

Lipset S M. *The first new nation: the United States in historical and comparative perspective*. New York: Basic Books, 1963. 366 p.
[Expanded edition: New York: Norton Library, 1979. 366 p.]

According to one view, America suffers from elaborate corruption, from a growing concentration of business power, from the influences of tasteless mass media, and from wasteful expenditure of resources. According to another view, America is an affluent, highly democratic, increasingly tolerant and sophisticated society in which the distribution of income, of status symbols, and of opportunities for social mobility is becoming more evenhanded all the time. This book tries to reconcile these two pictures, to point out that such contrasts have distinguished American society through its history and are linked to two basic American values—equality and achievement. [The SSC® indicates that this book has been cited in over 375 publications.]

The US as a Developing Country

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The First New Nation is an outgrowth of service on the Program Committee for the 1962 World Congress of Sociology. The topic for the meeting was developing societies, which meant to those who chose it the analysis of social, political, and economic structures and changes in the Third World. I suggested to the Program Committee that the study of development must include the analysis of the processes of development in the industrialized democratic countries as well, that they had once been undeveloped agrarian low-income nondemocratic societies. In harmony with one of the few invariant social laws, the other members of the committee decided that I, as the proponent, should organize a plenary session.

The session was organized by area, and I agreed to write about the US as a developing country. Research for the article led to the realization that the US had not only been underdeveloped, but that it was the first new nation, that is, the first colony to become an independent state.¹ In this sense it had faced many of the problems of establishing legitimate authority that the post-World War II new nations did. The paper presented to the congress led to a book, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*.

My concerns with political development were not new. They formed a major segment of an earlier work, *Political Man* (also a Citation Classic), which deals with the factors associated with the emergence of democracy, emphasizing the role of structural factors, largely those related to economic growth and stratification.² This research involved correlating aggregate national statistics with the character of political systems, democratic or not.

In *The First New Nation*, I seek to explain variations in political outcomes by reference to differences in the history and social structures of nations. As contrasted to the structural emphasis in *Political Man*, more stress is laid on the role of factors that generally go under the rubric of values, which are affected by historical outcomes. I try to analyze how varying national values affect the development process in different nations and the types of political cleavages that evolve within them.

The book not only deals with early American history, but also compares the US with the other major English-speaking countries, Australia, Britain, and Canada in one set, and with France and Germany in another.

For example, the American tradition and law have placed much more emphasis on separation of church and state than has the European. A large majority of Americans have adhered to the Protestant sects, which had formed in opposition to the established churches in England and Europe. The former largely have a congregational structure and foster the idea of an individual relationship with God.

In seeking to elaborate on the nature and sources of American exceptionalism, to use Tocqueville's term, I have turned to detailed comparisons of the two countries that came out of the Revolution, the egalitarian, antistatist Whig society of the US and the elitist, statist Tory one, Canada.^{3,4} Ironically, the content of Canadian conservatism, its emphasis on the values of *noblesse oblige* and state responsibility, has meant that Canada (like Britain and most of Europe) has provided a more favorable political and social climate for the development of welfare state policies and socialist parties than is found south of the border. Conversely, a dominant *laissez-faire* Lockean tradition that from a comparative perspective has characterized the US is antithetical to such programs and groups.

The First New Nation is the fourth of my publications to win recognition as a Citation Classic.^{5,6} I am naturally pleased and flattered by this. I recognize, however, that, the quality of my work apart, my citation record is a function of a multidisciplinary emphasis. My writings are of interest not only to political scientists and sociologists, but also to historians and labor economists.

1. Lipset S M. *The United States—the first new nation*. *Transactions of the Fifth World Congress of Sociology*. Louvain, Belgium: International Sociological Association, 1964. p. 307-61.
2. ———. *Political man: the social bases of politics*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, (1960) 1981. 586 p. (Cited 1,070 times.) [See also: Lipset S M. Citation Classic. *Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences* 18(26):14, 30 June 1986.]
3. ———. Revolution and counterrevolution—the United States and Canada. (Ford T, ed.) *The revolutionary theme in contemporary America*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1965. p. 21-64. (Cited 5 times.)
4. ———. *Continental divide: the values and institutions of the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1990. 337 p.
5. Lipset S M, Trow M A & Coleman J S. *Union democracy: the internal politics of the International Typographical Union*. New York: Free Press, 1956. 455 p. (Cited 395 times.) [See also: Lipset S M. Citation Classic. *Current Contents/Arts & Humanities and CC/Social & Behavioral Sciences* 16 May 1988.]
6. Lipset S M & Rokkan S. Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: an introduction. (Lipset S M & Rokkan S, eds.) *Party systems and voter alignments: cross-national perspectives*. New York: Free Press, 1967. p. 1-64. [Reprinted in: Lipset S M. *Consensus and conflict: essays in political sociology*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1985. p. 113-85.] (Cited 360 times.) [See also: Lipset S M. How do political parties arise? Citation Classic. *Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences* 22(12):16, 19 March 1990.]