

Riggs in Retrospect

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The work of Fred Riggs in the field of Comparative Public Administration has been rich in ideas and has helped increase understanding of administration in developing countries. However, two of his central positions — his views of the relation between diffraction and administrative development and his treatment of bureaucratic power — are quite unacceptable. Other than Riggs' "differentiation" explanation, much of the dysfunctional administrative behavior in developing societies may originate principally from the limited resources available and perceptions of this limitation. Moreover, Riggs, in making observations on power: (a) does not specify exactly which bureaucrats he regards as wielding power; (b) does not distinguish sufficiently between various types of regimes, and therefore his generalizations are too sweeping; (c) says little regarding the influence of transnational corporations and technocrats in analyzing the power structure; and (d) discusses a different kind of power than one might expect, given his argument on who holds power in a prismatic society. Nevertheless, Riggs' outstanding contribution is best summed up in his attempts to show that administrative difficulties arise out of ignorance and immorality; hence, the infusion of know-how or informing zeal will not suffice to bring about the desired changes.

For twenty years Fred Riggs has been the acknowledged dominant figure (other terms are "dean" or "prime mover") in the field of Comparative Public Administration, officially recognized by his chairmanship of the once-influential Comparative Administration Group (CAG) in the United States, and testified to, unofficially, by the number of people who have written about his theories. It has been said that "mere acquaintance with all of his writings on comparative theory is in itself not an inconsiderable accomplishment."¹ The

present article is not a detailed examination of his writings, and concentrates on only a few key arguments in some key texts.² It seeks to look at some aspects which, in my opinion, have not yet been sufficiently explored. Briefly, my contention is that while Riggs' work has been rich

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¹Ferrel Heady, "Comparative Public Administration: Concerns and Priorities," in Ferrel Heady and Sybil Stokes (eds.), *Papers in Comparative Organization* (Michigan: Institute of Public Administration, University of Michigan, 1962), pp. 4-5.

²Notably: "Agraria and Industria," in William J. Siffin (ed.), *Toward the Comparative Study of Public Administration* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1957); "The Sala Model," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (1962), pp. 3-16; *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964); "Introduction" and "Bureaucratic Politics in Comparative Perspective," in Fred W. Riggs (ed.), *Frontiers of Public Administration* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1970); *Prismatic Society Revisited* (Morristown, N. J., 1973); "Bureaucracy and Development Administration," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (1977), pp. 106-122.

in ideas and in increasing understanding of administration in developing countries, in two major respects his arguments are unconvincing: on the nature of administrative development, and on the question of bureaucratic power. Nothing on a grand scale is put forward here in their place. However, some suggestions are made about the former, which may explain, in a modest way, some of the bureaucratic behavior found in developing societies by Riggs and others. On bureaucratic power, the main argument is that some terms have been inappropriately defined, which has led to unnecessary confusion and incorrect conclusion.

Riggs' theories are expressed in the form of models, originally two in number, *Agraria* and *Industria*, but later expanded to three, in one important version called "fused," "prismatic," and "diffracted" societies.³ The prismatic model corresponds to what are generally described as "developing societies." Without going into detail (and the details vary with the particular model Riggs is using at the time), the prismatic model may be described as one in which institutions have become more differentiated and functionally specific than in the fused model, but not so much as in the diffracted. A main consequence of this administratively, according to Riggs, is that the bureaucracy has become too powerful, because there are too few external checks on it to ensure responsiveness and performance.⁴

³In "*Agraria* and *Industria*," *op.cit.*, and *Administration in Developing Countries*, *op.cit.*, respectively.

⁴*Ibid.*, Chaps. VII and VIII.

I do not propose to say much about the nature of models in general in this paper,⁵ but to concentrate on their use in helping us understand administrative behavior in developing societies. However, it should be remarked that Riggs' approach was "ecological"⁶ in that it sought to study administrative behavior in the context of its environment. This led him to provide an elaborate anthropological, sociology, economic, psychological, and political background as a prelude to theorizing on a truly grand scale. Consequently, some reviewers of his work have thought that the scope was too sweeping and abstract to influence research directly, although perhaps it would not be difficult to extract some middle-range theory from it.⁷

Riggs' models are deductive, but they were also to some extent based on particular countries: *Agraria* and *Industria* on Imperial China and the United States, respectively; the prismatic society predominantly on Thailand, the Philippines, and South Korea.⁸ However, the features described in the prismatic model are to be found in many other countries,

⁵R.S. Milne, "Uses and Limitations of Models in Public Administration," *Concepts and Models in Public Administration*, Part I (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1965).

⁶As suggested by the title of another of his works, *The Ecology of Public Administration* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1961).

⁷F.J. Tickner, "Comparing Administrative Systems: Two Views," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (1959), pp. 19-25.

⁸As stated in, and inferred from *Administration in Developing Countries*, *op.cit.*, p. ix.

with some of which Riggs can have been little acquainted at the time he wrote. When we encounter, in real life or in public administration literature, characteristics which are "prismatic," we do indeed experience a shock of recognition. The lengthy process of exchanging currency at Dares-Salaam airport is somewhat compensated for by noticing that, with ritualistic precision, the rate has been worked out to no fewer than five digits after the decimal point. We read, with a sense of familiarity, after exposure to Riggs, that in Latin American countries generally the community receives from the bureaucracy "... only a minimum level of essential services, as compared with its size and cost."⁹ Similarly, his writings give us the background to appreciate the generalization about administrators in several Middle Eastern countries; "... the situation is not at all a matter of program politics versus personal politics. It's a matter of personal politics versus personal politics."¹⁰ Perhaps the most encouraging tribute to the near-universal applicability of many aspects of the Riggs model came from a Brazilian social scientist, who after reading *Administration in Developing Countries*, exclaimed: "He was writing about Brazil."¹¹ Some

scholars have produced whole articles explicitly applying a Riggs model to a particular country, and have found a close correspondence in some respect, although not in others.¹²

All of these have been illuminating for students of public administration. His writings convey the flavor of administration in developing countries, and also point to the connections between various features which had not been so precisely or so ingeniously indicated previously. Concepts known to us before, such as nepotism, overlapping, authority, and control, acquired a new depth of meaning. New concepts were coined and given new names; polynormativism, bazaarcanteen, clect, formalism, the painful-sounding "blocked throughput," and so on.

However (and this is not to belittle Riggs' great accomplishments and my appreciation of them), in spite of his impressive arguments I am unable to accept two of his central, perhaps his two central, positions: his view of the relation between diffraction and administrative development; and his treatment of bureaucratic power. He has changed his statement of the two positions over time. I propose to deal in succession with two main versions of each.

Some of my views on diffraction and differentiation are to be found

⁹Jorge I. Tapia-Videla, "Understanding Organizations and Environments: A Comparative Perspective," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 6 (1976), p. 631.

¹⁰Edward W. Weidner, *Technical Assistance in Public Administration Overseas: The Case for Development Administration* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1964), p. 201.

¹¹R.T. Daland, *Brazilian Planning: Development Politics and Administration* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 11.

¹²Nelson Kasfir, "Prismatic Theory and African Administration," *World Politics*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (1969), pp. 304 and 308-311; James R. Brady, "Japanese Administrative Behavior and the 'Sala'," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (December 1964), pp. 314-324.

elsewhere.¹³ Riggs distinguishes between structures, as Talcott Parsons does, according to the degree to which they are functionally specific or functionally diffuse, that is, whether they perform few or many functions. The models of social systems corresponding to these two cases he labels diffracted and fused, respectively. Between them, in terms of specificity-diffuseness, is the prismatic society, afflicted by special problems. He also states that it might "... serve a heuristic purpose to identify 'development' with 'diffraction'."¹⁴ This model was never trouble-free. To some, the central argument has been simply unacceptable: there is no point in differentiation as such, unless: (a) what has been differentiated is subsequently coordinated; and (b) the degree of differentiation is appropriate for the task in hand. Riggs' unease is perhaps shown by his changes in view, or at least in terminology. Even in *Administration in Developing Countries* he mentions the importance of other Parsonian pattern-variables, and near the end, writes: "The precision of measures for diffraction depends upon how well we can distinguish different degrees of specificity of roles. For example, let us say that a role which is both functionally specific and recruited by achievement is more diffracted than one which, while specific, is recruited ascriptively."¹⁵ In what I shall refer to as his second version, diffraction has quite definitely

become differentiation and something else. In one contribution to a book, Riggs considers diffraction as differentiation plus performance.¹⁶ In a still later work, the emphasis shifts to the degree of integration among structures in a differentiated society. A "prismatic society" is now one with some degree of differentiation but which is not properly integrated.¹⁷ Among other things, the new approach allows him to present certain aspects of public administration in the United States as "prismatic," although even in the previous form of the model he had already referred to prismatic behavior there, for instance in local government in the South.¹⁸ Clearly the argument is no longer what it was: the importance of differentiation, as such, has declined, and the value of retaining it at all has become more questionable than ever.

Without claiming to put forward a substitute for Riggs' "differentiation" explanation, it could be suggested that much of the dysfunctional administrative behavior in developing societies may originate principally from the limited resources available, from their being poor. The literature on peasant behavior has not neglected the role played by limited resources and the peasants' perception of this

¹³R.S. Milne, "Differentiation and Administrative Development," *Journal of Comparative Administration*, Vol. I, No. 2 (1969), pp. 213-233.

¹⁴*Administration in Developing Countries*, op. cit., p. 422.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 22 and 23, fn. 4 and 417 (*my underlining*).

¹⁶"Administrative Development: An Elusive Concept," in John D. Montgomery and William J. Siffin (eds.), *Approaches to Development: Politics, Administration and Changes* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), p. 240.

¹⁷*Prismatic Society Revisited*, op. cit., pp. 7-8; Ferrel Heady, *Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective* (2nd ed.; New York: M. Deckker, 1979), pp. 69-72.

¹⁸*Administration in Developing Countries*, op. cit., pp. ix and 256; "The Sala Model," op. cit., pp. 5 and 7.

limitation.¹⁹ Any study which ignored this aspect would obviously invite criticism as being unrealistic. Yet it is often ignored in studies of Third World *administrative* behavior. Maybe one of the penalties we pay for talking about "developing countries" rather than "poor countries" is that we may easily forget the pressures on their administrators arising from poverty, other people's, the government's, and their own. Some authors, fortunately, have not lost sight of this. In writing about the characteristics relevant to administration in African countries, Adedeji begins by mentioning underdevelopment, and in particular low incomes.²⁰ Swerdlow, also, sees "development" administration as a useful concept to describe administration in poor countries, and asks the question: are there certain characteristic patterns in such countries which materially affect the nature of their public administration?²¹ It would be rather too simple to argue such a case by jumping directly from limitation of resources to allegedly consequent admin-

istrative behavior. An important intervening factor is *the perception of* such limitations on the part of administrators, and there could be a time-lag between these limitations and perceptions of their existence. Discoveries of oil or some other valuable mineral resource could make a country comparatively well-off, but administrative behavior patterns, formed when resources were scarce, might yet persist. Scott found in Malaysia that some high Malaysian administrators *did* perceive that resources were very limited, that they held a "constant pie" view of the administrative arena. He believed that it was associated with social distrust and lack of felt control over the future so as to constitute a system of mutually reinforcing attitudes.²² Perceptions of the degree to which resources are limited will vary from individual to individual. So will the reactions which follow. Some individuals may be led to act "prismatically," others may not. Some may behave "prismatically" at certain times but not at other times; they may switch roles. Some organizations in a mainly prismatic society will have an *ethos* or *esprit de corps* that protects them from the temptation to act prismatically, and makes their behavior exceptional. Such an ethos may be encouraged by training, although, given the existence of the concept of limited good, it will be a corrective rather than a panacea. It may also be strengthened by the example set by heads of bureaus, as shown in the *Final Report* of the Philippine Team for the IDRC project, *Bureaucratic Behavior and Develop-*

¹⁹ See for example George Rosen, *Peasant Society in a Changing Economy*, Chaps. I and II (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1975); James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven, Conn., 1976), especially "Introduction" and Chapter I; Joel S. Migdal, *Peasants, Politics and the Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), especially Chapter IX.

²⁰ Adebayo Adedeji, "The Professionalization of Public Administration in Africa," in A.H. Rweyemamu and G. Hyden (eds.), *A Decade of Public Administration in Africa* (Nairobi, 1975), p. 137.

²¹ Irving J. Swerdlow, "Introduction," in Irving J. Swerdlow (ed.), *Development Administration* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1963), pp. ix-xii.

²² James C. Scott, *Political Ideology in Malaysia: Reality and the Beliefs of an Elite* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1968), Chap. VI.

ment in Asia.²³ Some whole societies under the influence of government ideologies, a factor Riggs does not take into account, may behave in ways unpredictable from his model. Consequently, suggestions about how to go about explaining administrative behavior which start from the fact of limited resources can not be complete explanations. However, this is only another way of saying that they are probabilistic rather than deterministic, and explanations which do claim to be complete explanations should be met with appropriate skepticism.

Other writers have indicated connections between limited resources and particular types of prismatic behavior. Van Riper points to the effect of low wages and scarce jobs, in conjunction with the attraction of status and other factors, in helping to explain patronage in Latin America.²⁴ Riggs himself, although his prismatic model does not include a consideration of poverty or scarce resources, mentions that one of the reasons for unwillingness to delegate is reluctance to lose a source of income.²⁵ Scarcity of resources may

also be associated with centralization, an important feature of Riggs' models. "If resources are few, their allocation must be made centrally in order to achieve economies of scale, to ensure that only approved goals are served, and to prevent frictional losses. Abundance permits social choice to replace central decision-making."²⁶ In many ways the stakes are higher where resources are severely limited, and this is reflected in greater competitiveness and ruthlessness, which may reach the point of corruption or violence. For example, consider the siting of a school which in a developing country may mean great difference in opportunity for a good education. An unfavorable decision in such a case would be a severe blow to the parents concerned, and might induce them to exert pressures on the bureaucracy, while in a "developed" country an "unfavorable" decision would be no more than inconvenient.²⁷

More speculatively, some of the grandiose planning which has been attempted, particularly in prismatic societies in Latin America, may have its roots in a refusal to face the daunting fact of material limitations. The "motivation-outruns-understanding" style of problem-solving may also have

²³Ledivina V. Cariño and Raul P. De Guzman, "Negative Bureaucratic Behavior in the Philippines: The Final Report of the IDRC Philippine Team," Paper presented at the 4th Working Meeting on Bureaucratic Behavior and Development Project, sponsored by the International Development Research Centre, Hong Kong, August 25-29, 1978.

²⁴Paul P. Van Riper, Review of *Civil Service Reform in Brazil: Principles versus Practice* by Lawrence S. Graham, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (1968), pp. 521-524.

²⁵*Administration in Development Countries*, op. cit., p. 300. Of course, this is only

one reason for refusal to delegate. And there may be delegation with "collaborative" corruption.

²⁶"The Innovating Organization," Special Supplement published by *Trans-Action* (January-February 1965), reproduced in Walter A. Hill et al., *Readings in Organization Theory* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1967), p. 493.

²⁷A point deserving further exploration is that the association of poverty with large families will tend to increase pressure for government jobs thus inviting corruption and nepotism.

elements of an "aspirations-outrun-resources" approach.²⁸ The irresistible force, the revolution of rising *administrative* expectations, has encountered the immovable object, stringently limited materials resources. The result, quite predictably, is formalism, Riggs' term to indicate a gap between what is officially prescribed and what is actually practiced.

As mentioned earlier, these observations take the form of an hypothesis based on a rather obvious premise, not a carefully formulated theory or model. Perceptions of the limited availability of resources would be only a basis for a theory and would need to be supplemented by consideration of cultural and structural factors. However, before leaving this topic, the views of Neher should be cited, which are of special interest because, writing about Thailand, he specifically discusses Riggs' account of the "operating code" of the ruling Thai bureaucrats. This is said to be based on four principles: reduce the work load for officials, particularly those necessary for making and enforcing hard decisions; reduce tensions within the bureaucracy and the public primarily by distributing benefits rather than enforcing regulations; extract the means of subsistence for officials from the public; and be well situated in the bureaucracy by identifying with and servicing prominent officials. Neher says most scholars would agree that such codes do actually exist in the

Thai bureaucracy. "However, the same code might very well be found in all bureaucracies with minimal resources and not only in bureaucracies which are characterized by a lack of bureaucratic controls."²⁹

In Riggs' initial observations on power, his main hypothesis is that bureaucratic power is heavy in the prismatic system as compared to either the fused or the diffracted system. By comparison with the latter, institutions external to the prismatic bureaucracy which might act as a check on it, such as parties and legislatures, are too weak to do so. He adds that the degree of administrative efficiency of a bureaucracy varies inversely with the weight of its power; it follows that the prismatic bureaucracy is relatively inefficient, administratively.³⁰

My observations on this main hypothesis fall under four headings: the definition of a "bureaucrat"; the need to recognize that the power of bureaucrats will vary according to the type of regime (to characterize the regime as "prismatic" is not enough); the influence on the distribution of power in the policy of factors not considered by Riggs, such as the transnational corporations and the technocrats; the ambiguity of the word "power" in the term "bureaucratic power."

²⁸John C. Honey, *Toward Strategies for Public Administration Development in Latin America* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1968), p. 93, referring to A.O. Hirschman; R.S. Milne, "Decision-Making in Developing Countries," *Journal of Comparative Administration*, Vol. III, No. 4 (1972), pp. 387-400.

²⁹Clark D. Neher, "A Critical Analysis of Research on Thai Politics and Bureaucracy" (unpublished, mimeo., December 1976). The reference to Riggs is to his *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1966), p. 237.

³⁰*Administration in Developing Countries*, Chaps. VII and VIII, particularly pp. 222-227 and 263-265.

First, Riggs does not specify exactly *which* bureaucrats he regards as wielding power: are they, for example, high-level or low-level; generalists or specialists; at the center or in the regions? A reader might gain the impression that the bureaucracy he refers to was monolithic. To compound the difficulty of identifying the locus, or loci, of power, Riggs insists that the term, bureaucracy, must include both the civilian and the military bureaucracy. He claims that where a military group is in control it forms part of the bureaucracy, because, typically, military officers constitute part of the hierarchy of authority and decision-making which officially serves the state.³¹ Definitions are a matter of individual preference, however the test should be: does a definition sharpen or obscure potentially important distinctions?³² In fact, in his book on Thailand, in many places Riggs *does* draw a distinction between the military and civilian bureaucrats, for instance in his charts showing the composition of successive Thai governments. A recent student of the Thai elite also believes that, although until 1973 the military and civilian bureaucrats worked together, they should now be treated separately.³³

³¹ "Relearning an Old Lesson: The Political Context of Development Administration," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (1965), p. 70.

³² In Riggs' "Bureaucracy and Development Administration," *op.cit.*, p. 116, for example, he properly distinguishes between government and party bureaucracies in the USSR.

³³ Likhit Dhiravegin, "The Power Elite in Thailand," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. III, No. 1 (1975), p. 3.

Part of the reason for Riggs' wide definition could have been that, although the military are by nature well-equipped for seizing power, they are not trained in its use. They are therefore forced to seek the collaboration of the bureaucracy.³⁴ But surely "collaboration" is not necessarily the same thing as sharing power. After all, every regime that is at all operational depends on the collaboration of the bureaucracy. The *styles* of civilian and military rule may also differ substantially, making it unprofitable to lump them together when analyzing the behavior of the bureaucracy as a whole under civilian or military leadership. Quite apart from possible differences arising from recruitment from various social classes or from a range of geographical areas, there are differences arising from the nature of military training. In an Indonesian study, military officers put into civilian positions apparently had difficulty adjusting to the relatively amorphous structure of the bureaucracy after having experienced the military structure of vertical authority and unambiguous command. They were also more action-oriented, and more interested in performance and less in patronage than civilians.³⁵

The nature of relations between the bureaucracy and the military needs much more careful analysis, for instance, through a consideration of

³⁴ Heady, *op.cit.*, pp. 259, 264 and 302.

³⁵ Donald K. Emmerson, *Indonesia's Elite* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 164-165; "The Bureaucracy in Political Context: Weakness in Strength," in Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye (eds.), *Political Power and Communication in Indonesia* (Berkeley, California, 1978), pp. 104-105.

roles played by bureaucrats in particular countries under military regimes, as compared with their roles under regimes headed by civilian non-bureaucratic leaders. This has been attempted for Ghana and Nigeria by Richard L. Harris looking at a wide range of role sets: policy maker, policy adviser, program formulator, program manager, program implementor, interest aggregator, interest articulator, agent of political communication, adjudicator, agent of political socialization.³⁶

My observation on the second heading is brief; Riggs does not distinguish sufficiently between various types of regime, and therefore his generalizations are too sweeping. Many different political regime-types can be identified, as defined, for example, by Ferrel Heady.³⁷ On Riggs' criterion of differentiation, some of them are undeniably prismatic, and yet at the same time politicians are unquestionably in command over bureaucrats, for instance in India and Malaysia, something simply not allowed for in the Riggs' scheme.³⁸

Under the third heading, on bureaucratic power, two factors have become increasingly prominent since Riggs wrote his "first version." If they are taken into consideration, the

question of where power lies becomes even more complicated, and to identify the power-holders as overwhelmingly a single group becomes even less realistic. The additional factors are the transnational corporations and the technocrats.

Riggs says little about outside forces except in the context of discussing external sources of change or modernization. He has a section on the "dependency syndrome," but in it external references are very limited, the main exception being one to a dominant imperial power extracting tribute.³⁹ The literature on the transnational corporations⁴⁰ and "dependency"⁴¹ is vast, but the possible implications for the locus of power in developing (dependent?) countries are obvious. In the complex relations between large foreign firms, local firms and the national government, do

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 219. Other brief references to external forces are on pp. 289, 466-467.

⁴⁰Among U.N. publications see: *Multinational Corporations in World Development* (E 73. II. A. 11, 1973); *The Impact of Multinational Corporations on Development and on International Relations* (E 74. II. A. 5, 1974); *Transnational Corporations in World Development: A Re-examination* (E/C.10/38, 1978).

⁴¹There is a good summary of the dependency literature in Heady, *op.cit.*, Chap. III. On dependency in the Philippines, see the work of Robert B. Stauffer, particularly: "The Political Economy of a Coup: Transactional Linkages and Philippine Political Response," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (1974), pp. 161-177; "Framework for Peripheral Development," in John F. Doherty, S.J. (ed.), *Readings in Peripheral Development* (Manila, 1978); "TNC's and the Transactional Political Economy of Development: The Continuing Philippine Debate" (lecture, College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, 1979).

³⁶Richard L. Harris, "The Effects of Political Change on the Role Set of the Senior Bureaucrats in Ghana and Nigeria," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (1968), pp. 386-401.

³⁷Heady, *op.cit.*, pp. 264-270.

³⁸Even allowing for varieties of the "interference complex," common enough in Western societies as well (Riggs' *Administration in Developing Countries*, *op.cit.*, pp. 226-228).

the partnerships involved result in such a degree of external control that, in order to explain fully the internal power structure of the "independent" developing country, we must look at forces outside it? Which, if any, are the internal groups which acquire power through external backing? Do they include sections of the bureaucracy? Marxists of all kinds have produced a wide range of terminologies to describe the linkage which they see as indicating external domination. One commentator on Thailand refers to the fusion of merchants and military-bureaucracy into a new bourgeoisie fostered by United States imperialism.⁴² Another, on Pakistan and Bangladesh, writes that the role of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy needs to be interpreted in terms of a new alignment of the respective interests of the three propertied exploiting classes, the indigenous bourgeoisie, the Metropolitan neo-colonial bourgeoisie and the landed class, all under Metropolitan (that is, foreign) patronage.⁴³ Some of these more extreme interpretations verge upon "conspiracy theories," but they are worthy of consideration and evaluation.

It is a pity that the transnational corporation has not been incorporated in the Riggs framework, if only because a fascinating comparison is possible between the transnationals and Riggs' concept of the "pariah

entrepreneur." The latter, it will be remembered, is the non-indigenous trader with commercial skills, who, because of his political insecurity, must pay tribute, financially, to "bureaucratic capitalists" who are actually government officials.⁴⁴ To a degree the transnationals have also been forced to pay tribute.⁴⁵ But they are more powerful than the pariahs in size, in resources, and possibly in being able to mobilize the support of their home governments. They resemble pariahs, but they are a two-way version, with more bargaining power, and more teeth. Furthermore, their relations with pariah entrepreneurs (whether known as Ali Babas, *cukongs*, or some other name), and the inter-relations of these two groups with bureaucrats, are of considerable interest.

Another feature which should be included in analyzing the power structure is the technocrats.⁴⁶ Definition is difficult, but the technocrats would seem to have the following characteristics. They possess expertise, usually

⁴⁴ *Administration in Developing Countries*, *op.cit.*, especially pp. 189-191.

⁴⁵ N.H. Jacoby, P. Nehemkis and R. Eelle, *Bribery and Extortion in World Business: A Study of Corporate Political Payments Abroad* (New York, 1977).

⁴⁶ *Asian Survey*, Vol. XVI, No. 12 (1976), containing contributions on technocrats by Richard Hooley, John James MacDougall, Lawrence D. Stifel and Guy J. Pauker, pp. 1156-1202. Stifel points out that the technocratic tradition goes back to the time of King Chulalongkorn (p. 1184); Heady, *op.cit.*, pp. 324-331; Tapia-Videla, *op.cit.*, pp. 631-636; Juan Linz, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes" in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.), *Macropolitical Theory*, Handbook of Political Science, Vol. III (Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 293-300.

⁴² Peter F. Bell, "Cycles of Class Struggle in Thailand," in Andrew Turton *et al.*, (eds.), *Thailand: Roots of Conflict* (Nottingham, 1978), p. 60.

⁴³ Hazmah Alavi, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh," *New Left Review*, No. 71 (January-February 1972), p. 59.

in economics or in business administration, which can be applied to the higher administrative levels of government. They are a force for modernization via techniques and values spread from "developed" countries. They have no power base of their own, although it may be possible for individual technocrats to graduate to being politicians. Their importance has far-reaching implications. Their capability and dedication may constitute a source of legitimacy for the regime.⁴⁷ They may also have a favorable view of transnationals, indeed some may previously have worked for one. Certainly, in any evaluation of the power structure, their actions may be expected to be more "modern," more professional, and less concerned with self-interest than those of the prismatic bureaucrats described by Riggs.

The fourth heading concerns the nature of power. Many of Riggs' examples have to do with the exercise of a different kind of power than one might expect, given the tenor of his argument about who holds power in a prismatic society. If we assume that the ". . . bureaucracy carries a heavy weight of power, we must also assume that its members devote their energies to building up their power position, to forming alliances with other officials, and to defeating their opponents — to a struggle, in short, for the attainment of their bureaucratic interests."⁴⁸ This seems to refer to "office politics," not a struggle for the control of state power. Riggs also suggests that effective power is widely dispersed in

the sala (prismatic) model.⁴⁹ This agrees with his account of the "disengagement" of authority and control. High officials are unable to exercise substantial control over their subordinates; "in respect to effective control the prismatic bureaucracy is almost anarchic, offering few substantial curbs to the expediency interests of subordinate officials."⁵⁰ This is indeed far removed from a model which would postulate a relatively monolithic group of top bureaucrats occupying the commanding political heights of the society, fingertips poised on the pushbuttons of power, whose instructions were faithfully carried out by their subordinates. Indeed, it is more reminiscent of Tullock's concept of "bureaucratic free enterprise," written with *developed* countries chiefly in mind.

Tullock hypothesizes that when efforts are made to extend the size of a hierarchical organization beyond its practical limits, those at the top of the organization have little control over some of the actions of those at the bottom.⁵¹ It resembles, also, the line of argument in two books, probably better known to students of public administration than Tullock's, by Downs and Crozier. Downs' "propositions" are set out in a deductive form, but his examples are nearly all from the United States. Yet the behavior he portrays is undeniably prismatic. He maintains that the operations of bureaucrats are very largely

⁴⁹"The Sala Model," *op.cit.*, p. 13.

⁵⁰*Administration in Developing Countries, op. cit.*, p. 281.

⁵¹Gordon Tullock, *The Politics of Bureaucracy* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965), pp. 167-168.

⁴⁷Heady, *op.cit.*, p. 325.

⁴⁸*Administration in Developing Countries, op.cit.*, p. 266.

motivated by self-interest and are subject to very little restraint by the formal mechanisms of the government organization in which they work. For instance, he points to the existence of networks of personal friendship (Riggs' clects). He describes how, when officials have the power to make choices, they use this to further their own, not the organization's goals. He concludes that ". . . in any large, multi-level bureau, a very significant portion of all the activity being carried out is completely unrelated to the organization's formal goals, or even to the goals of its topmost officials."⁵² In Crozier's book on French organizations, there are also numerous instances of prismatic behavior, particularly "formalism." Good examples are the sections on routinization, displacement of goals, and conformity and over-conformity.⁵³

The use of "power" illustrated by Riggs' examples has not very much in common with power in the sense of substantial control over policy making. It is much closer in fact to the administrative behavior portrayed in Tullock, Downs and Crozier, and consists typically of bureaucrats' "power" to escape from the control of others or to assert control as far as they are able in order to gain advantages for themselves, their friends and relatives, or their "corruptors." In this respect their behavior is "rational," from

⁵² Anthony Downs, *Inside Bureaucracy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), pp. 134-136.

⁵³ Michel Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 53, 191-193 and 201, respectively. At the end of his book he makes comparisons between administrative behavior in various societies.

the point of view of their own self-interest, just as the bureaucrats in Downs' book are being rational in pursuing *their* self-interest.⁵⁴ In each the desirable, but almost certainly unattainable, solution is the ideal situation where self-interest and duty coincide, but this may take considerable time and effort to reach!⁵⁵ The differences between the "developing" and the "developed" situations seem to be two-fold. As Riggs suggests, the external checks on non-feasance and malfeasance, and on formalism generally, are stricter in developed societies than in developing. Additionally, the pressures of bureaucrats' demands based on self-interest are probably greater in the developing, because of the more intense competition there for the limited resources available.

At the risk of over-simplification, I am assuming that Riggs' views on bureaucratic power in the 1970's are fairly represented by his contributions to *Frontiers of Development Administration* and by his article in the *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, April 1977, entitled, "Bureaucracy and Development Administration."

I propose to take the four headings under which I examined his earlier position on bureaucratic power, and see in what respects, if any, they now differ. On two of the four there is no appreciable change. There are some references to external forces (and briefly to dependency theory), but none explicitly to the influence of transnational corporations or other

⁵⁴ Downs, *op.cit.*, p. 2. See also Scott, *op.cit.*, pp. 245-249.

⁵⁵ John Stuart Mill, *Liberty, Utilitarianism and Representative Government* (London: Dent, 1910), p. 194.

foreign influences on the internal power structure, nor is there any mention of technocrats. Neither is the nature of power analyzed closely enough to make any distinction between power conceived of as control of policy and power regarded as the ability to seek to achieve one's own goals within the system through the exercise of bureaucratic free enterprise. On another of the four points he still includes the military under the "bureaucracy," although one would have thought that the point of separating the two, analytically, was greatly strengthened by his comment: "I can scarcely think of any bureaucratic polity dominated by civilian bureaucrats. The typical bureaucratic polity — perhaps all of them — is ruled by military bureaucrats."⁵⁶

The last of the four points, variations in bureaucratic power according to the nature of the regime, needs to be looked at in rather more detail. In Riggs' new account, some polities are said to be autocratic with a head of state who is unaccountable to any other person or body.⁵⁷ This is a gain in realism, because there was no equivalent category in the earlier version, and yet such regimes undoubtedly exist. In the previous version the implication was that any regime which was not responsible to the public

through democratic processes was "bureaucratic" (which is obviously incorrect). In the remaining (non-autocratic) polities in the new version, the ideal is to have a "balance" between bureaucracies and the "constitutive system," a composite of extra-bureaucratic organs, notably parties, legislatures, and electoral systems.⁵⁸ In developing countries, it is likely that the bureaucracy will in fact predominate, as he claimed was *universally* the case in his previous version. However, now he allows for the possibility that there may be a balance, or that the imbalance may actually be *against* the bureaucracy. Some half-dozen countries are placed in the "balanced" category, including the Philippines (no date indicated), India, Malaysia, and Jamaica.⁵⁹ Where the constitutive system dominates over the bureaucracy the polity is usually "party-run." The consequence is that the merit system is assailed by pressures of spoilsmen seeking appointments, and the bureaucrats are unable to influence the policy-making process enough to ensure that it takes account of administrative feasibility.⁶⁰ No actual examples are given of countries in this last group. Another improvement on the previous version is that historical influences in producing different regime-types are stressed,⁶¹ always a necessary implication, one would have thought, of the ecological approach.

⁵⁶ *Frontiers of Development Administration*, *op.cit.*, p. 484 (editor's note).

⁵⁷ "Bureaucratic Politics in Comparative Perspective," *ibid.*, p. 396. An expanded form of the argument may be found in "The Structures of Government and Administrative Reform," in Ralph Braibanti (ed.), *Political and Administrative Development* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1969), pp. 320-324.

⁵⁸ "Introduction," *ibid.*, p. 3; "Bureaucracy and Development Administration," *op.cit.*, pp. 116-117.

⁵⁹ "Bureaucratic Politics in Comparative Perspective," *op.cit.*, p. 405.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 399-408.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 406, 413.

The new version is undeniably superior to the old, among other things in realizing that, in discussing power, we should look at the ways in which combinations of forces or organizations, such as the constitutive system, operate in a polity. This avoids looking for a single center of power. But, if the concept of balance is invoked, why is it not applied to the polity as a whole? Why is the bureaucracy singled out and required to be balanced by the "constitutive system"? Should not the whole polity be looked on as a system, and a balance required among *all* its various parts? Is there not a need, for instance, to secure a balance between the legislature and the executive? Also, what does balance mean, and is not the determination of when a balance has been reached necessarily a subjective one? Finally, does the use of the term "balance" imply that the bureaucracy, although it has claims to *some* power,⁶² should actually have *equal* power as compared with the other organs of the polity combined, a proposition that would seem to be diametrically opposed to his own previous writings and to the general body of democratic theory? If this is really what is implied, we should indeed have to unlearn an "old lesson."⁶³

To put Riggs' theories in context briefly, the Comparative Administra-

⁶²"Bureaucracy and Development Administration," *op.cit.*, p. 114.

⁶³The treatment of Communist systems is unsatisfactory. The argument that the system in the USSR may be balanced is arguable. But to attribute the outcome of the Second Vietnamese War to the North Vietnamese polity being balanced while the South Vietnamese one was not (*ibid.*, p. 120), is implausible, even quaint.

tion Group (CAG),⁶⁴ which he headed with distinction from 1960 on for over a decade, was action-oriented, insofar as development administration was conceived of as aiding Third World Development through improving the quality of its administration.⁶⁵ The CAG's direct impact on the world of action, as opposed to the world of ideas, was less than some of the more optimistic had expected.⁶⁶ The group was also far from monolithic and lacked a common perspective.⁶⁷ Consequently, individual members of the CAG differed in their diagnosis of what was wrong with Third World administration, and in what they prescribed in the way of remedies. For Riggs and some others, there was a special difficulty, because his analysis seemed to deny the possibility of giving the "patient" any help; the nature of the diagnosis seemed to rule out the possibility of productive external aid.

⁶⁴Out of a vast literature, see: Fred W. Riggs, "The Group and the Movement: Notes on Comparative and Development Administration," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 6 (1976), pp. 648-654 (contribution in a Symposium in the issue on "Comparative and Development Administration: Retrospect and Prospect"); Peter Savage, "Optimism and Pessimism in Comparative Administration," *ibid.*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4 (1976), pp. 415-423; William J. Siffin, "Two Decades of Public Administration in Developing Countries," *ibid.*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1 (1976), pp. 61-71; B.B. Schaffer, "Comparisons, Administration and Development," *Political Studies*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (1971), pp. 327-337.

⁶⁵Savage, *op.cit.*, p. 416, Heady, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

⁶⁶Schaffer, *op.cit.*, p. 330; Warren F. Ilchman, *Comparative Public Administration and Conventional Wisdom* (Beverly Hills, 1971).

⁶⁷Savage, *op.cit.*, p. 417.

This impasse followed from his conclusions on the nature of bureaucratic power and his belief that it tended to be inversely correlated with administrative efficiency.⁶⁸ Riggs was bound to argue that any actions taken to "improve" administration would merely strengthen bureaucratic power, and, in the broader context of the polity (where there is a need to check and control the bureaucracy), lead to *reduced* administrative efficiency. The only possible exception on his later formulation might be countries that were "balanced," such as the Philippines, Malaysia, and India. But even here there would be the danger of turning a balanced situation into an unbalanced one. He himself says that in the "party-run" systems where the bureaucracy is currently *too weak*, programs to improve the administration would be more likely to transform these regimes into bureaucratic or autocratic polities than help them become balanced.⁶⁹

Other prominent members of the CAG did not share Riggs' qualms.⁷⁰ Broadly, they either took the view that the bureaucracy was a reliable, rather than a dangerous, basis on which to build, or they shared some of Riggs' doubts but could not see any feasible alternative. Riggs, however, could logically propose only two kinds of aid to solve the problem. One would have been a program to make the bureaucracy *weaker*, which would

hardly have been acceptable. The other would have tried to achieve "balance" by strengthening the extra-bureaucratic, or constitutive, system. The difficulty was that, even if a way of doing this could be worked out for a particular country, any attempt to do so would be regarded as external "interference" to a much greater extent than external *administrative* aid programs.⁷¹ This alternative, also, was therefore not really practicable. Riggs had no real answer to the problem, and deserves credit for saying so.⁷² The paradox was that the chairman of the action-oriented CAG was precluded from making prescriptions for action, at least through the medium of external aid, by the nature of his analysis of the bureaucracy.

Although the CAG was not monolithic, in some respects Riggs, its leader, epitomized the movement. This was perhaps particularly so in the appeal it offered of ". . . a domain in which scholars could apply imagination, ranging speculation and a utopian purpose."⁷³ Riggs had the broad vision, the pan-disciplinary scope, and the ecological sweep. He charted wide boundaries for comparative administration when he pointed to three trends: from normative to empirical; within the empirical, from a study of the idiographic (particular cases) to the nomothetic (generalizations); from the non-ecological to the ecolog-

⁶⁸His analysis of differentiation/diffraction, perhaps fortunately, was not made a basis for prescription.

⁶⁹"Bureaucratic Politics in Comparative Perspective," *op.cit.*, p. 412.

⁷⁰"The Group and the Movement . . ." *op.cit.*, p. 649; Heady, *op.cit.*, pp. 397-398.

⁷¹Ralph Braibanti, "External Inducement of Political-Administrative Development: An Institutional Strategy," in Braibanti (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 3-106.

⁷²"Bureaucracy and Development Administration," *op.cit.*, p. 121.

⁷³Savage, *op.cit.*, p. 421.

ical.⁷⁴ The fertility of his thought is seen not only in the wealth of the terminology he coined, but the readiness with which much of it has been widely accepted as currency. After having been exposed to it we are never quite the same again, and some of it is accepted more readily than the arguments which it was designed to support. He is a scholar's scholar, and it would be inappropriate to expect direct action and immediate "results" from his work. Yet, from the practical point of view also, he was correct in stressing the need for caution in trying to effect administrative improvement, because of the need to understand the differing settings in which administration takes place. Hanson, speaking of those from "developed countries" who are assigned to work in and help "developing countries," says that their ". . . briefing on Riggsian principles may not give them the solution to any problems, but at least it will help them to understand what the prob-

lems are — and this is the beginning of all wisdom, as in a 'prismatic' society the apparent problems are rarely the real ones."⁷⁵ Riggs, many years ago, summed up his own contribution very well. "What is novel, I hope, is the explanation of why these conditions should exist. Many writers, after all, attribute them to the unique cultural characteristics of this tribe or that nation, to personality traits induced by infant care practices, to the historical experience of a given country or its racial composition. If I have succeeded at all, it is to dispose of some of these over-simplified explanations, and especially to expose the notion that administrative difficulties arise out of ignorance or immorality. Hence the infusion of 'know-how' or reforming zeal will not suffice to bring about the desired changes."⁷⁶ This conclusion, unlike many self-evaluations, would surely command universal agreement.

⁷⁴"Trends in the Comparative Study of Administration," *International Review of Administrative Science*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (1962), pp. 9-15.

⁷⁵A.H. Hanson, Review of *Administration in Developing Countries*, *Journal of Local Administration Overseas*, Vol. V, No. 4 (1966), p. 291.

⁷⁶Riggs, "Commentary," *ibid.*, p. 288.