Development Studies at the Start of the new Millennium in South and North

Timothy M. Shaw
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‘...the study of development has been relatively neglected in modern IR...What would be needed is the creation of a global political economy of development which takes account of the specificity of development in a changing global system, and which steers towards more critical and normative approaches’
- Anna K Dickson (1997) Development & International Relations 22-23

‘Every element of development studies is subject to controversy:

the meaning of development
the scope of the inter-disciplinary project
the geographical coverage
the nature & possibility of inter-disciplinarity
the tension between enquiry into social processes & enquiry into managed change
the tension between analysis & prescription’

‘The last forty years can be called the age of development. This epoch is coming to an end. The time is ripe to write its obituary’

Notwithstanding the negative inclinations of some analysts (Edwards 1989, Leys 1996, Sachs 1992), ‘Development Studies’ at the turn of the century is experiencing something of a renaissance (Schuurman 2000), especially in some regions & institutions in the South (& ex-state socialist East) (cf McMahon 1995). Its apparent vitality is a function of student interests/concerns, institutional responsiveness/ opportunism & global needs/lacunae, in both South & North (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1999), as well as its now well-established intellectual characteristics of being robustly interdisciplinary, critical etc (Hettne 1995: 1-20 & 249-269) even if not to the extent that Hettne et al would wish (Hettne & Soderbaum 1999).

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This paper reflects on the prospects for the field in the first decade or so of the twenty-first century with a focus on interrelated intellectual & institutional developments, particularly taking salient global & regional trends into account. It privileges two types of actor, in addition to the state, which impact on prospects for sustainable development into the new millennium: companies & civil societies (Shaw & Nyang’oro 2000); i.e. for me, at least, the field should relate to all three not just one or two ‘sides’ of the political economy/culture ‘triangle’. And it identifies some emerging intellectual & political potholes or controversies (see second opening quotation above) appearing on the development path at the dawn of the new millennium (Loxley 1998).

As indicated in the second opening citation, Development Studies, as not only analysis & praxis but also ideology & idealism, continues to attract advocates/defenders, even disciples (cf v) below) (Mittelman & Pasha 1997). Yet it remains a broad church/religion, which has proven adaptable over the years since its founding in the heady nationalist era of the 1960s (Leys 1996, Grindle & Hilderbrand 1999). Certainly, it attracted Yoweri Museveni (1997: 25) as a convert during his Dar es Salaam University days in the late-1960s, so that he now advocates it as an essential core of the curriculum in Uganda’s national universities (MUST 2000).

With the end of the Cold War, Development Studies has displayed flexibility about a range of ‘new’ human security/development issues such as ecological, economic & gender security, peace-building/-making etc (Shaw 1997a, UNDP 1994). Similarly, given the incidence & impacts of structural adjustment programmes over the last one or two decades, it has been accepting of some economic & political liberalisations; i.e. more market forces & civil societies in a range of ‘partnerships’ with the state (Fowler 2000, World Bank 1997). And, as indicated in vi) below, it has begun to respond to a set of parallel analytic & existential developments - the world(s) of globalisation(s) (Held 1999, Hettne, Payne & Soderbaum 1999, Scholte 2000) – particularly in terms of forging its own global networks, approaching a virtual ‘epistemic community’ however facilitated/ dominated by prevailing ideologies/interests/institutions (www.gdnet.org) (MacLean & Shaw 2000, Mbabazi, MacLean & Shaw 2000).

i) Globalisation of Development Studies
This paper seeks to highlight some emerging issues & discourses in the increasingly global & cosmopolitan field of comparative/international development studies as the twenty-first century opens (Hettne 1995), concentrating on its increasing range of novel concerns, its heterogeneity in different regions, especially in the South (Souths?!), & boundary conflicts with neighbouring, often established yet (unfortunately!) typically hide-bound, disciplines & fields, including the relatively contemporary, albeit

In particular, as indicated in iii) below, notwithstanding the dangers of dilution, Development Studies at the turn of the century seems to be accommodating of a range of ‘new’ factors such as boundaries, ecology, globalisations, governance (including varieties of civil societies/NGOs), migrants/refugees, new regionalisms, new security, (near-?) NICs, transitions etc. But it appears to still have some difficulty, given its genesis in the West/North during the nationalist era, to treat/integrate aspects of the ‘global South’ in the North, such as diasporas, indigenous communities, let alone the new rich (countries & communities) in the South itself (e.g. city states of the Gulf & Singapore, some billionaires in China etc) (Hoogvelt 1997).

And the field may continue to take on rather different priorities in the South in the new millennium by contrast to its northern roots (MUST 1998). Further, Development Studies/policies may come to diverge in different regions in both South & North – e.g. East versus Southeast versus South let alone Central Asia(s), Southern Africa versus the Horn, Caribbean & Central America versus the Southern Cone etc? – in part depending on whether the field can digest much of the old Second World given the latter’s own focus on the problems of transitions – political, social & ecological as well as economic – as there are now more ‘developing states’ than ever before (Dickson 1997)! But confidence-building/peace-making/post-conflict reconstruction is likely to remain more of a focus in parts of Africa & the ex-Second World for the foreseeable future than in, say, East Asia or South America (Carnegie Commission 1997). Conversely, issues around more familiar aspects of globalisations such as flexibilisation/feminisation/contracting-out will be concentrated in the NICs & near-NICs (given the late-1990s ‘Asian crises’ even ex-NICs?!) rather than in the Fourth World (Chan, Clark & Lam 1998, Stein 1995). Nevertheless, Development Studies everywhere is coming to prioritise sustainable human development/security (UNDP 1994 & 1999), especially contemporary dilemmas such as the compatibility/sequence of economic & political liberalisations (Armijo 1999, Henderson 1998).

Given the field’s flexibility & energy, ‘boundary’ disputes will continue to arise between ‘Development Studies’ & international studies/global studies/international political economy/regional studies etc (cf Mittelman & Pasha 1997, Stubbs & Underhill 2000). The intense controversy in the United States about the continued relevance of ‘area studies’ in the post-bipolar era (cf Payne 1998) also impacts upon the field as many such identified/established Cold War-defined ‘areas’ in fact consist(ed) of a single or groups of state(s) in
developing regions in the South (Haugerud 1997). Likewise, the continuing agonies of ‘African Studies’ around diasporas, race, voices etc also impact on Development Studies (Martin 1996). James Manor (1991) has indicated the imperative of locating a new ‘centre’ for the field between post-modernism on the one hand & rational choice on the other, such as the promise of comparative institutionalism, the developmental state and/or neo-patrimonialism. By contrast, Ankie Hoogvelt (1997) focuses on aspects of globalisations/New International Division of Labour as well as regional diversities/divergencies. And recently, Hettne & Soderbaum (1999: 359) in a somewhat ambitious quest for ‘global social theory’ have suggested the juxtaposition of several analytic strands/genres through which ‘development theory’ can respond to assorted challenges:

‘i) globalisation & the restructuring of the nation-state; ii) the new wars & development-related conflicts; iii) the unbundling of the state; & iv) the role of culture in the process of development’.

Aside from the challenges for both perspective & policy posed by contemporary issues such as ecology, gender, globalisation & structural adjustment, perhaps the single most dramatic factor to destabilise the field has been the appearance & absorption of a range of post-bipolar security issues (Hettne, Payne & Soderbaum 1999: 354 & 360-362). As already suggested above, until the 1990s, strategic & development studies had existed in somewhat splendid isolation from each other. But the two solitudes have had to both recognise & even come to respect each other given the proliferation of conflicts & related responses in the conflict-prevention to post-conflict reconstruction spectrum, particularly the problematic peace-keeping through--making syndrome. Thus it was not a coincidence that somewhat controversial notions of ‘human security’ were introduced & popularised in the first years of the 1990s (UNDP 1994) for the end of the Cold War produced, alas, not so much a ‘peace dividend’ but rather an explosion of previously contained social antagonisms. These were all too often exacerbated by the relentless pressures & conditionalities of adjustments or liberalisations, competitiveness or globalisation as indicated in telling UNDP (1999) & UNRISD (1995) analyses.

If the last decade of the twentieth century was characterised by a concern for early-warning & peace-building, along with escalation & proliferation in both conventional & nuclear weaponry, the first decade of the twenty-first century has begun to recognise two profoundly destabilising aspects of current conflicts, which I treat further in iii) & v) below.

First, it has become increasingly apparent that development & (in) security are inseparable, so one cause of conflict is the imperative of (political/social as well as economic/communal or familial) basic needs; e.g. in cases like Angola &
Sierra Leone, political ‘crises’ in part consist of long-term humanitarian situations which drive communities towards consumption & accumulation through the production of so-called ‘blood’ or ‘dirty’ diamonds as well as other exportable commodities. The novel ‘political economy of violence’ perspective poses profound challenges for development analysis & practice alike (Berdal & Malone 2000, Smillie et al 2000). And second & somewhat relatedly, the privatisation of security has proceeded apace as downsized states can no longer meet security demands alone. Thus, civil-military relations are increasingly problematic as the former is expanded to include non-state institutions like civil society/NGOs while the latter is recognised to include private as well as official security forces.

Nevertheless, Development Studies remains distinguished by its interdisciplinary aspirations/achievements. It also retains a definite ‘idealistic’ aura & can facilitate inter-institutional relations, especially across the artificial divide between the academy & other sectors such as corporations, governments, international agencies, (international/intermediary/indigenous) non-governmental organisations etc (Garcia-Godos 1997, Development Studies in Britain 1997).

ii) Redefining Development Studies
As the new millennium dawns, in intellectual terms, Development Studies has begun to transcend its initial North-South preoccupations, reflective of the nationalist/decolonisation era, to focus on the differential incidence/impacts of processes of globalisation(s), including the impoverished & excluded wherever they may be located (Poku & Pettiford 1998, Thomas & Wilkin 1997). Before the end of the last century, Simon Maxwell (1998) began to explore the relevance of ‘poverty & social exclusion’ (PSE) on the discourse, especially in terms of possible post-modern perspectives/policies: the imperative of diverse approaches/voices, which avoid unilinearity but embrace aspects of globalisations (Hoogvelt 1997, Mittleman & Pasha 1997). Certainly, the political economy of violence/privatisation of security discourses reinforces such directions in terms of policy as well as perspective.

Moreover, in the last decade of the last century, the purview of the field began to expand spatially to include many but not all parts of the post-socialist world, such as Eastern Europe & Central Asia (Henderson 1998, McMahon 1996), along with the poor in Northern cities, isolated rural villages & indigenous communities everywhere.

Conversely, at least until the recent dose of ‘Asian flu’, it was beginning to exclude the development of the old-NICs like Japan or Singapore, while continuing to treat near- or almost-NICs: the so-called (or hitherto-called?!)
‘developmental states’ (Chan, Clark & Lam 1998) like Malaysia & Thailand (even if no longer Indonesia!).

And in terms of sectors or subjects, Development Studies has expanded well beyond its established interest in development theory/policy, industrial & rural development, and agriculture & technology, to include culture, ecology, gender (Hettne, Payne & Soderbaum 1999) & health (Loxley 1998). In particular, at its boundaries – which is where successive generations of students tend to be concentrated - it is especially interested in civil societies, fundamentalisms, globalisations, governance, new security issues, peace-building, population movements, post-structural analysis, regionalisms, transitions etc as outlined in the next section.

I treat institutional aspects of the field’s growth in iv) below, but clearly the conceptual, intellectual, ontological, spatial and sectoral aspects (cf Hettne 1995, Martinussen, 1997) cannot be separated from the organisational, even bureaucratic & certainly ideological.

iii) Towards a ‘New’ Development Studies?
I treat below each of these ‘new’ fin de siecle issues or factors in Development Studies – again, policy as well as analysis, for think-tanks & South as well as international agencies & North – recognising that, while some emerge out of disparate genres/debates, there are still some overlaps among them. Here I list them alphabetically; recognising that which of them are privileged is a function of assumptions, approaches, location, period, prejudices etc. In short, they are not all compatible; some ‘schools’, actors, periods, positions favour one or two over all others:


fundamentalisms, not just religious (e.g. Christian, Hindu, Moslem etc) but also ‘deep ecology’, feminist separatist, or neo-liberal ‘market fundamentalism’;

there are also growing literatures on as well as debates around globalisations from a variety of analytic & disciplinary perspectives, much of which focuses on time/space compression, global competition/regulation via neo-liberalism, flexibilisation/ feminisation etc (Hoogvelt 1997: 114-149, Held et al 1999, Scholte 2000, UNDP 1999);
governance, from local to global and from corporate to civil society, including accountability/best practices/transparency for NGOs (Fowler 2000) as well as MNCs;

new (or human/critical) security issues such as chemical weapons/drugs/gangs/guns/viruses etc as well as underdevelopment/scarcities as causes (Dickson 1997, UNDP 1994 & 1999);

peace-building from confidence-building measures (CBMs)/early-warning/track-two diplomacy to reconstruction/reconciliation, especially blue beret/NGO ‘partnerships’ at each ‘stage’ (Carnegie Commission 1997, Shaw 1997b);

political economy of conflict given economic and/or political imperatives to consume, produce & accumulate (Berdal & Malone 2000, Smillie et al 2000);

population movements/contract labour/migrations/refugees etc, including the sex industry/slavery, and profound gender & generational as well as regional dimensions;

post-socialist regimes/states, concentrated in Eastern Europe & Central Asia where the small minority of political economies are being upgraded towards EU/OECD membership while the majority slip into the growing ranks of Third or Fourth World countries in terms of GDP per capita, HDI etc;

post-structural analysis which recognises a diversity of voices/responses/resistances & eschews any grand meta-theory, hence notions of ‘post-impasse’ or post-development (Hettne, Payne & Soderbaum 1999, Sylvester 1999);

regionalisms, not only formal, inter-state & economic but also non-state based on cross-border civil society links such as culture/language/sports & media/(I)NGOs/professional associations etc along with a variety of triangles/corridors which lead towards more flexible notions of ‘open’ or ‘asymmetric’ regionalisms, not all of which are compatible/nesting, hence competitive regions (Hettne et al 1999, Hettne & Soderbaum 1998); & finally,

transitions, especially in the old ‘Second World’ but also given more liberal, yet not necessarily compatible, economic & political arrangements elsewhere, especially post-conflict/-dictatorship (Henderson 1998, McMahon 1996).
iv) Institutionalising Development Studies

In institutional terms, Development Studies has been something of an academic growth area, particularly in terms of increasingly specialised masters courses in Britain (Development Studies in Britain 1997, Grindlee & Hilderbrand 1999, www.bham.ac.uk/dsa) as indicated in the listing of degree & non-degree programmes at all levels on the Association of Commonwealth Universities’ website (www.acu.ac.uk) when ‘development studies’ are cited as keywords. Certainly, to be autobiographical just for a minute, Canada’s largest IDS programme, that at my own university in Nova Scotia, has recently had a long & intense debate about nomenclature because we did not want the uni-disciplinary associations of ‘Department’ to impact negatively on our multidisciplinary programme, especially as our disciplinary connections continue to evolve, sometimes in quite unexpected ways (see www.casid-acedi.ca & www.idsnet.org).

Interestingly, the field is beginning to spread outside its Northern (EADI) (www.eadi.org), especially Canadian & Scandinavian (Garcia-Godos 1997) as well as British, roots to parts of the South such as Eastern (e.g. Uganda as well as Dar es Salaam (Museveni 1997) & Nairobi) & Southern (especially South (e.g. Cape Town, Fort Hare, Natal etc)) Africa, with important implications for its intellectual & institutional foci in the new century.

For example, post-colonial (Sylvester 1999) Development Studies in Africa has a somewhat chequered history as it was associated in the 1970s with two rather divergent types of state: ‘African socialist’ on the one hand & the apartheid regime on the other. Thus at the new University of Dar es Salaam, then the citadel of ‘socialism’, it advanced more or less ‘scientific’ analysis while, south of the Limpopo in Afrikaans & Bantu universities, it offered courses in how to effect apartheid! These geneses/associations still taint the field on both sides of the Limpopo/Zambesi, albeit sometimes with positive results: President Yoweri Museveni (1997: 25) of Uganda, who studied in Dar during its glory days of the late-1960s, is now insisting on some variant of Development Studies at his country’s two state universities; i.e. Mbarara (MUST) as well as Makerere. And these in turn can begin to inject a distinctive ‘Central African’ or ‘Great Lakes’ content, with implications for the field outside their region/continent, such as focusing on borders, ecology, governance, refugees, regionalisms, rehabilitation & redevelopment (MUST 1998) (cf my own listing of Development Studies desiderata in previous section above!) They may also expect to impact interrelated issues of pedagogy & professionalism; i.e. what market for Development Studies inputs, products & skills in the new century in Africa as elsewhere. It is not entirely coincidental, then, that both a set of US foundations plus SSRC & Sida are contemplating renewed support for select programmes in
a few universities in Eastern & Southern Africa along with Nigeria: a contrast to Cold War investment in Area Studies inside the US itself?

v) Development Studies in Praxis at the Start of the New Century

Significantly, the general sclerosis & now commercialisation if not privatisation in African as other universities means that much intellectual & institutional innovation occurs outside the ivory tower in the area of Development Studies as well as other contemporary programming such as IT. Thus, a trio of non- or extra-university collaborative graduate programmes were conceived & inaugurated in the mid-1990s. First, the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) in association with the African Capacity-Building Foundation has orchestrated three sets (anglophone, francophone & Nigeria) of collaborative inter-campus/-country masters degrees in economics (www.worldbank.org/wbi/aerc) which may yet become also a co-operative doctoral programme as well. Second, the Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies now offers a part-time tri-campus Masters in Policy Studies accredited by the Universities of Dar es Salaam, Fort Hare & Zimbabwe (www.csf.colorado.edu/ipe/sapem). And, third, the Women & the Law in Southern Africa project has spawned a regional Women’s Law Diploma at the University of Zimbabwe, with a concentration on methodologies. This trio all have sustained links in terms of curriculum development, visiting faculty, student body & income with national regimes, (I)NGOs & regional organisations if not (yet?!) the private sector.

At the dawn of the new millennium, then, Development Studies can claim to impact positively on several related disciplines as well as on a variety of policies & institutions, from states & international organisations to NGOs & the media (see website addresses below). Its products, both graduates & research findings, are increasingly likely to be welcomed by elements in civil societies, such as NGOs & media, as well as by international organisations & corporations rather then by states, which are increasingly diminished or disrespected, as indicated by the proliferation of subcontracts for essential services (Weiss 1998), privatisation of security (Reno 1998) etc.

After more than three decades of ‘Development Studies’ – as I personally recall along with others on campus at the time like Thabo Mbeki, IDS at Sussex was inaugurated by Barbara Castle in the mid-1960s (see www.ids.ac.uk) – uneven development has challenged & enlivened comparative politics/IPE – from NICs & near-NICs (Chan, Clark & Lam 1998) to ‘Fifth World’, collapsed, failed, quasi and/or shadow states (Clapham 1996). In turn, such analyses have generated discourses about governance – from World Bank (1997) advocacy of ‘partnerships’ with companies & NGOs to notions of ‘subcontracting’ (Weiss 1998) – which increasingly are coming to replace the established notions of
international law & organisation. These are related to the emergence of global advocacy & delivery coalitions of heterogeneous partners over issues such as gender, land mines, ozone etc and now blood diamonds (Keck & Sikkink 1998). In turn, such forms of globalisations have encouraged innovative ideas about ‘new’ regionalisms, not just inter-state or -regime & economic but also defined in practice by corporations & civil societies (e.g. ethnicities, media, NGOs, sports) as well as ecological (e.g. trans-border river basins & peace-parks) (Hettne & Soderbaum 1998, Boas, Marchand & Shaw 1999). And the demise of the Second World has led to a whole new generation of ‘new’ states, where debates around transitions have flourished (Henderson 1998, McMahon 1996).

In turn, Development Studies has contributed to the recognition of comparative (especially transitions) & international politics/foreign policy/human security (Dickson 1997, Shaw & Korany 1994), especially the burgeoning fields of civil society, ecology, governance & new regionalisms (Dunn & Shaw 2001, Shaw 1999 & 2000). Thus Christopher Clapham (1996: 256) suggests a variety of development notions based on his study of contemporary international relations in Africa such as the ‘externalisation’ of both economic management & political accountability, along with the privatisation or ‘de-stating- of diplomacy, concluding:

‘Africa’s relations with the outside world were privatised, not through their subversion by the private interests of politicians...but through the displacement of traditional state-to-state relations as a result of the processes of globalisation...’

The rather dramatic contrast between ‘emerging markets’ & ‘peace-keeping’ or between near-NICs & -anarchies, often in neighbouring states or regions (Shaw & Nyang’oro 2000), leads towards comparative analyses not only of policies & regimes but also of sequences & mixed actor coalitions; e.g. the relationship between blue berets/helmets & (I)NGOs at each stage in the peace-building syndrome (Weiss 1998): from early-warning/confidence-building to post-conflict reconstruction/ reconciliation (Shaw 1997b). Given the regional dimensions of almost all peace-building operations, regional security communities may be emerging in the post-bipolar era, such as around Africa’s Great Lakes, even if these tend to be rather dynamic/unstable/personalised.

As Anna Dickson (1997: 149) concludes her own overview of the prospects for a ‘new’ international relations, which incorporates issues of ‘development’:

‘The end of the Cold War has certainly changed the nature of IR. From the point of view of the South, it has both offered opportunities, in new coalitions & trading partners, and provided new constraints, in new political & economic
conditionalities. For the discipline of IR, the end of the Cold War has opened up the security agenda to new thinking, which has the potential to include concerns about development…’

vi) Development Studies in the first Decade of the New Millennium
In short, Development Studies has displayed considerable flexibility, permitting it to incorporate & redefine central notions in contemporary social/policy science discourses, including AIDS, bio-diversity, children, corporations, crime/drugs, debt, gender, global warming, governance (from local to global), habitat, humanitarian interventions, informal sectors, land-mines, oceans, ozone-depletion, peace-keeping, proliferation, sanctions (by companies & civil societies as well as states & inter-state institutions) etc (Loxley 1998, Mittelman & Pasha 1997). Although now into its fourth or fifth decade, it remains a rather youthful & vibrant field for both analysts & activists, especially in parts of the South & old East. It has certainly served as a catalyst for theory & policy, advancing a more inter-disciplinary if not fully integrated or global social science (Hettne 1995: 1-20 & 249-269). Even it may not be sufficiently plastic to enable it to satisfy the ambitions of Hettne & Sonderbaum (1999: 365), namely

‘...that the proposed marriage between certain strands of IPE theory & certain strands of development theory provide a base from which to start rethinking development theory, ultimately contributing to a unified historical & comprehensive social science.’

Nevertheless, as it comes to reflect its increasingly global scope in terms of bases, curriculum, faculty, networks, professionalisation etc (e.g. Potter 2001, Potter & Desai 2001) so Development Studies will be increasingly Southern in location & orientation to the benefit of both intellectual field & policy outcomes. Its continuing niche & attractiveness for students & policy-makers (state & non-state alike) is well-captured in the mission statement or manifesto for Oxford Development Studies (‘Introduction’ 1996: 6):

‘At the core of development studies is a comparativist critique of ideas & theories about change & the management if change, a critique which leads in turn to the development of ideas, theories & practice.’

And such an emerging niche is both reflected in & advanced by its burgeoning status as a virtual transnational ‘epistemic community’ of both analysts & activists/policy advisors & networks (Stone 2000). Such architectures are most advanced around Asia Pacific as well as across the North Atlantic, but they are also emerging in Latin America & Africa (Mbabazi, MacLean & Shaw 2000) as well & on track two or three confidence-building measures & human security
(MacLean & Shaw 2000), as well as over more familiar developmental issues such as democracy, environment, gender, human rights etc (www.oneworld.org, www.twnside.org.sg). Such potential is symbolised by the World Bank-facilitated Global Development Network (www.gdnet.org) even if its genesis was largely economistic & orthodox, building on established IFI-supported macro-economic policy institutes. Similarly, the collection on Think Tanks & Civil Societies (McGann & Weaver 2000) concentrates on neo-liberal rather than more radical research organisations/networks such as the Heritage Foundation in the US, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research in India & Institute of Policy Studies in Singapore. But as the ‘battle of Seattle’ & subsequent demonstrations & related networking have made apparent, ‘development’ has become a more high-profile as well as problematic focus or terrain at least thus far into the new century…which is likely to generate & sustain continued growth in student interest globally.

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