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Democracy in the South

Democracy in the South: Participation, the state and the people

Edited by Brendan Howe, Vesselin Popovski and Mark Notaras



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Endorsements

"The end of the Cold War marked not just the defeat of the Soviet Union as the rival power, but the triumph of liberal democracy and market economy over totalitarian ideology and the command economy. Democracy, as a set of principles and values as well as the institutions that underpin and sustain it, is what everyone aspires to now and donors and international organizations seek actively to promote. At the same time, the institutions and practices of democracy are bound to vary from one country to another, posing challenges to analysts and policy makers to separate the merely coincidental from the inalienable attributes of democracy. In this valuable new book, scholars from the regions concerned scrutinize three country case studies each from Africa, Asia and Latin America to explain the theory and practice of democracy away from the familiar Western world. As such, the book will be useful to students and scholars of comparative as much as international politics for presenting voices from the South about the challenges of consolidating democracy in developing countries."

***Ramesh Thakur**, Director, Balsillie School of International Affairs*

"Democracies come in various shades, depending on the historic, political, ideological, cultural, economic or social contexts and experiences that shape the ways in which the rule of the people, by the people, and for the people is organized. As the contributors to this highly innovative book show, democratic principles and practices vary greatly in and between countries of the North and the South, often with the former expecting

the latter to adhere to ideal forms of and paths towards democracy that they themselves find neither useful nor workable for the purpose of fair, just and practical governance. The authors provide us with insightful and critical analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of democracies in Latin America, Africa and Asia. They show that there are neither Northern, nor Southern, nor African, Latin American or Asian 'models' of democracy, ready to be replicated elsewhere. Each society's democratic journey takes a different course, depending on the opportunities for and obstacles of securing the rights of the people to representative, just, effective and accountable governance and, thus, the satisfaction of their human needs, rights and security. As we learn from the studies in this book, democracy is not an end in itself, but a means towards achieving those goals in highly unique local contexts."

***Albrecht Schnabel**, Senior Fellow, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces*

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Abbreviations

AD	Acción Democrática (Venezuela)
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AG	Action Group (Nigeria)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia
CERD	UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CNS	Council for National Security (Thailand)
CoC	certificate of canvass
COHA	Council on Hemispheric Affairs
COMELEC	Commission of Elections (Philippines)
CONVIVIR	Cooperative Services of Private Security (Colombia)
COPEI	Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (Venezuela)
COTU	Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya)
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CPP	Convention People's Party (Ghana)
CSO	civil society organization
CTV	Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (Confederation of Venezuelan Workers)
DAGAMI	Danggayan Ti Mannalon Dagiti Isabela (Philippines)
DNP	National Planning Department (Colombia)
DP	Democratic Party of Kenya
EC	Electoral Commission
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
EV	ethno-linguistic vitality
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FEDECO	Federal Electoral Commission (Nigeria)

FORD	Forum for Restoration of Democracy (Kenya)
GEMA	Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association (Kenya)
GNP	gross national product
GO	Genuine Opposition (Philippines)
HRET	House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal (Philippines)
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPD	Institute for Popular Democracy (Philippines)
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KAMATUSA	Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana and Samburu
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KPU	Kenya People's Union
LAC	Latin American and the Caribbean
Lakas-CMD	Lakas-Christian-Muslim Democrats (Philippines)
LP	Liberal Party (Philippines)
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo (Venezuela)
MBR	Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario (Venezuela)
MVR	Movimiento Quinta Republica (Venezuela)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NAP	New Aspiration Party (Thailand)
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition Alliance (Kenya)
NCNC	National Council of Nigerian Citizens
NDC	National Democratic Congress (Ghana)
NDP	National Development Party (Kenya)
NLA	National Legislative Assembly (Thailand)
NPA	New People's Army (Philippines)
NPC	Nationalist People's Coalition (Philippines)
NPC	Northern People's Congress (Nigeria)
NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NPP	New Patriotic Party (Ghana)
OBC	other backward classes
ODA	official development assistance
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement (Kenya)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAD	People's Alliance for Democracy (Thailand)
PBOC	Provincial Board of Canvassers (Philippines)
PDSP	Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (Democratic Socialist Party of the Philippines)
PDVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela
PMP	Partido ng Masang Pilipino (Party of the Filipino Masses)
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council (Ghana)
PNU	Party of National Unity (Kenya)
PPCRV	Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (Philippines)
PPP	People's Power Party (Thailand)
SC	scheduled castes
SMS	short message service

SoV	statement of votes
ST	scheduled tribes
TRT	Thai Rak Thai party
UN	United Nations

1

Introduction: Participation, the state and the people

Brendan Howe and Vesselin Popovski

The concept of democracy or "rule by the people" has assumed such a positive normative value that to be seen as criticizing its fundamental tenets (or being overtly "undemocratic") is to be stigmatized as a social pariah, and to be seen as deviating from its accepted tenets in practice is to invite the label of "rogue state". However, this project argues that democracy is an essentially contested concept rather than conforming to a single universal model.

Even if we agree that the essence of democracy is "government of the people, by the people and for the people", there exist different interpretations of which element is more important and how best to implement these ideals in practice. "Pure" democracy does not and cannot exist because of inherent contradictions within the underlying principles and practicalities of governance, making trade-offs essential. An emphasis on different pushes and pulls has led to the evolution of different models, all of which deviate from the ideal in some aspect. Thus the Northern or Western consensus on the balance that should be reached between competing pushes and pulls does not have the sole claim to legitimacy, nor is it transferable in all instances.

The problem addressed herein is the extent to which Southern models and practices may nevertheless be considered democratic under certain conditions, irrespective of Northern censure, and may in fact outperform Northern models in fulfilling the prime objectives of democratic governance in the Southern context.

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Collective decision-making

Since the rise of the modern state there has been a need for a form of collective decision-making that takes into account competing desires in an increasingly complex and interdependent environment. The consensus through most of the contemporary international environment is that democracy is the best/only form that this collective decision-making can/should take.

Most commentators start with the assumption that everyone's interests should be protected and everyone's autonomy maximized. Throughout history there are examples of individuals and groups choosing participation in the political process over other gains (such as material ones). Thus poverty-stricken independence is generally seen as preferable to (relatively) well-off dependence and/or occupation; or a destitute state of freedom as preferable to being a well-fed slave.

In this context, choice and participation are seen as the most important political achievements, and collective decision-making systems should attempt their maximization, as all other things are worthless if one is not responsible for the fulfilment of one's own dreams. As a result, even benevolent dictatorship is automatically rejected. This also forms a criticism of the various élite models of government – even if other groups are better able to look after our interests, they should not be allowed to do so. Rather, it is intrinsic to our development as human beings that we should be allowed to make our own mistakes and (hopefully) learn from them.

Furthermore, no matter how enlightened an élite is placed over the common people, it is unlikely that it will give equal consideration to interests that it does not share and which are not represented among its number. This may not necessarily be as a result of any callous disregard, but merely due to the pressure of time and the complexities of government. Thus, in order for the wishes of all to be represented, the people must rule and exercise power. According to Ross Harrison, "For someone to exercise power is for their wishes to be effective. So someone is a ruler if it is the case that what happens, happens because it is in accordance with their wishes. If, then, the people rule, this means that the people's wishes are effective."[1]

The nature of democracy

However, while the concept of rule by the people is all very well in theory, and perhaps in cases of small political communities administered by

direct democracy, it is clear that the complexities of administering modern states require some degree of alienation of administrative power. Every required political decision cannot be submitted to the masses for their approval. It is impossible for many thousands, let alone for millions, of individuals to be given equal opportunity to express their views, or for their divergent views to be taken into account and given equal weight when decisions are made.

Indeed, members of the demos in Switzerland, which is often held up as the closest model of governance to direct democracy in the modern world, appear to be experiencing opinion-expression fatigue as a result of the large number of plebiscites presented to them. This phenomenon manifests in declining voter turnout and participation. Not only, therefore, might it be seen as impractical to consult the demos for every decision, it might also be seen as undesirable.

Moreover, only if absolutely everyone agrees which option is preferable, and it is thus chosen to be implemented, can we truly say that what happens happens because it is in accordance with everyone's wishes and that everyone rules. Rather the tendency is for modern "democracies" to be ruled by representatives in the interest of the majority.

It can be argued that these necessary departures from the pure theoretical form of democracy negate the validity of claims by all modern political systems to be democratic. However, if we accept that political systems can depart from an "ideal" position in practice and yet still retain democratic characteristics, we can move to a more useful Wittgensteinian definition, that of "family resemblance". That is, numerous political systems may be accepted as democracies despite varying degrees of "democraticness". In fact we can make reference to a "scalar" evaluation of democracy, according to which different models of democracy (whether theoretical or in practice) can be compared in the degree to which they restrict the right to, opportunity for and actual occurrence of political equality, and the extent to which these restrictions are justified.

We are now faced by the problem posed by Robert Dahl: "If democracy is both an ideal and an attainable actuality, how are we to judge when an actual regime is sufficiently proximate to the ideal that we can properly regard it as a democracy?"[2] A further problem in the policy world concerns the question of "Who gets to decide on the sufficiency of the proximity?"

In general, Western commentators have taken up this challenge, passing judgement in the policy statements of presidents and prime ministers, and in the pseudo-scientific measurements of academic think-tanks such as Freedom House or Polity IV. However, even if Western commentators do not express a conscious bias, there is still a danger that unfamiliar models, or voices originating from an alternative cultural context, may

attract an "undemocratic" label because they are insufficiently proximate to the Western democratic tradition.

Here we have to return to basics – if democracy means rule by the people, who are the people, and to what extent do they rule? In other words, we must consider who is actually enfranchised as part of the demos (the quantitative element of collective decision-making), as well as how democratic the system is for those who are able to participate (the qualitative element). Together, these elements reflect a Rousseaunian concept of identity of sovereign and subject. Lively has summarized a range of possible positions within our scalar concept of democracy in which the "people" may loosely be said to "rule".

- That all should govern, in the sense that all should be involved in legislating, in deciding on general policy, in applying laws and in governmental administration.
- That all should be personally involved in crucial decision-making; that is to say, in deciding general laws and matters of general policy.
- That rulers should be accountable to the ruled; they should, in other words, be obliged to justify their actions to the ruled and be removable by the ruled.
- That rulers should be accountable to the representatives of the ruled.
- That rulers should be chosen by the ruled.
- That rulers should be chosen by the representatives of the ruled.
- That rulers should act in the interests of the ruled.[3]

The top end of the scale would seem to be closer to the democratic ideal, as it comes closest to providing the identity of sovereign and subject that we seek. However, as previously mentioned, in most cases this form is not practicable. Some alienation of people power is required in the name of efficiency. Madison even claims that representative government overcomes the excesses of "pure democracy" because elections themselves force a clarification of public issues.[4]

On the other hand, many commentators would reject the opposite end of the scale as being too "undemocratic", as they claim it is most unlikely that the rulers would be able or willing to act consistently in the interests of the ruled. Thus many countries in the South are accused of being "undemocratic" precisely because their political structures bear more resemblance to the bottom end of Lively's scale than the top.

Yet, as mentioned above, this judgement as to which parts of the scale "count" and which do not is in itself subjective, and it is at least conceivable that it is generated by the cultural experience and occidental prejudice of Northern commentators. Likewise, it is at least possible that other expressions of "people power" may exist in the traditions of other political societies.

It is fairly easy to dismiss authoritarian dictatorships such as the "Democratic" People's Republic of Korea as being democratic in name only. However, many other cases in the South are far less apparent once we delve below the Western prejudices of commentators and the global media. For instance, President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela has been able consistently to manifest huge demonstrations of popular support both at the ballot box and in the streets, but is accused of being undemocratic by the West, in part because of dubious constitutional changes and concerns over media control, but also because of his very popularity. On the other hand, in Africa one-partyism is sometimes viewed not necessarily as anti-democratic in itself, but rather as a way to preserve the interests and participation of the demos as a whole against tribal factionalism and domination expressed through multi-party processes.

In the South in particular, there is a democratic tension between the demands of majoritarianism and the protection of the rights of the opposition, minorities and plural avenues of political expression and power. This can be ably demonstrated through consideration of the recent political turmoil in Thailand. The news that Thailand's revered monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, had supported a military coup against the democratically elected Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was greeted with dismay by many commentators, particularly those in another well-known "constitutional monarchy", the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Indeed, such was the outrage that one of the most prominent right-leaning (and pro-monarchist) publications in the United Kingdom, the *Daily Telegraph*, commented that the king's actions "shamefully makes the country, along with Burma, an odd-man-out among the Association of South-East Asian Nations".[5]

However, Thaksin's regime had itself been roundly criticized, despite a huge popular mandate at the ballot box, for abusing human rights (particularly those of the Muslims in the south), for arbitrary justice (including shooting suspects on sight), for rampant corruption and for riding roughshod over the interests of many sections of society through a majoritarian dictatorship.

By contrast, the military coup was welcomed by many sections of the Thai demos (particularly among urbanites). On 19 August 2007 the interim government managed to secure around 70 per cent of the vote, with a turnout of 60 per cent, in a referendum on a new constitution. This charter was designed to prevent the re-emergence of an elected strongman with a built-in majoritarian power (Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai won 375 out of 500 lower-house seats) and instead to preserve political plurality.

While critics say the new constitution is less democratic, as it proposes that the Senate should be only partly elected, proponents claim that there

were too many loopholes in the old charter that allowed Mr Thaksin to abuse power, and that the new charter has many other clauses, like those recognizing minority rights, which are more liberal than before. As noted by the BBC's Jonathan Head, this referendum was about a lot more than the 194-page constitution, which few Thais are likely to have read. It was also a vote on the coup itself.[6] Which then is the more democratic, the populist majoritarian government of the previous regime or the plurocracy of the current one?

It seems the jury is still out on this one, both within the country and among external commentators. The January 2008 elections saw the majoritarian People's Power Party (PPP) return to power even in the absence of Thaksin. But in October and November 2008 a second round of political upheaval in Thailand saw the anti-Thaksin People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) effectively bring the functioning of government to a halt and even manage to close Bangkok international airport. In December 2008 the PPP government was dissolved by a court ruling (raising further questions of guardianship) and a new administration under Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva was voted in by the democratically elected representatives of the people in parliament. However, immediately the new administration was challenged on the streets, with the prime minister being prevented from addressing parliament amid claims by PPP supporters that he came to power in a virtual coup d'état.

It is important, in examining the democratic traditions and credentials of states in the South, to establish whether some form of non-Western values may be at play in determining the acceptability of forms of governance to both the citizens of these countries and the wider regional communities.

Democratic trade-offs

What most political societies aim for is some balance between democracy and efficiency that lies between the two scalar extremes listed above by Lively – although as a result of such reasoning, many areas of social existence (especially in the realm of economics) are often placed outside the scope of democratic accountability entirely. Thus we reach our first qualification of the democratic principle, namely to strive for the maximum participation that is consistent with the degree of efficiency required in practice. As all societies have, in practice, to reach the same sort of compromise, an evaluation that holds one version absolutely superior might be seen as unjust.

Competence is related to the concepts of efficiency and the justifiable limitations of people power. Due to the technical nature of many col-

lective decisions that need to be made, specialists or experts in the relevant field often handle some elements of decision-making. Even in the North this is often the case. Thus unelected judges process legislation, unelected military officials carry out defence procurement and unelected "quangos" (quasi-NGOs) have proliferated in many other fields of human endeavour.

While it is true that these groups and individuals usually remain answerable to the elected representatives of the people, who also usually control the purse strings, they are nevertheless granted a considerable degree of authority. Policies do not flow directly from elections. Instead, proposals are filtered through specialized committees in legislative bodies and administrative agencies staffed by highly qualified people of exceptional expertise. In fact, expertise is so important in all systems of government that they have sometimes been called a "mixture of democracy and meritocracy".[7]

Competence also becomes an issue when related to the extent of the franchise, or the quantitative element of the demos. Persons under a certain age are denied the vote in all "democracies", on the grounds that they are not sufficiently socially developed to understand the consequences of exercising power over others (which in essence is what voting is). Likewise, certain categories of insanity are deemed to exclude one automatically from participating due to perceived lack of competence. It is also one of the arguments used against granting the vote to transient foreigners.

All these categories are subject to the rules of society in the form of laws passed by a "sovereign" body despite having no formal influence upon the formulation of these laws. Thus, competence is the second generally accepted limitation placed upon functioning democracy. One argument often put forward in the South is that societies have not reached the level of competence in a number of fields for "democratic" procedures to be implemented, thus "pure" democratic principles may be considered "unfeasible". That Northern commentators reject such pragmatism when it occurs in unfamiliar surroundings might therefore seem inconsistent at best.

Democratic hurdles in the South

In principle, democratic participation should be as broad as possible. Firstly, any group that is excluded from the demos is likely to have its interests neglected (we are assumed to be the best judges of what is in our own best interest). Secondly, if we assume that any one individual has a slightly better than 50 per cent chance of making a correct decision, then

the more individuals whose opinions are aggregated to make a collective decision the better chance there is of the choice made being the correct one. This explains the need for democratic accountability of leaders, and some of the reasoning behind the claim that democracies are less likely to go to war. Thirdly, we have the widely assumed educational benefits of participation – the fact that one belongs to the demos and participates in such acts as voting improves one's competence to perform these very tasks. Finally, we have the moral value of participation in the political process as part of the demos. It is an all-important expression of identity.

James Hyland points out that "all we need to do is to imagine the contrary situation, imagine ourselves, that is, as publicly proclaimed inferiors, unfit for the responsibility of self government".[8] In addition, participation can lead to moral development, an opportunity for "gaining a more mature sense of responsibility for one's actions, a broader awareness of the others affected by one's actions, a greater willingness to reflect on and take into account the consequences of one's actions for others, and so on".[9]

Yet, as with our previous limitations on democracy, we are faced with a balancing act between the desirability of "pure democracy" and the harsh reality of what is feasible based on the competence of the people. In many countries in the South, lack of exposure to the philosophical principles upon which democracy is founded may tip the balance in practice in favour of feasibility and other participatory means over democratic purity.

As demonstrated above, there are further concerns regarding the operation of strict majority rule, particularly in Southern societies whose boundaries, having been drawn by Northern imperialists, often include multiple political communities each with a substantially different concept of the common good. An entrenched majority may fail to take into account the consequences of their actions for persistently disadvantaged minorities.

Some Northern commentators may dismiss this as a non-problem, claiming it is unlikely that the same people will always end up in the majority on every issue, and thus they will take into account the interests of minorities, as they are likely on future issues to find themselves part of a smaller group. Alternatively, in many stable, consolidated Northern democracies, any group of rulers relies on a coalition of interest groups, and cannot afford to offend the vital sensibilities of even relatively small parts of the electorate. Yet this reflects an ignorance of the make-up of many Southern societies, where it is quite likely that the same people will end up in the majority or minority on every issue, and where some rulers are able to entrench power based on only one part of the electorate.

Even in the North sufficient concern persists for many political societies to have introduced somewhat "undemocratic" procedures in order to safeguard the interests of minorities against abuse by elected majorities. These measures include "super-majorities", whereby more than a "50 per cent plus one" vote margin is required for the passing of certain legislation (e.g. a two-thirds majority), and the introduction of some kind of restraint upon the power of the demos in the form of a written constitution or an unelected group of paternalistic guardians whose job it is to protect the interests of all.

The problem with the first of these solutions is that it gives more power to minorities to block legislation than is allowed to majorities to pass it. With the example given above of a two-thirds super-majority, the interests of 65 per cent of the demos could be thwarted by the remaining 35 per cent. Hyland suggests that proportional representation overcomes this problem, but this could still leave a small party with perhaps only 15 per cent electoral support wielding undue and undemocratic influence over those parties which received far more of the vote.

The problem with the second solution is that it deprives people of their autonomy. "To the extent that a people is deprived of the opportunity to act autonomously and is governed by guardians, it is less likely to develop a sense of responsibility for its collective action. To the extent that it is autonomous, then it may sometimes err and act unjustly."[10] So another painful balancing act must be performed. In addition, the construction and functioning of constitutions are often themselves a source of political conflict in the South, as can be witnessed from Thailand to Iraq, in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe.

This issue is key to many of the problems faced in the South, but is substantially ignored in Northern discourse. Indeed, when problems of this nature arise in the South they are often dismissed by Northern commentators (with much hand-wringing) as being the result of implacable tribal enmities, rampant corruption or a lack of "democraticness", rather than a product of Northern imperialism and the actual functioning of Northern democratic models.

Alternative models of democracy

A post-modern criticism often levelled at modern democracies is that simple equality with regard to the right to vote is not enough. Hyland contrasts the right to vote without interference (a negative right) with the positive right of equal ability to vote:

> From this point of view, saying that everyone is equally entitled to rights of democratic participation, implies that there are obligations incumbent on a society as a whole, and ultimately on the government of that society, to ensure the provision to everyone of all those conditions, economic, educational and cultural, necessary to render effective political participation possible for all.[11]

Barriers to attaining this sort of freedom and equality are overt (such as physical and financial ability to participate in the political process), invisible (such as access to information and educational achievement necessary for comprehension of issues), social (socialization of groups to think in ways contrary to their natural interests – thought control) and structural (agenda setting). Dahl refers to this concept as distributive justice. "Distributive justice requires a fair distribution of crucial resources – power, wealth, income, education, access to knowledge, opportunities for personal development and self-worth, and others."[12]

Again, there are particular problems with achieving such a democratic ideal in the infrastructure- and capital-poor environment of the South. However, instead of following a Northern model and insisting that distributive justice should emanate from the central governmental structure of a state for it to be considered democratic, a more practical model for the South could be one that promotes personal development in the regions.

In addition, democracy in the North has tended to take a *laissez-faire* liberal, or even libertarian, approach to this problem, leaving many citizens effectively disenfranchised through lack of education, infrastructure, opportunity or incentive to join in the agenda-setting participatory process. If countries in the South were to demonstrate a similar approach to even more serious barriers, it is unlikely that Southern democracy would ever reach the identity of sovereign and subject desired.

Having accepted that democracy may persist in a form somewhat deviant from the ideal of identity of sovereign and subject, and yet still be worthy of the name, we must consider what restrictions are justified by the above concerns, and whether there exists a superior alternative to universal adult suffrage representative government as it is commonly conceived.

Condorcet suggested the possibility of "restricting unenlightened citizens temporarily in the full exercise of their political rights, while still offering them a mathematical guarantee of the rationality of the political decisions taken on their behalf".[13] The competence of the electorate would be improved by the expedient of removing the least competent members. We wouldn't have to worry about the accountability of the rulers, as they would be constrained by the inescapable logic of "social mathematics" to act in the rational interest of all.

Moreover, although Condorcet was convinced that there were matters upon which the majority were more likely to decide erroneously and against the common interest of everyone, nevertheless:

> It is still for the majority to designate the matters concerning which it ought not to rely directly upon its own decisions; it is for the majority to determine those whose reason it believes it must substitute for its own, and to establish the method that these men must follow to arrive more assuredly at the truth; and it cannot abdicate the authority to decide whether or not their decisions violate the common rights of everyone.[14]

Aside from the dubious concept of social mathematics, the major criticism of Condorcet's system is that by reducing demos participation to such a level, it is likely to prove a disincentive to voting, especially when the electorate are reassured that everything will be taken care of by an élite that is not only far more capable than the people, but is also guaranteed to be trustworthy. Voter apathy would mean that the majority *would* abdicate the authority to decide whether or not the decisions of the élite violate the common rights of everyone. In addition, as the masses become steadily depoliticized, they would lose the moral benefits of participation. Finally, such a model would do nothing to alleviate the particular problems facing democracy in the South identified above, and in fact would be more likely to exacerbate them.

J. S. Mill didn't propose to disenfranchise anyone. Rather, his solution was to give more votes to those of higher professional and educational achievement. He pointed out that "though everyone ought to have a voice – that everyone ought to have an equal voice is a totally different proposition".[15] Mill acknowledged the value of allowing all to be enfranchised and receive the benefits of participation, but pointed out that far from the pooled judgement of the many automatically producing better-reasoned decisions, in fact the lower levels of intellect will drag down the higher due to their greater number. Thus, instead of a centralizing tendency, we have a tendency towards the lowest common denominator.

Few, however, would accept that Mill's solution would still fall into the democratic family, as it blatantly goes against the concept of "one man, one vote". A further problem with Mill's proposal is that it doesn't take into account the questions raised above about resource allocation. If we accept that we are living in a society where some groups are more blessed with material and educational resources, if these social advantages are then made a condition of receiving power and influence, the higher social strata will have the opportunity to turn themselves into a self-perpetuating oligarchy – precisely one of the social structures that

Mill was trying to avoid, and one to which Southern democracies may be particularly prone.

However, both Condorcet and Mill make the valuable observation that education is the key to resolving many of the difficulties facing the implementation in practice of democratic theory, in particular those of voter competence and ruler accountability. This is also reflected in the words of Thomas Jefferson: "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion."[16] Incompetence could be a result of lack of opportunity for responsible involvement rather than a justification for permanent denial of such opportunity.[17]

As Dahl points out, in the real world no system will fully meet the criteria for a democratic process. "At best any actual polity is likely to achieve something of an approximation to a fully democratic process ... However, the criteria serve as standards against which one may compare alternative processes and institutions in order to judge their relative merits."[18] In a like manner we can also use the criteria outlined above as a way of setting new targets within existing Southern democracies.

Democratic models in the South

In studying democracy and social movements in the South, it is important to consider alternative expressions of "people power" and representation found in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Rather than concerning ourselves with the degree to which such models match the Northern vision of sufficient democraticness, we should address the degree to which "the people" can be said to rule, the extent to which these models function in the interests of the people and the practical benefits offered by adopting these approaches in the South over more Northern-centric templates.

On the other hand, it is also important to look at specific limitations to democracy in the South, asking whether they are justifiable, and, if not, in what ways they can be overcome. Particular emphasis should be placed on non-traditional avenues for participation in the South, and upon educational projects aimed at improving the political expression of those most disadvantaged. Even political processes in Southern states that are particularly reviled by the North for their lack of democracy can thereby contribute substantially to our understanding of the Southern political and social operating environment. In all cases, movements in the South can be examined to see whether Northern models would function bet-

ter in providing equality between rulers and the ruled, or whether indigenous practices excel due to a "horses for courses" phenomenon.

That is to say, it is not necessary to look at the transferability of Southern models to the North, or to advocate them as universally superior, only to open our minds to the possibility that, given conditions on the ground, indigenous practices may outperform Northern models in terms of both efficiency and participation. It may well be, however, that there is some possibility of transfer of Southern models within the South where similar ground conditions pertain. The advantage of choosing deliberately controversial case studies from the South for further analysis is that by uncovering people-power elements in states considered by the North to be the most undemocratic, we force a radical re-evaluation of the notion of identity of sovereign and subject.

Chapter overview

This book is subdivided into analysis of case studies from the three major geographical regions that are seen to constitute the "South": Latin America, Africa and Asia. These regions also represent distinct "voices" offering alternatives to, and often criticisms of, the dominant Western or Northern discourse.

Chapter 2 offers a detailed analysis of the dynamic tension between populism and democracy from a uniquely Latin American perspective, focusing on one of the most controversial Southern models of representative government. One of the dangers arising from Northern approaches to the subject is the assumption that democracy is synonymous with populism – after all, it is common to talk of the popular vote. However, as Nicole Curato points out in her chapter on Venezuela, in a Latin American context the distinctive logic of populism is to simplify a complicated and fluid political terrain by splitting the social field into two distinct and seemingly irreconcilable camps – "the people" versus the "dominant bloc".

Curato analyses the dynamic tension between populism and democracy, and concludes that when normal representative channels are occupied by oligarchic élites, the people have to fight back through a more direct and radical expression of people power. Populism may win votes, but if not translated into good governance it leaves empty promises and disappointment. In a situation where populism replaces representative government, the notion of democracy may be seen as an "empty signifier" – an essentially contested concept, especially in the context of a polarized country where competing visions of democracy abound.

Olga Lucía Castillo-Ospina's chapter on Colombia demonstrates that even if a state bears a superficial resemblance to a "free" state in accordance with the Northern democratic tradition, it may nevertheless fall far short of the radical democratic imperatives of functioning in the interests of all and with the participation of all. Indeed, Castillo-Ospina characterizes Latin America's "oldest democracy" as a flawed or make-believe democracy, functioning as it does in the interests of oligarchic élites.

The Colombian state has relatively strong power and autonomy as part of a democratic system immersed in a framework of national and global social relations. Not all democratic elements and rule of law are present in countries like Colombia, and Castillo-Ospina makes recommendations on how to escape from the vicious circle of both structural and circumstantial failures. One example that she presents is the lack of cohesion of the traditional political parties on the subject of privatization of the state, leading to a progressive distortion of democracy, contradictory to the fundamental supposition of the "common good", to favour only the industrial, financial and political élites in Colombia.

In Chapter 4 Mariana Garzón Rogé and Mariano Perelman identify the dual threats to adequate representation of the people in Argentinian democracy. First, the imposition of an intellectual hegemony concerning what "counts" as democratic can lead to the suppression of disenfranchised voices. Second, toleration as a democratic virtue can lead to continued support for anti-democratic forces. Democracy in Argentina has often run the risk of relapse to authoritarianism, with democratic governments forcefully replaced by military ones. In 1983 the end of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* was followed by a considerable period of democratic developments, but these were more concerned with formal procedures than substance. The Argentinian political community has not engaged deeply in all elements of democracy, but rather has focused on political rights, and remains limited and unable to address inevitable ideological conflicts within itself. From a more theoretical perspective the authors suggest an interesting idea – that to radicalize democracy, one needs to understand it as an existence of an eternal conflict.

The authors underline two important characteristics. On the one hand, contemporary Argentinian democracy is a political regime in which formal procedures constitute the essence and social protests are seen by civil society as anti-democratic actions. Acceptable exercise of rights in such a democracy includes voting and freely driving in the streets, but not protesting because of the levels of unemployment. On the other hand, democracy in the current Argentinian image is a consensus where every political position is allowed in the name of pluralism, even those which vindicate the last and bloodiest military dictatorship.

All three Latin American cases demonstrate that formal democratic institutions and models following the Northern pattern are insufficient to represent and protect the people. By contrast, the key theme running through the African cases represented in this book is how best to overcome the problems and dangers of multi-ethnicity in colonial legacy states.

In Chapter 5 Moses Metumara Duruji introduces us to the problems of governing a large, heterogeneous society like Nigeria. In particular he is concerned with the extent or degree to which provisions and practices meant to accommodate diversity in a heterogeneous polity conform to the principles of democracy. He is concerned not only that the majoritarian principle of democracy is problematic in an artificially created and conflictual heterogeneous society, but also that another democratic ingredient, responsible for creating the space for groups to emerge and thrive, rather destabilizes the democratic polity of the country due to the emergence of ethnopolitical groups with conflicting extreme agendas.

Nevertheless, Duruji feels that because democracy as a system of governance offers the generality of citizenry a say in their own affairs, it holds a continued allure for many in Nigeria. The colonial experience united the peoples to stand up against that evil; the victory over colonialism presented the challenge of nation-building; and in that journey, since the country attained independence in 1960, a lot has been learnt, including from a bitter civil war and incessant military intervention in politics. It is these experiences that are reflected in the unique brand of democracy the country is practising, yet the period of learning and perfection is still ongoing.

In Chapter 6 James Ogola Onyango critically evaluates how the fundamentals of ethno-linguistic vitality have impinged on the democratic practice in Kenyan general elections. He identifies undercurrents of distrust between large ethno-linguistic groups and, of large groups by small groups, and the emergence of ethnic alliances with undercurrents of mega-ethnicity.

The violence that followed the election in December 2007 presented a great challenge to the credentials of democracy in Kenya. The opposition challenged the election results, accusing the ruling party of stealing the elections (upheld by international monitors), and more than 1,000 people died in the unleashed violence. Many criticized the elections, presenting them as a reason for the violence. In fact it was the opposite: the violations of the normal electoral rules – equality, fairness, transparency, respect for minorities, etc. – were the factors leading to the violence. Interestingly, however, Ogola Onyango concludes that since Kenya has never had a successful military coup, the ballot has been the sure way to

gain power and therefore this means ethno-linguistic vitality will remain an important index in "democratic practice" in Kenya.

Finally, in Chapter 7 Gbenga Afolayan addresses the dual dynamic of democracy and markets in Ghana. The relationship between democratic and economic forces is extremely complex, and often commented on in the North, but it can be pivotal in the South. Afolayan questions whether in Ghana democratization is viewed as a process by which popular control over public decision-making is made more effective and more inclusive – the relative roles of the public and private sectors, for example. Rather it is viewed, he argues, as a means to implement an a priori decision that the state's role must be reduced.

Using a Marxist political economy perspective, Afolayan critiques the uni-dimensionality of liberal democracy and criticizes the over-positive image of Ghana which has emerged, he claims, based mainly on procedural political equality animated by elections but which ignores the political and economic causes of conflict. As such, the idealized image of Ghana has created concealed uproar and the author advocates moving away from fixing analytical lenses on procedures of democratic transitions in Africa – an aspect that has been over-researched – and refocusing on an equally important area: the dangers that political economic deficits of liberal democracy pose to peace. For Afolayan, decentralization can be viewed in a similar way, valued less for its potential to realize more effectively the key democratic principles of popular control and political equality through devolution of democratic decision-making to subnational levels, but valued more for its role in further reducing the power and authority of the central state.

The key unifying theme for the Asian case studies represented in this book is the extent to which Northern models have failed consistently to address the needs of people in the region and therefore have become openly challenged. In Chapter 8 K. Deepamala addresses the ways in which the Dalits of India are failed by the functional mechanics of what is supposed to be the world's largest democracy. She points out that while the Indian system has, on paper, comprehensive laws outlawing inequality and injustice resulting from the caste system, in practice many Indians face great social inequality because these laws are ineffective in protecting their rights.

A fundamental defect is the lack of engagement of its politicians with the issue. The author advocates raising awareness that caste is the single most disruptive element in Indian society and a barrier standing in the way of economic development and national integration. She concedes that it will be difficult to wipe out age-old traditions, but contends that nevertheless the adverse influence of caste can be diminished by strong leaders who are able to rule with conviction. Without the eradication of

social injustice and inequality, India will remain a democracy in name only.

In Chapter 9 Narayanan Ganesan shows how the political party system in Thailand has metamorphosed since the 1970s, when political parties first appeared and underwent a process of adjusting to some non-democratic constraints. Relatively liberal attitudes, the weakened political role of the military and socio-economic changes that enlarged and empowered the middle class set the stage for democratic norms to take root in the 1990s. Ganesan explores the populist Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's tenure and its impact on the political party system in Thailand, showing that the personality and policies of the maverick politician and businessman, while endearing him to the new business élite and rural poor, deeply alienated traditional centres of power and the urban electorate that had always wielded disproportionate influence in determining national politics in Thailand, thereby laying the groundwork for a military coup.

Thailand's experience alerts us to the fragility of democratic consolidation when not ingrained in political culture or the structural mechanics of the state. Just as important as good governance to the maintenance of a stable democracy is the existence of a loyal opposition, by which is meant an opposition that, while it may oppose the government, does not oppose the institution of democratic government. Ganesan demonstrates that there are many features of the Thai system that clearly differ from democracy as it is practised in the developed world. The first and most striking feature is probably the deep reverence that the citizenry generally have for the monarchy and the present king. The system, despite being a constitutional monarchy, clearly allows the king both political intervention and the conferment of legitimacy on political developments that are unmatched in other similar systems. Ganesan recommends that the Thai public should be weaned away from the belief that coups are an acceptable way to institute change when the political situation is deemed unacceptable.

The final case study chapter on democracy in the Philippines by Gladstone Cuarteros shows why this country is considered to share a political culture with both Latin America and other Asian countries. Not only have democratic institutions in the Philippines consistently been undermined by abuses from oligarchic élites, but there are also a number of anti-democratic movements fuelled by discontent with the performance and corruption of democratically elected governments. Cuarteros sees the Philippines as an example of an élite democracy dominated by political families and clans dating back 100 years or more to the earliest introduction of electoral politics by the then American administration. The power and influence of political families survived the dictatorship of

Ferdinand Marcos and his removal from power by the so-called people power revolution. The domination of political clans naturally raises questions concerning the representation, participation and well-being of large sections of the Philippine demos.

Cuarteros feels that the conditions under which political élites can fall from power or be removed have been left unattended in the literature. He notes that even if flawed democratic elections can help undermine the position of old élites, they are likely to be insufficient to cause the collapse of entrenched political families, who most of the time have no misgivings in employing authoritarian practices. It is therefore necessary for the candidate of democratic opposition to have linkages to a section of the national élite, and for the media to play an activist role instead of just delivering the news and information to the people. Meanwhile, grassroots organizations and movements can raise people's awareness of economic and social issues in many towns in the provinces, eventually making it easy to mobilize them in electoral advocacies.

The concluding chapter of the book summarizes how, as an essentially contested concept, one-size-fits-all Northern democratic models do not necessarily fit best in practice when applied in the context of Southern regions. Indeed, attempts to impose assumed universal principles can in themselves store up problems for the equitable governance of countries in these regions.

Notes

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4. Held, David (1987) *Models of Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 64.
5. *The Daily Telegraph* (2006) "Thailand's King Reverts to the Bad Old Days", *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 September.
6. Head, Jonathan (2007) "Thai Voters 'Approve New Charter'", BBC News, 19 August, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6953456.stm.
7. Dahl, note 2 above, pp. 56–57.
8. Hyland, James L. (1995) *Democratic Theory: The Philosophical Foundations*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 189.
9. Dahl, note 2 above, pp. 104–105.
10. Ibid., p. 192.
11. Hyland, note 8 above, p. 105.
12. Dahl, note 2 above, p. 164.
13. Baker, Keith Michael (1975) *Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, p. 334.
14. Ibid., p. 34.

15. Mill, John Stuart ([1861] 1972) *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government*, edited by H. B. Acton. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, p. 283.
16. Barber, Benjamin R. (1984) *Strong Democracy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, p. xvii.
17. Hyland, note 8 above, pp. 256–257.
18. Dahl, note 2 above, p. 131.

2

Venezuela: Democratic possibilities

Nicole Curato

In December 2006 President Hugo Chávez secured his second six-year term in office, winning 60 per cent of the popular vote. His electoral success has often been dismissed as the product of mere charisma and rhetoric. Chávez, after all, fulfils the requirements of a recurring character in Latin American politics – the populist leader. In spite of his submission to periodic elections, a number of outside observers view him as a despot capitalizing on social divisions for personal gain. Yet to write off Chávez as nothing more than a "ranting populist", a "ruinous demagogue" or a "mercurial left-leaning leader" trivializes the complexities of Venezuela's political realities. This chapter aims to rise above these convenient labels and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of populism and democracy using Ernesto Laclau's framework.

Populism as a concept has been extensively theorized and contextualized in Latin America. The first section of this chapter introduces Laclau's work on populism. Instead of dismissing populism as political excess, he places it at the centre of political life, arguing that all politics is populism.[1] The second part of this chapter is anchored on this theoretical background. It examines Venezuelan populist democracy by focusing on a specific juncture – from Chávez's rise to power to the failed coup d'état in 2002. This period is characterized by rapid political and social change, mirroring the highs and lows of Venezuelan democracy. Understanding the social conditions that led to Chávez's electoral victory and temporary ousting generates realizations on the dynamics of Venezuelan democracy and the possibilities that loom over its future.

Democracy in the South: Participation, the state and the people, Howe, Popovski and Notaras (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1178-0

The populist logic

Latin America has long been witness to the rise and fall of populist leaders — from Argentina's Juan Domingo Perón to Peru's Alberto Fujimori, Mexico's Luis Echeverría and finally Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. Yet there is a lack of consensus theoretically on this widespread and recurrent phenomenon. It is as if "we know intuitively to what we are referring when we call a movement or ideology populist, but we have the greatest difficulty in translating the intuition into concepts".[2] As Peter Wiles comments, "to each his own definition of populism, according to the academic axe he grinds".[3] This section argues that in spite of its silences and ambiguities, Ernesto Laclau's work is a critical contribution to the theory of populism. This chapter demonstrates how this framework is particularly helpful in making sense of Venezuela's political realities, such as the rise of Chávez's populism and the 2002 coup.

Populism as political reality

A source of difficulty in pinning down the concept of populism is its vagueness and indeterminacy "in the audience to which it addresses itself, in its discourse, and in its political postulates".[4] For Kazin, populism is an unpredictable and mutable style of political rhetoric.[5] It can promote both political participation and demagoguery. It can maintain or oppose the status quo, strike a deal with the élites or defend "the people".[6]

This explanation is clearly manifested in Latin America. In the 1930s and 1940s populism's social base consisted of agrarian movements and the urban disenfranchised rallying against the ruling élites.[7] Through the rise of globalization, scholars identified a new breed of leaders called "neopopulists". Neopopulism presented a "novel paradox – the rise of personalist leaders with broad-based support who follow . . . market-oriented structural adjustments".[8] They pander to members of the informal economy instead of the organized working class, and accept neoliberal policies instead of state interventionism.[9] Neopopulism had a short lifespan. Carlos Andrés Pérez and Fernando Collor de Mello ended their careers with impeachment, while Alberto Fujimori's and Carlos Menem's administrations ended in shame due to accusations of unethical conduct.[10] After the wave of neopopulist leaders, populism was, and still is, conveniently identified with those who deviate from the norms of free trade.[11] These include Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales and Fidel Castro, whose policies directly oppose those of the neopopulists.

Peter Worsley deviates from the mere analysis of populism's ideas to the role it plays in certain cultural contexts – "a role which modifies not only their uses but also their intellectual content".[12] Laclau draws

on Worsley's work, arguing that the fluctuation of populist discourse is not due to any cognitive failure, but a manifestation of the discourse's operation within a heterogeneous and fluctuating social reality.[13] This explains why isolating the ideological core of populism is an impossible task. While other scholars are preoccupied with pinning down the stable patterns of populist rhetoric, Laclau does not define populism in terms of content. The substance of populism takes up different, unpredictable and often contradictory beliefs; it cannot be considered an ideology but a political logic.[14]

The populist logic

The distinctive logic of populism is to simplify a complicated and fluid political terrain by splitting the social field into two distinct and seemingly irreconcilable camps – "the people" versus the "dominant bloc".[15] It seeks to transcend ideological differences and heterogeneous demands by organizing identities around an "empty signifier" (i.e. revolution, democracy), and creates a shared antagonism against a certain bloc. Note that these are not a priori antagonisms and alliances but are creations of a collective social imaginary,[16] wherein the "enemy" is identified as the obstacle hampering "the people" from realizing their identities.

Identity is a vital concept in populist discourse. People can only act politically if they can connect to a "collective identity which provides an idea of themselves they can valorise".[17] Constructing "who we are" is closely linked to constructing "who we are not" or "the other", anchored in some form of differentiation, and consequently exclusion. These antagonistic terms often take the form of "us" versus "them" – "us" being "the people" and "them" the "enemy". What constitutes "the people" and "the enemy" is not prescribed in advance. It is conceptualized as the "formation of an internal antagonistic frontier separating 'people' from 'power' ".[18] Slavoj Žižek supports this idea, explaining that "what characterizes populism is … the mere formal fact that, through their enchainment, 'people' emerges as a political subject, and all different particular struggles and antagonisms appear as parts of a global antagonistic struggle between 'us' (people) and 'them' ".[19] Laclau considers the "construction of the people as the political operation par excellence".[20]

Laclau's emphasis on constructing "the people" corresponds to the explanation of several scholars on Latin America. For Allan Knight, "the people" do not necessarily assume an essentialist character, particularly the battle of the masses versus the élite. The "other" can also be defined along the lines of class, nationalism, religion or ethnicity.[21] Similarly, Kirk Hawkins, though clashing with Laclau's conceptualization of populism in

several aspects, observes that the "populist discourse in Latin America typically pits 'the people' against a presumed 'elite', although the exact content of this 'other' can vary".[22] Populism is a set of resources available to a plurality of actors.[23] The task of the populist leader, then, is to claim representation of "the people", while his or her opponents necessarily represent a minority group of outsiders.[24] Because of the seemingly divisive nature of populism, several scholars consider this phenomenon to be a setback for democracy.[25] It compromises the institutionalization of pluralism, liberal democratic norms, the rule of law and checks and balances, especially when the mobilization of the popular will is anchored in a shared antagonism against a minority group.[26]

However, in so far as populism can divide "the people" from "the other", it can also unify disparate groups. One of Laclau's major premises is that collective identities do not have fixed essences. This idea is fundamental in understanding the nature of populism, particularly in Latin America. Noted populists such as Carlos Menem and Alberto Fujimori expanded the public sphere by mobilizing previously disenfranchised sectors through nationalist rhetoric. At the same time, these leaders utilized neoliberal policies that concentrate wealth in the hands of the few.[27] Some scholars see this as ironic, and go so far as to accuse the populist leader of hypocrisy. However, using Laclau's framework it is possible to dichotomize populism based on nationalist rhetoric that invokes national identity over class affiliations, and neoliberal rhetoric that emphasizes empowerment of the business class through privatization measures. The use of both nationalist and neoliberal rhetoric, though seemingly contradictory in content, enables a populist leader to establish a broad multiclass political coalition necessary for a socially heterogeneous nation.[28] Such "inconsistency" demonstrates the multidimensional character of populism, enabling a leader to construct and reconstruct discourses of "us" versus "them" in different contexts to generate and maintain support from various sectors.

Populism and radical democracy

Laclau and his co-author in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Chantal Mouffe, propose the existence of a system called "radical democracy".[29] Mouffe explains that envisaging consensus and reconciliation as the aim of democratic politics is both conceptually mistaken and fraught with political dangers.[30] Consensus or partisan-free democracy does not give citizens a real choice between significantly different policies,[31] partly explaining why political apathy is prevalent.[32] Instead, the aim of radical democracy is to create a vibrant political field where different political

projects can be confronted.[33] Hence, the challenge of democracy is to institutionalize antagonisms, rather than to perceive them as threats. Conflicts are accepted as integral to democracy, as long as parties in conflict do not treat their opponents as enemies to be eradicated. Both parties recognize that there is no final solution to their conflict, but they still acknowledge the legitimacy of their opponents.[34] For radical democratic politics to exist, it is imperative that dissenting voices have legitimate political channels to engage with their opponents. As Mouffe explains, adversaries do fight – even fiercely – but according to a shared set of rules and positions. Despite being ultimately irreconcilable, adversarial opinions are accepted as legitimate perspectives.[35]

For these reasons, the challenge of populism is to exist within the structures of radical democracy. Given that all forms of politics involve the creation of "the people" versus "the other", the challenge specifically lies in the democratic system's ability to create and maintain legitimate political channels for various struggles to flourish and compete instead of creating consensus. For Mouffe, prioritizing consensus over the creation of pluralist discursive spaces compromises the emergence of political alternatives.[36] It is this lack of genuine political competition that leads to the resurgence of "unhealthy" populist parties whose discourse is anchored in "false premises and unacceptable mechanisms of exclusion; such as right-wing populist parties in Europe".[37] While Laclau and Mouffe are ambiguous on what qualifies as "unacceptable mechanisms of exclusion", they are clear in explaining that the absence of sufficient and legitimate channels for discursive formation can lead to non-democratic forms of expression such as violence, extremism, terrorism or in some cases coup d'états, as in Venezuela.

Venezuela: A ticking time bomb

For some time, social scientists were preoccupied in examining "Venezuelan exceptionalism".[38] Unlike its Latin American neighbours, Venezuela appeared to enjoy rapid economic development and uninterrupted civilian rule, making it one of the most stable democracies in South America. Although Venezuela has had a turbulent history of coup d'états and military dictatorships, this was during a relatively contained period. After General Marcos Pérez Jiménez's ousting in 1958, Venezuela experienced relative stability politically.

This section identifies two factors that account for this "relative stability" – the Pact of Punto Fijo,[39] and Venezuela's immense oil wealth. The term "relative stability" is deliberately placed in inverted commas. As this section demonstrates, the period 1958–1989 is not a phase marked by pol-

itical and economic progress, but a period that deepened the colonial legacy of social inequalities. These entrenched cleavages later erupted into two of Venezuela's most defining historical junctures – the Caracazo in 1989, and the 1992 coup led by Lt.-Col. Hugo Chávez.

Puntofijismo

After General Pérez's military dictatorship ended in 1958, Venezuela's two major political parties – Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI) and Acción Democrática (AD)[40] – signed the Pact of Punto Fijo. In this pact, the two major civilian power blocs agreed to respect the electoral process in attaining power and renounce military intervention.[41] For the political right, this signalled the end of the country's last military dictatorship and fortified Venezuelan democracy. For the next three decades, COPEI and AD took turns holding office at the Miraflores Palace.

However, for the political left Puntofijismo represented everything that had gone wrong in Venezuelan politics. The pact deliberately excluded parties affiliated to the left, even if they played a crucial role in the ousting of the Jiménez dictatorship.[42] Although COPEI was believed to represent the interests of the centre-right and AD the centre-left, the "frequent struggles for power . . . were essentially the quarrels of competing factions or families within this ruling group; they never altered the fundamental political structure".[43] In effect, the pact formalized the unequal and exclusionary power structure in Venezuela while projecting a healthy democratic image marked by periodic elections and the absence of successful military interventions.

Oil rich, dirt poor

Such an unequal and exclusionary power structure is also pronounced in the economic system. Using petro-dollars, the state bought its way into modernity in the form of new buildings, hospitals, mansions, cars and other consumer goods.[44] This changed the external appearance of Venezuelan society, making it the most urbanized country in Latin America with only 10 per cent of the population living outside towns and cities.[45] Yet the country's dependence on petro-dollars as a major source of national revenue proved to be risky. Without recourse to other profitable economic activities, declining oil prices rendered the state incapable of paying off national debts while continuing its high spending, as was the

case under President Jaime Lusinchi in 1983.[46] As the economist Moisés Naím explains:

> Venezuela lacks the human and physical infrastructure to make it a rich country and its oil and mineral wealth have proven to be more of an obstruction than an advantage ... Venezuela's experience is an unequivocal confirmation of the general rule that the abundance of natural resources induces parasitism and stifles development.[47]

This observation was manifested in how the oil company Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) was run. Due to the abundance of resources, there was no incentive for the company to professionalize its systems and make the industry sustainable. Foreign investors condoned the Venezuelan élites' avoidance of paying taxes through their recycling of oil profits overseas, stashed in private accounts. Even when the oil company was nationalized in 1976, the managers of the private company were retained. If anything, the oil wealth became "even more tightly controlled by the Venezuelan elite".[48] Such a management style was described as a "state within a state"[49] in the sense that the PDVSA operated with its own logic independent of the state, up to the point that even the country's president had to wait for an appointment with the company's chief executive officer.

Oil revenues may have provided Venezuela with the look and feel of progress, but failure to distribute oil wealth added force to growing inequalities. Often described as oil rich but dirt poor, 80 per cent of the Venezuelan population lived below the poverty line.[50] More than half of the country's labour force belonged to the informal sector. In 1997 the richest 10 per cent of the people accounted for 33 per cent of the national income, increasing from 22 per cent in 1981; in terms of inequality, it was one of the biggest increases in the world.[51] Venezuela's class structure also involved an ethnic dimension, where barrio dwellers were mostly *mestizos*, while the property-owning classes were white.[52] Such stark economic and social inequalities were what led to the Caracazo and the 1992 coup.

The Caracazo

Literature from both left and right fundamentally agrees that the Caracazo was caused by the neoliberal reforms of President Carlos Andrés Pérez.[53] In brief, the effects of the IMF's structural adjustment programme led to a 100 per cent increase in petrol prices overnight. Consequently, "students, who found that their travel cards were no longer

accepted, occupied a bus station in central Caracas alongside barrio dwellers and groups of workers. Protests, rioting and looting spread like wildfire across the capital, and as the news spread, across the whole country."[54] The massive riots in Caracas brought open class struggle back to the centre of political life in Venezuela, after it had been swept under the rug by the Pact of Punto Fijo and its ability to buy Venezuela's way into stability through petro-dollars. Tariq Ali also notes that the Caracazo was the first "genuine mass revolt by the poor against neoliberal capitalism, predating Seattle by a decade".[55]

However, aside from economic mismanagement as one of the major causes of the Caracazo, Margarita López Maya rightfully points out that the Caracazo was also triggered by a sense of betrayal of the moral economy.[56] President Pérez was re-elected in 1988 with populist promises of rejecting IMF reforms and raising people's standard of living. However, "within a fortnight of his inauguration in February 1989, he did a complete volte-face and introduced precisely the kind of IMF deflationary package he had sworn to oppose".[57] From the very beginning, Pérez's betrayal of "the people" tarnished the masses' respect for institutional recourse in addressing issues that directly affected their lives. This betrayal of moral economy "took place in a context where institutions of representation and mediation were undergoing a process of decline".[58]

As riots broke out in Caracas, President Pérez declared a state of emergency on 28 February 1989. All clauses in the constitution related to civil liberties were suspended.[59] The Venezuelan military's control over the citizenry was characterized by high levels of repression and brutality. In most cases, fresh military recruits were ordered to assault the poorer neighbourhoods and shoot to kill if necessary.[60] This created a lasting impression among junior officers, in the sense that some, particularly members of the Chávez-led faction Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario (MBR),[61] "identified more with those they fought than with those they obeyed in the confrontation".[62] In some areas it was reported that agents of social control even supported the actions of protesters.[63]

1992 failed coup

In 1982 a group of junior officers founded the military movement Ejercito Bolivariano 200, referring to the bicentenary of Simón Bolívar's birth.[64] The movement started as a discussion-oriented organization among friends, meeting informally as collegial working groups but "without a concrete plan".[65] Discussions often revolved around corruption in the military and the unmeritorious appointment of officers linked to President Pérez's party, AD. In a way, "the military elites were perceived

as merely a reflection of the corrupt political elites".[66] It is not surprising that some factions of the military were sympathetic to the causes of "rioters" in the Caracazo.

The Ejercito Bolivariano 200 actively planned a coup after the Caracazo. The movement started incorporating more civilians, and changed its name to MBR-200. Led by Chávez and Francisco Arias Cárdenas, the MBR decided to unseat President Pérez on 4 February 1992 through a military coup. The coup ended in defeat due to various factors, such as the failure to take over the media – a tactical necessity – and their inability to garner support from the high command and the National Guard.[67]

Although the coup technically failed, its long-term implications were critical. The military uprising brought Chávez to the political centre stage for the first time. As the coup's leader, Chávez requested to address his co-conspirators on television. In a succinct yet powerful address, Chávez said:

> Unfortunately, for now, the objectives we had set ourselves have not been achieved in the capital … Where you are you did very well, but now the time has come to avoid further bloodshed. It is time to think things over, new situations will arise and the country must definitely change direction towards a better future … Comrades, listen to this message of solidarity. I thank you for your loyalty, for your valour, for your selfless generosity; before the country and before you, I personally take responsibility for this Bolivarian military uprising. Thank you.[68]

Chávez's 72-second surrender speech made a lasting impression on a huge number of Venezuelans. In a country where nobody accepts responsibility for anything, accepting personal responsibility for the coup attempt and defeat was a breath of fresh air.[69] More importantly, the phrase "for now", or "*por ahora*" in Spanish, implied that the MBR intended to continue the struggle.[70] In a later interview, Chávez admitted that it was not his intent to inflate the meaning of the phrase "*por ahora*".[71] However, the intentions of speakers do not matter when it comes to discourse, but the "perspective and the interpretation of the other(s) that prevail [do]: discursive activity becomes socially 'real' if it has real consequences".[72] After the coup, the term "for now" became the slogan, with the red beret of Chávez's parachute regiment as the symbol of resistance in Venezuela.[73]

Fertile ground for populism

This section demonstrates that the democratic stability projected by Venezuela in the 1980s was largely a mirage. "It was built upon exclu-

sionary and seemingly undemocratic practice that in time gave way to a stifling political system and an alienated electorate."[74] The Pact of Punto Fijo and the élite's accumulation of oil wealth represented a democracy built on élite consensus.[75] As discussed in the previous section, consensus democracy disabled the citizens from having a qualitatively different set of choices and alternatives while working within the structures of existing institutions. Using Laclau's framework, the Caracazo and the coup can be construed as mechanisms for recapturing the political space through non-traditional means, given that existing democratic institutions were exclusionary and parasitic.

The Caracazo and the coup made a serious dent on the perceived endurance of Venezuela's two-party system.[76] According to Laclau, populism's greatest appeal occurs when ruling coalitions fracture. The rise of populism is "historically linked to the crisis of the dominant ideological discourse which is in turn part of a more general social crisis".[77] This was already seen in the cases of Presidents Pérez and Caldera, who won the presidency by using an anti-neoliberal discourse – a dominant ideological discourse in crisis, not only in Venezuela but in the rest of Latin America. However, both presidents betrayed the moral economy by sharply shifting their economic strategies to the very same policies "the people" voted against. In a situation where the difference between traditional parties and politicians has become much less significant than before,[78] it becomes an imperative for emerging political actors to capitalize on a different political logic. The succeeding sections deal with how Chávez employed the populist logic, and its relationship to Venezuela's emerging popular democracy.

Chávez's popular democracy

Chávez and his group were held at the San Carlos barracks in Caracas after the coup. Instead of neutralizing the rebel officers' politicized character, time in prison gave them the opportunity for political reflection. This was when Chávez pored over Fidel Castro's works and vowed to get to know the Cuban leader upon his release.[79] Hundreds of civilians also went to see members of the MBR, frequent among them members of the new left.[80] Inasmuch as the MBR already had leftist inklings prior to the coup, it was only after this time in prison that it forged an alliance with the left. After two years the newly elected President Rafael Caldera granted amnesty to Chávez and all officers involved in the coup, on the condition that Chávez resign from the military.

After their release, the MBR officially abandoned the coup path and brought its struggle within the premises of parliamentary democracy.

The military movement MBR incorporated more civilians and founded the Movimiento Quinta Republica or MVR.[81] The MVR, later called Polo Patriotico, was a loose left-of-centre political alliance,[82] merging with the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), La Causa Radical, Desobedencia Popular and Bandera Roja.[83]

Like traditional parties, the MVR ran a campaign promising prosperity for all by creating a new Venezuela. After all, governments and parties of all shapes and stripes tend to take the populist course, especially during election time – "it may, indeed, be a reflection of the fact that ... we are all populist now".[84] Traditional parties, particularly AD, had their own versions of populism.[85] To some extent, the MVR's platform of state interventionism, production of basic commodities and nationalization of key industries was reminiscent of AD's election rhetoric. As the election came closer, Chávez's electoral platform backtracked on proposed nationalist programmes, left open a range of options for foreign capital and displayed greater flexibility on its proposed moratorium on the foreign debt.[86] As explained by Chávez himself in his first speech as president, "Our project is neither statist nor neoliberal; we are exploring the middle ground, where the invisible hand of the market joins up with the visible hand of the state: as much state as necessary, and as much market as possible."[87] Such philosophy is not distinct to Chávez but akin to Tony Blair's "third way" or Eduardo Frei's fuzzy doctrine of "communitarianism" in Chile. But if Chávez's populist platform was nothing new to Venezuelan politics, where then did he source his distinct appeal?

After his powerful speech in the 1992 coup, Chávez presented a new face – literally and figuratively, unrelated to Venezuela's traditional power structure. Literally, Chávez presented the face of an "outsider" in politics,[88] his Indian and black features identifiable to politically disenfranchised groups. Impeccably dressed in military uniform, Chávez delivered a humble and succinct speech, far different from the suit-wearing, light-skinned politicians making promises they could not keep. Figuratively, Chávez's acceptance of personal accountability, unconventional for politicos, conveyed the emergence of a genuine political alternative and the possibility of change.[89]

Because of such a successfully projected ethos, Chávez was able to capture the discourse of reform. He called for a complete break from the fourth republic built in the seventeenth century by what he called "a class of oligarchs and bankers on the bones of Bolivar and Sucre".[90] Inasmuch as this statement is suggestive of class tensions, the election was framed as a choice between supporters of Puntofijismo – Venezuela's traditional party democracy – or popular participation through constituent assembly. Chávez won the election with more than 56 per cent of the popular vote, while AD's and COPEI's candidates obtained a meagre 4 per cent.[91]

Aside from Chávez's symbolic victory over what Laclau calls the "institutionalised system",[92] there are two other peculiar characteristics of this emerging brand of democracy – the active utilization of the military, and the displacement of party politics to grassroots participation.

The activist military

Democratic discourse highlights the importance of civilian supremacy, particularly in post-authoritarian states. Samuel Huntington introduced the ideal type of military organization, characterized by political neutrality, professionalism and conservatism. This influential perspective rejects active military involvement in politics.[93] It is a view that considers civilian control as inherently favourable, regardless of the civilian regime's character. This kind of analysis subscribes to reified standards of democratization and civil-military relations, equating demilitarization to democratization,[94] and "superficially views 'civilian' and 'military' governments as mutually exclusive, judging the former as generally good and the latter as generally bad".[95] As Abraham Lowenthal explains, "scholars almost invariably grounded their analysis in a 'democratic-civilist' model of civil-military relations, derived from European and North American experience" where the military's functions are of "an essentially non-political nature".[96]

The discourse of civilian supremacy came up as one of the major issues during Chávez's presidential campaign. His opponents questioned his military background and democratic credentials, recalling his disrespect for democratic institutions in the 1992 coup. Unfortunately for his opponents, the template of a politically neutral military officer does not fully correspond to the social forces that shape the character of the armed forces.

The praetorian or guardian functions that the Venezuelan military assumed lie in a well-established claim that the national military institutions preceded the nation-state itself. They "created the nation" in the sense that they defended her against Spanish reconquest, foreign intervention and internal strife. The army sees itself as the "the soul of the present" because it "prevents the nation from falling into barbarism", and it is "the soul of the future, because by assuring order and security of the country, it favours its progress and helps it to achieve its destiny".[97] Regardless of the accuracy of these claims, they remain strong elements in military lore and discourse.[98] This is reflected in current discourses, as in the case of a Venezuelan website that proclaims: "The Army is born with the Nation ... its preamble in times of the conquest."[99] It is especially apparent in the discourses of the MBR military movement, such as "we could not be

custodians of a genocidal regime"[100] and "we have assumed the historic responsibility to rise in rebellion . . . not against the constitutional order, which [is] continuously being violated by the government of Pérez, but against the regime which is destroying this country".[101]

The MBR's core of support came from officers who graduated with the highest grades in the military academy in 1975.[102] Through the Andrés Bello Programme, young officers were enrolled in Venezuelan universities, exposing them to civilian students of social sciences as well as Marxist or left-wing lecturers. This contributed to the politicization of the junior officers in their formative years,[103] complementing the socialized discourse about military praetorianism. The class structure of the army also influenced the military's activist posture. According to Jorge Luis García Carneiro, Chávez's minister of defence, the Venezuelan military "are not part of a caste like in other countries where the commanders of the armed forces are upper class with impressive last names".[104] For Ali, the military is the one institution not totally under the control of Venezuela's political élite.[105] Increased corruption and unmeritorious appointments directly challenged the military's élitist-proof organizational identity, which became the foundation of the MBR's grievances, as expressed in the manifesto of the 1992 coup plotters.

Setting itself apart from the corrupt Pérez regime, the MBR effectively labelled itself not only as guardian of the nation's values but also the arbiter of institutional crises. The moral indignation present in its discourse was a sharp response to the country's bankrupt moral economy that was allegedly brought about by its traditional parties. In a way, the 1992 coup was a manifestation of the MBR's hope to represent the "universal class" and their grievances.[106] It is critical to point out that this uprising did not necessarily take on a class dimension. The supporters of the MBR's coup in 1992 were not homogeneously from the masses, as supporters were also to be found among the very rich.[107] What unites these heterogeneous groups is the shared feeling of generalized discontent.[108] Using Laclau's analysis, this is a manifestation of how the populist logic is employed. The coup plotters' emphasis on their ranks of "junior officers" established a clear difference from the corrupt and clientelistic senior officers who benefited from the existing system. Projecting themselves as an injured party seeking to rectify social injustices created a discourse positioned "as an antagonistic option against the ideology of the dominant bloc",[109] and articulating the subordinate group's demands.

After the elections, Chávez assigned the military to deliver social services or *misiones* – ranging from the distribution of consumer goods to the needy to the repairing of boat engines belonging to fishermen's cooperatives in local wharves.[110] While critics saw this as an indicator of militarization and retardation of democracy,[111] Chávez's supporters saw an

emerging civilian-military relationship termed "co-responsibility". During the Caracazo's tenth anniversary, Chávez launched Plan Bolívar, stating that "ten years ago, we [military] came out to massacre people ... now we are going to fill them with love".[112] Intent on restoring public trust in the military, the armed forces were assigned non-traditional roles and were considered an active partner to civilians in national development.

With old institutions still apprehensive about Chávez's so-called Bolivarian Revolution, there were only two groups that Chávez could rely on to circumvent the institutions still opposed to him and carry out his promised reforms – the disorganized groups who brought him to power, and the army.[113] Inasmuch as it is common for post–Cold War (or what Charles Moskos calls post-modern[114]) militaries to assume more social duties like disaster relief and peacekeeping, what sets the Venezuelan military apart is its integral role in carrying out social services, usurping the roles traditionally carried out by civilians. While this has made many traditionalists uncomfortable, such a posture was duly approved by Venezuelans in the 1999 constitution.

Popular democracy, popular constitution

The enactment of the 1999 constitution officially marked the beginning of Venezuela's fifth republic. This officially changed the name of the country to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in honour of South America's liberation hero Simón Bolívar. One of the central tenets of the new Bolivarian Constitution is the declaration of "the people" as sovereign and active agents of history. Participatory democracy and popular sovereignty were declared as fundamental rights. According to article five, "state organs emanate from popular sovereignty and are subject to it". This clause was a direct response to the condemned Puntofijista democracy which emphasized party control and patronage in the name of representative democracy. Instead, the Bolivarian Constitution represented the empty signifier – "democracy" – as the rule of "the people" through popular participation. The 1999 constitution itself embodies the spirit of popular participation, as it is the first constitution in Venezuela to be created by popular referendum, with 72 per cent voting "yes".

Popular participation was put into practice through a series of referendums that gave Venezuelans the opportunity to decide directly on issues of national importance, instead of leaving this task to elected representatives. To promote political accountability, any elected official including the president can be subject to a recall referendum after completing half of his or her term, as long as the opposition gathers sufficient signatures.[115]

By submitting himself to periodic elections and referendums, Chávez was consistently able to demonstrate his legitimacy by winning a huge majority of the popular vote every time.

The government also encouraged the creation of grassroots, community-based organizations called Bolivarian Circles. Each is composed of seven to 15 individuals who discuss social issues and provide policy recommendations to the government. In their meetings, Bolivarian Circles read the constitution and discuss their rights, responsibilities and other prospects for participation.[116] These groups are also used as channels to deliver social services to the public, such as job training and short-term credit. One could say that the Bolivarian Circles serve as an avenue for democratic participation – in form and in substance – of citizens previously disenchanted with politics.

The increased participation of the masses is not without its critics. It is often opined that popular democracy and Chávez's leadership style crippled Venezuela's democratic institutions. Instead of turning citizens into mature political actors, they ended up as fanatics, crediting a single charismatic leader for their political empowerment. Supporters commonly identify themselves as Chavistas instead of Emmeveristas.[117] Although some supporters, like members of Hands Off Venezuela and MVR, identify themselves as Bolivarians more than Chavistas, Chávez's leadership is still "widely accepted as a principal course of action".[118]

Charismatic leadership takes a pejorative character when the leader is typified as someone who owes his power to his ability to play upon the masses, or what Canovan calls "populist dictatorship".[119] The phrase "play upon the masses" assumes a manipulative nature on the part of the populist. Instead of representing the will of his followers, the followers end up representing the will of the leader.[120] As a result, populists, partly due to their charisma, are accused of hijacking the institutionalized forms of representation necessary for democracy.[121]

Laclau sees this conceptualization of the populist leader as problematic: "For even if we were going to accept the 'manipulation' argument, the most it would explain is the subjective intention of the leader, but we would remain in the dark as to why the manipulation succeeds – that is to say, we would know nothing about the kind of relation which is subsumed under the label of 'manipulation'."[122] Instead, the "symbolic unification of the group" around an individual is inherent to the formation of the "people".[123] The leader is not and should not be a passive agent who merely represents the will of a particular group, but someone who can show that the will of a particular group is compatible with the interests of the community as a whole. In short, "representation is a two-way process: a movement from represented to representative, and a correlative one

from representative to represented".[124] Similarly, charisma is not an innate quality of the charismatic leader but denotes a relationship between leader and followers.[125]

While it is tempting to consider the populist leader's personal characteristics as motors for political manipulation, such a perspective ignores the collective and relational nature of democratic populist movements. There are "the complex mechanisms of linkage, reciprocity and accountability that exist between the government and civil society".[126] In the context of Venezuela, "the people" are represented by a multiplicity of grassroots organizations, the "majority of which are far more autonomous and organisationally coherent than is implied in the populist narrative".[127] Demonstrations involve people and movements assuming a populist dimension in the sense that they renounce traditional channels of representation and political mediation, instead preferring direct political participation.

The concept of popular participation is not without problems. As explained earlier, the creation of "the people" consequently creates "the other". Chávez's opponents – mostly though not exclusively from the business community, private media and the Catholic Church – consider the new democratic arrangements as illegitimate because they were "designed to facilitate hegemonic supremacy by the President and his movement, with little respect for minorities".[128] Chávez's populism introduced new rules of the game that "the other", as the minority, did not consent to. These included reforms undertaken to rectify historic injustices against "the people" which came at the expense of "the other".

A case to demonstrate this conflict is the Chávez-led land reform programme called "War against the Latifundia".[129] In a country where 75 per cent of agricultural land was owned by 5 per cent of the population,[130] land redistribution was indeed necessary to extend people's participation in the economic realm by making land productive. For the *latifundia*, despite this programme being contrary to their right to private property, it can be argued that "rather than denying the right to private property, in many ways the government has extended it to large numbers of poor people, those who have never had any productive property".[131] This kind of revolutionary measure, along with 48 other decrees enacted in 2001, altered the political playing field. The programme's title itself, "War against the Latifundia", connotes a direct antagonistic relation with "the other". Consequently, "the other", with no respect for new structures of participation, sought alternatives, often using non-democratic mechanisms to articulate their demands. These included economic sabotage, indefinite work stoppages, vigilantism and perhaps the worst attack on Chávez's leadership, the 2002 coup d'état.

Puntofijismo's attempted comeback

Among the sweeping anti-neoliberal reforms that Chávez implemented, the fiery dismissal of seven high-level PDVSA executives was the last straw for his opponents.[132] On 7 April 2002, in his weekly television programme *Aló Presidente*, Chávez summarily fired the top seven managers of the oil company. As if he were a baseball umpire, Chávez called the names of the seven managers and cried, "You're out!"

As early as March 2002 the PDVSA management and CTV started to speak publicly about an organized strike. By 4 April the PDVSA management shut down important sections of the oil company, such as gasoline distribution centres, as a sign of protest against several reforms Chávez had initiated. Such economic sabotage prompted Chávez to fire the executives three days later.

According to Mouffe, us-them antagonistic relations escalate "when the other, who until now has been considered simply as different, is perceived as putting into question our identity and threatening our existence".[133] PDVSA is symbolic of the Venezuelan élite's tight and exclusive control of the country's oil wealth. Historically, its bourgeois-dominated management enjoyed autonomy from state intervention, which signified the local élite's privileged status in society. When Chávez used the executive's prerogative to sack its management unilaterally, he directly threatened the élite's political and economic identity, similar to the land redistribution case. When Chávez brought in left-leaning managers as replacements, he effectively terminated the élite's monopoly of rule in the company. Hence, the dismissal of PDVSA executives was a particularly contentious reform because it directly challenged the important components of élite identity – autonomy and exclusivity of rule over resources.

As a result of unilaterally firing PDVSA executives, the business community, labour unions and the Catholic Church – conveniently labelled as "civil society" – organized a massive demonstration on 10 April 2002, protesting against Chávez's autocratic practices. From the corporate office of PDVSA-Chuao, demonstrators were urged to march to the Miraflores Palace, where a small crowd of Chávez supporters had been in constant vigil for the past few days. After a while, gunshots were heard. News commentators claimed that Chavistas started firing at unarmed opposition demonstrators, resulting in 10 killed and 100 wounded. It was not reported that most of those killed were Chavistas. The media repeatedly showed footage of Chavistas shooting from the Llaguno Bridge, which implied they were aiming at peaceful demonstrators beyond the view of the camera. However, in the 2003 documentary "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised", Bartley and O'Briain expanded this frame and showed that there were no anti-Chávez demonstrators below the bridge.[134] In-

stead, the Chavistas were aiming at snipers shooting at them from the buildings. As if civility was exclusive to only the "civil society", the shooting incident furthered the representation of Chavistas as inherently violent mobs led by a boorish leader.[135] This furthered the construction of the "civil society's 'other' ", consistent with an upper-class image of Venezuela's modernity: Venezuela's past is related to barbarism, poverty, isolation and autocracy. The future specifically promised by the modernizers would be a civilization based on democratic freedom and oil wealth. Unfortunately, at all levels of this modernizing project was the fear of "the other", the middle-class fear of violent, lawless barbarism personified in the figure of the black or *mestizo* Venezuelan.[136]

The shooting incident was used as justification for officials to withdraw support from Chávez, particularly the military. By 7 pm that day, heads of the armed forces began withdrawing support from the president. The military threatened to attack the Miraflores Palace if Chávez did not resign; the president was then taken and detained in an unknown location. Venezuela awoke the following day with a new president, Pedro Carmona, the head of the business organization Fedecamaras. Carmona's reign only lasted for 36 hours. Greeted by cheering crowds, Chávez returned to the palace after a 48-hour coup.

There are numerous reasons for the coup's failure. After Pedro Carmona assumed the presidency, the anti-Chávez bloc started to disintegrate. Many took offence at Carmona's appointments for being "too representative of the business community and unrepresentative of the trade unions".[137] The groups that signed the decree to grant the president's legitimacy were the same faces from Puntofijismo, while the new ministers came from either the military or the country's political right. The junior officers were also largely responsible for the coup's failure. After all, it was a junior officer, one supposedly guarding Chávez while he was in captivity, who sent a fax to the Honour Guards containing a signed statement from Chávez that he did not resign. Consequently, the Honour Guards spread the word that Chávez was still the rightfully elected president. As thrilling as it may be to valorize the strategic role of the junior officers, it is also appealing to highlight the role of "the people" in restoring Chávez back to power. Because of the private media's news blackout, the Bolivarian Circles had to rely on word of mouth to spread the news about Chávez's captivity, and consequently rallying at the Miraflores Palace to protest. Dramatic images of demonstrators holding a copy of the constitution still abound. However, as Raby appropriately pointed out, it was the "civil-military alliance that saved the revolution".[138] The notion of "co-responsibility" between the people and the military enshrined in the constitution was evident in the protesters' chants – "*Soldado, amigo, el pueblo está contigo!*"[139] The civil-military alliance was driven by the

logic of equivalence – the belief that fellow members, whether civilian or military, are substitutable for each other on the grounds that they share the same demand[140] of protecting the revolution. The logic of equivalence also extended to Chávez, in the sense that his ousting is tantamount to "the people's" ousting from democratic politics.

Conclusion

The 2002 coup, though unsuccessful, was one of the lowest points of Venezuela's democracy. The coup not only exposed the deep social fractures between Chávez's supporters and his opponents, it also exposed the lengths the opposition is willing to take to root out Chávez's leadership. However, a political field run by the populist logic of us-them differentiation is not necessarily antagonistic. Antagonisms only intensify when a collective questions and threatens the identity of another collective. The historical data outlined above explained the relevance of PDVSA as a symbol of the élite's privileged position in society. Even in recognizing the claim that the coup was premeditated, Chávez's interference in the élite's historically impenetrable turf was an understandable breaking point which led to the coup.

The coup can be seen as a mechanism for Chávez's opponents to articulate their demands. To a certain extent, the 2002 coup was induced by the same condition that led to the Caracazo and the 1992 coup – a political playing field that operated on systematic exclusion. Absence of mutually recognized democratic avenues for demand articulation created crisis situations which led to demand articulation through non-democratic means. In Venezuela, where political demands are fundamentally different, there is wisdom in Mouffe's statement – "some kind of bond must exist between the parties in conflict, so that they will not treat their opponents as enemies to be eradicated, seeing their demands as illegitimate".[141] Without this "bond", anti-democratic interruptions will continue, taking on different forms. Hence the challenge of democracy is to institutionalize existing antagonisms and consider threats as a "normal, positive condition for its functioning".[142] Without this, all the democratic advances earned by Chávez's populism will be continually subject to such anti-democratic eruptions.

Venezuela's populist democracy today makes a strong statement on the possibilities of a democratic state. Gramsci sees the state as "the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules".[143] However, Gramsci "did not envision a state that was outside of the ruling class or part of

a counter-hegemonic movement. The Venezuelan case should lead us to consider that the state can in fact be a force allied with resistance movements."[144] Indeed, there is wisdom in Laclau's contention that "hegemony does not have a determinable location within a topography of the social" because "in a given social formation, there can be a variety of hegemonic nodal points".[145] In a highly fragmented political scene, discourse and hegemony do not inherently privilege certain social institutions or classes. Similarly, democracy continues to be an "empty signifier" and an essentially contested concept, especially in the context of a polarized country where competing visions of democracy abound. While recognizing the Bolivarian Revolution's imperfections, Venezuela's emasculation of its élitist representative democracy and support for a more participatory system demonstrate that democratic alternatives exist and are worth exploring. It must be said, though, that the Venezuelan case is not meant to be considered as a "model" for alternative democratic arrangements that can be transplanted to other countries in the South. Instead, this chapter has demonstrated Venezuela's historical contingencies and the value of human agency in creating democratic alternatives. At best, the Venezuelan case is illustrative of the value of democratic imagination in creating reforms. This sends a message of hope to resistance movements that with hegemony decentred, democracy is now open to multiple possibilities.

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3

Colombia: Not the oldest democracy in Latin America, but rather a fake one

Olga Lucía Castillo-Ospina

If the concept of democracy is "government of the people, by the people and for the people" – as was stated in the introductory chapter – what is the rationale behind a democratic state that is accused by Amnesty International and the United Nations (UN) of recurrent violations of human rights, that has allowed almost 10 per cent of its population (about 3 million people) to be forcibly displaced,[1] that is contending for first place in the world as a cocaine producer and that has had an internal, armed political conflict for 60 years, among other associated problems?

In order to explore answers to these questions, the logic of this analysis is firstly based on the fact that a number of international decisions that apparently belong in the economic domain frequently have strong political implications. Secondly, in theoretical terms it is clear that all countries need to take part in the net of international relationships. The role and the status each country reaches in that net depend on the power relationships in which it is immersed. However, in practical terms the room to manoeuvre within this net is very narrow for a number of countries, given the existence of powerful mechanisms, such as official development assistance (ODA) among others. The role that a country performs in terms of ODA – as either a recipient or a donor – determines in turn whether this country can freely adopt certain international decisions or whether they are imposed upon the country. Macroeconomic measures taken under the neoliberal framework have had deep political implications all over the world. A few years after such macroeconomic measures were implemented on a global scale, they, as well as their political consequences,

Democracy in the South: Participation, the state and the people, Howe, Popovski and Notaras (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1178-0

were formalized through what is known as the "good governance" scheme. Good governance relates the economic and political domains in such a way as to demonstrate that, at all costs, a liberal economy is synonymous with political virtues such as democracy, among others.

Despite these conditions, governments of some countries (e.g. most South American countries) seem to be making broader room to exert sovereignty over their own decisions and actions. This is certainly not the case in Colombia, as the facts identified and analysed in this chapter, exposing the current economic, social and political situation, explain. The connection of those economic, social and political facts explains why armed conflict is functional to the present Colombian government – or to put it in stark terms, why there is a need to maintain and fuel the Colombian armed conflict – contradicting, therefore, any notion of democracy (including those of "substantive" and "institutional" democracy) and respect for human rights. Even so, recent analyses like the one produced and disseminated by the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Colombian democracy as a flawed democracy, after full democracies. Finally, some conclusions are presented in order to point out the main arguments.

Democracy and the web of international power relations

For quite some time now societies have been understood as integrated systems in which all of their dimensions are strongly interconnected. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware that, for example, macroeconomic measures at the global scale may have strong implications for political, social, environmental and cultural dominions: "Macroeconomic performance, mass political support and macroeconomic policy are viewed as a system of dynamic, interdependent, economical-political relationships."[2]

This is precisely the case with the relationship between neoliberal precepts and democracy for some countries, such as Colombia: a situation that possibly is also similar in many other so-called third world countries. At first glance, neoliberalism was presented and implemented as a set of economic policies that have become widespread globally. Its main points include the pre-eminence of the market, liberating enterprise or private enterprise from bonds ruled by the state; cutting public expenditure, particularly for social services; deregulation – minimizing government regulation and maximizing intervention of "market forces"; and privatization – selling state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors, including key industries.

A new scheme promoted by international institutions such as the World Bank came into the global arena, and good governance emerged from the international political context that resulted from the end of the

Cold War.[3] The good governance approach emphasizes three main elements: governance, democracy and human rights, all of them interrelated.

- *Governance*. On the governance dimension, political functions of the state garner further consideration when compared with neoliberal precepts, and planning and resource managing are included in the state's functions. It is accepted that there are three elements which have particular importance in order to fulfil the political functions of the state: accountability, openness and the rule of law.
- *Democracy*. The emphasis is on "Being committed to and applying the principles of multi-party democracy, pluralism and market economics."[4] Specific action by bilateral donors in terms of the democratic process has been, for example, support for electoral processes for representative institutions such as parliaments or constitutional commissions, and specific assistance to transitional political processes.
- *Human rights*. The third element of the good governance agenda is explicitly related to the promotion of and advocacy for the respect of human rights as a more comprehensive concept.

Although at first glance good governance appeared to be a strong shift in the international agenda, away from the "neoliberal" paradigm, the resemblance of their main features is notorious. A look at the relationship between neoliberalism and good governance suggests that the euphoric reaction of Western governments to the triumph of capitalism and the defeat of communism was soon tempered when they realized the size of the challenge to transform Eastern countries into modern market economies in the midst of an economic downturn in industrialized countries. In order to meet this challenge, Western governments proposed good governance to maintain structural adjustment measures, but added the requirements of democracy, transparency and respect for human rights: "This was the model for economic reform that was presented to the Eastern European economies after 1989. One might say that the 'good governance' approach (or 'Washington Consensus') melds together an economic reform kit tested on the Third World with political ideas promoted in Eastern Europe during the Cold War."[5]

Under this assumption, good governance continues prioritizing markets as the prime force to rule society: "the model remains market-driven. It is wedded to the neo-liberal principle of efficiency through competition. The 'good government' conception is 'consumer-led'. Customer and voter are sovereign. Governments should rise and fall by popular judgment on their performance. Companies and economies should likewise live and die by market competition."[6] Good governance emphasizes the expansive role of the private sector especially in developing social welfare institutions, which is a response to the trend of cutting public spending.

A more radical way to understand the close relationship between neoliberalism and good governance says that "the new official orthodoxy

has simply dressed up the brutal economic reforms applied in Africa and Latin America during the early 1980s in the political rhetoric of post Cold War triumphalism".[7]

Hence the historical context about 15 years ago:

> The collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union brought with it the ending of the Cold War. A rapidly emerging consensus over the twin virtues of liberal democracy and capitalism allowed Western governments to promote democracy and pluralism as desirable objectives in their own right without being seen to be imposing alien political values.[8]

So was good governance imposed, or freely adopted not only by Eastern Europe but also by a number of developing countries across the world? Autonomy, a crucial notion when it comes to the topic of democracy, will help us to explore an answer: "The state claims to be sovereign, to exercise power within its frontiers. This is central to the common notion of democracy: a government is elected in order to carry out the will of the people by exerting power in the territory of the state."[9] However, in the words of the same author, this is not altogether true, because "It attributes to the state autonomy of action that it just does not have. In reality, what the state does is limited and shaped by the fact that it exists as just one node in a web of social relations."[10]

> Both national governments, by legislating in favour of the market or by lifting barriers to the circulation of goods and capital, and Intergovernmental Organizations actively contributed to produce and shape the global economy. In what governmental action is concerned, their decisions can be considered democratic as long as the governments themselves have been democratically elected. . . Indeed, the decisions produced by these organizations can hardly be considered democratic. The criteria upon which decisions are made differ substantially from those adopted by national governments. Whereas the majority of votes legitimize national governments to act on behalf of a country's citizens, this is not the case within Intergovernmental Organizations.[11]

It is fundamental, in order to understand the extent of leeway a democratic state has, to make the connection between autonomy and the good governance approach, at least in relation to the twin virtues already mentioned: liberal democracy (the political realm) and capitalism (the economic realm).

- Firstly, and regarding the political dominion, any achievement that a state has or has had in terms of respect for the rule of law, free and multi-party elections and respect for minorities and the most vulnerable population can exist only in the setting of the web of social relations it is immersed in. To be more precise, there is a difference be-

tween the power given to the state as an abstract entity and the power that, in practice, the position of the head of state has in a given moment, in the framework of the social relations of any society; these social relations exist at all levels, from the global to the local. Does this mean, then, that we should qualify the notion of power that the state has in a genuine democracy? I believe the answer is an adamant yes.

- Secondly, and related to the economic realm, it cannot be obviated that the three mainstays of the good governance approach (governability, democracy and respect for human rights) are embedded in the market economy, a global and hegemonic proposal (or imposition, as some would say) that promotes and implements the precepts of the neoliberal model. Therefore, the autonomy of a democratic state is not only limited by the political and social relations that make up the global context, but it also has to respond to economic policies determined outside national borders: "Countries which tend towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights, market principles, should be encouraged. Governments which persist with repressive policies, corrupt management, wasteful and discredited economic systems should not expect us to support their folly with scarce aid resources which could be used better elsewhere."[12]

Together, those political and economic conditions largely constitute the frame of international power relations – indeed, so largely that, for example, all countries which are interested in being part of the international cooperation net as fund recipients have to comply with the prevailing economic and political conditions.

Despite these circumstances, a number of Latin American countries are dealing with them in such a way that they are gaining more room to manoeuvre in making sense of notions of autonomy and sovereignty. This is not true in the case of Colombia, given that the government desires so badly to be the recipient of international cooperation funds and obtain some political benefits, especially from US governments. This has placed Colombia in a very difficult and even paradoxical position, first in relation to Colombian society, but also in relation to other national governments and international organizations. The next section offers a short description of the Colombian situation in economic terms, exposing first a schematic context of the armed conflict.

Colombia: Getting away from well-being and peace

If the subject of democracy is normally an issue of much debate, in Colombia it is even more so. It is not possible to make any political or economic study of Colombia without referring to the armed conflict and

drug trafficking. Guerrilla groups of today, which 60 years ago were created as a response to social injustice, have undergone a great ideological, political and military transformation.[13] For example, their connection to drug trafficking and the appearance of paramilitary groups have changed the way they relate to Colombian society. This and many other elements in the national and international contexts have strongly changed the way in which different Colombian governments have tried to interact with the guerrillas. Attempts have ranged between peace talks (President Betancur, 1982–1986); official declarations on the illegality of the paramilitaries – extreme right-wing groups generated around 1980 to fight guerrillas[14] (Barco, 1986–1990); a first attempt to bring justice to paramilitary groups implicated in the extermination of the political party Unión Patriótica[15] (Gaviria, 1990–1994); the explicit recognition of the political status of the guerrillas (Samper, 1994–1998); the creation of temporary military exclusionary zones to hold talks (Pastrana, 1998–2002); and, most recently, military confrontation (Uribe, 2002–2010). However, some of these leaders have not always been consistent in their proposals, which, for example, have led to events such as the attack on the Casa Verde (the semi-official headquarters of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – FARC from the Spanish acronym) on 9 December 1990 – the very same day as National Constitutional Assembly elections and in the middle of peace talks.[16]

This last event was of crucial importance in terms of the democratic process. Up until then the guerrilla groups, especially the FARC, had attempted to be integrated into those processes, at least through political propaganda. However, from that day on they changed their tactics to intimidation and hampering the election processes.

> We are treating the traditional politicians very well, and let them go into all the regions, without putting pressure on them. They, however, were tolerating and applauding the massacre of the *Unión Patriotica* . . . they killed 3500 people who were organized, and that is not the game of democracy. We said: let's do the same, we're not going to kill them, but we're not going to let them work in our zone either.[17]

In the middle of a rather complicated internal political situation, the way in which the present Colombian government has chosen to take part in global social relations[18] has been through the internationalization of the conflict, and through so-called "democratic security". This "consists of the deployment of an effective authority that follows the rules, restrains and deters the violent ones, and is committed to the respect of human rights and the protection and promotion of values, plurality and democratic institutions",[19] which not surprisingly shows great similarities with the international good governance agenda.

Neoliberalism, good governance and the Colombian economic context

International institutions assert that "Governance matters for economic development. Capable governments and high-quality institutions promote growth, raise incomes, and reduce poverty."[20] Therefore, going back to the basic democratic precept of government based on majority rule and the consent of the governed for the benefit of the majority (although limited at the same time by the economic policies determined by the global agenda), what is the situation of Colombian democracy in this respect?

In regards to good governance, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) declared in 2001 the following role for the state: "a basic issue that comes up in relation to governability is the own role of a government in the economical management . . . it is expected that the governments carry out certain key functions in this regard. These include (i) keeping the economic stability, (ii) to develop infrastructure, (iii) to provide public services, (iv) to anticipate the failures characteristic of the market and (v) to promote equity."[21]

The fact that democratic states, set within the good governance framework, must undertake to respect not only the principles of multi-party politics but also those of the market economy is consistent with a political regime that promotes and protects efficiency. This is done through free competition, the free flow of capital and the growth and stability of the economy, all of which are characteristic of neoliberalism, one of the most forceful expressions of capitalism. In other words, if there is something that characterizes the democracy that is promoted nowadays, it is the alliance between the political regime and the private sector, and/or the so-called market forces, which hopefully always keep in mind democratic principles for the benefit of the majority.

At a first glance, after reviewing international and national bibliographic and statistical material, it is easy to note that Colombia has traditionally been regarded as a success story in terms of macroeconomic growth and stability. Nonetheless, a deeper analysis of statistical data shows a rather different situation. Although the increase in gross national product (GNP) has diminished in recent years, it has remained positive since 1990. Per capita data also tell a similar growth story to that of GNP growth (Table 3.1). However, the distribution of this growth and its benefits for all sectors of the Colombian population are not revealed when contrasting this information with other indicators.

Despite some discrepancies between the sources of data, the proportion of the Colombian population living in poverty has been between 50 per cent and 70 per cent since 2002 (Table 3.2).

Table 3.1 National and per capita GNP annual variation (%), 1990–2007

Year	National annual variation (%)	Per capita annual variation (%)	Year	National annual variation (%)	Per capita annual variation (%)
1990	—	—	1999	7.9	5.9
1991	29.5	26.9	2000	15.4	13.4
1992	27.6	25.1	2001	7.8	5.9
1993	31.6	29.0	2002	7.9	6.0
1994	29.2	26.7	2003	12.3	10.4
1995	25.0	22.8	2004	12.8	10.9
1996	19.3	17.0	2005	10.7	9.0
1997	20.8	18.5	2006 (p)	12.3	10.5
1998	15.4	13.3	2007 (p)	11.6	9.8

Source: State Bank Banco de la República – Statistical Series.
(p) Provisional data.

Table 3.2 Poverty in Colombia (% of population)

Source	2002	2003	2004	2005
National Planning Department	57	50.7	52.7	49.2
National University of Colombia (Economics School)	69.8	66.8	66	n.d.

Source: Heshusius, Karen (2006) "Cifras de Pobreza en todo caso preocupantes in Hechos del Callejón", No. 19, UN Development Programme, p. 2.

Statistics reveal that while in 1991 14.3 per cent of total government expenditure was invested in public education, between 2002 and 2005 it decreased to 11.1 per cent.[22] The unemployment rate in the cities, where 75 per cent of the population live, increased from 10.5 per cent to 14 per cent between the years 1990 and 2005.

According to the evaluations of the Colombian National Planning Department (DNP, from the Spanish acronym) regarding different social groups within the population, rural citizens are more affected by poverty than urban citizens, and women are more affected than men. Also, indigenous peoples and those of Afro-Colombian descent have the highest levels of poverty and extreme poverty.

In rural areas, 68.2 per cent of the population lived under the poverty line in 2005, in great contrast with urban populations. As shown in Table 3.3, in 2002 the poverty line as defined for the rural population was almost three times below the poverty line for urban populations, and this difference increased in 2005 to 3.18 times. Additionally, Table 3.3 shows that there was a small decrease in average per capita income in rural

Table 3.3 Poverty in Colombia (urban and rural areas)

	Poverty average line	Average monthly income per capita (pesos)		
	2005	2002	2005	Change
National	224.307	368.470	420.780	12.40%
Urban	246.055	445.373	513.894	13.30%
Rural	163.085	163.784	161.238	–1.60%

Source: Heshusius, Karen (2006) "Cifras de Pobreza en todo caso preocupantes in Hechos del Callejón", No. 19, UN Development Programme, p. 3.

Table 3.4 Real monthly labour income in Colombia – Current million pesos, September 2004 (urban and rural areas, 1996, 2000 and 2004)

Area	Total	Men	Women	Women/men (%)
1996				
Town seats	868.9	994.8	673.4	68.0
Outlying areas	278.0	299.4	205.3	69.0
Outlying areas/town seats (%)	32.0	30.0	30.0	
2000				
Town seats	773.0	868.1	642.2	74.0
Outlying areas	255.6	282.2	182.3	65.0
Outlying areas/town seats (%)	33.0	33.0	28.0	
2004				
Town seats	725.6	827.4	592.1	72.0
Outlying areas	292.0	330.7	197.4	60.0
Outlying areas/town seats (%)	40.0	40.0	33.0	

Source: Nuñez, Jairo, Juan Ramírez and Laura Cuesta (2007) "Determinantes de la Pobreza en Colombia 1996–2004, Misión para el diseño de una estrategia para la reducción de la pobreza y la desigualdad", National Planning Department, Bogotá, p. 23; author's calculations.

zones, which may be explained by the continuous fall since 2003 in the revenue of rural non-agricultural sectors.

These already stark differences between urban and rural poverty are even greater when the additional variation of labour income figures within rural areas is taken into account. As seen in Table 3.4, disproportionate differences between populations in town seats and outlying rural areas have increased during the last decade, in addition to real incomes decreasing for both men and women since 1996. In 1996 the average income for men and women in outlying areas was only 32 per cent of the average earned in town seats, although this increased slightly to 40 per cent in 2004. Disparities in outlying areas are relatively worse for women,

Table 3.5 Share of income or expenditure, 2003

Poorest 10%	Poorest 20%	Richest 20%	Richest 10%	Gini coefficient
0.7	2.5	62.7	46.9	58.6

Source: UN Development Programme (2007) *Human Development Report*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 282.

despite improvements from 1996. By 2004 women still received just 33 per cent of income received in town seats. When comparing data between men and women in 2000, women in the town seats received only 74 per cent of the income received by men, decreasing to 72 per cent in 2004. The situation is even worse for women in outlying areas: while they received 65 per cent of the income earned by men in 2000, by 2004 they obtained only 60 per cent.

In terms of different ethnic groups, some regions such as Chocó, largely inhabited by people of Afro-Colombian descent, have 71.3 per cent of people living below the poverty line, higher than the rural area average of 68.2 per cent. This compares to the capital Bogotá, where 29.5 per cent of people are living in poverty.

These differences mean that, in terms of income distribution, Colombia has the eleventh highest level of inequality in the world.[23] More recently available statistical data show the huge disparities between the share of income or expenditures between rich and poor people (Table 3.5).

While Colombia's poorest 20 per cent of people earned only 2.5 per cent of the income or expenditure in 2003, the richest 20 per cent enjoyed 62.7 per cent, a figure that leads to an inequality Gini coefficient of 58.6. In fact: "The Gini Consumption index in Colombia from 1998 to 2006 has improved just 0.6%, from 0.5259 in 1998 to 0.5227 at 2006. It can be concluded that over the course of 8 years of social development policies, concentration in consumption has not changed significantly in the country."[24]

When it comes to the issue of wealth concentration in Colombia, it is impossible not to refer to the concentration of land. One of the reasons identified to explain the origin of the rebel movement in Colombia is the failure of agrarian reforms in 1936. This issue was never faced by the state or by contemporary governments, and during the present administration the concentration of land has increased severely.

Millions of peasants and indigenous and Afro-descendant communities have been forcibly displaced and abandoned their lands due to the terrorizing practices of the paramilitary groups. These lands have ended

up in the hands of a few private entrepreneurs in collaboration with the state, which has given way to what has been named "a land counter-reform". Now, those considerable extensions of land have come to be part of the agro-industry businesses of oil palm and sugar cane for agro-fuels, for example. "The figures say almost everything: 13 per cent of Colombian farmers own 73 per cent of the land, while 46 per cent of small farms account for only 3.2 per cent of it (DANE). Even more dramatic: 53 per cent of registered land is concentrated in about 3,000 landowners (National University of Colombia)."[25]

Responding to the good governance agenda: The Colombian political context

In order to show how the alleged Colombian democratic tradition is a victim of the narco-guerrillas and why it needs help to defend itself, the administration of President Uribe has placed more importance on international cooperation compared to some of his predecessors. His turning of international cooperation into one of the key determinants of the nation's politics has been a very clever tactic in two senses. Firstly, because Colombia has achieved the steady commitment of the United States and the European Union to fight a common enemy in the illegal drugs cartels, it has ensured that great amounts of funds are pouring into Colombian government institutions. Secondly, the resources of international donors have rapidly served to combat insurgent groups. The success of Uribe's administration in achieving both purposes has been undeniable.

In relation to the first purpose, "In the 1990s Colombia was classified as a country of medium levels of development and was no longer a priority country in terms of development cooperation. However, the international community continued to support, decisively, Colombia's efforts to counter the effects generated by violence, the production and trafficking of illegal drugs, human rights infringements and environmental deterioration."[26] In fact, the international support has been so decisive that before 11 September 2001 Colombia was the third-highest recipient of US aid, behind only Israel and Egypt.

During Colombia's two most recent administrations, US aid has come through Plan Colombia I, Plan Colombia II and the Plan Patriota (Patriotic Plan). Plan Colombia I was expected to last for six years (from 2000 to 2005), but it ran until the beginning of 2007. The Colombian government financed US$4 billion of the US$7.5 billion that the plan required. Of this US$4 billion, US$2.5 billion came from the Colombian state budget, especially at the expense of social investments, US$600 million was raised with the mandatory sale of "peace bonds" and the remaining US$900 million (12 per cent of the total) became part of Colombia's

external debt. Nevertheless, diverse statistical data concerning drug production show that this programme has been a failure. The *New York Times* stated that: "The effort, begun in 2000 and known as Plan Colombia, had a specific goal of halving this country's coca crop in five years. This has not happened. Instead, drug policy experts say, coca, the essential ingredient for cocaine, has been redistributed to smaller and harder-to-reach plots, adding to the cost and difficulty of the drug war."[27] Despite this failure, it was stated in 2006:

> Due to changing priorities in U.S. foreign policy after 9/11 and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, Colombia has dropped from third to fifth place as the highest recipient of U.S. aid. As a result, the Colombian government is seriously concerned that aid will not be as forthcoming as it has been in previous years. But there are reasons to bet, if only in the short term, that U.S. aid, whether dubbed phase two of *Plan Colombia* or *Plan Colombia II*, will continue to pour in.[28]

Regarding the second purpose, and in the middle of the failure of Plan Colombia I and the planning for Plan Colombia II, a question of common sense that should have come to mind would be: if the spraying of drug crops does not diminish these illegal crops at a national level, why is this tool still being used, every time with more intensity? The argument put forward by Presidents Uribe and Bush – on which they seem to agree – is that control over illicit crops and drug trafficking is one of the main objectives of the conflicting armed groups, since these activities form the guerrillas' main sources of income. Such a premise provides the solution to dissolving the armed conflict by aiming to eliminate the coca and poppy crops completely. Therefore, one possible answer to our question is that what is sought by the spraying of the crops is not so much the elimination of illegal crops but the erosion of the social base of the FARC, to weaken this organization in regions of the country characterized by the existence of strong social movements.[29]

This answer is consistent with the fact that most of the funds for Plan Colombia I, over 77 per cent of them, were destined for military purposes. Based on this rationale, in 2003 President Uribe obtained even more political and financial support from the Bush administration to establish Plan Patriota. In its article "Plan Patriota: What $700 Million in U.S. Cash Will and Will Not Buy You in Colombia?", the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA) asserts that:

> The obejctive of Plan Patriota is to break the balance of the conflict and mortally weaken the FARC guerrillas, both militarily and economically . . . This offensive, which began in 2003, was at the time a classified operation. Since then,

and for the first time in history, the U.S. is intervening directly in the heart of the conflict to help Bogotá contain the guerrillas and protect U.S. military and economic interests in the country and region.[30]

The fact that Plan Patriota was a classified operation meant that it was only presented in the Colombian press for the first time – and therefore to the Colombian public – on 25 April 2004, a full year after it was approved.

Another possible answer to why such a persistent and mistaken anti-drugs strategy is being waged is that oil is one of the valuable natural resources present in some regions where guerrillas are set up. Given the fact that Colombia possesses important oil reserves, and in 2007 was the twelfth-largest oil supplier to the United States, partial funding of Plan Colombia served to protect key oil pipelines and other related infrastructure.[31]

However, the political, social and ethical cost paid for this apparent success has been very high, especially for Colombian institutions and civil society. "If President Pastrana was the Americanization of the Colombian security policy, while . . . a comprehensive development strategy ended up adapting to the agenda and the interests of the US government, President Uribe is the 'Colombianization' of the US security strategy in the country, which is the internalization of the views of Washington; not an adaptation of an initiative, but a translation of the diagnosis, policy and US demands."[32]

In trying to achieve US demands to demonstrate adequate and efficient use of resources from the United States and other donors, the Colombian government has proceeded against its own laws and legal institutions, and even against the most basic humanitarian norms. Some of the negative actions within this context are briefly described as follows.

- There is no consensus about the success in restraining the guerrillas' armed actions as a result of Plan Colombia I and Plan Patriota. While some consider that these movements do not show signs of weakness, official data claim that great successes against them have been achieved.
- In the first week of March 2008 the number-two leader of the FARC was killed in Ecuador in an armed cross-border incursion by the Colombian national army. It was another opportune "victory" for the present Colombian government, in light of the success, just before, of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in mediating the liberation of four important hostages of the FARC. President Chávez, as a strong political adversary of President Uribe, took advantage of the global media to criticize Uribe's democratic security strategy. The Colombian army's victory was strongly questioned, due to the obvious implications of the

violation of Ecuadorian territory, and the adverse effects of having another bordering country as an opponent within the region.

- One of the results of this action was that negotiations on the humanitarian exchange of hostages with the government came to a standstill.
- Some incidents have been rather horrid and worrying, due to the implementation of a reward scheme. For example, a guerrilla rebel who assassinated and cut off the hand of his leader, as proof of his identity, was highly and publicly rewarded.[33] What kind of message is being sent to common citizens through such government actions? A planned assassination is simply that – an assassination in cold blood. However, for Colombia's governmental institutions, it apparently depends on who is killed.
- These messages have led to even more horrid situations relating to what are euphemistically named by the media as "false positive" cases. They are simply extra-judicial killings of civilians that the Colombian army has practised in order to receive payments as reward. More than 2,000 people killed and portrayed as dead enemies from combat were, in fact, unemployed young people from the poorest neighbourhoods or peasants abducted by the national army and dressed in FARC uniforms before being killed in cold blood. Surely these murders should be referred to as state-sponsored crimes?
- On more than one occasion, Amnesty International has accused the Uribe government of violating the human rights of the civilian population on suspicion of sympathizing with guerrillas, through the use of official legal resources.
- Additionally (in early December 2008) the NGO Justice for Colombia, a group of forensic specialists and qualified national and foreign lawyers, obtained access to secret Ministry of Defence documents which provide evidence that the payment of rewards to soldiers who have demonstrated that they have killed guerrilla men in combat "come from the State and others from international cooperation".[34]
- On the other side, the paramilitary demobilization process has raised a lot of criticism (and has been accused of being fake), because the laws related to it seem to be complacent in terms of negotiations on the reintegration into civilian life of paramilitaries, and likewise on the issue of amnesty for paramilitary crimes, which are as vicious as those of the guerrillas.
- Moreover, the Colombian government has ignored UN recommendations related to the installation of commissions of inquiry about the alleged links of the paramilitary groups with the national army and other Colombian government security forces.
- This kind of omission has also contributed to the disregarding of accusations about links between paramilitary groups and regional politicians; once revealed, these links led to a new, extended phenomenon

known as the "para-political", in which day-by-day evidence of Colombian politicians cooperating with paramilitary militias has come to light. Since several years ago, both individuals and civil society organizations have been denouncing the links between the Colombian army and the paramilitary groups. The latter have typically been doing the army's dirty work, such as intimidation, massacres and forced displacement in regions under the control of the guerrillas, before the Colombian army moves in to take control of such areas. It is well known, too, that just like the rebel groups, paramilitary groups are heavily involved in the production and trafficking of drugs. Additionally, in June 2005 not only the army but also several congresspersons connected with the paramilitary groups were denounced publicly. The allegations stemmed from a statement by the leader of an extreme-right armed group, Salvatore Mancuso, who said that 35 per cent of the members of the Colombian Congress were "friends" of his organization. This fact is still on trial and has resulted in the resignations of and issuing of arrest orders against government ministers, congresspersons, directors of official institutions and business people, many of them belonging to the political movement of President Uribe. These events are clear proof that the privatization of the supposedly democratic Colombian state is a reality involving not only the economic élite of the country but also the darkest elements of Colombian society, such as the armed groups and the drug cartels.

In addition to the obvious strong criticism over these practices, these procedures have created a paradoxical situation because, in trying to satisfy donors' expectations, the present Colombian government has crossed the most basic boundaries. At the same time, this has made some of those donors (especially some Europeans) start to question strongly their support to Colombia. Also, in wanting so badly to take part in the web of international political relations, the current Colombian government has chosen to deal with its political autonomy in such a way that its room to manoeuvre is precariously narrow, while – and in precisely the opposite way – the international relations strategies of all remaining Latin American countries are looking to recover wider levels of practical self-rule.

The above facts demonstrate the strong reservations held about the basic level of democracy in Colombia within the political realm. The next paragraphs will analyse some issues in the economic realm.

Does the Colombian government want to win the war or maintain the war?

There is war in Colombia because of the presence of displaced people, who themselves become fundamental to promoting the government's "democratic security" strategies, even if the high costs already mentioned

have to be paid. These strategies are presented as part of the national security measures for development (as they were with Plan Colombia). But what kind of development does that refer to? Evidently, is it the kind that supports the growing of agro-industrial crops such as sugar cane and palm oil, which bring benefits simultaneously to the government and transnational corporations operating in the country.

For those who accept that there are people who have been forcibly displaced in order to sustain the war, there are at least two perspectives. The moderate one indicates that the democratic security measures are not anti-narcotic but anti-insurgency in nature. By eliminating in general all groups and resistance organizations, it is possible to achieve a successful counter-agrarian and peaceful reform – that is, the concentration of land in the hands of the legal and illegal economic élites (private entrepreneurs and paramilitaries, respectively).

The other perspective is more incisive and emphasizes that, in removing the armed conflict, it becomes more difficult to implement development models such as the government's preferred one based on agro-fuels businesses. Having a situation of armed conflict provides the perfect opportunity, for any resistance to this kind of development can be characterized easily as a rejection of development. Alleged opposition to "progress" is directly associated with the rebel movement, putting into practice the polarized logic of war that "if you're not with me, you're against me". This logic of war also applies to the guerrillas, who similarly distort and reject any proposal that comes from the state.

Under this perverse logic, if there were no guerrillas, the government could not criminalize those who disagree with it and, in turn, if the government (and all its allies) were not the enemy, the guerrillas would lose their enemy and therefore their *raison d'être*. Hence, the arguments underlying the idea of democratic security are necessary for defining and keeping alive an enemy that provides the context and the excuse to act in defence of the so-called good.[35]

Despite the steady increase in economic growth in Colombia, the aforementioned alliance between the political regime and the private entrepreneur élites has been detrimental to the living conditions of most Colombian inhabitants in regard to their basic rights such as to own land, have an education and so on.

If an internal armed conflict by itself places the civilian population in a very difficult situation, the events described above leave them in even worse circumstances. This is because the original internal and "domestic" conflict is nowadays a conflict with heavy external support, especially regarding military infrastructure. Also, this identifies the United States and other countries that provide cooperation as actors who are intervening for war rather than for peace.[36]

Nevertheless, the continuity of the armed conflict does not equal the failure of the state, because the funds of international cooperation have earned more than just dividends. Not only does the money keep flowing, but the Uribe government has positioned itself as the steady and strategic ally of the United States at a time when Latin America has witnessed a rebirth of resistance movements through the governments of Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, as well as from civil society organizations.

Colombia: Not even a flawed democracy

The conceptual proposals of democracy are just as contested in theory as the ways of measuring it are in reality. We will now take the most recent indicators built around democracy, proposed by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

Ranking 167 countries around the world in 2007, the EIU Democracy Index classifies countries across four political regime types: 28 countries enjoyed full democracies, 54 had flawed democracies, 30 were in the midst of hybrid regimes (which refers to regimes with "some level" of democracy) and 55 suffer under authoritarian regimes. In terms of population, only 13 per cent of the world's population reside in full democracies, although more than half live under a democracy of some sort. Almost 40 per cent of the world's population live under authoritarian regimes. In first place under the category of full democracy was Sweden, followed closely by Iceland and the Netherlands. Near the bottom of this category were the United States (17), Britain (23) and France (24). As can be expected, the developed OECD countries (with the notable exception of Italy) dominate among full democracies, although there are also two Latin American countries, two Central European countries and one African country, indicating that the level of development is a significant but not binding constraint. Only one Asian country, Japan, makes the grade as a full democracy.[37]

By linking democracy and development, firstly, it is stated that the level of development is not a binding obstacle to achieving full democracy. How then can it be explained that the 25 countries with the highest incomes, and which are all OECD members, all make the full democracy category with the exception of one? In contrast, there is only one country (Mauritius) that is considered a "full democracy" out of the 59 countries that make up Africa and two countries (Costa Rica and Uruguay) out of the 41 that make up Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC).

Almost half the LAC countries were in the next category, that of "flawed democracies". Among these were Chile (30), Brazil (42) and

even further down a group of countries that includes Colombia (67). Other Latin American countries like Nicaragua (89), Ecuador (92) and Venezuela (93) were in the next category, the hybrid democracies. Only Cuba (124), among the LAC countries, was categorized as an authoritarian regime.

This EIU Democracy Index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. Colombia obtained its rank of sixty-seventh position with a high score of 9.17 (out of 10.00) given to the election process and its multi-party politics. This is surprising, precisely because this is one of the main elements lacking in Colombian democracy, for structural and contingent reasons.

Regarding structural reasons, one of the factors that leads to the void in Colombian democracy is that "the Colombian State is made up as an institutional-legal-political entity . . . that develops views, policies and actions that summarize, represent and defend the interests of the capitalist class that dominates the country",[38] and thus becomes a privatized state. A fact that bears witness to this situation is the presidential campaign of former President E. Samper, who governed between 1994 and 1998, and was financed by the three largest private financial groups of the country (Sarmiento Angulo, Ardila Lule and Santo Domingo). Since this was an electoral campaign that occurred within a democratic context, it is peculiar that it is totally acceptable, even a reason for pride, that the campaign was financed by the most powerful private economic groups in Colombia. This has been a characteristic of the ruling political class in Colombia for many decades.[39]

Concerning contingent reasons, the strong unification of the Colombian political class has been one of the outcomes of the approach of the current Uribe administration. According to Ferro:

> the significant complaints to the Uribe project are less and less from the upper classes. Proof of this is that the traditional Conservative party yielded completely to this project, while the Liberal party, seeing that several of its main leaders scattered towards the party of President Uribe, was reduced to its simplest form, not to mention the almost unanimous support that Uribe gets from the big companies and the army.[40]

Therefore, while the Colombian state was traditionally controlled by the Conservative and Liberal parties, they have represented class interests that are nowadays expressed through the big companies and financial groups of the country which have significant influence upon state-issued policies and guidelines.

The above factors indicate why it is not possible to consider that Colombia has satisfied "the condition of having free and fair competitive

elections, and . . . related aspects of political freedom".[41] This leads to the absence of other elements of democracy. As has recently been stated in the Colombian press, when referring to the already-discussed Democracy Index:

> it contemplates five factors that define democracy: the existence of free and fair elections, which is the basic concept of democracy; the existence of civil freedoms (of speech, of assembly and others without which the free elections would make no sense); the good working order of the government (it is of no use to have free elections if the government cannot make the decisions of the majority into a reality); a political culture (if the citizens feel apathy, obedience and docility towards their leaders, a true democracy cannot exist); and, lastly, the active participation of citizens, not only in the elections, but in the discussions and campaigns, and in the whole political process.[42]

A clear election process is a prerequisite of a genuine democracy, because from it stem the other elements; if free elections do not exist, the other four aforementioned factors cannot exist either. In other words, a democracy shaped through clear and fair elections is not possible unless at the same time the population has access to political education, free and truthful information, the benefits of social capital, the right to assemble, through civil society organizations for example, and laws that will punish corruption. Therefore, the elements of this first democracy indicator are redundant; the four other elements should be included in the first. Meanwhile, the indicator neglects to include other factors, more structural in nature, which would give more solid information about democratic practices and the democratic regimes of many different countries.

Evidently, the current situation of Colombian democracy is far from what it seems to be. The presence of shady political alliances, widespread corruption and paramilitary groups linked with many politicians that violate even the most elementary of human rights and the safety of whole communities is so pervasive that it is difficult to comprehend the reasons for the EIU Democracy Index classifying Colombia as merely a flawed democracy. Therefore, I would like to put forward the notion of a "fake democracy" to describe present-day Colombia in a more accurate way.

Conclusion

In relation to the perceptions that exist over the concept of "development" and the practical implications of those perceptions, the author cannot help but note that a reasonable consensus is reached: "development" and "democracy" build upon similar lines. Yet governments and organizations that make influential decisions at a global level, decisions that

have an impact on millions of people around the world, assume universal positions over terms like "development" – terms that are both relative and ambiguous. We can find many instances of such confusion in the data held by countries like the United States, as well as in international organizations. For example, "The North American internationalism: promotes freedom, democracy and development."[43] As Irving Horowitz, a well-known sociology and political science professor, points out, "the world's only superpower is rhetorically and militarily promoting a political system that remains undefined – and it is staking its credibility and treasure on that pursuit".[44]

Nevertheless, "Even if a consensus on precise definitions has proved elusive, most observers today would agree that, at a minimum, the fundamental features of a democracy include government based on majority rule and the consent of the governed, the existence of free and fair elections, the protection of minorities and respect for basic human rights. Democracy presupposes equality before the law, due process and political pluralism."[45] The resemblance of these basic elements to the contemporary notion of "good governance" is evident, which suggests that its agenda is the practical way to make developing countries pursue democracy.

The state has a relative level of power and autonomy as a part of a democratic system immersed in a framework of national and global social relations. The widespread concepts of democracy assume fair and clear election processes as a fundamental characteristic. From this derives a series of benefits, such as the promotion of human rights for everyone, especially for minorities and the most vulnerable sectors of the population, including their participation and their right to organize and access social welfare.

However, to have genuine election processes, some other elements (that maybe be taken for granted in fully democratic countries) are fundamental: access to education and to free and impartial information, and equality under the law.

The fact that those elements are not present in countries like Colombia strongly suggests that structural changes are necessary in order to escape from the vicious circle we seem to be caught in. These structural failures, combined with others that are more circumstantial, such as the cohesion of the traditional political parties on the subject of the privatization of the state, lead to a progressive distortion of any alleged democracy, and contradict the fundamental supposition of the "common good" to favour only the industrial, financial and political élites of the country. On the other hand, as has been illustrated through the Colombian case, the alleged democratic state has managed to counter insurgent groups in such a way that the scaling up of the war seems to have been the only answer to the armed conflict. This has resulted in a disastrous coalition of the

government with the economic élites, extreme-right armed groups and the drug-trafficking mafias; all for the benefit of a minority to the detriment of the majority of the Colombian population. Without doubt, the continuity of the Colombian armed conflict has been beneficial for the Colombian state and, in particular, for the current Uribe administration, while being extremely detrimental for the inhabitants of the regions in dispute and the citizens of the lower classes all over the country.

Finally, the privatization of the Colombian state benefits the economic élites of the country by allowing them to profit from the funds of international cooperation and from being US allies at a time when resistance movements are peaking all over Latin America.

Notes

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2. Hibbs, Douglas Jr (1981) "Contemporary Political Economy: An Overview", in D. Hibbs Jr and H. Fassbender (eds) *Contemporary Political Economy*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing.
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4. EBRD (2001) "About the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development", available at www. ebrd.com.
5. Archer, note 3 above, p. 12; Potter, D. (2000) "Democratization, Good Governance and Development", in T. Allen and A. Thomas (eds) *Poverty and Development into the 21st Century*. London: Open University in association with Oxford University Press; Robinson, Mike (1994) "Governance, Democracy and Conditionality: NGOs and the New Policy Agenda", in Andrew Clayton (ed.) *Governance, Democracy and Conditionality: What Role for NGOs?* Oxford: International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC).
6. Archer, ibid., p. 4.
7. Ibid., p. 13.
8. Robinson, note 5 above, p. 36.
9. Holloway, John (2002) *Change the World without Taking Power – The Meaning of Revolution Today*. London: Pluto Press, p. 23.
10. Ibid.
11. Couret, Branco (2007) "The Logic of Globalization and Substantive Democracy", Documento de Trabalho No. 2007/01, Departamento de Economia, Universidad de Évora, Portugal.
12. British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd, speech in June 1990, quoted by Robinson, note 5 above, p. 47.
13. Regarding the origin of the Colombian guerrillas, for some analysts it goes back to 9 April 1948, the day that Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, a Liberal candidate for the presidency of the republic, was killed and the era of "violence" began. For others, the source of the rebel movement is found in several events, such as the failure of agrarian reform in 1936 and the heavy repression that the Conservative government exerted after the

assassination of Gaitán upon any attempts for social organization, while providing more support to the landowners and the oligarchy. This government also offered support to the United States in the Korean War, which resulted in cooperation between the United States and Colombia and the United States providing weapons to Colombia, escalating the conflict that had already begun. As a result, "crews" were created in rural areas against landowners, some under the communist ideology and some under liberal tutelage; later on, in about 1952, these became a guerrilla movement. Other facts were the expulsion of smallholder peasants from their lands and the eviction of tenants who lost their crops and improvements. Instead, heavy support was offered to large plantation owners, which accelerated class polarization and the concentration of land ownership, mainly in the coffee-producing region, which was previously predominantly occupied by smaller landholders. In the 1960s the major guerrilla groups were born: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP from the Spanish acronym) and the National Liberation Army (ELN from the Spanish acronym), which are both currently still fighting against the state.

14. The origin of the self-defence groups in Colombia goes back to the late 1960s when the Colombian Congress authorized the mobilization of civilians for tasks to restore normality, giving powers to the minister of defence and the commanders to consider as "private property" weapons which until then had been used exclusively by the armed forces. More recently, in 1994 the same phenomenon was again present when the Cooperative Services of Private Security (CONVIVIR from the Spanish acronym) were created as agents to support the work of the armed forces in the task of controlling the subversion in rural areas. Some analyses on this topic have pointed out that present paramilitary groups emerged out of CONVIVIR, namely the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). Initially, the AUC was located in areas where rural residents could pay for its service as a private security force that joined with the armed forces in the task of maintaining public order. Generally, productive activities concentrated in these areas were large plantations of industrialized agriculture and export, extensive and intensive cattle farming and industries engaged in the exploitation of natural resources. In recent years AUC actions have been directed towards the seizure of large areas for the establishment of agro-industrial activities – supported by Colombian economic élites – or as corridors for the movements of paramilitary forces. Its control of territory was gained through massacres, executions and other individual and collective terror actions which led to the forced displacement of populations.
15. The Unión Patriótica was a political party, backed by the FARC, that originated during the peace talks. Its leaders and members have been systematically murdered since the mid-1980s.
16. The National Constitutional Assembly, which would write up a new constitution (the 1991 constitution) to replace one that had lasted for over 100 years, was convened as a result of an institutional crisis in the Colombian government, brought about by the armed conflict, the lack of agrarian reform, corruption, impunity from the legal system, private armies and many other structural faults within the Colombian state.
17. Ferro, Juan-Guillermo and Graciela Uribe (2002) *El Orden de la Guerra – Las FARC-EP: Entre la Organización y la Política*. Bogotá: Centro Editorial Javeriano. Interviews with the FARC commanders Ivan Rios and Fernando Caicedo, p. 137. Author's translation.
18. I refer to international diplomatic relations (formal diplomatic relations), international politics (state-to-state interaction) and international relations (includes state to non-state and non-state to non-state relations).
19. Presidency of the Republic of Colombia (2004) *International Cooperation Strategy*. Bogotá: Colombian Agency for International Cooperation and Foreign Affairs Ministry, p. 33, available at www.colombiaemb.nl/es/cooperacion/documents/EstrategiaCooperacion.pdf.

20. World Bank (2007) *State and Markets in World Development Indicators*. Washington, DC: Oxford University Press, p. 259.
21. ADB (2001) "Good Governance Defined", Asian Development Bank Development Topics, available at www.adb.org. It is important to point out that different international institutions follow slightly different variations of the good governance model. In Asia the World Bank seems to be a bit more lenient, because the Asian tigers have had extensive state intervention as a central component of their development models from the 1960s to the 1980s. This is the same for the Asian Development Bank. Also it is important to note that there is no democratic component when it comes to prescriptions for Asian countries. All that are required are transparency and more efficient economic transactions.
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4

Consensus or conflict? The problem of an anti-political imagery of democracy in contemporary Argentina

Mariana Garzón Rogé and Mariano Perelman

This chapter aims to analyse the political imagery which supports the idea of what democracy in contemporary Argentina is. The analysis shows that we are facing an "anti-political" imagery of democracy, according to the theoretical keys proposed by Chantal Mouffe.[1] Argentinian democratic imagery is "anti-political" in a double sense: on the one hand, democracy is reduced to its procedural principles, excluding social demands as "anti-democratic"; on the other hand, the distinction between opponents, friends and enemies is blurred in a dangerous frontier dominated by a superficial concept of pluralism which is hegemonic.

Two manifestations of this "anti-political" imagery of what democracy is in contemporary Argentina are presented as cases for the reader to reflect upon. Through these two cases, it is possible to indicate the hegemonic place that has the idea of "consensus" in democracy: a hegemony which – following the analytical framework proposed by Mouffe – can put the existence of a radical democracy at risk. This hegemony pretends to erase something which is ineradicable in current societies: "conflict". If conflict is simply ignored, then there is no possibility to channel it through political mechanisms and therefore traces of authoritarianism emerge in communities.

In the first place, in line with Mouffe, we will analyse the concept of democracy theoretically as a place in which conflict has an inherent role. After that, we will argue for the necessity of pluralism and its respective need for limits. The authors will propose that in Argentina, with the aim of imposing a complete idea of democracy, a post-political or

Democracy in the South: Participation, the state and the people, Howe, Popovski and Notaras (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1178-0

anti-political concept has turned hegemonic. This concept does not allow an understanding of the real and complex tensions in which the definition of democracy is the objective of a fight in the social and political arena.

Two cases will be provided in order to explain the problem: why the vindications of unemployed workers (*piqueteros*) are seen as undemocratic; and how it is still possible, even today, to see groups supporting the last military coup.

Democracy and post-politics

Ernesto Laclau said that, nowadays, "inherent dislocations to the social relationships in the world we live in are deeper than in the past, because the categories that synthesize social experience are increasingly turning obsolete".[2] Thus, humankind's way of living should be thought out, with the aim of enlightening its present and future possibilities.

Democracy as a political social system seems to be the most adequate regime for the characteristics of modern life. However, its definition loses its political origin when it is manipulated to disguise the authoritarian ground upon which wild capitalism grows. A distinct reflection has become necessary to establish clearly what democracy is, what its political characteristics are and what its chances of survival are in a world of growing inequality. As Mouffe remarks, "the moment has come to analyse its principles, to examine its functioning, to discover its limitations and to value its possibilities".[3]

Mouffe proposes a very interesting theory about democracy. Her main objective is to fight against what she calls "postpolitics", which is the cultural and political hegemonic atmosphere of today. The post-politics perspective affirms that we are in a world that is on the way of progress, in a world "without enemies" in which "consensus" can be obtained through dialogue. Mouffe says that far from contributing to a "democratization of democracy", the post-political consensus causes problems to democracy because it denies the antagonistic dimension which is necessary to social life.

Putting aside the rationalist illusion of a formula through which the different aims of humankind can be harmonized, Mouffe[4] proposes that it is a question of assuming the radical impossibility of a society in which antagonism can be eliminated; that is, conflict will always be there, whether we think about it or not. Certain ways of life are incompatible with others. We could imagine a society in which some of its members consider it right to stone a woman on account of infidelity and others do not. Which criteria of justice would prevail if the members of that society do not harmoniously agree about how such issues should be dealt with? In

any case, one would have to consider the consequences of such a society, in light of the absence of capable institutions that could arbitrate decisions.

Liberalism has imposed the idea that antagonism can be eliminated by the rational and individual consensus. However, this imagery only exacerbates the conflict and imposes a power whose conjectural construction has been disguised. Mouffe characterizes the pluralist democracy as a regime in accordance with the complex characteristics of the world. She describes it as a regime flexible enough to allow its members to live in a community in which the least possible amount of liberty would need to be sacrificed. Within democracy, institutional procedures are not enough to create an essential political unit. There should also be substantial homogeneity to recognize a common space in order to solve conflicts.

In accordance with this, the authors consider democracy in the contemporary world as being necessarily pluralist. The political, economic, social and cultural characteristics of real-world relations demand pluralism as the unique way in which individuals can live together in a common space. That is, by encouraging as much plurality as possible, what is constitutive of democracy must not be given up. The pluralist democracy which Mouffe identifies implies a belief in a common space for discussion where an opponent could exist.[5]

To Mouffe, what is important is an idea that is seemingly contradictory at first glance: understanding the impossibility of eradicating conflict is a necessity for living in a common pluralistic space. "[In order] to deal with the question of pluralism in a political way it is necessary to acknowledge its limits."[6] The limits, says Mouffe, should exist to a level of a certain idea of the political community, and crystallize in institutions and intellectual principles – that community's political principles, therefore. These limits will show what Mouffe considers to be the main characteristic of pluralism: the distinction between "opponents" and "enemies".

A political community gathered together as "us" involves "opponents" whose existence is legitimate and who must be "tolerated". Opponents' ideas can be fought, but their right to defend them will never be questioned. Instead, the "enemies" are those who question the proper basis of the democratic order, and therefore must be excluded from the community.

The task of democracy is not to overcome conflict through a consensus but to activate a democratic confrontation by conducting an "antagonistic" fight through an "agonic" fight. According to Mouffe, the "antagonistic" fight is produced by an "us-and-them" relationship in which "us" and "them" are enemies that try to eliminate each other. Alternatively, the "agonic" fight is produced by an "us-and-them" relationship which permits recognition of the opponent's values and ideas. The relationship

between "opponents" is, according to Mouffe, an "agonic" relationship, and one that exists inside a pluralist democracy. Nevertheless, the relationship between community and "enemies" is "antagonistic" and cannot be tolerated within the framework of a plural democracy. The antagonistic relationship must be transformed into an agonic relationship (if it does not exceed the limits) in order to be part of the democratic game.[7]

It could then be thought that the limits of pluralism are determined by the frontier set with enemies who make an attempt against democracy itself. This situation could be produced because there are no founding limits for plurality; no limits rejecting anti-democratic expressions. If pluralist democracy finds its character in existing in the tension between what is legitimate and what is tolerable, the question of who sets the limits of what democracy is can still be asked. In other words, who sets the limits about what is legitimate or tolerable, and what is intolerable?

There are always very distinct ways of interpreting political principles. Who has the right to do it? Facing the matter of the impossibility of a wholly reconciled society, Ernesto Laclau[8] proposes that there is an "absent plenitude" or a "failed totality" in which conflict is the centre of life in a community. In other words, there is always a fight between those who want to construct a hegemonic ground to govern, and this fight will not stop in a democracy.

If we accept these premises, we arrive at the following conclusion: true democracy lies in the permanent attempt to find something which will never appear. Then, questions about who decides the limits to pluralism and how to reconcile different perspectives about political principles become the two considerations that must be taken into account. The subject of hegemony turns out to be the main issue in this reflection about democracy.

In Argentina, the hegemonic idea of democracy is post-political or anti-political in two senses: first, because its meaning is restricted only to procedural aspects of democracy; and second, because at the same time the idea of pluralism is unlimited, a fact which causes the inclusion in the democratic space of expressions against it. We will demonstrate, by analysing two cases, how the idea of "consensus" underlines present democratic discourses and how "conflict" is denied.

Starting point: The process of national reorganization and the neoliberal age

Argentina's suffering was triggered on 24 March 1976. A military junta, consisting of Jorge Rafael Videla (army forces), Emilio Eduardo Massera (navy) and Ramón Agosti (aeronautical forces), took over power from

María Estela Martínez (also called "Isabelita" at her own wish), the widow of Juan Domingo Perón.

The military's arrival in power was received with sympathy by many civilians, who found them to be the only solution to economic problems and the situation of "disorder", the root of which was meant to be based in the political mobilization of popular groups and the action of armed militants.

It started what uniformed personnel called the "Process of National Reorganization".[9] The term suited the situation well, because the military's objective was to transform the whole of Argentina's political, economic, social and cultural community life and establish a new order. Their aim was to "reorganize the society". Arrests, interventions by the unions and other worker organizations, and the prohibition of the political activities of students and left-wing political parties were everyday occurrences.

Isabelita had already given the military permission to fight against the guerrillas, and from 1976 state terrorism became the norm. Their methods and the precise way they acted had never been used before.[10] The legal means of the state to judge people were changed into clandestine repression. In 1977 the military argued that the large number of deaths was the consequence of public confrontations between armed groups and the police; this disguised the true situation in which the military threw corpses down the Río de la Plata or buried them in common graves. Even today, the majority of those citizens who have "disappeared" via state-sponsored torture and assassination are still missing.

Repression was not only geared towards the armed groups, which by 1977 were almost without social support, but also towards the workers' unions, student unions, artists, journalists and intellectuals. Marcos Novaro affirms that "the insecurity which had accompanied the years of rebelliousness, more spectacular in terms of defiance and disorder than in terms of reformist and innovating productivity, encouraged [a good part of the civil society] to think that the military order was the only possible option for a society which had lost its way".[11]

To show their disapproval of the regime, many citizens turned to antipolitics. Even the political parties which did not integrate the rightist groups, such as the Unión Cívica Radical or part of the Peronists, sometimes lent their support to the military, and even negotiated with them to establish a civilian-military solution to the situation. It is paradoxical to learn that it was the military junta which aborted the plans.[12]

The dictatorship had other impacts, one of which was the dismantling of a state which had previously been involved in many productive service activities. Before 1976 Argentinian society had highs levels of formal employment (98 per cent in 1975).[13] There existed a homogeneous working class and a heterogeneous dominant class. Citizenship was linked to

formal working relations. To have social security and social rights depended on having a formal job. Also, social and political relations as well as social identities were linked to a person's field of work.

After seven years of military government, a new social equation had been imposed: a homogeneous dominant class (based on the domination of financial capital and some locally concentrated capital) now combined with a heterogeneous popular class.[14] The result of the so-called "*Proceso*" was the disappearance of 30,000 people and the creation of an environment amicable to a neoliberal regime.

However, the regime started to show its limits. Argentina was isolated from the international community, exiled people began to have voices and influence on foreign public opinion and the families of disappeared persons started to ask about their relatives.[15] This made what was happening in Argentina, including internal divides within the military government's top brass, economic difficulties and the military failure in the Falklands war in 1982 (where 700 Argentinians died), more visible to the world, until it finally strangled the authoritarian regime. It was the beginning of the so-called "transition" to democracy.

The *piqueteros* as anti-democratic people

Argentina has experienced major changes during the last few decades as the country has embraced a new developmental model based on open economies and global competition. This process was started by the military government, which dramatically transformed the social structure of Argentina. Unemployment increased considerably as jobs became more precarious. Political support for the ideology behind state intervention changed from a model of inclusive policies and ideals to targeted policies and individualistic ideals. Although these transformations started during the dictatorship, they continued on in the elected governments and the neoliberal policies which were implemented, as never before, during the 1990s by Carlos Menem's government (1989–1999).[16]

These changes were not unique to Argentina. However, rising unemployment became more than just an economic problem in Argentina because, unlike other countries, social citizenship had historically been articulated through formal work relationships. Therefore, when unemployment rose to 24 per cent during the first years of the new century, not only were the social rights of a great part of the population questioned, but also their identities, due to the fact that the "work" component of their lives was no longer a central determinant of their image and status.

Over the last decade, new political actors have appeared in the form of the *piqueteros*. These movements began to demand what they consider

their main rights, and questioned the capability of "traditional" actors to represent political parties and unions. They protested by blocking bridges, highways and streets. As they were expelled from the job market, most of them resorted to state assistance to create new work relations by practising a new form of collective action, *piquete*. This was seen as being "against democracy" from the hegemonic point of view.

More than covered faces

The *piqueteros* social movement was formed from complex and diverse social organizations that got together in specific situations to oppose, or demand something from, the Argentinian state. As Manzano[17] argues, the *piqueteros* organizations have developed a series of contentious collective actions that have stimulated specific forms of state intervention in order to address problematic dimensions of everyday life, such as work relations, food, health and education. *Piqueteros* claim, from different state agencies, food, medicines and social plans (these are the so-called "fight plans" because they are won in a fight).[18]

Nevertheless, *piquete* is only one of the practices the *piqueteros* engage in. In their everyday practices they try to change their unemployed status, but create a common identity as "unemployed workers" (*trabajadores desocupados*). This complex and contradictory process is generated through a series of activities they have named "productive projects". Within this category they include communal vegetable gardening, communitarian bakeries, leather crafts, the sale of cleaning articles, soup kitchens, etc.[19] These projects are intended to change work relations by democratizing decisions and production, driven by communitarian values. Thus productivity does not refer exclusively to the economic field.

For the members of *piqueteros*, being part of these productive projects is an opportunity to be part of a group and have the possibility of producing valuable social goods again. Many interviewees refer to their work relations as "free" because they compare their ways of production with capitalist ones.

Being a worker is not only about earning money (material reproduction), but also about the possibility of becoming a complete human being and of reconstructing themselves as useful people. Also, work is one of the main components of the popular classes' identity. In actual social movements, however, not everybody is a formal worker – many can never get formal jobs, while others have always been unemployed. Nevertheless, everybody demands their right to work.

Another element that shows the importance of being a worker as central in the composition of popular identity in Argentina is the *piqueteros*' reference to themselves as "unemployed workers". On a superficial level,

it is possible to say that their collective actions are directed towards assistance and plans, but if daily practices are analysed, it is possible to look into other dimensions of this complex process. *Piqueteros* are presented as both beneficiaries (passive people who need assistance) and people who contest the social transformations.

Is social democracy anti-democratic?

In 1994 Castoriadis argued that the hegemonic way of thinking about democracy was restrictive. In fact, the issue was a direct consequence of classical liberal theory; formal institutions and political parties were seen as the only "good" way of practising democracy.[20]

Democracy as a particular political regime became central in academic debates only when most Latin American countries started their democratic periods. Democracy was viewed as if it was independent of economic and cultural processes. In fact, one of the premises of the transition to democracy theory is that democracy is a procedure. This is the reason why social fields were usually forgotten, since it is only necessary to preserve the democratic process in terms of the political regime, and not in terms of the political system. Democracy was thought of as something solely pertinent to formal and institutional processes. Social demands were seen as threatening to the democratic procedures, thus people who have suffered the consequences of the neoliberal model, such as the *piqueteros*, were seen as anti-democratic.

The division between politics and the social fields contributed to creating a democracy in which all should have the right to vote, but lacked any space to discuss substantial issues of human life. This made formal democracy possible but reduced discussions about social conflicts.

Due to this dominance of procedural democracy, a (false) consensus that political issues are the main determinants of the concept of democracy appeared in the region in the 1970s. The case of the *piqueteros* demonstrates how social democracy could lose its place in the public space once it is equated only with political rights. In this context, the practices which emerged with the transformation of the social structures can be seen as anti-democratic. Therefore, the actions of the *piqueteros* are seen not as social democratic vindications, but rather as political anti-democratic protests.

Nevertheless, without occupying a space within democratic procedures, and in trying to resist deep social transformations, the popular classes started to make a series of contested collective actions. Social movements emerged to create a new political space within democracy. The movements, which acquired visibility in the 1990s and have consolidated since, peaking in 2001, have a long history. The eruption of the movements into

the public sphere proved that the political manifestation of the popular classes was passing through other channels which were not formally established as "democratic".

Due to the variety and complexity of the movements, the political protests carried out by unemployed people appeared to be significant and revealing cases of social transformation, paving the way for new forms of protest. Once they were constructed as anti-democratic, their protests are not "social" but "political" in nature, and their actions and demands are discredited, criminalized and punished.

National reconciliation or the authoritarianism of "democracy"

We have analysed thus far how social demands have little space within the restrictive concept of democracy in the context in Argentina, and how they become "anti-democratic" vindications. Now we are going to analyse another case which permits us to understand how the hegemonic imagery about democracy is not only restrictive to its political field, but also that pluralism without limits can explain that the idea of consensus is hegemonic and the refusal of conflict generates an anti-political and dangerous concept of democracy.

Thirty years after the last and bloodiest dictatorship in Argentinian history, Argentina's government abolished the privileges that the Menemist government (1989–1999) gave to those responsible for the disappearance of 30,000 people. It also started trials on state terrorism, and in 2006 Julio López, one of the main witnesses, disappeared overnight, just like in the 1970s.

The new political climate cannot put a stop to the escalating hatred in the rightist sectors of the society. The powerful groups of the right make efforts to support the theory of the "war of the two devils". This perspective holds people, including the disappeared and the militants, as equally responsible for the past as the military in power. This perspective tries to paint the history as a civil war, rather than viewing it as an authoritarian state repressing its own citizens to an unbelievable extent. It proposes that it is necessary to forget what has happened, and, if necessary, to judge the military and the militants in the same way.

The idea of a "national reconciliation" still has a place in the discourses, and it constitutes the point where various groups stood to attack President Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) and his human rights policies.[21] "He wants revenge," they said, and still say as they emphasize the fact that he was a militant in the 1970s, and try to reduce his political perspective to personal terms in order to moderate its historical value.[22]

There are still groups which vindicate the last military strike freely in the public sphere. These expressions, even if they are often rejected, are not excluded by existing institutions, in the name of "tolerance" and "pluralism". Examples include a large number of "processist" organizations (groups that vindicate the *proceso*) including the Commission for Permanent Homage to the Dead during Subversion (Comisión de Homenaje Permanente a los Muertos por la Subversión), the Argentines for an Entire Memory (Argentinos por la Memoria Completa), the Association of Relatives and Friends of the Argentine Political Prisoners (Asociación de Familiares y Amigos de los Presos Políticos Argentinos), etc. These organizations are publicly active.

It could also be added that the election of the ex-subcommissary Luis Abelardo Patti to occupy a seat as a national deputy, even after having been accused of numerous violations of human rights, displays "pluralism" (he was elected, but was unable to assume the position on account of a scandal). Such examples of pluralism are abundant. In the province of Mendoza, for example, one of the highest functionaries was seen greeting Alfredo Morelato, who has been accused of two disappearances and was punished for having borrowed an electric-shock tool to torture two militants in 1979.

Hegemonic discourse about the dictatorship

Like every traumatic historical situation, the end of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* in 1983 brought out social discourses which began to explain what had happened and what should happen in the future. From the interpretations and possible predictions, the one that positioned itself the best was a discourse based on two foundational aspects. On the one hand, it created the idea of "the war of the two devils". On the other hand, it posed "the necessity of national reconciliation".

The idea of "the war of the two devils" implies that the real problem during the dictatorship was the conflict between two equal groups: the military of the state and the armed guerrilla groups. Both groups would have had the same amount of responsibility. Those behind the "the war of the two devils" thesis deny the sheer volume of disappeared and imprisoned people and claim that all 30,000 disappeared people were militants. It is ridiculous to consider that they all were militants in armed organizations.[23]

Yet, even if we believe that the disappeared were all members of armed organizations, we must think that those who fought against them were not isolated parts of the military, but a whole state apparatus which had became a terrorist state. This is why it is impossible to affirm that it was a "war", and it is more correct to label it as "repression".

The idea of the "necessity of national reconciliation" was proposed on the basis of a thesis which affirmed that the dictatorship was a democracy in regression. This idea aided those involved in genocide to avoid their responsibilities. These two elements, the theory of "the war of the two devils" and the idea of "the necessity of a national reconciliation", were the pillars of the discourse which persisted after the return to democracy. This discourse was possible due to the fact that the society which had survived needed to receive an explanation about what had happened and think that democracy could again be possible. This discourse allows the existence of two laws: the *Obediencia Debida* (necessary obedience) and *Punto Final* (final point) laws. In the democracy which emerged in 1983, the military went unpunished and the democratic governments failed to initiate the necessary actions to find the whereabouts of children and disappeared corpses.

In 2003 Néstor Kirchner took over the presidency. His perspective on human rights policy was the opposite of the views held by the governments that preceded him, and he therefore started the trials on state terrorism. Yet, even though the national government has intended to bring justice to sufferers from events in the 1970s, the hegemonic discourse which was introduced three decades ago continues to stand firm and has many voices. These voices sometimes pretend "not to come back to the things of the past", and sometimes support the process of national reorganization through associations which blatantly vindicate the dictatorship in the public sphere, as mentioned.

Hegemonic discourse about the reconciled society

The newspaper *La Nación* is a powerful voice in the media which has a great influence on Argentinian political life, reflecting the liberalist opinions of the society. We would like to introduce a recent editorial from this newspaper to outline further the concept of democracy in terms of the theory of the "two devils" and the "necessity of national reconciliation". On 24 May 2006 a demonstration of 3,000 people vindicating the reconciliation process took place in San Martín Square in the federal capital, Buenos Aires – a number considerably less than those who attend pro-human rights demonstrations. It was the day before the celebration of the anniversary of the May Revolution in 1810. *La Nación* wrote about this incident in the following editorial, entitled "When Truth Is Distorted":

> In contradiction to the announcement pronounced last March by President Néstor Kirchner to "make a historical analysis which allows us to construct the country we deserve, with memory, justice and truth, but without hate and revenge", the national authorities have just given another example of intolerance

and distortion of reality, when they censored part of the prologue of the last edition of the Nunca Más report written in 1984 by the National Commission of Disappearance of People (Conadep).

They deleted, not by chance, the first paragraph of the original prologue, which says word for word: "During the decade of the 70s, Argentina was shaken by a terror which came from the extreme right and from the extreme left", which is strictly true.

Last 11 November the Argentinian Conference of the Episcopate approved a brave pastoral letter titled "A light to reconstruct the nation". The letter states: "22 years after the restoration of the democracy, the older generation should ask if we are transmitting all the truth about what happened in the seventies to the young people. Or if we are giving them a biased point of view, which can stir hate up between Argentinians." It referred in this way to the "clear purpose" to "keep quiet about the guerrilla crimes" and not to "detest them".

The obvious distortion of the prologue of the Nunca Más report is a new demonstration of the solid bases which support the perspective of the Argentinian Commission of the Episcopate.

The secretary for human rights, Eduardo Luis Duhalde, disclosed that the decision to modify the prologue was not made in consultation with any other organizations, and affirmed, "It is the policy fixed by the President and it is not possible to discuss it with other organizations." This attitude, which inexorably leads to this becoming the sole point of view, is nothing but an attempt at the intellectual suppression of every different ideology. Every other alternative result is simply impossible.

The right to truth has to be properly guaranteed in every country, as the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations upholds. The right to truth is also a bridge to the right to justice, and it cannot be manipulated nor distorted. It should not be subjected to arbitrary exceptions in order to fit the needs of the privileged or defer their responsibilities.

To distort the truth is to fuel unhealthy passions and the need for revenge. Distorted truth creates false memories and continues to sow the seeds of intolerance and distrust. It also removes the possibility of reconciliation, because reconciliation is possible only when every Argentinian can admit that the other side has also suffered and that nobody is totally free of guilt.

Murder and torture can never be justified nor accepted, no matter who committed these acts. To hide the crimes of one faction, discrediting the investigation of a very respected group of intellectuals which resulted in the Nunca Más report, only helps to hurt our social space and deepen the open wounds instead of heal them.

> It is time for Argentinians to reflect deeply about the need to overcome the hate and divisions of the past, progressing towards a definitive national reconciliation. None of this will be obtained by reliving old antagonisms; far from that if the embarrassing tragic facts of the seventies are disguised.[24]

The day after, on 25 May, in its assessment of the first three years of the Kirchner presidency, *La Nación* said that "the national government has not allowed progress towards the necessary overcoming of the divisions of the past". The editorial of *La Nación* shows the reaction of an important part of the citizenry towards the national government's policy on human rights issues. A revision of the main arguments will allow us to approach the concept of democracy which underlines them.

On the one hand, this point of view is presented as universal truth. The proper vision of the world is what is determined to be "strictly true". Then, every difference is seen as a "distortion of the truth". Different perspectives constitute a "disfiguration of reality". But what is extremely curious is that *La Nación* affirms that the government pretends to install a "unique thought", but nevertheless supports its politics by describing it as an "evident deformation". The newspaper demands, in the name of tolerance, the acceptance of the necessity to begin a "definitive national reconciliation", as if this demand would not constitute a way of "unique thought".

As it has been said, the discourse on "national reconciliation" suggests that there exist – as *La Nación* remarks – "factions" in the conflict, which are the "two devils". This position is, obviously, ideological. Nevertheless, it pretends to portray itself as an anti-ideological face to the one of the government, which constitutes an "embarrassing version of the tragic facts of the seventies".

The government, according to *La Nación*, "fuel[s] the unhealthy passions and the need of revenge". The issue of "revenge" is always present because, with the aim of discrediting Kirchner, it helps to personalize the conflict instead of reflecting upon the real political ideological debate behind it. The government, according to *La Nación*, wants a "unique thought", draws "a divided memory and continues to sow the seeds of intolerance from a lie".

We can see in this revealing text an idea that exists as an objective truth, something anti-ideological which can be affirmed by all the citizens when they leave aside their prejudices. Every individual, according to this editorial, is capable of seeing the historical reality, that it was a "war of two devils" and that the antagonisms of today should be overcome if we want to construct democracy and national reconciliation. This editorial is a perfect example of how we can invoke an anti-politics democracy to support a discourse which does not condemn the dictatorship and, in

doing so, can allow the persistence, in the extreme case, of groups who vindicate the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional.*

Reconciled democracy or the authoritarianism of tolerance?

The liberal discourse of *La Nación* produces an elimination of "antagonism" in the name of "democracy", as has been seen in its editorial. This elimination is illusionary because it is not possible to eradicate the antagonism. The possibility of recognizing the antagonism and accepting it inside the limits of plurality in an agonic relationship exists. Nevertheless, the Argentinian political culture assumes an anti-political formal definition and, in doing so, imposes an ideological discourse which erases the conflict and does not leave space to question what is tolerable and what it is not. In the name of democracy, in the name of "common sense", everything is possible.

The main problem is that, in the case of this article, the imposition and the assumption of the ideas of the "war of the two devils" and the "necessity of national reconciliation" are fundamental to a social imaginary which constitutes a threat to democracy itself. This discourse should be rejected from the social imaginary and its vindicators should be considered enemies. This can only be possible if power relations place the hegemony in favour of positions related to a radicalization of democracy.

Final reflections

Democracy in Argentina still runs the risk of not being truly established in the coming years. The country went through the twentieth century changing democratic governments for military ones. In 1983 the end of the so-called *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* initiated a considerable degree of democracy in terms of formal procedures. Nevertheless, the political community has not gone deeply into the definition of democracy, which is still limited to political rights and is unable to engage the inevitable ideological conflicts present inside it.

A theoretical perspective supposes that the main task in radicalizing democracy is to understand the existence of an eternal conflict. We have analysed some aspects of the hegemonic imagery in the country to understand the meanings that democracy has in Argentina at present.

Two important characteristics have been underlined. On the one hand, the contemporary imagery suggests that democracy would be a political regime in which formal procedures constitute the essence of the definition. In doing so, social protests and vindications are seen by an important part of civil society as anti-democratic actions. Rights in democracy

would be, for example, to vote and to drive freely in the streets, but not to protest because of the levels of unemployment, as the *piqueteros* do. This is a false argument. When economic groups interrupted the traffic during the so-called "countryside conflict" in 2008, an important part of civil society backed the protest, forgetting their condemnations of the *piqueteros*.

On the other hand, democracy in the current Argentinian imagery would be a moment of "consensus" where every political position should be allowed in the name of pluralism, even those which vindicate the last and bloodiest military dictatorship. By evoking pluralism, political communities can demolish the basis of democracy by proposing a kind of universal pluralism which cannot distinguish between a democratic pluralist dynamic and a non-democratic, and therefore unacceptable, one. It seems obvious that the emergence of neo-Nazi or neofascist parties in many countries in the world is related to where limits to pluralism coincide with limits to what is considered democratic and what is not. In Argentina, the "theory of the two devils" and the illusion of beginning a "national reconciliation" process reinforced the indeterminate outlines of local democracy and, because of that, democracy's risky fragility. There is a long way to go if we want not only to continue supporting electoral procedures but also to ensure conviction among Argentinians that democracy is the best regime for a contemporary society.

Latin America is a subcontinent with its own particular political characteristics, where it does not seem possible to accept political principles like those which have been cultivated in Europe. In Argentina specifically, antagonism (the vocation to eliminate the enemy) has been one of the main political dynamics. History from the twentieth century, and the early part of the twenty-first century at least, confirms this assertion. Nevertheless, the attempt to create a new dynamic for a democratic game, initiated in 1983, did not understand the existence of the conflict. On the contrary, it strived to erase it by creating an anti-political perspective about what democracy was, trying to reduce its meaning to formal procedures and thereby tolerate every type of authoritarian vindication. Different conceptions about what democracy is should be conscious of creating a democratic space in which tensions are part of a vibrant dynamic, and not a risk to any potential self-destruction of a society.

Notes

1. Mouffe, Chantal (2007) *En torno a lo político*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
2. Laclau, Ernesto (2005) *La razón populista*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, p. 310.

3. Mouffe, Chantal (1992) "Penser la democratie moderne avec, et contre, Carl Schmitt", *Revue Francaise de Science Politique* 42(1), p. 83.
4. Mouffe, note 1 above.
5. Apolitical pluralism, for example, which allows and justifies everything, leaves the door open to a novel vision of liberal individualism that assigns the individual with a determined role to solve conflicts. However, the problem is that we live in communities. Apolitical pluralism, the perspective that everybody can choose how to live, turns life in a community into an impracticable fact.
6. Mouffe, note 3 above, p. 94.
7. Mouffe, note 1 above.
8. Laclau, note 2 above.
9. "*Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*", as they call themselves.
10. Torture and killings resulted in the disappearance of 30,000 people, known as *desaparecidos*.
11. Novaro, Marcos (2003) *Historia de la Argentina Contemporánea, de Perón a Kirchner*. Buenos Aires: Edhasa, p. 77.
12. Ricardo Balbín, a very important leader of the UCR, went to the point of saying in 1978 that Videla, the military president, was a "great man of democracy". Ibid., p. 85.
13. Beccaria, Luis (2001) *Empleo e integración social.* Buenos Aires: FCE.
14. Villarreal, J. (1985) "Los hilos sociales del poder", in *Crisis de la dictadura argentina, Sección II: La sociedad movilizada*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.
15. The best-known exponent of these groups is the Madres de Plaza de Mayo.
16. Cf. Basualdo, Eduardo (2001) *Sistema político y modelo de Acumulación en la Argentina. Notas sobre el transformismo argentino durante la valorización financiera (1976–2001)*. Bernal: UNQ; Feliz, M. (2005) "La reforma económica como instrumento de disciplinamiento social: la economía política de las políticas contra la pobreza y la desigualdad en Argentina en los '90", in Álvarez Leguizamón (comp.) *Trabajo y producción de la pobreza en América Latina y el Caribe*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, pp. 275–321.
17. Manzano, V. (2004) "Tradiciones asociativas, políticas estatales y modalidades de acción colectiva: Análisis de una organización piquetera", *Intersecciones en Antropología* 5, pp. 153–167.
18. Perelman, M. (2006) "De trabajadores a beneficiarios? El movimiento piquetero en Argentina", *Interseções* 8(1), pp 151–168.
19. These ideas were developed in Loza, J. and M. Perelman (2007) "Nuevas formas de trabajo o formas de supervivencia? Reflexiones a partir del caso argentino", in *Actas del V Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología del Trabajo*. Montevideo: CD.
20. Castoriadis, Cornelius (1997) *El avance de la insignificancia*. Bueno Aires: Eudeba.
21. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, his wife, is the current president of the country. The continuity of the government is evident.
22. The topic of national reconciliation has been used in other polities as well. It is interesting in this sense to note the discourses nowadays about the Franco era in Spain.
23. It is not the aim of this chapter to justify the armed activism. This topic is a difficult one; we think within the objectives of this specific work it is not necessary to analyse it.
24. *La Nación* (2006) "When Truth Is Distorted", editorial, *La Nación*, 24 May.

5

Democracy, pluralism and nation-building: The Nigerian case

Moses Metumara Duruji

Background

This chapter examines democracy in a multi-ethnic society where affinity and loyalty to the micro group are very strong. But given the nature of democracy as a system of rule by laws that protect the rights of citizens and limit the power of the government, creating a strong nation-state in a heterogeneous society may prove difficult. This is the case in Nigeria, when democracy demands that the majority should have their way while the minority have their say. Nations confronted with the problem of diversity often devise mechanisms to accommodate the varying interests of the various ethnic groups, with the aim of fostering unity and sustaining the continued existence of the country. But the question to be answered in this section is the extent or degree that provisions and practices meant to accommodate diversity in a heterogeneous polity conform to the principles of democracy. These issues cannot be effectively discussed as they relate to Nigeria without first taking an excursion into the history of the country and its experimentation with democracy.

To start with, we have to note that one important ingredient of democracy presupposes that the "demos" must be a part of every aspect of governance processes, as the end products affect their lives. In the history of Nigeria's experimentation with democracy, this important element has been missing. Even though the country has at one time or another practised a system of democracy where the most powerful officials of government are purported to have been selected by the will of the majority of

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Nigerians, critical examination of those processes shows that the various efforts at democracy have yet to produce a system purely driven by the people at the grassroots controlling the governance process.[1]

The reason for this is not far-fetched given the nature of the Nigerian state. First, Nigeria as a state is a product of coercion and imposition.[2] The country was created for the purpose of colonial exploitation, and thus the people's consent was not sought by the imperial overlords. Through conquests and deceptions of leaders of the various peoples that formed Nigeria, who ignorantly signed treaties of protection, the British were able to establish control in the area in the late nineteenth century. Initially these territories were governed separately by the British, given the fact that the history, culture and political development of the various groups constituting the Nigerian entity were sharply at variance with one another. The British Crown amalgamated the territories for administrative convenience in 1914, without consulting the peoples or the rulers who had signed to come under its protection.[3]

The new administrative styles adopted by the British altered the evolution of indigenous systems that embody elements of democracy. For instance, Ojo[4] posits that colonialism acted as a disruptive force in the formation of democracy, because it halted traditional administrative systems of governance that invested control with the people. An example is the Igbo society, where there existed a republican democracy that encouraged the involvement of an age-grades system with assigned roles for different age groups and entrenched firmly a culture of debate. Even in centralized societies like those of the Yoruba, the "Oba", who is the supreme leader, is often forced to commit suicide when he is discovered to be out of tune with the desires of the people.[5]

The imposition of native authority ordinance and an indirect-rule administrative style destroyed these systems of checks and strengthened the powers of the rulers over the people. Though it might be argued that not all the systems of government in Nigeria prior to colonialism were democratic, as the administrative system in the north of the country indicated, most of the other indigenous administrative systems in Nigeria exhibited noticeable elements of democracy prior to colonialism. This is probably responsible for the dissent registered against colonial domination, which denied Nigerian peoples the rights and privileges they had enjoyed prior to colonial contact.[6] This autocratic beginning to governance of Nigeria has been very significant for the process of democratic evolution in the country in the years after the colonial experience.[7] For instance, the high-handed nature of colonialism did not make room for the evolution of a political culture that is consonant with democracy. The colonial system was devoid of democracy, as it denied the Nigerian peoples the opportunity to input their ideas into the evolving colonial state.

The aftermath of this became the problem of acceptance of the Nigerian state and Nigeria as a corporate entity by the disparate groups that compose it. Consequently, the quest to ensure the continued unity of the country and its inviolability has been through coercion. In the first instance, Nigerians were not consulted before "Nigeria" was created, and subsequent reforms and restructuring to arrive at an acceptable structure have largely followed the same pattern. This tendency fundamentally affects the democratic process in Nigeria; this is manifested in dissent embodied in the emergence of ethnic militia groups which challenge the legitimacy of the state.[8]

Any assessment of democracy in Nigeria must be predicated against this backdrop. Therefore, if democracy presupposes the rule of the people, where the "demos" are the indigenous Nigerians, then we can assert that it was only when Nigeria attained full independence and self-rule that this essence was achieved. The question which must be answered is whether the Nigerian peoples have been full participants in the governance process of their country since then.

One area in which we can begin this assessment is electoral politics. This started in Nigeria in 1923 after the promulgation of the 1922 Clifford constitution introducing the elective principle – the mechanism that enabled the Nigerian people to partake in determining their affairs. That exercise only allotted four positions in a legislative council dominated by official appointees. However, it was significant because it was the first time Nigerians under colonial rule were allowed to elect their leaders directly, even though this was restricted to Lagos and Calabar.[9] The long history of electoral politics is yet to produce a system that inspires confidence in Nigerians. Elections in Nigeria, especially since the country got its independence in 1960, have always ended up in dispute.[10] Suspicions of electoral fraud heighten after every election process; spontaneous violence often follows the outcome; and there have been cases where the courts have upturned the election results, citing irregularities.[11] So if we are to use elections as an index to evaluate the degree of democracy in Nigeria, we shall arrive at the conclusion that the country still has a long way to go.

Rule by the people and democratic credentials of a country go beyond election rounds to include issues like the regard public officials have for public opinion.[12] This is where the Swiss example of democracy comes out as a model system, because instruments like referendums and popular initiatives are encouraged by the constitution and enthusiastically practised by the citizens. These impact on the political system fundamentally, in that they increase the willingness for compromise and favour big coalitions and consensus-building in decision-making processes. From available evidence, the Nigerian government hardly considers the views of the

public when designing policies and programmes.[13] Only on a few occasions after forlorn battles, strikes and violent demonstrations have the views of the demos mattered in policy articulation, while most other dissent expressed via the media has met with repression manifested in the proscription and annihilation of civil society organizations.[14]

Even under civilian democratic dispensation, the influence of public opinion on policies and governance in Nigerian has not been significant. A good example is the long strike and work stoppages that characterized the Obasanjo administration over the deregulation of the downstream oil sector in Nigeria.[15] If democracy is taken as an open polity which is responsive to the yearning of the populace, post-colonial Nigeria is far away from achieving this goal. The essence of democratic values is that the people should have the right to determine who governs them and how. Nigeria is yet to attain this ideal, where elections of political office holders are used to measure the degree of democracy.

Most elections in Nigeria are manipulated and rigged, and the will of the people is not reflected in their outcomes.[16] On the many occasions when democracy had to be terminated by the military, the juntas have always cited the inability to conduct free, fair and acceptable elections, as well as the violence that accompanies election results, as reasons justifying their intervention.[17]

The disputes that arise among contestants of elections in Nigeria stem from an avalanche of allegations of fraud and massive rigging against those who cash in on the fraud-prone electoral system to thwart the will of the electorate.[18] This tendency has on more than one occasion degenerated into crises that have had devastating consequences for the Nigerian nation.

Though no society can be said to have attained perfection in the process of elections and recruiting government personnel, the experience of Nigeria has not been palatable.[19] Every single election that has been conducted in Nigeria since the country attained independence has been disputed.[20] The Nigerian nation has been engrossed in a history of electoral malpractices which have, most of the time, been accompanied by social upheavals that negatively impact on the polity. For instance, in the first republic the manipulation of the 1965 western region election enraged the people and precipitated spontaneous rioting that contributed in part to the fall of that republic and the military takeover of government.[21]

The same scenario was repeated in the second republic when the ruling party, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), claimed a "moon slide" victory that stunned the electorate, who went on the rampage in some states in protest against the outcome announced by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). The discontent in the country stemming from the outcome of that election gave the soldiers the legitimacy to take

over the reins of power again in 1984. It was the experiences of the first and second republics that informed ideas to fashion a leak-proof system for the third republic in order to reduce incidents of the election rigging and malpractice that had plagued the previous republics.[22] One result of that experiment was the new secret ballot system and its modified version used in the 12 June 1993 presidential election. The new system was designed to replace the conventional secret ballot system, which most people in Nigeria thought was highly susceptible to manipulation, believing that an open count of voters queuing behind their preferred candidate would reduce fraud.[23] Yet the experiment never produced an acceptable election outcome, as the process was aborted when General Ibrahim Babangida, the military ruler who oversaw the transition, annulled the election citing massive voting fraud.

That incident contributed significantly to the stillbirth of Nigeria's third attempt at democratization. It generated a crisis that led to the emergence of General Sani Abacha, who abolished all the democratic institutions established by Babangida and started afresh to erect his own structures in another programme of transition to civilian rule that many politicians suspected was designed to transform him into a civilian leader. It was only his sudden death in June 1998 that rallied the people to forge ahead in a new transition programme supervised by his successor, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, which successfully moved Nigeria to civilian rule in 1999.

The instability which characterized previous republics seems not to be the case for the fourth republic, despite the presence of destabilizing factors including contested and fraudulent elections, the likes of which led to the demise of previous democratic experiments.[24] The most worrisome development since 1999 has been the increasing emergence of social and political groups with diverse agendas that are sometimes extreme in pressing democratic institutions to their limits.[25] The bottom line is that the democracy responsible for creating the space for such groups to emerge and thrive is itself under threat from within the country due to the conflicting extreme agendas of these groups. However, the system has managed to survive, despite the peculiarities of Nigerian democratic practice. There is a need here to find out whether these peculiarities measure up to democratic standards. However, that cannot be adequately addressed without taking an in-depth look at the principles of democracy.

Principles of democracy

Democracy generally connotes the participation of the adult populace in the affairs of their state. It is has been the subject of many interpretations

by scholars over the years. So much has been written about democracy that it is really not of much use for us to start seeking definitions. Without going into the controversy over the meaning of the word, we can see democracy in light of its etymological sense as "rule by the people". However, it is even more difficult to conceptualize "rule by the people" properly. But one can agree with one of the simplest yet clearest definitions of democracy, offered by Oyugi, who describes it as "the existence of an open polity that is responsive and accountable to the general citizen".[26]

Democracy comes from the Greek word *demos*, meaning people. In democracy it is the people who hold sovereign power over legislation and government. Tracing the inviolability of this term to its root, Ake opined that as a political concept, democracy is uncharacteristically precise.[27] It means popular power, or, in a famous American version, government "of the people, for the people, by the people". There was agreement on this definition across the considerable ideological divide of classical Athens. The Athenians refined it with obsessive rigour and operationalized it meticulously in practical political arrangements. Therefore, although nuanced interpretations apply throughout the world's various democracies, certain principles and practices distinguish democratic government from other forms of government.

A logical way to discuss these fundamental principles that define democratic practice is to assert that the essential idea of democracy is that the people have the right to determine who governs them. In most cases they elect the principal governing officials and hold them accountable for their actions. Democracies also impose legal limits on a government's authority by guaranteeing certain rights and freedoms to their citizens. In other words, it is a government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all citizens, directly or through their freely elected representatives. Democracy is a set of principles and practices that protect human freedom; it is the institutionalization of freedom.

Another important element of democracy is that it rests upon the principle of majority rule coupled with individual and minority rights. All democracies, while respecting the will of the majority, zealously protect the fundamental rights of individuals and minority groups. Democracy guides against a powerful central government and decentralizes government to regional and local levels, understanding that local governments must be as accessible and responsive to the people as possible. One of democracy's prime functions is to protect basic human rights such as freedom of speech and religious assembly, the right to equal protection under the law and the opportunity to organize and participate fully in political, economic and cultural activities. Here, inclusion means that democratic rights and freedoms must be for everyone. They must not be denied to

specifically targeted elements of the population, such as women or minority groups. And equality in the context used above does not, *per se*, imply that everyone should ultimately be exactly or approximately equal – this is unrealistic. It rather connotes equity in terms of fairness. With a more comprehensive and rigorous use of the word, one would safely assume that in a democratic setting, equality implies that rights and freedoms must be accorded to everyone on an equal basis. No group in society should have fewer democratic privileges than other groups.

According to Lipset,[28] democracy is a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing governing officials and social mechanisms which permit the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions, by choosing among contenders for political office. Elections in a democracy cannot be a facade that dictators or a single party hide behind, but rather they should be an authentic competition for the support of the people. Free and fair elections open to all citizens are what make democracy credible. Related to this is that governments are subjected to the rule of law in conducting all affairs, including elections. The rule of law simply and unambiguously states that the power of the state must be limited by law and that no one is above the law. This is why constitutional and institutional mechanisms are put in place to act as a balance of power between different arms of government. Democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation and compromise. Democracy recognizes that reaching consensus requires compromise and that it may not always be attainable. Importantly, given the ideological and ethnic diversity of most nation-states, democracy has often been fashioned to address the particularities of a given state. This notwithstanding, this assessment of democracy is anchored on the aforementioned defined standards that are universally accepted. So, to what degree do the Nigerian brand of democracy and its particular attributes measure up to this universal standard of liberal democracy?

The practice of democracy in Nigeria

For most of its history, Nigeria was under autocratic rule. However, for most of this time democracy has always been on the agenda either by way of agitation by pro-democracy forces or through transitory government programmes designed to achieve it.[29] Democracy in Nigeria can be traced to 1 October 1960, the date when the country attained independence. It was the first time that elected Nigerian officials were fully in charge of political power apparatuses in the country. Before that, Nigeria had an admixture of unelected colonial administrators and elected indigenous administrators at different levels of government.

The Westminster model of democracy which the colonialists passed to Nigerians lasted for only six years until it was terminated by a military coup in January 1966. The domineering politics and bitter rivalry between the three major political parties of the time, the Northern People's Congress (NPC), National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG), were partly responsible for that failure.[30] These dominant political parties were ethnically based and controlled the three regions that then constituted the Nigerian federation, setting the stage for a fierce battle among them for control of the centre.[31] In order to sustain their regional dominance as a launch pad for central control, these parties employed emotive ethnic sentiments while working to undermine their rivals in their region of dominance.[32] The uncontrollable nature of this rivalry was partly responsible for the intervention of the military.

The military held the fort for 13 years, then transferred power to democratically elected civilian administrators in October 1979.[33] Before this, a lot of changes were made in the Nigerian polity. Apart from the fact that the Nigerian federation was transformed from a federation of four regions (at the time the military ceased power) to 19 states, the Westminster model from the British was abandoned in favour of the American presidential model, including a constitution which accommodated these changes. Though the rules of politicking were changed to take care of some of the destabilizing tendencies of the last democratic experiment, the ethnic-based politics was replicated.[34] However, the maturity of the actors of this era, given the experience of the past, contributed to the reduction of political crisis. Instead, there was an intensification of corruption and mismanagement – problems which the military cited in December 1983 when that democracy was terminated by another round of military rule.

The practice of democracy in the second republic was quite different from that of the first republic as a result of these changes. For instance, the president of the country under the second republic was vested with executive powers and directly elected, with the whole country as the constituency, unlike the previous practice where executive powers resided with the prime minister and cabinet, who are elected to parliament by a narrow segment of the electorate in individual constituencies. The rules for the recognition of political parties became more stringent and difficult. In the end, only five political parties were registered to participate in the transition that ushered in the second republic: the NPN, the Unity Party of Nigeria, the Nigerian People's Party, the People's Redemption Party and the Great Nigerian People's Party. The Nigerian Advanced Party was added to the list in the 1983 general election.[35] Provisions in the 1978 constitution that guided elections in the second republic had an impact on the character and behaviour of these political parties, which

was also reflected in the structure of the administration. However, the conduct of the political actors, such as the corruption and nepotism that characterized the NPN-led administration, led to the collapse of that republic on 31 December 1983 and gave rise to another round of military interregnum in the country.[36]

The military junta that seized power came in as a corrective regime with an agenda to put in place structures to ensure that the country would have an enduring democracy devoid of the destabilizing tendencies of the previous experiences. The military administrations, especially that of General Ibrahim Babangida, drew up a programme for transition to civil rule with in-built mechanisms that incorporated corrective measures suitable for the Nigerian environment. One of the notable innovations introduced by that administration was the provision that only two political parties would be recognized to participate in the transition elections and afterwards.[37] Despite the inability of the politicians to meet the very high standard set for the registration of the parties, in 1989 the government went ahead to create the two political parties: the centre-left Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the centre-right National Republican Convention. Nigerians, especially the new breed of politicians, were told to join either of the two parties as co-founders and co-joiners allowed by law. All elections under that transition programme, from local government to the presidential elections conducted on 12 June 1993, were fought on the platform of the two parties. However, suspicions that the Babangida administration was insincere and accusations that Babangida himself harboured a secret agenda came to the fore after the annulment of the presidential election. That election would have marked the final disengagement of the military, after elected civilians had taken office at all levels, except the presidency where Babangida and his military coterie retained control. This action plunged the country into a political crisis, which was not even resolved by the decision of Babangida to step aside for an interim national government to conclude the transition programme.[38]

The weakness of that regime, given the mounting political tension, led to the emergence of another military administration on 10 November 1993, headed by General Abacha. Abacha cancelled the transition programme and fired all those elected and inaugurated at the various levels of government, opting instead to install a more credible process for true democracy. That promise only amounted to deception by an administration looking for support to entrench its hold on power. The new transition to civilian rule programme was designed to transform General Abacha into a civilian president after the careful exclusion of a large segment of the political class and prominent politicians who could challenge that agenda. This became obvious in the kind of political parties that

were registered to participate in the transition election – parties which were sympathetic to Abacha's presidential ambition. The majority of the parties that opposed the continuation of military rule by other means were not registered. Notwithstanding, elections were held at all levels of administration, except for governorships and the presidency. This was halted by the death of General Abacha, who had been nominated by the five registered political parties as their presidential candidate, making him virtually unopposed in the scheduled presidential election.

This latest transition was opposed by a large segment of the Nigerian people, including pro-democracy activists campaigning for the revalidation of the 12 June 1993 presidential election (annulled by General Babangida); it was subsequently reversed by Abacha's successor, General Abdulsalami Abubakar. A new transition to civilian rule programme that lasted for only eight months was conducted by General Abubakar after a wide consultation with national and international stakeholders. That programme, which was more credible than those that preceded it, was able to lead the country successfully back to democracy on 29 May 1999, when elected retired general Olusegun Obasanjo took the oath of office as the new civilian president.

In all these years of practical democracy in Nigeria, there are certain peculiarities unique to the Nigerian political firmament that need to be highlighted. Some of them are statutory provisions and others are conventional practices, designed to help sustain the continued unity of the country. But how consensual are those statutory provisions and conventional practices, and why were they instituted?

Zoning

Zoning of political offices is a mechanism designed to accord a sense of belonging and participation to the diverse ethno-regional and multi-religious population of the country. Even though it has not been incorporated into any statutory document, the practice is widely accepted in Nigeria's political firmament. This idea was covertly practised in the first republic in the coalition government of the NPC and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon, where offices were shared by nominees of the two political parties and their allies. That coalition ensured that the northern and eastern regions had a fair share of office holders distributed between them. For instance, during that first republic the office of president was held by Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Ibo from the east, while the office of the prime minister was held by Abubakar Tafawa Belewa from the north. Nwafor Orizu, also from the east, held the office of the senate

president. This was not a deliberate decision by the political parties to have things this way, but rather occurred because the parties of that era were ethnically and regionally based and, given the need for a coalition government, the two parties had to provide the personnel that constituted the government.[39]

That coalition government excluded people from the southwest of the country, where the major Yoruba ethnic group live. The result of this was the political crisis that the country faced as a result of the hegemonic contests among the major ethnic groups for control of power. The inability of the first republic's political actors to resolve the crisis led to the intervention of the military and a subsequent civil war that nearly split the country into two.

Stemming from this experience, the political parties of the second republic, especially the party that eventually won most of the seats and the office of the president, the NPN, incorporated into their constitutions the zoning of major offices to reflect the diversities of Nigeria.[40] During that period the north produced President Alhaji Shehu Shagari, while the east produced Vice-President Alex Ekwueme and the west produced party chairman Adisa Akinloye. The NPN ensured that the political positions in the party and the administration were spread around to accommodate all the diverse ethno-religious interest of the country. This arrangement has become a rule in Nigeria ever since, not only at the federal level, but also at state and local levels of governance.

This is similar to what takes place in Lebanon, a country with a history of periodic outbursts of violence that have influenced political compromises to recalibrate the distribution of power and privilege among the country's major communities. As is the case in Nigeria, formal and informal power-sharing arrangements in Lebanon divide executive and legislative powers into sectarian allotments of Sunni Muslim, Shiite Muslim and Maronite Christian. The electoral system recognizes a fixed sectarian distribution of seats, though blurred by the fact that most candidates face a multi-confessional electorate and many contest in districts in which their sect is not a majority.[41]

The implication of this practice is that it is exclusivist, because it denies the right of certain individuals to aspire to political office in the country and does not give the electorate adequate choice in the elections. Fallout from this type of system took place in Nigeria in 1983, when one of the major financiers of the ruling NPN, Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba from the southwest, was prevented from challenging the incumbent President Alhaji Shagari because the zoning formula had allotted that office to the north. The same happened in 1999, when a populist politician from the north was persuaded to step down from contesting the presidential

primaries of the People's Democratic Party, because the office was zoned to the south.

Some analysts have argued that this practice is not aligned with the norms of democracy, given that zoning is conducted mainly by the party élites who meet and impose their view on the population. Democracy promotes equal participation in the political process and invests rights in the citizens to aspire to any political position. Even though the liberal variant of democracy denies this "equality of all" in the sense that it imposes the sovereignty of laws rather than sovereignty of the people,[42] the trend seems to suggest that it has been accepted as the norm in spite of these imperfections. The zoning scheme of Nigerian democracy is not a creation of law. It is rather a convention that has found acceptance by the political élites despite some elements of resistance from disgruntled politicians, who argue that it is undemocratic and counterproductive because it does not allow the best candidate to emerge. The practice is restrictive; given the nature of the political process in Nigeria, where the space for political parties is very narrow, the electorate who vote on election days have to make do with what the political parties throw up for them.

Rotational presidency

Nigeria's rotational presidency became an issue during the third republic transition programme following agitation from politicians of southern origin about the north's dominance of the highest position. The proponents argued that there should be a power shift to the south as the country marches to democracy: the north had dominated the top political office since independence, except in 1966 under Agueyi Ironsi's coup (he was dethroned after just six months in a counter-coup) and under General Olusegun Obasanjo between 1976 and 1979 after the abortive coup of 1976, which claimed the life of the then head of state, General Murtala.[43] The agitation, which became vocal during the transition to civilian rule programme of General Babangida, was resisted then by the mainstream northern political élites, who believed that political rule rightly belonged to them, given their numerical strength over the south. They also argued that power in the hands of a northerner should be compensation for the north's backwardness in education and commerce. The tense atmosphere created by the debate continued until the end of that transition, when the 1993 presidential election under the two-party system polarized the country into two camps. While the National Republican Convention presented Bashir Tofa, a northerner, as its presidential candidate, the Social Democratic Party presented Moshood Abiola, a Moslem from the south, as its candidate.

That election was inconclusive because the National Electoral Commission did not declare a winner when it became apparent that Moshood Abiola had won the election. This followed the announcement by the military leader that the election had been annulled; he called for a rerun with new players. That annulment was interpreted by southerners, especially ethnic Yoruba, as a calculated ploy by the northern-dominated military government to prevent a southerner from assuming the presidency, and consequently the country was plunged into a political crisis.[44] General Sani Abacha took advantage of the crisis after the High Court announced that the interim national government put in place by Babangida was illegal. One item on Abacha's transition programme to be considered by the Constituent Assembly, inaugurated in 1994, was the issue of a rotating presidency. It was incorporated in the draft constitution that there should be a rotational presidency alternating between the south and the north, with the country divided into a total of six geo-political zones.

Though that provision did not see the light of day, the principle was applied in the fourth republic. First Olusegun Obasanjo from the southwest, who benefited by this understanding in 1999, handed over to Umaru Yar Adua from the north after two terms in office. This understanding was adhered to by the political élites in spite of popular agitation by other segments of the south that they ought to take their shot at the presidency before it rotated back to the north. The principle of rotation as practised in Nigeria is not limited to the office of the president but applies to other levels, such as state governorships and local government chairpersons.

This practice is not democratic. Just like the concept of zoning, it is exclusivist in the sense that it prevents citizens from areas other than where the offices rotate to from seeking those offices. The principle could have gained legitimacy if the draft constitution of 1995 was adopted, but that constitution and the processes of the transition to civil rule organized by General Abacha were jettisoned after his sudden death in June 1998.

Citizenship

One area of ambiguity in the Nigerian constitution is the definition of who is a Nigerian and what rights should be accorded to the individuals and groups in the country. The practice of democracy in Nigeria has brought this issue to the fore. The country is demographically made up of more than 250 ethnic and linguistic groups. However, the major ethnic groups of Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba have dominated leadership at the centre, whereas the minority ethnic groups seem to have been shut out.[45] The feeling of minorities is that they cannot occupy certain positions in

the country. This has caused alienation and frustrations that are sometimes expressed in the formation of militia organizations demanding their rights.[46]

Another complex aspect of the citizenship question in Nigeria is the issue of indigene and non-indigene. This problem has its roots in the colonial administration, which created a divisive system where the disparate groups constituting Nigeria have refused to see themselves as one people with a common destiny.[47] The colonial regime encouraged a policy of preventing indigenous populations of a locality from interacting with immigrants from other parts of the country. This was most pronounced in the northern cities, where a quarter called *sabon gari* is reserved for people non-indigenous to the area. The same pattern of settlement is replicated in the southern part of the country, where people of northern origin settle in exclusive quarters known as *ama-awusa* in the southeast and *sabo* in the southwest. Demographic changes in major centres of commerce, after many years of intermingling and interaction between different groups, have led to indigenous people in some localities losing their numerical strength to immigrants. Yet those immigrant communities are still regarded as strangers with limited political rights.

In places like Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Abuja and Jos, among others, the original settlers or indigenes still exercise absolute political control. Other settlers with political ambition who have lived all their lives in those communities discover that they have to trace their roots back to their area if those aspirations are to be actualized. This culture started in the 1950s in the western region when it became obvious that Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo and leader of the NCNC, was to emerge as the first premier. Obafemi Awolowo, the leader of a cultural association that promoted the interests of the Yoruba, appealed to the sentiments of his kinsmen and led the mass crossing over of elected NCNC members of parliament to the Action Group.[48]

That experience forced Azikiwe to relocate to eastern Nigeria, where his kinsmen constitute the majority, to upset the political arrangement.[49] Since the incident, the practice has become a trend in Nigeria. Who would have imagined that a personality like the former leader of the Nigerian Labour Congress, Adams Oshiomhole, would go back to his ancestral state of Edo to contest a governor's seat there, instead of in Lagos, where most of his populist activism was carried out and his popularity was very high? In places like Jos, where the settlers (non-indigenes) have a high level of political consciousness and have attempted to assert their political rights by presenting candidates for city council elections, the so-called indigenes have always resisted loosening their grip on political power, especially of the Jos North local government. The result has been an eruption in

violent communal clashes, most recently in November 2008 after a local government election.

Political party system

Political parties are vehicles in liberal democracies that provide a platform for individuals of like mind, sharing common values and views on the direction the nation should follow, to come together and work out ways to actualize their common desire.[48] Since their emergence in England, political parties have proven to be vital in modern representative democracies.[51] The history of political parties in Nigeria has roots in colonialism following the introduction of the elective principle by the Clifford constitution of 1922. The political parties that emerged at that time to contest positions created by the colonial government constituted the core of independence movements that fought and dislodged the colonial administration in 1960.

However, those parties quickly turned against each other and became instruments of ethnic oppression and vehicles for the advancement of parochial ethnic agendas. The major political parties of that era, such as the NPC, AG and NCNC, had an intense rivalry that grew into violence and eventually led to a military coup in January 1966 and the civil war in May 1967.[52]

To avoid the reoccurrence of such coups, the military government of Murtala-Obasanjo stipulated stringent measures for political parties seeking registration in its transition to civilian rule programme. Conditions included the requirement for political parties to establish functional offices in at least two-thirds of the then 19 states of the federation, and also ensure that their executive committee membership reflects the federal character of Nigeria – meaning that the party leadership should reflect Nigeria's diversity in terms of ethnicity and religion. The essence of this policy is to ensure that the parties eventually registered to contest elections are pan-Nigerian in character and form.

This policy was an imposition by the military to constrain the development of pluralism in the Nigerian democratic journey.[53] That was the case in the second republic, when only five political parties were recognized. The scenario became worse in the third republic, when only two parties were allowed; furthermore, these were created by the military authorities, who asked politicians to join one of only two choices. The result was that the politicians who joined the two parties all had, unsurprisingly, different agendas and interests that did not align with the interests of others. A glaring example of this manifested shortly after the annulment of the 12

June 1993 election. The party executive of the Social Democratic Party, led by Anthony Aneni, abandoned their presidential candidate, Moshood Abiola, in his struggle to claim his mandate and joined the military that annulled the election.

This culture of restricting the number of political parties participating in the political process reared its head again in the fourth republic, until it was challenged by Balarabe Musa in 2003. Musa questioned the right of the Independent National Electoral Commission to draw guidelines and conditions for the registration of political parties. The case, which rose from a lower court to the Supreme Court (the highest court in Nigeria), was finally pronounced illegal and recognition was given to all the political parties that sought registration that year. Today, and for the 2007 general elections, the space for the existence of political parties has been increased to 50 parties by that judicial pronouncement. But, notwithstanding the constitution of 1999, the rules still forbid political parties that promote religious symbols and also require all parties to reflect Nigeria's federal character in their executive committees. These provisions deny some segments of the population the right to associate and hold political beliefs, a fundamental element of democracy.

Federal character principle

The principle of federal character is a mechanism devised to foster national integration by giving a sense of belonging to the diverse groupings that make up the Nigerian federation. The principle of federal character intends to ensure that Nigerian affairs are not dominated by persons from a few states or ethnic groups.[54] The architects of the idea took into account the acrimony among the diverse groups and interests in the country; this had often led to endemic mutual distrust and communal conflict which threatens political stability. Therefore, the application of the principle manifests in a quota system in job placement and recruitment into the civil service and military. It is also reflected in the granting of special consideration for educationally disadvantaged areas in admission into unity schools and higher institutions, as well as for appointments to public offices.[55] The term "federal character" was coined by the Constitutional Drafting Committee which drafted the 1979 constitution, and was enshrined in the 1979 constitution and subsequent ones. It states *inter alia*:

> the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and to

> command loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or sectional groups in that government or its agencies.[56]

This stipulation is not limited to the central government, as the constitution also mandates the governments of states and local/municipal councils, as well as their agencies, to conduct and carry out governance in such a manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within their area of authority in order to achieve national integration.[57]

Since 1979 governments have struggled to apply this principle to achieve the intended objective. One area where it has been visible is in the appointments to various positions in the federal administration. For instance, the constitution demands that in the composition of the federal cabinet, the president should nominate at least one minister from each state. This statutory provision gives the civilian administration the challenge of accommodating many states in the cabinet, given the multiplication of states under the military juntas that held power for so long. With the 36-state structure, as opposed to the 19 states the country had during the second republic, fourth republic administrations are saddled with at least 36 ministers.

Conclusion

Democracy as a system of governance connotes the participation of the adult population in the affairs of their society; it presupposes that popular power determines the direction of governance. Because it is a system that offers the generality of citizenry a say in their own affairs, its appeal has continued to allure many a society. However, no society in the world can be said to exhibit all the ideals that democracy presupposes; rather, each state or society strives to improve on the model it practises, with varying elements that attend to the particularities of a given society. That is why the practice of democracy varies from country to country.

Nigeria, as a budding nation, has a peculiar history. A multi-ethnic and religious society created by British colonialism has had a lot to grapple with in fashioning its own home-grown democracy. The colonial experience united the peoples to stand up against that evil system. Nigeria's victory over colonialism in 1960 then presented the challenge of nation-building. A lot has been learnt since then, including from a bitter civil war that lasted between 1967 and 1970 and incessant military intervention in politics. These experiences are reflected in the brand of democracy that the country is still practising, although the process of learning and perfecting Nigeria's model of democracy continues.

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6

Ethno-linguistic vitality and democratic practice in Kenya

James Ogola Onyango

Introduction

This chapter begins by explaining the ethno-linguistic vitality (EV) framework that underlines the importance of ethnic group numbers and representation in nation-state institutions and their status in election processes, especially in positions of power relevant to election outcomes. Up until now, the most important position of power related to the outcome of elections in Kenya has been the executive presidency.

The second section makes an EV analysis of select groups in Kenya, in terms of their presence in significant political parties and their influence on power-related outcomes of general elections. The groups are the Kikuyu, the Luhya, the Luo, the Kalenjin, the Kamba and the Kisii, which together account for about 76.57 per cent of Kenya's total population.

The third section shows that since Kenya's independence and up until the present, EV has been an important factor in terms of political parties, mega-ethnic alliances and political party alliances that have competed for power in general elections.

The chapter concludes by observing that unless the present role of ethnicity in political parties and representation in nation-state institutions that in turn affects the status of ethnic groups are redressed, EV is likely to influence election processes in Kenya persistently.

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Defining ethno-linguistic vitality in the context of Kenyan democratic practice

Landry and Allard have shown that the EV construct has been very important in studying linguistic relations between ethnic groups in a number of contexts.[1] However, this chapter moves a step further and applies EV factors to democratic practice in Kenya. The construct of EV underlines three important aspects in ethnic relations: demographic factors, institutional variables and status.[2] These factors have implications for questions related to disproportionate demography, institutional support and the status of ethnic groups in a given locale.

Demography refers to the number of group members in the various ethnic groups throughout the territory. Demography also concerns the degree of concentration of an ethnic group within a territory, their relative birth rate, the degree of endogamy and rates of immigration and emigration.[3] In Kenya, this has led to two clusters of groups across the partisan divide. The big groups with big numbers are the Kikuyu (Gikuyu), the Luhya, the Luo, the Kalenjin, the Kamba and the Gusii (Kisii), ranked by size according to the 1999 national population census.[4] Remaining groups are referred to as the small groups. Demographic factors are very important in relation to the question of power. In power politics, gaining a majority vote, based on the principle of "one man, one vote", has led to the small groups suspecting the big groups. However, the question of the "big" and the "small" groups has not always been very clear-cut, since there is intense rivalry between big groups too. Furthermore, in connection with power, a group that has the president in its ranks is seen as big because of the power it wields in comparison to the out-groups, regardless of its demographic size.

The issue of institutional support concerns how a group is represented in the nation-state's institutions, such as the media, education organizations, government services, industry, religion and cultural bodies.[5] In actual practice in Kenya, the issue of institutional support does not proportionately correspond to demography. Experience has shown that the ethnic group that has the privilege of providing the president has always had an upper hand in representation in strategic positions in the territory. In connection with elections, such positions include the minister for finance, the minister for internal security, the minister for justice and constitutional affairs and members of the Electoral Commission of Kenya.

Lastly, status is viewed in terms of prestige along dimensions of economic, socio-historical, social and linguistic factors.[6] For example, in Kenya some communities are known to dominate in the economy in areas where they are not indigenous. Similarly, varying status is accorded to speakers of different languages in a territory. EV has been important in

the high-level ethnic conflict seen in the periodic general elections that have been held in Kenya since independence (see also Atieno-Odhiambo[7] and Lonsdale[8]), because big groups have been significant actors in this conflict.

Ethno-linguistic vitality analysis of select groups in Kenya

Ethnicity has been a remarkable factor in Kenyan politics since independence. Although political parties in Kenya have had nationalist and democratic names, such as the Kenya African National Union (KANU), Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), Democratic Party of Kenya (DP), National Development Party (NDP) and so on, it is important to note that political parties have had transparent ethnic masks. In this regard, it is observed that ethnic groups with larger demographic clout have been prime movers in political parties in Kenya.

According to the 1999 population census in Kenya, the big groups comprise the Kikuyu (who number 4,555,865 and make up 20.78 per cent of the population), the Luhya (3,083,273 and 14.38 per cent), the Luo (2,653,932 and 12.38 per cent), the Kalenjin (2,458,123 and 11.46 per cent), the Kamba (2,448,302 and 11.42 per cent) and the Kisii, also known as the Gusii (1,318,409 and 6.15 per cent). These big groups account for about 76.57 per cent of the total Kenyan population (Table 6.1).

The Kikuyu originally resided in the neighbourhoods of the capital city of Kenya, Nairobi. Among the indigenous groups of Kenya, they are much further ahead in terms of economic power. It is important to note that although the Kikuyu were originally indigenous to the Central Province of Kenya, for historical reasons and also due to their highly enterprising spirit, they have especially settled in the fertile areas of Rift Valley Province. They also have a remarkable presence in the Coast Province – a very important area for Kenya's tourism industry which earns a lot of foreign exchange for the national economy. Compared to other groups of Kenya, the Kikuyu are the leading diaspora group in other provinces of Kenya.

Historically, the Kikuyu lay claim to a prominent place in the struggle for Kenya's independence. Geographically, Kikuyu country was on the immediate doorstep of colonial activities in Kenya. Thus when the popular discourse of "hard-won independence" comes up, the Kikuyu normally lay claim to a bigger contribution than the other Kenyan ethnic groups. Since independence the Kikuyu have had significant memberships in several big political parties: KANU, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Asili (FORD-Asili), the DP, the National Rainbow Coalition Alliance (NARC) and the Party of National Unity (PNU).

Table 6.1 Ethno-linguistic groups of Kenya

Tribe	Male	Female	Total	% of total
Ajuran	13,461	13,455	26,916	0.13
Bajun	27,556	27,631	55,187	0.26
Basuba	55,380	52,439	107,819	0.50
Boni-Sanye	5,513	5,378	10,981	0.05
Boran	41,714	38,446	80,160	0.37
Bulji	3,051	2,924	5,975	0.03
Dashnachi-Shangil	281	137	418	0.00
Degodia	52,101	48,299	100,400	0.47
Dorobo	12,396	11,967	24,363	0.11
Elmolo	1,800	1,800	3,600	0.02
Embu	128,235	128,388	256,623	1.20
Gabra	18,194	17,532	35,726	0.17
Gosha	1,037	1,044	2,081	0.01
Gurreh	41,501	38,503	80,004	0.37
Hawiyah	14,091	13,153	27,244	0.13
Kalenjin	1,223,037	1,235,086	2,458,123	11.46
Kamba	1,212,635	1,235,667	2,448,302	11.42
Kikuyu	2,205,640	2,250,225	4,555,865	20.78
Kisii	653,150	665,259	1,318,409	6.15
Kuria	55,904	56,332	112,236	0.52
Luhya	1,518,851	1,564,422	3,083,273	14.38
Luo	1,306,323	1,347,609	2,653, 932	12.38
Maasai	188,950	188,139	377,089	1.76
Mbeere	48,365	52,643	101,008	0.47
Meru	540,160	547,618	1,087,778	5.07
Mijikenda	492,971	514,400	1,007,371	4.70
Njemps	7,826	8,046	15,872	0.07
Ogaden	71,797	67,800	139,597	0.65
Orma	23,060	22,502	45,562	0.21
Pokomo	29,276	29,369	58,645	0.27
Rendile	12,804	13,732	26,536	0.12
Sakuye	5,307	5,371	10,678	0.05
Samburu	53,182	53,715	106,897	0.50
Swahili-Shirazi	7,050	6,870	13,920	0.60
Somali	24,232	20,866	45,098	0.21
Taita	99,546	103,843	203,389	0.95
Taveta	7,090	7,268	14,358	0.07
Teso	88,861	89,594	178,455	0.83
Tharaka	48,558	50,970	92,528	0.46
Turkana	140,071	143,679	283,750	1.52
Indian	14,925	14,166	29,091	0.14
Pakistani	997	865	1,862	0.01
Other Asian	3,044	2,220	5,264	0.02
Kenyan Asian	28,113	24,855	52,968	0.25
Kenyan European	1,720	1,464	3,184	0.01
Kenyan Arab	16,838	16,876	33,714	0.16
British	7,076	8,532	15,608	0.07
Other Arab	4,153	3,728	7,881	0.04

Table 6.1 (cont.)

Tribe	Male	Female	Total	% of total
Other European	8,350	7,418	15,768	0.07
Other Kenyan	14,560	14,162	28,722	0.13
Tanzanian	10,797	8,529	19,326	0.09
Ugandan	12,965	14,302	27,267	0.13
Other African	8,357	6,114	14,471	0.07
Rest	3,291	3,017	6,308	0.03
Tribe unknown	1,459	952	2,411	0.01
Not recorded	10,769	5,947	16,716	0.08

Source: Government of Kenya (1999) *Kenya Population Census*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

The Kikuyu were predominantly in KANU during the reign of Kenya's founding president, Jomo Kenyatta. When multi-party politics was reintroduced in Kenya in 1992, during the presidency of Daniel arap Moi, the Kikuyu mainly decamped to the two leading opposition parties, namely the FORD-Asili and the DP. In the 2002 general elections that dislodged KANU from power for the very first time, the Kikuyu were mainly in the winning NARC party and the president came from their ranks. In the 2007 general elections the Kikuyu were again in the controversial winning alliance, the PNU.

The Luhya, Luo, Kalenjin, Kamba and Gusii have also had a remarkable position in Kenyan party politics based on their EV attributes. Just like the Kikuyu, their members have a significant presence in the nation's institutions. Although, for example in the civil service, the issue of merit is emphasized, in actual practice the big groups are well represented in important positions. This is because in Kenya civil service appointments are very much influenced by ethnicity.

However, in terms of comparison, the Luhya have not had a significant presence in political parties as a single group because they are the most heterogeneous among the big groups, with membership of 16 different subgroups that sometimes subscribe to different political parties. The Luo have typically been aligned with large opposition political parties, such as the Kenya People's Union (1966–1969) and the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya (FORD-Kenya) during the 1992 general elections and the NDP during the 1997 elections. They were, however, in the winning NARC alliance in the 2002 elections, before they fell out with the Kikuyu in 2005 and went back to the opposition. Currently they are important stakeholders in the grand coalition government between the PNU and Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K) on one side and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) on the other side of the

coalition. The Luo, the Kalenjin and the majority of the Luhya subgroups are in the ODM wing of the grand coalition government.

Because of the importance of demography in the election process in Kenya, the small groups have been mainly collaborators with the big groups. The next section of this chapter explains that former President Moi (1978–2002) won two multi-party general elections (in 1992 and 1997) because his Kalenjin group got the support of the small groups. However, there are instances that have shown that the small groups are not always comfortable being under the influence of the big groups. For example, based on the awareness of the importance of demography in Kenya's election process, one Maasai politician urged his in-group not to practise family planning. He wanted members of the Maasai community to multiply in big numbers so they can improve their demographics.

Because of the importance that is attached to demography in the election processes of Kenya, apart from KADU, a coalition of small groups that took part in the first elections after Kenya's independence, no small group has had a serious presidential candidate within its ranks.

Ethno-linguistic vitality and democratic practice in Kenya: A critical overview

It is important to emphasize again that the remarkable influence of EV on democratic practice in Kenya is mainly seen in the area of general elections, usually held every five years. Therefore, we must first discuss the influence of EV in political parties before we look at other democratic institutions, such as the parliament, media, civil society and the labour movement.

At the time of Kenyan independence in 1963 there were two prominent parties that reflected the balance between the big and small ethnic groups. KANU was associated with two big ethnic groups, the Luo and the Kikuyu. The other prominent party, KADU, was associated with small ethnic groups such as the coastal groups. Indeed, one of the important questions addressed at a constitutional conference that took place in Lancaster in the United Kingdom revolved around the fear of the small groups that they would be submerged by the big groups in post-independence Kenya.[9]

Since independence, the question of EV has been evident in all the primary events that have shaped Kenyan politics. In the elections immediately after independence, KANU emerged as the winner, with senior members of the Kikuyu and Luo communities, like Jomo Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga respectively, being very prominent in the post-independence government. On the other hand, members of the small

ethnic groups like Ronald Ngala were initially very prominent in the opposition. Soon after, when the opposition KADU crossed the floor of the parliament to join KANU, Kenya became in practice a one-party state. In the context of EV, the big ethnic groups had seemingly submerged the small ethnic groups in Kenyan politics.

In 1966 the question of EV took a new turn. The dominant Luo and Kikuyu fell out. The Luo lost their position in the post-independence government when Oginga Odinga, the first post-independence vice-president, resigned his position in President Kenyatta's government. This culminated in Oginga Odinga forming the Kenya People's Union (KPU) that predominantly became a Luo party. The KPU was, however, proscribed in 1969. From that time onwards, the Luo remained a formidable opposition to President Kenyatta's government until his death in 1978. The fallout between the big groups redefined the politics of EV in Kenya. It was no longer a question of big groups versus small groups, but rather about competition between one big group – the Kikuyu – versus another big group, the Luo.

In 1973 the Kikuyu sought to consolidate their power through mega-ethnicity by forming the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association (GEMA) that aimed at enhancing their status, demography and presence in national institutions in collaboration with other peripheral ethnic groups, i.e. the Embu and Meru. When President Moi took over after the death of President Kenyatta in 1978, the question of EV still confronted him. His government employed the strategy of an alliance of his ethnic group (the Kalenjin) and the small ethnic groups. During his reign there was an alliance of the groups of the Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana and Samburu (KAMATUSA). This was also an example of mega-ethnicity. It is important to note that during President Moi's regime some of the prominent critics of his government were from the Kikuyu and the Luo. During the multi-party elections of 1992 and 1997, Moi faced formidable opposition from parties that had predominantly Kikuyu and Luo membership.

Moi characteristically reached out for small groups in Kenya through a number of strategies. One was that of giving small groups such as the Teso and the Kuria new districts. This was very strategic because the Kuria, who were neighbours of the Luo in the Nyanza area, for example, always voted for Moi in presidential elections, as opposed to the Luo who did not. Secondly, Moi could give very powerful positions to members of a small group, like when a Pokomo was appointed as the chief secretary and secretary to the cabinet. Thirdly, he appointed and retained ministers from small groups, like those from the Coast and Northeastern Provinces.

It is instructive to note that in 1992 the ruling party KANU won the general elections because the Luo and the Kikuyu, who were originally united in a strong opposition party, the Forum for Restoration of

Democracy (FORD), could not remain united until election time. Subsequently FORD split into FORD-Asili, led by Kenneth Matiba, a Kikuyu, and FORD-Kenya, led by Oginga Odinga, a Luo. The Kikuyu also had another presidential candidate in the DP, Mwai Kibaki, and in the elections of 1992 almost all the Kikuyu and the Luo voted for their respective candidates. KANU, led by incumbent President Moi, won the elections because it got its votes mainly from the Kalenjin community and the other ethnic groups, other than the Kikuyu and Luo.

In the 1997 elections the Kikuyu and Luo were again in opposition, in the DP and NDP respectively. In 1997 FORD-Asili leader Kenneth Matiba did not contest the election, so the majority of the Kikuyu voted for the DP candidate, Mwai Kibaki. Similarly, the majority of the Luo voted for the NPK candidate, Raila Odinga. However, once again the Kalenjin and the small ethnic groups voted for Moi of KANU, who won the elections. Thus KANU's victories in the 1992 and 1997 elections were mainly made possible because of the fear of domination by the big ethnic groups (the fairly homogeneous Kikuyu and Luo).

In 2002 some realignment occurred among the big groups. President Moi had completed his two mandatory five-year terms and picked a successor who was not acceptable to some of those in his ruling KANU party. Because of this, the Kikuyu, the overwhelming majority of the Luhya groups, the Luo, the Kamba and even other small groups formed an alliance, the NARC. The NARC eventually defeated President Moi's preferred successor, Uhuru Kenyatta, a Kikuyu. In fact, Uhuru Kenyatta got more votes from President Moi's Kalenjin community than in his own Kikuyu community, because the coalition's presidential torch-bearer was a Kikuyu, Mwai Kibaki, who went on to win the presidency. It is important to observe that in this election the Kikuyu, the majority of the Luhya subgroups, the Luo, the Kamba and other small groups did not join hands out of nowhere. They had signed a memorandum of understanding that was to give Raila Odinga the position of prime minister after the elections. Kalonzo Musyoka, the Kamba torch-bearer, was also supposed to gain a powerful position in the post-election government, as were the Luhya.

It is interesting to note that the Gusii preferred to go it alone in the 2002 general elections, and had their own presidential candidate in Simeon Nyachae. Although he did not capture the presidency, all the members of parliament from his area (the Kisii, Nyamira and Gucha districts) were voted in on his FORD People Party ticket.

When Kibaki assumed the presidency, he reneged on some sections of the memorandum of understanding. A Luhya, Kijana Wamalwa, was appointed vice-president, but the Luo and the Kamba were not given the positions that they were promised in the memorandum of understanding.

This led to dissent from Kalonzo Musyoka and Raila Odinga, who were eventually sacked from the cabinet in 2005. Musyoka and Odinga had joined with politicians from other ethnic groups to defeat the government in the November 2005 national referendum on the new constitution that was viewed by them as pro-government, a euphemism for pro-Kikuyu.

In the 2007 general elections the Luo, some Luhya, Kalenjin and some groups from the coast banded together in the ODM. The Kikuyu and their kindred, the Embu, Mbeere and Meru and the Bukusu subgroup of the Luhya, were in the PNU. The Kamba were mainly in the ODM-K. Thus, in a big way, ethnic alliances that had undercurrents of mega-ethnicity were very visible in the run-up to the 2007 general elections.

Looking critically at the importance of EV in Kenya's political parties, the case of Luo Oginga Odinga and his son Raila Odinga is notable. Oginga Odinga distinguished himself as the doyen of opposition politics in Kenya. Similarly, although his son is currently the prime minister of Kenya in the present grand coalition arrangement, he was previously a distinguished opposition politician. Therefore, EV is an important variable in the political power structure in Kenya. The Kikuyu also provided some able opposition leaders during President Moi's regime.

Since the reintroduction of multi-party politics in Kenya in 1992, the legislative role of the parliament has been visibly influenced by the composition of the political parties. Although motions and bills that do not have serious power ramifications are normally debated with non-partisan interests, partisan interests usually come to the fore. In such circumstances, political parties, either by themselves or in alliances, usually hold very partisan private conferences with the aim of galvanizing their positions before debates and the vote in parliament. As explained earlier, political parties in Kenya have transparent ethnic or mega-ethnic masks, their pseudo-democratic titles notwithstanding.

On the part of the media, it is important to observe that they started playing a major role in the struggle for democracy after the reintroduction of multi-party politics in 1992. From 1992 to 2000 and since, the media made a positive contribution to democracy in Kenya. As the BBC says:

> Over a period of 15 years, this increasingly assertive and self-confident media has played a substantive role in mediating relationships between citizens and the state, in shaping the democratic dispensation in the country, and has transformed utterly how some of the most marginalized in society access information on issues that shape their lives. Kenyan citizens have become increasingly reliant on the media for such information, investing it with greater credibility than almost any other source of information . . . For most of this period, the media has been seen nationally and internationally as a principal indicator of the democratic vitality of Kenya . . . That reputation is now being challenged . . .[10]

The reputation of the Kenyan media is being challenged largely because the community media in particular (read: the ethnic media) are currently mainly serving the partisan interests of EV. In 2000 a Kikuyu community radio station, Kameme, started broadcasting using the Kikuyu language. In 2004 a new law was passed that further liberalized the airwaves and led to an unprecedented proliferation of ethnic radio stations. In this regard, ethnic radio stations that had an EV complexion sprang up to target the Kikuyu in Central Province, the Luo in the west, the Kalejin in the northwest and the Kamba and Kisii in the southeast. The important negative impact of these ethnic radio stations has been seen in elections. During the 2005 referendum on the constitution that represented a visible power struggle between the major ethnic groups, some of the ethnic radio stations played a role in fanning ethnic hatreds. In the hotly contested 2007 general elections, some ethnic radio stations again played a role in spreading hatred.

Although, on the positive side, new technologies such as short message service (SMS), telephony and blogs can offer opportunities to enhance democracy and empowerment of people, in the 2007 general elections and their tragic aftermath the new technologies were used negatively. Since EV was an important basis of competition for power among the major parties, mutual hate between the mega-ethnicities was rapidly circulated via SMS, telephony and blogs.

One should note that two important instruments in the democratization process in Kenya have not succumbed to serve the negative interests of EV. Historically, the trade union movement played a major role in the democratization process in Kenya during the struggle for independence, where charismatic politicians like Tom Mboya used the movement to enhance the cause of legal nationalism after a state of emergency was declared in 1952.[11] Although the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) still plays a peripheral role in democratization, mainly in the realm of fighting for workers' rights, it has not been seriously infiltrated by the negative elements of EV.

Kenya's civil society organizations (CSOs) are very vibrant, numbering in the thousands.[12] Despite the enormous potential that the CSOs have to enhance the democratization process in Kenya, however, they have only made a modest contribution. In connection with EV, however, the CSO is another type of institution that has not been influenced by negative connotations of EV, mainly because the majority of CSO members are more progressive and educated than ordinary political party members.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that EV is an important factor in Kenya's election processes. At the time of independence, EV was seen in terms of

the big groups versus the small groups. When the Luo and the Kikuyu fell out, the Luo became a formidable opposition to the ruling Kikuyu. Mega-ethnicity in the form of GEMA and KAMATUSA depicted a strategy by the then ruling ethnic groups, the Kikuyu and Kalenjin respectively, to increase their EV attributes, especially demographics, to enable them to compete more effectively in elections. The present ethnic political alliances such as the PNU and the ODM are even bigger mega-ethnic alliances than their GEMA and KAMATUSA predecessors. It is disturbing to note that the Kenyan media, which previously had the reputation of being a good indicator of democratic vitality, lost that reputation during the 2007 general elections and their tragic aftermath because sections of them served partisan EV interests. Since the ballot box, inextricably linked with partisan EV interests, has been the surest way to gain power, EV will remain an important index in "democratic practice" in Kenya. A good way to change this is to delink political parties from ethnic influence. This should go beyond the ethnic parties with pseudo-democratic labels that we have in Kenya today.

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7

The democratization process in Ghana: Key issues and challenges

Gbenga Emmanuel Afolayan

Introduction

Ghana was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain political independence, significantly ahead of other West African countries, including oil-rich regional giant Nigeria. After achieving independence in 1957, Ghana's political history entailed a series of alternations between authoritarian and notional democratic rule, with three periods of elected government and three of military rule between 1957 and 1992. Except for the first republic under Kwame Nkrumah, the interludes of civilian government under the second (1969–1972) and third (1979–1981) republics have been short-lived, enduring for no longer than 30 months. Ghana's most recent democratic transition in late 2008 has been more successful and has attracted international commendation. The constitutional and legal framework in place for the presidential and parliamentary elections is in line with international standards for the conduct of credible elections, to which Ghana is a signatory.[1]

The democratic wave that swept sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s brought irresistible pressure on the then quasi-military government of Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings and the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), in power since 31 December 1981. The élite-managed democratic transition that followed has been well documented.[2] A draft multi-party constitution for the fourth republic was approved by a large majority of the population (92 per cent) in the national referendum of April 1992, instituting a hybrid model of a US-style executive presidency

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alongside a unicameral parliament of 200 members. Parliamentary members are also able to serve as government ministers, elected on a first-past-the-post single-member-constituency basis. Three sets of presidential and parliamentary elections have been held subsequently (1992, 1996, 2000), with perceived advances each time in the quality of the electoral process. Although Rawlings and his party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), retained power in the 1992 and 1996 elections, a key criterion of democratic consolidation was met in the December 2000 elections when a peaceful transfer of power between political parties occurred for the first time in Ghanaian history, with the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP), led by John A. Kufuor, winning both the presidency and exactly half of the 200 parliamentary seats.[3]

Since the early 1990s, Ghana has embarked on a renewed and sustained process of democracy. After four successful elections, including one which saw the exit of the ruling party and its replacement by the party then in opposition, Ghanaians in December 2008 went again to the polls to choose the next president and a new crop of 230 members of parliament. The 7 December 2008 election in Ghana, which resulted in a run-off election held on 28 December 2008, produced a demonstration of a sense of pride in the way Ghanaians had voted. Ghanaians demonstrated political maturity as they voted on critical issues such as employment, food security and health services. The electorate also split their votes between one party's presidential candidate and the other party's parliamentary candidate. Overall, it was issues that dominated the 2008 voting patterns in Ghana, and not geography or ethnicity.

Ghana got it right, mainly thanks to certain institutional mechanisms that the Ghanaians have put in place over the years.[4] Zounmenou averred that the pre-electoral period saw a number of violent incidents that raised concerns over the peaceful nature of the electoral process. However, the existence of strong mechanisms helped Ghana overcome the challenges associated with this highly contentious electoral process. Among other things, Ghana has put in place:

- a code of ethics accepted and respected by all political actors
- intensive voter education
- a relatively efficient judiciary
- a credible Electoral Commission (EC)
- pre-election televised debates between the main presidential candidates
- results from the lessons of the experiences in Kenya and Zimbabwe.

There is an emerging convention that Ghana is a model of democratic peace in Africa. However, the glorified democratic image of Ghana seems to disguise some hidden hullabaloos underlying Ghanaian democracy. Liberal democracy is embedded within the same political and economic

factors which have contributed to deadly conflicts in Africa because of inherent contradictions between political equality and group-based inequalities. As a result, this chapter takes a cursory look into the conceptual framework of liberal democracy and its hidden dilemma with respect to Ghanaian democratization. Consideration of this makes Ghanaian democratization a paradox rather than a model. Also, this chapter opens with a brief analysis of democratic theory, particularly of procedural and substantive democracy, which is discussed in order to illustrate the theoretical components of democratization. Finally, I attempt to depict different issues and challenges that can give a deeper analysis of Ghana's democracy.

Conceptualizing liberal democracy and its hidden dilemma in Ghana

Liberal democracy was essentially a capitalist class revolution in a specific socio-historical context in England, aimed at bringing about the unfettered accumulation and protection of private property, as reflected in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.[5] It was inherently ridden with conflict because the classes that it marginalized and exploited – women, workers, slaves, the non-propertied – had to struggle against the bourgeois class for the very rights for which liberal democracy is eulogized.[6] As highlighted by Immanuel Wallerstein and Reinhard Bendix, marginalized groups in the liberal democratic state had to struggle fiercely for their rights as citizens because of the distinctly bourgeois nature of citizenship at that specific historical conjuncture.[7]

The liberation of the citizen was, therefore, paradoxical: while everybody was liberated under the liberal state, this "was only a partial liberation ... and the new inclusions made sharper and more apparent the continuing (and new) exclusions. Universal rights turned out in actual practice to be somewhat of a linguistic mirage, an oxymoron."[8] When liberal democracy was subsequently extended to all classes, it maintained its historical/theoretical elusive separation of the "political" from the "economic"; a separation that made it possible for the liberal state to depoliticize bread-and-butter issues as "private" or "economic", and as such not to be interfered with by the state.

Hence, hard-nosed liberals like Hayek, Friedman and Nozick do not see any contradiction in liberal democracy if "socio-economic inequality and exploitation coexist with civic freedom and equality".[9] As such, they will demur at any attempts by the state to address this contradiction through welfare programmes.[10] Similarly, when liberal democracy was

exported[11] by the West to Africa in the wake of the neoliberal counter-revolution in the 1980s, these theoretical insights informed its practice.

It is logical, in this case, to argue that liberal democracy by its history, theory and praxis does not substantively address the economic and political grievances of the subaltern classes – the very constituency from which warlords recruit fighters for their insurgencies. In view of this, it would seem that democratic institutions and procedures alone do not douse the fires of "atypical severe grievances"[12] in Africa. Paradoxically, socio-economic inequality and poverty are inherent characteristics of liberal democratic economies because of their capitalist nature.[13] This is a fact that even a passionate advocate of liberal democracy, Francis Fukuyama, concedes: "liberal democracies are doubtless plagued by a host of problems like unemployment, pollution, drugs, crime and the like".[14] He goes on to note that "major social inequalities will remain even in the most perfect liberal societies" and further concedes that this represents "a continuing tension between the twin principles of liberty and equality upon which such societies are based".[15] This is so because in a liberal democratic system the free market and unfettered accumulation of profit are the underlying principles of the workings of the economy. However, contrary to the magic of the market working for the good of everybody, history and empirical evidence have shown that the beneficiaries of the market (the bourgeois classes) are often few and the losers (marginal social groups) are often many.[16] Socio-economic inequality is thus rooted in the capitalist mode of production and its inherent class exploitation.[17]

The political-economic factor of conflict is what Schock[18] described as the "Marxist theory of rebellion". Marx's famous statement, "the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle", encapsulates his theory of conflict in society. Conflict is underpinned by material issues and social contradictions. Conflict resonates in the logic of capitalist accumulation, namely exploitation of the working class by the propertied class. In that sense, conflict is embedded in the continuous exploitation of the proletariat, who are likely to rise up against their exploiters at some historical conjuncture. The presumption is that the greater the extent of economic exploitation, the more likely that the working class will experience discontent, or what Marx referred to as "immiseration".[19] Despite criticisms that history has turned Marxist theory of conflict on its head, and despite the deterministic and mechanistic misreading of Marx's philosophy of history by some Marxists,[20] the underlying principle of the theory – exploitation of one class by another and the conflict that this relationship breeds – is still relevant in contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

Ghana has so far successfully managed its ethno-regional/political conflicts and has averted the deadly wars that have erupted in Liberia, Sierra

Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. Be that as it may, the country may be laden with the very conditions that brought about conflict in its neighbouring countries.[21] Indeed, as argued by Tsikata and Seini,[22] Ghana is a paradox because, while it is perceived as an island of peace, it has actually been grappling with its own violent conflicts. For instance, Sowatey[23] and MacGaffey[24] have documented how persistent political interference with the chieftaincy institution by state élites has been a source of bloody conflicts in Ghana, with the Dagbon regicide in March 2002 being a recent example. Regrettably, because the extant liberal democratization literature on Africa has privileged "high politics of state" over "deep politics of society",[25] the myriad undemocratic life experiences of the marginal classes, which can potentially implode into a deadly civil war, are underestimated. In that sense, contrary to the liberal peace orthodoxy, Ghana is a paradox and not a model.

Unfortunately, an uncritical international media and the mainstream "transitology" literature are promoting Ghana as a success story of neoliberal economic reforms and transition to liberal democracy,[26] and thereby giving impetus to this reckless behaviour. This has given rise to the tendency for Ghanaian leaders to seek refuge under this image whenever they are criticized at home for the dire economic hardships that their neoliberal policies have wrought on most Ghanaians. For example, President Kufuor, as part of Ghana's fiftieth independence anniversary celebrations, granted an interview to BBC TV in which he confidently asserted that Ghana was "moving ahead", and that the whole world was acknowledging it. Interestingly, the same BBC TV programme showed footage of abject poverty in the northern part of Ghana: women and children fetching drinking water from dirty and stagnant ponds, and schoolchildren with tattered footwear and uniforms sleeping while their teacher was teaching. The teacher told the BBC that the children were sleeping because of hunger.[27] The contradictions that the BBC was trying to convey about Ghana's much-praised development and democratic credentials should be apparent to even a child. In a country where people cannot afford the basics of life, the president and his Western patrons still see it as the beacon of hope, the rising black star of Africa and the trailblazer of the continent. It is clear that these views are informed by the dominant political science perspective of development and peace. The obverse is also true: they are oblivious of or underrate the critical political economy aspect of democratization and conflict management. This is dangerous for the fragile democratic peace that endures in Ghana.

The mainstream transitologists have argued that the struggle by Africans against their autocratic leaders in the late 1980s was a demand for liberal (procedural) democracy.[28] This genre of literature has through empirical research established that Africans have imbibed liberal culture,

making "(neo)liberal democracy" hegemonic.[29] The work of these scholars represents an important path of social scientific work on democratization in Africa. To make matters worse, it creates a sense of complacency in the power blocs of the state, providing cover for élites to indulge in acts of arrogance, profligacy and other kleptocratic behaviour – the very things that ignited civil wars in neighbouring countries.[30]

The existence of "vertical" and "horizontal"[31] inequality in Ghana is another source of the hidden dilemma. Using the Gini coefficient and Theil's T index of inequality measurements, Adjasi and Osei[32] have computed various dimensions of inequality in Ghana, including national, inter-group, rural-urban, occupational, regional and expenditure-related dimensions. For example, they reported that the national Gini coefficient is 0.425, compared to 0.323 for the Accra region and 0.426 in other regions.[33] These statistics, even though valuable, may not capture the vivid picture of inequality in Ghana.

Horizontal inequality between the three northern regions and the rest of the country has attracted the attention of conflict researchers. The three northern regions are the poorest and least developed in Ghana.[34] Langer ascribed the root cause of this problem to three factors: the unfavourable geographical/climatic conditions and resource poverty of this part of Ghana; the exploitation-driven policies of the colonial state, which saw the northern part of Ghana as marginal to its project; and the national development policies of the post-colonial state that perpetuated the problem. It is true that leaders like Nkrumah, Acheampong and Rawlings tried tackling this problem by implementing various concrete development projects in the north. Nkrumah stands out among all the leaders for making a conscious effort to narrow the literacy gap between the north and south, through policies like free primary and secondary education and the opening of secondary schools in the north. Nonetheless, the south–north gap persists.

As is expected of capitalist exploitation, the corollary of this is the wreaking of implacable havoc on the environment and the livelihoods of the downtrodden in the mining communities. Scholars researching this problem have documented massive evidence of the most egregious forms of social injustice, environmental degradation, social deprivation and destitution in these communities. Farmlands have been taken over by the government for foreign transnational mining companies, biodiversity has been killed and drinking-water sources have been polluted – all of which have led to high incidences of poverty.[35]

Ake[36] believes that the political arrangements of liberal democracy make little sense in Africa. Liberal democracy assumes individualism, but there is little individualism in Africa. Liberal democracy assumes the abstract universalism of abstract subjects, but in Africa that would apply

only to the urban environment. The political parties of liberal democracy do not make sense in societies where associational life is rudimentary and interest groups remain essentially primary groups. In contrast, he argued that African democracy in a collective social sense offered a form of political participation that was different from and superior to that offered by liberal democracy. According to him, this was because the African notion of participation did not rest on the "assumption of individualism or conflicting interests, but on the social nature of human beings".[37] This underlines the primacy of being a part of a continuous process of decision-making and of the collective will in securing "concrete benefits".

Ake was of the opinion that liberal democracy is different from the classic or Athenian notion of the rule of the people.[38] Accordingly, it became the rule of the bourgeoisie following the industrial revolution, and subsequently has become the rule of the minority.[39] He also noted that liberal democracy and the market shared the same values, thus creating a situation in which any real political participation was structured out of the process.[40] This view comes out in his argument that liberal democracy had become trivialized "to the extent that it is no longer threatening to those in power or demanding to anyone".[41] He argued that liberal democracy had displaced democracy, effectively rendering it as the rule of the oligarchy or the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Democratic theory: Framing Ghanaian democratic processes

In order to evaluate prospects for democratization in Ghana, it is imperative that a working definition of democracy is established. Democracy, in its most basic interpretation, implies power. The ambiguity arises through competing ideas of where that power is consolidated and how it is applied to society. In the West, it is common to argue that democracy is a system of government based on the social and political desires of a population. These desires are represented by democratically elected officials who act on behalf of a constituency. This type of system requires a strong civil society that will allow for peaceful transitions of power, as well as institutions that will provide assurances that élites will transfer power as dictated by free and fair elections. The question then becomes, how do we define democracy within an African context? Dankwart A. Rustow defines democracy as "a system of rule by temporary majorities. In order that rulers and policies may freely change, the boundaries must endure and the composition of the citizenry be continuous."[42]

This definition does two things. First, it provides a comprehensive definition of democracy that is independent of Western-style liberal de-

mocracy. Second, it illustrates the very reasons why democratization has struggled throughout Africa since independence. Many African states have tried to institutionalize temporary majorities, boundaries or a continuous citizenship. Of those which have, there have been periods when they struggled with such concepts. In other words, democracy has not been a universal concept in Africa because it has been difficult to define its basic ingredients: citizenship, boundaries and consistent regime change.

Claude Ake is one scholar who points to the "bitter disappointment of independence and post-independence plans" to illustrate how the concept of democracy in Africa has been exploited by the early leaders of newly independent states. Ake understands that the realities of democratization in Africa call for a different kind of democracy from that to which the West is accustomed. In the case of Africa, "the use of ethnic groups, nationalities and communities as the constituencies for representation ... would be a highly decentralized system of government with equal emphasis on individual and communal rights".[43] This approach to democracy fits the physical and ethnic make-up of many African states. Centralized governments are able to consolidate power within a small group of élites. This is actually a benefit of a centralized government. However, the socio-economic make-up of many African nations is not conducive to a strong, centralized government. Smaller, provincial authorities make it easier not only to communicate the policies of the state but also to be more responsive to their immediate constituencies.

Is it more important for a nation to have regular elections or free and inclusive elections in order to be considered a democracy? Once elections are over, how will the political minority be protected from and represented by the majority? These are questions that address the procedural versus substantive approaches to democratic theory. Procedural democracy suggests there are certain processes, such as elections, that define a democracy. In his study of democratization, Samuel Huntington characterizes the process as "a group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specific period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time".[44] While regular transitions of government power are a cornerstone of democracy, they do not in and of themselves constitute a democracy.

Procedurally, Ghana has implemented democratic reforms. There is general agreement that successive elections, and the processes preceding them, have been characterized by a progressive improvement in terms of the criteria of "free and fair".[45] Such improvements did commence from a low starting point, however, with the debacle of the 1992 elections in

which the opposition parties disputed the result of the presidential election in November and boycotted the parliamentary elections held soon after. Subsequently, election results have been generally accepted and the Electoral Commission, established as an independent body under the 1992 constitution, must take considerable credit for the improvements achieved in the whole electoral process.

Like the previous elections under Ghana's fourth republic, the 2008 Ghana elections were intensely contested, with eight presidential candidates and 1,060 parliamentary candidates competing for 230 seats. Presidential and parliamentary candidates were drawn from eight political parties and independents. According to the Commonwealth Observer Group, the majority of voters in the 2008 Ghana election were able to exercise their democratic right in a peaceful and orderly way.[46] This was due in large part to the effective organizational machinery the Electoral Commission instituted to manage the electoral process. The process was transparent and polling staff worked diligently, often under challenging circumstances. Similarly, West Africa Human Rights and Democratization Coalition election observers also declared that the Ghana 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections were free, fair and credible, thereby meeting international standards.[47] Simply put, Ghana enjoys patriotic pride in being the first black African nation to gain independence, as well as being an inspirational role model to other African states in pioneering the hopes and aspirations of pan-African ideology injected into the work of African scholars and political activists during independence struggles.

Joseph Schumpeter posited that democracy is where "the role of the people is to produce a government", as opposed to exercising an ongoing role in government. Schumpeter takes the responsibility of democracy away from the people and places it in the hands of the elected representatives. This is the central tenet of procedural democracy, because by "producing a government" the people are viewed more as a means to an end rather than the end itself. For Schumpeter, democracy was a means to construct an efficient and stable government that could guard against the numerous desires and opinions of the governed.[48] Regarding parliament's representative function, it is perceived that there has been an improvement in MPs' representation of their constituents, largely due to the increased competition for parliamentary seats. Such improvement is qualified, however, since some MPs have been scared to visit their constituencies because of the incessant demands being made upon them for cash or benefits in kind by constituents.

A further issue of representation in Ghana's parliament concerns gender balance, with currently only 8 per cent of MPs being female. Clearly this is woefully inadequate: we are reminded that Nkrumah adopted an

affirmative action policy in the early years of independence, and there have been arguments for a similar legal intervention now to provide an improved gender balance. A final issue is that of parliamentary capacity, which is generally regarded as weak in both material and human terms. Consequently there is a lack of support staff, research assistants, library facilities, access to independent data and so on. This is perceived as largely a resource issue, stemming from parliament's low priority in the governmental budget and its lack of financial autonomy. Yet to address these institutional weaknesses, a substantial expansion of available financial and human resources is required.

In principle, it would appear that the judiciary has been relatively well insulated from executive interference through constitutional provisions. In practice, the executive has remained a dominant force and the judiciary under the fourth republic cannot be said to be independent of executive influence. Tellingly, the findings of a survey showed an overwhelming public perception of government interference (73 per cent) and a majority (57 per cent) who perceived the judiciary as not independent.[49] The main factors limiting judicial independence are the appointments system, including for the Supreme Court, and the lack of financial autonomy.[50]

In terms of organizational structures, the NDC had ready-made structures inherited from the PNDC, including its allied mass organizations, such as the Association of Committees for the Defence of the Revolution and the 31st December Women's Movement, which effectively became wings of the new party. Moreover, despite the ban on political parties under PNDC rule, Pinkney[51] states that opposition party networks were maintained during this time and thus "revived with considerable ease", as confirmed by the example of the NPP.[52] Second, in terms of the mutual acceptance of the legitimate roles of competing political parties and of the rules of electoral competition, the historic turnover between parties in the December 2000 elections provides evidence of significant progress.

One major constraint, however, on the institutional capacity of political parties is a weak financial base.[53] Financial constraints are intensified by the ban on external donations and company donations to political parties, and a limit on donations from private Ghanaian citizens of 1 million cedis per year.[54] Consequently, some commentators[55] advocate the public funding of political parties. Though this remains controversial, a national debate on party political funding is needed.

Participatory democratic governance and the contextual factors that determine or influence politically motivated violence in Ghana are expressed within the three most influential political traditions and their intense competitions for political space. These are the Nkrumahists (Convention People's Party – CPP), the Danquah-Busiaists (NPP) and

the Rawlingsist traditions (NDC). Implicitly, each tradition is characteristic of each leader and their respective political philosophies.[56] Today, the canonization of the first president of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the founder of the CPP, and his national legacy has in a way softened the political rivalry between the new generation of Nkrumahists (CPP) and the Danquah-Busiaists (NPP) – unlike the competition between the newly emerged Rawlingsists (NDC) and the contemporary Danquah-Busiaists (NPP). The old political grudge of the twentieth century between the Nkrumahists (CPP) and the Danquah-Busiaists (NPP) is not resurfacing and spilling over into the twenty-first-century democratic discourse.

The reduced prospect of the new generation of Nkrumahists competing on the same political platform with the Danquah-Busiaists today has weakened the competitive tensions between them. Interestingly, the contemporary bitter political rivalry between the Rawlingsists (NDC) and Danquah-Busiaists (NPP) is reminiscent of earlier post-independent competition between the predecessors of the Nkrumahist and Danquah-Busiaist traditions. Since the transformation from military to democratic rule under Rawlings, from the PNDC to the NDC in 1993, the NDC has continually been troubled by the perceived past human rights records of the former president and its founder – a factor used by rival parties for political advantage against the NDC party.

In the lead-up to the December 2008 elections, pro-NPP newspapers continued to refer to human rights abuses of the PNDC era. The NDC response was to remind the electorate about current serving members of the government, members of the NPP, who served in the PNDC revolutionary government. Likewise, pro-NDC newspapers also refer to incidents of human rights abuses under the presidency of John Kufuor of the NPP government. Ghana's past political history is haunting its present. Even after attempts at national reconciliation through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission initiated by the government of the NPP, in which leading religious figures played active roles, a cursory political observation can highlight the contradictions of a reconciliation effort that has not reconciled Ghanaians because contending political parties are incapable of moving away from the challenges of Ghana's political evolution and history.[57]

There is no question that the structural limits to the development of political parties in African multi-party polities – limits that begin with the scarcity of human, infrastructural and, especially, material resources – remain a massive obstacle on the way towards the consolidation of democratization in Ghana. But, as the above analysis shows, there are signs, notably in Ghana, that some of the drawbacks normally associated with Africa's party systems may be contained, if not entirely avoided.

Ghana's democracy: Analysis of its processes and suggestions

Allied to the desire for basic freedoms and rights is the issue of economic well-being of the ordinary citizen. Incontrovertibly, democracy is expected to do several things for the ordinary citizen. The near-total contraction of the state from economic management on the wings of the neoliberal economic creed and the institutionalization of democratic structures for governance are intended to improve the lot of Ghanaians. It follows that if this expectation is not met for any reason, tension is likely to mount. Poverty is a major problem in the country and unemployment is very high, with able-bodied youth engaging in menial informal jobs.[58]

There is thus a high level of economic dissatisfaction in the country, and this does not augur well for the sustenance of national stability. The fact that a country is democratic does not imply that it should meet the economic needs of all the inhabitants. However, the expectation is that under democratic rule, standards of living will be enhanced. It is poverty that normally drives desperate people to take to arms, and this is what must be avoided through the creation of the necessary environment for the generality of the people to earn a decent living. Adam Burgess argues that, if democracy is to be construed in both political and non-political terms, there would not be a single democratic country.[59] In other words, democracy must be concerned fundamentally with political issues. Burgess further argues that conditions in most societies, with reference to equality and distribution of resources, are still not satisfactory. It may be true that this is a problem of democracy, but he cautions that "profligate use of the term democracy threatens to render it meaningless".[60] He states:

> Democracy is a political system. Social inequality and injustice, meanwhile, is more than a political problem, and their solution does not lie in requiring democracy to effect social transformation before it is recognized as legitimate. The result of incorporating such elevated standards of (social) democracy into the idea of democracy is at least as likely to be a sense of futility as a constructive yardstick against which to measure the progress of democratization around the world.[61]

By implication, democracy is not a magic wand that has the potential to solve every socio-political, economic, ethnic and cultural problem. Democracy as a political system attempts to create an enabling climate for the majority of the people to carry on with individual ventures that will enhance their well-being. So to expect democracy instantly to solve the economic problems of every Ghanaian is impracticable. While the logic

of Adam Burgess's argument appears unassailable, the point made by Claude Ake on the economic component of democracy in Africa is worth considering. He noted that "ordinary Africans do not separate political democracy from economic democracy or for that matter from economic wellbeing. They see their political empowerment, through democratization, as an essential part of the process of getting the economic agenda right at last and ensuring that the development project is managed better and its rewards more evenly distributed."[62]

Ake's position aptly reflects what pertains in Africa regarding people's conception of democracy and its dividends. His stance was informed by the fact that the whole democratic agenda and the struggles by social forces were to facilitate the equitable distribution of societal resources and, as he noted, "the demand for democracy in Africa draws much of its impetus from the prevailing economic conditions within".[63] This is a truism identified also by David Simon. Simon notes that the major push for the democratization process in the 1990s was the people's dissatisfaction with unending economic crisis and endemic poverty.[64] For many Africans therefore, the democratic wave signalled two things: a change in leadership and a change in economic prospects. People thus viewed political change in instrumental terms and as a prerequisite for economic recovery.

In my view, the passion underpinning Burgess's position stated above suits the conception of liberal democracy as it pertains to the advanced industrialized countries. But even so, it is difficult to segregate the economic from the political benefits of democracy. Citing the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, Ake stated:

> We affirm that nations cannot be built without popular support and full participation of the people, nor can the economic crisis be resolved and the human and economic conditions improved without the full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of the people. *After all, it is to the people that the very benefits of development should and must accrue.*[65]

Ghana's ability to manage the past four elections has been highly instrumental in ensuring the relative peace and stability in the country. Once political opponents accept the outcome of the electoral race and congratulate each other, it takes the venom out of those harbouring any intention to utilize the election results as a point for mobilizing people to destabilize the system. As noted by Elklit and Reynolds, "it finally appears to have been recognised explicitly that the quality of electoral administration has a direct impact on the way in which elections in the developing world and their outcomes are regarded, not merely by inter-

national observers, but also – and more importantly – by domestic actors such as voters, parties, media and local observers".[66]

In the Ghanaian case, the trump card of the Electoral Commission was its willingness to accept responsibility for lapses in the conduct of the 1992 elections and go back to the drawing board to improve the various mechanisms. The formation of the Inter Party Advisory Committee in 1994 was a masterstroke. It deprived contending parties of grounds for complaining about lapses. It must be stressed that no general election will be absolutely free of complaints by losers. Complaints form part of the game and are a means to get people to empathize with a party's inability to win political power at the polls. But such complaints should not be allowed to degenerate into confrontations that have the capability of undermining the democratic system. The comparatively peaceful elections after the foundational elections in 1992 testify to the good election management by the EC. But, more importantly, they demonstrate the benefits of working together with relevant bodies to ensure transparency, and by so doing creating a general perception of a legitimate and credible electoral process.

It must be added that the EC was able to achieve all this because of the independence it enjoys under the 1992 constitution. The government cannot control the EC if officials abide by constitutional provisions. This has actually been the trend, especially since the 1992 elections. A good example of the independence of the EC in Ghana was its ability to counter plans by the NPP government to control the purchase of voting materials for the 2004 elections. The government raised several issues regarding the procurement of such materials, but the EC brushed the government aside, took its case to the public domain for public opinion and judgement, and the government had to recoil and allow the EC to carry on with its job. Arguably, the assertion of the EC's independence, guaranteed by the constitution, saved the nation from a catastrophe. Although the opposition NDC still claimed that the 2004 presidential election was rigged by the NPP, this view was not shared by the host of internal domestic monitors and observers and their foreign counterparts. The near-perfect interplay between the EC, civil society organizations and political parties facilitated the evolution of an efficient election management process in Ghana.

The efficiency of the EC notwithstanding, attention has been drawn to other salient factors that in my view have contributed to the stability of the nation. These include the wish by most Ghanaians not to allow past dictatorship, whether civilian or military, to be repeated. And this calls for collective defence of the democratic structures and institutions that are being strengthened on account of the relative stability the nation enjoys. Other factors are improved civil-military relations, commitment by

civil society organizations and their continued education on the virtues of democratic norms as opposed to dictatorship and military rule, media plurality that makes it possible for every segment of society to know about political issues, prohibition of paramilitary organizations and the supportive role played by development partners.

Mention must be made also of the willingness of the political parties to liaise with civic associations and policy think-tanks to build consensus for the progress of the country. Consensus-building has been of immense assistance to the EC in carrying out its responsibilities. One instance of such consensus-building was the introduction in 2003 of the Platform of General Secretaries and the Chairmen's Caucus, initiated by the Institute of Economic Affairs. This exclusive platform is composed of political parties with parliamentary representation. The twice-monthly meetings of the caucus are devoted to intensive discussions of party programmes and activities, as well as larger potentially destabilizing problems the country might face.[67]

However, there are also several factors which, if not well managed, may threaten the survival of the nation. These include extreme dependence on the international system at the expense of developing indigenous productive sectors that will minimize such dependence. No nation has been solely built through external support. This is not to say that nothing is being done to revamp the economy to ensure growth. The point is that the nation has banked its hopes on external financial support to an extent that has overshadowed any attempt at revitalizing local production sectors. Much needs to be done at the micro level for all-round development to take place, instead of taking solace in impressive macroeconomic indicators. These are always appreciated by development partners and the Bretton Woods institutions, but mean little to the common citizen.

Ethnic politics is a canker in Africa, and Ghana is not free from this challenge. Even though many would want to sweep this issue under the carpet, the problem of ethnic voting is real and should engage the attention of all stakeholders. It is a truism that even in industrial democracies, parties have their strongholds and bank on them in elections. While this may serve parochial interests, it bodes ill for the sustained stability of the nation. Perhaps Ghana is not as ethnically polarized as other countries, but continuous ethnic voting patterns will continue to pose a danger to the nation's democratic growth. Urbanization and high levels of migration should help people to grow out of their ethnocentric shells. Politicians must be aware of the harm they do on the campaign trail when, in place of issues, they try to mobilize along ethnic lines, oblivious of the potential danger this poses to national stability. There is an urgent need for people to think nationally.

The democratization of Ghana is equally threatened by a lingering perception of corruption in high places. Ethical leadership is necessary if the trust and confidence of the people is to be bolstered. Where leadership is perceived as corrupt, the masses lose faith in the democratic process and this may lead to frustration and social explosion.

The solution thus appears to be in the sustained education of the people, self-sacrifice by those in authority and heavier doses of transparency and accountability in government business. In addition to the ritualized elections every four years, the people must be genuinely involved in decision-making through district assemblies. This will lead to greater understanding as to why the generality of the people have to wait for better days in the future. This calls for the revamping of the district assembly concept so that the economic realities are communicated to the generality of the people. Effective participation of society through district assemblies is necessary to ensure active and sustained input into policy-making by the people. As Olof Palme, the late prime minister of Sweden, pointed out, "conscious, critical and active people are the prerequisite for progress. It is only when men and women, with their individual capabilities and dreams, can actively influence and take part in decisions that democracy takes root and a society in harmony and justice can be built up."[68] This is the way to help people come to terms with the economic situation of the country.

Conclusion

Democratization is not viewed as a process by which popular control over public decision-making is made more effective and more inclusive, including decisions on (what should be) open questions about the relative roles of the public and private sectors. Rather it is viewed as a means by which to implement an a priori decision that the state's role must be reduced. It is a conception of liberal democracy where the struggle between its liberal and democratic components has been emphatically won by the former.[69]

The progress that Ghana has made in its democratization process, the suggestion that Ghana is a model of liberal democratic peace, rests on shaky ground. Using a Marxian political economy perspective, I have tried to jettison this emerging orthodoxy by depicting the one-sidedness of the liberal democracy: it is mainly based on procedural political equality animated by elections. It ignores the political and economic causes of conflict and conflict transformation/management. In that sense, the idealized liberal democratic model has concealed uproar which is rooted in its

neoliberal policies. It is time we moved away from our fixation on procedures of democratic transitions in Africa – over-researched, in my view – to refocus on the equally important area of its established creeds and the dangers its political economic "deficits" pose to peace.

In the same vein, and in the specific case of Ghana, valuable areas of research on its enduring peace should include looking at the specific sociological factors – its social structure[70] – which make Ghanaians less likely to resort to violent insurrections to address their grievances. For example, notions of the "patience and proverbial good naturedness"[71] of the average Ghanaian need further sociological research. Similarly, the country's "ethno-linguistic fractionalization" and the feasibility of mobilizing an insurrection around ethnic grievances[72] also require researching. Considering the hotchpotch of ethnic groups comprising the marginalized three northern regions, it begs the question whether a northern insurrection can ever be mobilized around its economic grievances. Langer is right in pointing to "important 'structural' impediments to the mobilisation of the north as a group".[73]

Additionally, sustained poverty may undermine the trust people have in and the legitimacy they grant to the democratic system of government in general and the ruling class in particular. This is the reason why Claude Ake[74] admonishes democratic leaders in the subregion not to marginalize the social base, whose dissatisfaction with how the system was being managed by personalized, military and pseudo-democratic rulers paved the way for the democratization process. Pressure from the international community and political conditionalities would have yielded few democratic gains if the majority of people were content with their standard of living under dictatorship of all hues. This is the reason why it is plausible to argue that the economic status of the people, as opposed to their political and civil liberties, holds the key to the growth of democratization processes in the region.

Finally, the Ghanaian state must be studied in its specific historical, political and socio-economic context. Mamdani's theory of the "bifurcated state"[75] will be a useful theoretical guide for this research. Does the existence of parallel traditional political authorities[76] challenge the liberal democratic theory, which assumes a monolithic state? This is an important area of research considering a recent volatile incident in which the king of Ashanti summoned his subjects and challenged them "to rise and fight the enemy",[77] saying among other things that "Ashanti was alive before Ghana was born". Further research in the aforementioned areas will yield more promising theoretical insights into the enduring democratic peace in Ghana than the narrow liberal democratic peace approach. Beyond elections, democracy should make governments accountable to

citizens – not just citizens who are close to leaders in power, but all citizens who fall under the jurisdiction of governing bodies.

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8

Democratic bewilderments of the world's largest democracy – India

K. Deepamala

Democracy has achieved the status of a universal good, considered to be such an ultimate expression of human political will that some political scientists heralded the US victory in the Cold War as the "end of history".[1] But the practice of democracy is not so clearly defined. In the case of India, after experiencing 60 years of independence, while the country has become a large democracy, there still remains room for greater maturity. Stated differently, democracy in India is deeper than it used to be, but several democratic battles remain. This chapter will analyse what basis we use to say that it is deeper and why it is unfinished.

India is allegedly the world's largest democracy, with over 1 billion people living in an area less than one-third the size of the United States. However, India's booming economy and increasing prosperity do not conceal the fact that an oppressive caste system still exists. Because of the persistence of the caste system – an elaborate form of discrimination – a substantial percentage of the population are disenfranchised *de facto*. Political instability and sectarian violence also continue to threaten the very core of the country. Despite this, the Indian government has so far failed in its endeavours to eradicate the caste system, and as a result the low-caste Indians, the Dalits, are regularly subject to gross human rights violations.

Democracy in India, by Arthur Bonner,[2] provides a concise, if critical, assessment of Indian democracy. In Bonner's view, the state of emergency declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975 marked the beginning of the dismantling of Indian democracy, while the destruction of the

Democracy in the South: Participation, the state and the people, Howe, Popovski and Notaras (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1178-0

sixteenth-century Muslim mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, in 1992 signalled the extent of democracy's decline at the hands of *Hindutva*, or Hindu domination. India's gap between alleged and unrealized democracy is huge, and, for Bonner and many others, the reason is the caste system. Brahmin dominance and the chauvinistic cultural nationalism of *Hindutva* render democracy in India "a hollow shell". In Bonner's view, "elections merely serve to legitimate a caste elite with a total monopoly of power and wealth" – an élite "that without hesitation, uses all its force to suppress lower-caste dissent. There is no social democracy and no equality of economic opportunity."

Gross human rights violations of Dalits

Caste violence continues to rage in western Uttar Pradesh. On 22 September 2007 India's major news channel, NDTV, reported that a Dalit woman whose son was accused of eloping with an upper-caste girl was set ablaze and killed.[3] This victim of continuing atrocities on Dalits suffered from burns to 80 per cent of her body. The 45-year-old woman was allegedly burnt by upper-caste villagers in the state's Firozabad district. Her son Bunty had eloped with the daughter of an influential upper-caste villager, Rajveer Singh Yadav, who was opposed to the relationship. Yadav and three others allegedly set Bunty's mother ablaze.

As the slogans of "India poised" and "India shining"[4] are shouted from every rooftop in the country, here is a reality which needs to be looked at, relating to how the Dalit population, who account for 16 per cent of the total population of India, or around 160 million people, are treated. Consider the following facts and statistics:

- according to government statistics, an estimated 1 million Dalits are manual scavengers who clean public latrines and dispose of dead animals
- 80 per cent of Dalits live in rural areas and 86 per cent of Dalit households are landless
- 60 per cent of Dalits are dependent on casual labour
- only 37 per cent of Dalits are literate
- three Dalit women are raped every day in India.

UNCERD report

In a 2007 shadow report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, the current reality of

discrimination against Dalits was exposed.[5] The report is based on investigations by HRW and the findings of Indian governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on caste-based abuses. The report suggests, for example, that the government's failure to address caste discrimination "has resulted in continued, and sometimes enhanced, brutalities against Dalits". Excerpts from the report on some of the main issues facing Dalits are as follows.

- India's National Human Rights Commission has commented that the law enforcement machinery is the greatest violator of Dalits' human rights. The police often target whole Dalit communities in search of one individual and subject the community to violent search and seizure operations. Dalit women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence by the police, which is used as a tool to punish Dalit communities. Police also actively allow private actors to commit violence against Dalits.
- Residential segregation of Dalits is prevalent across the country, and is the rule rather than the exception. Segregation is also evident in schools, in access to public services and in access to services operated by the private sector. A recently published survey[6] documented that "untouchability" practices took place in almost 80 per cent of the villages surveyed.
- The police have systematically failed to protect Dalit homes and Dalit individuals from acts of looting, arson, sexual assault, torture and other inhumane acts, such as the tonsuring (shaving a person's head), stripping and parading of Dalit women, and forcing Dalits to drink urine and eat faeces.

Is the caste system India's apartheid?

India is bound by its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which in Article 1 defines racial discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life".[7]

In its fifteenth to nineteenth periodic reports, which were considered by CERD in February 2007, the Indian government claimed that discrimination based on caste falls outside the scope of Article 1 of the convention.[8] As a result, the reports do not outline any instances of caste-based discrimination nor any concrete measures undertaken by the government to address such discrimination.

This represents a clear indication of a lack of political will to acknowledge fully and address discrimination against Dalits in India. After consideration of India's position, CERD maintained and reaffirmed that discrimination based on the grounds of caste is fully covered by Article 1 of the convention, expressed in general recommendation number 29 that "discrimination based on 'descent' includes discrimination against members of communities based on forms of social stratification such as caste and analogous systems of inherited status which nullify or impair their equal enjoyment of human rights". India will be required to report on caste-based discrimination in its next report to CERD, due in 2010.

The inroads made in addressing this apartheid style of discrimination – such as constitutional amendments, specific legislation, monitoring bodies and reservations for Dalits in education and politics – are a positive step in the right direction, but are clearly not being effectively implemented. Furthermore, there seems to be a need to focus on abolishing caste itself, not just the discrimination that is inherently built into the system. An Indian academic asserts that:

> caste discrimination exists because people continue to believe in caste. Indian democracy is, paradoxically, a culprit. By encouraging the formation of democratic participation along the lines of identity, caste is, in fact, reinforced every time India goes to the polls. The recent electoral gains of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh must be seen in the context of this double-edged nature of caste. It may be hard to imagine Indian society and the Indian state outside of the system of caste. Even Dalit Christians, Sikhs, and Muslims find that caste discrimination continues to exist after they have acquired different religious identities. Yet caste discrimination against Dalits, in all its forms, is a stain on the idea of a modern India, and needs to be eliminated effectively.[9]

The caste system

In no part of the world has so much injustice and systematic discrimination been practised against a particular, vast group of people for thousands of years as that which has occurred in India with regard to the "untouchables" and Dalits. Curiously, the base of this injustice and discrimination has not been religion, language, sex or colour, but rather "caste" and "birth", which have been the core grounds for discriminatory treatment in most parts of the country. Even given the passage of 60 years of Indian independence, this social evil continues to exist. The lower castes are still subject to various restrictions and limitations imposed by the higher castes.

According to the ancient Hindu scriptures,[10] there are four "*varnas*". The *Bhagavad Gita* says *varnas* are decided based on *guna*, or quality, and *karma*, or deed.[11] *Manusmriti* and other scriptures mention four

varnas: the Brahmins (teachers, scholars and priests), the *Kshatriyas* (kings and warriors), the *Vaishyas* (traders) and *Shudras*[12] (agriculturists, service providers and some artisan groups). Offspring of different *varnas* belong to different *Jāti*s, or communities. Another group excluded from the main society was called the *Parjanya* or *Antyaja*. This group of former untouchables, the present-day Dalits, were considered either the lower section of *Shudras* or outside the caste system altogether. Dalits fall outside the *varna* system and have historically been prevented from doing all but the most menial jobs.[13] Included are *chamar*, or leatherworkers, poor farmers and landless labourers, *bhangi*, or night-soil scavengers, street handicrafters, folk artists, street cleaners and *dhobi*, or washermen. Traditionally, these people were treated as pariahs in south Indian society and isolated in their own communities, to the point that even their shadows were avoided by the upper castes. Discrimination against Dalits still exists widely in the private sphere, especially in ritual matters such as access to eating places and water sources.

The caste system and government endeavours

During British rule in India, the problem of untouchability became a focus of law and politics, and soon after independence a vigorous constitutional drive was launched to bring an end to this age-old problem and ensure the enforcement of "equality" and "justice" in both law and fact. For this purpose, Dr Ambedkar's concept of positive discrimination, or policy discrimination, was approved and inserted into the Indian constitution.

The government of India has brought forth a number of rules and laws to equalize these underprivileged and underdeveloped castes with higher castes. The Indian constitution has outlawed caste-based discrimination, in accordance with the socialist, secular, democratic principles that founded the nation. To alleviate the wrongs done in the name of blind faith and support for the caste system, the constitution has adopted various measures. By incorporating these articles, it guarantees equal opportunity to all citizens in all matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. It specifically lays down that no citizen shall, on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence, etc., be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state.

The constitution also forbids the practice of untouchability in any form. Furthermore, the right to freedom provides, among other things, the right to the practice of any calling without restriction. The right to non-exploitation guarantees freedom from forced labour. Through the incorporation of these articles, vigorous attempts have been made to

establish equality among all sections of the society. The implementation of these articles in the Indian constitution means the major thrust has been shifted from the caste to the individual as the unit of Indian society.

The Mandal Commission was established in 1979 to "identify the socially or educationally backward"[14] and consider the question of seat reservations and quotas for people to redress caste discrimination. In 1980, as per the commission's report,[15] "other backward classes" (OBC) comprised 52 per cent of India's population, and "scheduled castes" (SC) and "scheduled tribes" (ST) made up a further 22.5 per cent. The commission's report suggested the implementation of affirmative action practices under Indian law, whereby members of lower castes would be given exclusive access to a certain portion of government jobs and places in public universities. When V. P. Singh's government tried to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission in 1989, massive protests were held in the country, with many alleging that politicians were trying to cash in on caste-based reservations for purely pragmatic electoral purposes.

These allegations are not completely unfounded. Many political parties in India have openly indulged in caste-based vote banking. Parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal claim that they are representing the backward castes and rely primarily on OBC support, often in alliance with Dalit and Muslim support. Remarkably, in a landmark election in 2007 in Uttar Pradesh, the Bahujan Samaj Party was able to garner a majority in the state assembly by mainly concentrating on Dalit issues.

Affirmative action reservations are intended to increase social diversity in campuses and workplaces by lowering the entry criteria for certain identifiable groups that are disproportionately under-represented when considering their numbers in the general population. However, caste is the criterion used most often to identify these under-represented groups. The underlying theory behind these reservations is that the under-representation of the identifiable groups is a legacy of the Indian caste system. The framers of the constitution believed that the members of SC and ST were historically oppressed and denied respect and equal opportunity in society due to the caste system, and thus were under-represented in nation-building activities. The constitution laid down that 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent, respectively, of positions in public educational institutions, the government and other public sector agencies must be reserved for SC and ST candidates for a period of 10 years, after which the situation was to be reviewed. This period was routinely extended by the following governments and the parliament.

Additional reservations were introduced for other sectors as well. The Supreme Court ruling that reservations cannot exceed 50 per cent, as dictated by the constitution, has put a cap on reservations, but there are

state laws that exceed this 50 per cent limit; these are under litigation in the Supreme Court. For example, the caste-based reservation quota stands at 69 per cent and is applicable to about 87 per cent of the population in the state of Tamil Nadu.

But it would be wrong to think that the constitutional measures have succeeded in minimizing the impact of caste on society. The caste system continues to exercise a powerful influence on the political, social and economic life of the people. People have become conscious of the power of the vote, and since castes are the best-defined groups, politicians find it easy to garner support through them. In fact, political parties take special care to select candidates who can obtain the majority of votes of a particular caste. Caste bonds are very strong in rural India, where people are often guided by caste interests rather than political or economic interests. Political parties fully exploit these tendencies, and thereby direct the voting patterns in the villages. The candidates also often seek the support of religious leaders who can exercise a commendable influence over their castes.

Furthermore, Dalits are still poorly represented in business, the media and the higher levels of the government, such as in the police forces, the military and the judiciary. This is because the literacy and enrolment rates among Dalit children are alarmingly low, since the real challenges and discrimination faced by Dalit children in accessing and participating in education include caste-based exclusion, segregation, humiliation, punishment and beatings. These factors, combined with the poor quality of education and their physical distance from schools, constitute the central reasons why Dalit children often drop out of school and get caught up in child labour. Hence the positions allotted to the Dalits remain unfilled because of their inability to attain the minimal qualifications prescribed by the government. For example, despite there being places reserved for members of the SC and ST in higher educational institutions, it is very rare to find a male or female Dalit who has overcome the social barriers and actually benefited from higher education.

There are no easy solutions to the ongoing plight of India's untouchables. The rules and regulations are mostly theoretical constructs. In practice, India's millions of untouchables are trapped at the very bottom of a system that functions by virtue of their shameless and relentless exploitation. For the past 60 years the complexity of the issue has been utilized by politicians in order to garner votes, and no efforts were made to deal effectively with the problem. In 1947 Jawaharlal Nehru stated in his address to the constituent assembly that "the first task of this assembly is to free India through a new constitution, to feed the starving people, and to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity".[16] Until then, the state had not been able to clothe the "naked masses" because its policies were

designed in a way that did not lead to an efficient distribution of resources. Here, it is implied that India has enough resources to deal with its problems, but the present system does not provide the environment for utilizing them properly. India has a booming economy, but also suffers from severe income disparity and poverty. Because of the highly diversified, unequal nature of Indian society, it is difficult to aim for good governance unless a strong state with a suitable ideology is planned for. There is definitely a need to think about restructuring the system and developing an indigenous model which is suited to the unique conditions of the subcontinent.

Democracy cannot forget the individual – something that has been an often-repeated principle of Indian democracy. Yet after experiencing democracy for 60 years, it is apparent that India is sacrificing individuals for the sake of upholding democracy. This is due to the hasty implementation of Western-style democracy in India, without sufficient adaptation to meet the unique conditions of India.

Dynamics of democracy

Democracy, as a philosophy and as an underlying principle of institutions, has received enormous attention from philosophers, jurists and political scientists, and large amounts of literature have grown around it. Countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, which have worked out democratic institutions in the last few centuries, have developed democracy into an art and their achievements have been held as a model for adoption elsewhere in the world.

Democracy was defined by Abraham Lincoln as "a government of the people, for the people, by the people". On the other hand, George Bernard Shaw condemned democracy as "a government of the fools, for the fools, by the fools". Shaw's remark seems to emanate from the fact that the best talents do not necessarily come out as a result of democratic elections, and many nations continue to be ruled by the mediocre. Whatever the merits or demerits of democracy, Sir Winston Churchill opined that it was the best form of government until a better alternative can be found.

Plato on democracy

Plato, the sophisticated exponent of the rule of the dialectically trained philosopher, is hostile to democracy.[17] The murder of Socrates and the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War had shamed democracy, leading Plato to castigate it. Democracy signifies the submergence of the legal

system, the transformation of liberty into licence for all and the dispensing of an indiscriminate quality to equals and inequals alike.

According to Plato, democracy fails to stabilize social structures. Plato's view that democracy leads to mob rule has some ring of truth to it. In democracies today, leadership and ruling inevitably involve the assembling of coalitions and ensuring that their needs are met so as to remain in power. He was of the opinion that democracy leads to rule by the stupid, who while having fine rhetorical skills (that can exert some control over the masses) have no true knowledge to rule. Also according to him, democracy leads to disagreement and conflict, which is something that is intrinsically evil and to be avoided.

Aristotle and democracy

Aristotle constructs a typology of the economic bases of democracy.[18] He believes that the best material of democracy is an agricultural population. But, from a more extensive knowledge of the workings of democracy today, we can say that Aristotle was mistaken in thinking that the agricultural population provides the best material for democracy. In Athens, the growth of democracy from Cleisthenis onwards was dependent upon the extension of trade and commerce, and we see that the commercial class, not the agricultural class as Aristotle thought, provides the great bulwark of the democratic process. Psychologically, the active and dynamic commercial sectors in touch with the other countries of the world, not the tradition-bound conservative peasants, can develop the thought patterns suited to the political fluctuations of a democratic system characterized by tremendous political vicissitudes in the fates and fortunes of successive ruling groups.

Democracy in practice

India is an agrarian economy, with most of the population living on the land. However, social inequality causes many problems for these farmers. India has masses that need to be fed first rather than provided with freedom; there is an impracticability in practising democracy when society is highly unequal and underdeveloped. Yet Western philosophy is based on the concept of survival of the fittest. It implies that the weak may, and even must, perish. Therefore it is logical to assume that some fit people must be more equal than others, eventually resulting in the exploitation of the weak by the strong. This is the culture of democratic capitalism, and is found in governments of such countries as the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. Michael Novak[19] envisions democratic

capitalism as a tripartite arrangement – a market-based economy, a democratic polity and a pluralistic and liberal moral-cultural system. Democratic capitalism is a system of natural liberties that forms the basis for a genuine communitarian free association, tapping individual creativity and initiative, producing virtuous people and reinforcing habits consistent with Judeo-Christian traditions. This kind of philosophy may be very well suited for Western nations that are already developed.

However, democratic socialism is the philosophy cultivated in India. After accepting the tenets of democracy, India started thinking about ways of adapting and changing this system, giving rise to a so-called democratic socialism. Because Indian society is underdeveloped, the state has the great responsibility of providing a just life to its citizens. Hence the state must be very strong in order to implement all the necessary ideals to achieve equality among the citizens. Indian philosophy preaches survival of all – the strong, the weak, the poor, the handicapped and the disabled. Its national policy is governed by this philosophy.

The leaders of India's independence movement are often accused of wrongly choosing democracy in 1947. In fact, however, they had little choice. Because India was composed of separate princely states prior to independence, democracy was the only system that could possibly provide political cohesion in a society with little tradition of political centralism, dizzying social diversity, an independence movement built along participatory lines and limited elections introduced only in the last three decades of British rule.

The British reaction to the Indian National Congress was largely aimed at establishing the unsuitability of democracy to India and proving the impracticability of introducing British institutions in India. Despite this, democracy and parliamentary government have always received the allegiance and homage of leaders of public opinion in India, most notably of Congress. Since the assumption of representation by Congress in the majority of Indian provinces, there has been a marked change in the attitude towards some of the accepted tenets of parliamentary democracy in certain high Congress quarters.

When India gained independence, the caste system was in its darkest phase. The leaders of the independence movement realized this, and felt the entire Indian society was at stake because the system was undermining the very principles of democracy. The framers of the constitution never aspired to a country that was torn because of artificial internal rifts.

Towards a democratic socialist state – A historic account

India's failure to achieve true political or economic democracy has been attributed to various causes. British economic colonialism and the mistreat-

ment of Indians by Muslim invaders are both cited – mainly by Indians – as great stumbling blocks to true Indian democracy. But according to Nehru, India's caste culture is the real source of the country's social ills. The caste system is the root cause of the problems with democracy and social justice in India, and has proven extremely resistant to change. Nehru found that no solution to India's greatest problems with political and economic democracy could be attained unless the caste system was abolished.

As the first prime minister of India, Nehru was a democrat as well as a socialist. He was the forerunner of the socialist trend in the Indian national movement, and was instrumental in guiding India on the path of socialism. He wanted to achieve the objectives of socialism gradually within the democratic framework. He was one of the few who did not take democracy for granted, but sought to explain and show how it could be brought into harmony with his conception of socialism. In this way he was very much influenced by some of the British nationals of his day, who had socialist thoughts. He brought to bear on the suffering of his fellow countrymen his modern mind and scientific temper.

Nehru was not satisfied as prime minister to operate his government under the principles of democracy when he saw millions suffering from want, ignorance and disease. He wished that his fellow citizens could enjoy the fruits of economic freedom, and strived to make India into a democratic, socialist and secular modern society. Nehru held the view that there was no difference between his own ideas of socialism and Russian socialism, except regarding the means through which the ideals were to be attained.

Nehru further argued that "political freedom and independence were no doubt essential, but they were steps only in the right direction. Without social freedom and a socialistic structure of society and the State, neither the country nor the individual could develop much."[20] In this way he aimed to preserve both economic security and liberty. He further declared that "the philosophy of socialism has gradually permeated the entire structure of society the world over and almost the only points in dispute are the pace and the methods of advance to its full realization. India will have to go that way, too, if she seeks to end her poverty and inequality, though she may evolve her own methods and may adopt the ideal to the genius of her race."[21]

Nehru was a democrat, but he knew that India was a country suffering from abysmal levels of poverty and low literacy levels. Given this, it would be a Herculean task to improve the lot of the people in a minimum amount of time without resorting to coercive methods. If there was no rapid development in the standard of living of the people, democracy in India was in jeopardy.

Though Nehru held strong democratic beliefs, democracy without socialism meant little to him. He was especially interested in the drafting of the Directive Principles, since it had always been an article of faith for him that political democracy was incomplete without economic and social democracy. Nehru in fact was aiming at a democratic socialism where there was increasing production, full employment, no exploitation, equality of opportunity, freedom and the possibility for everyone to live a good life.

Political application of democracy in India

In the process of reincarnation of an empire into a nation, the empire-to-nation syndrome was created in most countries, if not the entirety, of the developing world in the decades after decolonization. The empire-to-nation syndrome means freeing the nation from colonial rule without liberating the people and society from the deep-rooted feudal-colonial ruling class and administrative systems. The democracy that was created based on the Westminster model limited people's role in the new dispensation to choosing their rulers in elections as free and fair as the changing political circumstances would permit. Leaders of the freedom struggle took over as rulers of a secular democratic state delivered by caesarian surgery. They proceeded to rebuild the nation and create an egalitarian society through a bureaucracy that was neither role wise nor emotionally equipped for the challenging task. Indeed, the state became democratic, but the administration remained largely authoritarian and imperial. The relatively small élites functioning at the national level were seduced by the lofty dreams and clarion rhetoric of leaders. They saw change at the top, and drew hope from it that change would reach down to the bottom. For the people at large, however, there was little change.

India's secular democratic state was created in defiance of all grammars of politics, from Aristotle to Harold Laski, Samuel Huntington and Robert Dahl. The economy was very largely agrarian. Industrialization had begun on a modest scale on the periphery of a famine-prone agrarian economy. Over 80 per cent of the population lived off the land. The large landholdings of the Raj period were broken up to create 20 million *kulaks* that held down the huge mass of poor peasants and landless labourers. There were hardly any land reforms. Numerous loopholes wilfully maintained in the new land laws prescribing ceilings of ownership left enough scope for perpetuation of the old colonial and pre-colonial agrarian relations in the countryside where most Indians actually lived.

The lines marking the limits of government and the state are always thin and subtle. Generally it is the government that is seen by the

people as the state. The state is created by the people, who give unto it the inviolable framework of the constitution. People elect a party to power. The party's elected representatives in the national legislature form the government. The government must function within the legitimacy of the constitution. For trespasses, the government is punished by the higher judiciary: the high courts and the Supreme Court.

In India, dynastic rule has introduced another dangerous element into the political process, impinging on the secular, democratic state itself. Politics has become perilously personalized. Functions revolve around particular persons. Loyalties of these leaders as well as of their followers are conspicuously mobile. The feudal culture still ingrained in the minds and lifestyles of the political élite is boosted and sustained by the culture of sycophancy. The two together build a mental wall against the spirit of the secular democratic state. In the words of Rajni Kothari, "The ideology of a stronger and centralized State and the cult of personality have brought the country close to ruin. It is an illusion to think that it is any longer a democracy."[22] Now politics is mainly dominated by the cult of Ram, of *Hindutva*, as a proxy of a non-secular state in which democracy may suffer cruel stabs and future shocks.

Is democracy a panacea?

After 60 years of independence, what we are witnessing today is mind-blowing. On the same day that Sensex, the Indian stock market index, crossed 19,000 points, India clocked in at 94 in the Global Hunger Index – behind Ethiopia. Also on the same day, it was reported that India was the leading nation in terms of maternal mortality rates.[23] Indian farmers who took their own lives between 1997 and 2005 because of poverty were estimated to number 150,000. Where lay the mistakes? Where has the socialism gone? Where has the democracy gone? Why should we stop our thinking only with democracy?

India, while subscribing to democracy, emphasizes the dignity of the individual, and this humanism has enriched the character and content of its democratic institutions. India has also sublimated nationalism to the cause of internationalism, another name for humanism or cosmopolitanism, which has been possible merely because of its attachment to the individual who, irrespective of place of residence or natal status, faces common problems of life all over the world.

Democracy relies on its key components: a written constitution, a powerful judiciary as the guardian of individual liberty, maintenance of the sanctity of property as an extension of individual liberty and establishment of a pure and incorruptible administration which will be able to

realize its identity with the common people. These basic postulates of democracy have been so often forgotten in the world that philosophers have started thinking about how best to impart correctives to its organization or how to supplant it by a rearrangement of popular will.[24]

In India, the meaning and dimensions of democracy have been a matter of continuing discourse. A visible gap has appeared between democracy as defined in the constitution and as practised in the political process. In a system which permits the "haves" to press their demands as freely as the "have-nots", the scales are heavily loaded in favour of the haves. Hence there exists an undesirable but inevitable situation in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. When the poor are too many and the rich are relatively too few, democracy tends to be for the few rather than for the many. The few champion democracy's representative virtues, but shy away or adopt ambivalent postures when participatory pressures from the many threaten the power structure of the few.

A democracy cannot work without a certain level of civic competence and absorption of the culture of democracy among its people. Civic competence is lacking in developing countries, including India; it does not exist in abundance even in some of the developed democracies. A culture of democracy should be represented by equality, independence and an openness of mind. A civic culture requires a social discipline born of common sharing of values. However, this does not normally happen, because people do not feel that they are their own rulers.

If government is an essential asset, it must not be overloaded with responsibilities it cannot bear and expectations it cannot meet. The idea of reinventing government to make governance effective and benign is nothing new. It is only the job of putting together many ideas that have been floating around for centuries.

Government must now be owned by the community. Only then will the people be able to govern themselves. A democracy needs citizens, not clients. Clients are people who are dependent upon and controlled by their helpers and leaders. Clients are people who understand themselves in terms of their dependencies and who wait for others to act on their behalf. Citizens, on the other hand, are people who understand their own problems in their own terms. Citizens perceive their relationships with one another and believe in their capacity to act. Good citizens make strong communities. Strong communities make strong nations and strong states.

Recent international miracles

As seen in South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, indigenous forms of democracy after a period of centralized decision-making have led to the ascension of these nations into world powerhouses with prosperous economies.

Today they are wealthy nations which, instead of receiving aid, are now giving aid to poorer nations. Yet their path to prosperity and stability stems not from that of pure democracy, as their economic growth developed largely under authoritarian rule. Taiwan was under martial law for over 40 years, Japan was under the dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party, and only after the assassination of Park Chung Hee in 1979 did South Korea finally begin adopting more democratic measures.

In South America, Africa and recently in the Middle East, the United States has been especially active in promoting "democracy", regardless of whether these nations are educated and stable enough to adopt it. These newly established democracies have been unstable and fraught with violence and corruption – for example Kenya and Nigeria, among others. Even countries that finally have partially functioning democracies are electing presidents with authoritarian powers and attitudes, such as in the cases of Bolivia and Venezuela. One could argue that many of these nations essentially had democratic systems forced on them due to the "communist threat" or "red scare" at the height of the US anti-communist movements during the Cold War. Another example of this was the invasion of Iraq, which was justified by the bringing of democracy after authoritarian rule under Saddam Hussein. Yet even though the US-led allied forces have been in Iraq for more than six years, lawlessness and disorder are still commonplace in Iraq.

After former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev introduced his *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies to the Soviet Union, after decades of communist rule since the First World War, there followed many undesirable results. Not only did its economy collapse, but today Russia finds itself under hard-line *faux*-democratic rule where any political resistance is quickly quelled. Many look back at the Soviet Union days with nostalgia: everyone had something to eat, unemployment was low and many social services were free. However, today Russia has one of the largest wealth disparities in the world and its economy has become increasingly dependent on exporting natural resources. Clearly, even the Soviet Union was not ready to make the huge leap from centralized authoritarian rule to democracy in the early 1990s.

China, with its booming economy, is the last major country still under communist rule. However, its leaders seem to have learned the lesson about rushed democracy from Russia and other examples. Instead of racing into reforms that may be unsuitable for China, it has instead focused on stability and economic growth as its main goals, and we can see the results of this stability and growth. *The Economist*'s survey of Asia[25] in 1991 found Asia's greatest democracy, India, to be an "economic failure – it has consistently lagged behind not only Asia's fast developers, but, embarrassingly, the poor world as a whole".

Singapore's former prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, who gave the island republic sustained economic growth without democratic liberties, made a comparison between China and India in an interview with *The Economist*.[26] He pointed out that over a 20-year time frame, China presented an optimistic picture of sustained growth and development. "The turning point was really Deng. He broke the windows. You cannot shut the windows again."

It should also be pointed out that the rule of law which a democracy is supposed to uphold does not preclude that the laws themselves may be conducive to economic development. Even in some of the richest democracies of the world, while the "enforcement" of laws may be more efficient and subject to less corruption and arbitrariness than in developing countries, the process of enactment of those laws is subject to an enormous amount of influence-peddling for contributions to campaign finance and other prerequisites for legislators. Over time this problem has worsened in most democracies.

Democracies may be particularly susceptible to populist pressures for immediate consumption, unproductive subsidies, autarkic trade policies and other particularistic demands that may hamper long-run investment and growth. On the other hand, authoritarian rulers who may have the capacity to resist such pressures may instead be self-aggrandizing, plundering the surpluses of the economy. Historically, authoritarian regimes have come in different kinds. Some derive their legitimacy from providing order and stability, such as Franco in Spain or the State Peace and Development Council in Myanmar, and some from rapid growth, with Park Chung Hee in South Korea being such an example.[27]

Theoretical perspectives

According to Dahl,[28] the most important source affecting the development of democracy is the logic of political equality. Almost all thinkers, left and right, emphasize the importance of freedom and equality. However, these concepts mean different things to different thinkers. For example, equality in classical liberalism means only moral equality, which is merely the minimal equality for most thinkers. Most democratic theorists demand more equality than the minimal, moral equality of classical liberalism. Leftist thinkers, among whom Rousseau and Marx are two examples, hate inequalities. They generally define freedom as something positive and affirmative. For them, freedom means being able to realize certain higher goods, such as free and equal participation in political activities and freedom from alienation. In order for people to have the ability and opportunity to achieve these higher goods, the society has to

create certain conditions. One of these key conditions, say Rousseau and Marx, is equality.

Rousseau[29] considers inequality to be the major threat to freedom. Due to people's natural tendency to compare and envy, inequality creates jealousy, vanity and alienation. The development from natural inequality to moral inequality is a process of moral corruption, through which the freedoms of independence and transparency are lost. People's miseries in human development are symptoms of a lack of true freedom. A therapeutical solution is regarded as insufficient. In that political solution, coercive social contracts are used to transform people so that they can understand and behave according to the general will of the society.

For Rousseau, there were three stages in the development of human society. In the first stage there was no human language and people lived in a state that was not that different from other animals. In the second stage there was simple language, some family life and "independent intercourse" among small groups of people. The development of modern society emerged as the third stage. Of the three stages, says Rousseau, the second is most desirable, as people lived a simple, independent, transparent and happy life. However, it was impossible to stay in the second stage forever, because people's envy and vanity led them to compete with each other and bring about the rise of the third, corrupt, stage where natural inequality in strength, talent and appearance leads to moral inequality. In the third stage, writes Rousseau, people are not happy when there is no freedom. Freedom means two things to Rousseau: independence and transparency. To regain freedom, he asserts, a political solution is needed since a personal and therapeutical solution is insufficient.[30]

Rousseau proposes a political solution that relies on the social contract and focuses on eliminating alienation through collective forces. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau asserts that social contracts are formative. People should be transformed by social contracts in order for them to realize the "general will", which represents a higher good that an ideal society should strive for. In other words, people are "forced to be free" by the social contract. However, this formative, even coercive, aspect of social contracts is tested by the fact that people in general are short-sighted and easily controlled by passion, envy and vanity. Because of this, it is difficult for ordinary people to see the true import of the "general will" of society. Freedom implies responsibility. Responsibility involves honesty and sincerity. Democracy in irresponsible hands results in anarchy. As such, it is a significant task for legislators to educate ordinary people and enforce the laws.

Enforcement is the major problem for democracy in practice. But unless a justified equality in the society exists, there will always be chaos. That is currently a major problem with the Indian system. India, the

world's largest democracy, faces a great threat in terms of development because of the deep existence of inequality in its social make-up. Importance must be given to bringing equality by breaking age-old traditions, such as the caste system, rather than considering democracy as a mere panacea.

According to Jalal,[31] there must be greater prior equality among citizens for democracy to function in a real and practical sense. A deeply unequal society cannot check the authoritarian functioning of the state structures and therefore cannot have a polity that is truly democratic. He claims that "legal citizens are more likely to be handmaids of powerful political manipulators than autonomous agents deriving concrete rewards from democratic processes", unless voting rights are extended and social and economic exploitation is suppressed.

In its theoretical anchorage, we should note, this kind of reasoning is not new. Commonly associated with Marx, Lenin, Gramsci and Mosca, it has a long lineage lasting over a century. The arguments of Gramsci[32] and Mosca[33] are the most elaborate. Gramsci reasoned that so long as the economically powerful had control over the cultural means of a society – its newspapers, its education, its arts – they could establish a hegemony over the subaltern classes and essentially indoctrinate these classes in accordance to their own interests. Mosca further argued that in democracies, given their many inequalities, domination by a small élite is inevitable.

Should we, then, consider socio-economic equality as a precondition for democracy? In the leading texts of democratic theory, the two basic criteria of democracy – contestation and participation – do not require socio-economic equality; but they still may affect or be affected by inequality. Democratic theorists expect that if socially or economically unequal citizens are politically equalized and they constitute a majority of the electorate, their political preferences would sooner or later be reflected in who the rulers are and what public policies they adopt.[34]

Another well-known theoretical point is germane to a discussion of inequalities and democracy. If inequality, despite democratic institutions, comes in the way of free expression of political preferences, such inequality makes a polity less democratic, but it does not make it undemocratic. Given contestation and participation, greater equality certainly makes a polity more democratic, but greater equality in itself does not constitute democracy.

In light of the theoretical discussion above, what can we say about India? Has Indian democracy become more inclusive or not? And has greater inclusion reduced social, if not economic, inequalities? In case social inequalities have been reduced as a consequence of the political

process, it will, in the theoretical terms proposed above, make India more democratic, even though an inability to reduce economic inequalities will not make India's polity undemocratic.

Restructuring the system

The main objective of the Indian democratic republic should be the creation of a social structure amenable to the realization of political and economic equality. Freedom as moral control over passions or as self-determinate action is a perfect sentimental utopianism for the vast masses of backward, starving Indians. The augmentation and equitable social distribution of property, and not a quest for an abstract moral and philosophic liberty, should be the dominant goal. A certain minimum amount of consumer property is absolutely indispensable for the preservation of liberty. This minimum degree of consumer property must be equally available for all citizens of the republic. The exact amount of this minimum may vary, but it must be both recognized by the society and guaranteed by the state.

The central doctrine in this democratic ideology was that of popular sovereignty, the theory that government rests upon the consent of the governed. However, the concept of the "people" was in the highest degree ambiguous, and the system of institutions exploited this ambiguity by operating democratically in name only. The chasm between theory and practice perceptibly widened during the later decades of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century, when various doctrines began to blow more or less tempestuously through the thought of the present age and a number of new basic rights came to be recognized as expressions or implications of the democratic doctrine.

The guarantees of individual and personal rights – the right to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, freedom of religion and several rights which guarantee to every individual accused of a crime the necessary protective procedures and a fair and impartial trial – were part of the original theory of democracy, which must not only be preserved but actually practised. But the new theory of "a good life" needs a new system of political institutions for its effective fulfilment.

Reported in a journal on the role of the state in economic development,[35] the ruler in a "strong" state is taken to be a "stackelberg leader": he or she maximizes his or her objectives, subject to the reaction function of the ruled, and in this process internalizes the economic costs of his impositions in accordance with public reaction. In contrast, one can say that the "weak" state is a weak follower; it cannot commit to a particu-

lar policy and merely reacts to the independent actions of private actors such as special-interest groups. Existence of these interest groups is one of the demerits of democracy, and is not desirable in the development of a democratic state.

However, as long as human society endures, inequality will exist, and as long as inequality exists there will remain the conflict of interests that stimulates the creation of interest groups. In order to understand whether these groups are a positive or negative phenomenon, it is necessary to analyse them from both positions. Interest groups may protect the interests of their members and provide mutual help, but they do not produce a positive impact on society as a whole. The stronger groups' interests are within a society, and the less legitimate the society becomes as an equal structure, the more the protection of individual or group interests may contradict the interests of the whole society.

Similarly, Indian society is divided in the form of castes. Because members of a caste will work to protect the interests of their own caste in the face of opposition from other conflicting interests, the caste system still plays a very influential role in the Indian political arena. How to end this system is a profound issue, because of its structural importance in the operation of India's society and economy. After decades of legislation to end caste discrimination and inequality, it is legitimate now to ask: can caste discrimination be ended without ending the caste system itself? If so, what does that imply for policy and law-making? While the Indian constitution outlaws untouchability and caste discrimination, it has not abolished the caste system itself. It may now be time for the government and society to reorient themselves towards this goal and begin the process of ending India's own system of apartheid. Having taken a principled stand in foreign policy against racial discrimination, India should be proactive in discussing possible methods and policies regarding how to end caste discrimination effectively in its complex society.

Conclusion

The Indian system has, on paper, perfect laws to outlaw the inequality and injustice resulting from the caste system. But, in practice, many Indians face great social inequality because these laws are ineffective in protecting their rights. One of the fundamental defects in Indian democracy is the lack of practicality on the part of its politicians. Who is ready to enforce the laws that already exist on paper? Unless there is serious and focused enforcement of laws, the problem of inequality in Indian society cannot be solved. A new consciousness must be planted in the Indian people that caste is the most disruptive element in their society, and that

it is the barrier standing in the way of economic development and national integration. It will be difficult to wipe out age-old traditions with one stroke, but it can be made possible by strong leaders who can rule with conviction and absolute power. Without the eradication of social injustice and inequality, India will remain a democracy in name only.

The common threat for development in a developing country is democracy itself. Producing a great leader is a challenge in democratic systems. There is no incentive for an individual or a group of individuals to hold responsibility towards society. However, rule by a strong state will ensure that the responsibility to set right inequality will rest on the shoulders of the state.

This lack of real democracy is happening everywhere in the world. People are told to accept democracy as a panacea, but in reality it is a system that cannot even provide them with basic means for survival. Singapore, which is one of the best-governed nations in the world, does not practise democracy. It is evident that there are no massacres in Singapore and the people are quite comfortable. Even though India practises Nehru's concept of democratic socialism, it has failed to attain a socialist state. To attain this, the state must be the strongest power and hence be populated with strong leaders. We have seen that at the time of state emergency, one of the most controversial periods in the history of independent India, some concrete progress was made, with results such as reduced prices and free availability of essential commodities. In democracy, it can be said that everyone wants to enjoy the freedoms afforded by their system but they do not care as much about their obligations towards society, which eventually results in confusion and chaos. Therefore, a strong state is needed to show its people the correct path to social equality.

The leaders of today must recognize that although democracy may be considered as an ideal form of government, it may not be the most practical if their goals are to improve the economic state of a nation. Democracy must be developed in a gradual and indigenous manner tailored to unique conditions and situations. Failure to do so may bring about disastrous results. Democracy should not be forced upon nations, for it should develop indigenously and only when the time is right.

Notes

1. Fukuyama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Penguin, pp. xi, xii, xxi, 211.
2. Bonner, Arthur (1994) *Democracy in India – A Hollow Shell*. Washington, DC: American University Press, p. 38.
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9

The 2006 coup and the evolving democratic and political party system in Thailand

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Introduction

In September 2006 the military in Thailand staged a coup against the country's elected prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, while he was away in New York attending a UN meeting. The coup came as a surprise to many observers and academics studying Thailand, for the simple reason that after the failed coup attempt in 1991 it was assumed that Thailand had shed authoritarianism for good and was well on the way to becoming a democracy, like the Philippines in 1986 and Indonesia in 1998–1999. Thailand, despite severe economic and political strains in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, had allowed the democratic election of a self-styled populist leader. Thaksin, at the time he was ousted from power, had successfully won consecutive elections in 2001 and 2005. In the latter election, his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party controlled 377 out of the 500 seats in parliament; on a structural level, his position was unassailable. However, his personality and policies, while endearing him to the new business élite and rural poor, deeply alienated traditional centres of power and the urban electorate that had always wielded disproportionate influence in determining national politics.

This is the backdrop to the 2006 military coup. Suffice to say that the coup and all that followed afterwards were rather unexpected, although theorists on democratic consolidation have always warned of forward and backward movement between authoritarianism and democracy in the early stages of the onset of the latter. Pakistan and Nigeria are normally

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cited as examples of such developments. This chapter[1] examines the evolution of democracy and party politics in Thailand, and how the military coup has in turn affected their development. It begins with an introduction that traces the crucial role played by General Prem Tinsulanonda from 1980 to 1988 in entrenching democratic practices. The second section examines the consolidation of democracy from 1988 to 2005, while the third looks at the trends and trajectories of the political party system and how the coup has affected these in turn. The fourth section appraises the institutionalization of the party system on the basis of Samuel Huntington's approach and criteria, and is followed by a conclusion that identifies the unique characteristics of Thai democracy.

Political parties have generally been a feature of the Thai landscape since the 1970s.[2] Prior to that period, until the early 1970s, a succession of military authoritarian governments made the functioning of political parties rather difficult. Typical of such regimes, competing centres of political power and influence were stymied and often denied legitimacy. Consequently, the meaningful participation of political parties only first occurred during the democratic interlude that was spawned by the overthrow of the military regime through a student-inspired uprising in 1973. For the three years from 1973 to 1976, Thai political culture accommodated political parties and, in reaction to the excesses of the previous governments, leaned to the left. This short-lived trend was arrested in October 1976 when the military staged a coup to return to power. Halting the leftward drift in domestic politics and insecurities spawned by the communist victory in Viet Nam in 1975 were cited as reasons justifying the coup. Nevertheless, the return of the military sounded the death knell for political parties. They were not revived until the 1980s when, curiously enough, General Prem – who assumed the premiership in 1980 – felt sufficiently confident to allow political parties to function once again. This initiative effectively entrenched political parties on the Thai landscape until the present day.

Perhaps the best starting point for a discussion on democracy in Thailand is the election of Chatichai Choonhavan as prime minister in August 1988. Chatichai's election under the banner of the Chart Thai Party followed the stable and semi-democratic government of General Prem that lasted from 1980 to 1988. The Prem government was described as semi-democratic as it presided over the country during the period that is generally regarded as important to the democratic transition of Thailand.[3] Among the reasons for this assessment is the fact that Prem allowed political parties to function and newspapers were given greater freedom in journalistic reporting. These characteristics were in sharp contrast to the previous military authoritarian regime.

There are a number of other important considerations as to why the Prem government is generally viewed as the midwife of Thai democracy. His personality was such that he was widely viewed as a politician who emphasized the consensual nature of élite decision-making – a democratic trait for a military leader. Even after his resignation in 1988, Prem continued to remain in good standing and was immensely popular, with not just ordinary citizens but also the king of Thailand. As a gesture of appreciation, Prem was made statesman and privy councillor to the king, then subsequently elevated to the rank of senior privy councillor. He is currently the president of the Privy Council. Almost two decades after retiring from politics, Prem is still widely regarded as the spokesman for the king and is generally viewed as one of the monarch's most trustworthy messengers. Apart from being popular at the élite level, a survey conducted by Assumption University in July 2006 confirmed Prem's popularity among Bangkok's urbanites, who rated him higher than Thaksin in seven out of 10 categories.[4]

Prem is also to be credited for putting an end to the tradition of military coups in Thailand. The reason for this assertion is that he deflected, with the support of the king, two coup attempts by the army's "young Turk" faction in 1981 and 1985.[5] Against the backdrop of these developments, allowing political parties to operate and compete in elections and liberalizing the mass media created the conditions for the gradual emergence of a democratic culture, though it was originally embedded only in urban areas, especially in and around Bangkok.

Notwithstanding his past contributions to the emergence of political parties and a nascent democratic culture in Thailand in the 1980s, there have been recent charges that Prem is at the centre of a powerful political network that has sought to entrench the monarchy in Thai politics.[6] In other words, Prem's contribution was, in effect, part of a larger plan to allow for the strengthening of an existing alliance between the military and the monarchy to share power. According to this interpretation, this strategic alliance was a way of maintaining the domestic political economy that underwent radical changes to challenge the Thai traditional élite from the 1980s, and this new alliance, or rather the evolution of an earlier power-sharing arrangement among traditional élites, is part of a larger attempt to consolidate the position of the monarchy in Thailand. Viewed through such a framework, Prem's role was and is merely to recalibrate élite power away from non-traditional sources that challenged the palace-centred establishment under Thaksin Shinawatra. In other words, some analysts regard Prem as the saviour of the *ancien régime* rather than the midwife of modern democracy in Thailand. Thaksin had on numerous occasions alluded to the presence of extra-constitutional

forces that sought his removal from power. Under the constitution of Thailand, only the king could have removed Thaksin from power, and in fact Thaksin eventually stepped down after being "whispered to" by the king.

The democratic consolidation phase: 1988–2005

Chatichai's election to office in August 1988 on the back of Prem's initiatives was revolutionary. Following his election, Chatichai's Indochina initiative was equally revolutionary. By promising to turn the battlefields of Indochina into marketplaces, Chatichai effectively negated Thai perceptions of a Vietnamese security threat.[7] This perception of a threat had conditioned previous Thai foreign policy towards its immediate neighbours, and also allowed the military to play a dominant role in domestic decision-making.

Chatichai's revolutionary tenure came to an abrupt end in 1991 when the military, led by General Suchinda Krapayoon, mounted a coup against the government. The military cited the existence of "unusually rich" politicians and claimed that its actions were in the interests of national security and development. Subsequently, Anand Panyarachun was appointed by the military to lead a caretaker government for a year before elections were called in 1992. The military, led by Suchinda, attempted to control the political process through a system based on unelected premiership supported by parliament, similar to Prem's government. However, this was thwarted by widespread demonstrations against the military's return to power.[8] The situation eventually culminated in political violence and required the intervention of the king through Prem to appease both parties. Subsequently King Bhumiphol appointed Anand Panyarachun to head a second caretaker government before elections were called in 1992. An interesting detail to note with Anand's appointments was that he was acceptable to both the military and the monarchy, perhaps indicating that there was a measure of a convergence of interests between all three parties. Additionally, by this time the norm of political parties supporting military strongmen had already been clearly established.

Beginning from 1993, the Democrat Party led by Chuan Leekpai dominated Thai politics, although its hold on power was briefly broken by the ascension of Banharn Silpa-Archa in 1995 and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh in 1996. The Democrat Party, led by Chuan, who had a reputation as an honest and committed politician, was able to capitalize on popular sentiment in its favour from 1992. It aggressively pushed for a number of

domestic political reforms that were aimed at weakening military involvement in the political process, reducing corruption and the leakage of public funds, and the introduction of transparent democratic principles of government. Additionally, it was committed to constitutional reforms that eventually led to the laborious drafting of a completely new constitution in 1997 with wide-ranging societal inputs.[9]

In 1995 and 1996, when the Democrat Party was not in control of the national agenda, the Banharn-led government was subjected to factional infighting and high levels of corruption, while Chavalit, who led the New Aspiration Party (NAP) with significant support from the poor agricultural regions of the northeast (*Isaan*), was also racked by similar issues. The onset of the Asian financial crisis in July 1997 dealt a mortal blow to the Chavalit government. He was forced to resign because of its financial mismanagement, which led to losses of approximately US$24 billion in the central bank's attempts to support the Thai baht against speculative attacks. The subsequent floatation and collapse of the baht considerably worsened the situation. This crisis provided Chuan and his Democrat Party with a unique window of opportunity to lead a reconstituted government with the support of King Bhumiphol. However, the Chuan-led government did not have strong control over the legislature and was in effect a weak cobbling together of six political parties, and was defeated by Thaksin in 2001. In other words, it was a minority-led coalition government with a royal rather than popular mandate, and replicated the weak and sprawling coalitions that Prem created in the 1980s.

The fallout from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 on the Thai economy provided a major opportunity for Thaksin and his party, and he was able to garner widespread appeal through a populist agenda. Central to this agenda were practical steps to achieve a sufficiency economy (*mahajanaka*) that had been suggested by the king.[10] Key features of the populist scheme involved providing each village with a million baht, encouraging the output of cottage industries by identifying a single product for each village, and a three-year moratorium on farm debt. Public medical services were made much more affordable, at a flat rate of 30 baht per hospital visit. Thaksin also had resources vastly exceeding those of his competitors, many of whom were significantly weakened by the crisis.

Thanks to the populist agenda, Thaksin and TRT's performance at the 2001 general election was nothing short of outstanding. With 248 seats, the party needed only three more seats for a clear majority in parliament. This was easily achieved on the basis of the party's new bargaining position, considering that its closest rival, the Democrat Party,

had secured only 128 seats. Furthermore, Thaksin had little difficulty in persuading other parties such as Seritham and NAP to join it as part of a larger coalition that eventually yielded it a total of 350 seats and clear control of parliament.

In the February 2005 general election, Thaksin was able to widen his lead considerably. The TRT surged further ahead in popularity and won a landslide victory in the election, securing a total of 377 seats in parliament. In fact, the victory margin was so large that opposition MPs did not have the required quorum to call for a censure motion in parliament.[11] The general belief among many observers and analysts was that Thaksin, while having acquired political power through democratic means, was not particularly enthused about the restraints that accompany democratic governance. In other words, whereas Thaksin has generally abided by the rules of democratic contestation, his actions indicated an aversion to democratic norms and the diffusion of power. Nonetheless, he was much loved by many in the poorer rural areas that benefited directly from the TRT's policies. In this regard, he was one of the few senior Thai politicians who indicated some commitment to lessening the plight of the poor rather than attending to a predominantly urban constituency. The fact that Thaksin was so easily able to subvert democratic norms suggests that perhaps these norms were not yet well entrenched in Thailand.

However, in the aftermath of the 2006 coup there have been significant changes to political parties as well as the political system in general. As far as political parties are concerned, the major change was the dissolution of the TRT by court order and the five-year moratorium on 111 of its senior officials from participating in political activity. Three smaller parties were also ordered to be dissolved by the Constitution Tribunal for violating laws regarding political parties.[12] Additionally, the People's Power Party (PPP) that brought together Thaksin loyalists was dissolved in 2008 after it obtained a majority in the December 2007 national election. The Democrat Party, however, was absolved of the charges brought against it and gained significantly from the dissolution of the TRT and the PPP. The PPP government led by Samak Sundaravej was labelled a Thaksin proxy government and attracted widespread criticism, in particular from the vocal PAD (People's Alliance for Democracy). He and his replacement, Somchai Wongsawat, were both forced to step down, the former through PAD pressures and occupation of Government House and the latter after the court ruling dissolved the PPP as well. Then in December 2008, on the basis of a parliamentary vote, Abhisit Vejjajiva from the Democrat Party mustered enough votes to become the new prime minister. His election was in turn made possible by the defection of the Newin Chidchob faction from the PPP.

Trends and trajectories of the Thai political party system

Traditionally, political parties in Thailand were viewed negatively, especially by the military and the bureaucracy that tended to dominate politics and administration in the country. Resources and power were accumulated and distributed by "non-democratic" élite groups. These in turn were often mediated and reinforced through kinship, social networks and patron-client relations. After all, within the Thai conception of hierarchy and status there was quite simply no place for political parties.[13] Consequently, political parties were often regarded in their early years as functional tools by traditional élites. In this regard, early Thai political parties did not necessarily represent the will of the majority or even significant segments of society. To illustrate this, John Girling remarked that early political parties existed between the hammer of military coups and the "anvil of bureaucratic indifference or distaste".[14]

Additionally, in light of the structural and social constraints they faced, early political parties were often conceptualized as government parties (*phak rathaban*). In the early years, political parties survived under the direction of Pridhi Banomyong from 1944 to 1947 and subsequently under Colonel Phibun Songkram from 1948 to 1957. Thereafter, political parties were banned by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat until the late 1960s. Even when the ban was lifted, the Saha Pracha Thai (United People's Party) set up for the 1969 elections was led by leading military and police élite such as General Thanom Kittikachorn, General Praphat Charusatien and Pote Sarasin.[15] Nevertheless, it should be noted that even such parties had at least transitory social bases that were often located in the rural provinces. The bureaucratic polity of yesteryear quite simply sought to bureaucratize democratic practices to further its own interests. Exceptions to this rule did not occur until the 1970s, when the 1973 student uprising and the rise of the Democrat Party led by *Mom Rajwong* Seni Pramroj effectively broke the bureaucratic mould. Nonetheless, the Pramroj family were themselves from royal backgrounds and thus were part of the traditional élite. Similarly, the Chart Thai party also owes its origins to the military, with General Adireksan, General Chatichai Choonhavan and close relatives of General Pin as its founding members. In addition, the Social Action Party was founded in 1974 by *Mom Rajwong* Kukrit Pramroj, Seni's brother. Hence, it was the democratic interlude between 1973 and 1976 that was crucial to the formation of political parties in Thailand. Of these major parties, it is the Democrat Party that has had the greatest success in stamping itself on the Thai political landscape. Therefore, curiously enough, political parties and parliamentary procedure already existed in Thailand by the 1970s, notwithstanding decades of military

authoritarian rule. Democratic practices characterized by a competitive party system were therefore a norm in waiting.

Since the time of Prem, when parties were allowed back on the political landscape, a vibrant party system has been a characteristic feature of Thai politics. Traditionally, Chart Thai, the Democrat Party and the Social Action Party were dominant, alongside a number of smaller and lesser-known parties such as Seritham and Prachakorn Thai. It is worth noting at this juncture that Chart Thai represented the unusual willingness of a military cabal implicated in a number of atrocities prior to and during the 1970s to engage in electoral politics, and to do so even when it was not in government. The story of the institutionalization of the Thai party system during the 1980s and 1990s is in many ways an extension of this Chart Thai model.[16] During the Prem era, from 1980 to 1988, while neither the premier nor many of his key ministers were elected MPs, parties were without question the principal legitimate open vehicles for contesting power in Thailand. Beginning in the 1990s, there was a mushrooming of political parties. In light of the ongoing democratic transition in the country, political parties became a legitimate way to aspire to and acquire power, though many such attempts were often rooted in the quest for spoils and mired in factionalism. Notwithstanding these selfish motivations, Thailand was pushed by this institutionalization of parties into increasing political openness, towards the institutionalization of parliament and elections with outcomes that had real meaning.

Of the major political parties that appeared in the 1990s, two are clearly attributable to the military. The first of these was Sammakkitham, which was formed to allow the military to retain interest in the political process following the failed coup in 1991. The second was the New Aspiration Party, set up by Chavalit Yongchaiyudh in the same year – this was the party that provided him with an avenue to assume the prime ministership in 1996. In other words, even powerful military élites became reconciled to the fact that political parties were the only legitimate instruments in their quest for power. This recognition in turn greatly facilitated the entrenchment of the party system and the military's necessary competition and collusion with civilian politicians in aspiring for political office. Another notable party formed in the 1990s was Chart Pattana, which split off from the Chart Thai party due to factionalist struggles. And finally, Thaksin's TRT was registered in 1998, a mere three years before the general election.[17]

Thai political parties have traditionally waxed and waned depending on a number of circumstances. The first of these is the personality of the leader and the patronage arising from political power. Such patronage, which was traditionally a source of corruption, held party loyalists

together. Patronage also meant that rural electoral constituencies could be created or bought through dispensations at the village or district level. So, for example, until the time of its dissolution, NAP had a commanding lead over the other political parties in the rural and predominantly agricultural northeastern regions. This reservoir of votes was inherited by Thaksin's TRT.

The practice of buying and selling votes is naturally detrimental to democracy, but it is the reality in the poverty-stricken rural areas in Thailand. This practice in turn creates politicians who seek to recover their "investments" as quickly as possible after an election in order to begin accumulating gains. These practices in turn create a fundamentally unstable party system that is skewed to politicians serving their own interests rather than governing for the national good. A corollary development of this practice is that governments tend to be unstable and do not last their full terms in office. Factions within parties, alignments and realignments within parties and self-serving coalitions further worsen matters.

During his first term in parliament, Thaksin altered the dynamics of the party system in Thailand. Whereas it was true that the fortunes of political parties could never be taken for granted, Thaksin skilfully strengthened his own party by weakening competing parties. In the first instance, he sought a majority in parliament; to achieve this majority, he coopted Seritham and subsequently NAP. Such cooptation was certainly well within the rules of Thai politics, where coalition governments were the norm. But Thaksin went further. Following their cooptation, he persuaded the leaders of the lesser parties to disband their parties and function under the TRT banner. Such dissolution of lesser coalition parties was certainly unexpected and unprecedented. In doing so, Thaksin was perhaps hoping for a situation where the Democrat Party would become sufficiently weakened and atrophy over time. In other words, Thaksin was trying to engineer the emergence of a dominant or predominant party system, not unlike the situations in Malaysia and Singapore. In this regard, the TRT's domestic political consolidation, at least in terms of the sheer number of seats that it controlled, was unprecedented in recent history, where broad-based coalitions tended to weaken major parties since smaller parties had disproportionate leverage to articulate their own agendas and claim powerful ministries and departments. The converse occurred in the case of the TRT, with it gobbling up smaller parties, consolidating itself and ultimately weakening the party system.

That Thaksin had been relatively successful in his quest was a source of his strengths as well as weaknesses. While it is true that the TRT had accumulated sufficient power so that it no longer worried about even censure motions in parliament, its overwhelming strength also became

a source of fear among many observers. Consequently, there were more attempts to scrutinize the government than ever before. The Democrat Party did perform poorly, partly owing to leadership problems and the absence of a clear agenda.[18] Thaksin cannot be blamed for the opposition's failures. However, the more fundamental reason for this development is that at the time of its formation, the TRT incorporated many political groups that were led by provincial strongmen. Hence, the party suffered from a ramshackle quality on the ground. Consequently, even as the TRT has strengthened in terms of the total number of electoral seats over time, cracks were beginning to show. The irony of Thai political culture is that since it is so driven by personality and patronage, loyalties are hard to keep and hold. As a result of these factors, absolute party discipline and loyalty could not be maintained, even for someone of Thaksin's wealth and ability. Hence, although Thaksin intended to weaken the party system and amass power for the TRT, the dynamics of Thai political culture were capable of frustrating his plans from the outset.

Factionalism is one of the major reasons why Thai political parties suffer from a low rate of institutionalization. Factionalism is also tied to resource allocation and clientelism. The latter is an endemic feature of the Thai political system. Thaksin tried to control factionalism by promulgating a law in line with the 1997 constitution that would require electoral candidates to have held membership in a political party for a minimum of 90 days before being able to run for elections. However, the strongest criticism of the new rule actually came from within Thaksin's own party. Sanoh Thienthong criticized a move that would not only have jeopardized his own role as a factional leader but also would prevent politicians from switching loyalties across parties at the last minute – a fairly common practice in Thai politics. In this way, factional loyalty is often more important than loyalty to the party. After all, factions, like minority parties in fragile coalition governments, are able to exert greater or disproportionate influence than their actual worth.

Another observation that may be made is that individual parties, with rare exceptions, do not have a history of institutional presence. Among the major political parties, the Chart Thai and the Democrat Party can claim some pedigree in this regard. Other than these, many of the other parties are of recent birth, such as the TRT and NAP. These trends may be indicative of more serious problems within the party system, including the overwhelming influence of dominant personalities within these parties that tie their MPs and constituents to them on the basis of personal loyalty and patronage (*bunkum*). Chart Thai's Banharn Silpa-Archa and TRT factional leader Sanoh Thienthong are classic examples of such personalities. Politicians with charismatic personalities and stature

(*barami*) are not only able to hold loyalties but also prevent factionalism. However, their departure from the scene typically triggers a political crisis that in turn affects the party's performance.

In 2001 the Thai parliament became significantly larger, with a total of 500 seats compared to its previous size of 393 seats. This change was one of the reforms aimed at diminishing the role of the military in the political process, as the base for civilian politicians became significantly enlarged. However, this enlargement is reflected in neither a proliferation of parties nor the strengthening of a few major parties. Rather, with the power of patronage and persuasion, the TRT has been able to absorb smaller parties, leaving only the Democrat and Chart Thai parties as viable alternatives for voters. Consequently, it is arguable that the broadened political base has not been reflected in the make-up of the party landscape. The other inadvertent outcome of the enlarged parliament and party-list MPs was the creation of professional party politicians, further increasing the amount of party switching and instability.

The outbreak of widespread protests against the Thaksin government was certainly not expected a year after its overwhelming victory. However, a number of charges levelled against him led disgruntled constituencies to coalesce and unseat him. These included elements from the mass media, led by Sondhi Limthongkul, the Santi Asoke sect and its Dhamma army, led by Chamlong Srimuang, academics and students, public employee unions and disgruntled members of the middle class in general. Especially significant were charges that the national development agenda had been skewed in order for Thaksin to reward members of his party. This alleged policy change came to be referred to as "policy corruption".[19] However, the straw that broke the camel's back was the sale of Shin Corp shares held by Thaksin and his family to the Singapore government's investment firm Temasek Holdings. The deal, which netted the family US$1.8 billion, drew angry protests as no taxes were paid on the transaction.[20]

Rather than succumbing to the pressures, as most Thai politicians would have done in order to restore calm and prevent the situation from escalating, Thaksin held on to power and remained defiant. He maintained that his mandate was democratically obtained and legitimate; as he put it, democracy should not be subverted by the protests against him, and he consequently projected himself as the champion of democracy. Eventually, Thaksin claimed to have won some 57 per cent of the popular vote and, based on his earlier assertion of a renewed mandate if he obtained more than half of all votes cast, he reclaimed the prime ministership shortly after the April 2006 election. The returns, however, indicated diminished support for the TRT, and an increase in anti-government and spoilt votes. Finally, after many street protests, two days after the elec-

tion Thaksin announced a leave of absence as prime minister after an audience with the king. In announcing his resignation, as a face-saving gesture, Thaksin announced that he was stepping down in the interest of national unity and indicated his wishes to assist in the national celebration of King Bhumiphol's sixtieth anniversary. Once again, intervention by the monarchy resolved a political impasse and returned the political process to a modicum of normalcy, albeit, as noted earlier, some observers have charged that royal intervention was a deft way of ensuring a return to palace-centred politics.

A greater impact on the political party system was the king's directive for the courts to resolve the political deadlock. This development subsequently led to the dissolution of the TRT and PPP.

The legitimacy the TRT government obtained before the coup was already seriously undermined by boycotts from major opposition parties. In addition, the Election Commission disqualified a large number of candidates standing for the April elections. To complicate matters even more, Thaksin implicated an "extra-constitutional and charismatic" figure in trying to unseat him from power during a speech delivered on 29 June. Most observers regard this comment as a reference to either General Prem or the king himself. The Thai king is regarded as being above the political process, and the constitution allows for *lèse-majesté* charges to be brought against those who defame him or the royal family. The king's intervention in mediating the situation was certainly interpreted as a slap in the face for Thaksin. He then endorsed the government led by Surayud Cholanont, who was acting as caretaker prime minister after the coup.[21] However, it must be noted that Surayud is also a member of the Privy Council. In light of these linkages between retired members of the military and the monarchy, it does appear as if the two institutions have a measure of overlapping interests. The socio-economic cost of TRT policy had simply become too burdensome, and Thaksin had clearly violated the unwritten rules of Thai political culture, indicating perhaps an attempt to dismantle the palace-centred political network.

That minority Thai urban voter sentiments overcame those of the rural majority should come as no surprise to political scientists. Such patterns of élite selection and endorsement are common in developing countries. The urban middle class remains strong and sufficiently motivated to mobilize and defeat an incumbent government that it perceives as unworthy of its mandate to rule. Furthermore, many leading public intellectuals and social critics were equally convinced that Thaksin was unworthy of support and sought to undermine him. In this regard, perhaps the urban middle class is unprepared for a popularly elected leader who does not fully cater to its own interests or acquires sufficient power to decrease or mitigate its input into the national political process.

In the aftermath of the 2006 coup there have been a number of important structural changes introduced into the Thai political system that have the potential to impact significantly on the political party system. The first of these changes is the re-emergence of the military in domestic politics after having been relatively dormant in the last 15 years. The first sign of this new role was the appointment of retired military élite such as Surayud and Sondhi to executive posts in government. Subsequently, the temporary 242-member National Legislative Assembly (NLA) that was appointed as the interim government included many members of the military who were closely associated with Prem.[22]

The clearest sign of such military re-emergence is the formation of the Council for National Security (CNS) that draws on senior members of the military. Since its formation, the CNS effectively justified the military coup against Thaksin by releasing a 35-page official white paper entitled "Facts about the Reform of Thai Politics on September 19, 2006", explaining the circumstances surrounding and the motivations for the coup. The document "outlines corruption scandals, abuse of power and conflicts of interest in the Thaksin government".[23] The CNS transferred provincial governors who either were seen as being close to the TRT or were administering states where the TRT maintained a strong constituency. Additionally, the CNS appointed military officers as deputy governors in all 76 provinces and extended the terms of village headmen from five to 10 years.[24] As a final precaution, military commanders of key battalions in the north and northeast that were deemed a potential threat to the political situation were replaced.[25] These measures were meant to undercut the support base of the TRT, especially in the aforementioned regions where Thaksin's populist policies gained the party strong electoral support. In order to undercut populist appeals of future politicians, the military also announced a scheme to educate the rural poor on how to vote.[26] In fact, the PAD has increasingly argued that it has taken the task of educating the rural voters upon itself!

Other important structural changes relate to the new constitution and the number and types of seats in parliament. Under the new rules, the prime minister must be elected but the Senate will be partially appointed. The Senate comprises 150 members, out of whom 76 will be elected to represent each of the provinces, with the remaining 74 chosen to represent the professional, government, academic and private sectors. Selected senators will be screened by a selection committee of seven distinguished persons.[27] The House of Representatives will now consist of 400 members, out of whom 320 will be elected via constituency votes and the remaining 80 drawn from a list representing eight regions, instead of the previous 100-member single national party-list system. The new charter,

under which the December 2007 election was held, was approved in a national referendum with a 57.81 per cent majority.[28]

As for the political party system, the dissolution of the TRT led to a large number of new parties being formed. Many of these new parties were derived from factions representing the TRT. The largest of these, the PPP, was led by the well-known social activist, former governor of Bangkok and unabashed supporter of Thaksin, Samak Sundaravej. From the list of his close associates and advisers, it was clear that he led the core factions of the disbanded TRT.[29] The PPP clearly represented a formidable force but it was worn down by court decisions in its disfavour and eventually disbanded. High-ranking officials were forced into resignation, and eventually even Samak succumbed to the drawn-out protests of the PAD that took over Government House. PPP officials had from early on lodged claims of intimidation by the military and alleged secret military plots to destroy the party – a plot later confirmed by Surayud Cholanont.[30] In light of such accusations and their official verification, it is clear that the military regarded the PPP with contempt and perhaps as a Thaksin-inspired or appointed party. The courts that were tasked by the king to broker the disputes have also ruled very unfavourably against the PPP.

Another significant development is that the newly formed political parties attempted to curry favour with the military, a common practice in the past. For example, retired army commander General Chetta Thanajaro was elected to head the Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana Party.[31] Similarly, the Matchimathippathai Party considered inviting General Saprang Kalayanamitr to join its ranks after his retirement.[32] And it was reported that the Puea Pandin Party had invited General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh to advise on its campaign strategy for the northeastern regions.[33] However, the PPP remained independent and almost contemptuous of the military, notwithstanding Samak's careful dealings with its leadership in trying to defuse tensions with the PAD. Similarly, both the Democrat Party and Chart Thai have also avoided any clear alliances with the military. These signs point to a classic attempt by the new Thai political parties to adjust to the constantly changing power equation.

The king's express desire for the Samak-led government to avoid violence meant that the PPP-led government was unable to dislodge the PAD from Government House by force. This humiliating development, Samak's subsequent forced resignation and the PPP's nomination of Somchai Wongsawat as the new prime minister in September 2008 did not ease the political stalemate.[34] And to complicate matters, the PAD made it clear that Somchai, who is Thaksin's brother-in-law, was unacceptable as prime minister.[35] These events and the PPP's dissolution then

catapulted Abhisit and the Democrat Party into a new-found pride of place. The situation is still evolving and there are certainly no guarantees that the present government will last very long, though a measure of national political fatigue and significant economic decline has clearly set in.

Veteran political observers interpret the current situation in Thailand in a number of ways. Prominent academic Chai-Anan Samudavanija believes that the parties will learn how to work with a resurgent military, leading to a weakening of democracy, although the nature of their relationship will not be official. The same process, he argues, will lead to an empowerment of the bureaucracy and technocrats.[36] Another academic and Thaksin critic, Pasuk Phongpaichit, argues that Thaksin deeply politicized and polarized Thai society by empowering the rural electorate, thereby alienating the traditional élite and the urban middle class.[37] Many have also noted that the strengthening of the military in the political process may empower the monarchy and reinforce the symbiotic relationship between the two institutions. The Privy Council, for example, houses not only members of the military but senior "royalist bureaucrats" who had previously been sidelined by Thaksin.[38]

Assessing the institutionalization of the Thai party system

Writers on democracy and democratization in particular have traditionally paid attention to the process of institutionalization of political parties as one of the fundamental prerequisites of enduring democracies. Institutionalization can occur at two levels – that of the institutionalization of individual parties, and/or the institutionalization of the political party system as a whole. The latter development is generally regarded as a structural characteristic of mature democracies, since it entrenches democratic norms as the only avenue for legitimate political contestation. However, the institutionalization of a party does not necessarily imply the institutionalization of the party system, since this development may interact negatively or even inversely with other parties. For example, if the institutionalization of one party is to the detriment of the system or its competitive nature, which is central to democracy, it is not necessarily a positive development. Similarly, a well-entrenched party system may well yield weak and ineffective parties, leading to weak coalition governments that may hamper democratic consolidation. Systemic institutionalization is also a reference to the deep-rooted acceptance of a competitive political party structure at the popular and structural-functional levels. In order for such acceptance to be obtained, the state should retain a good measure of autonomy from individual parties despite collectively supporting them as part of the system of obtaining public office.

Samuel Huntington was one of the earliest political scientists to draw attention to the importance of the institutionalization of political parties, which he believes is "the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability".[39] Huntington was interested in the acceptance of political parties as an important political cultural norm, and the evolution of systemic structural attributes to accommodate this norm. Additionally, he identified four aspects of party institutionalization: adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence. Adaptability is a reference to the ability of a party to respond to changes in the environment and its membership, while complexity refers to the various facets of a party. Autonomy, for Huntington, referred to the ability of a party to develop a discernible and discrete identity for itself. Finally, coherence is the ability of a party to endure internal problems with clearly defined boundaries and arbitration mechanisms. Huntington's conceptualization of how to assess individual political parties and the political party system in its entirety yields some rather important findings when appraising Thailand and its ongoing political crisis.

Of the major Thai political parties, the Chart Thai, the Democrat Party and the TRT in particular were able to adapt to their political environment. In the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, it was Thaksin who sensed the opportunity for a self-styled nationalist mandate with a populist base and rhetoric. Yet, aware of some of the ground realities, over time he also coopted many of the traditional bases of power in Thai politics, such as the military and business élites.[40] However, his party dissipated as spectacularly as it had emerged. The Democrat Party has been fairly successful in adjusting to ground sentiments, though it might be noted that the 1990s were really the heyday for the Democrats. The party's ideological positions and the structural reforms that it spearheaded after the failure of the 1992 coup attempt obtained significant and widespread legitimacy among the populace. Unfortunately for the Democrat Party, leadership transition was problematic after the resignation of Chuan Leekpai. However, the anti-Thaksin and anti-TRT sentiments conversely buttressed the credibility of the Democrat Party as a worthy alternative. Yet it would be true to note that by 2008 the Democrat Party had little by way of identifiable policies other than to oppose the PPP-led government. The Chart Thai also adapted well to the broader systemic environment by initially aligning itself with the TRT, then distancing itself from the government and aligning with the opposition when voter sentiments changed. Leader Banharn Silpa-Archa has previously held different high-level executive appointments, including that of prime minister, and is skilled in the use of resources to create enduring clientelist loyalties (*bunkum*).

As for organizational complexity, both the Democrat Party and the TRT were sufficiently complex in terms of different groups working on

different issues and maintaining clear positions on domestic and international issues. Both parties also maintained representation in the Senate and often used the Senate to lobby on specific issues. The Democrat Party, for example, had the Senate Foreign Relations Committee play an important role in blunting some of its perceived foreign policy blunders, such as its dealings with Myanmar and pronouncements on the Islamic insurgency in the south that strained relations with Indonesia and Malaysia. Additionally, the Democrat Party indicated its strength in uncovering corruption and wastage in government, as well as shady deals involving cabinet ministers and their immediate family and friends. In light of its previous overwhelming majority in parliament and the character of Thaksin, there was much less evidence of organizational complexity in the TRT. However, the overwhelming representation can be equally used to make the argument that the functional organization of the government since 2001 was as much a reflection of the TRT as it was of the Thai government. In the case of Chart Thai, it is organizationally much less complex than the two larger parties, and Banharn, like Thaksin, has a strong personality with a loyal following.

The organizational autonomy of a political party is a little harder to measure in Thai politics. The reason for this is the simple fact that political parties are naturally sensitive to public opinion on issues when trying to eke out a discrete agenda and policy position. In fact, it is arguable that successful political parties often gauge and utilize public positions on issues in order to enhance their voter base and electoral support. If such an appropriation of an existing sentiment is successful, a party may be able to come into power, as was the case with the TRT in 2001 and subsequently in 2006. Conversely, the Democrat and Chart Thai parties have benefited from the negative urban voter sentiments against the TRT. It could also be argued that the boycott of the April election by the Democrat Party and Chart Thai forced Thaksin's hand and led the TRT towards a stalemate. However, this shows that one thing is for certain: institutional adaptability and autonomy are clearly interactive variables.

Finally, in terms of institutional coherence, it is quite clear that the Democrat Party is the most coherent, while the TRT was the least coherent with its four dominant factions. The Chart Thai appears to be reasonably coherent. However, there are important differences and reasons for the level of coherence for each party. As a general rule, it may be hypothesized that ideology provides far better glue for organizational coherence than patronage does, and herein lies the reason for the relative coherence of the Democrat Party, which holds generally stronger principled positions. At the other end of the spectrum, the TRT provides an example of functional coherence brought about through patronage. Faction leaders, like minority parties in coalition governments, are able to

exact greater leverage than their actual worth. In the case of the Chart Thai, the institutional coherence derives from Banharn's immensely successful use of patronage and his clear position as leader of the party. Huntington's first dimension of institutionalization, organizational adaptability, is also interactive with coherence in the Thai political scene, as the *barami* or charisma of a leader is an important factor in determining if the political party he/she leads has coherence. Other than *barami*, given the importance of financial resources in obtaining and retaining electoral support, it may also be noted that organizational adaptability in the Thai case has implications for most aspects of party institutionalization.

Political party institutionalization at the systemic level was fairly firm until the 2006 coup and its aftermath. The process itself is a relatively recent one that began in earnest only in the late 1980s, despite the precedents from the 1970s. Nonetheless, some of the developments alluded to earlier, such as the failure of military coups in the 1990s and the proliferation of political parties, augur well for Thailand. Whereas initial fragmentation of political parties has weakened the system, there has been a good deal of consolidation in the last decade or so. Ironically enough, Thaksin takes credit for some of this consolidation in trying to fashion a dominant party system, as when the TRT entrenched itself, it simultaneously imbued competing parties with increased visibility and recognition, with the Democrats and Chart Thai benefiting the most from this. In addition, most aspirants for public office abide by the cultural norm of joining a political party and running for office. The trend that set these positive systemic developments backwards was the public demonstrations of disaffection against Thaksin and the TRT and the PPP. The failure of the TRT to continue as previously imagined under Thaksin reversed the gains of party consolidation and led to the formation of more new parties.

Public demonstrations, despite being an expression of fundamental liberties under democracy, have exerted undue influence on democratic structures and undermined the process of democratic consolidation. The popularity of demonstrations and the loose organizational coherence within the Thai left at critical junctures in the country's political evolution may also be interpreted as a consequence of the failure of the left in democratic institutionalization. In referring political disputes to the courts, the king has significantly empowered the judiciary and politicized it. The coup against Thaksin's government, no matter how unpopular, has clearly set back the process of democratic consolidation. Public protests do have a place in democracy, but they should not become so unwieldy or disruptive as to threaten or dislocate the democratic process itself. Such behaviour threatens political stability and state-society relations, and ultimately undermines the autonomy of the state. In mature democracies,

public officials who regard themselves as having lost the political mandate in the legislature or at the popular level tend to resign from office so that a new government more representative of the public will may be constituted. Hence, as public trust constitutes an important measure of party institutionalization, such trust should be channelled through due process. The PAD's demand that a large proportion of the seats in parliament be appointed will also be a definite setback to democracy if implemented.

Conclusion

The Thai political party system has metamorphosed considerably since the 1970s, when political parties first etched themselves on the Thai landscape. They underwent a process of adjusting to some non-democratic constraints in the 1980s under the Prem government. However, Prem's relatively liberal attitude, the weakened political role of the military and socio-economic changes that enlarged and empowered the middle class set the stage for democratic norms to take root in the 1990s. Two failed coup attempts and the implementation of political and administrative changes to consolidate democratic gains led to the entrenchment of democracy in the 1990s. However, the Asian financial crisis of 1997 weakened both the Democrat Party and the reforms that it undertook to institutionalize democratic norms. The difficulties following the crisis allowed Thaksin's TRT party to win a near majority of seats in parliament in 2001 and an overwhelming majority of seats in 2005 – both feats by Thai political standards. Yet Thaksin's popularity at the polls, at least partly obtained from a populist agenda, waned significantly a year into the second term.

Thaksin's tenure has seemingly had a major impact on the political party system in Thailand, although it is still too early to tell if the changes obtained will endure. The TRT has proven that under certain conditions and specific agendas, a new political party is capable of not only having a major impact on the local scene but running a full term and returning with a resounding victory. Along the way, the party was also able to placate and coopt other traditional centres of power. Naturally, Thaksin's political skills and patronage were responsible for the TRT's stunning performance. The absorption of smaller parties and leadership problems in the Democrat Party also assisted Thaksin in consolidating his position. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that Thaksin's *barami,* in typical Thai style, as well as access to resources that were totally disproportionate to those of his competitors, were also responsible for the transformation of the political party system, and factionalism has played a significant

role. Both of these traits are concurrent with traditional Thai political practices.

However, unexpected developments again liquefied the seemingly solid balance between the three major parties. If Thaksin brought the Thai political party system to a crossroads with his attempt to develop a dominant or predominant party system while undermining the opposition, the coup against him and the subsequent installation of a caretaker government led to a changed situation. Thaksin was not only deposed from power and his political party disbanded, but he is currently in exile in the United Kingdom while there are outstanding arrest warrants for him on corruption charges. His two replacements from the PPP have also been ousted from power, while Democrat Abhisit Vejjajiva obtained a parliamentary majority to lead a minority coalition government in January 2009. Some calm now appears to be in place, though Thaksin supporters have threatened to unseat Abhisit. The election of Sukumphand Paribatra as the new governor of Bangkok in the same month has also strengthened the Democrat Party and pacified the urban electorate.

As for the institutionalization of political parties in Thailand, the situation is a mixed one. On the one hand, at the systemic level there is evidence of the institutionalization of political parties. On the other hand, in light of the importance of personalities and *barami* in fashioning and determining the organizational adaptability of a party, the complexity and coherence of political parties can become skewed. Similarly, organizational autonomy is often compromised by the requirements of adaptability in capitalizing on political opportunities, as it may be seen that ideology, rather than patronage and *barami*, is far more likely to yield enduring organizational institutionalization for political parties. Notwithstanding all these developments in the party system, the 2006 coup demonstrates that the developing democratic norms in Thailand can still be thwarted and remoulded to accommodate traditional interests and élites.

There are many features of the Thai system that clearly differ from democracy as it is practised in the developed world. The first and most striking feature is probably the deep reverence that the citizenry generally has for the monarchy and the present king. The Thai system, despite being a constitutional monarchy, clearly allows the king both political intervention and the conferment of legitimacy on political developments unmatched in other similar systems. Although there have been much more neutral assessments of the king recently, he continues to inspire large segments of the population, serving as a powerful symbol that invokes deep emotions. Nonetheless, the aura associated with the king has clearly been abused recently, in particular by the PAD. It should also be noted that other members of the Thai royal family are not held in similar

esteem; after this king has passed on, the monarchy is likely to be much less influential. How and under what banner the traditional élites band together and protect their interest in the future is likely to change.

Charisma, factions and related loyalties are common even in mature democracies, though perhaps not as exaggerated as in Thailand. However, the pervasiveness of clientelism and vote buying that are deleterious to the democratic process is often common in the South. Perhaps there are indeed important preconditions, including a certain level of socio-economic development and education that is crucial to the proper functioning of democracy, as writers like Seymour Martin Lipset have suggested.[41] And finally, the Thai public should be weaned away from the belief that coups are an acceptable way to institute change when the political situation is deemed unacceptable. Democracy requires that proper procedures be adhered to when changes are made to the government. In this regard, there should be civilian control of the military, which should in turn be confined to the barracks. The Democrat Party that is currently in power has a better record in observing proper procedures than other political parties. It can only be hoped that this tradition will continue as the country refines the political system. Unfortunately, though, Abhisit's present government is a minority coalition with all the attendant frailties. And the loyal opposition that Brendan Howe and Vesselin Popovski allude to in Chapter 1 is now in disarray. In fact, there is currently no leader of the opposition, as court decisions have dealt the leadership of the TRT and PPP mortal blows. This development may in turn undermine democracy at the systemic level in the country and further weaken democratic consolidation.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this chapter was delivered at the Third Congress of the Asian Political and International Studies Association, New Delhi, 23–25 November 2007.
2. Political parties are a reference to independent organizations that aggregate the demands of voters and formally present them as part of the political and legislative process. In so doing, parties should, as required in democracies, be within the framework of a competitive system. At the systemic level, there should be universal enfranchisement of adult citizens. These two basic criteria, usually referred to as inclusion and contestation, are at the core of democracy both as a regime type and as a political ideology. See, for example, Dahl, Robert A. (1975) *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 4. The political party system is a reference to the sum total of parties at any one time, their characteristics and interactions.
3. Neher, Clark D. (1988) "Semi-Successful Semi-Democracy", *Asian Survey* 38(2), pp. 192–201. It should be noted, however, that there is considerable disagreement in the scholarly community over whether semi-democracy constitutes a regime type. See Case,

William F. (1996) "Can the Halfway House Stand? Semi-Democracy and Elite Theory in Three Southeast Asian Countries", *Comparative Politics* 28(4), pp. 437–465; Collier, David and Steven Levitsky (1997) "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research", *World Politics* 49, pp. 430–451.

4. *Bangkok Post* (2006) "Poll: Prem Was the Best PM", *Bangkok Post*, 17 July. The seven areas are honesty (52.5 per cent), politeness (42.9 per cent), ethics (50.5 per cent), sacrifice for the majority (51.4 per cent), temper control (39.9 per cent), not abusing power (45.3 per cent) and justice (43.2 per cent). Thaksin, on the other hand, scored higher for donations (56.2 per cent), endeavour (62.1 per cent) and patience (57 per cent).
5. On factionalism within the Thai military see Samudavanija, Chai-Anan (1982) *The Thai Young Turks*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
6. For an interesting article on the linkage between Prem and the monarchy see McCargo, Duncan (2006) "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South: Network Monarchy Strikes Back?", *Critical Asian Studies* 38(1), pp. 39–71. For a much more systematic appraisal of the monarchy's involvement in and management of the political process see Handley, Paul (2006) *The King Never Smiles: A Biography of Thailand's Bhumibol Adulyadej*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
7. Um, Katharya (1991) "Thailand and the Dynamics of Economic and Security Complex in Mainland Southeast Asia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 13(3), pp. 245–270.
8. Maisrikrod, Surin (1992) *Thailand's Two General Elections: Democracy Sustained*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
9. See Bunbongkarn, Suchit (1999) "Thailand's Successful Reforms", *Journal of Democracy* 10(4), pp. 54–68; Ganesan, N. (2001) "Appraising Democratic Developments in Post-Authoritarian States: Thailand and Indonesia", *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 28(1), pp. 3–18.
10. Paul Handley argues that the sufficiency economy was mooted only after the monarchy attempted to deflect the tremendous loss of prestige to itself and money to the Crown Property Bureau, whose holdings in Siam Commercial Bank and Siam Cement Company in particular were subjected to significant degradation and subsequent insolvency. Handley argues that the monarchy attempted to avoid the IMF reforms and replace the Chavalit government with a "national government" modelled along that of Prem in the 1980s. However, this attempt was thwarted before the rebuke of capitalism and invocation of the sufficiency economy. See Handley, note 6 above, pp. 407–417.
11. In the final tally, Thai Rak Thai secured 377 seats, the Democrat Party obtained 96 seats, Chart Thai 25 seats and the new Mahachon Party gained only 2 votes in the 500-member parliament. In order to move a motion of censure the opposition needs the support of 25 per cent of parliament, or 125 MPs out of a total of 500.
12. The Rak Paendin Thai and Thamma Thippathai were dissolved for having failed to file a report of their activities in 2005, while the Palang Dharma Party was dissolved for having failed to provide receipts of the spending of its subsidy to the Election Commission. See *Nation* (2007) "Three Small Parties Dissolved", *Nation*, 22 October.
13. Girling, John (1981) *Thailand: Society and Politics.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 157–158.
14. Ibid., p. 160.
15. Ibid., pp. 160–161.
16. I owe this observation to a comment from Michael Montesano in July 2006.
17. There were other smaller parties like Nam Thai as well.
18. Banyat Bantadtan, who led the Democrat Party in the 2005 election, did not have the same level of support as Chuan Leekpai. His resignation immediately after the election results were announced left the party in limbo before Abhisit Vejjajiva was elected to lead it. At 43 years of age, Abhisit is generally regarded as young and inexperienced.

See *Bangkok Post* (2005) "Banyat, Sanan Call It Quits", *Bangkok Post*, 8 February; *Nation* (2005) "Abhisit Steps in as Acting Party Leader", *Nation*, 21 February.

19. See *Bangkok Post* (2006) "Jaruvan Slams Government Graft Practices", *Bangkok Post*, 14 March. The term "policy corruption" is now commonly used by academics and researchers to refer to Thaksin's development plans and priorities, in particular large infrastructure projects.
20. *Nation* (2006) "Eyebrows Raised as Shin Deal Wins Tax Shelters, Rule Waivers", *Nation*, 25 January.
21. *Nation* (2006) "HM Backs Surayud Government", *Nation*, 5 December.
22. Prem associates in the NLA include Vice-Admiral Pachun Thampratheep, General Panthep Phuwanartnurak, General Pairoj Panitsamai, General Oud Buangbon, Admiral Prajet Siridej, Admiral Prasert Boonsong and General Preecha Rojsen. See *Nation* (2006) "New Parliament: NLA 'Doesn't Represent' All of the People", *Nation*, 13 October.
23. *Nation* (2006) "CNS Makes Its Case for the Coup", *Nation*, 22 November.
24. *Bangkok Post* (2006) "TRT-linked Governors Transferred", *Bangkok Post*, 1 November; *Bangkok Post* (2007) "CNS Moves to Tighten Army's Grip", *Bangkok Post*, 2 March.
25. *Bangkok Post* (2007) "Army Chief Tightens His Grip: Transfers to Counter PPP's Rise in Popularity", *Bangkok Post*, 16 November.
26. *Nation* (2006) "Interior Ministry to Educate Rural People on How to Vote", *Nation*, 29 November.
27. The seven-member committee comprised the president of the Constitution Court, the parliamentary ombudsman and chairmen of the Election Commission, the National Counter-Corruption Commission and the State Audit Commission, while the Supreme Court and the Administrative Court will select a representative from outside agencies. See *Nation* (2007) "New Senate: CDC Decides on 74 Selected, 76 Elected Members", *Nation*, 6 August.
28. *Nation* (2007) "Charter Approved with 57.81 Per Cent of Votes: Official Results", *Nation*, 24 August.
29. The factional leaders behind Samak included Sudarat Keyuraphan, Yaowapa Wongsawad and Thaksin spokesperson Surapong Suebwonglee. See *Nation* (2007) "Samak Set to Head Up TRT Bloc", *Nation*, 1 August.
30. See *Nation* (2007) "PPP Boasts It Will Capture 250 House Seats", *Nation*, 30 October; *Nation* (2007) "PPP Alleges Soldiers Intimidate Its Canvassers", *Nation*, 29 October; *Nation* (2007) "Top-secret Plan to Ruin PPP Revealed", *Nation*, 26 October.
31. *Bangkok Post* (2007) "Chetta to Lead Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana", *Bangkok Post*, 16 October; *Nation* (2007) "Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana Elect Chettha as Leader", *Nation*, 16 October.
32. *Bangkok Post* (2007) "Prachai Eyeing Saprang to Join Matchima", *Bangkok Post*, 16 October.
33. *Bangkok Post* (2007) "Chavalit Predicts Political Calm after Polls", *Bangkok Post*, 15 November.
34. Somchai Wongsawat was elected to the post of prime minister by a total of 298 votes in parliament. See *Bangkok Post* (2008) "Prime Minister No. 26", *Bangkok Post*, 18 September.
35. *Nation* (2008) "PAD Say No to New PM", *Nation*, 18 September.
36. *Nation* (2007) "Thailand's Future: Military Will Keep 'Pulling the Strings'", *Nation*, 16 February.
37. *Bangkok Post* (2007) "Thai Politics beyond 2006 Coup", *Bangkok Post*, 31 July.
38. In 2001, when Thaksin sidelined Kasem Watanachai and Palakorn Suwannarat, within hours they were appointed by the king to the Privy Council. See Crispin, Shawn W. (2006) "Thailand: All the King's Men", *Asia Times*, 22 September.

39. Huntington, Samuel (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 12. For further elaboration on the various aspects of party institutionalization see Randall, Vicky and Lars Svasand (2002) "Party Institutionalization in New Democracies", *Party Politics* 8(1), pp. 5–29.
40. See Ganesan, N. (2004) "Thaksin and the Politics of Domestic and Regional Political Consolidation in Thailand", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 26(1), pp. 26–44; Ganesan, N. (2006) "Appraising Democratic Consolidation in Thailand under Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Government", *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 7(2), pp. 1–22.
41. See Lipset, Seymour Martin (1959) "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy", *American Political Science Review* 53(1), pp. 69–105.

10

Consolidating democracy in the Philippines: Breaking monopolies of local power

Gladstone A. Cuarteros

Introduction

Philippine local politics is an example of élite democracy. It is dominated by political families and clans, some of whom were active in politics as early as the turn of the twentieth century when the Americans first introduced elections in the Philippines. Throughout the history of Philippine democracy these political families have controlled local power by winning seats in the Philippine legislature and elective positions in local governments.

For generations political families have entrenched themselves so much that neither the break in democratic tradition during the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos[1] nor the subsequent reintroduction of democracy after the historic EDSA I People Power movement could bring great change to Philippine politics. At the very least, in terms of representation the number of families in politics should have been broadened.

The Philippine political structure is subdivided into 80 provinces, 116 cities, more than 1,500 municipalities and more than 44,000 *barangays* (villages). It also has a bicameral legislature, consisting of a 24-member Senate elected nationally and a House of Representatives with 219 districts elected through a first-past-the-post single-member district representation and representation from a party list.[2] Elective positions in the House of Representatives as well as in provinces, cities, municipalities and *barangays* are considered local positions.

Democracy in the South: Participation, the state and the people, Howe, Popovski and Notaras (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1178-0

Earlier studies provide several explanations regarding the continuing control of political clans. Their endurance is because clans gained support from the electorate through nurturing a patron-client relationship;[3] are unafraid of using coercion, intimidation and even illegal resources;[4] are engaged in systematic plunder of state resources for the clan's advantage;[5] and have adopted an innovative strategy of combining money, machine, marriage, media and/or movies, murder and mayhem, myth and/or merger of political clans.[6]

When political clans dominate local politics the issue at hand is representation. Are the different sectors in society meaningfully represented in the political structure? This is important because consolidating democracy requires representation of various sectors in society, which eventually helps in making democracy the "only game in town" and preventing serious threats to overthrow it.[7] Representativeness of the polity then contributes to maintaining stability, especially so when representation is true at both national and local levels. Larry Diamond explained how critical decentralization to local governments is.[8] By diffusing power to local governments, Diamond said that it helps in consolidating democracy by providing additional channels of access to power for historically marginalized groups, thus improving the representativeness of democracy.

Clearly consolidation of democracy means ensuring representation of different sectors. Yet because of the dominance of political clans, this can hardly be said to be true of the Philippines. From the 1998 elections up to the most recent elections in 2007, holders of local power, i.e. provincial governors and political clan members, have controlled 64–80 per cent of all provinces.[9] The greatest dominance was in 2004, when 63 of the 79 provincial governors came from established political families.

The need to decrease this dominance cannot be overemphasized. Instances where the hold of political clans has been successfully broken must be thoroughly analysed in order to learn about the conditions necessary for consolidating democracy. With regular elections after the 1986 EDSA People Power I and subsequent decentralization in 1991, the Philippines by this time should have deepened its democratic practice.

This chapter focuses on a case where a new entrant in politics ended the monopoly of an established local political clan. The key question is under what conditions new entrants can break the monopoly of local élites in holding local power. The underlying interest here is determining contributory factors in the electoral success of new entrants, thus facilitating breakthrough into the control of traditional political families. Conversely, we are also interested in identifying factors that hinder the ability of new entrants in politics to wrest local power.

Specifically, we will look into the most celebrated case of a new entrant winning against a formidable political family. The case relates to Governor Ma. Cielo "Grace" Padaca of Isabela – a province located 500 kilometres north of Manila. Padaca ended the monopoly of the Dy family in the province, which had lasted for more than three decades. She dislodged then incumbent Governor Faustino Dy Jr in the 2004 elections, and repeated her victory during the 2007 local elections.

Brief theoretical discussion

A common conclusion on local politics in the Philippines is the enduring control of political clans. In the House of Representatives, studies from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism have shown that political families continue to dominate Congress, where during the twelfth Congress more than half of all representatives have relatives who held public office.[10] The data for provincial governors are even worse: governors coming from political clans make up two-thirds of the total, with a high of 80 per cent after the 2004 elections.[11]

Political clans are families which have been active in politics for a long time and whose members occupy different political offices at the same time. There are two elements we should consider when we speak of political clans; the first is longevity of political involvement. As noted by Teehankee[12] and Coronel,[13] many political clans have remained in politics since the American period. It was the Americans who introduced electoral politics in the Philippines in 1901, although the elections were gradually adopted at different levels of the political structure. Depending on the specific period when a clan became politically dominant, Teehankee classified them as either traditional, new or emerging political clans.[14]

The second element is the number of family members occupying political office. It is not surprising to find situations where in a family the husband is provincial governor, the wife or son is a congressperson, while another child is the mayor of the capital town or city. A notable example would be the Ortega political clan in La Union province, where more than 10 members held elected positions in the local government after the 2007 elections.

Earlier research works of the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) utilized the political clan framework. Guiterrez[15] "believes that clan dominance in Philippine politics remains the most decisive influence in shaping its nature and character". Power relations and decision-making continue to be determined by the motions and dynamics of political clans. In studying the background of candidates in the 1987 congressional and 1988 local elections, Gutierrez, Torrente and Narca found that about 46

per cent of the winners came from old political clans and their relatives. In a succeeding study on the membership of the House of Representatives, the situation was more élite domination, with 72 per cent belonging to political families.[16]

The continuing political clan domination undercuts the long-held expectation that regular competitive elections will lead to formation of a more representative polity. Obviously, where other sectors in society have limited chance of gaining local power, the ability to have broader representation is compromised. Even with a backdrop of decentralization, the access of marginalized groups to power remains limited. This is contrary to the expectation that decentralization contributes to consolidating democracy.

In addressing relationships between democratic consolidation and decentralization, Diamond argued that the latter will contribute in consolidating democracy in five ways.[17] First, decentralization helps develop democratic values and skills among citizens. Second, it increases accountability, responsiveness and concerns. Third, it gives additional access to power for historically marginalized groups, thus improving representation in a democracy. Fourth, decentralization enhances checks and balances *vis-à-vis* power at the centre. Fifth and lastly, it provides opportunities for parties and factions in opposition to exercise some measures of political power.

Perhaps decentralization in itself will not automatically lead towards consolidating democracy, but in addition requires reconstructing previous democratic experiences. As Haynes has pointed out,[18] in order to consolidate democracy it is necessary to construct or reconstruct (if there has been a previous democratic experience) core political institutions. This means reconstructing institutions like elections, electoral rules, political parties, political leadership, intra-party alliances and legislature. In the case of the Philippines, reconstruction should have the objective of reducing the dominance of political clans. A situation where the five dimensions identified by Diamond will come into play can exist when the electoral behaviour of the citizens is geared towards developing democratic values and skills that eventually facilitate representation of marginalized groups. The recent success of new entrants in local politics, where some well-entrenched political families lost their grip on local power, shows a movement towards Philippine democratic consolidation.

However, explaining successful entry of new actors into politics mediated through regular elections is left unattended in the literature. If traditional political families do fall from their long-entrenched hold on local power, the underlying analysis should focus on under what conditions this happens and how new political actors become successful in wresting local power.

Franco,[19] in studying how less-than-democratic elections could contribute to democratization under both authoritarian conditions and a clientelistic electoral regime immediately after an authoritarian regime's collapse, argued that less-than-democratic elections under an authoritarian regime could contribute to democratization if they can create a political space for a democratic opposition to emerge against authoritarian rule. Such elections primarily called to give legitimacy to the power holders are then transformed into political opportunities for the democratic opposition.

On the other hand, less-than-democratic elections under a clientelistic electoral regime can further erode authoritarian obstacles to democratization when regional (local) authoritarian élites are either divided or isolated from allies at the national level; the democratic opposition is united electorally; and there is a pre-existing alternative outreach network that enhances the political capacity of previously unrepresented groups during and between elections.[20] She further explained that a collapse of authoritarian regimes at the national level does not necessarily mean system-wide democratization. There remain authoritarian enclaves in the provinces and municipalities that hamper the conduct of competitive, free and fair elections at the local level. Such situations undermine consolidation of democracy. Franco cited examples of countries in Latin America where, just like the Philippines, competitive national elections did not mean the end of authoritarian practices system-wide. In these countries, local elections are controlled by local bosses who have no qualms about employing intimidation, fraud and violence.

Franco clarified in the literature what the conditions are surrounding the collapse of regional authoritarian enclaves under a clientelistic electoral regime. However, she assumed that the democratic opposition at the local level (provincial and municipal) did not have links with sections of the national élite, or at least linkages with a national personality. It helps the candidate of the democratic opposition when he or she has linkages with national élites or personalities. Secondly, although Franco noted the role played by activist media in the case of Andolana in the Second Congressional District of North Cotabato province during the 1987 elections, whose activist reporting prevented the local authoritarian élite from rigging the outcome of the elections, she failed to highlight the media's role as among the conditions that can help new political actors. Activist media[21] that regularly broadcast or publish developments/updates regarding a local electoral contest not only provide information to grassroots supporters of the candidate from the democratic opposition, so that these supporters can mobilize and deploy in the canvassing area if need be; more importantly, activist media make the candidate of a tra-

ditional political clan think twice before employing intimidation, violence and/or cheating to influence election outcomes.

This chapter validates the significance of the three conditions identified by Franco. Yet it also argues that their mere presence is insufficient to cause the collapse of entrenched political families, who most of the time hold no misgivings about employing authoritarian practices. As the following discussions will show, it is likewise necessary for the candidate of a democratic opposition to have linkages to a section of the national élite, and for the media to play an activist role instead of just delivering news and information to the people.

The case of Governor Grace Padaca in Isabela

The province of Isabela is located in the north of the Philippines, and is the second-largest province in terms of land area. It is primarily an agricultural province, dubbed the "rice granary of the north" since it is one of the country's top rice-producing provinces. Isabela has an estimated population of 1.4 million inhabitants. It is subdivided into 34 municipalities and three cities, with Ilagan City as its provincial capital.

For more than 30 years Isabela province was under the control of the Dy family. This dynasty started when the patriarch of the family, Faustino Dy Sr, was elected provincial governor in 1969. Immediately preceding that, he served as Cauayan municipal mayor for four years. After 1969 Faustino Dy Sr went on to serve as governor until 1986, when the Marcos dictatorship was toppled. A well-known supporter of the dictatorship, Dy was briefly replaced by an officer-in-charge in 1986 when President Corazon Aquino succeeded Marcos. At that time, President Aquino tried to dismantle the control of influential political families, particularly those identified with Marcos. But Faustino Dy Sr was soon re-elected in the 1988 local elections right after the ratification of the new Philippine constitution. He then served until 1992, and later asked his son Benjamin Dy to replace him. In 1993 Faustino Dy Sr died, but Benjamin continued the control of the family in the province. Benjamin served for nine straight years until he was forced to pass on the governorship to his half-brother Faustino Dy Jr in 2001, because he was not qualified to run for yet another term.[22]

Faustino Dy Jr himself was not a political neophyte when he ran for governor in 2001. He had represented the second district of the province in the House of Representatives for three terms, or a total of nine years. Thus practically all members of the Dy family took turns in controlling the provincial government. Other members of the Dy clan have also

Table 10.1 Dy power line

Family member	Position/post	Period
Faustino Dy Sr	Cauayan mayor	1965–1969
	Provincial governor	1969–1986; 1988–1992
Benjamin Dy	Provincial governor	1992–2001
Faustino Dy Jr	Representative, 2nd District	1992–2001
	Provincial governor	2001–2004
Faustino "Boogie" Dy III	Cauayan mayor	1999–2001
	Representative, 3rd District	2001–present
Ceasar Dy	Cauayan mayor	2001–present
Napoleon Dy	Alicia mayor	2001–present

Source: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.

contested, and up until now are occupying, other local positions (Table 10.1). The family seem unsatisfied with their hold of the governorship and have recently actively attempted to expand their control by contesting other legislative and municipal positions. The Dy family are so strong and influential that all attempts to go against them in the past have failed. Usually, after elections, the losing challengers are effectively neutralized.[23]

During the 2001 elections all candidates from the Dy clan ran unopposed, except in the third legislative district where broadcaster Ma. Cielo "Grace" Padaca challenged Faustino "Boogie" Dy III. Knowing full well that she was up against a political Goliath, Padaca said that she decided run "merely to challenge the unwritten rule set by the Dy family that their members should run unopposed in any position".[24] She felt that given the abuses of the family, their desired seats should not be handed to them on a silver platter. She further explained that running against the Dy clan was her way of doing something about the death of democracy in Isabela, which, as a radio commentator, she had long been criticizing.[25] Grace Padaca worked for local radio station DZNC Bombo Radio for 14 years hosting public affairs programmes like "*Sa Totoo Lang*" ("Only the Truth") and "Bombo Radio Bigtime", where she wrote a daily five-minute editorial on social and governance issues.

Padaca lost that election, although it was a highly contested victory for Faustino "Boogie" Dy III. In the counting of votes, initially Padaca was winning in five of the seven municipalities and one city comprising the legislative district, but the final tally showed her losing by 1,285 votes. She then protested the result with the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal (HRET), alleging that Dy manipulated the final outcome. She protested some 151 ballot boxes. But in order to distract her, Boogie Dy filed a counter-protest questioning the results for the entire 812 pre-

cincts constituting the legislative district. This was a tactic used by Dy in order to pressure Padaca finally to abandon the electoral protest. Dy knew that Padaca on her own did not have funds to finance the reopening of all ballot boxes in the district.

Electoral practices in the Philippines are complicated, not only because of the many rules but because of the tactics employed. As required by law in filing electoral protests, the protestant and the respondent both have to shoulder expenses for each ballot box that is to be reopened. The payment is to defray expenses for the labour costs needed for the revision of the votes.

The procedure of reviewing the ballots required 850,000 Philippine pesos (about US$18,000), an amount that Padaca did not have. And so she launched an innovative fundraising effort to support her protest. She initiated what she called an "Adopt A Ballot Box" campaign where she sent letters to people she knew asking them to donate 1,000 pesos. She wrote to people in Isabela and outside the province whom she believed to be persons of good will. One of them was the late Enrique Zobel, who was one of the Philippines' richest people.[26] To her surprise, most people responded and poured in funds. She was able to raise a total of 650,000 pesos to sustain her case against Dy.

In the revision of votes, it was indeed found that the questioned certificate of canvass (CoC) and statement of votes (SoV) from Angadanan town were fraudulent, falsified and padded. There was also evidence of post-election fraud where original ballots were removed and replaced with spurious ones that had Dy's name.[27] The final decision on the protest came after two-and-a-half years, with Boogie Dy declared winner by a mere 48 votes. However, supporters of Padaca insist that she would have won the case had the HRET counted the ballots where the name "Grace" was written.[28] Although Padaca was unsuccessful in 2001, her campaign struck a responsive chord among Isabela voters that proved helpful in her next electoral battle with the Dy.

The 2004 and 2007 gubernatorial elections

Grace Padaca got her revenge in the 2004 elections, when she and then incumbent Governor Faustino Dy Jr squared off. In that year, elections were held for national positions (like president, vice-president and senators), as well as for local positions (legislative district representative, provincial governor, vice-governor, provincial board members, municipal/city mayors and vice-mayors and municipal/city councillors). For the position of provincial governor, Dy was seeking re-election and only Padaca was considered to be a serious challenger.[29] According to Dy's political operators, the governor was confident that he would easily defeat Padaca,

whom he claimed did not have sufficient machinery, money or influence.[30] Besides, it was said that Faustino Dy Jr had performed well in delivering needed services to his constituents.

Padaca decided to run again in 2004 because the people clamoured for change. In an earlier media interview, she recalled her experience from the 2001 election and said that the greatest pressure for her came when people told her to continue fighting because they were also fighting for her. Furthermore, Padaca was encouraged by local political and business élites in the province who had also tried to challenge the Dys but were unsuccessful. The role and contributions of these élites to Padaca's electoral victory will be discussed later. However, suffice to note at this point that disunity among the local élites contributed to defeating Faustino Dy Jr. In one media article, Padaca was quoted as saying that "the people of Isabela were not given a chance to choose, instead we were just being made to perfunctorily write their names [meaning the name of Dy] in the ballot to legitimize their positions. It came to a point that even a dog can win in an election for as long as it is supported by the Dy family, a proof of their power."[31]

What became a handy advantage for Padaca was her clean reputation as a broadcaster. She refused bribes and returned gifts, even at Christmas.[32] For this reason she was also the candidate of different sectors, like the peasants, the middle class and the Church. She was regarded by these sectors as someone who could give the people an alternative. She was able to offset her lack of resources by tapping different groups in her campaign. Padaca went on to win as governor with a margin of more than 44,292 votes over her rival.

In the 2007 election she repeated her victory, this time against Benjamin Dy, the former governor from 1992–2001. This was her second victory over the Dy political clan. Although her winning margin for the 2007 election was lower compared to 2004, it is useful to look into what the conditions were that allowed her firstly to wrest control of the province from the Dy family in 2004, and then later sustain this electoral victory in 2007.

The local élites

Isabela has at least six big political families, with the Dys being the most dominant. They are all traditionally active in local politics. While in some periods in history these families became rivals, for the last three decades they somehow managed to divide the positions among themselves. The Dys would get the governor and third district representative; the Albanos would represent the first district; the Uys would get the second district or

vice-governor positions; and alternately the Abaya, Miranda and Aggabao families would represent the fourth district. Usually these families would align with one another depending on their own political interest. In the 2004 election Faustino Dy Jr was supported by the Aggabao and Albano families, while the Uy and Miranda families supported Padaca. The Abaya family were politically inactive in 2004 and 2007 after their patriarch Antonio Abaya died.

In terms of party affiliation, Faustino Dy Jr was the president of the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), a party founded by businessman and very close Marcos associate Danding Cojuangco. Cojuangco chairs the San Miguel Corporation, the largest food conglomerate in Southeast Asia. The Albano family are a member of Lakas-Christian-Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD). Part of the alliance of the Dy and Albano families is the formal alliance between the NPC and Lakas-CMD at the national level.

Meanwhile Representative Edwin Uy of the second district is also a member of Lakas-CMD, but because the party alliance is loose and more directed by the presidential contest, Uy opted to support Grace Padaca for governor (Table 10.2). Primarily, however, the Uys are rivals of the Dys in the second district – one reason why the coalition of parties at the national level was not observed at the local level. This is an indication of how weak political parties are in the Philippines.

The Aggabao family are rivals of the Mirandas in the fourth district, not to mention the Agbayani family. Aggabaos are also members of the NPC, while the Mirandas are with the Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP, the Party of the Filipino Masses). The Aggabaos supported Dy, while the Mirandas went for Padaca. Thus, the alignment of the local political élites was such that the Dy-Albano-Aggabao families were on one side with the Uy-Miranda alliance on the other. While Dy was the only élite candidate for governor, not all the ruling political élites in the province were united behind his candidacy.

Because 2004 was also the year of a presidential election, alignment with national élites was all the more important. Through these alignments, resources can be accessed and networks expanded. Dy, as a member of the NPC, supported President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who was running for her own full six-year term. She had formed the K4 coalition composed of half of the NPC, Lakas-CMD, the Liberal Party (LP) and Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (PDSP, the Democratic Socialist Party of the Philippines). On the other hand, Padaca was running under the smaller Aksyon Demokratiko (Democratic Action) party whose presidential standard bearer was former senator Raul Roco. Early on, Roco was leading in presidential surveys, but in the middle of his

Table 10.2 Padaca in 2004 versus 2007

	2004	2007
Political party affiliation	Aksyon Demokratiko	Liberal Party (Lakas provided support later)
Allied section of national élite	Former senator and presidential candidate Raul Roco Enrique Zobel de Ayala	Senate President Franklin Drilon Liberal Party
Allies from local political élite	Uy (Representative Edwin Uy) Miranda (Representative Anthony Miranda)	Uy (Representative Edwin Uy) Miranda (Representative Anthony Miranda) Albano (Representative Rodolfo Albano Jr)
Political machinery	Volunteers from CSO and cause-oriented groups: party-list campaign structure, Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Akbayan Catholic Church organizations: CFC and Basic Christian Communities; active endorsement from Bishop Utleg Protestant Church organizations DAGAMI Aksyon Demokratiko	Volunteers from CSO and cause-oriented groups: party-list campaign structure, Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Akbayan Catholic Church organizations: CFC; no active endorsement from Bishop Utleg, instead issued only a pastoral letter advising Catholics on how to choose Protestant Church organizations DAGAMI Liberal Party
Winning margin	44,292 votes	17,007 votes
Date of proclamation	14 June 2004	28 June 2007

campaign lost momentum and strategy. He finished fourth among the five presidential candidates. Nonetheless, the linkage of local candidates to national élites was critical in the canvassing of votes and proclamation of winners.

Elections in the Philippines are not finished when voters cast their ballots. Rather, they continue with the canvassing phase and the proclamation of winners. Canvassing of votes begins at the precinct level and is then aggregated at the town/city level and later the provincial level, until the Commission of Elections (COMELEC) through the Provincial Board of Canvassers (PBOC) proclaims the winners for local positions. For national positions, provincial tallies are brought to Manila. Provin-

cial tallies for senatorial positions go to COMELEC's Central Office in Manila, while for presidential and vice-presidential positions tallies go to the Congress of the Philippines.

It took more than a month before Grace Padaca was finally proclaimed as the winner in the 2004 elections. The Dy camp successfully delayed the canvassing of votes by filing a series of pre-proclamation cases. The PBOC must provide due process by setting a hearing and promulgating a decision. This was further delayed when Dy appealed the PBOC decision to COMELEC's Central Office in Manila.

There were also attempts to manipulate the election outcome. However, the vigilance of Padaca's supporters, who took turns in coming to the capitol compound where the canvassing was held, prevented execution of any special operations by the Dy camp. Whatever plans they might have had, their political operators were themselves very careless in executing the plans. For example, in a desire to sabotage the election in the municipality of Jones, the COMELEC office was burned a week after elections in the hope that without the municipal certificate of canvass, the election would be declared a failure. Fortunately, the local COMELEC registrar had taken the CoC home with him, and was able to deliver it to the provincial capital the following day.[33] Another attempt to disrupt the result occurred while the canvassing was ongoing in the provincial gymnasium at the capitol compound. Perpetrators allegedly linked with the Dys made a mistake by cutting off the electricity in the capitol building instead of the adjacent gymnasium where the actual canvassing was being done. This prompted the supporters of Padaca, who anticipated electoral fraud, to run to the gymnasium and safeguard the ballot boxes.[34]

For the 2007 local elections Governor Grace Padaca ran under the LP headed by then Senate President Franklin Drilon. She transferred to the LP after Raul Roco died and his Aksyon Demokratiko party was weakened. It was Padaca's third-round bout with the Dys, only that this time around her opponent was former governor Benjamin Dy. Compared with Faustino Jr, Benjamin is said to be more connected with voters, especially the *masa* (common people). He is more of a populist in terms of how he managed the provincial government compared to Faustino Jr, who brought with him his ethos and experiences as a businessman. It is said that Faustino Jr would apply business indicators, such as return on investment or net present value, before approving a project.[35] Furthermore, Benjamin, having served as governor for nine years (1992–2001), was considered a more formidable opponent than his brother Faustino Jr overall.

The local élite alignment had also changed leading into the 2007 election. The Albano, Uy and Miranda families were now supporting Padaca,

while only the Aggabao family supported Dy. The Albano family shifted to Padaca at the last minute after they felt betrayed by the Dys in an earlier agreement. A few months before the election period, the Dy and Albano families made a unity pact where Tonypet Albano would not run for governor, but instead support the attempt of Faustino Jr to reclaim his old post. Instead, it was Benjamin Dy and not Faustino Jr who filed a certificate of candidacy just minutes before the deadline. Of course, this substitution did not sit well with the Albanos, who thus lent their political machinery to Padaca and actively campaigned for her. How the realignment assisted Grace Padaca will be discussed in the next section.

In terms of political party affiliation, Benjamin Dy was with the NPC against Padaca of the LP (Table 10.2). The 2007 election was a local election, except for 12 senators who had a national constituency. A coalition of parties at the national level was again loosely divided between the Genuine Opposition (GO) and Team Unity. GO included half the LP (the Drilon wing), half of the NPC, PDP-Laban and the PMP. Team Unity on the other hand represented the administration, which included the other half of the LP (the Atienza wing), half of the NPC, Lakas-CMD, Kampi and the PDSP. For the opposition, the LP was declared by COMELEC as the dominant opposition party, allowing it to receive the sixth copy of the CoCs from COMELEC, while Lakas-CMD was the dominant majority party, entitling it to receive the fifth copy of the CoCs.

Political clans and Padaca's victory

Franco earlier concluded that a division among local élites or the denial of access to national élites advantages candidates from the democratic opposition. One can partly observe this situation in the case of Isabela, where the local élites were supporting two different candidates. But exactly how did the support from sections of the local élite boost the new political actor from the democratic opposition? Some argue that the success of Grace Padaca is mainly because of the support from Uy-Miranda in 2004 and Uy-Miranda-Albano in 2007. Yet to what extent is this true?

Election data from the 2004 and 2007 elections have been gathered for this purpose. The IPD Political Mapping (Polmap) Database was maximized for 2004 data since elections returns and CoCs could no longer be retrieved from COMELEC. The 2007 election figures gathered were from the provincial COMELEC office and the provincial Namfrel Quick Count.

From the election outcome data in 2004, we observe that Padaca has greater vote share in more towns located in Districts 2 and 4, where the Uy and Miranda families are based, respectively. In District 2, for exam-

ple, out of the 11 municipalities Padaca had a greater share of votes compared to Faustino Dy Jr; while in District 4 she had more votes in four of the seven municipalities (Santiago City was excluded since voters there do not vote for provincial-level officials). In District 1 where the Albano clan is based and District 3 where the Dy family has control, Padaca garnered more votes than Dy in fewer towns. Out of the 10 towns in District 1, Padaca had the upper hand in only three, while in District 3 she received more votes in five of the eight municipalities in that district.

This cursory analysis, however, should be nuanced, given that 2004 data from the IPD Polmap are not as robust as those gathered for the 2007 election. The 2004 data are incomplete. The IPD data only cover 368,947 votes of the total provincial turnout of votes cast, or 76 per cent of the total turnout (noting again that Santiago City voters do not vote for governor). The remaining 24 per cent (a total of 117,070) is significant, in that it goes well beyond Padaca's winning margin in that election. Secondly, the IPD data in four key towns are missing, namely Ilagan City, Santa Maria, San Mariano and Jones. The data from Ilagan City are critical, given that it was to be so controversial in the 2007 election contest.

Of special interest for us is to assess the effect of the shift of Albano from Dy in 2004 to Padaca in 2007. In spite of some of the limitations in the 2004 data, one can argue that Albano's support was critical in Padaca's 2007 victory. Using only the 2007 election outcome (Table 10.3) we notice that Padaca has a greater share of votes (vote percentage from actual turnout) in all 10 towns in District 1, resulting in a district-wide share of 57 per cent against the 34 per cent share of Benjamin Dy. Incomplete IPD Polmap data show her getting more votes in only three towns during the 2004 elections.

Padaca's success in District 1 is considered critical, since she lost much support in District 2 in spite of endorsement from her ally Representative Edwin Uy. According to local political observers, Uy actively campaigned for Grace Padaca in 2007, something he did not need to do in 2004.[36] Uy also requested his political operators to assist Padaca in her campaign.

Linkages with national *élites*

How did the connection with national élites help in the candidacy of local candidates? For both elections, Dy and Padaca had connections with members of the national élite. The Dys had the support of the Filipino president and one of the most influential businessmen in the country. Padaca meanwhile had support from Senator Raul Roco and future LP President Franklin Drilon. Although Padaca's connection with sections of

Table 10.3 Vote share of Padaca and Dy in District 1, 2007

Town/District	Padaca votes	Dy votes	Actual voter turnout	Padaca votes/ actual turnout	Dy votes/ actual turnout
Cabagan	9,124	4,525	15,225	0.60	0.30
Delfin Albano	8,017	1,897	11,260	0.71	0.17
Divilacan	766	778	1,868	0.41	0.42
Ilagan	30,484	24,945	47,037	0.65	0.53
Maconacon	1,179	256	1,559	0.76	0.16
Palanan	2,312	1,755	5,672	0.41	0.31
San Pablo	4,536	2,864	9,183	0.49	0.31
Sta Maria	4,261	1,867	7,410	0.58	0.25
Sto. Tomas	5,931	945	8,529	0.70	0.11
Tumauini	6,197	3,244	20,772	0.30	0.16
District/Total	72,807	43,076	128,515	0.57	0.34

Source: Comelec Provincial Certificate of Canvass and Namfrel Operation Quick Count Report.

the national élites was relatively smaller, one can conclude it assisted in her victory.

When the canvassing process was delayed in 2004, the presidential candidate Raul Roco travelled to Isabela to give direct support to his party ally Grace Padaca. His visit generated additional national media attention on the case, in which the proclaiming of a winning governor was taking a long time. Finally, after a long wait, Grace Padaca was proclaimed the winner on 14 June 2004, as the COMELEC *en banc* dismissed the remaining issues raised by Faustino Dy Jr. In interviews for this chapter, it was revealed that Roco, before conceding to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in the presidential contest, had specifically asked the president to request COMELEC to proclaim Padaca as the winner.[37] Although COMELEC is supposed to be independent from the president, information like this is not surprising given that democratic institutions in the Philippines are generally weak.

Delays in proclaiming the winning governor were repeated in 2007. Again it took six weeks before Padaca was proclaimed to have won re-election. Similar issues were raised in the PBOC and later the COMELEC *en banc* by the Dy camp. The only difference in 2007 was in the areas where Padaca was alleged to have committed fraud – District 1 instead of District 2. The Dy camp formally filed pre-proclamation complaints protesting the CoCs in the towns of Ilagan, Tumaini and Echague. Dy asked COMELEC to declare the failure of the election in these towns.

It was during this delay in the canvassing and proclamation that the LP held a press conference in Manila urging COMELEC to dismiss the petition to declare the failure of the elections in District 1. Drilon chided the complaint because the same election returns (CoCs) that were petitioned for exclusion in the canvassing were the ones used by COMELEC in proclaiming Rodolfo Albano Jr as the duly elected district representative. The LP asked: "while the election returns were valid in so far as Congressmen Albano and the vice governor are concerned, why did it became questionable when it came to Governor Padaca?"[38]

In one instance, Padaca herself came to Manila to exert pressure upon COMELEC to resolve the issues raised against her proclamation. She also feared that President Arroyo might step in and use her influence[39] – an understandable fear since Governor Padaca is a member of the opposition LP while Dy enjoys the president's support. However, a balancing factor for Padaca was the fact that the national and local media were continuously reporting developments in her electoral battles. Finally, on 28 June 2007, Padaca was proclaimed the winner. She received 235,128 votes, 17,007 more than Dy's 220,121 votes.

The united opposition

A second condition necessary for the collapse of traditional political clans is that a democratic opposition should be united in elections. In this case there was unity within the ranks of the broad democratic opposition. For the first time in four decades a united opposition emerged in Isabela, all rallying behind the candidacy of Grace Padaca. The democratic opposition was not limited to the organized left and progressive groups, but also comprised some local élites, business people and people from the progressive party list, the religious sector and sectoral groups. Representative Edwin Uy of Lakas-CMD, Pempe Miranda of the PMP and party-list Akbayan, Bayan Muna, Gabriela and Anakpawis were all part of the united opposition.

Sectoral groups included peasants belonging to the Danggayan Ti Mannalon Dagiti Isabela or DAGAMI (a peasant federation), youth volunteers and students, the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations which lent support to her candidacy. DAGAMI is said to be strong in the forested areas of the province and is organizationally present in more than half the 37 towns and cities of the province. In terms of mobilizing capacity, it was observed that DAGAMI could mobilize as many as 2,000 farmers, clearly proving it to be a strong organization.

For many business people, the continuing reign of the Dys would further deprive them of economic opportunities. Most of the businesses in

the province are controlled by either the Dy family or their allies. For example, the distribution of San Miguel products, from beer to soft drinks, poultry and even dairy products, across the entire region is in the hands of the Dy family. They are also involved in local hotels and inns (Dy owns the Isabela Hotel), aside from controlling the trucking services that bring thousands of tonnes of rice and corn out of Isabela and to Manila and Bulacan. For members of the NPC, Danding Cojuangco had an ingenious way of keeping the loyalty of local political families by giving them franchises to distribute San Miguel products across the provinces.

The masses were obviously for Padaca, too. The peasants were complaining of rampant land grabbing during the reign of Governor Faustino Dy Jr when he introduced contract growing of cassava to be supplied to San Miguel Corporation. The targeted area, as much as 220,000 hectares, affected the towns of Mallig, Quezon, Quirino, San Mariano and Benito Soliven among others, which traditionally grow rice and corn. Because of the opposition of farmers, the actual area planted with cassava did not reach a thousand hectares and the project failed to take off, since Dy lost in the election and was removed from the provincial capital.

Other issues were raised against the Dy clan. They were accused of tolerating logging even though there was a logging ban in the whole Cagayan Valley region. Also Governor Dy approved mining operations, for which he was heavily criticized by the people and the bishop of Ilagan diocese. On top of it all was the unabated illegal numbers game that continued to be played in the province, despite serious campaign by the Church to get rid of it.

Because of the broad support Padaca was getting from organized peasants and other sectors, one issue raised against her is the support given by the New People's Army (NPA), the armed group of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Her opponent Faustino Dy Jr in one media television interview reasoned that "what happened was, this Ms Padaca is from the media and she is being used by the NPA. She is the candidate of the NPA and of the church."[40] Padaca denied that she was being used by the NPA. In fact, she said that in the 2001 campaign, when the NPA-CPP expressed support for her, she berated them for their silence given the cheating that was done by the Dys throughout her campaign, which she deplored.

During the gubernatorial contests in 2004 and 2007 the NPA indeed supported Padaca, but so did the rest of Isabela. Her wide margin reflects a much broader-based support than the NPA could muster. Akbayan, a party list critical of the CPP-NPA, backed Padaca in the 2001, 2004 and 2007 elections. The late Rene Jarque, a former military officer who advised Grace Padaca in her campaign in 2004, explained it succinctly: "the

NPA knew the masses were supporting Grace but it is preposterous to claim that she struck a deal with them".[41]

Alternative outreach networks

Isabela has experienced years of community organizing of economic and social programmes, most of which has been developed by the local Catholic Church, Protestant Christian groups and development-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Protestant churches had their own parish organizing. Depending on their sect, they formed organizations for children, youth and adults. Similar to the Catholics, formations of Protestants were primarily to facilitate church-related activities and programmes, but in the process they developed leadership among the lay people. Such experiences in church organizing would pave the way for easier mobilization of the parishioners and church members in activities that were political, including those aimed at protecting and safeguarding people's right to vote.

Developmental NGOs had their own organizing communities working on issues, from relief during disasters to promotion of livelihood projects and sanitation, health and cleanliness projects, plus issues like illegal logging, mining, *jueteng* and agrarian reform. Historically, Isabela had many episodes where people resisted the dominance and abuse of the élites. One example is in 1979 where tens of thousands of peasant Isabelinos from northern and central Isabela, especially from the two big plantations of Hacienda Isabel and Hacienda San Antonio, launched mass actions against the Dy-Cojuangco (Danding) monopoly that was turning 14,000 hectares of haciendas into an agri-business empire. Two years later these peasants showed disgust against Dy-Cojuangco when they boycotted the presidential elections and instead marched into the provincial capital. Another example is the Church-led environmental movements called Cagayan Anti-Logging Movement and Save Sierra Madre Movement, which exposed the control of the Dys in logging and the wanton destruction of forests and natural resources.[42]

Back in 1992 the Catholic Church capitalized on such varied organizing experiences when the diocese of Ilagan organized local chapters of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV). The PPCRV was organized to assist voters on the day of the elections by guiding them to where their precincts are located and helping them find their names on voter lists, etc. The PPCRV also reports observations of election fraud like vote buying, cheating and voter disenfranchisement. In Isabela the PPCRV has continued its work up until the last election. After the ballots are cast during the canvassing phase, the PPCRV coordinates with the

National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) in protecting the sanctity of the will of the people. Namfrel is the accredited citizens' watchdog of COMELEC.

Specifically, how did the Catholic Church help Padaca? In the interest of non-partisanship – a mandate required of the PPCRV – the Church has dissuaded the PPCRV from openly campaigning for Padaca. Most parishioners followed the Church's call for non-partisanship, but some PPCRV members discreetly supported Padaca. Besides, the PPCRV and Namfrel in most instances have common memberships.

Obviously, the mere presence of the PPCRV indirectly favoured Padaca, i.e. its presence in the precincts during the voting and later in the canvassing prevented any resort to tactics of electoral fraud. The diocese of Ilagan chose not to endorse a candidate, but Bishop Utleg issued a pastoral letter advising his members on the criteria by which to vote for governor. In the pastoral letter, the Church told the people not to vote for candidates involved in land grabbing, supporting mining and suspected of protecting *jueteng* lords. Although the Church did not directly endorse Grace Padaca, the fact that the pastoral letter enumerated the very issues raised against Faustino Dy Jr served as an indirect endorsement of her candidacy.

The organizations and groups established by NGOs that have worked with people in communities became available networks to tap into for the electoral campaigns. The DAGAMI peasant federation, for example, increased the people's awareness of economic and social issues in many towns in the province, eventually making it easy to mobilize them in electoral advocacy. There are likewise a number of women's and indigenous peoples' federations.

In addition to these sectoral organizations are the party-list groups supportive of Padaca. These are Akbayan, Bayan Muna, AnakPawis and Gabriela, which all have their respective provincial and municipal chapters that continuously recruited new members from the grassroots level. Like the formations organized by NGOs, the local chapters of the party-list groups also campaigned for Padaca. One must note that it is the party-list local chapters which form the backbone of campaign machineries during elections.

New political actors like Padaca who do not have the advantage of their own political machinery down to the village level need assistance from existing community-based organizations. These organizations informed people about political issues, including what values and characteristics of candidates they should support. Padaca gathered broad support from different sectors whose organizations campaigned for her. Thus, aside from the help local élites provided, alternative networks of community-based organizations contributed to her electoral victories.

Activist media

The case of Grace Padaca in Isabela in 2004 and 2007 illustrates the crucial role played by an activist media. Activist media practitioners are not limited to their "traditional roles" of being mere observers and reporters of events, but play activist roles as watchdogs and participants in the electoral process.[43]

Padaca's battle with Dy was like the classic David versus Goliath fight – the Goliath being the new patriarch of the Dy political clan who had more than three decades of political control in the province behind him, not to mention large physical and financial resources at his disposal. The former is regarded as David because of her disadvantage in terms of resources, political machinery and influence with ruling national élites. It was no wonder, then, that their fight captured wide local and national media attention.

The major daily newspapers like the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and the *Philippine Star* had almost daily news articles on the developments in the Isabela electoral contest. In the 2007 electoral fight the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* even had an editorial entitled "Proclaiming Grace".[44] News magazines like *Newsbreak* and the web-based Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism also came up with several interesting articles on the Dy-Padaca fight, while in Isabela local broadcast media kept people informed of progress in the contest.

Back in 2004, the visit of then presidential candidate Raul Roco during the stand-off in the canvassing of votes at the provincial gymnasium boosted the media's attention on the contest. With journalists accompanying Roco, the news spread to a broader public, which made people throughout the country aware of the issue. The same was true in 2007 when the LP held a press conference complaining about the unnecessary delay in Padaca's proclamation.

So much media attention did not come without repercussions, though. On the eve of election day in 2004, COMELEC ordered the local Bombo Radio station to close down. It was then Commissioners Rufino Javier and Virgilio Garcillano[45] who signed the closure order, alleging that the radio station was engaged in partisan campaigning. Actually, this was the third time Bombo Radio had been closed down that year, ostensibly because it failed to get a business permit in Cauayan City, where Dy's brother Caesar Dy was and continues to be the city mayor.

Of course Padaca, with 14 years' experience as a broadcaster herself, naturally had the support of many of her former colleagues. However, she still had to achieve a significant feat to wrest local control from an enduring and well-entrenched political dynasty. With a highly aware public, the people in general were very vigilant in both the 2004 and 2007

elections – ready to mobilize to safeguard the popular will when necessary. They showed this when they took turns participating in a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week vigil at the capitol grounds, until Padaca was finally proclaimed winner.

Summary and conclusions

While Philippine local politics is largely dominated by political clans and dynasties, there are significant numbers of new actors entering from outside the traditional political families. As the case of Governor Grace Padaca in Isabela shows, long-enduring political clans do fall. They can lose elections and be dislodged from their positions of advantage. In both the 2004 and 2007 elections, a number of traditional political families lost their monopolies on local power. Such developments provide some hope for greater democratic consolidation as citizens develop their democratic values and broader representation is enabled.

But under what conditions do political clans fall, and what factors helped the successful new actors? Franco,[46] studying the impact of less-than-democratic elections in the democratization of a polity system-wide, identified three features: firstly, that the local élite is either divided or denied access to national-level élites; secondly, that the democratic opposition is united at an election behind a single candidate; and thirdly, that there is a pre-existing alternative outreach network that enhances the political capacity of previously unrepresented groups during and between elections. According to Franco, with these conditions satisfied, regional authoritarian enclaves can fall.

The case in Isabela, however, finds these explanations to be insufficient. Although one can validate the importance of two conditions, i.e. the electoral unity of the democratic opposition and the presence of alternative outreach networks, it is not enough that local élites are not united or denied access to national élites. In his loss in 2004, Faustino Dy Jr was the candidate of large sections of the local élite and had access to national élites. He was the president of the NPC, founded by businessman Danding Cojuangco. The NPC is also part of the K4 coalition of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Yet Faustino Dy Jr lost the election. What we note is that Grace Padaca, the lone candidate of the united opposition, also has linkages to a section of the national-level élites. She ran under Aksyon Demokratiko, with support from the late Raul Roco. According to interviews, Roco, before conceding defeat to President Arroyo in the 2004 presidential election, specifically requested that Padaca be proclaimed the winner in her contest, because she was winning by a wide margin anyway.

Secondly, the vigilant role of the media has to date been overlooked. In an electoral contest where fraud and manipulation remain prevalent, not to mention physical harassment, intimidation and violence, the vigilance of the people in general and more specifically that of the supporters of the democratic opposition's candidate combined with the media playing an activist and watchdog role to help prevent attempted fraud and manipulation. Incumbent forces therefore had to think twice about manipulating the system because the people and media were watching.

In addition, it is beneficial to new political actors when candidates from traditional political families are too confident in their ability to continue to hold local power. Faustino Dy Jr miscalculated the people's sentiment when he dismissed the chances of Padaca winning over him. When he realized that he would lose, his operators were not ready to implement a smooth, let alone a successful, cheating operation. Perhaps because of haste and so much pressure, the hired operators committed big blunders and as a consequence their cheating attempts became easily detectable. Supporters of Padaca were smart enough to anticipate that cheating would occur.

This case study shows how incoming politicians from non-established political families can maximize opportunities presented by regular elections. The 2010 local elections will again take place simultaneously with the 2010 Philippine presidential elections, similar to when Padaca first won in 2004. It is expected that divisions within the ranks of national élites will influence alignment of local élites in the provinces. New political actors will firstly have to study critically the political environment where they will contest local power with political clans, and secondly strategically utilize linkages with sections of national élites while generating broad support from the citizenry and organized groups. New political actors should also encourage the media not to be partisans, but rather actively to safeguard the popular will.

When conditions to break local power monopolies are maximized, there will be more new faces in Filipino politics. The people, by and large, are already demanding better governance from their leaders, which can (and should) eventually lead to strengthening of democratic institutions. Aside from Padaca, an equally important electoral victory in 2007 was that of Catholic priest and now governor of Pampanga, Father Ed Panlilio. He fought against two formidable political clans in the province who had the backing of no less than President Arroyo. If the Padaca and Panlilio victories are any indication, citizens are capable of creating a new political order. The willingness of citizens to take turns guarding ballot boxes 24 hours a day while the canvassing was happening at a provincial gymnasium shows what Diamond[47] pointed out to be people's own development of democratic values and skills. It is precisely these kinds of

citizens who are willing to protect their voting rights, ensuring that duly elected representatives of the people obtain their rightful mandate.

Notes

1. President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law on 21 September 1972; it was lifted in 1981. Amando Doronilla would argue, however, that patron-client relations shifted to patronage by the paternalistic state during martial law. Doronilla, Amando (1985) "The Transformation of Patron-Client Relation and its Political Consequences in Post-war Philippines", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16(1), pp. 99–117.
2. Under the 1987 Philippine constitution, 20 per cent of the House of Representatives is reserved for party-list representatives from marginalized and under-represented sectors. They are elected nationally.
3. Lande, Carl (1965) *Leaders, Factions and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
4. Sidel, John T. (1999) *Capital, Coercion and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
5. Hutchcroft, Paul D. (1991) "Oligarchs and Cronies in the Philippine State: The Politics of Patrimonial Plunder", *World Politics* 43(3), pp. 414–450; Hutchcroft, Paul and Joel Rocamora (2003) "Strong Demands and Weak Institutions: The Origin and Evolution of the Democratic Deficit in the Philippines", *Journal of East Asian Studies* 3, pp. 259–292.
6. Coronel, Sheila, Yvonne Chua, Luz Rimban and Booma Cruz (2003) *The Rulemakers: How the Wealthy and Well-born Dominate Congress*. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
7. Igarashi, Seiichi (2008) "The Dilemma of Democratic Consolidation in the Philippines: The Contested Role of Civic Organizations in Electoral Governance", *Philippine Political Science Journal* 29(52), pp. 79–116, at p. 82.
8. Diamond, Larry (1999) *Developing Democracy Toward Consolidation.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
9. Cuarteros, Gladstone (2007) "Political Clans Increase Monopoly of Local Power", 27 May, available at www.ipd.org.ph.
10. Datinguinoo, Vinia and Avigail Olarte (2001) "Political Clans Make a Comeback", iReport, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Quezon City.
11. Cuarteros, note 9 above.
12. Teehankee, Julio (1999) "Power Bequeathed: Generational Shift and Elite Reproduction in the 11th House of Representatives", work in progress, Institute for Popular Democracy, Quezon City.
13. Coronel et al., note 6 above.
14. For more on the definition refer to Teehankee, note 12 above.
15. Guiterrez, Eric, Ildefonso C. Torrente and Noli G. Narca (1992) *All in the Family: A Study of Elites and Power Relations in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, p. 11.
16. Ibid.; Guiterrez, Eric (1994) *The Ties That Bind: A Guide to Family, Business and Other Interest in the Ninth House of Representatives*. Pasig: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
17. Diamond, note 8 above.
18. Haynes, Jeff (2001) *Democracy in the Developing World: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 41.
19. Franco, Jennifer (2000) *Campaigning for Democracy: Grassroots Citizenship Movements, Less-than-Democratic Elections and Regime Transition in the Philippines.* Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy.

20. Ibid., p. 5.
21. Marbella, Winston (2007) "Media Played Activist Role in Election Victories", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 17 June.
22. The 1987 Philippine constitution only allows three terms for local positions. A term is three years. Any official who has served three consecutive terms is not permitted to run again, but can make a comeback after three years.
23. Grace Padaca said this during an interview with the media, recalling that in 1995 Silvestre Bello III (a former solicitor-general under President Fidel Ramos) ran against the Dys but eventually joined the Dy camp. Castaneda, Dabet (2004) "The Spark that Crippled a Dynasty", *Bulatlat* 4(17), 30 May–5 June, available at www.bulatlat.com/news/4-17/4-17-dynasty.html.
24. Holifena, Chay (ed.) (2006) *How To Win An Election: Lessons from the Experts*. Quezon City: Ateneo School of Government-Center for Social Policy, p. 25.
25. Ibid.
26. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Padaca.
27. Ibid.
28. A key issue in the electoral protest related to the votes "Grace" was given, since the nickname Padaca used was "Bombo Grace". The HRET ruled that these "Grace" votes could not be counted in her favour because they were not labelled as "Bombo Grace". Common sense would dictate that, because there was no other candidate named Grace in that election, those votes should have been credited to Padaca.
29. There were three other candidates, namely Charito P. Amurao, Mariano T. Barillo and Manuel L. Siquian.
30. Interview with Santiago Corpuz, September 2004.
31. *Bulatlat*, note 23 above.
32. Gloria, Glenda (2004) "One of A Kind", *Newsbreak*, 5 July.
33. Interview with Santiago Corpuz.
34. Ibid. Padaca supporters suspected that the cheating operations would be done at the capitol building since Dy had control of it, with Faustino Dy Jr being the incumbent governor.
35. Isabela under Faustino Dy Jr won a Galing-Pook award for a school building project that was lower cost in comparison to the Department of Public Works and Highways.
36. Interview with a Liberal Party member, Santiago City, 27 October 2007.
37. Interviews with Santiago Corpuz in 2004 and 2007; interview with a member of the Liberal Party in 2007.
38. See www.pinoyexchange.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-171058.html.
39. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 21 May 2007.
40. Interview with Cito Beltran over ANC, quoted in *Newsbreak*, 5 July 2004.
41. Gloria, note 32 above.
42. Garcia, Arturo P. (2004) "The Isabelinos Struggle Against Warlordism and Political Dynasty", *Bulatlat* 4(19), 13–19 June, available at www.bulatlat.com/news/4-19/4-19-warlordism.html.
43. Datinguinoo and Olarte, note 10 above.
44. *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (2007) "Proclaiming Grace", editorial, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 May.
45. Garcillano was infamous because of the "Hello Garci" scandal that broke in 2005. He was caught in a tape recording talking several times to a woman suspected to be President Arroyo discussing election results while Congress was still tabulating the results of the presidential election. Both Garcillano and Arroyo denied the allegations.
46. Franco, note 19 above.
47. Diamond, note 8 above.

11

Conclusion

Vesselin Popovski and Brendan Howe

This book illustrates that no governmental system can represent a perfect embodiment of people's power. The voice of the people, their proper representation in government, the separation of powers between legislative, executive and judicial branches, the accountability of the rulers and the transparency of the government are all well-established positive postulates, but they are always nuanced in historical and cultural specifics. Democracy has different meanings for different communities, and it is certainly not without deficiencies as a mode of ruling. Yet there seems to be little normative alternative. As Winston Churchill once said, "Democracy is the worst form of government except all other forms that have been tried from time to time."[1]

The widespread accepted concepts of democracy assume fair and free elections as a fundamental characteristic of the expression of people's will. From this derives a series of benefits, such as the promotion of human rights for all, and especially for minorities and other vulnerable groups in the general population; the entitlement to social and political participation; and the right to social welfare and to organization and mobilization. However, to have genuinely free election processes, other elements are fundamental: freedom of speech/expression, access to education and equality before the law. Elections alone do not satisfy people's expectations of democracy.

One major problem with democracy is that it can be held hostage to majoritarian rule – a party which receives 50.1 per cent of the seats in the parliament takes 100 per cent of the governmental power, and a party

Democracy in the South: Participation, the state and the people, Howe, Popovski and Notaras (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1178-0

that receives 49.9 per cent of the seats may end up with 0 per cent power. If the majority party in such a scenario does not address the aspirations of half of the population, or if it tries to deny the voice of the opposition or suppress it, democracy becomes an empty word, even if the elections had been fair and free. Democracy is not just represented by free and fair elections; there is also a crucial need for mutual respect and a mature political culture between the parties. This is often missing, particularly in countries which have long suffered under civil wars and/or dictatorial regimes.

No country in practice has ever provided a solid and unambiguously democratic model of governance. Even Britain, with its Magna Carta and Bill of Rights, and France and the United States, with 220 years of history of republican constitutionalism, have all experienced various problems with regionalism or minorities' representation. The infamous 2000 American presidential election saw the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, secure a majority of the popular vote, only to be denied victory by the vagaries of the US electoral college system and some questionable practices in Florida. In truth, US elections are regularly decided by a relatively small number of swing voters in key marginal states. Thus the votes of the majority of the American electorate have no impact on the outcome of the election, and the process of voting for them is not so much an exercise in people power as it is going through the motions of democracy – demonstrating their right to participate in the process.

Elections, usually seen as a benchmark of democracy in countries transitioning from war to peace, in fact often generate a great deal of violence. They are often rigged and flawed, generating outrage among those who feel cheated. The world witnessed this in 2008, not only in dictatorial Zimbabwe but also in relatively peaceful Kenya, where violence followed and more than a thousand people died. But even if elections are not unfair, the potential for violence may remain high. The party losing elections may fear marginalization, and may attempt to stay in power (or at least retain a share of it) through an armed struggle (an example is UNITA in Angola in 1993). Alternatively, the opposite may be true, when a party winning the elections denies minority parties any voice, and even prohibits them (for example the Nazi Party after winning the 1933 elections in Germany).

There should always be constitutional protection against the tyranny of the majority, but few systems have such a guarantee. In addition, violations of the majoritarian concept have occurred frequently, in every continent and over many decades. Many presidents and prime ministers, even in countries claiming to be champions of democracy, stay in power when their popular support has fallen to less than 20 per cent of the voting public.

Twenty years ago communism disappeared as a political system in all countries in Eastern Europe, but elections during the post-communist transition throughout the former Soviet bloc witnessed the return of ex-communists to power. One explanation for this phenomenon is that many people in these countries were made to believe that there is a direct causal relationship between democracy and economic prosperity. They were enticed to street protests on the assumption that removing communists from power would automatically fill the empty shops with goods. This belief soon created disillusionment and frustration and generated feelings of nostalgia for the supposed "good old days", leading to the voting in of ex-communists back to power. Democracy does not necessarily lead to economic prosperity, or at least does not do so directly. Paradoxically, some anti-democratic regimes – Chile (under Pinochet) and Singapore – have demonstrated very successful economic progress.

Although there is no definitive model of democracy, various groups of countries have produced similar systems of government that amount to types of democratically inspired governance. Some Northern democracies have developed what can be described as a majoritarian extreme. In the United Kingdom, for example, a party can win more seats in parliament than a party which has a higher total share of the public vote, because within each constituency the majority votes in a single candidate in a "winner-takes-all" or "first-past-the-post" system. Conceivably this could lead to a ludicrous and undemocratic extreme whereby a party that loses all constituencies, even if it gains nearly half the votes in total, can end up *ad absurdum* with zero representatives. Likewise, presidential systems can also give the appearance of a winner-takes-all form of governance – for example in the United States, where the electoral college system adds a further degree of democratic disconnect.

Another form of majoritarian extreme is represented through government by plebiscite, where every important decision can be put directly to a popular vote or referendum. Not only is this a dangerous process edging perilously close to ochlocracy, or rule by the mob, so feared by the critics of democracy, but it can often make any progress burdensome and almost impossible. As discussed in Chapter 1, even solutions aimed at protecting minorities from the tyranny of the majority, such as super-majorities or proportional representation, can have some very unfortunate undemocratic consequences. Tyrannies of minorities can similarly block the political will and adequate political expression of the majority.

The consolidated democracies in developed Asian countries also deviate significantly from any supposedly pure model. Post-war Japan has basically been a one-party system for much of this period, and its parliament (Diet) has often been lacking in seriously representative debate

and has had a minimal influence on societal developments.[2] To a great extent there are more significant debates concerning Japanese political evolution within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party than between the parties. Governmental changes also occur through intra-party dynamics rather than through representative inter-party developments.

In Korea, during the attempted impeachment of President Roh in 2004, the Constitutional Court ruled that although his actions in declaring his support for a particular political party did violate the obligation of political neutrality, and therefore the constitution, this was found not to be a serious enough breach to allow the impeachment to proceed. Yet constitutional violations are precisely what a politician should be impeached for by a constitutional court. However, it was clear at the time, through street demonstrations and subsequent trouncing of the president's opponents at the polls, that the quasi-guardians of the Constitutional Court clearly and efficiently expressed the will of the people, even if not sticking to the letter of the constitution. Likewise, in the debate concerning relocating the capital Seoul, the efficient expression of the will of the people was seen by the supposed quasi-guardians of the Constitutional Court to have been more important that either the strict letter of the Korean constitution or, in this case, the will of the democratically elected majoritarian leadership. There is a danger that the Korean Constitutional Court, for years viewed as ineffectual, by asserting itself as the efficient expression of the will of the people risks undermining its initial *raison d'être*.

If Northern countries are forced into pragmatic departures from democratic ideals by the practical considerations of their unique structures, histories and political cultures, it would seem hypocritical for representatives of these same quasi-democracies to criticize Southern models of government for similar departures. As has been outlined in the chapters of this book, Southern systems of governance face particular challenges, many of which are themselves the legacies of preceding Northern rule. And Northern refers to not only the West, but also a vast post-communist space comprising Russia and China – with their own controversial, non-transparent and problematic political systems.

The danger of oligarchies usurping power and failing to represent the interests of the people is particularly acute in developing countries, especially when agents of Northern penetration such as multinational corporations and aid and investment bodies are supportive of local élites against the true demos. Southern states often have to deal with the problems of heterogeneity, exacerbated by inter-ethnic tensions, and without the benefit of a unifying political culture and identity precisely because of lines drawn on the map by colonial powers. As highlighted by the

Asian case studies, democratic convergence, where a wish to imitate the relative success of Northern examples undermines support for traditional authoritarian structures, is also threatened.

The Northern way of life only exerts a positive attraction as long as it is perceived to be desirable and preferable to other alternatives. Should the capitalist democratic world system enter a pronounced downturn (which appeared to have started towards the end of 2008), this may no longer be the case, particularly if increased inter-regional competition should lead to a new wave of protectionism and shrinking global trade. Furthermore, the promised benefits of liberal transition policies have been slower to materialize within transitional states than many may have hoped. An internal expectancy gap has developed within many transitional states, and in some cases may lead to a degree of discontent sufficient to undermine or even reverse the liberalization that has already taken place.

The process of democratic transition itself is a source of considerable uncertainty and hardship. Some groups are bound to lose out, at least in the short term. Support for transition is only generated by the general optimism that ultimately all will benefit; the hope that even if this is not the case, then at least the majority will do so; and the common belief held by most that they will form part of this majority. The longer that uncertainty regarding the distribution of democratic spoils persists, the greater the chance of an authoritarian relapse. More than any other form of government, democracy depends for its legitimacy upon the consent of a majority of those governed.

Countries in transition face two possible courses of action – a gradualist reform process or a "shock therapy" designed to introduce market reforms in as short a time as possible. The majority of states in the South have accepted the OECD advice to adopt the shock therapy model. Unfortunately, even when people support radical change at the outset, this support erodes, often drastically, as social costs are experienced. The supposedly short, sharp shock can appear to go on for an inordinately long period of time, leading to an increased possibility of rejection of all democratic concepts. This was the case in much of Eastern Europe (for a certain period of time) and Latin America, and more recently in Africa.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, each of the studies in this book represents distinct alternatives to, and often criticisms of, the dominant Northern discourse. However, it is possible to identify some potentially unifying themes and characteristics from each of the major continents of the South. This in turn suggests that there may be different national, cultural and regional interpretations of democratic pros, cons and trade-offs.

In all three Latin American cases the authors make a similar assessment that the formal democratic institutions and models, even if following properly the established Northern pattern, are insufficient to offer a

representative democracy and comprehensive protection of human rights. The continent has its own particular political characteristics, historical evolution and cultural specifics, and it is not necessarily possible to accept all political principles which have been cultivated in Europe for many centuries.

Nicole Curato, in Chapter 2, discusses the notion of populist democracy in a Latin American context, pointing out that Venezuela's emasculation of its élitist representative democracy and support for a more participatory system demonstrate that democratic alternatives exist and are worth exploring. It is not a model for alternative democratic arrangements, but rather a reflection of historical developments and appreciation of human agency in creating democratic alternatives. At best, Curato concludes, the Venezuelan case is illustrative of the value of democratic imagination in creating reforms that send a message of hope to resistance movements, that once the hegemony is decentred, democracy is open to multiple possibilities.

Olga Lucía Castillo-Ospina's chapter on Colombia demonstrates that even if a state resembles a "free" state in accordance with Northern traditions, it may still fall short of the democratic imperative of functioning in the interests of all and according to the participation of all. Effectively, the privatization of the Colombian state benefits the economic élites in the country by allowing them to profit from the funds of international cooperation and from being allies of the United States during a time when resistance movements are peaking all over Latin America. Conflict escalation in this supposedly democratic state has resulted in a disastrous coalition of the government, economic élites, extreme-right armed groups and drug-trafficking mafias benefiting a minority to the detriment of the majority of the Colombian population. These arguments allow Castillo-Ospina to insist that the continuity of the Colombian armed conflict has been beneficial for the Colombian state and, in particular, for the Uribe administration. At the same time is has been extremely detrimental for the inhabitants of the regions in dispute and the citizens of the lower classes in the country.

In Chapter 4 Mariana Garzón Rogé and Mariano Perelman analyse specific aspects of hegemonic imagery in Argentina to uncover which elements of democracy are viable at present. They note that by evoking universal pluralism, the political community demolishes the basis of democracy and cannot distinguish between a democratic pluralist dynamic and democratically unacceptable political behaviour. It seems obvious that the emergence of neofascist parties occurs where limits to pluralism coincide with the limits of what is democratic and what it is not. In Argentina, the authors conclude that the "theory of two devils" and the illusionary attempts at arriving at national reconciliation reinforce the

indeterminate outlines of local democracy and risk fragility. A long way remains to be walked, involving continuing support for electoral procedures while reassuring the conviction among Argentinians that democracy is the best regime.

By contrast, the key theme running through the African cases in this book is how best to overcome the problems and dangers of fragmentation – internal vertical divides rather than the primarily horizontal tensions and conflicts characterizing Latin America – as well as the results of discriminatory multi-ethnicity rule and neohegemony in the colonial legacy states.

In Chapter 5 Moses Metumara Duruji is concerned not only that the majoritarian principle of democracy is problematic in an artificially created and conflict-prone society, but also with the paradox that the democratic aspirations responsible for creating the space for groups to emerge and evolve destabilizes the mere democratic polity of the country due to the emergence of ethno-political groups with conflicting extreme agendas. Dujuri agrees that no society in the world can exhibit all the ideals that democracy presupposes; rather, each state strives to improve on the model it practises. That is why the practice of democracy varies from country to country. Nigeria, as a budding nation, has its own unique history – a multiethnic and religious society created by British colonialism has had a lot to grapple with in fashioning its own home-grown democracy.

In Chapter 6 James Ogola Onyango critically evaluates how the fundamentals of ethno-linguistic vitality have impinged on the democratic practice in Kenyan general elections; despite undercurrents of distrust between large ethno-linguistic groups and of large groups by small groups, and the emergence of ethnic alliances and violence after disputed elections, he concludes that since Kenya has never had a successful military coup, ethno-linguistic vitality will remain an important index in "democratic practice" in Kenya.

Ghana is often held up as a democratic success story. However, as Gbenga Afolayan notes in Chapter 7, this is due to an overemphasis by international observers on mere procedural elements of democracy while overlooking the severe political economy challenges yet to be faced. He suggests that the emphasis on public sector reform and decentralization arises from the continued hegemony of neoliberal ideology, and observes that the international support for democratization in Ghana, as elsewhere, is motivated less by the attractiveness of the democratic ideal as an end in itself and more as a means towards the sustained pursuit of the neoliberal goal of limited government. In the latter, the power of the state is kept in check, and this is one of the challenges of the democratization process in most African countries.

Finally, the key unifying theme for the Asian case studies is the extent to which Northern models have failed consistently to address the needs of people in the region and therefore have been openly challenged. Human needs incorporate elements of identity, well-being and participation, all of which seem to come up short in some instances of Asian governance under transplanted models of Northern democratic traditions.

In Chapter 8 Deepamala observes that in India there is little incentive for an individual or a group of individuals to hold responsibility towards society – people are encouraged to accept democracy as a panacea, but in reality it is a system that cannot even provide them with basic means for survival. In a democracy everyone wants to enjoy the freedoms afforded by the system, but with less care about their obligations towards society. Therefore, a strong state is needed to show its people the correct path to social equality. The leaders, Deepamala concludes, must recognize that although democracy may be considered an ideal form of government, it may not be the most practical if their goals are to improve the economic state of a nation. Democracy must be developed in a gradual and indigenous manner tailored to unique conditions and situations, and failure in this may bring disastrous results.

In Chapter 9 Narayanan Ganesan concludes that the populist Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra brought the Thai political party system to a crossroads with his attempt to develop a dominant or predominant party system while undermining the opposition. Organizational autonomy was often compromised by the requirements of adaptability in capitalizing on political opportunities, yet it may be seen that ideology, rather than patronage, is far more likely to yield enduring organizational institutionalization for political parties. Democracy requires that proper procedures be adhered to when changes are made to the government. In this regard, there should be civilian control of the military, which, in turn, should be confined to barracks. It can only be hoped that this tradition will prevail as the country refines its political system.

Finally, in Chapter 10, Gladstone Cuarteros addresses the challenges posed in establishing a truly representative democracy in the Philippines by political élite families and clans. He feels that elections themselves are not sufficient to prise the hands of the élites from the reins of power at both national and local levels, but rather they are necessary to foster relations with a section of the political élite and coopt them into becoming champions of democracy. This process needs to be further buttressed by the active advocacy of the press and grassroots activists in order to raise the political awareness of the demos.

Thus we have seen clearly that there is no universal ideal model of democracy in either theory or practice. Northern and Southern states,

regions and cultures are subject to localized histories and experiences with a variety of modes of governance, and also to both unique and shared challenges. If we are to avoid outright rejection of democratic principles in Southern states, it is vital that necessary departures in recognition of local contingencies are not automatically condemned. Some degree of tailoring is always necessary, as can even be seen in Northern applications. The international community needs to work with Southern countries on a "horses-for-courses" basis, attuning governmental and socio-economic models to local voices and contingencies.

The final destination should not be a replication of one or more of the Northern democratic models, but rather the development of a local model of governance that protects and represents all segments of society and their interests, and, above all, generates a loyal opposition supportive of the mechanisms through which the government rose to power, even if they do not support the current administration. Only then will democratic regimes of whatever shade stand a chance of true consolidation.

Notes

1. *Little Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (2008), 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 100.
2. See, for example, van Wolferen, Karel (1989) *The Enigma of Japanese Power: People and Politics in a Stateless Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf; Curtis, Gerald L. (1988) *The Japanese Way of Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

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"f" refers to figures; "t" table; "n" notes.

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