3 Development: Changing Objectives

I INTRODUCTION

Excessive emphasis on growth in the 1950s and 1960s in the TW resulted in unintended social and economic consequences and to eventual misgivings about the direction being taken by development. Realization of the limited success of development after two decades of active state intervention led to serious examination of fundamental objectives. By the early 1970s increasing evidence of the failure of this narrow economic approach had become a cause for concern among governments in the TW, leading to much debate.

We find two varying responses to this situation. The first was to enlarge the concept of development and adopt a broad-based multi-dimensional view incorporating economic, political, cultural, environmental and social objectives (Goulet, 1992, 468, Sen, 1984). This approach would, it was felt, emphasize values like freedom and equality and provide fundamental basic needs like education, housing and health with economic growth. The second was to narrow the focus by adopting market-oriented policies, supposedly adopted with success by the NIEs. Either response necessitated a re-examination of development objectives on the part of governments.

This chapter examines those issues. In section II, I discuss the importance of adopting an interdisciplinary approach to development studies. Section III discusses the concept of quality of life and well-being as development objectives as an answer to the growth strategy of the early period. In section IV the compatibility between traditional societies and modernisation is raised. In section V, I argue for political development as an important objective, thus critiquing the authoritarian models of East Asian development. Section VI sums the chapter with a conclusion.

II THE NEED FOR A DIFFERENT APPROACH

The marked shift in development objectives in the 1970s demanded an interdisciplinary problem-oriented perspective and led to the emergence
of Development Studies as an academic pursuit (Smith, 1984–85). While recognizing that problems facing TW countries are multi-dimensional, the interdisciplinary approach to TW development assumes an understanding of relevant information, knowledge and methodology from different disciplines. The term ‘interdisciplinary’ suggests that the use of concepts or a methodology from various disciplines can bring about greater variation in the application of concepts. It implies an approach where two or more disciplines integrate through cross-fertilization of ideas and may involve considerable overlap in areas like culture and religion. Further methodologies and concepts of several disciplines may be combined to understand problems and help solve them (Streeton, 1975). However, early efforts in development studies attracted criticism for their ‘inability to articulate a unified model of comparative political economy . . . lacking any broad-based comparative historical perspective into which problems of mid-20th century development could be placed’ (Smith, 1984–85, 540).

Research on TW countries has until now failed to recognize the significant influences of history, culture and religion over traditional societies (Bartlett, 1996). For TW countries in search of a future vision of society, culture ‘is a social legacy the individual acquires in a group, a storehouse of pooled learning, a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to others . . . then we move to the heart of why economics as it is practised cannot adequately explain economic development’ (Tabb, 1995, 23). It is therefore important to adopt an interdisciplinary view of development and a new focus for development studies.

The evolving field of Development Studies heralds an awareness among social scientists that the problems faced by TW countries are not likely to be solved by adopting the experience of the FW. That assumption rests on the recognition that the economies of developing countries, their societies and culture are basically influenced by human attitudes, behavioural patterns, a sense of values and morals which differ from the developed world. The differing response of TW societies to economic, political and social problems has led to them being characterized as traditional. Originating from the need to adopt a different approach, what this subject really demands is a distinctive discipline (Streeton, 1975). If one accepts that human behaviour and attitudes are a product of the environment, then central to this approach to development is the need to develop the capability of TW societies to change from a situation of being dominated by chance and circumstance to the position of being able to shape one’s physical, social and economic environment (Sen, 1984). Essentially, the suggestion that development