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FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

From the editorial board of CD-APSA, we wish you all a Happy New Year and send our best wishes for a productive 2013. This year marks the 100th anniversary of a luminary scholar in our field, Barrington Moore, Jr. Fittingly, in this issue we present a collection of essays that explore Moore's influence on the field of democracy studies.

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WHY DO WE READ BARRINGTON MOORE? SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SURVIVAL OF AN INTELLECTUAL ICON

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Underneath the elaborate and at times distracting mass of historical detail, one of the two most powerful and ironic insights that Barrington Moore offers the reader of his classic work, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, is that it is impossible to understand the different variants of the modern world in countries ranging from Britain and the United States to Russia, Germany, and Japan without understanding their *premodern rural inheritance*.¹ The hinge of history is not found, as scholars have long argued, in the central sites of modern industrial innovation, cities; nor are states and political regimes the outcome of the balance of power among urban citizens, that is between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Instead, it is the structure of rural society, what E.J. Hobsbawm once called that "great frozen ice cap" on development, which is the least "biodegradable" challenge for modernization. In the end, though the bourgeoisie is important, Moore taught us that it is above all *conflict in the countryside* that shapes how modern states are created.

Are such insights of Barrington Moore's still relevant today? At the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the "birthday" of the Committee on Social Studies, the influential and interdisciplinary social

1. I would argue that the second major insight of Barrington Moore is the tragic observation that though violence and democracy are antithetic in principle, violence may be necessary to dislodge entrenched and traditional interests to create democracy. This theme is developed by Michael Bernhard and Jeff Kopstein, "The Leninist Irony: Revolutionary Violence and Democratic Gradualism Revisited."

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF BARRINGTON MOORE'S *SOCIAL ORIGINS OF DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY* TO THE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY

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I began to engage Moore's work seriously when I began teaching a course on the breakdown of democracy in Europe and Latin America when I was an assistant professor of sociology at Brown in the early 1980s. When I was a graduate student at Yale a decade earlier, Al Stepan and Juan Linz were working on their *Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*¹ volumes and I had taken a course with Linz on the breakdown of democracy in interwar Europe, which focused on the experiences of Italy, Austria, Germany, and Spain in that time period. The course and breakdown volumes focus only on a narrow time frame and only on cases of breakdown. The explanations offered were highly voluntaristic. I was struck at the time with the difference in the explanations offered in the breakdown volumes and the more structural and deterministic explanation which I had encountered in Moore's *Social Origins*.² Teaching the course at Brown gave me the opportunity to confront the

1. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

2. Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*

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science undergraduate program at Harvard University that Barrington Moore himself co-founded along with political scientist Stanley Hoffmann and economist Alexander Gerschenkron, one proud alumnus of the program prodded his audience to reflect on whether Barrington Moore is still pertinent for our world. Professor Brad DeLong, Professor of Economics at University of California, Berkeley, asked his co-alumni: does the social studies program that has spawned the academic career of sociologists, political scientists, and economists across the globe, continue to be well served with Barrington Moore's "problematic" as its guiding star? If the central dilemma and question that engaged Moore and the generations of scholars to follow in his wake was the seismic, unsettled, and violent transition from agrarian to industrial society and the political reverberations of that transition, is this still a relevant problematic at the beginning of the twenty-first century? As DeLong sharply put it:

"The era of the modern history that the "Barrington Moore problematic" was created to grapple with has come to its end. Not only are the problems that it addresses no longer our biggest problems here in the North-Atlantic world—they appear to have been largely solved—our current monsters are arising from other sources. We thus need something more advanced that deals with problems we have not yet solved rather than those we have."²

Is it possible that DeLong might be correct? In an age of terrifying climate change and melting ice-caps, a war on terrorism that threatens civil liberties, conflict over immigration in the west, high-tech industrial authoritarian states such as Singapore, and demographic collapse in many advanced democracies, to obsess over what Moore might have meant with the ambiguous term "labor repressive agriculture" in the 18th century Prussia, or whether the gentry was rising or falling in England in the 17th

century might strike some as the kind of inside-baseball "scholasticism" that Moore himself would decry. After all, in Moore's own 1953 essay "the new scholasticism," he warned against precisely this kind of scholarly life disengaged from the most pressing social problems. He wrote, "If social science drops the task of rational criticism of society from its program altogether, leaving it entirely to theology, journalism, and the Bohemian fringe, it can someday drown in a sea of verbiage, strewn with floating bits of meaningless data."³

The idea that Moore's central topic has simply fallen from the center of our intellectual agenda, superseded by more pressing concerns is certainly a challenge. In addition to this, however, there is a second type of challenge to Moore: even on his *own* terrain—the origins of dictatorship and democracy. Is it possible that his theoretical approach has been superseded by a more methodologically sophisticated, usually quantitative political economy that surpasses and encompasses Moore with a type of formal precision and quantitative support that leaves Moore quickly in its wake? Such a view is not simply one that simply admires the technical wizardry of modern political economy. Rather, we must remember the view of Max Weber himself in his essay *Science as Vocation*,

"In science, each of us knows that what he has accomplished will be antiquated in ten, twenty, fifty years. That is the fate to which science is subjected; it is the very meaning of scientific work, to which it is devoted in a quite specific sense... every scientific fulfillment raises new "questions"; it asks to be "surpassed" and outdated... scientific works certainly can last as "gratifications" because of their artistic quality, or they may remain important as a means of training. Yet, they will be surpassed scientifically... for that is our common fate, and more, our common goal."⁴

In an age when leading political economists, such as Carles Boix,⁵ Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson⁶ have self-consciously borrowed from, but elaborated the insights of Moore with formal mathematical models and quantitative evidence, seeking, in effect, to absorb Moore's own arguments, have we reached that point with Barrington Moore? Would Weber suggest that if we read Moore today we are being at best intellectual historians, or even worse, perhaps engaging in a curious form of intellectual nostalgia or antiquarianism that Weber himself would disapprove of?

Not Just an Intellectual Icon: The Reasons We Continue to Read Barrington Moore

There are, thus, two reasons we might believe that we ought not to continue to flatter Barrington Moore with the attention that we do: first, perhaps his world no longer exists; second, perhaps his work has been surpassed. Yet, we continue to read Barrington Moore. Why? There are, to my mind, two outstanding reasons that *compel* us to continue to give Barrington Moore careful attention despite these critiques; indeed, these two reasons should convince us that the concerns raised above are unwarranted and ultimately short-sighted. These are the following:

*First, *the Moore problematic has not disappeared; rather, it has replicated itself across the globe.* Professor DeLong might be correct that questions of repressive rural social structure that sit at the heart of Barrington Moore's analysis have faded from the North-Atlantic world. However, the North-Atlantic world has, in turn, not faded from its impact on the globe. Put differently, through the instrumental, invidious, and coercive interventions of European

Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Routledge, 1952 [1991]): 138.

5. Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Carles Boix, "Democracy, Development, and the International System," *American Political Science Review* 105 (November 2011): 809-828.

6. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

2. Brad DeLong, "The Barrington Moore Problematic and its Discontents," 25 September 2010, <http://delong.typepad.com/sdj/2010/09/the-barrington-moore-problematic-and-its-discontents.html>.

3. Barrington Moore, "The New Scholasticism and the Study of Politics," *World Politics* 6 (October 1953): 122-138.

4. Max Weber, "Science as Vocation," in Hans

colonialism, Europe has in part intentionally, in part unintentionally *replicated itself*, its social structures and its accompanying social and political syndromes throughout the world. One example can illustrate this point. Between 1880 and 1940, as described in Imran Ali's revealing work *Punjab Under Imperialism* (1988) the British Empire's interventions in the British Punjab transformed society in fundamental ways.

Chief among these, and not fully appreciated to date, is the massive canal colonization project that built the world's most massive network of perennial canals that led to cultivation in rainless tracts of land that had previously been agricultural wastelands. Though one aim was the expansion of the productive agrarian frontier in the British Punjab, the British also had strategic or, more precisely, sociological aims, and distributed land to key groups, bolstering the power of, and in some places, creating a new Junker-type agrarian hierarchy that lived on large estates, adopted the manners of a landed elite, closely intertwined itself with the military, and was represented by a political party with the same name as the British Tory Party itself after 1880: the Unionist Party.⁷ In short, a quasi-replica society had been created which in turn, in the last twenty years, has generated some of the worst and most violent political syndromes of repressive landholding societies, as Moore's (1966) analysis might expect. Indeed, one source of popular mass support for Taliban in locations such as the Swat Valley in Pakistan is the assault on wealthy landlords, which has ranged from calls for land reform to intense violence directed against landlords themselves.⁸

In short, it is in no small part because European societies replicated themselves that the "Moore problematic" suddenly is not only relevant for understanding of key problems facing the globe today; it becomes a crucial analytical lens without which our comprehension of the social bases of

7. On the relationship of landed elites to the military, see Tai Yong's *The Garrison State: Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2005).

8. Jane Perlez, "Taliban Exploit Class Rifts in Pakistan" *New York Times*, 16 April 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/17/world/asia/17pstan.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

terrorism in Asia would be substantially diminished. More broadly, Barrington Moore remains relevant anywhere where agrarian elites dominate politics and shape the nature of the revolutionary political reactions.

*Second, *Moore is not simply "encompassed" by recent work in political economy because his argument, though sharing some attributes with these works, is theoretically distinctive.* For example, in their groundbreaking work, Carles Boix, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson and others seek to understand the determinants of democracy and dictatorship with simplified but useful models of society in which classes—the rich, the poor, the middle class—fight over resources and hence, over political regimes to distribute those resources. Socioeconomic development is thought to promote democratization by dissolving the power of the holders of immobile assets (i.e. land), and by altering levels of socio-economic inequality. Democracy is an indirect fight over redistribution and the political rules of a society determine who the median voter is ; and how much power its elected officials actually possess. Since landed elites sit atop immobile assets that can be easily expropriated if land inequality is high, the stakes of democratization become heightened: the opponents of democracy resist more, fearing expropriation; the advocates of democracy fight harder for democracy because their targets are much more ripe for attack.

Empirically, there is much to this argument. Lord Salisbury, the head of the British Conservative Party beginning in the 1880s, a landlord ensconced in a medieval gothic estate on thousands of acres, indeed himself put it this way,

"[Suffrage expansion] means that the whole community shall be governed by an ignorant multitude, the creature of a vast and powerful organization, of which a few half-taught and cunning agitators are the head. . .it means, in short, that the rich shall pay all the taxes, and the poor shall make all the laws"⁹

9. Cited in Daniel Ziblatt, *Conservative Political Parties and the Birth of Modern Democracy in Europe* (in progress).

Yet, as powerful as this view is, and as resonant it is of Moore, is not an argument that encompasses all of the insights of Moore; indeed, it relies on what we might think of as a much "stingier" view of society than Moore's. In brief, although Moore's emphasis on social classes and class-coalitions, in short his essential materialism, is usually taken to be its defining characteristic, I would assert, controversially, a different view. A careful reading of his case studies as well as his last chapter, "Epilogue: Revolutionary and Reactionary Imagery," suggests an alternative interpretation: a chief difference between contemporary political economy and Moore is the former's strict focus on the economic *distributional* consequences of patterns of landholding and inequality, whereas Moore places emphasis on the social structural or status consequences of different modes of organizing economic and political life in the countryside. For, Moore, as for scholars such as Boix and Acemoglu and Robinson, landholding inequality is a barrier to democracy but not only because of the fears of expropriation that it triggers. There is another element to the argument: In an age and context when land was the major source of wealth, power, and prestige, the nature of the relationship between landed elites and peasants shapes the *revolutionary potential* of the peasantry. Though Moore does not use this term directly, the degree to which landed elites use their material power to develop *ideological hegemony* over peasantry—via deference, caste distinctions, a doctrine of racial inequality, or any other status-reinforcing ideological constructs—bolsters the bulwarks *against* democracy. As Moore himself put it when discussing the enduring power of German landlords, the "Junkers managed to draw the independent peasants under their wing...with a combination of repression *and* paternalism."¹⁰ But, also crucially, such ideological hegemony combined with material power can trigger even more radical reactions to landed wealth. One example clarifies the logic of how a coercive apparatus can be strengthened with a status-reinforcing ideology in Moore's view: in the United States, it is when antebellum slavery became simultaneously more profitable and more vulnerable that

10. Moore, 1966: 225.

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landed elites in the U.S. South invented and elaborated doctrines of race and racial supremacy, often seeking religious justifications for their increasingly coherent ideological apparatus to bolster their power and the old regime that protected them.¹¹ The result was a strengthened non-democratic regime because key groups' social status was now bound up in the old regime that was no longer simply reducible to fights over redistribution. The reactions to slavery, when given an additional normative or moral meaning, also were radicalized. As Moore himself put it, diverging from much of contemporary political economy,

“Human beings individually and collectively do not react to an objective situation in the same way as one chemical reacts to another when they are put together in a test tube. This form of strict behaviorism is, I submit, plain wrong. There is always an intervening variable, a filter, one might say between people and an “objective” situation, made up from all sorts of wants, expectations, and other ideas derived from the past... what looks like an opportunity or a temptation to one group of people will not necessarily seem so to another group with a different historical experience and living in a different form of society.”¹²

In sum, the contributions of Barrington Moore remain timely and relevant. But more than that, with his emphasis on how the two master-variables of *class* and *status* intersect, Moore's analysis has a depth that can explain outcomes not predictable with a focus on socioeconomic stratification alone.

Concluding Thoughts and Remaining Puzzles

Yet, we should not just be content to praise Moore; it would be a mistake to place Barrington Moore's work in a kind of museum of antiquities, under glass, where we safely bring his work out on solemn commemorative occasions such as his 100th birthday, the 50th birthday of an academic program he co-founded,

11. Moore, *Social Origins*, 1966: 118, 122; Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956).

12. Moore, *Social Origins*, 1966: 485.

and other safe occasions to celebrate “the classics,” of social science. It is much more productive, and indeed, necessary to engage his work theoretically and empirically because on some questions he was wrong, and on other questions he was vague or incomplete. To understand even the trajectories of democracy and dictatorship in Europe alone, there remains important work to do; puzzles remain.

We can conclude therefore with reference to one remaining puzzle, central to my own current research, to illustrate that Moore's framework, even when it can't provide the answers, helps us frame our research questions. If one looks closely at agricultural census data from the 19th century in Britain and Germany, as economic historians have begun to do in recent years, a more complex picture begins to appear in place of Moore's useful but perhaps overly stark juxtaposition of the British and German cases; it turns out, both were cases of extremely repressive and inegalitarian rural social structures. In Britain, by the 1880s, landholding inequality, reached Himalayan levels and was in fact much more concentrated than in Germany—and even more concentrated than anywhere east of the Elbe River.¹³ Furthermore, tenant farmers as a portion of total agricultural employment were a larger group in Britain than in Germany in the 1880s; and landless labor as a portion of total agricultural employment was also higher.¹⁴ Yet, the puzzle remains that British democratization was famously much more settled than Germany's. It is correct that by the 1880s, given Britain's relatively advanced industrialization, British landlords had diversified their assets and now also relied on industrial income. However, as economic historians have also begun to examine probate records, it has also become clear that the extent of sectoral diversification before 1900 has likely been exaggerated. In short, Britain, like much of continental Europe, possessed and was constrained by highly inegalitarian rural social structure late into the

13. See Peter Lindert, “Who Owned Victorian England? The Debate over Landed Wealth and Inequality,” *Agricultural History* 61 (Autumn 1987): 25-51.

14. See Ziblatt, *Conservative Political Parties*.

nineteenth century. Thus, a puzzle remains: how is that Britain, sharing similar structural conditions with much of continental Europe, nonetheless followed a more settled or gradual route of democratization?

Rather than attempting to save Moore's paradigm by either a) referring to the scope of violence in the distant 17th century as the cause of the 20th century outcomes as Moore might, or b) constructing ever-more elaborate and refined conceptualizations and distinctions between “labor-repressive agriculture” and other forms of agriculture that Moore's analysis also might suggest, I would propose there is another route to go altogether; the solution may simply not be found in social, structural or economic variables at all. In a book I am currently completing, I analyze political parties and the role that political parties play in mediating interests in the process of democratization.¹⁵ I am attempting to demonstrate that the organization of political parties, in particular conservative political parties that represent landed elites, may exert an autonomous impact on how regimes develop; whether or not political parties representing that era's “authoritarian incumbents” are organized before democratization for a variety of reasons independent of political regime shapes how settled subsequent paths of democratization are. The key pivot of regimes, I believe, may lie in the hands of the political parties representing the old regime. Moore's work helps us identify the problems we have yet to definitely solve; we may have to look elsewhere for solutions.

In sum, Barrington Moore is both relevant, has yet to be superseded and remains a major source of intellectual inspiration for his supporters and critics alike. That is why we still read Barrington Moore.

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15. Daniel Ziblatt, *Conservative Political Parties*.