POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ASIA

Defining and Deploying Political Space

Edited by Eva Hansson and Meredith L. Weiss

ROUTLEDGE

Political Participation in Asia

A combination of economic transformation, political transitions and changes in media have substantially, if incrementally, altered the terrain for political participation globally, particularly in Asia, home to several of the most dramatic such shifts over the past two decades.

This book explores political participation in Asia and how democracy and authoritarianism function under neoliberal economic relations. It examines changes that coincide seemingly perversely with a participation explosion: with mass street protests and 'occupations', energetic online contention, movements of students and workers, mobilization for and against democracy and more. Organized thematically in three parts – political participation in a 'post-democratic' context, changes in the scope and character of political space and the policing of that space – this book analyzes economic, regime and media shifts and how they function in tandem and both within and across states.

Closely integrated, comparative and theoretically driven, this book will be of interest to scholars and practitioners in the fields of civil society, contentious politics or social movements, democratization, political economy/development, media and communications, political geography, sociology, comparative politics and Asian politics.

Eva Hansson is Coordinator of the Forum for Asian Studies at Stockholm University, Sweden, and Senior Lecturer of Political Science, Stockholm University, specializing in studies of democratization and/or political regime change, focused particularly on Southeast Asia. She teaches democratization, human rights and international politics. Among her publications are *Growth without Democracy: Challenges to Authoritarianism in Vietnam* (2011) and the edited volume, *Civil Society and Authoritarianism in the Third World* (2nd edition, 2003). She has published chapters and articles on protest movements, inequality and political regimes in Southeast Asia, as well as reports on politics and political economy.

Meredith L. Weiss is a Professor of Political Science at the University at Albany, State University of New York. She has published widely on political mobilization and contention, the politics of identity and development and electoral politics in Southeast Asia. Her books include *Student Activism in Malaysia: Crucible, Mirror, Sideshow* (2011) and *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia* (2006), as well as a number of edited volumes, most recently, *Electoral Dynamics in Sarawak: Contesting Developmentalism and Rights* (with Arnold Puyok, 2017) and the *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia* (2015).

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2018
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Hansson, Eva, editor. | Weiss, Meredith L. (Meredith Leigh), 1972- editor. | Container of (work): Hewison, Kevin. Politics and businessification.
Title: Political participation in Asia: defining & deploying political space / edited by Eva Hansson and Meredith Weiss.
Other titles: Political participation in Asia (Routledge (Firm))
Description: New York: Routledge, 2018. | Series: Routledge contemporary Asia series; 62 | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017024651 | ISBN 9781138082298 (hb: alk. paper) | ISBN 9781315112589 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Political participation–Asia. | Democracy–Asia. | Authoritarianism–Asia. | Asia–Politics and government–21st century.
Classification: LCC JQ36 .P668 2018 | DDC 323/.042095–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017024651

ISBN: 978-1-138-08229-8 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-11258-9 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

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Acknowledgements

We complete this volume amid what many have termed a global democratic recession, produced by both governments and non-state actors. But against that grim backdrop are movements, organizations and individuals who struggle to defend, reimagine or expand their space for political participation. This volume had its origins in our conversations about how to interpret and make sense of such seemingly contradictory developments, which seem particularly endemic and long-lived in Asian countries. By the end of 2015, our discussions on transformations in political space and participation had laid the foundations for a conference at the Forum for Asian Studies at Stockholm University. To be honest, we were taken by surprise, but certainly gratified, by the overwhelming response from researchers from across the world to our open call for papers.

In the end, the conference brought together around 70 researchers from 17 different countries. We deeply appreciate the material support, especially of the Forum for Asian Studies at Stockholm University, as well as Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy at the University at Albany, without which the conference would not have been possible. Our thanks to Sara Moritz for her prompt assistance in taking care of logistics as well as documenting the sessions, and to all the participants, who travelled to Stockholm to brighten an especially dreary time of year with two days of stimulating and lively discussions. Special thanks, too, to our keynote speaker, Kevin Hewison, who broadened both the theoretical and empirical discussions.

After the conference, several clusters of topics and scholars emerged as suited for different forms of publication and continued collaboration, indicating the importance of academic get-togethers in an age of shrinking space for academic freedom. To continue and broaden the discussion, we followed up with a panel, *Defining and Deploying Political Space in Asia*, at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Philadelphia. We thank our co-panellists and paper presenters – Garry Rodan, Marco Bünte, Jamie Doucette, Susan Kang and Johan Lagerkvist – and especially our discussants, Edward Aspinall and Suzaina Kadir, for their insightful comments and analysis. Meriting special mention, too, are our

ongoing dialogues with students and colleagues on these matters, in Sweden, the US and several Asian countries, especially those resident and/or working in political contexts where this book could not have been published. The academic space in still-democratic countries serves its purpose, especially when used for such analysis.

Eva Hansson and Meredith L. Weiss
Stockholm and Albany
April 2017

Abbreviations

CBO	Community-based organization
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CRIR	Committee for Revising Industrial Relations (South Korea)
CSO	Civil society organization
DJP	Democratic Justice Party (South Korea)
DLP	Democratic Labour Party (South Korea)
DLP	Democratic Liberal Party (South Korea)
FKTU	Federation of Korean Trade Unions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KCTU	Korean Confederation of Trade Unions
KNU	Karen National Union
KWO	Karen Women's Organisation
Ma Ba Tha	Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion a.k.a. Patriotic Association of Myanmar
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NCPO	National Council for Peace and Order (Thailand)
NDM	New Democracy Movement (Thailand)
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission (China)
NDRP	New Democratic Republic Party (South Korea)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	National Intelligence Service (South Korea)
NLD	National League for Democracy (Myanmar)
NPC	National People's Congress (China)
NSL	National Security Law (South Korea)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAD	People's Alliance for Democracy (Thailand)
PAS	Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia)
PC	People's Congress (China)
PDRC	People's Democratic Reform Committee (Thailand)
PKS	Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, Indonesia)
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council (Myanmar)
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council (Myanmar)

UDP	Unification Democratic Party (South Korea)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UPP	United Progressive Party (South Korea)
USDA	Union Solidarity and Development Association (Myanmar)
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party (Myanmar)

Contributors

Bencharat Sae Chua is a Lecturer at the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Thailand, where she teaches human rights concepts, democratization and social movements. Her research is on the roles of civil society and social movements in contention over the meaning of rights and citizenship. She has contributed chapters on human rights and social movements in Thailand, including *Understanding Thai Human Rights Through (Non)-Search for Truth and Impunity: Cases of State Violence against Democracy Movements* (2016) and *Rights Claims and the Strategic Use of Culture to Protect Human Rights: The Community Forest Movement in Thailand* (2013).

Bui Hai Thiem is a Director of Research Project Management at the Institute for Legislative Studies, Ha Noi, Vietnam. He holds a PhD in political science from the University of Queensland, Australia and an MA in International Studies from SOAS, University of London, UK. His research focuses on civil society, constitutional politics, human rights and electoral governance in Vietnam and has been published in a number of peer-reviewed scholarly journals, including the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, *Asian Journal of Social Science* and *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*.

Marco Bünte is an Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations in the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Monash University, Malaysia. His research interests include democratization, authoritarian resilience and civil-military relations. He has published widely on Southeast Asian politics. He is the co-editor of *The Crisis of Democratic Governance in Southeast Asia* (Palgrave 2011) and *Politics and Constitutions in Southeast Asia* (Routledge 2017). He has published in a number of international journals, including *Armed Forces and Society*, *Asian Survey* and *Contemporary Southeast Asia*.

Jamie Doucette is a Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Manchester, UK. His research examines multiple dimensions of Korean democratization and development, including Korean labour geographies, the resilience of Cold War politics, the politics of developmental state

knowledge sharing and the changing nexus among sovereignty, territory and economy on the Korean peninsula. His work has appeared in such publications as *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Capital and Class, Critical Asian Studies, Geoforum, Political Geography, Journal of Contemporary Asia* and the *Routledge Handbook of Modern Korean History,* among others.

Eva Hansson is Coordinator of the Forum for Asian Studies at Stockholm University, Sweden, and Senior Lecturer of Political Science at Stockholm University, Sweden, specializing in studies of democratization and/or political regime change, focused particularly on Southeast Asia. She teaches democratization, human rights and international politics. Among her publications are *Growth without Democracy: Challenges to Authoritarianism in Vietnam* (2011) and the edited volume, *Civil Society and Authoritarianism in the Third World* (2nd edition, 2003). She has published chapters and articles on protest movements and political regimes in Southeast Asia, as well as reports on politics and political economy.

Hew Wai Weng is a Fellow at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, National University of Malaysia. Previously, he was Research Fellow at the Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin and Postdoctoral Fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden. He has written on Hui migrations, Chinese Muslim identities and urban middle class Muslim aspirations in Malaysia and Indonesia. He is the author of *Identiti Cina Muslim di Malaysia: Persempadanan, Perundingan dan Kacukan Budaya* (Chinese Muslim Identities in Malaysia: Boundary-making, Identity Negotiation and Cultural Hybridity; 2014) and *Chinese Ways of Being Muslim: Negotiating Ethnicity and Religiosity in Indonesia* (2017).

Kevin Hewison is the Weldon E. Thornton Distinguished Emeritus Professor of Asian Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, US, and Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. He is the author of some 280 books, articles, reports and other publications on Southeast Asian politics and political economy.

Johan Lagerkvist is a Professor of Chinese Language and Culture in the Department of Asian, Middle Eastern and Turkish Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden. He is also a Senior Research Fellow with the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. His main research interests include Chinese politics, state–society relations, digital communications and the media system and China's evolving role in 'South–South' co-operation. His most recent book is *Tiananmen Redux: The Hard Truth about the Expanded Neoliberal World Order* (2016).

Elisabeth Olivius is a Senior Lecturer in Peace and Conflict Studies at Umeå University, Sweden. Her research focuses on how gendered relations

of power are produced and reshaped in processes of conflict, displacement and peacebuilding. Her doctoral dissertation, entitled *Governing Refugees through Gender Equality: Care, Control, Emancipation,* examined the construction, interpretation and application of gender equality norms in the global governance of refugees. She has also published on masculinity and humanitarian aid, approaches to violence against refugee women and political participation in refugee camps. Her current research explores how diasporic women's peacebuilding organizations in Myanmar reshape conceptions of gender, ethnicity and nation.

Kwang-Yeong Shin is a Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology at Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Korea. He has been doing research on social inequality, precarious work and political change from a comparative perspective. His recent publications are *Inequality in South Korea* (2013) and *Swedish Social Democracy: Labour, Welfare and Politics* (2015). His work has been published in *Journal of Contemporary Asia, American Behavioral Scientists, Third World Quarterly, Development and Society, Asian Journal of German and European Studies* and other journals.

Meredith L. Weiss is a Professor of Political Science at the University at Albany, State University of New York, US. She has published widely on political mobilization and contention, the politics of identity and development and electoral politics in Southeast Asia. Her books include *Student Activism in Malaysia: Crucible, Mirror, Sideshow* (2011) and *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia* (2006), as well as seven edited volumes, most recently, *Electoral Dynamics in Sarawak: Contesting Developmentalism and Rights* (with Arnold Puyok, 2017) and the *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia* (2015).

Teresa Wright is a Professor and Chair of Political Science at California State University, Long Beach, US. Her publications include: *The Perils of Protest: State Repression and Student Activism in China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2001), *Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era* (Stanford University Press, 2010) and *Party and State in Post-Mao China* (Polity Press, 2015); journal articles in *Comparative Politics*, *The Journal of International Affairs*, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *The China Quarterly*, *China: An International Journal*, *Church and State* and *Asian Survey*; and numerous chapters in edited volumes. She also serves on the editorial board of the *China Quarterly*.

Part I

Post-democratic political participation

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1 Conceptualizing political space and mobilization

Eva Hansson and Meredith L. Weiss

This century has been widely dubbed 'The Asian Century' – an era when an ascendant Asia is to be the fulcrum of global commerce, security posturing and political consolidation. Yet launching that century has been a seemingly endless round of public protest: in China, Burma, Hong Kong, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Taiwan, India, Malaysia and more. The eyes of the world have indeed been on this region, but not for the reasons so widely predicted. That recurrent trope of rebellious publics brings to the fore larger questions about where these protests came from and what legacies they leave. Mass street protests and social media storms seize headlines, but underlying these cataclysmic moments are larger changes in public, political space: who claims, expands and defines that space, and how? How, too, do prior moments of protest themselves alter the landscape for future mobilizations: which actors are newly constituted, which discourses gain traction and what strategies emerge?

Political space is not coterminous with the state; it includes both state and non-state arenas for participation. Its scope and quality have ebbed and flowed throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, across types of regime (Hewison 1997, 10–15). During the last ten years, however, we have witnessed both an expansion of political space and intensified attempts at limiting activism within that terrain, as recent quantitative as well as qualitative research on political participation, civil society development and citizenship confirms. Some scholars have suggested that this expansion of political space to include previously or recently absent groups – for instance, rural Thais spurred to participate politically (Chairat 2012; Prinat 2014, 178) – has been driven by changing civic consciousness and rights-oriented political sensitivity among inadequately represented groups (Pattana 2012; Goldman 2005; Pei 2000; Perry 2014). These efforts to claim political space and democratic rights have intensified even as observers have situated the region within a global trend of shrinking space for civil society and democratic regression (for example, CIVICUS 2016). Others interpret this same trend of popular mobilization in more problematic terms and see the evolving 'street politics' in particular as 'inherently unrepresentative', however many people it engages (Jackson 2014, 208).

Envisioning political *space* – whether as a metaphor for participation, as a physical place in which engagement happens or in discursive terms – implies that it is delimited by boundaries that define what actors, interests and ideas may gain access, and which are excluded. These boundaries are naturally contested by various actors with sometimes conflicting interests and with varying power resources. Some aim to expand political space; others aim to limit it, or else have that unintended effect.

In this volume we are interested in how social and political actors struggle to carve out space for their activism, directed at the state or striving to affect social norms and institutions. An understanding of how political space is produced and how it changes must therefore include not only an analysis of actors aiming to expand space, but also, and just as importantly, an exploration of how political space is limited or how its boundaries are guarded and policed, and by whom. Explicitly anti-democratic movements in several Asian countries in recent years, for instance, have paradoxically thrived in the same institutional and discursive space as activists struggling to establish or sustain liberalization, including rights to organize, speak publicly, demonstrate, advocate, publicize and assemble. It is not only the state that polices boundaries; forces intent on preventing certain interests, including pro-democratic ones, from sharing political space, emerge from within civil society, as well. At stake are both political opportunity structures, in terms of openings for (or closure to) mobilization, but also the terrain itself: what modes of participation the character of space available recommends or precludes.

We draw on Bourdieu's conception of the political field as having embedded within it both structural attributes – institutions and actors – and power relations. However, the struggle for power – both symbolic power to define a particular social reality and more instrumental power over public policies and ideas that are able to generate collective mobilization – is especially defining (Swartz 2003, 147). The character of political space, as well as the relative position of actors therein and in the broader class structure, moulds supply of and demand for political ideas. The generation of political options, as well as the situation of boundaries and available meanings, must be considered in context, then, including in light of the state, given its claim to symbolic power (Swartz 2003, 148, 152).

Other scholars likewise inform our reading of political space, including its multi-dimensionality and the extent to which state and non-state actors mutually constitute the arena in which they engage. In the Latin American context, Collier and Collier (1991), for instance, trace discontinuities or critical junctures along the path by which movement politics shaped Latin American political regimes. 'Fundamental political differences' in how labour was incorporated (Collier and Collier 1991, 7) – for example, states' replacing independent unions with state-penetrated ones, versus parties' mobilizing unions as a convenient electoral base – shaped not only labour contention, but the expansion or narrowing of political space broadly.

Valenzuela's (1989) focus on contests over 'organizational space', particularly for and by labour as a critical strategic group in the course of installing or replacing authoritarianism, homes in on this same dialectic. Both these works, as well as others on that region (for instance, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992), home in on labour movements as being at the forefront of struggles to expand political space and forge alliances, in the process, shaping national politics and political regimes in fundamental ways. In Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Chile, for example, labour movements and unions spearheaded social protests against dictatorship and for (re-)democratization, and opened up space in the struggle for political participation and rights (Valenzuela 1989, 445).

While research on protest movements in Asia and their role in shaping national politics has been less extensive than that on European, American or Latin American cases, comparisons are revealing. Within Asia, Hewison and Rodan (1994) link the rise and decline of the ideological Left – socialism and communism – to the fate of 'non-state political space' during key phases through the 1970s. The role of labour in shaping political space was affected by the way developmental models in Asia precluded formal union formation, reinforced by corresponding differences in institutionalized, restrictive modes of government–civil society interaction (Deyo 2012). Since then, the vector has reversed: with other non-state groups working to expand civil society, the Left now has new space in which to strategize. In other words, an array of organized actors interact within political space and their engagement and struggles for or around forms of power (not necessarily over the state) simultaneously situate that space and colour its timbre and priorities.

Regardless, common parlance and prevailing ways of thinking about power and politics imply a dichotomous relationship between state and civil society, entailing both a degree of autonomy within, and clear-cut boundaries between, the Weberian spheres of political, economic and civil society. Such habits have distracted attention from the way these spheres overlap and produce variations in opportunities for social and political actors to define and deploy political space. These conceptual boundaries are not helpful for an understanding of how and why political space is structured in certain ways in different contexts. The notion of a state-versus-civil society dialectic, however politically useful for activists in their struggle against authoritarian rule, has in particular produced a misleading conception of the nature of repression and delimitation of political space as a purely state affair. In reality, regime institutions and attributes need not be so defining. Contemporary developments in Asia, for instance, clearly suggest the importance of social movements and other civil societal actors in both the policing and delimitation of political space and, consequently, in the reproduction of authoritarian politics.

In this volume, we therefore deem it an empirical question how and by whom political space is produced, reproduced or delimited. We take a different tack from previous research that has, for instance, examined how

episodes of contention have formed political regimes by spurring elite responses (Slater 2010). Rather, our interest in this volume is to explore how forms and episodes of mobilization within and across countries in Asia pose and embody both institutional and normative challenges to a topographical map of political space, engaging and transforming varying authorities, ideas and practices. The chapters herein explore that map, using close examination of patterns and incidents to theorize how and when political participation changes, and with what implications. Of course, this one volume could not hope to address the full empirical variety of Asian states. However, our goal is to present a framework and set of ideas, developed through an investigation of states at the poles of usual typograpies – from single-party communist regimes to consolidated democracies, as well as a sampling of states in between – in the hope that other scholars and activists will continue the conversation through an examination of those polities not given their full due here. Toward that end, we begin with some key concepts and dimensions with which to situate and frame the chapters to come. We start by introducing our terminology.

Conceptualizing political space and participation

The term 'political space' has come into vogue in recent years, among both policy makers and scholars, for instance, in terms of ways to expand participatory frameworks in authoritarian regimes in the name of 'good governance'. Our reading extends beyond authority to make, apply, interpret or enforce rules – a notion of collective governance – to a multi-dimensional arena for empowerment at the level of ideas as well as policies or other instrumental objectives, and working with, against, or around fellow citizens as well as the state. As such, political space overlaps state, government and civil society, and is integral to the political regimes writ large defining and defined by relations among these entities. We include in our frame engagement across modes and media, from street protests and rallies, to elections and lobbying, to documentary film and graffiti, to petitions and press conferences.

In policy and academic discussions alike, political space tends to be conceptualized as an at least loosely demarcated realm in which societal actors influence policy decisions or affect the rules by which citizens can participate in politics. In democratic regimes, this space is often presumed 'independent': an arena in which unconstrained articulation of ideas and contestation over interests can occur and where state authorities cannot arbitrarily inhibit or repress such activity. Even in democratic regimes, however, this view simplifies and idealizes how political participation works and exaggerates the extent to which rights to participate in formal politics can be substantially guaranteed and utilized.

As Rueschemeyer (2004) has argued, social and economic power resources profoundly affect the way citizens and groups can make use of their rights

and voice. Not only do differences in power resources vary among actors and affect their capacity for influence, but political influence itself may be more or less direct, and actors' claims may target either civil society broadly or a narrower political society. Some distance between the ideal and the reality of political equality seems inevitable, though the extent of that gap varies over time and place. In non-democratic regimes, not just asymmetric power resources, but also repression of independent voices and claims limit the possibilities for marginalized groups' and individuals' influence. In authoritarian regimes, states strive to control and manipulate political space to their own advantage. Partly in consequence, social movements and other civil societal actors are likely to find themselves at odds with the political regime sooner or later, even when their initial claims were not transgressive or directed at the government as such. Struggles among social actors with conflicting claims are then likely to verge into struggles over the boundaries of political space and, thus, over the composition of the political regime itself.

Asian authoritarian states have used different measures to limit political space, including co-optation, politicization of the judiciary, legal restrictions, securitization, control of media and censorship and manipulation of ethic and communal politics (Hewison 1999, 232–3). The rising importance of social media for mobilization lends primacy to attempts at controlling and manipulating these forums and communications specifically, to curtail activism. Those efforts alone extend from the juridical – introducing specific internet security laws and policing, to prohibit online discussion of certain themes – to shrewder tactics, such as employing armies of 'public opinion shapers' to offer pro-government comments or attack potentially threatening opinions, or more direct repression by arrests and imprisonment of transgressive internet activists.

Yet the rise of social media as a part of political space exemplifies how malleable that space is. When political space expands, it reconfigures the opportunity structure for different forms of activism, movements and organizations by altering the terrain on which struggles for influence and to exercise power happen, vis-à-vis both governments and fellow claimants. Changes in political space are incremental and cumulative, meaning the salience of social media as the latest effort at space-reclamation is relative to what came before.

The current transformation of political space cannot be understood without taking note of the broader societal changes that have occurred in most Asian countries in recent decades. Massive socio-economic transformations have, for example, resulted in the emergence of new cleavages in society that are producing new social and political conflicts and actors. Those actors are involved in claiming, defining, utilizing and imagining political space or in developing strategies to advance alternative imaginaries that challenge hegemonic norms (cf. Leitner 2008; Frasier 1990).

Importantly, whereas Weber sketches discrete realms of civil and political society, for us, these arenas inhabit a shared political plane and terrain.

Their institutions may be separate, but agency, discourses and ideas flow across this arena. Contributing to the formation of political space are representatives of political society, economic society and civil society, each with less autonomy in relation to one another than is sometimes suggested. While the state or a given government can be instrumental in shaping and safeguarding political space, political space extends beyond formal politics (or Weber's political society) and cannot be established by state intervention alone. Rather, its creation depends on 'the organizational practices and political experiences of the different social groups, and it involves discourses and ideas concerning rights and responsibilities present at different societal and institutional levels' (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen 2002, 10). We extend beyond what Webster and Engberg-Pedersen suggest, by emphasizing that political space is not merely a 'governance space', in which societal actors come into contact with and seek to influence policymaking institutions, but also where ideas about inclusion or exclusion, and about participation and representation, are contested. Our concept of political space is thus not tied to specific actors who engage in these spaces. Still, one might expect that the structuration of political space would be tightly connected with regime type – an issue to which we return in the volume's conclusion.

So what are we left with: where do we find political space, and how might one participate within it? At the most basic level, we might identify the various structures through which individuals express claims on state institutions, government officials and society, from elections to protest actions. All these activities transpire within political space, as we understand it, and all represent political participation. Our focus on *space* rather than on specific structures lets us sidestep some of the pitfalls of the liberal state–civil society argument, including rigid categorizations based on type of actor, target or demand, not least since a given individual may participate simultaneously across multiple registers and modes. A focus on political space allows for a wider conception of political participation, beyond procedural and formal definitions centred around transfer of political authority from citizens to officials through elections, and as exercised by both formal and informal actors.

Inspired by advances in civil society and social movement theories, we think there are good reasons to think of political space in relational terms, and not to offer an a priori argument of how it is constituted or changed. Political space emerges within, between and outside formal political society; some segments are coloured by how civil society relates to the state, while other segments may be less affected. A dichotomizing approach to civil society and state is, therefore, not particularly useful for understanding how and why political space emerges, expands or contracts. Neither is it helpful to view the state as necessarily superior, across dimensions, given how much more overlap we see among economic, political and civil society in any given regime, and the different types of authority and empowerment possible (Cohen and Arato 1994; Howard 2003).

But power still matters, especially in the absence of some form of democracy or political liberalization, which might render political space more independent. Political space may be exclusive and exclusionary. State actors may seek to push out or suppress dissidents, or the valences may be more subtle. For instance, the 'NGOization' of civil society is effectively an externality of neoliberal development in which states devolve service delivery to NGO partners. This process 'marks a shift from rather loosely organized, horizontally dispersed, and broadly mobilizing social movements to more professionalized, vertically structured NGOs', with 'lasting effects for mission, goals, management, and discourse cultures of civic actors', as well as for 'advocacy strategies, and ultimately the properties of the publics that NGOs seek out or try to generate' (Lang 2013, 62). Such an emphasis on supposedly non-ideological managerialism, under which political decisions reflect technocratic processes rather than expressions of specific interests, forms an ideology in itself and implicitly disregards or suppresses other forms of knowledge and engagement: only certain strands within civil society then enjoy full legitimacy (though they may still contest that diminution, their challenge oriented either towards fellow activists or towards the state). And paradoxically, although political space may thrive on liberal political rights, it is not a democratic space per se; it may instead be dominated by anti-democratic forces, whether in civil society or political parties (see, for instance, Shin or Bünte, this volume). In combination, the NGOization of civil society and anti-democrats' ascendance in other zones of political space may serve as counterweights to actors who are striving to carve out space for their political participation or for systemic democratization.

Importantly, political space, including political participation, has a discursive aspect. Several chapters in this volume draw on a concept of a *public sphere*; that term effectively captures the specifically discursive dimensions we seek to highlight, even if not all political space need be so public, civil or interactive as the Habermasian ideal implies (Habermas 1974). Not all activity in the public sphere is clearly instrumentalist or structurally pitched, nor does all engage explicitly with questions of power or authority, let alone with the state specifically. Even so, changes in meaning and interpretation, developed through challenges to symbolic rather than policymaking power, shift the ground on which political regimes rest – a firmament no more inevitable or immune to change than the ranks of office-holders.

Towards a synthesis

Approached differently, we bring together here two strands within the political and sociological literature that have developed more in parallel than in dialogue: studies of social movements and of civil society. While scholars of both purport to explore cognate phenomena, in practice, the foci of literatures on 'activism' or 'protest' versus 'non-institutional politics' or 'NGOs', and their respective understandings of where ideology derives

from or intervenes, vary, resulting in a misleadingly fractured view of how the pieces fit together. Our target is the nexus of associational life (whether 'formal' or 'informal'), and ideas, and thus resists dichotomies (*civil* versus *political*, or *institutional* versus *non-institutional*) as well as clear boundaries. Perhaps, most importantly, this space is neither static nor placid; it is a realm of struggle, competition and various inequalities – aspects upon which we will elaborate briefly and the chapters to come will expand.

Neither state nor non-state space is stable: both are consistently sites of struggle, contestation and change. However, changes in one realm need not be tied to changes in the other; a temporal lag might intercede, or shifts in, for instance, state institutions may not translate at all, or at all rapidly, to changes in behaviour within civil society. Moreover, when changes do occur, these may not be experienced in the same way across political space.

In particular, political space includes both *formal* and *informal* avenues for participation. Scholarly work on mobilization and political engagement tends to speak in terms of formal politics or institutions – political parties, bureaucratic agencies, etc. – rather than informal avenues or non-institutional politics (e.g. Offe 1985). This semantic distinction is useful, but should not be overstated. Associational life, media, alliances and more may mix formal organization with non-institutional channels (or vice-versa), for instance, or may vacillate between forms and targets. Moreover, institutions may have influence, yet not convey empowerment. Organizations *for*, but not *of*, the poor, for instance, might effectively pursue policy goals, yet leave their constituents as politically marginalized as ever. Political space includes a plethora of arenas and avenues for participation, including outside what we understand as 'state' and organized 'civil society'.

Formal space may face specific curbs or controls, but also offers certain protections; the balance between these features varies across and within regimes. Informal space may offer more flexibility for innovation and inclusion, but may be marginalized and/or especially vulnerable to suppression (see Chandoke 2004). Meanwhile, not all political activity, including much that is more expressive than instrumental in orientation, transpires in *public* space; some political participation or activism is essentially private and takes place out of public sight or underground.

We offer four key caveats in presenting this synthesis of a political space to be grasped *in toto*. First, it is not just the state that demarcates political space – to put it in more conventional terms, we argue that activists may claim, and not just receive, space for civil society. In the same vein, power relations within political space are not limited to those between citizens and state. Second, these political spaces are multi-levelled: that aspect is most clear in terms of institutions (village-level compared with national politics, for instance), but applies also to less clearly structured spaces. Third, a given actor's choice of venue or channel is not entirely free: participation outside state space may indicate mistrust and disenchantment, as Kevin Hewison's chapter here notes; it might reflect strategic decisions, as Johan Lagerkvist's

chapter details; it might represent forcible exclusion, as in the case Elisabeth Olivius presents; or it might reflect lack of resources, confidence or information to move from social activism to electoral politics or vice-versa, as Marco Bünte's discussion of a still-emergent repertoire and domain for engagement in Myanmar illustrates. Lastly, we must consider also the level of the actor: not only who participates and how, but how actors' sense of agency and disposition changes, or how they create themselves or are created, through political participation. We might think of constituting collective actors – 'identization', in Melucci's (1995) terms – but also acknowledge shifts in attitudes, empowerment and expectations at the individual level, regardless of whether participation seeks to change, or succeeds in changing, policies.

Next, drawing on these conceptual definitions and framework, we highlight several key themes that frame the discussion to come. The chapters prefaced here elaborate upon different aspects of these themes in the context of polities from across Asia; we then extrapolate in the final chapter conclusions regarding effects of regime type, how we might best characterize civil society, how political space has changed or is changing, and the implications of these shifts for political praxis and outcomes across the region.

Political participation in a post-democratic context

Political science tends to characterize regimes in terms of degrees of political liberalism, running on a continuum from what Dahl terms polyarchy (1971) to totalitarianism – though common parlance favours a simple democratic/authoritarian binary, even while acknowledging a raft of 'semi' hybrids (e.g. Diamond 2002). Such framings assume that power and authority reside largely with the state, or are at least the state's to distribute. Moreover, being defined at the national level, these typologies assume a degree of homogeneity: a state is or is not 'democratic' or 'authoritarian', presumably with a degree of stickiness or stasis to that categorization. The chapters to come challenge these assumptions in two key ways.

First, our volume starts from the premise that authority is distributed unevenly through the state in terms of geography, peoples and issues; that unevenness sculpts the landscape for resistance or challenge – for instance, whether citizens experience the state only as coercive military, as developmentalist benefactor or as largely absent. At the same time, the specific character of that state also shapes the challenges it faces, whether we think in terms of stores of despotic versus infrastructural power (Mann 2008) or more broadly, in terms of the state's capacity, ideological premises, allies and policy priorities.

Second, voices from 'economic society' – and specifically, large-scale, usually multinational corporations – carry special resonance in an increasingly hegemonically neoliberal world. Business, and not just state, interests shape policy and discourse around organized labour, for instance, as Kwang-Yeong Shin explains in his chapter (see also Doucette and Koo

2015); activists then negotiate an opaque and potentially hostile ground in pressing claims against dominant authorities. The result, in states from all regime types, edges toward what Kevin Hewison here conceptualizes as the 'businessified state', highlighting the dimension of corporate influence in a 'post-democratic' order.

This realization resonates in relevant ways with broader research on democratization in the Global South by Olle Törnquist, Kristian Stokke and Neil Webster (2009). In three successive edited volumes, they address the limits of democratization and implications for substantive representation. In *Rethinking Political Representation* (2009), they identify the root problem as *depoliticized* democratization (and democracy): overwhelming empirical evidence indicates that powerful actors come to dominate institutions in their own interests, curbing the potential of liberalization to enhance democratic representation of ordinary people and satisfy middle-class interests and aspirations. The consequences of this pattern include 'problems of abuse and privileged control of institutions of democracy such as unequal citizenship, unequal access to justice, poorly implemented human rights, elite and money-dominated elections, corrupt administration, middle class dominated civil society and otherwise predominance of "illiberal" democratic practices' (Stokke and Törnquist 2013, 5), all of which serve to structure political space in important ways.

This conceptualization accords with the framework Colin Crouch labels as *post-democracy*. Crouch developed this idea with reference to democracies, but as Hewison's and Doucette's chapters elaborate – and in line with Törnquist, Stokke, *et al.*'s conclusions – we find the concept more broadly relevant. Crouch explains that under post-democracy,

> while elections certainly exist and can change governments, public electoral debate is a tightly controlled spectacle, managed by rival teams of professionals expert in the techniques of persuasion, and considering a small range of issues selected by those teams. The mass of citizens plays a passive, quiescent, even apathetic part, responding only to the signals given them. Behind this spectacle of the electoral game, politics is really shaped in private by interaction between elected governments and elites that overwhelmingly represent business interests.
>
> (Crouch 2004, 4)

Not all states we consider here are democracies, however loosely defined, yet as the chapters to come demonstrate, even clearly illiberal contemporary states tend to hold elections and – more important for our purposes – the sort of behind-the-scenes negotiations Crouch describes matter across systems. Still, a number of states in this region identify as democratic or transitional; Jamie Doucette's chapter explores the difficulties of political liberalization in an already post-democratic context. We add, too, that civil society is not immune, but is similarly 'businessified'. That said, as will become clear in

the accounts to come, citizens under post-democracy, whatever the prevailing institutional regime, need not be 'passive, quiescent, even apathetic', in Crouch's terms (2004, 4), but their interventions may take novel forms or may be directed at targets other than the state proper.

Clearly, the state still matters. However unstable, we must understand the state as comprising institutions, actors and ideas. Those institutions constitute the terrain of 'formal' politics, whether electoral or otherwise; their boundaries demarcate state versus non-state space. At the levels of actors and ideas, the limits of the state are far less clear.

Further, an analysis of political space necessitates clear analytical distinctions between abstractions such as 'states', 'governments', and 'political regimes'. Distinguishing among these entities helps us to differentiate among forms and targets of activism. Inspired by Krasner (1983), we conceptualize a *political regime* here as a more durable political entity than a government; the political regime relates to the principles, rules and norms that structure relations between governments and the state, and between governments and states on the one hand and civil society and citizens on the other. A political regime could thus be understood loosely as a framework for how governments can come to power and according to what principles they may rule, including how they mediate societal conflicts, as well as what societal agency is encouraged, deemed transgressive, or contained. *States* are also more permanent than governments, and include 'structure[s] of domination and coordination including a coercive apparatus and the means to administer a society and extract resources from it' (Fishman, quoted in Lawson 1993, 187).

Challenges posed by actors who aim to expand political space may, for instance, be 'anti-government' – challenging incumbent leaders – without necessarily being 'anti-regime' or 'anti-state'. Likewise, groups and individuals who seek regime change or reproduction may be less interested in the state, in terms of specific institutions. Of course, in some instances – for example, in single-party or dominant-party regimes – the state and a particular government or party may intertwine so closely, in ideational as well as institutional terms, that a distinction becomes less meaningful. In other words, such distinctions clarify the differences among challenges to people, to structures and to underlying norms and ideologies, thus helping to make sense of the forces that contribute to struggles over the borders of political space.

In sum, the state contends not only with citizens as social activists and enforcers of accountability, but also with corporate, fellow-state and other interests. The contemporary terrain of pluralism includes widely disparate structures and voices, in mutable combinations, only sometimes targeting state institutions. We might then think of stores of capital that such engagement generates – political, social and cultural – each also fostering attendant axes of inequality. What forms of participation appear promising or possible, then, varies not only with regime type, but with the claimant's position vis-à-vis that regime and its power-holders, the nature and target of the

claim, the resources available (material, intellectual, temporal, human) and the opposition or allies likely.

Expanding and contesting political space

Enabling this variability is an increasingly broad field for politics, with not only expansion of consultative mechanisms, however shallow, in the name of 'good governance' as well as more genuine opening of policy channels, but also development of new media platforms and online space. Governments, states and civil societies struggle to define and dominate different portions of this terrain, while commercial forces, including the omnipresent nudge of consumerism, adjust their pitch. Any notion of a clear division between state and civil society becomes blurred when we take political space, rather than the state, as our starting point; doing so shifts emphasis away from regime institutions and attributes as necessarily defining and indicates both cooperation and conflict in these relations and the production of political space.

Moreover, the state or a specific government may have, essentially, avatars in civil society: actors or organizations that embody the same ideas about governance as the state, but are not themselves part of that institutional infrastructure. State agents or allies may work across zones; ideas, too, may permeate state and non-state space, whether state-supporting or state-opposing. It is that complex mix of institutions and ideas, across spheres, that Johan Lagerkvist explores in his chapter.

Not all political space is 'new', of course, let alone oblivious to the boundaries of the state. The usual organizational suspects still also populate civil society, engaging the state in the name of the usual pro-democratic goals. But as Asian states themselves navigate transitions not only to democracy, but among democratically elected governments, the ground shifts for civil society. We see that how much civil society organizations engage, and via what vehicles or to advance which interests, varies even across and within democracies, as Kwang-Yeong Shin's chapter so clearly articulates. His chapter also shows that which actors are able to carve out political space for themselves is strongly influenced by the timing of democratization, as well as the reproduction of conservative or anti-democratic forces at the level of civil society; a liberal–conservative alliance in the transition moment can preclude the development of more inclusive political space. Overarching these contests are still economic interests, which limit both sides' range of movement, yet the foundational structures and modes involved are those of classical democratic theory, in which state and social forces present themselves as distinct, sometimes antagonistic and iteratively mutually responsive.

Still, contemporary scholars focus heavily on the less tidily conceptualized terrain of the internet and social media as virtual political space. Even the more balanced and least apocryphal among them tend to conceptualize an online public sphere as comparatively resistant to control and open to a

range of players (for instance, Abbott 2011; Esarey and Xiao 2008). In reality, that sphere is itself fraught, marked by complex alignments and equally available to state as non-state actors, but should be considered in tandem with complementary and contesting social forces, as Bui Hai Thiem's chapter details. He concedes that online participation raises awareness and access to information, as well as offers new modes of developing and presenting public responses to, or claims upon, authorities (government or otherwise). Such voice, though, need not take on organizational form – and simultaneously serves those authorities themselves, whether for information-gathering or for self-promoting propaganda (see also Rodan 2003; George 2006).

Part of what makes online media messy to study as grounds for political contest is the 'digital divide', or the extent to which only some parts of the population – disproportionately urban, wealthier, better-educated citizens – presumably enjoy regular access to the internet. Critics have long levelled the same critiques at non-governmental organizations, citing the readier access of the urban middle classes to such vehicles. In fact, it may be that the range of media platforms, including not just social media, but also local traditional media and foreign media, as well as tools such as documentary film, effectively level the playing field.

Moreover, media present only one hazily institutionalized platform for political expression. Even consumerist behaviour may encode or advance political priorities, as Hew Wai Weng explores in his chapter; the public sphere or space for assertion of control and authority includes local communities. Such a reading calls into question not just the spaces in which politics happens, but what actually constitutes political activity: if a core objective is to reshape behaviour and pursuit of a politico–religious vision, when is that via policy change and when, via more direct intervention? The inherent politicization of even basic consumer activities complicates the relationship between politics and markets and allows progress toward political goals, not just in terms of policy influence.

Situating media and consumer activity as politicized draws attention to discourse as political. Such attention illuminates how much a part of politics *interpretation* is, extending beyond divergent readings of foreign and domestic media to the purposeful retelling and (literally) redrawing of myths and legends to validate new forms of agency (Mehta 2015), and the ways puns, images and other nonverbal or cleverly subversive messages evade controls (Wright, this volume; Meng 2011).

However much empowerment such innovation confers or reflects, just as disparities of power and access pervade the public sphere, discourses and norms, too, embody inequalities. Most importantly, not all ideas achieve or even seek power beyond their originators. Some ideas gain transformative, pervasive force, while others are more purely expressive or identity-group-specific, and some mix norms freely while others seek hegemony, to push out or police discordant voices, as our final set of chapters explores. Indeed, however much we might adjust our lens to take in the panoply of political

space, to focus on *space* acknowledges boundaries; these boundaries may shift, but are still guarded and patrolled.

The policing of political space

Most importantly, while the state does set rules and regulations for participation and police political space, it is not just the state that monitors, regulates and suppresses interests or voices within political space. Rather, the economic pressures on which Hewison, Doucette and Shin – as well as individuals and groups from within civil society – focus likewise challenge fellow citizens' or interests' legitimacy, access or priority. To some extent, we have seen a privatization of policing; it is not just that political space is not 'neutral', but also the power relations at play are not only between citizens and state. In states across the region, we see civil society actors, extending to social movements, that are directly involved in the repression of others' agency in political space, including with intent to delimit pro-democratic expressions. Even when the terrain of political space is largely discursive, moreover, both the state and civil society policing of it may take on nonviolent as well as more violent forms.

Online public space perhaps best exemplifies this wide dissemination of surveillance and control functions, if only since intercession is comparatively public, resting on more than norms and subtle pressure that may otherwise encourage self-censorship or conformity. For instance, in her chapter, Teresa Wright teases out how state and citizens alike spar and innovate to shape both the content of and the channels for articulation. Discourse from civil society in contemporary China, she finds, may both check and bolster the regime, complicating not only the nature of that regime, but also where it verges into society.

This devolution of authority calls into question the resources non-state actors access to police or press the state or fellow citizens. Complex framing contests emerge (Benford and Snow 2000, 626), both to limit the space of 'acceptable' discourse and to expand those boundaries. Hence, Bencharat Sae Chua's discussion here of how groups of citizens contest definitions of representation and democracy, challenging liberal presumptions by mobilizing both for and against dictatorship, and developing novel forms of subversion, surveillance and suppression independent of that contested state. In such a context, too narrow an understanding of what is 'political' or who has authority would miss struggles not just between civil society and the state, but within civil society itself, and would consequently miss important clues to an understanding of political regime change or reproduction.

For that matter, not only is the state itself beholden to, or curbed by, its ready reliance on business, as Hewison details (this volume), but economic power wields more complex control. The liminal spaces of the modern economy are illustrative of both the precarity of migrant or floating, informal labour (Schierup *et al.* 2015) and the increasingly common status of

refugees as beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance, yet profoundly disabled by that status. The fraught political economy of 'aid' is notable. However life-saving, aid may serve to dehumanize or deny the political agency of its beneficiaries. As Elisabeth Olivius proposes, donors effectively seek to delimit 'citizenship', in the sense of a claim to political participation and representation (cf. Fforde 2013, for analysis of donor civil society support and intervention in Cambodia and Vietnam and its effects on political space and agency).

That the state holds no monopoly on authoritative action or norm-setting suggests the limitations of too stark a distinction between state and civil society, as well as the potential for movement among political spaces: formal, informal, public and private. Even so, the state is hardly disempowered; it, too, asserts its interests, as a corporate actor or set of self-interested component parts. Moments of regime transition offer insight not just into when and how it matters, in terms of political space, whether a regime is 'democratic' or 'authoritarian' – a theme to which we return in the concluding chapter – but also when and how political space changes. Recent experience in Myanmar offers a lens onto those processes. In his chapter, Marco Bünte presents the unlikelihood of transforming a military regime's repressive stance overnight, as well as the extent to which liberalization opens the door to within-society policing and silencing, including through methods about as violent and coercive as those the military state previously deployed.

Conclusion

Colin Crouch asserts, 'Democracy thrives when there are major opportunities for the mass of ordinary people actively to participate, through discussion and autonomous organizations, in shaping the agenda of public life, and when they are actively using these opportunities' (Crouch 2004, 2). That claim has merit, but is too narrow: we argue that non-democracies, too, benefit from meaningful participation, but that the domain of empowerment extends beyond ability to shape policy agendas. A focus on political space as a varied, mercurial, organic terrain calls into question how much a label like 'democracy' tells us about the distribution, in practice, of empowerment, voice and influence, particularly given neoliberalism's regime-blind spread.

We focus on Asia in exploring these dimensions for the opportunity to see a wide array not only of regime and state forms and capacities, but also development and activity within a full range of political spaces, by a panoply of actors. Moreover, the dynamism within political space in this region allows insight not possible from observing more stable regime types or where consolidated, established institutions, actors or ideas more consistently dominate. In our conclusion to the volume, we seek out patterns across the cases presented, in the character and use of political space across regime types, in the constitution of civil society, and in the topography of political space. Yet, as will become clear, by unsettling concepts and conventions,

our investigation opens more doors than it nudges shut, offering vistas onto a plethora of further questions.

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2 Politics and businessification

The struggle for civil society

Kevin Hewison[1]

In several countries of democratic and democratizing Asia, the first half of the 1990s was a period of considerable optimism for the consolidation of a more open politics. Those observers influenced by modernization theory were cautiously hopeful about the prospects for democracy in the region. For example, Larry Diamond (1994, 4–5) mentioned democratic openings in the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan, and in another article, added Cambodia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka (Diamond 1996). While he was cognizant of the problems faced by emerging democracies, party systems and civil society, Diamond's optimism for further democratization shone through:

> At some point in the first two decades of the twenty-first century – as economic development transforms the societies of East Asia in particular – the world will then be poised for a 'fourth wave' of democratization, and quite possibly a boon to international peace and security far more profound and enduring than we have seen with the end of the Cold War.
> (Diamond 1996, 35)

This optimism, reflected in satisfaction over the role being played by a more active civil society, was apparent in the region. On December 6, 1996, *Asiaweek* magazine, under the headline, 'Activist power hits Asia', extolled the advances made by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).[2] While the magazine recognized that NGOs had been operating in Asia for 'decades', it suggested the 1990s had witnessed a remarkable efflorescence of activism. *Asiaweek* declared NGOs were 'emerging as a bold new force for change'. These were heady days for activists: they rallied in Manila, calling for APEC to be scrapped, and in Bangalore, they campaigned against a Miss World beauty pageant. Civil society and its groups had also played significant political roles in supporting democratization in South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand. The *Asiaweek* article continued, explaining the virtues and potential of NGOs:

> They want to reduce poverty; improve women's status; stop the spread of HIV; safeguard the environment; protect workers from abuse and

> consumers from fraud; expose corruption; bolster human rights; and, oh yes, defend democracy.
>
> They work in Asia's villages and slums; they offer credit, condoms, vaccines, job training and legal aid. In some countries these groups … provide services that governments do not. They wield banners when necessary and wheedle officials when possible.

Even some rather stodgy authoritarian governments seemed more enthusiastic than they might have been in earlier days. For example, the magazine cited Singapore's Tommy Koh, an official ideologue and then the patron of the city-state's Nature Society when he observed: 'NGOs by their very nature must be nuisances. … But we need such positive nuisances'. Then-government minister in Thailand Mechai Viravaidya, who had established his own rural development and population-planning NGO, declared: 'The whole of Asia will be seeing more NGOs … because they do make a difference'.

So enthused was *Asiaweek* that a week later (December 13, 1996), it included an editorial resonant with 1960s modernization theory. Asia, it was observed, was increasingly affluent, to the extent that the region could take notice of NGOs. The magazine headlined its editorial 'Joint Venture', suggesting that governments and NGOs 'should be partners, not adversaries' in a range of areas. There were, it argued, good reasons for taking NGOs seriously: 'Among other things, the NGO movement in Asia represents a means by which the frail or disenfranchised of a society gain a voice'. The editorial trumpeted this attention to NGOs as one way of avoiding the 'pitfalls' of the expensive welfare systems of the West. For governments, NGOs were also significant political and social bellwethers, and as such, were useful 'sources of information – conduits for grassroots concerns and views'. They assisted governments to better communicate with the grassroots and they delivered services such as health care, education and credit in place of and better than governments.

The magazine concluded: 'it is clearly in any country's interest that its government should embrace its NGOs as partners in progress, rather than consider them … rivals'. It also issued a warning, counselling NGOs to resist politicization. More than this, the editorial identified a useful trend where NGOs 'work with business'. Business and NGOs sometimes had 'a communion of interests with corporations: improved child care, education and quality of life make workers happier and more productive'.

Two decades later, it is appropriate to reconsider the role of NGOs within a region where the political future looks increasingly to leave democracy in the past as several countries have witnessed an authoritarian resurgence. Political space, always volatile and malleable, has been narrowing, even as NGOs have expanded their operations.

This chapter does not seek to explain the ebb and flow of civil society (see Hewison and Rodan 1996). Rather, the task is to consider the relationships

between state and civil society and civil society and business. This chapter makes use of the literature associated with studies of 'post-democracy' on the relationship among political space, electoral politics and the fate of democracy to assess the relationship between business and civil society. The broad argument is that, in the same manner that government has been subjected to a business 'takeover', there is now a significant struggle for the control of civil society, pitting the organizations of civil society, not so much with the state – although this contest remains – but with business.

Conceptualizing civil society

While political space, civil society and NGOs will be defined below, this chapter generally emphasizes the roles and activities of NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) as significant both for theoretical reasons and for their on-the-ground activities in political space. These organizations have consistently been conceived of as contesting the state's control over political space (see Whaites 2000).

In analytical terms, 'civil society' has meanings that are embedded in the development of capitalism and the end of absolutism in Western Europe. The forces unleashed by these processes sought to reduce the weight of the state (see Bernhard 1993, 307–11). For many of the late colonial and post-colonial states of Asia, this historical context has some parallels, although the fit is by no means perfect. Yet, as the *Asiaweek* examples show, a political space was created, recreated and inhabited by organizations that, together, were thought of as civil society. In writing of Burma, Steinberg (1997) observed that civil society was:

> composed of those non-ephemeral organizations of individuals banded together for a common purpose or purposes to pursue those interests through group activities and by peaceful means. These are generally non-profit organizations, and may be local or national, advocacy or supportive, religious, cultural, social, professional, educational, or even organizations that, while not for profit, support the business sector, such as chambers of commerce, trade associations, etc.

This definition reflects the *Asiaweek* view, eschewing any notion that civil society is inhabited by political organizations. In other words, civil society groups can be formal or informal, and charitable or developmental, but not political. The organizations Steinberg mentions reflect a considerable heritage in the academic literature, identified by Whaites (2000, 128) as associated with classical de Tocquevillian thinking.

However, other analysts have adopted a different perspective, defining civil society as incorporating civil associations or community groups as well as political groups. In seeking to capture the significance of the political groups that inhabit civil society, several analysts have identified a 'political

civil society'. Writing of Vietnam, Thayer (2009, 1–2) identified such an arrangement of 'non-violent political, advocacy, labour and religious organizations and movements that seek to promote human rights and democratization in authoritarian states' (see also Ma 2007).

If it is accepted that civil society is associated with political space, then it must also be recognized that political space is open to a range of groups. Many and varied groups occupy political space, including NGOs, CBOs and state-sponsored activists; right-wing, anti-immigrant and anti-democracy activists; and other groups that many might consider nasty and reactionary (see Rodan 1996). Not all these groups will seek to expand political space or democratic development. Indeed, in Thailand, in the years since 2005, there have been several large anti-democratic movements against elected governments. These groups, some of them supported by NGOs and CBOs, have demanded military political intervention and have violently blocked voters from participating in elections (see Prajak 2016). Other examples of 'dangerous' civil society or 'uncivil society' include violent groups such as Islamic militias in Indonesia and racist Buddhist gangs in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. All these groups occupy political space as a public space and exist in a relationship with the state, whether they support or oppose the regime, state or system of government. Political space is not just any space, be it discursive, territorial or however else conceived. In fact, political space is a site of intense competition and struggle, including for the organizations that occupy this space.

Thinking in this way of political space and civil society is not uncontroversial. As already intimated, much conventional political science, heavily imbued with modernization theory, has conceived of civil society as an indicator for democratization (see Pye 1990; Huntington 1991, 135; see Weiss 2015). In terms of politics, this modernization perspective romanticizes civil society as the natural domain of individual and group freedoms. It is usually contrasted with the state's coercive institutions and its overbearing relationships.

This romanticized view of civil society remains highly influential even though it elides the divisions that exist in any society and which motivate considerable social and political conflict. Because political space is created and restricted by contestation with the state and by state fiat, civil society is connected to state power and is, in fact, a site of struggle with the state. Within civil society, this contestation means that political space will expand and contract as contests take place (Hewison and Rodan 1996). Organizations are usually expected to engage in self-discipline in return for the protection and political space afforded them. This self-discipline is an act of domestication and, in capitalist societies, often results in reformist political activism (Rodan and Jayasuriya 2009). At the same time, as indicated above, there are groups that exploit this space who are angry, radical and uncivil (see Kopecký and Mudde 2003).

Yet even in this expanded conception of the struggles associated with political space, something is missing. When conceptualized this way, civil

society is seen as a site of struggles over power. Yet such encounters are usually conceptualized as struggles with the state and its agents. Only occasionally are these contests considered to be with society's elites. This chapter will now proceed to argue that contestation is not only between the state and civil society organizations. By focusing on state and civil society, it will be argued, we are neglecting the struggle *for the control* of the very organizations of civil society. More broadly, the chapter asks: what if we find that the very nature of state, civil society and political space is not as we have understood it?

The rise of post-democratic politics

In making an argument about the struggle *for* civil society, this chapter develops and extends positions developed in the broad 'post-democracy school'. Works by Crouch (2004, 2013), Mair (2013), Streeck (2013) and Wolin (2008) are considered significant in defining this approach. In particular, the post-democracy approach pays attention to the relationships between state and business that have changed the nature of democracy. This discussion is followed by an account that links post-democracy insights with developments in civil society.

With some exceptions, the post-democracy literature is about advanced capitalist polities (for an exception, see Doucette and Koo 2016). Even so, this body of work alerts us to broad patterns of change, troubles and quandaries that face almost all capitalist societies that have democratized or seek to democratize. Post-democracy is not a system that is 'after democracy', but a political system in which popular democracy is reduced and limited. The reason for this transition is rooted in the relationship between business and the state.

The rise of US billionaire Donald Trump, who sought and won the Republican Party's nomination as its presidential candidate for the United States' highest office, caused *The Economist* (September 5, 2015) to observe that his candidature 'revealed a democracy in real trouble'. This concern about democracies in trouble deepened with the Brexit referendum, Trump's election and perceptions of the rise of rightist and populist demagogues elsewhere. If a 'vibrant civil society' really is '[a]mong the most commonly noted contributors to democratization' (Weiss 2015, 135), then 'real trouble' for US democracy raises questions about what is happening with civil society there. After all, the US has a huge crop of 'nonprofits'. Estimates of their number are as high as 1.5 million formal groups. Not all these groups are required to lodge tax information, yet in 2013, nonprofits reported over $1.74 trillion in total revenues (National Center for Charitable Statistics 2015). So why is it that a nation overflowing with civil society protagonists is a place where democracy is in trouble?

The literature on post-democracy offers considerable insight on 'democratic declines'. Post-democracy is a political system in which elites and

technocrats tightly control policy and debate, while the 'mass of citizens plays a passive, quiescent, even apathetic part. … Behind this spectacle of the electoral game, politics is really shaped in private by interaction between elected governments and elites that overwhelmingly represent business interests' (Crouch 2004, 4). The 'trouble' and democratic decline, then, have to do with the role of business and its domination of the state. This role also impacts civil society and its organizations, something returned to later in this chapter.

Several analysts have pointed to the economic and political triumph of capitalism following the end of the Cold War and the shattering of national social contracts as the context for the emergence of post-democracy. The associated national class conflicts and international conflagrations that grew from what Lichtenstein (2004, 108) identifies as a 'crisis of transatlantic capitalism during the first half of the twentieth century' saw agreement among 'policy liberals and social conservatives that free-market capitalism was an increasingly obsolete system'. This realization resulted in the emergence of the 'embedded liberalism' that Ruggie (1982) argued permitted Western combinations of freer trade, national capitalisms and social welfare. These were essentially class compromises that saw a 'blend of state, market, and democratic institutions [developed] to guarantee peace, inclusion, well-being, and stability' (Harvey 2005, 10). The last decades of the twentieth century, associated with the rise of neoliberal capitalism, destroyed these First World social contracts.

The political outcome of this neoliberal triumph is a new conception of democracy – post-democracy. The vastly expanded political and economic power of capitalists and their influence over the state meant that political democracy has been reduced or undone (see Crouch 2004, 10). Post-democracy emerges to strip away democracy's 'popular component', or as Mair (2013, 2) has characterized it, to allow an 'easing away from the demos'. A further feature of post-democracy is the rise of 'anti-politics' and its notion that the state is redundant. Where the state does intervene, it is considered to be deadening or even threatening when compared with the allegedly more dynamic arenas of society found in communities and markets. In this view, 'governance' is best when more-or-less self-organizing and self-regulating, and should be left to the private sector and/or communities. In other words, the 'important decisions' in society need to be 'taken out of the hands of government' (Mair 2013, 5).

Taking this analysis further, it is now common for activists of various political persuasions to declare that mainstream politicians, as tools of the elite, are not to be trusted. Anyone who listened to the demands of the anti-democracy demonstrators on Bangkok's streets in 2014 will recognize this clarion call to oppose elections because politicians are corrupt, immoral and untrustworthy (see Prajak 2016, 475–6).[3] Claims that government and state are overbearing, corrupt and restrictive of the 'true' aspirations of communities, non-state organizations or democracy will be recognized by many as

also emanating from some in civil society, where an anti-politics agenda is developed and propagated (see Jayasuriya and Hewison 2004).

In post-democracy, the best policy outcomes are achieved with limited government but unrestrained capitalist development. Government becomes subordinate to economic growth, technocracy and/or business. Government is best when it is limited to providing the appropriate regulatory framework for capitalist development. Meanwhile, the role of non-governmental institutions expands (see Mair 2013, 4).

It may seem odd to talk about post-democracy as a limiting and constraining set of processes and ideology when democratization has undergone a global expansion since the end of the Cold War. Post-democracy analysts do not deny that elections are held in more places than ever before, or that some of these elections result in changes of government, or that activism for openness, accountability and other reforms may strengthen some aspects of democracy. Yet for all of these effects, democracy has been trivialized (see Crouch 2004, 12). And, as Rodan and Hughes (2014) have shown for Southeast Asia, transparency and accountability 'reforms' can amount to little more than moral claims that enhance the positions of elites and further denigrate electoral politics. For example, in Thailand, a military junta that seized power in 2014 from an elected government claims to be reforming politics, ousting corrupt politicians, reducing inequality, promoting a more moral society and more. Yet the military's politics is authoritarian and its proclamation that it will return democracy to Thailand is actually an effort to establish a 'guided democracy' that will enhance the elite's political, economic and social power.

Crouch (2004, 104) is clear in identifying the 'fundamental cause of democratic decline' that makes post-democracy. That cause is 'the major imbalance now developing between the role of corporate interests *and those of virtually all other groups*' (emphasis added). This imbalance not only trivializes electoral politics but dashes hopes 'for an agenda of strong egalitarian policies for the redistribution of power and wealth, or for the restraint of powerful interests'.

Making the business of the state the business of business

The post-democracy perspective on business focuses on its power and its relationship with the state, viewing this relationship as determining. Crouch (2004, 30, 43) is clear that firms are not simply a means to accumulate capital. Rather, they are a concentration of economic, ideological and political power. In the view of post-democracy analysts, business power dominates the state to such an extent that its interests are paramount and shape the state. The relationship between business and the state is both antagonistic and a partnership, where business is the dominant partner. Business rails against the state as a drag on entrepreneurialism, as fettering markets and taking up too much space. Yet, as Crouch (2004, 19) points out, 'corporate

lobbies show no signs of losing interest in using the state to achieve favours for themselves'.

Questions of taxation present one example of the many debates surrounding post-democratic and neoliberal notions of 'governance' and reducing state imposts. No one, it seems, wants higher taxes. Everywhere, businesses demand lower taxes. It is taxes, business lobbies say, that reduce entrepreneurialism, growth and employment, with radicals claiming it is 'theft' (Huemer 2017). Keen to attract investment, governments compete for business on the basis of low tax regimes. The burden of tax is thus shifted from companies to individuals through income taxes. Individuals hear the call for lower taxes and resent the burden they face. The result can be that they support politicians, parties and governments promising to reduce tax demands or redirect them, most usually to regressive consumption taxes. This leads to budget cuts, a reduced state role and deteriorating public services, especially in health, education and welfare (Crouch 2004, 33–4).

Inexorably, declining revenue bases mean the promotion of the 'commercialization' of the state and its services. Promoted as 'reform' and bringing commercial principles to the 'business' of state, the result is a commodification of previously noncommodified domains of state intervention in critical areas such as education, health and welfare. Such 'reforms' are broadly neoliberal and fundamentally imbued with anti-democratic and technocratic notions of managerialism and new public management (see Wolin 2008). This process sees state services contracted out, a loss of competencies in government, more private sector involvement, advice and contracts and the dominance of business models. The result is that business power comes to dominate government in a process of the broad 'businessification' of the state. Firms do not just dominate the economy but are also taking on roles in the 'running of government' (Crouch 2004, 44).

While parts of the welfare state remain in Western democracies, where the state continues to provide services, these areas remain available for capital's domination. State agencies and quasi-state agencies such as universities, schools, hospitals, local services and more are subjected to businessification. What have been primarily public services are required to 'improve', meet key performance indicators (KPIs), and respond to stakeholders, converted to customers and clients, be they patients, students or the public. 'Reform' is defined by submission to the 'discipline' and 'efficiencies' of the market. Public services are required to mimic businesses by contracting out capital projects and service delivery, developing public-private partnerships, subjecting themselves to privatization and broader processes of commodification. Crouch (2004, 109) states that rather than 'clarifying the boundary between government and business, neo-liberalism has mixed them up in manifold new ways – but all within the former territory reserved to government'.

Of course, this businessification is meant to be completed with 'efficiency dividends' that reduce state employment and budgets. This process is more complex than notions of 'starving the beast' (Bartlett 2007). As tax revenues

are reduced, states become indebted, essentially to pay for their businessification (see Streeck 2013, ch. 2). By making themselves more like businesses, states lose their capacity in many critical areas, making them even more reliant on contractors and consultant firms. One result is that states lose their knowledge base and, ultimately, their 'authority' (Crouch 2004, 100). Government is reduced to the position of customer, a purchaser of services from the private sector. The 'corporate makeover' is complete when the process results in managerialism, commodification, privatization and the conversion to customer, all of which come together as businessification.

This is all very familiar to citizens-as-consumers. It is 'normalized' in the sense that it is recognized in universities and schools and in daily dealings with government agencies. This business model is understood because of dealings with mobile phone companies, airlines, hotels, computer suppliers and insurance companies, or when consumers speak with someone at a 'contractor' company employed at a twilight world of call centres spread across the globe.

The post-democracy argument is that, as business wants, the space for the state has been narrowed, but, more significantly, quite a lot of the remaining space has been occupied or co-occupied by business. In complex ways, business power dominates the state as a class project. As Crouch (2004, 51–2) puts it:

> In pre-democratic times social elites which dominated economic and social life also monopolized political influence and positions in public life. The rise of democracy forced them at least to share space … with representatives of non-elite groups. Today, however, through the growing dependence of government on the knowledge and experience of corporate executives and leading entrepreneurs, and the dependency of parties on their funds, we are steadily moving towards the establishment of a new dominant, combined political and economic class.

The struggle for the organizations of civil society

How does this post-democracy approach provide insights on civil society and political space? This question is significant not least because several definitions of civil society specifically exclude business (Shaw 2008, 269). Some theorists even argue that civil society itself is of a past era, with Hardt (1998, 23) arguing that civil society has gone the way of modernity and we need to understand 'postcivil society'. Whether we inhabit a modernist civil society or some kind of post-civil society, it is argued here that significant change is taking place in the political space inhabited by civil society.

Civil society is also undergoing a businessification that mirrors the processes in the state's relationship with business. Just as that process in the state was conflicted and contested, so it is in civil society. In other words, civil society is a site of struggle, much as Gramsci considered civil society a

site of contestation, 'where capitalists, workers and others engage in political and ideological struggles' (Simon 1982, 69). The contemporary struggle is *for the organizations of civil society*.

The processes involved in the struggle for civil society have at least two significant resonances with the post-democracy account of the contest for the state. First, the neoliberal and anti-politics claim that citizens no longer need the state is echoed in civil society discourses about the threat the state poses to the 'grassroots'. And, second, the businessification of the state is also a recognizable trend extending 'deep marketization' into the space of civil society through the control of ideology and organizations in that space (see Carroll 2012).

The *Asiaweek* era of the 1990s saw a particularly strong version of what might be seen as an NGO populism emerge that was opposed to both big capitalism and the state, particularly in post-economic crisis Asia (see Hewison 2001). It has sometimes been concluded that because they are non-governmental, NGOs and CSOs are 'capable of liberating communities and individuals from incompetent or oppressive states on the one hand and the grip of the market on the other' (Watkins, Swidler and Hannan 2012, 286). In response, Petras (1999, 430) has lambasted NGOs and CSOs for representing themselves as a Third Way between 'authoritarian statism' and 'savage market capitalism' while promoting 'alternative development' that turns increasingly to market-friendly 'alternatives' in microfinance, micro- and social entrepreneurialism, impact bonds and marketization.

The anti-state/anti-politics rhetoric rings loud in civil society, just as it does in business. Recently, Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, the Secretary General of CIVICUS, a global alliance of CSOs and activists from 165 countries that declares itself dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world, has claimed that there is now a 'renewed period of contestation about the acceptable bounds of civil society, the latest manifestation of the battle to protect citizens against state power' (CIVICUS 2015, 5). Such claims fit neatly with neoliberal exhortations that modern government is best when operating as a combination of 'stakeholder participation' augmented by 'problem-solving efficiency' (see Mair 2013, 15). Calls for 'participatory governance', often a kind of anti-politics declaration, have been widely taken up. Participation is often defined in terms of appropriate decision-making. In authoritarian regimes, this mode might be progressive, but in democratizing regimes, grassroots decision-making facilitated by quasi-technocratic NGOs and CSOs has the potential to undermine elections, representation, delegated power, politicians and institutions like political parties. The notion is that it is not just states and politicians that cannot be trusted, but neither can voters be.

Interestingly, business seems somehow neglected in this battle to protect citizens against state power and venal politicians, and even against themselves as voters. To be sure, there has been anti-business rhetoric amongst NGOs. Yet those criticisms are declining as NGOs cooperate with business and government on a vast scale and themselves become more businesslike.

Petras has argued that NGOs promoting this kind of politics are in the service of 'neoliberal elites', where these elites are interested in NGOs because of the useful 'capacity of NGOers to raid popular communities and direct energy toward self-help projects instead of social transformations' (Petras 1999, 432). That may be a harsh judgement, yet there is a congruence of interest between NGOs and elites in 'understanding' – and managing, if not controlling – the grassroots, as *Asiaweek* had urged in the 1990s. At the same time, it is noticeable that the neoliberal agenda adopted by donors and recipient governments has seen the rise of numerous 'non-state actors … involved in the governing process itself' (Brass 2012, 209). The result is a complex intertwining of governance processes that support a broader businessification.

As governments withdraw from service provision and delivery, it is often NGO 'partners' that are contracted to deliver services, complete contract research and perform other services required by donor and recipient governments. It is this contracting that allows NGOs to make money. More often than not, the 'projects' contracted are not those that the NGOs might have chosen if they had their own funding streams. Increasingly, NGOs find themselves engaged in competitive markets and wound up in the resulting red tape of accountability, accountancy and more required by businessified government agencies in areas such as development and welfare. While such demands cause some angst as NGOs concentrate on the aims of others and their logical frameworks and bookkeeping, attention to the grassroots wavers. Such processes reveal another trend in businessification: working with private donors has come to be perceived as easier than working with businessified and managerialized state agencies.

When CSOs and NGOs link with businessified government agencies, businesses and foundations, they find themselves competing with the private sector in terms of who better implements projects, service delivery and poverty alleviation. State agencies now engage in contract bidding for service providers. As a CIVICUS (2015, 153) report notes, a local or national government becomes 'a shopper for the cheapest means of delivery, indifferent about whether it contracts a CSO or a business, although businesses may be preferred because they are less likely to raise difficult questions'.

Importantly, though, the private sector business is not just a competing 'supplier'. In addition, there is an emerging discourse that argues for the recognition of 'the power of the private sector to transform the lives of poor people' (Mitchell 2011; see also Bernstein 2010). Business executives proclaim their capacity for getting the development job done. Andy Wales (2014), the corporate affairs director of the giant brewer SABMiller Europe, claimed: 'The role of business value chains in driving meaningful poverty alleviation must not be underestimated – and indeed at Davos this year [2014] there was a clear consensus that business has a critical role to play in wider poverty alleviation'. He added: 'The company I work for … has a significant emerging market footprint meaning that we are able to

understand the multiple benefits of supporting micro and small businesses development'.

These claims that it is firms and entrepreneurs that drive development and poverty alleviation are now widely accepted in government, international financial institutions and other elements of the development community. Even when faced with contrary evidence, state agencies have been reluctant to reconsider private sector claims and claims about the capacity of the private sector (see Independent Commission for Aid Impact 2014; 2015).[4] Indeed, Norfund, the Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries, established by the Norwegian Parliament in 1997, in 2015 had a portfolio of US$1.7 billion for 'business development'. Norfund is the Norwegian government's 'main instrument for combatting poverty through private sector development' and seeks to invest in 'profitable and sustainable' enterprises to 'promote business development and contribute to economic growth and poverty alleviation' (Norfund 2015).

This businessification of development, also seen in welfare and other services, is also associated with the faddish growth of social businesses, sustainable markets, social innovation, microfinance, microbusinesses, microfranchising, social incubators, information and communication technology innovations and more (see Wankel 2008). Indeed, in some accounts, it is social business that will 'save' capitalism (Yunus 2007); other accounts hold that such privatized ventures are a logical outcome of capitalism's economic superiority and political victory (Bernstein 2010). Social enterprise coupled with 'social entrepreneurialism' is touted as bringing business and commercial strategies to bear in improving human and environmental wellbeing (Ridley-Duff and Bull 2011). In social enterprise and its related activities, outcomes are measured by market results rather than, say, development outcomes.

Social enterprise is also voguish for 'philanthropists', some of whom describe themselves as 'evangelists' for social enterprise and who exude an 'American Dream', can-do, personalized and individualistic approach to doing good and the business of development (see, for example, Skoll Foundation 2015). Their wealth, influence and star attraction allow them to bring together governments, rock stars, venerable educational institutions and other celebrity developers to promote their causes.[5] 'Philanthrocapitalism' is embraced by businessified governments and business people (Hobbes 2014, 3). Anyone who has been through Bangkok's international airport will have seen the Thai royal commercial outlets hawking products from 'villagers'. Such enterprises are profitable and market-expanding. At the same time, they do as much to propagandize for the world's wealthiest monarchy as they do for the grassroots, long oppressed and exploited by a royalist alliance of tycoons, military and monarchy.

In this approach, the nature of civil society is also redefined along the lines of the businessification seen in state agencies. The space of civil society is defined as inhabited by individuals rather than collections of organizations

(CIVICUS 2015, 35). In this way, those at the grassroots become clients, customers and key stakeholders to be surveyed, focus-grouped and so on. The individualization of civil society is meant to unleash its latent entrepreneurialism. States can contribute to this process by providing an appropriate regulatory framework: granting property rights, making loans and providing seed capital and other commercial inputs. Some of the earliest efforts toward establishing regulatory frameworks for the promotion of individualized business were in Southeast Asian rural areas, involving land titling projects funded by the World Bank, bilaterals and domestic governments (see Feder 1987). Such projects were forms of primitive accumulation meant to commodify the commons and increase productivity by smallholder farms producing for capitalist markets. Today, it is businesses or businessified NGOs that are required to lead embryonic grassroots entrepreneurs to the market.

As the nature of civil society is redefined by this broad process of businessification, so it changes funding. Some CSOs and NGOs refuse government and corporate funding, but these organizations are in the minority. And much funding has been converted to contracts for services and work in an environment that has seen the rise of individual and corporate philanthropy.

Some estimates suggest that private development assistance is now equal to about a third of the overseas development assistance (ODA) from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members, and that it makes up about a quarter of all humanitarian funding (CIVICUS 2015, 167). 2011 data from just 30 countries estimated that more than US$47 billion was provided in private development assistance (Hénon and Stirk 2015, 258–9). Private donors are also important for NGOs in fields other than development. While private donations are sometimes seen as coming with fewer strings attached, to access such funds, CSOs and NGOs must engage in corporate-style marketing, advertising and branding, and present agendas that wealthy individuals find palatable and even 'exciting'. In other words, the nature and ideology of donors shape agendas.

The influential and wealthy are also gaining increased attention as private philanthropy becomes more significant. Often conceiving of themselves as entrepreneurs, these individuals not only have wealth, but they see themselves as having particular skills and abilities honed in the Darwinian corporate world that are models for problem-solving and dealing with the world's health, social and economic problems. Inevitably, they prefer business and investment 'solutions'. Often this approach is top-driven, in CEO-style: 'This is what you need. I'll give you what you need'.

CIVICUS (2015, 173) asks: 'what does it mean, for those CSOs seeking structural change in the interests of social justice, if they accept funds from the wealthy winners of current economic and political arrangements?' Certainly, where money comes from is important. As they observe, a small and powerful group of 'private foundations commands most resources, with

the ten largest private foundations providing 60% of all international foundation giving, meaning that their decisions on resource allocation can be disproportionately influential' (CIVICUS 2015, 170–1).

This constellation of ideas, demands and practices of businessification amount to a 'convergence' rather than a challenge. As advocates put it:

> Businesses and civil society – in all of its incarnations – actually do have a strong convergence of interests when it comes to levelling the playing field.
>
> The rule of law is preferable to the rule of power. Predictability trumps disorder. Fairness is better than corruption. These statements ring as true for business as they do for civil society. Stable, balanced environments are better for everyone, whether they be a multinational corporation, a grassroots activist group, or a major international CSO working on health issues.
>
> It is time that we acknowledge our similarities and start working together to achieve this, for the benefit of each sector, and for society as a whole.
>
> (Kiai and Leissner 2015, 272)

Working together and competing with each other means that market logics need to be applied to NGOs. One example of the logic of the market at work comes from Tim Costello, chief executive of World Vision Australia and chair of the Community Council for Australia. He argues for a 'rationalization' of NGOs. With limited funding available, Australia's peak body representing the not-for-profit sector called for 'mergers, where there is wasteful duplication by charitable organisations' (Costello 2015). Small NGOs are, apparently, unable to meet the demands of efficiency, evaluation, transparency and good governance. Mergers and acquisitions might be another business innovation that can make 'charitables' efficient and accountable.

Conclusion

The struggle for civil society analyzed in this chapter is a contest that has been seen before in the ways in which business has come to dominate the state in post-democracies. At the same time, the successful businessification of the state means that civil society is faced by a two-pronged effort, by state and business, to businessify the organizations of civil society. Businessified NGOs will pose even fewer challenges to regimes, repressive or democratic, than in the past. Businessification means that NGOs, CSOs and CBOs will tend to be supportive of – or at least not challenging to – the regimes of the day, meaning that the narrowing of political space is likely to result. Petras (1999, 435) pointed out that there has been a tendency for 'apolitical' postures amongst NGOs, and observes that 'their focus on self-help depoliticizes and demobilizes the poor'. Whatever we think of that judgement, for

Asia, much as *Asiaweek* suggested in the 1990s, civil society representation and participation is largely about regulation. Businesses and states understand that.

Yet this post-democracy-influenced argument is not that civil society is lost or that NGOs have sold out. Rather, this approach observes that, in politics, democracy is weakened by businessification. As businessification takes hold of the organizations of civil society, they experience a diminution of activism that contributes to the narrowing of political space, the rise of anti-politics and the domination of business elites. If the space of civil society is being businessified, political strategies need to take that into account and adjust to the power of business over state and civil society.

Notes

1 When revising this chapter, Kevin Hewison was a Visiting Researcher at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University. The author acknowledges the Centre's generous support.
2 As Whaites (2000, 124) notes, there was a corresponding expansion of academic interest in NGOs and civil society.
3 Such claims are also the ballast of populist politicians (see Canovan 1999, 7; Müller 2016).
4 Indicating the extent of businessification in state agencies, both reports were completed with the assistance of consultants, including KPMG LLP and Agulhas Applied Knowledge, which themselves are private companies that have contracted with the agency being reviewed.
5 Reports of anti-poverty fads gone bad are common. See, for example, reports on the TOMS and Skechers shoes-for-the-poor failures and the troubles faced by the PlayPump drinking water initiative (*The Economist*, November 5, 2016; Hobbes 2014).

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3 Post-democracy and political space

Lessons from the Korean experience[1]

Jamie Doucette

Despite the occurrence of mass democratic events across East Asia in the late 1980s and early 1990s – from popular uprisings to negotiated transitions – contemporary movements for greater democratization, labour rights and socio-economic equality in the region have seemed frustrated by the resilience of elite power. The source of this frustration has not only been the terms upon which many political systems have been transformed (Shin 2012), and the manner in which marginalized voices have continued to be left out, but also the resilience of forms of policing, censorship and legal persecution associated with former authoritarian regimes. For instance, the National Security Law in South Korea, *lèse majesté* in Thailand, the charge of 'disturbing public order' in China and the Sedition Act in Malaysia remain powerful tools in the hands of ruling elites who use them to silence and demobilize popular opposition. Furthermore, the use of these laws is often emboldened by the survival of Cold War-era geopolitical imaginaries that depict popular politics as an internal threat to the nation-state itself and as harbouring chaos and disorder.

This chapter examines the salience that contemporary literatures on post-democracy and political space might provide for understanding the challenges raised by these policies and the elites who use them to enforce unpopular economic policies and to safeguard their power from popular contention. To do so, the chapter promotes a concept of post-democracy adjusted to take Asian contexts into account, using South Korea as an exemplar, and a reading of political space that emphasizes its emancipatory potential. Rather than simply seeing elite power as a by-product of neoliberal globalization, the approach to post-democracy and political space promoted in this chapter foregrounds important questions of political will, intentionality and antagonism as essential to the study of political economic transformation in Asia and beyond. Focusing on the Korean experience in particular, I seek to show how the survival of Cold War geopolitical imaginaries, the role of neoliberal restructuring in constraining the ambitions of labour and democracy movements, and the persistence of juridical forms of repression associated with authoritarian politics have acted to insulate elites from popular politics. And yet, this form of politics has not necessarily

been successful at securing long-term stability for conservative politicians, as the recent ‘candlelight revolution’ and impeachment of President Park Geun-hye have revealed. Taken too far, post-democracy has the potential to provoke political crisis and lead to the re-energizing of mass politics under the right conditions.

Interrogating post-democracy

While the literature on post-democracy is varied, in general, the term has been used to denote a process of depoliticization that occurs under ostensibly democratic regimes where elections are held and governments rotate, and where there is a formal guarantee of freedom of speech. This process represents an erosion of democracy in the sense that key political and economic decision-making powers as provided within the democratic framework are monopolized by a small elite, one often associated with pre-democratic times. Political participation is confined to processes that lack substantive deliberation and that do not contest established political–economic configurations and/or participation is replaced by techno-managerial governance. In other words, post-democracy functions as a process of disempowering the electorate. This process can take place through a variety of means, among which are tactics such as the public security laws mentioned above. These tactics are often used to target political conflicts and disagreement as an ‘an ultra politics of radical and violent disavowal’, to be penalized through exclusion and containment (Swyngedouw 2011, 370). Political disagreement is treated as a disturbance to public order and targeted with the same logic as a police operation (see Rancière 1999; Stravrakakis 2011).

In addition, much of the literature on post-democracy highlights the following hallmark features: the establishment of a neoliberal consensus between dominant political parties (in most cases due to the rightward drift of social democracy), the commercialization of public services, the reorientation of political parties from their core ideologies to the vagaries of public opinion polls, and the resilience of the national security state apparatus (Crouch 2004; Rorty 2004; Rancière 1999). However, these features are not, by any means, universal; post-democracy is not a one-size-fits-all process but, rather, one that is heterogeneous, differentiated and uneven, and that takes place across and through geographic scales (Swyngedouw 2011, 372; Hwang, Lee and Muller 2016).

Crouch (2004) periodizes post-democracy as a parabola-shaped process in which democratization recedes from a peak or ‘maximal’ level of mass participation by ordinary people who demonstrate a popular concern with egalitarian causes and demands. It represents not simply a reverse course, but rather a tendency towards neglect, erosion and even entropy, barring major crises and events. While the terminology they employ may be different, this general sentiment is what unites authors associated with the concept of post-democracy: each sees it as a process that abuses democratic

institutions and erodes democratic control and accountability, and thus works towards reducing democracy to a minimalist form. In Crouch's words, 'a post-democratic society is one that continues to have and to use all the institutions of democracy but in which they increasingly become a formal shell' (Crouch 2013).

Nonetheless, Crouch has mainly been concerned with the form this process has taken in Western Europe and North America, where social-democratic political parties have drifted towards a free-market consensus and where opinion polling and media spectacle have become a surrogate for clearly articulated political ideologies and substantive participation. He notes, but does not analyze in detail, similar processes that have animated politics in Eastern Europe and Japan, albeit in a more compressed form. We might extrapolate from his remarks that Western European and North American politics should not present the only cases from which the concept might be extricated and to which it may be applied, and that post-democracy might take on varied spatial and temporal forms, depending on content and context.

While the rightward drift of social democracy has shaped post-democracy in Western Europe, the concept itself might be revised and extended by applying it to cases characterized by greater and lesser degrees of liberal democracy. Here, the process might not be something that primarily originates from the left per se, but might take a more compressed and confrontational trajectory, such as has been seen in many Asian contexts where conservative actors have sought to erode the gains and mobilizations made after democratic events. In many contexts, these actors have attempted to adjust to democratization by accepting its formal validity while simultaneously undermining, through both accommodative and subversive means, the popular actors who have supported democracy. For some of those involved, this undermining might resemble a process of passive revolution (Gray 2013). Furthermore, as the political struggles that it targets are always specific and particular, so too are the inherent geographies of post-democracy. Applying the concept to any specific context thus requires paying attention to the ways in which post-democracy grafts itself onto existing hegemonic structures of political–economic power and trajectories of development and democratization rather than assuming that democratization will follow a preordained path, with the same actors and institutional contexts in each place.

The geographical variability of post-democracy means that in some contexts, such as the Thai case described by Glassman (2010), the process may be animated by forms of right-wing politics that correspond to authoritarian reversal. Disentangling the two processes can be challenging in as much as authoritarian actors often affirm democratic values, actors and institutions while simultaneously seeking to undermine them. At the same time, there is no necessary link between the two developments. Post-democracy should be thought of as a process of reducing democracy to a manipulable, minimalist

form rather than as a reversion to fully fledged authoritarian rule as such. And yet, inasmuch as post-democracy is considered to be a parabola-shaped process, it does not preclude an outcome such as authoritarian reversal: the parabola can indeed cross the *X* axis and leave the space of democracy.

For instance, Glassman (2010, 1303) describes the lead-up to the Thai coup of 2006 and its subsequent reverberations as a slide towards post-democracy, understood as a condition animated by both the *subversion* of democratic political forms achieved through previous social struggles and explicit attempts to *rein in* popular influence. In the Thai case, it was the influence of up-country and poor people's movements – and the mild extension of social rights via affordable health care programs and rural development schemes promoted by Thaksin Shinawatra – that wealthy and influential royalists and aligned political forces targeted. In order to understand this predicament, Glassman provides an analysis of the forces of uneven development that underlie the status quo, which has sought to defer long-standing demands for equality by Thai poor people's movements that have participated in a variety of democratic mobilizations against royalist and military rule over the past four decades. As discussed above, here the sources of post-democracy have less to do with the rightward drift of social democratic parties, which are barely fledgling in the Thai context, than with the enduring legacy of Cold War developmentalism, which has allowed royalist elites to continue to exercise a considerable capacity to mobilize the coercive institutions of the state, even when there is a functioning multiparty parliament (Glassman 2010, 1319).

Glassman wrote his analysis at a time when it appeared that Thailand would continue along a post-democratic trajectory characterized by a 'functioning multiparty parliament but in which governments elected by the majority cannot effectively function or carry out policies because of Bangkok-based and royalist opposition' (Glassman 2010, 1319). The electoral victory of the People's Power Party in 2007 and Pheu Thai Party in 2011 seemed to confirm this assessment. Following the crackdown on the 'red shirts' backing these parties in the events leading up to the May 2014 coup, however, Glassman (2013) has placed much greater emphasis on the explicitly authoritarian dimensions of the Thai situation. In this case, the concept of post-democracy, which symbolizes an erosion or hollowing out of democracy, loses its efficacy as a description of the current situation, but not necessarily of the processes that led up to it. Post-democracy is thus a useful concept for exploring political processes that seek to contain political conflict under a minimal semblance of democracy. Once that semblance has been breached, a shift in conceptual focus may be necessary, depending on what aspects of the situation are under study. However, given that authoritarian interruptions of democratic rule are often justified through a post-democratic logic, the concept may yet have traction in distinctly authoritarian contexts, including Thailand and China, where intervention is justified as necessary to preserve the social order so that a functioning

political system can be established or maintained. It is best, then, to understand post-democracy as a process that operates along a continuum ranging from relatively liberal to authoritarian contexts.

Frustrations of Korean democratization

The dilemmas of contemporary South Korean politics under the conservative regimes of Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013) and Park Geun-hye (2013–2017) provide further material for developing the concept of post-democracy and teasing out its geographical complexity. Both of these governments consistently emphasized respect for the rule of law but often resorted to tactics that evinced little conviction regarding the importance of upholding democratic principles, most notably freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the independence of the judiciary and Prosecution Service, much less collective labour rights. Furthermore, Park's ultimate impeachment by the National Assembly in December 2016, a decision upheld by the Constitutional Court in March 2017, demonstrates the depth to which this politics might be pursued before provoking a crisis. South Korean politics also provides a good counter-case to the Thai situation as it shows that authoritarian reversal is not the natural outcome of post-democratization in post-authoritarian contexts. Instead, aggressively pursued, post-democracy has the possibility of re-energizing popular politics. Post-democracy should thus be thought of more as a tendency toward depoliticization: a tendency that has the potential to provoke crisis and reconstruction, rather than as a deterministic, unidirectional law akin to entropy – a term that Crouch occasionally uses to describe post-democracy.

The task of seeing post-democracy as a varied and uneven process imminent to historically situated geographies is further aided by the work of critical South Korea scholars who have described the frustrations of contemporary Korean politics in a manner commensurate with much of the post-democracy literature. For instance, in *Democracy after Democratization: The Korean Experience,* Choi Jang-jip (2005) argues that South Korean democratization has been a conservative process that has failed to develop substantive institutions and political parties that adequately represent the socio-economic interests of the working class (see also Song 2013; Shin 2010 and this volume; Suh *et al.* 2012). Choi's initial theory of 'conservative democratisation' concerned post-1987 regimes. He was especially critical of the liberal democratic governments of Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003–08), which implemented neoliberal economic policies in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–98. However, since 2007, Choi has focused his attention on the more conservative dynamics witnessed since the election of Lee Myung-bak in 2007. Lee's government attacked, undermined or closed down a number of the new institutions established by the preceding liberal administrations and that were strongly oriented towards addressing past wrongs, such as the National Human Rights Commission, Truth

and Reconciliation Commission and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, all of which were restructured, disbanded or largely subordinated under Lee's tenure (Doucette 2013; Kim DC 2010; De Custer 2010). In light of these changes, Choi (2009, 6) advanced the thesis that liberal democracy in South Korea has been poorly established. As a consequence, changes in 'authoritarian bureaucratic apparatuses and their behavioural norms' have taken place at an extremely slow pace and under Lee, some of the former repressive apparatuses of the state, notably the judicial and police agencies, expanded their 'functions and power in a manner with which the citizens were quite familiar during the authoritarian rule' (Choi 2009, 6).

The source of this problem, for Choi, dates back to the Cold War and post-liberation period and thus has its origins in East Asia's regional geo-political economy rather than simply in 'territorially trapped' or nationally confined forces. Choi argues that while the values and institutions of liberalism provided the 'raison d'état' for the establishment of a separate South Korean state after emancipation from the Japanese, anti-communism came to be seen as a more urgent task than building a democratic state. The architects of the separate South Korean state felt that 'under the circumstances, the realization of liberal democracy was not possible without the realizing of national security and internal political stability'. From Choi's perspective, the two processes – 'materializing liberal democracy and building an anti-Communist bulwark' – became virtually identical as state builders chose to consolidate 'the political order and stability of the regime by making it [the regime] a solid anti-Communist bulwark prior to building liberal democracy' (Choi 2009, 2). The result was the displacement and deferral of liberalism as the ultimate goal of the state's foundation, leading to an 'obvious discrepancy between reality and rhetoric, and between formal institutions and practices' (Choi 2009, 2). From Choi's perspective, this regional Cold War legacy continues to shape contemporary politics. The national security issue remains an imperative that cannot be overridden by other principles and norms, 'even those of democracy and liberalism', such that 'the ends and the means are hardly allowed to be distinguished' (Choi 2009, 6). In other words, the frailty of liberalism leads to a lack of moral restraint in the way in which the government deals with political conflict and security pressures.

Choi's work is complemented by that of critical sociologist Cho Hee-yeon, who uses the concept of post-democracy to describe the composition of the Lee Myung-bak regime. Cho (2012, 7) agrees with Choi that liberal democratic regimes have failed to substantively represent the working class and have thus aided the conservative trajectory of democratization. In this sense, the appeal of Lee's pro-growth politics stemmed in part from the failure of the preceding liberal governments and presidents to address fundamental problems in society such as income inequality, the influence of the *chaebol* and the power of public security agencies. However, Cho adds that the more recent neo-conservative government of Lee Myung-bak in particular represents a post-democratic threshold in that it was composed of both

neo-conservative forces and remnants of the old dictatorial regime (Cho 2012, 16). In Cho's (2012) view, the Lee government was post-democratic in that it did not involve 'regime reformers' or 'regime challengers', as did previous liberal-democratic governments, and relied instead on traditional pro-business and regional interests, as well as the neo-conservatives of the New Right movement, while undermining state institutions designed to safeguard democratic norms and promote social equality. In other words, for Cho, it was the composition of the forces involved in political participation within the administration rather than simply its style of politics that made the Lee regime post-democratic.

Both Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye's administrations were animated by a unique alliance of political forces associated with the so-called 'New Right' movement and remnants of prior authoritarian regimes, such as former prosecutors who were at the centre of past public security scares and came to occupy prominent positions in the ruling Saenuri Party, in addition to serving as Park Geun-hye's core advisors. The New Right supplied these older conservative forces with a narrative that posits democratization largely in terms of market democracy and as a linear outcome of the modernization policies pursued by former authoritarian regimes: a teleological narrative that denigrates political struggles and hard-fought accomplishments of past democratic movements. The New Right, much like the old right to which it claims to be heir, has been critical of efforts to revisit past injustices committed by the authoritarian regimes, seeing such initiatives as undermining the legitimacy of the South Korean state. To accord prestige to conservative forces, members of the New Right have promoted the effort to introduce state-mandated textbooks that offer a revised and rosier view of past dictatorships. This initiative has been complemented by Korea's Official Development Assistance policies, such as the Korean Development Institute's Knowledge Sharing Program (KSP) and similar Korean-sponsored initiatives by the United Nations and OECD. Under Park Geun-hye, these organizations sponsored programs that promoted Korea's authoritarian-era rural mobilization program, the New Village Movement (*Saemaul Undong*) as an example of grassroots, community-led and sustainable development (Doucette and Muller 2016). By seeking international recognition for *Saemaul*, the government sought, by extension, to accord praise for contemporary political forces associated with Park's father, the late dictator Park Chung Hee. These efforts have thus mobilized geographic scale (in this case, international organization and development assistance programmes) in pursuit of power and prestige for pre-democratic elites.

Political space

The frustrations of Korean democratization alert us both to the uneven pathways and space of post-democracy as well as to the necessity of situating the process in relation to specific actors and their geographies. But there is also

another way in which the post-democracy literature is useful for interrogating Korean politics, and that is by focusing attention on the value of a concept of the political, and thus of political space, as a construction founded upon equality. This egalitarian conception of the political – one that operates without fully defining what equality is, leaving this to be specified by actual social struggles – has much to offer, despite its risks of appearing overly generic, for it provides us with a sense of what is under threat in post-democratic politics. Furthermore, this concept of the political is one that has also gained currency in recent geographical inquiry and in the wider social sciences. For instance, Mustafa Dikec has argued that the political cannot be restricted to institutionalized practices even if such practices may formally constitute the sphere of 'politics' as it is commonly understood (2005, 184). Political space should not be thought of merely in terms of established parties and administration, but rather as a point of 'openness and undecidability' that 'implies the calling into question of the very structuring principles of the established order' (2005, 184). This is an emancipatory understanding of the political as a site of the disruption of the 'natural' order of domination, and 'as the place where a wrong can be addressed and equality be demonstrated' (ibid., 183). As Swyngedouw argues, 'a true political space is always a space of contestation for those who have no name or no place' (2014, 31). As such political space is 'specific, concrete, particular', but also 'stands as the metaphorical condensation of the universal' (2008, 25) inasmuch as it targets a 'condition in which the axiomatic principle of equality is perverted through the institution of an order' (2008, 19).

This egalitarian and emancipatory concept of political space as a site of egalitarian politics that disrupts existing orders of domination also resonates with the understanding of the political embraced by a number of East Asian scholars (cf. Chen 2003; Kim 2006; Wang 2009) who have called for more flexible approaches to political society in East Asia. Kuan-Hsing Chen (2003), for example, argues that the normative distinction between state and civil society is too simplistic because it ignores the experience of an East Asian modernity in which civil society has been subordinated to the state and social struggles kept mostly excluded from both spheres. Chen speaks of an additional sphere of the *min-jian* (a cognate of the Korean concept of the *minjung*) or 'people's sphere' as a space of political society. This is a space of subaltern struggles that is relatively autonomous from dominant institutions of state and civil society. While the latter may appropriate these struggles as part of a hegemonic project, political society, in Chen's usage of the term, cannot be reduced to a stable location within state and civil society. However, as a site of engagement, it can have effects that modify established relations of power and interest. Politics, then, always exceeds the established order; it is not primarily located inside the state, even though it may target locations within it.

The Chinese 'New Left' theorist Wang Hui (Wang 2009; cf. Zhang 2010, 79) uses the term 'political' in a similar fashion. Wang argues that

the state does not have an absolute capacity to encapsulate the political within its operations (2011, 35–6). 'The formula state = political', Wang argues, 'describes not the normal situation but rather the result of a process of depoliticization within the political domain' (2011, 36). In Wang's terminology, the political acts as both a noun denoting a sphere of power and interest, and an adjective denoting active subjectivity and human agency (the state being a site where active subjects attempt to become 'structural-functional'). For Wang, it is the tension between power and interest versus active subjectivity and agency that creates the political, or, through the latter's suppression, creates a depoliticized politics, stripped of popular agency (Wang 2009, 79).

Wang's perspective bears much resemblance to the concept of a political space espoused by other thinkers associated with the concept of post-democracy and its cognate concept, post-politics. For instance, Lazarus (1996) argues that an emancipatory political sequence needs to be analyzed on the basis of the sites/places that it names (cf. Badiou 2006, 26–57), sites that can shift or become depoliticized as emancipatory politics becomes no longer present in them – in the sense that prescriptions for equality or attempts to follow a broadly emancipatory politics cease to be made or are confined solely to sites within the state or party (Neocosmos 2010). Likewise, Wang (2009) argues that revolutionary politics in twentieth-century China initially represented an attempt to practice a broad social politics but yielded a sequence that has since exhausted itself, leading to statification and depoliticization, and allowing economic developmentalism to triumph over democracy.[2]

As an antidote to depoliticization, Wang and others advocate making space for emancipatory struggles. In *China's New Order,* for instance, Wang argues that the participation of social movements can provide the basis for democratic reform of the state through a 'mixed constitution' that prevents the state from arrogating too much power to itself and to elite interests (Wang 2003, 87–90).

> Thus the contemplation of a mixed system with the participation of ordinary citizens at its core (that is, a tripartite arrangement among the state, elites, and the common people) is a democratic program well worth considering. It is particularly important to investigate how to create mechanisms of democratic oversight through the interaction between social movements and institutional innovation. That is to say, to look into how ordinary citizens through such means as social movements and public discussion might promote open dialogue on policy questions among different levels of society.
>
> (Wang 2003, 89)

Here, Wang is discussing the work of Cui Zhiyuan (1996; 1998, 203 cited in Wang 2003 n42), who sought in the late 1990s to develop a theory of a

constitutional, mixed economic system for China that put special emphasis on the demands of the common people.[3]

Cui's vision, which Wang admits is hardly radical, was to establish a three-tiered system of government, comprised of distribution of power between a top (central government), middle (local government and capitalist interest groups) and bottom (the common people) that would 'turn the demands of the common people into the will of the state' in a way that foreclosed 'the possibility of a new aristocracy' (Wang 2003, 204). However, in the context of the statification of Chinese society since 1989, Wang argues that Cui's emphasis on the term 'common people' signifies a wider field of potential emancipatory sites compared to the more limited applications of the term 'civil society', which largely use the term to signify Beijing-based interest groups. In the post-Tiananmen context, the demand for mass democracy and participation of the 'common people' contains a radical critique against both conservative liberals, who have sought to implement Occidentally-derived notions of a bourgeois democratic regime based on private property and market economics *and* the central government, which has technocratically managed capitalist development as an official experiment in socialist market economy. Both of these forces have repudiated the radicalism of the democracy movement as a threat to the stability of economic development (cf. Zhang 2001; Chen X 1995).

Confronting egalitarian politics

This emphasis on the potential for egalitarian politics and advocacy of greater analysis of the popular or 'people's' sphere in contemporary East Asian political thought provides an important justification for understanding political participation in an expansive sense. It is also particularly useful for understanding politics in places like South Korea, where key democratic intellectuals, reformers and social movements have emerged from popular people's or *minjung* movements (Lee 2007). It is often the emancipatory understanding of politics offered by these movements and democratic changes spurred by them that post-democratic politics targets. The notion of the *minjung* itself provided a powerful egalitarian understanding of Korean modernity, one centred on overcoming the effects of capitalist development, authoritarian power and postcolonial nationalism on the subaltern masses. As Cho Hae Joang points out, during the dictatorship, the state mobilized the population as *kungmin* – a word formed from the combination of the Chinese characters for nation and people that connotes patriotic subjects of the nation – or as *kajok* (family). These terms suppressed other forms of subjectivity (Cho HJ 2000, 53, 57) and left 'no room for the emergence of civil society', for it was 'dangerous for an individual to think or act from different subject positions other than that of one's national or familial identity' (Cho HJ 2000, 60). The *minjung* movement provided an alternative, active sense of political subjectivity, one that could be expanded to the sites of multiple social struggles.

Despite the gradual decline of *minjung* movements since the transition to free elections (Kim 2011; Lee 2011), conservative thinkers still regard the legacies of these movements as a threat to elite rule. The Korean concept of civil society (*simin sahoe*) emerged in the new political field created by the June Democratic Uprising of 1987 (Kim 2006). Civil society is not simply a supplement to the state. Rather, it has remained a space of conflictual and transformative politics. In other words, civic movements are still largely focused on the demands of the *minjung* movements for procedural democracy, socio-economic equality and peaceful engagement and reunification with the North, not to mention the demands of new social movements. Thus, the conservative bloc has targeted the spaces of encounter, the political spaces, created by this popular political bloc of social movements – intellectuals and politicians that emerged from the *minjung* movement – for dismantling and obstruction over the last decade.

This reaction has been evident in the actions that conservative governments since 2008 have taken to target the reforms of the proceeding governments that emerged from the democracy movement. Lee suspended Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy of peaceful engagement between North and South Korea and restructured the Ministry of Unification, downsized the Ministry of Gender Equality and subordinated the National Human Rights Commission by emplacing pro-government appointees. Beyond the state apparatus, state funding for NGOs dried up and was denied to any NGO supporting 'illegal' public demonstrations. Using this criterion, the police targeted civic organizations for participating in the massive candlelight demonstrations against Lee Myung Bak's conservative policies during the summer of 2008. This politics reached a new apogee under Park's regime with the pervasive smearing of the opposition as pro-North leftists and the containment, in the name of public security, of popular social movements – especially those that have demanded greater labour rights, inter-Korean engagement and public oversight of the state apparatus following electoral intervention by state agencies and ongoing regulatory failures such as the tragic sinking of an illegally overloaded passenger ferry, the Sewol, in April 2014.

The 2012 electoral interference by allies of Park's presidential campaign in the government sector has been one of the most significant examples of a reactionary politics aimed at undercutting the legacy of the democratic opposition. To briefly summarize the case, in June 2013, the National Intelligence Service (NIS), South Korea's main spy organization, and other state agencies were revealed to have conducted a massive internet campaign using social networking sites and other online platforms to discredit liberal-left politicians as *chongbuk chwap'a* or 'pro-North leftists'. NIS chief Won Sei-hoon was subsequently convicted of violating a law that barred his agency from interfering in domestic politics. In his defence, the agency and its political allies presented such electoral intervention as being in the interest of public and national security and therefore legitimate. Moreover, recalling the tactics of past conservative regimes that used exaggerated

public security threats to tarnish oppositional forces and to divert public attention from broader issues of social justice, Park's government brought charges of treason and National Security Law (NSL) violations against a sitting lawmaker from the small, oppositional United Progressive Party (UPP) and his associates just as the NIS chief was served with the indictment for facilitating the agency's electoral interference.

The NIS took advantage of the potent association in the public imagination between Lee and North Korea to reiterate communist threats and to legitimate its public security politics. That the most compelling NSL violation charge for which Lee and his associates were convicted was for singing 'revolutionary' songs from North Korea was deemed especially troubling by liberal-left commentators as it called into question the limits of freedom of speech in what was supposed to be democratic South Korea in the twenty-first century. The Constitutional Court's later dissolution of the UPP in December 2014 on charges that its principles supported North Korean-style socialism and thus violated South Korea's basic democratic order – the first forced dissolution of a political party since 1958 – led to further troubling questions about Korean democracy. But the Park regime's reliance on a public security rationale was not merely confined to the case of Lee and the UPP (see Doucette and Koo 2016). For instance, her administration continued to actively confront the labour movement. It deregistered the 60,000 member Korean Teachers Union and attempted to privatize the KTX, the country's high-speed railway system, provoking intense labour strikes. This confrontation itself was also grounded in the rationale of public security, with the police accusing Korea Railroad Workers Union leaders of violating the National Security Law by forming an organization within the railway corporation that 'plotted to expand *chongbuk* forces' and spread pro-North propaganda (*Yonhap News*, April 29, 2013).

A Korean Thermidor?

Why is it that the legacy of popular politics in South Korea earns such ire in the conservative imagination? What is it about egalitarian articulations of the political that make them the target for repression and obfuscation? These are questions that are difficult to answer, but they are ones that an understanding of politics as an emancipatory project can allow us to ask. Doing so allows us to then understand post-democracy – the attempt to reduce democracy to a minimalist form – as a wilfully inegalitarian type of politics. Here Alain Badiou's (2006) notion of Thermidorean politics may be of some assistance in developing the post-democracy literature, as it directly takes up the issue of political will and the way in which conservative politics operates by obscuring and reacting against prior sequences of emancipatory politics.

For Badiou, the actual Thermidor that followed the radical, Jacobin phase of the French Revolution signifies not just a singular event but a general type

of political reaction: one that can be seen after major historical uprisings and social disruptions such as the Paris Commune, May 1968, Tiananmen Square – or, in the South Korean context, the sequence initiated by 1987's June Democratic Uprising. The figure of this reaction, the Thermidorean, is 'essentially politically corrupt … he [sic] exploits the precariousness of political convictions' (Badiou 2006, 130) by negating or obscuring the demands of a political sequence. Instead of accepting the consequences of political transformation, the reactive subject attempts to deny or obscure past democratic events, often by putting them in the service of another political project – a political project that, essentially, aims to terminate a political sequence by rendering it illegible or obscure. Likewise, conservative forces in South Korea have sought to delegitimize the social forces that emerged from past democratic events with a chimera of left nationalism that labels even mild policy innovations as the product of a Korean left that seeks its guidance from North Korea. Large segments of this conservative bloc cannot acknowledge the legitimacy of the democracy movement's demands and so instead they seek to obscure or negate its significance. This effort has the effect of obfuscating the political demands of the democracy movement by framing politics in the anti-communist language of the Cold War, a language that in Korea, makes even many liberal demands out to be a radical threat.

The Thermidor is thus a containment exercise in which political subjectivity, Badiou remarks, 'is referred back to order, rather than to the possibility about that which is latent in a situation' (2006, 132). To render a sequence illegible is to obscure its political space: the event-site(s) on which it operates and from where sequences can be charted and lessons drawn. As such, the Thermidor is thus also a geographical exercise: it represents an obstruction, a containment of political space.

It is not just left nationalism and demands for national independence and reunification that attract the ire of conservative reaction in South Korea. The conservative bloc also paints the neoliberal policies of the liberal reform governments of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun as policies of 'leftist' regimes, 'imprisoned by old ideology and populism to incite the masses' (New Right Liberty Union 2004). This is a very problematic interpretation, however. The reform governments of Kim Dae Jung (1997–2002) and Roh Moo Hyun (2003–2008), while endorsing a politics of participation by NGOs, and including many former democracy and labour movement activists in their ranks, have been regarded as predominantly hybrid liberal–conservative regimes by domestic political theorists (Choi 2005; Doucette 2015). As Choi (2005) describes, conservative regional forces and liberal politicians dominated progressive voices in these regimes. While reform regimes did introduce mechanisms for greater accountability and transparency into the state apparatus and facilitated a moderate expansion of social welfare and civic participation, these reforms have been accompanied by trenchant neoliberal financial and labour restructuring after the 1997–8 Asian financial crisis and in the years since then (cf. Gray 2008). As Alice

Kim (2011) argues, the labour movement was asked to 'participate and rectify' themselves: that is, they were asked to relinquish dissent against neoliberal labour reforms in return for modest welfare policies. Further protest against both Kim and Roh's labour reforms were often met with repressive police actions.

Thus, the New Right criticism of even Kim and Roh's neoliberal policies as 'leftism' obscures a coherent analysis of the Korean political spectrum and of the contradictions of the democratization process.

While Badiou regards the Thermidorean as a subjectivity constituted on the termination of a political sequence, he differentiates between what he calls a 'reactive' and an 'obscure' subject. While one attempts to negate a democratic subjectivity, the other obscures it. In the Korean context, the term could be used both for those politicians of the reform bloc whose policies subordinated the egalitarian demands of the democratic movement, and for those conservative political forces that try to consciously and wilfully obstruct reform forces and the sequence of politics that they have emerged from, rendering that sequence illegible for actors in the present moment. In the current conjuncture, it is the reactive subjects of Korean conservatism that seem to provide the largest challenge for democratic social movements. Although reform politicians may have lacked fidelity to the popular aspirations of the democracy movement for comprehensive change, they also lacked the intensity of the wilful obstruction and revision that one sees in the conservative bloc, and especially among the New Right. The latter have had a strong influence on the rhetoric of the conservative bloc, providing them with a vocabulary of reaction to target the reform bloc by radically obscuring its sequence and targeting its institutional innovations.

Rather than staunchly defending dictatorship against democracy, the New Right affirm democracy as a desirable system but explain democratization by stressing the contribution of the dictatorial Park Chung Hee regime. They credit Park for laying the foundations of the market economy, which they see as the necessary precursor for democracy – a narrative that they have attempted to promote by encouraging state-mandated history textbooks. Furthermore, they regard the efforts of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations to come to terms with the crimes of past dictatorships and seek reconciliation with North Korea as having impaired the identity of the Republic of Korea, damaged its national interests and broken its national unity (Lee 2008). The New Right was particularly known for its labelling of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun years as 'the lost decade', a phrase that caught on in the conservative imagination and was repeated by its ideological allies in the media as an apt description of liberal governance's policy failures. Their post-democratic politics is thus able to affirm a minimalist conception of democracy by obscuring the legacies of democratic struggles against authoritarianism *and*, by extension, misrepresenting the current demands of popular forces associated with this legacy.

Conclusion

While the frustrations facing democratic social movements in Malaysia, Thailand and China, among other locales, do not take the same shape as those experienced in South Korea, it is often the legacy of popular mobilizations in those places that elite politics targets. Using the Korean context as my guide, I have suggested that the concept of post-democracy offers a potential framework from which to think about attempts to depoliticize popular politics and safeguard elite rule. The understanding of political space that underlies the post-democracy literature and that stresses its egalitarian and emancipatory potential can inspire scholarship on popular politics in diverse contexts and thus cast greater attention to the ways in which such politics is targeted for obstruction. The geographies of reaction in each context may differ, but in the Korean context I have tried to show how surviving Cold War imaginaries, neoliberal restructuring and resilient elite forces have sought to contain expansion of more egalitarian renderings of political space, particularly those embraced by popular people's movements, which draw lineage from mass democracy events. I have also suggested that Badiou's concept of the Thermidor and its understandings of reactive and obscure subjects might provide scholars with greater focus on some of the diverse ways that demands for equality and democracy are targeted for obstruction. In the Korean context, such politics has involved not only the continued use of coercive means of containing protest by popular forces and limiting the traction that popular civil society actors and social movements may exercise on the state, but also the revising of the history of popular mobilization in order to obscure their origins and obfuscate their demands. Here the resilience of Cold War imaginaries of the domestic enemy and the necessity of economic modernization continue to provide discursive tropes that are used to undermine greater democracy and to embolden elite power throughout the Asian region.

And yet, as recent events in South Korea have shown, post-democratic politics is not immune to crisis. The depoliticizing narratives of the New Right, repressive practices of public security prosecutors and collusion within the elite conspired to provoke the largest popular protests since the June Democratic Uprising of 1987. In the process, key figures from both the Old and New Right and from the business community and political class, thought to have been immune from prosecution, have been arrested. However, overcoming the problems experienced under contemporary conservative regimes will depend on how the elections that follow Park's impeachment turn out (at the time of writing, these have yet to be held) and how the forces that emerge from them adjust themselves to the present conjuncture. The present moment, then, provides an opportunity to better understand the shortcomings of both liberal and conservative administrations that have emerged since democratization, to enable learning from the mistakes of the past. Here, the continued study of emancipatory politics

in Asia and beyond can thus provide a strong antidote to post-democratic politics by keeping open the potential for greater democracy that has been posed by past sequences of popular mobilization and enable abstraction from these sequences of clearer lessons, of use to contemporary struggles for political space.

Notes

1 This chapter incorporates revised and updated excerpts and arguments from two previously published articles, Doucette (2013) and Doucette and Koo (2016).

2 Wang historicizes his argument by suggesting that this dual character of the political is bound up within modernity itself. For Wang, modernity is 'paradoxical, containing intrinsic tensions and contradictions' (2009, 75). On the one hand, its 'faith in economic development, the market system and the legal political system, in the rationalization of law and order' have acted as 'a kind of ideology of modernity'. On the other hand, modernist thought also has intense 'anti-capitalist and secularizing tendencies' that provide a critical view of modernity. Against the rejection of modernist thought, Wang advocates instead for 'a movement for liberation from modes of thought based on notions of historical teleology and determinism, a movement of liberation from the fetishism of other systems and an effort to use the history of China and of other societies as sources for theoretical and institutional innovation' (Wang 2003, 134–135).

3 Cui Zhiyuan published these articles in the Chinese magazine *Dushu* (Readings), edited by Wang at the time.

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Part II

Expanding and contesting political space

4 Moral discourse and China's evolving enterprise society

Johan Lagerkvist

Since Xi Jinping took office as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, the outside world has noted increasing levels of political repression in the People's Republic of China. Campaigns against corruption in the Party and officialdom and against dissent in society; harassment of journalists and defense lawyers; drafts of new legislation such as the national security law, the law on cybersecurity and the foreign NGO management law; and a digital social credit system to register citizen behavior all amount to a broad politics of securitization. Yet scholars have so far been unable to explain why these repressive laws are being enacted and why so pervasive a monitoring system is being developed, targeting cadres and officials as well as ordinary citizens in a period of deepening market reform, increased freedom of the market and exhortation of individuals to innovate and grow the country's economy. The consolidation of Xi Jinping's personal power and the intra-party struggle that preceded his rise to power in 2012 do not suffice as explanations for such profound securitization of the regime, nor for the new rhetoric of an 'enterprise society' built on individual entrepreneurship.

Notwithstanding a re-centralization of power under the central government in Beijing, there is much more to the ongoing trend of securitization than Party factionalism and a power-hungry General Secretary cementing his rule. The moral discourse on security, welfare and individual enterprise and socio-economic responsibility in China resembles the post-war ideological discourse of West Germany: the programme of ordoliberalism. This chapter seeks to explore the affinities between these two discourses, as their ideas and policies powerfully affect the norms and affordances of political space.

One overarching question frames this chapter: why is repression increasing and a politics of securitization emerging under General Secretary Xi Jinping? To find some preliminary answers, the chapter investigates the moral discourse that accompanies the current economic agenda. The chapter proceeds in three steps. First it presents an analysis of the politico-economic agenda of marketization since 1978 and de facto neoliberalization of Chinese society after 1989. An analysis of the consequences of the military crackdown on June 4, 1989, is crucial, as the legacy of late leader Deng

Xiaoping has continued to limit the available policy options for subsequent generations of leaders. Following this analysis is an account of the reinvention of a New Confucian moral discourse as the ideological framework for political participation in the wake of the crackdown on the 1989 democracy movement. Third, the articulation of responsibilities that constrain cadre units, citizens, economic organizations and bureaucratic entities in China's evolving enterprise society, as they interact in political space, are analyzed.

The politico-economic agenda of marketization and the 1989 upheaval

The road to transfrom China into a market society has been tortuous. Observers continue to be baffled by the blend of state regulation, market-friendly policy reform and Leninist institutions in place since the first major round of reforms were introduced in 1978 after Deng Xiaoping's initiation of the open-door policy. The notably vague term 'neoliberalism' has never entered the list of common keywords in the scholarly literature on the equally puzzling political economy of post-Mao China. Nevertheless, the Tiananmen suppression of 1989 sped up China's embrace of the logic of neoliberal reason. In this respect, the second round of market economic reforms that overlapped with leader Deng Xiapoing's famous 'southern tour' of 1992 (Wang 2003a) was critical.

In the three-decade process of China's becoming a market society, two significant events stand out. The first is the decision to enforce a slow but sure conversion from a planned economic system to a market-based one in 1978. The other significant milestone was the events of June 4, 1989, which followed the first set of reforms. The reforms of the 1980s had culminated in a conflict between the CCP and the people, and escalating rifts inside the Party. While the consequences of the policies associated with the first major turnover are well known, the transformative effect of the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 and the deepening of market reform that was pushed through afterwards is less well understood. Observers have tended to view the crushing of the movement as a conservative step on the brakes for both political and economic reform. Yasheng Huang (2008) argues that 'the Tiananmen interlude' meant the reversal of entrepreneur-friendly policies of deregulation and privatization, toward an unfavorable trend of state-centred capitalist policy that was broken only in 2002. Yet this argument misses the fact that the predatory state-capitalist arrangement that took shape in the 1990s exploited not only private enterprise, but also citizens en route to a market society.[1] It is the culmination of this trend of ballooning state-capitalist vested interest that Party leader Xi Jinping has been fighting since 2013 through the anti-corruption campaign, 'beating tigers and swatting houseflies'.

Notably, after 1989, the danger of stalled economic reform spurred Deng to fight orthodox elements in the party as well as democracy activists. This

enmity comes across clearly in the Communist Party's official rationalization for the Beijing massacre, excerpted below, which takes as its point of departure Deng's address five days later to the officers responsible for the clearing of Tiananmen Square:

> Is it the case that because of this rebellion the correctness of the line, principles, and policies we have laid down will be called into question? Are our goals leftist ones? Should we continue to use them as the goals for our struggle in the future? We must have clear and definite answers to these important questions. We have already accomplished our first goal, doubling the GNP. We plan to take twelve years to attain our second goal of again doubling the GNP. In the next fifty years we hope to reach the level of a moderately developed nation. A 2 to 2.9 percent annual growth rate is sufficient. This is our strategic goal. Concerning this, I think that what we have arrived at is not a 'leftist' judgment.
>
> (Deng 1989)

Deng made it clear that China needed more marketization, not less, and that the People's Republic must never again isolate itself from the world economy. From June 1989 through June 1992, Deng Xiaoping combated Party conservatives, a struggle that he inherited from his former liberal protégés Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. This challenge was in many ways more hazardous to Deng than the democracy movement was. The latter movement was comprised of students and young highbrows with inadequate networks, whereas the Party's old orthodox masters had strong connections throughout the party–state apparatus, as the subsequent three-year long period of strife and tension until 1992 clearly showed. Yet, without the broad social movement of 1989 that set off the rifts within the Party, this conflict over marketization would have become long-drawn-out. As Deng argued:

> This storm was bound to come sooner or later. This is determined by the major international climate and China's own minor climate. It was bound to happen and is independent of man's will. It was just a matter of time and scale. It is more to our advantage that this happened today.
>
> (Deng 1989)

The 1989 crisis shortened Deng's struggle against Party orthodoxy and defenders of a planned economy. To historian of ideas Wang Hui, 1989 was fatefully central to put into effect a neoliberal logic in China (2003a; 2003b). Herein lies the 'advantage', as Deng phrased it in his speech to the army officers. Importantly, Wang points out why the detested price reform, along with other financial reforms, could be quickly and painlessly implemented as early as September 1989: in the wake of the military crackdown of June 4, during a period of strict stability measures, people no longer ventured to organize protests. The crushing of the broad social movement

supportive of political liberalization on June 4, 1989 made it simpler, particularly after Deng had safeguarded final defeat of Party orthodoxy in 1992, to apply colossal industry layoffs. What made the pitiless new societal and economic competition worse was the perceived danger of bringing criticism to bear on deepening market reform.

Deng acted as one who had spent substantial time reading Milton Friedman's works. In the preface to *Capitalism and Freedom*, market liberal Friedman explained the golden opportunity intrinsic to crisis:

> Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable.
>
> (1982, ix)

Thus 1989 was conclusive for *both* the actual affirmation to settle the crisis consistent with Friedman's positive view of moments of crisis, *and* on a profounder level, as an opportunity to 'immunize the community from a threatened return to conflict' (Campbell 2007, 7). Or rather, in the language of Deng Xiaoping, it marked a return to the all-out chaos of the Cultural Revolution, which led him to the deduction that: 'China can accomplish nothing without peace and unity in politics and a stable order. Stability must take precedence over everything' (Zhang, *et al.* 2002, 360).

The latter phrase is one of two that embody China's adoption of neoliberal reason, both of which Deng expressed in February 1989, in a tête-à-tête with President George Bush (Deng 1993; Dirlik 2014). The other phrase is *fazhan shi ying daoli*, 'Development is a hard truth'. Together these slogans denote that only a robust state with power to uphold stability and enforce uncomfortable development policy can generate trade and industrial growth and material affluence, or *xiaokang*, for (parts of) society. In turn, growing gross domestic product (GDP) also confers political capital and legitimacy upon the ruling elite.

There is an obvious connection between the collapse of the democracy movement and the rise of the post-1989 neoliberal world order, which received a formidable boost by the Dengist party–state's further liberalization of the markets for labour, education and health (Friedman and Lee 2011; Zhao 2015; Wang 2008). If not for June 4, 1989, China's economic, social and ideational-cultural landscape would not have undergone the kind of dramatic socio-economic alteration that has made China rich but unequal, open but hyper-nationalist, moralistic but immoral (Lagerkvist 2016). As historian Perry Anderson argues, 'The depth and scale of the upheaval of 1989 in China was far larger than anything in Eastern Europe in that year, let alone in Russia, then or later' (2010, 88). Mainstream Western narratives on this upheaval and the subsequent marketization of Chinese society

are problematic, however, because they maintain an American and Western tradition of 'othering' China and obstruct accurate understanding of the role played by the People's Republic in the puzzle that is the enduring global project of neoliberalism.

Contemporary political analyses continue to comprehend imperfectly the puzzle of how the case of China intersects spheres of global political economy and ideology. Yet in the wake of the momentous recession that originated with the financial crisis of 2008, even critical scholars have pondered the remarkable 'non-death' of global neoliberalism (Crouch 2011) and the resilience of the international market order (Gamble 2014, 51) without giving much thought to the role played by Beijing. Near the centre of these accounts, but nevertheless at a peculiar distance from the centre-stage of the slowly declining hegemon, the United States, stands China: the international system's foremost contender-state. It is important to realize that neoliberalism takes different forms in different national contexts, in which people and institutions acclimatize differently to its logic and reason. Thus, since the 1980s, and especially during the 1990s, the CCP has pursued market liberal policies under the cloak of state capitalism – now about to be practiced through private sector entrepreneurial capitalism, to yield yet another round of economic growth and political capital under the moralistic rule of General Secretary Xi Jinping.

Moral discourse of China's evolving enterprise society

To guarantee the staying power of the CCP, since 2010, under the auspices of former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, it has designed a new growth model, anchored in domestic consumption and entrepreneurial innovation rather than centred on mechanics manufacturing and export-led growth, as in the former model. Following the 2012 World Bank report, *China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious and Creative Society*, China's Premier Li Keqiang and his aides in the Development Research Council advocated freeing up China's financial market to keep GDP production levels in the vicinity of seven percent annually. The third plenum of the CCP that took place in December 2012 acted on the report's idea that further economic liberalization to foster continued economic growth is vital, including for political stability.

The central state in the 1980s had decentralized considerable power to local authorities. Therefore, the re-centralization of political power in Beijing and personal power amassed by Xi Jinping should be viewed in the light of implementing the transformative agenda of that World Bank report. Power is employed to control and stem the centralized power of vested interests, first and foremost among them, strategic state-owned companies and their bureaucratic allies, notwithstanding their objections or the wider problem of official graft and, increasingly, the growing influence and potential independence of large-scale private conglomerates. Outside observers continue to argue that China must proceed further with reform of its state-owned

companies in sectors such as steel, energy and telecommunications. Clearly, Xi Jinping has signaled to remonstrating elements in the CCP that such reform is inevitable and that the invisible hand of economic liberalism is something that party cadres will have to embrace and make full use of, if the deepening of market reforms is to take real effect. As Xi phrased it in a recently published volume:

> Under new circumstances, cadres at every level, especially leading cadres, must keep steadfastly deepening their studies in the course of implementation (of policies) and while studying, they must deepen implementation. They must incessantly investigate new issues, collect new experiences and learn how to correctly employ 'the invisible hand' and 'the visible hand' to become good experts at mastering the relationship between state and market.
>
> (2015, 118)

Thus, the intention to increase marketization and further divest from state-owned enterprises is apparent in a series of Party and government documents since 2012. Interestingly, the Party has simultaneously sought to distinguish its own deepening of market–economic reform from Anglo–American shock-therapy neoliberalism, which an internal document has attacked for its 'market omnipotence theory'.[2] The deepening of reform, however, has proved to be a protracted struggle even for the exceptionally powerful Xi Jinping. This is because state-owned companies and banks continue to oppose deepening market reforms despite their being congruent with both China's commitment to World Trade Organization standards and economic policies of the 18th Party Congress (Zheng 2013, 161; Panitch and Gindin 2013, 153). To avoid the scenario of becoming a stagnating middle-income country, Xi Jinping has come to realize that vested interests in China must be thwarted to initiate a new round of market reform. General Secretary Xi has acted cleverly to attack these interests under the banner of a 'swatting flies and smashing tigers' campaign against corruption, seeing these vested interests as a brake on economic reform and China's number-one target of popular resentment.[3]

Thus, the politics of securitization taps into both the pool of popular discontent and reservoirs of Confucian thought to counteract the disappearance of ideological glue within the CCP and re-engage with grassroots concerns about embezzlement, inequality and, more broadly, a sense of moral crisis emanating from the marketization of Chinese society. Yet while Chinese leaders are intent on deepening market reform, they have also been careful to mark their distance from Anglo–American neoliberalism, whose proponents rarely bother with the social consequences of free market policies. Instead, Xi Jinping has been taking a moral stance on the socially splintering effects of the market.

To acknowledge in this way the dangers that marketization presents, and that large swathes of society perceive, is reminiscent of German

ordoliberalism, a school of thought concerned with workers' alienation in capitalist society. Ordoliberals searched for preventive measures to avoid the danger that capitalism as a productive force poses to itself. The hard approach of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign and the government's intention to motivate individuals to become entrepreneurs should be conceptualized as 'a policy for society', or a *gesellschaftspolitik*. As explained by Michel Foucault, the economic thinkers of Weimar Germany envisaged gesellschaftspolitik to secure the competitive mechanism of market space, despite its inherent fragility. To Foucault the aims of this policy were to forestall the centralization of power in both large private businesses and the state, similar to the actions and policies taken by the Chinese government today. The idea was to counteract the potential alienation of society's lower strata by generating support from small businesses and citizens that benefitted from increased access to private ownership and who could be expected to accept the substitution of social insurance with private insurance. According to Foucault, giving new form to society by 'generalizing the "enterprise form" within the social body … not according to the grain of individuals, but according to the grain of enterprises' (2008, 241) entailed nothing less than having a vision of a decentralized, but nevertheless orderly, society (Peck 2010, 61). As Foucault further outlined, 'The "cold" mechanism of competition' in gesellschaftspolitik must be complemented by a 'politics of life' that serves to cushion the former's impact by 'reconstructing concrete points of anchorage around the individual', that is, 'a set of "warm" moral and cultural values' (Foucault 2008, 242).

At the most basic, ordoliberalism comprises an authoritarian-liberal project: one that socializes losses, that balances the books by a politics of austerity, that demands individual enterprise and calls upon citizens to meet life's misadventures with courage, and that sets out to empower society in the self-responsible use of economic freedom (Christi 1998, 636; Bonefeld 2012). Mirroring the desires of the ordoliberals to construct an 'enterprise society', China's Premier Li Keqiang spoke enthusiastically in 2015 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, about spurring the entrepreneurial power of every Chinese individual:

> Our people are hard-working and talented. If we could activate every cell in society, the economy of China as a whole will brim with more vigour and gather stronger power for growth. Mass entrepreneurship and innovation, in our eyes, is a 'gold mine' that provides constant source of creativity and wealth.[4]

These words accord with the vision inherent in Xi Jinping's rhetorical conception of the 'China dream', which contains an economic and a political part. The political part concerns restoring and returning the Chinese nation to its proper place among the most powerful nations in the world, whereas the economic part is about creating prosperity for the people, who in the

post-socialist era must exert their utmost strength as individuals to achieve both their own material goals and those of the nation – often expressed as *xiaokang shehui*, the 'relatively prosperous society'. As mentioned above, General Secretary Xi Jinping has been very clear about rolling back the state to give entrepreneurial society freer reign:

> give to the market the things that the government should not manage, let the market develop good effects in all the areas wherein it can develop such effects to the full, promote resource allocation and realize its benefits fully and with optimal efficiency, let enterprises and individuals get more vigour and have more space to grow the economy and create wealth.
>
> (Xi 2015, 117)

The premier's and the CCP general secretary's China dream echoes and reflects the ideological tenets of the German ordoliberal Müller-Armack, who advocated that, 'total mobilisation of the economic forces allows us to hope for social improvements, which achieve real social contents by means of increased productivity' (1981b, 79). Premier Li's emphasis in his Davos talk about the activation of *every cell in society* is crucial. This is not merely about business innovation and growing the economy. In effect the Chinese party–state produces a neoliberal subject by individualizing unemployment and social security – that is, saying to citizens that it is their responsibility to make themselves employable (and care for their own security).

This discourse is reminiscent not just of ordoliberal theory, but also of the neoliberalization of Singapore. There, in referring to the needs of the market, the 'upgrading discourse … focuses on moulding individuals into "entrepreneurs of the self"' (Liow 2011, 258). Citizen cells in the small island–state are made responsible for their livelihood and are instrumental for growing the economy. This approach is fully in tune with Müller-Armack's idea that, '[s]ustained economic growth is the best possible social policy' (1976). Or as Foucault succinctly puts it, for the uncompromising social market economy, there 'can only be one true and fundamental social policy: economic growth' (2008, 144).

The moral discourse of Confucian harmony and stability

In the politics of securitization that characterizes his rule, Xi Jinping follows largely in the footsteps of Deng Xiaoping. While Xi is further deepening the structural transformation of China's political economy, he is at the same time making sure to contain the expansion of political liberties and to direct and control the expansion of political space. It is noteworthy, however, that Xi Jinping has gone one step further in his containment quest than Deng. By adding and synthesizing elements from Confucianism to the longstanding general moral discourse on being an active, self-employed individual,

but still a politically passive one, he has added a dimension to ensure future political containment: he is modulating the implication of economic changes for the quality of political space. The moral exhortation to each citizen to become an exemplary 'market cell' of the evolving enterprise society is thus accompanied by Confucian moral pronouncements on the harmonious society and responsibilities of citizens to assist in upholding social and political stability.

Just as Deng Xiaoping gave marketization a boost after the military crackdown on June 4, 1989, the gradual incorporation of key concepts from the Confucian tradition into the vocabulary of the Communist Party also started in the early 1990s. Thus, the 1989 military crackdown in Beijing was the starting point for both the acceleration of neoliberalization in China and an intensified period of sponsored research on, and spreading of, Confucian ideas and concepts (Brady 2012, 62). Technocratic and pragmatically oriented elites in Beijing have been involved in financing and supporting a cultural shift for utilitarian ends of statecraft for almost two decades (DeBary 1995). The reason they reached for this new political and economic rationale was that the crushing of the 1989 democracy movement incurred a significant loss of popular legitimacy for the Communist Party. It had to re-engage and rebuild the social contract between Party and people – beyond the discredited idea of the planned economy and defunct Marxism. With the turn to state-sponsored *guoxue*, or national studies, Confucianism and the values associated with it spread within the educational system and research academies. This sponsorship generated results also at the popular level. Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, China has witnessed a remarkable interest in and revival of the Confucian tradition. Old ideas about order and harmony are being encouraged at the popular level through language, literary works and televized history programmes. General Secretary Xi Jinping has made sure that state-craft Confucianism is taught at Party schools across China to ensure more effective governance that resonates with the grassroots.

The moral centrepiece of the German ordoliberals' *vitalpolitik* was Christianity. In Xi Jinping's China, in contrast, the moral foundation of vitalpolitik draws inspiration from Confucianism. Robust implementation of market economic policy, if complemented by responsible rule for the wellbeing of the people, is in line with the Foucauldian 'warm' vitalpolitik of decentralized communitarian life that German ordoliberal thinkers called for to combat the splintering effects for society of market competition that may yield social dislocation and protest. As China's version of neoliberalization has sought to avoid the roller-coaster process witnessed in post-Soviet 'shock therapy', economic transformation has been implemented gradually. In the current face of deepening market reform, a Confucian vitalpolitik is believed to further augment social stability and control over political space.

How should the New Confucianism that the present leadership is chiselling out of tradition be defined? Daniel Bell has rather romantically

envisaged the burgeoning trend of Confucianism in China as harbinger of 'left Confucianism', which he argues has a critical and oppositional attitude toward ruling state power (Bell and Wu 2014; Bell 2015). This framework is a rather peripheral and scholarly phenomenon that is overshadowed and out-powered by what I would call 'right Confucianism', or the powerful and conservative statecraft version of the Confucian ethos that Xi Jinping is deploying. Such right Confucianism is, in fact, a real-world phenomenon that mirrors sentiments among both the technocratic elite and the grass-roots citizenry. Right Confucianism focuses on cementing sociopolitical order, while accepting socioeconomic mobility – and demanding acceptance of the results thereof (Whyte 2010). The 'warm' cultural values that Foucault saw accompanying the 'cold' values of competition should, in this specifically Chinese version of ordoliberalism, be understood as establishing a 'naturalized comfort zone' that conditions the individual to have the ambition of social mobility but also accept one's proper place in the social order, as a result of intense competition. Importantly, and in contrast with 'left Confucianism' – as Shin also argues with regard to South Korea (this volume) – conservative forces in the form of conservative 'right Confucianism' are reflected also at the concrete level of civil society.[5] (Part of that civil societal discourse transpires online; see Wright's chapter in this volume on the complexity of, and ideological currents within, online discourse in China.)

In response to what many Chinese view as a mounting moral crisis in an increasingly competitive era, General Secretary Xi Jinping has continued to draw on 'harmony' and to speak of 'the Chinese dream', constructing a moral ethos that resonates with popular anxieties. Under his strongman rule, Xi has chosen to usher in more market–economic reform. Yet he has simultaneously sought to cushion Deng Xiaoping's dictum that 'development is a hard truth' with Confucianism's moral ethos to mitigate social dislocation and protest – that is, to emphasize the 'warm' vitalpolitik. With his slogan, 'the Chinese dream', Xi is building further on the moral ethos of Confucianism. In a speech at UNESCO in Paris, Xi said:

> Forefathers of the Chinese nation yearned for a world of great harmony in which people are free from want and follow a high moral standard. In the Chinese civilization, people's cultural pursuit has always been part of their life and social ideals. So the realization of the Chinese dream is a process of both material and cultural development.[6]

The Chinese dream is thus a project to attain material welfare *and* the traditional Confucian ideal of harmony. Since 2012, under the auspices of Xi Jinping, politico-economic governance in China has increasingly been moving toward a regulatory and moral ethos of statecraft Confucianism, which the CCP wants, to replace the socio-political glue that socialism and Maoist nationalism previously provided.

Moreover, this trend of making use of key concepts from scholarly Confucianism and sentiments that resonate with popular Confucianism is visible also outside China. The moral-political legacy of Confucianism continues to penetrate across East Asia. The foremost beliefs inherent in that legacy are that the interests of the harmonious community override the interests of individual rights and freedom, that good government means prioritizing economic well-being, and that an authoritarian mode of governance should prevail (Shin 2014, 319–22).

Thus, the model of responsible and paternalistic governance does seem to resonate with the populace. A dynamic process has developed, whereby the CCP elite and grassroot citizens are mutually influencing the trajectory of statecraft Confucianism in today's China. During the 1990s it became increasingly clear that market-friendly policies cohabited ideologically with still-authoritarian political structures that put ever more emphasis on moral guidance. New Confucianism has proven useful as it provides a filter and a means for the party–state to withstand politico-cultural globalization. Thus, Chinese individuals are today judged essential as entrepreneurial assets to the national economy in their capacity as market cells and as responsible for their own welfare. At the same time, these individuals continue to have limited rights to form or express opinions in, or otherwise participate in, public space; the prevailing framework limits popular participation in political space.

The securitization and monitoring of enterprise society lest moralism fail

As Michel Foucault noted, for ordoliberals, the 'defense of liberal principles has to be pre-emptive – the strong state is ever vigilant, and so properly called a "security state"' (Foucault 2008, 16). A crucial goal is the struggle against potential mass organization by both wage-earners *and* various self-interested elites. Argued Wilhelm Röpke, 'laissez-faire is no answer to the hungry hordes of vested interests' (2009, 181). What the ordo-school views as needed is a strong state that governs – a state standing above the economy and above all interest groups. To them, the political assertion of *all interests* must be restrained to secure economic effectiveness (Bonefeld 2012, 648). Their stance toward political participation and political space reveals common ground on state responsibility between ordoliberal thinkers and the CCP.

In the eyes of Xi Jinping, the most problematic interest groups in China are corrupt cadres within the Party, officials in government and private entrepreneurs who seek to corrupt the party–state. As the rebalancing of the Chinese economy threatens the vested interests of state and industry, implementation of the proposals in the World Bank report and the communiqué of the Party's third plenum of November 2013 has stalled, due to state-owned industries' unwillingness to comply with the new round

of marketization. Also, regarded negatively are the different forces within China's largely contained civil society: independent workers, artists and intellectuals. Xi perceives decentralization by a self-organized demos to be as problematic as over-centralization of state and commercial power. It is against the struggle between the CCP general secretary and vested interests that Xi Jinping's politics of securitization and build-up of an ordoliberal security state should be viewed.

Securitization, however, cannot be left to moral exhortation and encouragement alone. Gesellschaftspolitik in the form of neoliberalization and vitalpolitik in the form of right Confucianism may not be enough to contain either the state's foes inside the state apparatus or in society at large, or an expansion of political space. Therefore, a firm politics of securitization, enforced by strong legislation to prevent potential protest, is also powerfully employed, strategically containing attempts at contesting and expanding political space. Capital controls in the financial system have long been a mainstay for controlling post-Mao China (Panitch and Gindin 2013, 147). Liberalizing these controls means walking an uncharted route that could derail into social protests. Therefore, the decision at the third plenum to make market mechanisms 'decisive' in the Chinese economy was followed by the decision to establish a new National Security Commission (Lampton 2015; Fu 2014) and to introduce a draconian new law on national security,[7] a draft cybersecurity law and a draft foreign NGO management law, and by plans for extensive citizen surveillance through a nationwide social credit system – all aimed at controlling dissent and an uncontrolled expansion of political space.

Law scholar Eva Pils has argued that the new law on national security 'manifests a neo-totalitarian ambition to reach into every sector of society' (Yu 2015). The vague law on cybersecurity is directed as much toward foreign security threats as internal ones (Eriksson and Lagerkvist 2016). This draft law devotes a whole chapter to the need for cyber-censorship to maintain domestic social stability, a task that the new law demands foreign high-tech companies actively take part in and comply with (Zhou 2015). The law on foreign-funded NGOs will greatly diminish the impact that foreign actors may have on Chinese civil society, whereas it will 'provide greater accountability and predictability to a home-grown civil society' (Hasmath 2016). Thus, the powerful one-party state demands accountability and transparency from a weak civil society – to prevent a future in which these roles are reversed.

A State Council document published in 2014 clearly illustrates this trend of drafting and passing very harsh laws to maintain social and political stability. This document lays out the plans for a new national social credit system and contains more quasi-Confucian moralism and rhetoric than the various laws on security do. The social credit system will have profound consequences for internet use in China, as it creates powers relating to the systematic, far-reaching control of people's behaviour and perlocutionary

acts on the internet, made possible by the coordination of vast amounts of data (a.k.a. 'big data') between state authorities and computer companies. The system has just started to be rolled out in some of the larger provinces, like Jiangsu and Shandong, and has triggered a flurry of activity, not least amongst software companies as they frantically struggle to snap up a share of the market that this monumental control system is creating. The programme, which is scheduled to be up and running by 2020, is a highly ambitious one that can only be described in terms of a digital panopticon set up to monitor individuals, companies and the state bureaucracy in order to tackle dishonesty in Chinese society and foster trust. It is also marketed as good for ensuring secure online commerce and thus promoting economic growth. But the scheme is not just a matter of preventing fraud and generally improving national morale; everything that is reported about individual citizens, what they have done or said, both on- and offline, will be linked to their personal identity cards. People's behaviour, purchases, statements and comments – all information deemed valuable by the authorities –will be stored in personal files.

Unlike corresponding systems of credit control in democratic countries, this coordination of vast volumes of data is not just a question of economic regulation but also one of social control. China's social credit system will, according to documents from the Chinese government and university researchers, also register opinions and even attempt to grade people's characters. It contains, too, elements of 'opinion hygiene' and character-building. Chinese researchers make clear in their reports that Western credit systems cannot be superimposed onto China. They claim that while advantageous components of foreign systems will be applied, a national system 'adapted to the Chinese context must be developed'. That the country's enormous public administration is not spared the gaze of the panopticon is, of course, about ridding bureaucracy of corruption.

What is most telling, and what confirms that the system has been constructed by a dictatorship, is that the Communist Party, with all its political power, is the only social institution and political body to be exempted from the scrutiny, control and accountability that the social credit system will entail. How is it then possible to implement such an extensive control system? What might the ulterior motives be? What do the critics say? One could claim that the 'character registration' part of the social credit system is a response to the widespread feeling amongst the Chinese people that society is suffering a moral crisis marked by indifference and dishonesty between people and a lack of trust, in what is no longer a society of citizens but a market of consumers. This sentiment is also manifest in the anger that normal Chinese people feel at the corruption that infests the entire state apparatus. Since having recently implemented a vigorous national anti-corruption campaign within public administration and the Communist Party, General Secretary Xi Jinping has boosted his popularity and legitimacy with the common people. The moral cleansing that China's supreme leader is

engaged with in the state apparatus can be seen as a reflection of the moral shake-up that society, companies and citizens also need if a mood of trust, community and goodwill is to return to what is now a highly competitive market society.

Many people would agree that such a shake-up is needed, and that if any visible result is to be achieved, the state must make it happen – partly because extremely few Chinese citizens seem to be aware of the consequences that the implementation of the social credit system will have on personal integrity and the storage and use of personal data. Even well-educated Chinese have approved of the new social credit system: 'It's the future. After all, we want to evolve. The vast majority of people are all pulling together on this'.[8] Such pronouncements are exactly the popular responses the CCP wants to hear while it simultaneoulsy fosters 'market cells'. A recent commentary in the *People's Daily* suggests the economic agenda of party chief Xi Jinping assumes an 'existential dimension' of pulling together and asking the big questions: 'Where are we coming from, where are we going? This is the biggest economic issue facing decision-makers. This also involves historical decisions that will determine the fate of China'.[9]

The repressive tendency the new draft laws indicate and the moralism inherent in the state council's plans for an all-encompassing, national social credit system demonstrate that General Secretary Xi Jinping is very cognizant of the risk of social protest should his deepening of economic reforms derail and cause dislocation. To defuse this risk, China's leaders are securitizing against the vested interests of state-owned companies and elements in officialdom, as well as against an emergent civil society, a transforming public sphere and expanded political space. For the ordoliberals in post-war Germany, as in the People's Republic today, containing proletarianization of the people and revolutionary upheaval is the state's responsibility. The proposed means of containment include the *internalization of competitiveness* (Müller-Amarck 1978) and the transformation of mass society into a property-owning collective of well-rooted individuals (Bonefeld, 2012, 651). To these means I would add *securitization* and monitoring of 'every cell in society', which includes the vested interests of both centralized state power and the power of big business.

Concluding remarks

Since Xi Jinping took office as general secretary of the CCP, outside observers and human rights organizations have noted an increasingly harsh political climate in China. Campaigns against corruption in the Party and officialdom, dissent in society, harassment of journalists and defense lawyers and the draft legislation discussed above illustrate these authoritarian tendencies. So far, scholarly works have not been able to explain the rationale behind the increasing level of repression and control of political space, at a time when economic freedom and marketization are envisaged to increase ever

further. Analyses have hitherto been too myopically calibrated on micro-level CCP factionalism, when analysis of macro-level politico-economic and ideological rationales is likely to provide deeper insight.

In this chapter I have offered an explanation of why China is currently undergoing a *politics of securitization* that is linked to the twin trajectories of neoliberalization and New Confucianism, both of which received strong policy support and research funding in the wake of the milestone event of the military crackdown against the democracy movement on June 4, 1989. These two ideational programmes have taken shape in ways reminiscent of the twin concepts of German ordoliberalism, *gesellschaftspolitik* and *vitalpolitik*. The hard approach of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign and the government's intention to motivate individuals to become entrepreneurs and 'market cells' should be conceptualized as 'a policy for society', or a gesellschaftspolitik. Yet General Secretary Xi has simultaneously sought to cushion Deng Xiaoping's dictum that 'development is a hard truth' with Confucianism's moral ethos to mitigate social dislocation and protest: the 'warmth' of *vitalpolitik*. The repressive authoritarian tendency of Xi Jinping's rule is thus linked to an agenda to further deepen and expand the realm of the market economy in China, as outlined by the third plenum of the 18th Central Committee in 2013, and to control the expansion of political space.

The politics of securitization originates from Xi Jinping's perception of two primary phenomena that pose significant hurdles for implementation of a new round of marketization and economic reform. First, the deepening of market reforms faces obstacles in the form of vested interests in the Party and in officialdom. Second, market reforms entail substantial risk of further social dislocation, which explains the trend towards guaranteeing securitization if the moral discourses of self-employed 'market cells' and Confucian harmony fail to persuade elites and the grassroots. Guarantees come in the form illustrated by the slew of new security laws. Thus, backing up the moralism of a specifically Chinese version of ordoliberal *gesellschaftspolitik* and Confucian *vitalpolitik* are new laws, robustly enforced.

Ongoing political repression, legislation to combat vested economic interests and control civil society online and offline and re-centralization of personal political power under Xi Jinping, however, may dim the larger picture of the struggle inside China to further deepen marketization, neoliberalization and the creation of an enterprise society. I view the moral discourses on market freedom and containment of political space, and the curtailing of freedoms and battle against remonstration by vested interests, as measures the CCP leadership judges to be necessary in their pursuit of neoliberal market reforms and a Chinese enterprise society. Profit-motivated resistance among key state-owned companies, a lingering legacy of governmental interference in the economy and ambivalent respect for private property are likely to continue to impede this formative phase of the Chinese enterprise society. That reality is the reason behind the politics of securitization and

the limits it imposes on forces attempting to carve out political space for themselves in contemporary China.

Notes

1 Victor Nee and Sonja Opper argue that it was only through new legislation in 2004 on private property rights that the Communist Party grudgingly accepted that state oppression of entrepreneurial 'capitalism from below' was flawed and stifling growth (2012). Their 'hero narrative' is right in noting that the CCP has wrongly assumed credit for China's economic 'miracle'. Entrepreneurs were certainly involved in this growth – but so were laid-off migrant workers. In seeking to stress entrepreneurs' role, however, they underestimated the extent to which the party–state at different administrative levels stifled the entrepreneurial spirit. Officials and cadres profited as predators on a burgeoning capitalism – the state played a role, too, even if a dubious one.

2 See 'Communiqué on the current state of the ideological sphere. A notice from the central committee of the communist party of China's general office', <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>, accessed April 26, 2017.

3 In a study from 2014, 94.8 percent of respondents felt strong confidence in China's General Secretary Xi Jinping's 'handling of domestic affairs'. See Saich 2014, figure 7.

4 See 'Full text of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's speech to participants at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland', <https://agenda.weforum.org/2015/01/chinese-premier-li-keqiangs-speech-at-davos-2015/>, accessed April 26, 2017.

5 Recent studies, including the World Values Survey and the Asian Barometer quantitative surveys, indicate that the popular 'cultural norms' of both authoritarian China and democratic Asia lean strongly toward what Tianjian Shi has described as 'guardianship democracy' (Shi 2015, 226) and that 'delegative democracy', or non-liberal democracy, is more compatible with Confucian legacies (Shin 2012, 323).

6 Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at UNESCO Headquarters, March 28, 2014, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1142560.shtml>, accessed April 26, 2017.

7 The National People's Congress passed the National Security Law on July 1, 2015. See <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqcj/zgjj/2015-07-01/content_13912103.html>, accessed April 26, 2017.

8 Interview in Shanghai, May 2014.

9 'Stepping into the rhythmic and forceful walk of a big country economy, the new practice of running the country and governing the state', *The People's Daily*, February 1, 2016.

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5 Reshaping political space and workers' mobilization in South Korea

Kwang-Yeong Shin

From a comparative historical perspective, the working-class movement in South Korea is a latecomer due to the country's late industrialization and late democratization. Working-class movements in Europe evolved from focusing on material interests to political and social interests in the course of industrialization and democratization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though the working-class revolution that Karl Marx predicted has not materialized among industrialized countries in the West, working-class parties have controlled the government in many countries and have transformed industrial capitalism into a new form of political economic system, welfare capitalism (Esping-Andersen 1990; Korpi 1979; Rueschemeyer, Huber, and Stephens 1992). In this process, the capacities of workers' movements to claim political space was an essential feature.

In South Korea, workers' mobilization was severely oppressed by authoritarian governments during the period of industrialization from the 1960s to the 1980s, which presented different opportunity structures than workers' movements in the West faced, with detrimental effects for Korean workers' ability to claim political space and play a more significant role in the democratic transition. While workers' protests took place during the authoritarian period in South Korea, they were confined to some regions and had limited impact on a working-class movement in general. Several workers' struggles broke out in industrial areas such as the Masan free export zone in a southern coastal city (Kim 1997, 97–128; Ogle 1990) and the Kuro industrial complex in Seoul (Koo 1993). However, strikes in the 1970s were mostly organized by female workers with the help of religious organizations such as the Urban Industrial Mission (Koo 2001; Michelson 2009).

Two critical conjunctures transformed labour mobilization in South Korea. The first was the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1987 and transition to democracy after 26 years of military rule. After the transition to democracy in 1987, workers succeeded in organizing unions in major companies in industrial sectors. However, shaping new political spaces turned out to be a formidable challenge for labour organizations in South Korea. While democratization in the late 1980s opened up liberal political space, including electoral competition and expanding civil rights, democracy at

the workplace remained peripheral to the democratic transition. Workers needed to find their own ways to expand workers' rights and foster industrial democracy. Transition to democracy did not automatically expand political opportunities for unions at the national level. Newly organized unions still could wage struggles for recognition only by management at the workplace level. Preoccupied with harsh contestation at the workplace and largely shut out of negotiating the course of political liberalization broadly, new unions did not have sufficient will and resources to carve out political space specifically for the working class in the political arena at the national level.

Moreover, liberal opposition parties already occupied the expanding political space that political liberalization, partly driven by *minjung* movements (Doucette, this volume), created. Political parties representing the working class could not garner sufficient votes from workers to transform existing politics. As competitive elections were introduced as the rule for selecting political leaders, elections became a new political space determining the nature of the elected government. While labour unions succeeded in forming the Democratic Labour Party in 2000, electoral outcomes in subsequent elections were not so successful, primarily because a ruling authoritarian party and liberal opposition parties dominated the process by mobilizing regional sentiments among voters rather than offering interest-based political programmes.

The financial crisis in December 1997 was the second critical juncture in the transformation of labour mobilization in South Korea, affecting opportunities to mobilize to expand political space. The financial crisis had the double effect of elevating the political importance of the newly organized Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), while undermining its legitimacy in the process. Though the KCTU had not been legalized as a union confederation by the government yet, it was invited to join the Tripartite Committee with the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) right after the financial crisis, in January 1998. Sharing concerns about the economic crisis, the two union confederations conceded to an agreement with respect to flexibility of the labour market in exchange for legalization of the KCTU and teachers' union. The KCTU then succeeded in establishing the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) in 2000.

However, the immediate sharp increase in non-regular workers due to the agreement by the Tripartite Committee significantly undermined the legitimacy and political power of the newly legalized KCTU. The representatives of the KCTU at the Tripartite Committee did not pay enough attention to non-regular workers' issues, simply because non-regular workers cannot be members of labour unions. The Labour Union Law codified that only regular employees could be members of a company's union. Thus, fragmentation of workers by employment status has curtailed the associational power of unions, as the increasing ranks of non-regular workers mostly cannot join labour unions and the gap in wages and social protection between regular workers and non-regular workers has become larger.

Strikes by non-regular workers have exploded in the 2000s, reshaping political space through an articulation of workplace politics and social movements in civil society. We might see this development as a third critical juncture, still in train. Development of solidarity between strikers and civil society organizations, including student activists and other citizens, has revealed itself in a new form of protest against alignment between capital and the state: denouncing neoliberal economic policies. The emerging varied repertoire of protests, including sky protests (described below), solidarity bus tours, etc., mobilized by strikers and their supporters, present new forms of mobilization that are reshaping political space at the national level (Shin 2010; Lee 2013). These expressions also show a new assertion of associational power between labour and civil society, fortifying a social basis of solidarity against neoliberalism and an expansion of political space.

Four forms of workers' associational power

Working-class mobilization has shown the development of different forms of associational power along with broader social and political change since the late 1980s. The organized mobilization of workers has been closely associated with political dynamics in which regime transition has deeply affected associational power (for a comparison, see Deyo 2012). Worker mobilization has also been influenced by intensified globalization, as the Korean economy has become more deeply embedded in the global economy since the collapse of Eastern European communist regimes by the early 1990s (Shin 2010). At the same time, the mushrooming of civil society organizations (CSOs) has transformed the relationships between the state and society, and between unions and CSOs, as progressive civil society organizations have directly challenged the new post-democratic (see Doucette, this volume) and, hence, conservative government. Thus, building up the power resources of workers has been difficult, given the simultaneity of economic, political and social changes, as described above.

Unlike workers in Europe in the twentieth century, workers in South Korea have experienced a conjuncture of different forms of associational power in the last two decades. Four forms of associational power emerged among workers without much temporal difference, though all four lacked strength and sustainability and, thus, offered limited possibility to widen the scope of political participation or of influence in structuring political space.

The first form of associational power to emerge among workers was the labour union. The union is an organization expressing the associational power of workers themselves. The aggregation of individual workers into a single union in each factory was a big step toward the formation of a national centre for the union movement. However, internal and external constraints affected the building of labour unions. As Offe and Wiesenthal (1980) have argued, workers' organizations face an internal dilemma associated with the unique nature of mobilization for unions, 'willingness to

act'. Unions continuously require constructive dialogue, the opportunity for which is negatively correlated with the size of an organization. Thus, unlike a capitalist organization's power, the power of workers' organizations does not increase with size. Building multi-way discursive channels among leaders and rank-and-file participants is an important task for making the associational power of workers' organizations effective. In addition, external constraints have proved immediate and tangible, as the long-term hostile relationship between the government and unions has persisted. Suppression of organized unions by management or by the state continues in authoritarian regimes even today (Ho 2014; Koo 2001), but also in post-democratic ones in which issues pertinent to labour mobilization and participation have been depoliticized, despite the existence of a liberal democratic rights regime.

Workers' second form of associational power is working-class parties or political parties friendly to unions or labour issues. In Korea, organized labour has not had a political machine to protect against retaliation and violence by management at the workplace. The opposition parties have been liberal parties, which have advocated political citizenship and electoral democracy and thus have played a significant role in reshaping political institutions. However, they have evinced little interest in the labour movement and industrial relations.

The formation of a labour party in South Korea has been particularly difficult. Previously, under hegemonic anti-communism, working-class parties could not survive due to oppression by the authoritarian regime, which applied the National Security Law to limit political activities and space for leftist parties. After democratization, these liberal opposition parties quickly came to occupy the formal political sphere, leaving leftist parties to find a niche only in civil society. The formation of an independent political party by workers has been an objective of the KCTU. A former leader of the KCTU, for example, ran for president under the political party, People's Power 21, in 1997. While he failed to get enough votes to win, his candidacy raised awareness of the necessity for a pro-labour party. The formation of a labour party has remained a long-term project of progressive forces.

That goal materialized in 2000 when the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) was launched. As it succeeded in getting 13.1 percent of the vote in the 14th general election in 2004, it became the first leftist party to hold seats in the National Assembly of South Korea. However, socialist and nationalist factions cohabitated in the party. In 2011, the DLP dissolved into the Unified Progressive Party (UPP) after the socialist faction seceded in 2008 and other small opposition parties joined.

Workers' third form of associational power is networks of labour unions and civil society organizations, such as religious or civil rights organizations. Labour unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have developed different foci with respect to issues and strategies for collective action. Labour unions have focused on material issues such as wages and working

conditions, whereas NGOs have paid more attention to issues relating to the interests and survival of civil society and expansion of political space, such as human rights, environmental issues and freedom of the press (see Liu 2015 for the cases of South Korea and Taiwan). When the KCTU declared social movement unionism as a main principle of the union movement in 1995, it indicated the need for common ground for a coalition between unions and NGOs. However, the KCTU was not effective enough to build strong ties between unions and civil society organizations. In spite of the orientation of the leadership of the KCTU, the rank-and-file of the KCTU, confined to individual companies, were not so interested in the issues raised by NGOs and were reluctant to join political activities organized by NGOs.

The fourth form of associational power among workers is citizens' popular support of unions' activities. Because it faced regular elections, the ruling party began to pay more attention to trends in public opinion with regard to the government's labour policies. Public opinion became particularly salient for the ruling party during election years. Thus, media framings, which shape how the public perceive reality, have become more important than ever before. Because unions do not have their own newspapers or television networks, they rely on liberal and progressive media, which are not necessarily leftist, to influence public opinion. Thus, because workers are not powerful actors in shaping the public sphere, they have to be more defensive during times of economic crisis.

The first and second of these forms of associational power for workers have been common in Europe. Though there are no labour parties in the United States, most European countries have labour parties of one form or another (Misgeld, Molin and Åmark, 2010; Scase 2016). However, there were two significant ways of fostering associational power among the working class in Europe. One is the creation of a political party via labour unions. Some workers in industrial societies formed labour unions first and then created a working class party. Another is the creation of labour unions via political parties. Socialist intellectuals organized a political party first and then organized labour unions in industrial sectors. Britain offers the best example of the first case, with the creation of the Labour Party in 1906 by labour unions, whereas Sweden presents the best example of the second case, the formation of the nationwide confederation of unions, Landsorganisationen (LO), by the Swedish Social Democracy Party in 1898. The sequence of the formation of labour unions and political parties later shaped the form and nature of workers' associational power and their ability to press the scope of political space.

The timing of when labour unions and political parties are created is also an important factor shaping political space, in tandem with the launch of other social movements and political parties. In South Korea, all forms of social movements today derive from the struggle for democracy, in which the student movement played the key role. When the transition to democracy started, new forms of social movements emerged. They included the

labour movement and the 'new social movements' known as citizens' movements (Shin 2007). The labour movement sought a niche within the new social and political space that political liberalization opened up. However, civil society organizations such as People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, a general social movement organization, and the Korea Foundation for Environmental Movements dominated the political space for social movements.

Meanwhile, the late formation of a leftist party implies that political space was already taken over by conservative and liberal parties. Leaders of liberal opposition parties became symbolic political figures, representing the struggle for democracy. Thus, the DLP could not find support from voters as electoral competition became more contentious. The newly launched DLP could not easily expand its political space and influence within a political situation in which two major political parties, monopolizing the conservative bloc and the liberal bloc, dominated the National Assembly. That the ideological structuring of political space remained characterized by strong Cold War anti-communism became yet another obstacle against making the DLP popular. Finally, in 2014, the Park Keun-hey government abolished the United Progressive Party (UPP), a successor of the dissolved DLP formed in 2011, after charging that party members of the UPP had violated the National Security Law.

The third form of associational power of workers is also complicated because occasionally CSOs established by former political activists compete rather than cooperate or form alliances with labour unions in the domain of public issues. Furthermore, some CSOs have conflicting interests vis-à-vis unions with respect to quality of service and safety issues. The rise of CSOs took place in the early 1990s in South Korea as the democratization movement developed. Many political activists in the 1980s turned into leaders of new CSOs as political struggles became less frequent. They attempted to address substantive issues related to quality of life, such as human rights, rent, housing, welfare, education and environment. In short, 'life' politics that accentuates quality of life and self-realization came to dominate the new politics in South Korea (Cho, 2015).

The fourth form of associational power workers enjoy is more broad and vague than the other three forms because public opinion is an outcome of unions' activity in ideological and cognitive space. Nevertheless, it represents an important part of unions' strategy for mobilizing public support for unions' activities and for generating support and consent from the public in their struggle.

Democratic transition and workers' struggles in 1987

The success of the struggle for democracy in June 1987 thoroughly transformed political space in South Korea. After a long period of struggle for democracy, the military regime surrendered to the demand for democratization by student protesters and the political opposition on June 29, 1987.

Most observers expected that if there were a bloody attack on student protesters and political opposition once again in 1987, foreign countries would condemn the Korean military government and join a mass boycott of the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988 (Cotton 1993; Han 1990). Thus, instead of either complete breakdown of the regime or further suppression of the opposition, the military regime opted for a negotiated political transition as a third way. For the military regime, this option was at least the second best, since it could exercise residual power over the pace and content of the transition to democracy through negotiation, as well as continue to nurture a conservative and anti-democratic section of civil society. Instead of transition to democracy by rupture, the political 'transition by transaction' or 'transition by pact' at least allowed the ex-military power bloc to control the process of democratization (Karl and Schmitter 1991; Munck and Leff 1997).

Nevertheless, the strategic surrender of the military regime to the nationwide protests on June 29, 1987 heralded a rocky road to democratic transition, in which peaceful negotiation and violent contestations took place at the same time, both at the negotiation table and on the main streets of big cities. Thus, the transition to democracy by pact was only partially accomplished by the free and competitive presidential election in December 1987, because social organizations and actors mobilizing for democracy were completely excluded from the negotiations and their demands were only partly included in the outcome thereof. Furthermore, the competitive presidential election in December 1987 ended with the victory of Roh Tae-woo – a former army general, a classmate of President Chun at the Korea Military Academy, and the Minister of Domestic Affairs in the Chun Doo-hwan government – due to the split between two opposition leaders, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung, with regard to candidacy in the presidential election of December 1987.

Democratic transition completely transformed the matrix of social movements. The major actors in protests changed from students to workers. As eight representatives from political parties engaged in political negotiations, students and opposition leaders from outside political parties were completely marginalized. Instead, suddenly workers became the major protesters, launching militant protests on a huge scale. As Table 5.1 shows, students and intellectuals were the main actors in protests before 1988. However, labourers became the dominant actors in protests after 1987. Though democratization took place at a political regime and procedural level, these changes did not transpire significantly in the workplace. Because opposition politicians did not have clear alternative ideas to the authoritarian industrial relations of the past, labour protests took place to demand changes to low wages and workers' rights at the workplace (Koo 2001).

Hot summer strikes by workers were abrupt and violent, paralyzing industrial centres in major industrial cities. Mostly, they were spontaneous wildcat strikes that swept the Korean peninsula during the summer of 1987. Prior to the collapse of the Chun regime, workers had been controlled in a

Table 5.1 Main social groups participating in protest, by political context

1970s	*Percent*	*1980–1987*	*Percent*	*1988–1992*	*Percent*
Students/Youth	31.71	Students/Youth	48.41	Labourers	34.76
Labourers	17.00	Labourers	23.65	Students/Youth	21.57
Christians	16.50	Christians	4.92	General activists	16.40
Journalists	6.39	Intellectuals	3.65	Citizens	5.70
Christian students	6.30	General activists	3.65	Educators	4.63
Other	22.10	Other	15.72	Other	16.94
Total	100.00	Total	100.00	Total	100.00

Source: Shin, *et al*. 2007, 22.

militaristic way, with strict discipline and an authoritarian culture within companies. Even the police and security agencies of the government tightly monitored workers' activities and suppressed workers' struggles. However, the collapse of the Chun regime provided new political space for workers to express their grievances and organize their own unions.

The first outbreak of workers' protest occurred among workers at Hyundai Heavy Industry, one of the big family conglomerates, or *chaebol*, representing oppressive labour control. Workers went on strike to protest inhumane control of workers and low wages (Koo 2001). They also organized a union on July 7, 1987 that was the first union among companies associated with the Hyundai group, one the largest family conglomerates in South Korea. In spite of oppression by police and management, workers in other companies of the Hyundai group also succeeded in organizing their own unions. Moreover, they jointly staged a huge protest march in Ulsan against the oppression of newly established unions by the Hyundai group, as the Hyundai group mobilized gangsters to attack union leaders when they gathered for a meeting. However, strikes spread out from Ulsan to the whole peninsula, including Seoul and Incheon. The entire country was engulfed in massive spontaneous strikes, not only in the private sector but also in the public sector. White-collar workers and civil servants also launched strikes demanding workers' rights. As Figure 5.1 shows, the number of strikes exploded, from 276 in 1986 to 3,749 in 1987. The number of strikes in 1987 was greater than the sum of all the strikes that had occurred since 1950. The immediate outcome of these strikes was a sharp increase in wages, either set through collective bargaining or by companies without collective bargaining. A two-digit wage increase continued for a decade, until the financial crisis in 1997.

Building associational power resources

The Great Workers' Struggle in 1987 led to an organizational revolution through which the associational power of workers increased in a short

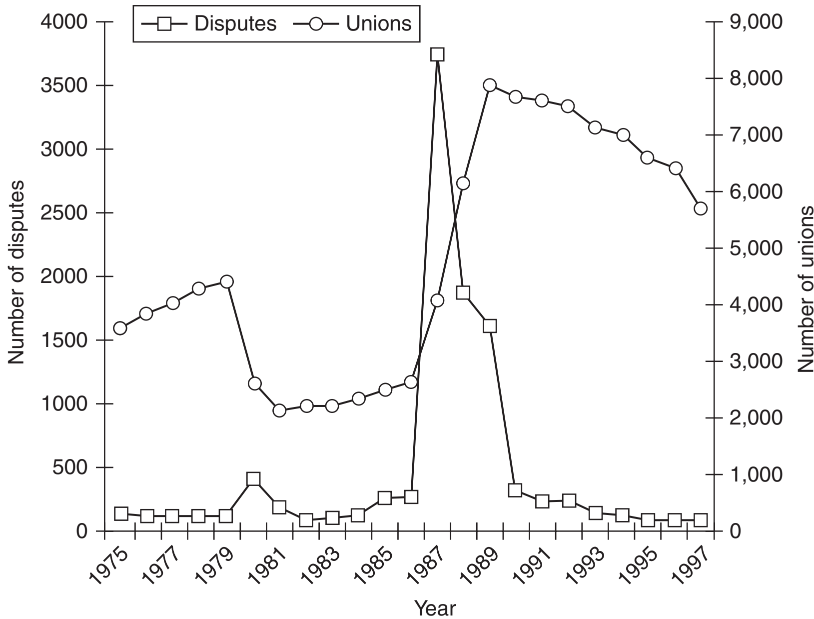

Figure 5.1 Number of labour disputes and labour unions, 1975–98.

Source: Koo 2001, 157.

period. A new wave of unionization swept across sectors, including both manufacturing and service sectors. As wildcat strikers attempted to organize unions during and after the strikes, the unionization rate drastically increased after 1987. It almost doubled in two years, from 9.9 percent in 1986 to 18.3 percent in 1988. In spite of fierce attempts by management to halt workers' organizing, workers mostly in big companies among the *chaebols* succeeded in establishing autonomous unions, mainly because state oppression of the labour movement almost disappeared, as the state's oppressive apparatus was almost incapacitated by mass protests, and the power of management was undermined by the wave of nationwide strikes. As Figure 5.1 also shows, a unionization drive followed the trajectory of strikes.

Because despotic labour control and low wages were quite pervasive, the spread of strikes across the country was strongly supported by public opinion in the summer of 1997. Thus, an organizational revolution persisted until 1990, when three conservative parties merged and the conservative government began to resume anti-labour policies and mobilized repressive measures against unions. Nevertheless, capitalists criticized the conservative government for leaving management alone to deal with conflicts in the workplace. Chung Joo-young, the founder of Hyundai group, announced his candidacy for presidency in 1992, criticizing the incompetency and corruption of leading politicians, including president Roh Tae-woo. His

running symbolized the anger and frustration of *chaebol* and the division of interests between the state and capital in this short period.

Consequently, newly formed unions, mostly enterprise unions, almost immediately confronted oppression by management at companies. Because the revised Labour Union Law in 1980 imposed company unions as the form of union organization, new unions had to struggle with management for recognition and carry out wage bargaining at each company. No negotiations at the national or sectoral levels developed because of a long history of enterprise unionism and the pervasiveness of company consciousness even among union members. Moreover, the Labour Union Law prohibited industrial unions, to prevent workers' collective action beyond the boundaries of a given company. Although solidarity activities were frequently pursued by different unions across sectors, they were oriented toward general political issues.

The most critical juncture in shaping political space during the transition to democracy was the merger of three parties on January 22, 1990. The party of President Roh Tae-woo, the ex-general and newly elected president – thanks to the split between opposition candidates – failed to win a majority of seats in the general election of April 1988. His Democratic Justice Party (DJP) gained the largest number of seats, with 125, but that share fell far short of a majority in the National Assembly, which had 299 seats in total. The ruling party could not exercise sufficient power in the National Assembly to control the process of transition to democracy. Merging three political parties, Roh attempted to change the composition of the National Assembly from four parties to two, such that the ruling party would control the National Assembly as a majority party (Kim 1997, 41; Kim 2011, 43). He negotiated with Kim Young-sam, the leader of the Unification Democratic Party (UDP), and Kim Jong-pil, the leader of the New Democratic Republic Party (NDRP). The Peace Democratic Party (PDP) had won seventy seats; the UDP, fifty-nine seats; the NDRP, thirty-five; and independents, ten.

Roh could not stop the transition to democracy, but wanted to regain control over the process of democratization to secure the interests of the old guard. Recognizing the remote possibility of their winning the next presidential elections as leaders of minority opposition parties, Kim Young-Sam and Kim Jong-Pil agreed to merge, to form a new majority ruling party, the Democratic Liberal Party (DLP). Kim Young-sam tried in particular to enhance his own chance of winning the next presidential election. Because the term of president was only one five-year term, Kim Young-sam expected to become the presidential candidate of the ruling party and to win the majority of votes in the presidential election in 1992 (Kim 2011, 39).

However, the merger was a political coup, completely denying the voters' choices. Political transactions among political elites ignored the outcome of the general election, because one of the three merged parties, the UDP, had been a core party of the opposition but now became a part of the ruling party. Voters had supported that party because it strongly challenged

authoritarian rules and criticized the ruling party during the election campaign in April 1988. The transformation of political space by the deal among political elites also affected industrial relations. The Roh government began to apply authoritarian control over union activity and to intervene in the internal affairs of unions through state agencies (Gray 2008, 65–7).

Moreover, a backlash from the government reactivated companies' union-busting. While contestations between union and management continued among big corporations with a large union membership, unions in small and medium-sized companies faced more hostile union-busting activities by management. Because unions were company unions, their members were organized within companies and did not have sufficient associational power to mobilize resistance against threats and intimidation of union members by management. While the number of unions increased by almost 195 percent, from 2,675 in 1986 to 7,883 in 1989, it dropped by 16.2 percent between 1990 and 1995. The number of union members also decreased by 16.4 percent, from 1,932,000 to 1,615,000 from 1989 to 1995 (Korea Labor Institute 2015).

Nevertheless, there were several attempts to organize labour unions beyond companies in the manufacturing sector, among white-collar workers and workers in companies under *chaebol*. In 1989, white collar workers' unions established the Korea Congress of Independent Industrial Trade Union Federations (KCIIF, Upjonghwehui), including the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers' Union (later the Korea Teachers' Union). Workers in companies of the Hyundai Group, including unions in Hyundai Motor Company and Hyundai Heavy Industry, organized the Hyundai Group Trade Union Federation. Workers in companies in the Daewoo Group also organized the Daewoo Group Trade Union Council. In 1990, the Korea Trade Union Congress (KTUC, Chonnohyup) was formed as a nationwide solidarity organization of unions waging struggles for recognition at companies mostly in the manufacturing sector.

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), a new national centre of trade unions, launched in 1995. Newly organized unions formed the KCTU as an alternative confederation to the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), which had been sponsored by the state. However, it has not successfully expanded its associational power beyond companies in which new unions were organized. While the KCTU was a confederation of unions, its activity was limited to meetings of union representatives; it lacked any significant role in coordinating union activities in terms of collective bargaining and wage negotiation. Regardless, the division and competition between the KCTU and the existing FKTU heralded a new era of dual confederations of unions in South Korea. The FKTU was allowed and even financially sponsored by the military regime. The military regime also recruited leaders from the FKTU as proportional representatives to be sure of cooperation between the FKTU and the government. The cooperation between the FKTU and the conservative party has been mostly maintained,

with some interruptions. Though the rank-and-file of the FKTU were critical of the leadership and some leaders intermittently took a confrontational stance toward the government, the FKTU has mostly maintained a pro-government orientation and government-patronized leaders of the FKTU have personally utilized their position to become politicians of the conservative ruling party.

Globalization and workers' politics

Globalization has presented a complicated set of social changes as international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank and domestic agencies on the part of the government, labour and capital have attempted to reshape processes and outcomes, mobilizing their own power resources, with attendant possibilities to claim political space. However, spatial-temporal particularities of globalization in each country have articulated multi-layered cleavages and contestations.

Globalization in South Korea has entailed membership in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as of December 29, 1996. While the OECD and United States had strongly pushed for South Korea to join since the late 1980s, the Korean government delayed its membership because it required changes in government regulation of the market and labour relations. While President Kim Young-sam stressed globalization as a mantra of his government policy, he postponed taking necessary steps to become a member of the OECD until late 1996.

In preparation for joining the OECD, in 1996, President Kim launched a Committee for Revising Industrial Relations (CRIR) to amend draconian labour-relations laws last revised by the military junta in December 1980. The labour-relations laws of the military junta included codes in violation of workers' rights and prohibited plural unions within a company, political participation of unions, third party intervention in union affairs and formation of a teachers' union. The main principle of the new bill in 1996 was a purported balance among interests of labour and business: while the proposed bill allowed plural unionism, political participation of unions, third party intervention and teachers' unions, it also permitted individualized labour relations, including legalization of agencies dispatching workers to customers, labour market flexibility and easy layoffs. Yet, the Ministry of Economic Planning, representing the interests of business, intervened in the negotiations; in protest, the representatives of the KCTU withdrew from the CRIR. The CRIR sent a draft with items based on agreements reached thus far, together with unresolved items, to the government. The Ministry of Labour added its own ideas to the proposal and sent it to the National Assembly. However, the ruling party completely changed the bill in accordance with the demands of business and rushed the bill through the National Assembly by surprise, without an opposition party presence, at dawn on the day after Christmas in 1996.

The blitzkrieg passage of the Labour Relations Law provoked nationwide protests, including general strikes by the KCTU and mass protests by civil society organizations. Joint activities by the KCTU and the FKTU contributed to formulating solidarity strikes, mobilizing more than three million workers and mass popular supporters (Koo 2001, 199–201). Contrary to the government's expectations, strikes and protests gained remarkable public support, so that the government gave in, announcing immediate revision of the law and an apology to the people by President Kim.

The general strike in late 1996 and early 1997 was a great success by unions in protecting workers' interests and workers' rights. Workers' strikes and protests by citizens continued for more than one month, enabling the victory of unions and workers. Supportive public opinion was a key factor in the success of the workers' struggle for revision of the draconian Labour Relations Law in late 1996 and early 1997. A newly crafted Labour Relations Law was passed on March 10, 1997. South Korea's ascension to the OECD hence opened up an important political opportunity.

Another impact of globalization on South Korea was the financial crisis in 1997, which occurred exactly one year after Korea joined the OECD. The pattern of growth of companies based on debt financing became a serious problem when the Korean economy became integrated into the global economy. While the OECD demanded fundamental changes in the relationship between the state and big corporations, the legacy of norms and behaviour of economic actors and policy makers still remained unchanged. The immediate cause of the financial crisis in 1997 was the inability of big corporations to pay back debt from international financial organizations. The sudden collapse of the Korean economy ended up bankrupting sixteen of the thirty largest chaebol and incurring mass layoffs, on a scale unprecedented in history.

The crisis dramatically transformed workers' mobilization in three ways. First, the economic crisis resulted in inclusion of organized labour in political processes (Gray 2008, chap. 4; Koo 2001, 203). Both the KCTU and the FKTU became social partners within the Tripartite Committee. As Kim Dae-jung, one of the leading opposition leaders fighting against the authoritarian regime, became president in 1998, he attempted to forge a social consensus to overcome the economic crisis in a corporatist way. As the sixteen chaebol collapsed, economic restructuring and mass layoffs were inevitable. The Kim Dae-jung government followed guidelines given by the IMF when the government reached an agreement for rescue funds from the IMF. The IMF programme that the Korean government accepted fully embodied the Washington consensus, including core neoliberal principles such as deregulation of the labour market, privatization of public enterprises, opening of financial markets and the reform of chaebol governance (IMF 1997).[1]

Second, while top leaders of union confederations could join the Tripartite Committee, rank-and-file workers were left to wage militant resistance against mass layoffs as companies initiated 'structural restructuring' as a

way of enhancing flexibility. In particular, workers in bankrupted companies staged violent strikes. The best example was the strikes of workers in Daewoo Motor Company in Incheon, which was wound down and sold to General Motors in the United States in 2001. While the general strike in early 1997 had been successful in reshaping the process of the revision of the Labour Relations Law, the strikes right after the financial crisis, in early 1998, were defensive; to avoid the mass layoffs taking place in each company. Mergers and acquisitions were common in economic restructuring and almost one hundred thousand workers were discharged each month in 1998.

Third, the leadership of the KTCU was in crisis, as its rank-and-file criticized an agreement by representatives in the Tripartite Committee with regard to layoff and employment of non-regular workers (Gray 2008, chap. 5; Koo 2001, 202; Shin 2010). The leadership of the KCTU was changed, with installation of more radical leaders by delegates at the emergency meetings right after the agreement by the Tripartite Committee. While the agreement by the Tripartite Committee was hailed as a historical compromise between labour and capital, it became a key moment in shifting the focus of labour mobilization from regular workers of organized unions to non-regular workers.

Globalization transformed not only the management styles of chaebol, but also the labour movement in South Korea. As the KCTU withdrew from the Tripartite Committee in February 1999, the inclusion of labour in the Tripartite Committee was short-lived. Thus, the contentious politics of the KCTU revived after that and opportunistic behaviour by the FKTU became more frequent than before. However, the deregulated labour market generated new dynamics and new agency for labour mobilization, heralding a new age of labour mobilization in which the third form of associational power became more central.

Mobilization from the margins

The immediate consequences of economic restructuring by the state and structural reform by companies after the financial crisis were mass layoffs and the rise of precarious work. The Tripartite Agreement enabled companies to easily discharge surplus workers or replace regular workers with non-regular workers to lower labour costs. As companies quickly changed their employment practices, the number of unemployed skyrocketed. Unemployment increased from half a million workers in June 1997 to 1.5 million in June 1998, corresponding with an increase in the unemployment rate from 2.3 percent in June 1976 to seven percent in June 1998. The social group most damaged by the financial crisis and successive economic reforms was youth. Because companies primarily attempted to reduce their number of employees, opportunities for employment were curtailed severely. As many new graduates from high schools and universities could not get jobs

due to companies' freezing recruitment, unemployment among youth below the age of 25 more than doubled, from 7.7 percent in 1997 to 15.9 percent in 1998 (Shin 2015, 34).

Another change was the dramatic increase in non-regular workers. The number of non-regular workers began to explode even after the number of unemployed significantly diminished. The proportion of non-regular workers rapidly increased by 10.8 percent, from 26.2 percent in 2001 to 37 percent in 2004, before declining to 32.4 percent over the next decade. Companies carried out mass layoffs after the financial crisis and then recruited non-regular workers rather than regular workers when they began to hire new employees. One of the unique characteristics of non-regular workers in South Korea is that the majority of them are full-time, in contrast with European countries, where the majority of non-regular workers are part-time. This pattern implies that employers exploit full-time non-regular workers with low pay and precarious employment status. Since 2002, non-regular workers' wages have hovered at less than sixty percent of those of regular workers (Korea Labour Institute, each year). While the relative proportion of non-regular workers has been diminishing since 2004, the wage gap between regular workers and non-regular workers has been increasing. Moreover, all categories of non-regular workers have experienced shrinking wages between 2002 and 2015. In sum, one third of workers are now precarious workers with low pay and no job security. Intensifying exploitation of non-regular workers has become the 'new normal' in the Korean labour market.

As their employment status has deteriorated, non-regular workers have begun to protest such an exploitative system. Because they do not have associational power, they rely on more unconventional and extreme forms of protest. According to the Union Law, non-regular workers are not entitled to be members of unions. Unions do not accept non-regular workers as members even if they are working in the same company as unionized regular workers. Thus, non-regular workers have begun to use a different repertoire of protests from union workers because they consider themselves to be a marginal group in the labour market and politics.

Non-regular workers' protests have shown three features different from those of past labour protests. First, their protests have taken extreme forms, such as 'sky protests'. Sky protests are a new form of labour resistance. Strikers ascend a tall chimney of the factory or a crane on which they are working, and remain there for an extended period, to proclaim their grievances and demands (Lee 2013). Other extreme types of protest include hunger strikes, sit-in strikes and even more dramatic forms, such as suicide. This new form of non-regular workers' resistance tries to capture public attention because these workers are deprived of basic rights and because unions and political parties do not pay attention to their concerns.

Second, because employers ignore demands by non-regular workers, strikes by non-regular workers tend to be long. Some non-regular workers'

strikes have continued for several years. One of the longest such strikes was by the mostly female non-regular workers of JEI Co., a private tutoring company. Non-regular workers of JEI Co. staged a sky protest for 202 days at the bell tower of the Catholic church in Seoul and held a 2,016-day sit-in rally. After six years, when the company agreed to reinstate fired workers and to negotiate a collective agreement, workers stopped their strike (Kim 2013).

Third, solidarity activities by civil society organizations and citizens have played a key role in supporting non-regular workers' struggles for labour rights. Non-regular workers have developed the third form of associational power and a network of solidarity activity has become the base for extremely long struggles. Recently the 'hope bus' movement has become a new form of solidarity activism, in which social activists and students or ordinary citizens visit places where one or two strikers are holding sky protests (Lee 2013; Shin 2010). Solidarity mobilization between strikers and civil society organizations has become more frequent and angry than ever before.

Conclusion

South Korea experienced two macro-level social changes, democratization and globalization, in the late twentieth century. In South Korea, the labour movement has been affected by the dynamics of political change and social change taking place at the global level and national level; both the political space in which they operate and their modes of participation have shifted. While industrialization started in the mid-1960s, industrial workers emerged as a new social class. But workers were a deprived social group with low pay and no social protection. Their political mobilization was also suppressed by the military regime until the military regime was itself in crisis in the late 1980s. Thus, democratization became an important factor for the development of labour mobilization. Workers' mobilization took place on a large scale when the oppressive apparatus of the state was severely weakened due to the struggle for democracy by students and political activists. However, shifts in the character of the regime since then, and especially the rise of a post-democratic orientation on the part of increasingly conservative governments, have again limited workers' political space.

Workers' mobilization has been also affected by globalization. Both OECD membership in 1996 and the financial crisis in 1997 shaped the temporal and spatial fix of neoliberalism in South Korea, significantly transforming political space for the working class. The most fundamental factor in the development of workers' mobilization has been the building of various forms of associational power among workers. Historically, workers have developed four forms of associational power: unions, labour parties, networks with civil society organizations and supportive public opinion. Changes to the balance among these forms of associational power have also taken place within a matrix transformed by globalization as well as democratization.

The mobilization of non-regular workers in South Korea is a unique feature of present-day workers' mobilization. It is also an outcome of multi-layered social dynamics that exclude non-regular workers. 'Naked workers' without social protection do not have alternative opportunities for voice. The marginal have begun to talk more loudly and have acted out to transform the workplace and the economy. The rise of labour mobilization among non-regular workers in South Korea sheds light on a new direction in labour mobilization, in an era of neoliberal globalization.

Note

1 The programme targeted many reforms, including enhancing rights of shareholders, transparency of corporate accounts and improvement of insolvency proceedings (see OECD 1998, 105–6).

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6 The new meaning of political participation in cyberspace

Social media and collective action in Vietnam's authoritarianism

Bui Hai Thiem

In recent years, informal politics in Vietnam has increasingly interacted at a higher level of visibility with elite politics and become more prominent, a trend clearly associated with social media. The boom in civil society forums on the Internet has been a major feature of a new information politics in Vietnam (Nguyen 2013). The focus on civil society and the expansion of political space in Vietnam has shifted markedly from either development activity of NGOs or political dissent by the 'loyal opposition' to a broader range of social and political activism, including engagement on social media and informal civil society groups' and individuals' acting collectively together on an issue-specific basis (see Wells-Dang 2014).

The ascendency of social media has been a key force in thrusting civil society activism to the foreground. The process of amending the Constitution between 2011–13; the popular protests against China's assertive and aggressive actions over the South China Sea and anti-China protests emerging in 2007, leading to mass protests in 2014 (Nguyen An 2009, 157); the popular movement to protect trees in Ha Noi from being felled in March 2015, then against dumping landfill into a river that same year in Đồng Nai; workers' protests in Bình Dương, Đồng Nai and the greater Ho Chi Minh City area (Kerkvliet 2011; Tran 2013; Hansson 2011); as well as coal-dust protests in Bình Thuận, are among the key examples of the ascendency of, and new power possessed by, civil society and social media activism. In all these cases and others, civil society action has shaped public responses and the way the party–state handles the outcomes of contentious politics. These examples indicate a new level of development of civil society in terms of the impact of social media and the level of organization, coordination and responsiveness among actors involved.

With the rise of social media, citizens' political participation has increasingly moved online and the initiative in social mobilization on key issues of public concern has shifted away from state-linked agencies, invited arenas for participation and official media. The strength and resilience of online civil society is measured in terms of its political and mobilizational impact and its effects on policy, public opinion and government action. Recent developments show that the relative 'sensitivity' of a number of issues is

strongly conditioned on timing, framing and actors' willingness to press boundaries of accepted speech and political space. Terms such as 'transparency', 'accountability' and 'advocacy', once considered off-limits, are now in normal usage, and even 'civil society' is more widely used than in the past.

Cyberspace offers both formal and informal avenues for political participation. In social media in Vietnam, we see increasing contestation within political space, at multiple levels and with a wider array of actors. The use of social media as interactive forms of information and communication technologies (ICT) that involve people's generating and exchanging content has developed into a higher level of complexity and sophistication in recent years. Actors in cyberspace include a vast array of social media users, ranging from state agents or allies, to independent political commentators or analysts, to netizens concerned about governance issues and dissidents. The interaction among these actors has contributed importantly to the expansion of political space in Vietnam. Similar to what Wright observes about China's Internet (chapter 8, this volume), policing and control of online political space in Vietnam goes along with toleration and acceptance of citizens' online grievances and inputs, as well as allowing use of the Internet by candidates for elected office, particularly during the months leading up to the election of the National Assembly of Vietnam in May 2016.

This chapter provides an account of the historical development of social media in Vietnam. While the Communist Party of Vietnam and its government has been attempting to place social media under closer watch and control, the online political space opened up by social media has been made possible due to these platforms' expedience for various actors, including influential sections inside the party–state. The chapter examines the use of social media in two important aspects, as a political resource and as a political arena. A case study of a campaign for trees in metropolitan Hanoi in March 2015 manifests the implications of social media for political participation, followed by an analysis of the response of the state to the increased use of social media. The case study manifests how the use of social media has affected different aspects of contentious politics in the country. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limits of social media for civil society activism in the political life of contemporary Vietnam.

The ascendency of social media

The dramatic advance of information and communication technologies has become a key factor for the development of civil society and for political participation and space by providing new opportunities as well as creating new challenges. According to Chang, Chu and Welsh (2013, 153), the Internet and social media have three important implications for the development of civil society: (1) providing alternative sources of information, (2) lowering the cost of political participation and (3) increasing the mobilizing capacity of opposition forces. This development of civil society, in turn, has

been closely associated with three familiar features of social life that Tilly and Tarrow (2015, 7) identify as 'contentious politics': contention, collective action and politics. Social media have all it takes for one to embrace contentious politics, particularly in such a context as Vietnam.

Although in Vietnam the existence of any opposition force is questionable due to the thorough destruction of independent power centres as a result of the Revolution (1945–75) and the direct repression of pro-democratic forces or autonomous expressions of dissent by the party–state, cyber dissidence has been on the rise and is likely to become more cohesively organized. In response, the party–state has recognized the importance of managing, controlling and disciplining cyber dissidence. It has been able to adopt a combination of repressive and responsive measures to mitigate the adverse effects of its economic malperformance and public frustration as expressed by activists and citizens in cyberspace. These measures include technological ones, like restricting access by way of firewalls, filtering and list-blocking; legal ones in new legislation aimed at preventing such activities; and political ones like the extensive use of compliant networks and legal measures to force compliance.

Vietnam has had one of the fastest rates of growth in Internet use not only in Asia, but in the world, with a very high Internet penetration rate and young users.[1] By the end of 1997, the Internet began to go commercial in Vietnam, first among a limited number of users from state agencies. Within fifteen years, the number of Internet users had exploded. According to the Vietnam Internet Centre under the Ministry of Information and Communication, 31.3 million people, accounting for 35.58 percent of the population, used the Internet by November 2012 and the number continues to grow.[2] Mobile broadband Internet users (3G subscribers) alone numbered approximately 20 million by 2013. Most Internet users are young, urban and educated, belonging to the middle class. Just as has been the case with rising Internet use worldwide, Vietnamese society is now increasingly empowered to access and spread information, build ties among geographically separate peoples and connect individuals via common interests.

The high level of Internet penetration in the population has a number of important implications for virtual association in Vietnam. There are now plenty of vehicles for Internet communication, including blogs, microblogs, social networking sites, chatrooms, emails, mailing lists, instant messaging and online forums that can be used to connect dissenters and distribute their opinions. The Internet and mobile phone data services have provided fertile ground for a blossoming blogosphere and cyber activism that challenge the mainstream press, owned by the party–state, in many significant ways. Social media users are an important target audience for, but also emerging players in, the developing independent civil society in Vietnam. These new actors have been taking advantage of the blogosphere and social media to circulate information, including contestation and dissent over party–state ideas and norms. They include informal groups of

intellectuals, retired government officials, professors, students, writers and independent activists.

The ascendance of the Internet in Vietnam has facilitated the disproportionate expansion of independent cyberspace for discussion and deliberation and has been crucial for the re-emergence of civil society in Vietnam. The Internet has increased access to different sources of information and advanced freedom of information. In doing so, it has contributed to reducing the party–state's control over information flows and effects of censorship and to the opening of space for aspects of civil society and political space more broadly to thrive. There has been a marked increase in social interactions over the Internet. In the context of an authoritarian state with strict control over physical association, virtual association tends to encourage political involvement and active citizenry as it 'is typically more anonymous than traditional group membership, and usually is less formal' (Kittilson and Dalton 2008, 4). Anonymity and information access are among the most important reasons an increasing number of people are choosing to use Internet communication tools.

Preference for anonymity in online life also reflects societal worries, whether possible detection by the state regarding taboo issues like politics, or surveillance by higher authorities, including bosses, parents and teachers. In essence, Vietnam's social structure has been only partially transposed onto the Internet: the older generation is less prominent in online activism and expression than it is in real life.[3]

Social media, particularly Facebook, offer an important outlet for dissenting views regarding the party's control of society. Social media analyst Socialbakers estimates that Vietnam's Facebook users numbered 22 million in 2014.[4] Besides Facebook, home-grown Vietnamese social networking sites like ZingMe and Go.vn also have growing ranks of users. Blogging and microblogging are also very popular among Internet users. It is estimated that 3 million Vietnamese people have their own personal blogs.[5]

The rising influence of social media has contributed to noticeable changes in public awareness and in the role of traditional state-controlled media, to the extent that Facebook has now become the most important and influential outlet for information in Vietnam. Mainstream journalists even have to consider the key issues debated on Facebook to develop their stories for print media. A majority of the 18,000 journalists licensed by the state have active personal Facebook accounts and proactively interact in this cyberspace. As a result, state-controlled mainstream print media are also increasingly going online and mobile. Pressure is building for mainstream media given the threat of their losing readers' interest and trust.

Social media as a political resource

But social media are also well received by official political actors in Vietnam as useful resources to tap into as they pursue their goals. They use interactive

functions of social media to generate consent and public interest to support their own positions and bolster their popularity. Minister of Health Nguyen Thi Kim Tien and the Office of the Government of Vietnam were among the first to pioneer this approach, using Facebook to promote their activities to the public. Their use of social media received positive responses from the public.

More remarkably, social media have started playing a visible role in competition among elite political factions, offering a handy political instrument. Accounts on social media have, for example, revealed a 'sense of acute political gridlock' and 'a bitter and uncharacteristically public proxy struggle for control over the party Politburo' (London 2014, 1). To a certain extent, social media influence public opinion by filling the gaps in the information provided by state media. Various websites and blogs have emerged, with unknown sources or owners, that provide insider information about important public figures and high-ranking officials. These sites have attracted a lot of public attention. Although several critical bloggers have been detained, arrested and imprisoned, the actors behind these popular websites have still not been publicly identified.

The emergence of certain political blogs has coincided with political events at the level of political elites and has started to play an important role in the political struggles of warring elites and factions within the party. Some especially influential blogs have been set up shortly before important political events. For example, *Dân Làm Báo* (Citizens' Journalism) appeared online in August 2010, when top party officials were jockeying for positions at the 11th Party Congress (scheduled to take place in January 2011). *Quan Làm Báo* was established in May 2012, on the threshold on the 5th Plenum of the CPV Central Committee of the 11th term. This plenum sent out signals of intensified efforts to curtail the power of Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng. A key item on the agenda of the plenum was a review of anti-corruption efforts, including the performance of the Central Anti-Corruption Steering Committee headed by Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng (CPV Central Committee 2012). At the plenum, it was decided that the Central Anti-Corruption Steering Committee undergo important organizational and leadership changes. It was placed under the direct purview of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party instead of the Government, as its chairmanship was transferred from the prime minister to the party general secretary. The two blogs, *Dân Làm Báo* and *Quan Làm Báo*, carried numerous attacks on the prime minister. The prime minister reacted by publicly ordering the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Information and Communication to investigate and take strict measures against several blogs, including *Dân Làm Báo* and *Quan Làm Báo* (Office of the Government 2012). Several blogs were closed down in the process.

Chân Dung Quyền Lực (Profiles of Power) was established in December 2014, after a vote of confidence in government ministers in 2013 (see Malesky 2014) and just before votes of confidence in twenty top party officials at the 10th Plenum of the CPV Central Committee of the 11th term

in January 2015. The blog presented a series of corruption-related charges against high-profile politicians, including Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Defense Minister Phung Quang Thanh and President of the Supreme People's Procuracy Nguyen Hoa Binh, among others. The fact that it never published any account of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung gave rise to speculation that the blog was aimed at the Prime Minister's political opponents (BBC 2015). According to an informant's estimate, roughly 70 percent of facts and figures revealed by *Chân Dung Quyền Lực* and another site, *Dân Luận*, are accurate, but political leaders have not spoken publicly about or responded to information posted on these sites.[6] (Social media have particularly highlighted corruption allegations in China, too; see Wright's chapter in this volume.) Interestingly, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung made a public comment at an official meeting in January 2015, that social media are 'a necessity and cannot be banned' (Thanh Nien News, October 21, 2015), amid some concerns raised among officials about the 'poisonous' information produced by social media – implicitly taking aim at *Chân Dung Quyền Lực*. Paradoxically, *Người Cao Tuổi*, a newspaper under the management of the Elderly People's Association, was immediately punished for printing sensitive facts and figures about several high-ranking officials, including former Government Inspector General Trần Văn Truyền (Minh Quang and Da Trang 2015).

With the rise of the blogosphere, the initiative in social mobilization on key political issues of public concern related, for example, to the behaviour of party elites, their corruption and key political positions has shifted away from mainstream state-linked agencies and media to the Internet. As can be seen in the cases presented in this chapter, and as noted by Hansson and Weiss in their introductory chapter, the use of social media can be both indicative of mistrust and disenchantment and a strategic decision.

Social media as a political arena

It is important to note that social media and the blogosphere have become the major battlegrounds in Vietnam for contesting ideas about and norms of governance and discourses on the political regime. Various civil society organizations and better-informed citizens have turned to the Internet to associate virtually and articulate their demands for more effective governance and popular participation in policy-making and politics. Using data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) to investigate regime legitimacy in Southeast Asia, Chang, Chu and Welsh (2013, 153) observe that 'conflicts are taking place more and more online nowadays, and bloggers are often the front-line combatants'. In Vietnam, blogs, microblogs and social media have served as effective outlets for increasingly vocal calls from the public demanding democratic rights, freedoms of association and assembly, participation in the public realm and, thus, expansion of political space. Well-known political blogs and websites include *Anh Basam*, *Bauxite Viet Nam*,

Dân Làm Báo and *Diễn đàn Xã hội Dân sự* (Civil Society Forum). These sites attract millions of readers each day and claim thousands of followers, despite firewalls set up by the party–state to restrict access. They have stirred up a new form of political activism and added to the complexities of state–society relations in the view of the party. For example, the blog *Ba Sam* (or *Anh Ba Sam*) was started in 2007 with the aim of educating Vietnamese netizens about Vietnamese political, social, economic and cultural issues from a different perspective. The site published translations of English- and French-language articles and excerpts from books, and provided links to a variety of news sources. When Nguyen Huu Vinh, supposedly the owner of the *Ba Sam* blog, was arrested, the charges against him acknowledged that one microblog on the site, namely, *Dân Quyền* (Rights of Citizens, founded in September 2013), 'published 2014 pieces of writing, received 38,574 comments and got 3,243,330 access hits'. The charges also noted that another blog, *Chép Sử Việt* (Writing Vietnamese History, founded in January 2014), 'published 383 pieces, received 3,401 comments and got 480,353 access hits'. The police and prosecutors found twelve articles published on *Dân Quyền* and twelve on *Chép Sử Việt* to have

> untruthful and baseless content; distort the lines and policies of the Party and the law of the State; vilify a number of individuals and affect the prestige of offices and organizations; present a one-sided and pessimistic view, causing anxiety and worry, and affecting the people's confidence in the leadership of the Party, the Government, the National Assembly, and the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
>
> (HRW 2016)

As can be seen from the charges against the owner of *Ba Sam*, blogs like this have had a clear impact on the political arena of Vietnam.

As the traditional media in Vietnam are solely owned and strictly controlled by the party–state, social media represent virtually the only effective and practical way to navigate through censorship of and restrictions on information and critical knowledge. The issues that attract social media include governance problems and mismanagement by the party–state of the economy, the environment, foreign affairs, the system's and officials' integrity, education, healthcare, labour conditions and culture. Initially compartmentalized in specific issue areas, these discussions have quickly spilled over and become interrelated among groups and associations in civil society.

The establishment and development of the blog *Bauxite Vietnam*, is a typical example. The blog started in 2009 as a forum to air criticisms over the party–state's policy of bauxite mining in the central highlands of Vietnam, mostly on environmental grounds. The critiques developed to incorporate an economic analysis of costs and benefits and strategic security arguments against the bauxite mining policy and a criticism of Chinese interventions and investments in Vietnam. The site grew very influential among

intellectuals and the general public, despite the party–state's determination to proceed with the project. The blog has now become a generic forum for discussion of various topical development issues and critical governance problems, even though it still keeps its original name of Bauxite Vietnam.

The rise and fall of the blog *Quan Làm Báo* within a short period is another notable case. *Quan Làm Báo* was launched as a forum to fight against official corruption amid dramatic infighting among top political leaders in Vietnam, which reached a pinnacle at the 6th Plenum of the CPV Central Committee in October 2012. At this plenum, the Politburo made an unprecedented bid to discipline the prime minister; the effort failed at the time. The blog had exposed detailed profiles of high-ranking officials in the Vietnamese party–state in collusion with businesspeople supposedly implicated in corruption. While the provenance and authenticity of these reports and information cannot be confirmed with certainty, they triggered suspicions about and distrust of top officials. In some cases, the posts even disclosed secrets and highly sensitive news that were later confirmed by official media. This blog attracted millions of regular readers and followers at its peak. Public interest in the blog declined in 2013 as the political leadership reached compromises and it failed to sustain its reporting of confirmable news and analysis about corruptible officials and their dealings.

An important reason for the decline of *Quan Làm Báo* was the shift of public attention towards the process of amending the 1992 Constitution. The Group of 72 and Civil Society Forum were the focus of attention from the public in 2013. Both analyzed and criticized proposed amendments to the Constitution made by party–state institutions and delivered public petitions, convincingly pointing out various flaws in the amendments in terms of national development and the rights of the people. In particular, they criticized article 4 of the constitution (asserting the role of the Communist Party as the 'leading force' of state and society) and the constitutional role of the military as primarily the protector of the Communist Party and the political regime, rather than of Vietnamese citizens and territory, and they called openly for a pluralist party system). After the conclusion of the constitution-amending process, the Civil Society Forum remained highly responsive to sustaining public interest and continued to initiate a series of projects focusing on critical political regime issues and the protection of civil societal development.

The case of *6700 people for 6700 trees*

An especially revealing case of citizens' and social actors' coming together unexpectedly around a social and political issue, using social media to network and build up pressure, centred around a campaign to convince the local government of Ha Noi to cancel a plan to cull 6,700 trees. The case represented a kind of 'rightful resistance' (O'Brien 1996) in the form of environmental activism, both online and on the streets. Social media enabled

Table 6.1 Vietnamese blogosphere landmarks

2001: Talawas is established and run by writer Pham Thi Hoai (the website closed down in November 2010).

2005: *X-cafevn* is established as an online forum and *Yahoo! 360°* launches in Vietnam.

2006-2009: The pinnacle of Yahoo! 360° in Vietnam, with 2 million users (closed down in July 2009): *Anh Ba Sam* in September 2007 (Nguyen Huu Vinh and associates), *Dieu Cay* (Nguyen Van Hai) and *Free Journalists Club* in September 2007, *Anhba Sai Gon* (Phan Thanh Hai), *Osin* (Huy Duc) and *Change we need* in March 2009 (Tran Huynh Duy Thuc) use Yahoo! 360° for political blogging.

August 2008: Decree 97 on the Management, Supply, and Use of Internet Services and Electronic Information on the Internet.

Mid-2009: *Bauxite Vietnam* is established by Nguyen Hue Chi, Pham Toan and Nguyen The Hung.

2009-onwards: *Facebook* is the most influential social media platform in Vietnam and a number of other blogs have been established: *Que Choa* (Nguyen Quang Lap), *Truong Duy Nhat*, *Nguyen Xuan Dien*, *Huynh Ngoc Chenh*.

August 2010: *Danlambao* (Citizens' Journalism) blog is launched.

May 2012: Blog *Quanlambao* begins online.

January 2013: *Group of* 72 launches Petition on Constitutional Amendments through Bauxite Vietnam and other blogs.

April 2013: A group of rights activists (Free Citizens Group) makes a call over social media for human rights picnics in May at public parks in Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City and Nha Trang to discuss human rights issues.

May 2013: Blogger Truong Duy Nhat is arrested.

June 2013: Blogger Pham Viet Dao is arrested.

July 2013: *Vietnamese Bloggers Network* and an online statement by 130 bloggers demanding an abolition of Article 258 of the Criminal Code appear.

July 2013: Decree 72 on the Management, Supply, and Use of Internet Services and Information Content Online.

September 2013: 130 individuals initiate *Dien dan Xa hoi Dan su* (Civil Society Forum)

May 2014: Blogger Nguyen Huu Vinh, who runs *Ba Sam*, is arrested.

November 2014: Blogger Hong Le Tho, who runs *Nguoi lot gach*, is arrested.

December 2014: Blogger Nguyen Quang Lap, owner of *Que Choa*, is arrested.

December 2014: Blog *Chandungquyenluc* goes online.

January 2015: Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung publicly states that social media are 'a necessity and cannot be banned'.

March 2015: Facebook page *6700 people for 6700 trees* created to prompt Ha Noi's municipal government to reverse a plan to cull thousands of trees.

those with legitimate concerns about Ha Noi's environment and landscape to create a common platform to document events more vividly, communicate their grievances more persuasively to a greater audience and justify their claims more robustly than had occurred before.

In March 2015, information from a credible source indicating that the municipal government of Ha Noi was preparing a plan to fell 6,708 old trees without any transparency or accountability for its actions raised spontaneous reactions of anger and anxiety from various sections of the population. On March 10, 2015, Ha Noi's Department of Construction released to the media a number of measures to be taken under a project entitled, 'Renovating and replacing city green trees for the period 2014–2015', approved by the Ha Noi People's Committee. The state mainstream media also carried some news about the felling of trees along Nguyen Trai and Nguyen Chi Thanh streets, giving further rise to public laments about the city's loss of historic and environmental assets.

Public concern started with some discrete voices on social media about this plan and its damaging effects on the environment and emotional life of Ha Noi citizens. The online protests gathered momentum when a number of public figures and prominent intellectuals raised their voices. Tran Dang Tuan, a former senior government official, wrote a letter to the People's Committee of Ha Noi demanding accountability from the city managers about this plan and to suspend its implementation. His open letter, posted on March 16, 2015 was spread widely on Facebook.[7] The following day, the municipal government offered as its first response a statement from Mr. Phan Dang Long, deputy director of the Municipal Party Committee's Propaganda Board, that it was not necessary to consult the people to fell trees. His statement was widely seen as indicative of the local government's antipathy to the people's concerns and feelings of insecurity. Separately, Ngo Bao Chau, a prominent professor of mathematics, also publicized a letter to the municipal government of Ha Noi, raising three major issues and posing ten critical questions about the problems in this plan. The online activism initiated by the two public figures immediately resonated with other collective actions. For instance, heated debates started on a forum for journalists, about the serious problems with the plan to fell trees in Ha Noi. Some mini-surveys on these forums revealed massive support among journalists for the ideas of Tran Dang Tuan and Ngo Bao Chau.

Strong support on social media made the municipal government pay due attention to the issue. The online discussion was an effective answer to an earlier public announcement by city officials that the people agreed with the plan to cull the trees. Hanoi People's Committee Chairman Nguyen The Thao had to provide a response to Tran Dang Tuan's open letter about the plan to cut down so many trees in Ha Noi, which requested the 'relevant competent agencies' to review carefully the plan and its implementation. More people became interested in the issue and promptly took to social media to vent their anger and anxiety regarding the plan. A group

of interested and active citizens launched a Facebook page, *6700 people for 6700 trees*, which provided regular updates on the situation and reactions by both ordinary people and authorities. This Facebook page hosted widespread interactions and garnered more than 80,000 followers. Various people, including architects, artists, singers, university lecturers and students added comments on their own Facebook pages, on electronic news portals and in printed newspapers expressing their support for protecting the trees and for information transparency, and their respect for public and experts' opinions.

Cyber activism quickly translated into a form of political activism in physical space. Many people, particularly youths, organized as a movement, participated in tree-hugging, tree-mapping, tree-identification and tree-protection walks. A student in Ha Noi named Hoang Thuy Linh launched a project to protect the trees by encouraging people to tie yellow knots around trees to show love for them as well as to express their protest against felling the trees. Participants in this project used Facebook to spread the word and share their emotions. A number of journalists conducted a series of investigative reports, reported in the media, to expose signs of wrongdoing by local authorities and lack of accountability related to the tree replacement project. A number of people spontaneously organized green walks and tree-hug marches, holding signs, around Thien Quang and Hoang Kiem lakes in central Ha Noi, during March and April 2015. These actions on the streets were quickly suppressed by the local authorities.

Meanwhile, several lawyers, notably Tran Vu Hai, Nguyen Ha Luan and Le Van Luan, started a legal fight against Ha Noi authorities' tree-felling project. They drafted and signed an appeal for immediate suspension of the project, pointing out significant signs of infringement of laws (Cong Ly 2015). Another remarkable action was taken by some non-governmental organizations. PanNature (Center for People and Nature Reconciliation) and MEC (Center for Media in Educating Community) organized a workshop on March 23, 2015, as a forum for experts to voice their concerns to the public and media about the Ha Noi tree-felling project.

The extraordinary civil society activism in this case prompted both the municipal government of Ha Noi and the central government to respond. The government inspectorate had to investigate the situation and report to the central government. As a result, a number of city officials were found to have behaved irresponsibly and to have violated current rules. Ha Noi authorities disciplined these officials for their wrongdoing and reversed the plan to cull 6,700 trees. As a result, thousands of trees were saved from being cut. More importantly, Ha Noi authorities learned a significant lesson about paying attention to and respecting people's concerns and feelings, particularly in relation to transparency and accountability in city projects.

This episode represents an interesting case of intense interaction over social media, through which civil society activism effectively influenced the decision-making process. The case exemplifies different forms of peaceful assembly

and the growing confidence of people involved in collective action for common interests, including specifically interest in environmental protection.

Response by the party–state

The party–state has serious concerns about the influence of social media over public deliberation on governance issues through the use of convenient, widespread social networking. The party–state has been deploying various mechanisms to control and police social media via both formal channels and informal avenues. Formal measures include the use of bureaucratic agencies, incentives and administrative sanctions to manufacture consent and compliance in the social media. Informal measures can include the use of 'avatars' in civil society who are 'actors or organizations that embody the same ideas about governance as the state, but are not themselves part of that institutional infrastructure' (Hansson and Weiss, this volume, p. 14).

Although the party–state maintains firm control over information access and public discussion via traditional media, it has found it increasingly difficult to moderate content over digital channels, especially content related to politically sensitive issues and religious freedom. *Nhan Dan*, the mouthpiece of the party–state, cautions about the underground power of social media (Anh Khoi 2012). The history of insurgents' using innocuous internet communication means, particularly in Arab uprisings in the early 2010s, has resulted in the state's being wary of Vietnamese political comments and content online.

The press in Vietnam has always been considered a strong propaganda tool of the party–state. There are 812 press agencies which produce 1,084 print outlets, including daily newspaper and periodical magazines; 1,174 news websites; and 67 broadcasting organizations, with 101 television channels and 78 radio channels.[8] However, all of these are owned by the party-state and subject to regular instructions and direction from the Ministry of Information and Communication and the CPV Commission for Ideology, Education and Propaganda. They are supposed to serve as instruments for generating and disseminating particular kinds of knowledge and narratives in the interests of the party–state. The party–state's propaganda and communication officials often lament that the mainstream press is falling behind on the information front and giving way to citizen journalists or free bloggers who are more interested in the production and dissemination of critical knowledge that frequently embarrasses or undermines the authority of the party–state.[9] The situation raises grave concerns within the party–state about regime security in virtual cyberspace. A high-ranking official responsible for information and propaganda has acknowledged that the party–state-sponsored press is ceding ground to social media in terms of reporting on critical governance issues and providing updates on sensitive news.[10]

The party–state's information and propaganda sector has been trying to gain back ground to influence public opinion in favour of party–state policies and desired results. As in China (see Lagerkvist, this volume), the

Vietnamese party–state has been applying numerous techniques and considering still others to tighten security in cyberspace. First and foremost, restrictions have been applied in the form of laws and decrees which are often criticized as vaguely worded, catch-all and arbitrary. As Abuza comments (2015, 3), 'in Vietnam, the growth of the internet far outpaced the government's ability to contain it technologically – the government has relied instead on laws and decrees that put the onus of regulation and control on ISPs and content producers'.

Second, the party–state employs its political influence over, and offers financial incentives to, networks of compliant businesses, universities, hacker groups and civil society actors to enforce its will on the internet by filtering technically, putting up firewalls and placing certain websites on block lists. For example, it is widely assumed that the state is responsible for Facebook's inaccessibility at times in Vietnam. The state requests cooperation and assistance from internet and telecommunications companies, which are all either partly or wholly owned by the state or structurally tied to the state. These communications technology and service providers are required to provide state agencies with the information they need and facilitate state surveillance through data-mining and information-analysis on individuals' background, history, preferences, tastes and habits (see Wright's chapter on cognate strategies by the Chinese party–state). In May 2013, a decision issued by the prime minister required foreign news channels like the BBC and CNN to translate all their content into Vietnamese language for the purpose of broadcasting. Some cable service providers in Vietnam have since suspended broadcasts of CNN and BBC on their channels.

New restrictions on civil and political liberties related to virtual networking have been considered and implemented as a kind of soft repression. In April 2012, the Ministry of Information and Communication introduced a draft Decree on the Management, Provision and Use of Internet Services and Information Content Online. In effect, the decree would force foreign content providers to increase cooperation with Vietnamese authorities by removing content deemed illegal and potentially housing data centres within the country. The decree would also require users to use their real names online, which could severely restrict free speech in a political environment in which repercussions can be expected.

In fact, hard repressive measures are also employed to punish those bloggers who 'misuse their democratic freedom to infringe on the interests of the state' or who 'conduct propaganda against the state' (as stated in the Criminal Law of Vietnam). In July 2013, Decree No. 72/2013 was promulgated, causing an immediate outcry from human-rights-defending groups like Reporters without Borders and Freedom Online Coalition, as well as Vietnamese bloggers. This official decree prohibits bloggers and users of social media from 'providing aggregated news' and imposes a number of restrictions on sharing and providing information. Decree 72/2013 put many restrictions on circulating and aggregating news and analysis on social media, aiming effectively to

undercut the influence of social media over the public. Most concerns among critics of the decree focus on the state's attempt with it to exercise massive and constant surveillance over cyberspace in order to police the online population, and the decree's vague language, which gives almost blanket authority to punish any netizen at the state's discretion. Decree 72/2013 bans 'the use of Internet services and online information to oppose the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, threaten the national security, social order, and safety, sabotage the national fraternity, arouse animosity among races and religions, or contradict national traditions, among other acts'.

Another strategy employed is hiring opinion-influencers and online commentators to follow political blogs and social networking sites and engage in online battles against so-called 'hostile forces'.[11] However, the effectiveness of these strategies by the party–state is still limited. (See Teresa Wright's chapter in this volume for a comparison with efforts by China's kindred party–state to control – and itself to make use of – cyberspace.) These policies aiming to control and limit the expansion of political space have largely backfired, as coercive measures mostly invite resistance from Internet users, and hired commentators do not have the capacity to provide persuasive arguments, on rational grounds. Social media continue to grow beyond the party–state's control and represent a major source of support for the development of civil society and independent political space.

The limits of social media for civil society activism

While social media have enabled political participation at a new scope and scale, their implications for civil society activism should not be exaggerated; rather, these platforms should be assessed with caution. The authenticity and source of information spread on social media are, in many cases, hard to confirm. Thus, social media do indeed offer fertile ground for spreading politically motivated rumours. For example, in 2014, speculation ran wild on blogs and in Facebook posts that Nguyen Ba Thanh, the populist politician at the forefront of anti-corruption efforts, had been poisoned with polonium by his political rivals, resulting in his death. There were no trustworthy independent media to either counter or confirm those conspiracy theories regarding his death. Likewise, in 2015, a rumour about the sudden death of Phung Quang Thanh, the incumbent Minister of Defence, ignited a lot of curiosity and speculation about his political rivals and their schemes on social media. The rumour persisted even after state media released pictures of him, engaged in normal activities.

Public participation through social media is not always an active, political process. In an environment marked by a lack of transparency, disclosing information on issues sensitive for the party–state is often politically purposeful. In such a political context, social media can easily be manipulated by various political forces for their own purposes, without necessarily presenting either the complete truth or completely false information. It should not be disregarded that certain elements of the party–state have also been

taking a hidden role in providing unconfirmed information via social media to further their own interests, as discussed above.

While many citizens and observers have high hopes that social media can serve as a powerful tool to start social movements around issues related to inequality, injustices and the environment, it has sometimes been difficult to translate the reactions of a crowd on social media into collective action in the physical sphere. Examples such as the case of 6,700 people for 6,700 trees in Ha Noi remain quite rare. Civil society activism may be more likely to gather greater dynamism if it does not directly challenge political authority, the interests of powerful institutions, party leaders or powerful individuals and their personal interests, locally or nationally. An important reason for this persistent reality is that social media are vulnerable to marginalization and effective suppression. Meaningful participation to influence the political process on social and political issues at a broader and deeper level requires more than just the spontaneous reactions and emotions of participants in cyberspace, and trust and respect may be lacking among the people interacting on social media.

Conclusion

The growth of social media in Vietnam has been a major thrust in the expansion of political space for public participation in recent years. Thanks to new technology, social media have enabled mass participation and rendered many of the government's traditional controls, like censorship, less effective. The ascendency of social networks has empowered many ordinary netizens and social actors to voice their concerns and calls for action, despite the constraints imposed by legal restrictions. This pattern in itself has contributed to the expansion of political space and made it possible for a greater diversity of actors to participate in governance.

With the development of social media, the public has been better informed about key political and economic issues of public concern. In a dialectic way, civil society action has shaped public responses and also the way the state handles the outcomes of contentious politics. The ascendency of social media has taken civil society to a new level of development, in terms of its impact and the level of organization, coordination, mobilization and responsiveness among the people involved, despite still some limits. With the use of social media, civil society actors can push the boundaries of what is acceptable to the state and claim an expanding political space. However, social media do not offer so level a playing field for all actors as one might think. It is still a space characterized by inequality: participants in this political space carry different weights. In particular, the party–state still can wield significant infrastructural power to permeate cyberspace, beyond just policing it; counterparts from civil society have less assured influence.

Notes

1 See 'Digital Media in Vietnam', <https://wiki.smu.edu.sg/digitalmediaasia/Digital_Media_in_Vietnam>, accessed December 20, 2013.

2 VNNIC, <http://www.thongkeinternet.vn/jsp/thuebao/table_dt.jsp>, accessed October 20, 2013.
3 'Digital Media in Vietnam', op.cit.
4 Socialbakers, 'Vietnam Facebook Page Statistics', <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/vietnam>, accessed September 20, 2015.
5 Statistics from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Report prepared by Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013, to be submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council.
6 Interview with an informant in April 2015.
7 Tran Dang Tuan's open letter entry on his Facebook page got 6,567 likes, 789 shares and 588 comments within a few days.
8 Statistics from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Report prepared by Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013 to be submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council.
9 See http://vietnamnet.vn/vn/chinh-tri/131596/ba-o-chi--khong-dang--ma-ng-xa--ho-i-se--chie-m-li-nh.html, accessed April 14, 2017.
10 Do Quy Doan, Vice Minister of Information and Communication, repeated this comment on various occasions. See http://tuoitre.vn/Pages/Printview.aspx?ArticleID=529150, accessed November 20, 2013.
11 In an annual national meeting of the information and propaganda sector in December 2012, Ho Quang Loi, head of information and propaganda of Hanoi's Party Committee, disclosed that 900 online commentators had been mobilized for blogosphere battle during the year. See Dao Tuan 2012.

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7 Consumer space as political space

Liquid Islamism in Malaysia and Indonesia

Hew Wai Weng

In recent years, across cities in Malaysia and Indonesia, religious terms such as 'Islamic', 'halal' and 'Sharia-compliant' have been deployed to describe places such as hotels, restaurants, swimming pools, gated communities, massage parlours and beauty salons. We witness such spatial Islamization on an especially significant scale in the peri-urban regions of Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta. Islam plays an increasingly visible role as a source of ideas, practices and representations behind such changing urban trends. Who are the actors involved in the production and the deployment of these places? Can we perceive and analyze such Islamically labelled consumer space as political space? This chapter aims to examine how and under what conditions pious, middle-class Muslim aspirations are materialized in urban settings through processes of place-making. Based on interviews, informal discussions and ethnographic fieldwork in various Islamicized places, it explores how the intersection between Islamic politics and religious consumption takes place in urban and peri-urban settings. In the process, this investigation explores the boundaries of political space and under what circumstances such 'private' and individualized activity as consumer behaviour is not only 'political', but complements or substitutes for more formal political affiliations or participation.

Generally speaking, pious, urban, middle-class Muslims are the main producers and consumers of these places. Many of these Muslims are young (30–40 years old), highly educated, working as professionals or businesspeople, with good incomes and some are active in Muslim organizations. Instead of rejecting urban developments, they make sense of them in increasingly Islamic terms. In this chapter, I use the term 'middle class' in a broad sense to include both economic status and consumption patterns: both the reality of being a middle-class person and the desire to attain middle-class status. How, then, to define pious, middle-class Muslims? Jason Burke, a correspondent for the *Guardian* newspaper, describes members of the Muslim middle class as 'well-educated professionals with a modern outlook. They're also pious and socially conservative' (Burke 2008). He further explains that a middle-class Muslim:

> is around 40 years old … may have university education in a scientific subject … is in commerce, law, medicine and is articulate and modern

> … is the very model of a contemporary Islamist … for his modernity – at least modernity as defined broadly in the west – is deeply coloured with a strong social conservatism and a desire for a coherent identity … The old rural certainties of his grandparents' generation are long gone … fear for his/her children – drugs, crime, sexual relations that may break up the family … Islam, in the slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood, is the solution … He – or she – is not an extremist.
>
> (Burke 2008)

Such elements of the profile fit relatively well with the group of Muslims I am engaging with in my research. However, Burke's usage of the term 'Muslim middle class' has been criticized for over-generalizing Muslim middle classes, who are very diverse in their ideological outlooks, ranging from liberal, secular-minded Muslims to extreme Islamists. The segment he profiles is better understood as the fast-growing numbers of 'pious, middle-class Muslims', who take Islam seriously in the process of attaining and sustaining their middle-class status and lifestyle. Islam plays an important role not only as a personal belief, but also in their public life, in which Islam has been articulated as a form of moral guidance, identity marker, political ideology and urban lifestyle.

There have been excellent studies of middle-class Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia (Fischer 2008; Fealy and White 2008; Heryanto 2011; Noorhaidi Hasan 2011; Simone and Fauzan 2013). Most of these works focus on political Islam, market consumption, popular culture and social media. This chapter instead analyzes the spatial practices (or, more precisely, the place-making processes) of pious, middle-class Muslims, as well as investigating the politics of such spatial practices.

Depok, located about an hour's drive from the centre of Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, is a stronghold for the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), an Islamist party in Indonesia. Its recent and former mayors are from PKS. Bangi, located about thirty minutes' drive from Kuala Lumpur, is a stronghold for the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, PAS), an Islamist party in Malaysia. Its incumbent member of the state legislature is from PAS. Both Depok and Bangi are popular townships among pious, middle-class Muslims. They accommodate many urban renewal and place-making projects to meet religious needs and to allow residents to pursue a middle-class lifestyle. Various businesspeople there have established Muslim gated communities, halal eateries (in accord with Islamic laws), Muslimah (Muslim women's) beauty salons and fashion boutiques to promote an 'Islamic way of urban living'. Some have done so mainly for economic reasons, while others combine economic incentives with religious motivations and political commitments. Therefore, such places are sites where Islamic politics, religious business and pious lifestyles interconnect. Yet, this chapter argues that instead of consolidating Islamist movements, such development edges towards open forms of engagement

and broader definitions of religiosity which both include and exclude traditional political categories of Islamism.

Recently, a growing literature has shown that there is no contradiction between urban development and religious sensibility (AlSayyad and Massoumi 2010; Casanova 2013; Becker *et al*. 2014; Metrozones 2012; Knott 2010; Schmidt 2012; van der Veer 2015). Will the intertwining configurations of religiosity and urbanity lead to a 'making of urban religion', a 'production of religious urbanity', or both? (MetroZones 2012: 7). Using Depok as an example, instead of accepting a dichotomy, we can see urban renewal and religious revival as co-articulated processes; what I have elsewhere termed 'religious gentrification' (Hew forthcoming b). On one hand, urban places are redefined to accomplish Islamic principles; on the other hand, Islamic practices are adapted to face urban conditions. Do processes of religious gentrification complement or undermine the commitment of pious, middle-class Muslims to political Islam? This chapter sheds light on this issue.

The politics of place-making in Depok, Indonesia

> Most Indonesians are Muslims, but not many of them live their life according to Islamic principles. Indonesian government is also secular-minded and does not implement sharia laws ... It is difficult to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia. However, we can enforce Islamic values by living together in a Muslim-only compound … We cannot build an Islamic state, but we can build Muslim housing estates.
>
> (Field note, 8 January 2013)[1]

A middle-aged, male Muslim who works as a hotel operating manager described how his political and religious commitment led him to live in a Muslim-only gated community in Depok. In the last few years, increasing numbers of gated communities have been built in peri-urban towns of Jakarta, such as Depok, Tangerang and Bogor. Instead of informal neighbourhoods (*kampung*: popular settlements on informally registered land, with rather heterogeneous populations and village-like houses), formal housing complexes (*perumahan*: often gated, with modern housing units, built by property developers on registered land, with rather homogenous populations) are getting more popular among middle-class Indonesians. Some of these gated communities even promote themselves as 'Muslim housing complexes' (*Perumahan Muslim*), and claim to offer a 'modern, green and Islamic' living atmosphere to young Muslim families. They offer facilities such as a mosque, clubhouse, jogging track, swimming pool, Islamic learning centre and one-gate security system. While these Muslim clusters have goals in common with other gated communities – to provide a modern, safe and comfortable housing environment – Islam has played an important role in defining the features of such housing complexes, as reflected by their residents (only Muslims), transactions (preference for sharia banking),

amenities (mosques in the centre of housing areas), activities (religious classes) and regulations (veiling for female residents, no dogs and so on).

Depok has the highest concentration of Muslim gated communities among Indonesian cities. Depok is a city in West Java province, situated on the southern border of Jakarta. It is part of the fast-growing greater Jakarta area, known as the Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi) metropolitan region. Depok is a desirable place for many housing developers for its proximity to Jakarta city centre, relatively affordable land for housing construction and less-polluted living environment. In addition, the University of Indonesia in Depok has been a stronghold of the Islamic movement since 1980. Some Muslim activists have continued to work and stay in Depok after graduation and have left their imprint on the urban landscape. This profile explains why Depok has become a popular neighbourhood for many pious, middle-class Muslims.

Instead of via a top-down political approach, spatial Islamization in Depok has materialized in diffuse ways, through diverse types of place-making by various actors. For many pious Muslims, sharia is not only about the implementation of laws, but also the production and deployment of places, such as Muslim gated communities and integrated Islamic schools (which mix modern subjects with a religious curriculum), where Islamic values can be upheld (Hasan 2012). While not all are linked to PKS, some of these places have close relations with the Islamist party and its supporters.

Let me briefly mention a few Muslim housing complexes in Depok. First, established around 2006, Orchid Realty (Organization of Cyber Housing and Islamic Development) claims to be 'Indonesia's first Islamic property developer', seeing its business as a form of 'economic jihad' and providing 'sharia-compliant' housing to pious Muslims. Today, it has more than ten Muslim-only clusters in Depok and its surroundings. Most of these clusters are rather small in size, adopt modern minimalist design and use English names, such as Orchid Residence, Cyber Orchid Park, The Orchid Town House and The Orchid Green Village.[2]

Second, Bumi Darussalam, established around 2005, promotes its housing as the 'right choice for Muslim families'. Its developer told me that he named the housing company 'Bumi Darussalam' because, 'In Indonesian language, Bumi means earth, meanwhile Darussalam refers to heaven, we aim to create heaven on the earth' (Interview, Yon Haryono, 9 January 2013). Today, it has about ten Muslim clusters in Depok and neighbouring Bogor. Similar to Orchid Realty, most of Bumi Darussalam's housing complexes are rather small in size and adopt modern, minimalist exterior design; however, they have Indonesian names (such as Mutiara Darussalam, Permata Darussalam and Pesona Darussalam).

Another recently developed Muslim-only housing project is Pondok Nurul Fikri. Promoting the idea of 'Islamic Green Living' (previously 'Islamic Smart Living'), Pondok Nurul Fikri combines both an integrated Islamic school and a Muslim gated community, with a giant mosque in

the same area. Other facilities include a swimming pool, play park, jogging track, 24-hour CCTV and so on. While using their English tagline, the developers have named housing types after Andalusian cities, such as Seville and Cordoba, referencing the historical Islamic civilization in Europe. The housing complex claims it focuses on three main concepts: Islam, environmentalism and smart education. As these projects demonstrate, together with notions of 'green' and 'smart', 'Islam' has been articulated as a developmental idiom in justifying urban renewal projects.

Many developers and residents of these housing complexes in Depok are supporters or sympathizers of PKS, the main Islamist party in Indonesia. This connection has led some people to describe such housing complexes as 'Perumahan PKS' (PKS housing complexes). Both the developers of Orchid Realty and Bumi Darussalam are PKS sympathizers. As revealed by a joint-developer of one of these housing complexes, during a cadre meeting of PKS in 2005, a few PKS activists who had studied at the University of Indonesia raised the idea of establishing Muslim-only housing complexes (field note, 3 April 2014). Through different housing projects, the activists-turned-developers brought the idea to fruition, as a means both to make profit and to promote an Islamist agenda. In other words, Muslim gated communities are a by-product of PKS commitments to promote the greater influence of Islam on the Indonesian political system and in economic activity and everyday life.

During the campaign for the 2014 Indonesian parliamentary elections, PKS flags and banners hung right outside a few Muslim gated communities in Depok. A PKS candidate, Hendra, lived in one of these gated communities, Orchid Residence. He told me frankly, 'Through Muslim gated communities, we would like to develop an ideal way of Islamic living, a possible blueprint for Islamic state if Indonesia becomes one' (interview, 5 April 2014). While there was no open election campaigning at the housing complex, a poster inside its mosque stated that Muslims should vote for a political party that upholds Islamic values. The imam and most of the speakers in Orchid Residence's mosque are also PKS activists. During Friday prayers and Ramadan events, the mosque is open to the public. Mosque activities may have offered an indirect way for PKS to expand its influence in the neighbourhood.

While it does not claim to be a Muslim housing complex, Tugu Asri housing complex, also located in Depok, has been widely perceived as 'Perumahan PKS'. As of 2014, many key leaders of PKS, including the then-mayor of Depok, Nur Mahmudi, and the then-party president, Titaful Sembiring, lived there. Tugu Asri housing complex is located close to an integrated Islamic school; inside the complex are a big mosque and a swimming pool. Voting results indicate high electoral support for the Islamist party among residents in and surrounding these Muslim-only and PKS-related housing complexes.[3]

Generally speaking, PKS did not perform well in the national legislative elections (Fealy 2008; Tomsa 2012). The presidential candidate endorsed

by the Islamist party, Prabowo Subianto, also lost in the 2014 presidential election. Realizing the limited popular support for the Islamist party and for full implementation of sharia laws in Indonesia, some PKS supporters have rescaled their Islamization struggle, not only focusing at different levels in the political arena, but also on local places and in the economic field. In addition to parliament, they have expanded their ideological reach in various urban sites, such as mosques, housing complexes and schools. Apart from relying on law enforcement by state authorities, they also seek to self-regulate themselves, for example, by implementing guidelines for those staying in gated communities. By living in a Muslim-only housing complex, some pious, middle-class Muslims think they can live their life according to their understanding of Islam and distance themselves from activities they deem as 'un-Islamic'.

Islamic principles, as understood by pious developers, have guided the spatial arrangements of Muslim gated communities, as well as activities within such compounds. Almost all of these housing complexes have a mosque, always in the centre. The mosque is an important site that binds residents together, as well as bridging residents and outsiders. Most of the gated communities open their mosques to the public, allowing outsiders to perform prayers and join other activities there. Some of these housing estates also have other 'Islamicized' facilities, such as Muslim swimming pools (with different swimming times for male and female residents) and Islamic kindergartens. Most of the houses inside the clusters have no gates, to promote greater interaction among residents and to ensure residents' activities are constantly under surveillance by their neighbours, lest they involve themselves in 'un-Islamic' activities. Islamic features are part of the housing arrangement; for example, the toilets do not face *kiblat* (the direction of prayer). The houses' interiors do not lack Islamic-themed decorations, such as Islamic calligraphy, Islamic calendars, Quranic verses and photos of mosques on the walls. Moreover, residents in Muslim clusters are expected to observe religious duties such as attending prayers and religious classes, and veiling, for women, as well as to follow certain regulations, such as avoiding alcohol, smoking and dogs.

The intersection of personal safety, class distinction and religious assertion contributes to the growth of Muslim-only gated communities (Hew forthcoming a). Some residents in the Muslim gated communities see themselves as more religious than other Indonesian Muslims. As one of them told me, 'Most Indonesians are Muslims, but not many of them live their life according to Islamic principles. In Muslim clusters, the residents are mainly Muslim *berkualitas* (Muslim with higher quality). We want to practice Islam in a comprehensive way' (field note, 5 April 2014). Some think that by living in an enclosed housing compound with other like-minded Muslims, they can distance themselves from participating in local syncretized rituals, commonly practiced in many *kampung*, which they deem as 'un-Islamic' and 'backward' (field note, 5 April 2014).

Yet, given such housing estates' rapid expansion, rather than being guided by religious commitment or political motivation, some developers construct Muslim gated communities purely for marketing reasons. Similarly, as most of these housing complexes accept all Muslims as buyers, regardless of their religious affiliations, increasing numbers of middle-class Muslims who are neither Islamist-minded nor PKS supporters reside in such gated communities. For example, I encountered a resident who claims he bought a house at Pesona Darussalam, a Muslim housing complex in Bogor, not because of its Islamic concept, but for its strategic location and affordable price (field note, 6 April 2014). I observed, too, that, although encouraged to do so, quite a few residents do not participate in mosque activities inside the gated communities. The growing heterogeneity of Muslim residents in such gated communities might undermine the initial vision of their pious developers to establish a 'conducive Islamic environment', as not all residents share a similar religious viewpoint. In the long run, instead of consolidating an Islamist movement, such housing developments might lead to open forms of engagement with and contestation among different religiosities among Muslims living in such compounds.

Concurrent with the expansion of Muslim gated communities, the number of integrated Islamic schools has also grown. Like Muslim gated communities, many of these schools have close links to PKS and are very popular among middle-class Muslim urbanites. Unsurprisingly, Depok has the highest concentration of integrated Islamic schools among cities in Indonesia. I visited one of these schools. Billboards in front of the school state that the school compound is a smoke-free zone and all teachers and students must wear Islamic clothing.

Similarly, there are growing numbers of Muslimah beauty salons. One of them is Salon Muslimah Sari Soekresno. Salon Muslimah Sari Soekresno is situated next to a halal restaurant and a Muslim fashion boutique, and opposite the marketing office of Orchid Realty (the aforementioned Muslim gated community developer). The owner of Sari Soekresno claims her salon is a site for religious preaching (*dakwah*). She views her work as a form of worship (*ibadah*) and her business as an avenue for spreading an Islamic message. As a single parent who runs the Muslimah salon independently, she suggests that women's empowerment, religious preaching and profit-making can co-exist.[4] How do Muslimah salons differ from conventional salons? Sari Soekresno says all treatments at her salon are conducted according to Islamic principles, for example, ensuring gender segregation and using halal products. In addition, she also organizes religious and Quranic classes for her staff. Despite being a non-Muslim male researcher, I tried to visit the salon one afternoon. As I expected, when I knocked on the door, the female staff member who opened the door hesitated to talk to me. I asked her whether a non-Muslim could visit the salon. She politely replied that the salon prefers to serve only female Muslims (field note, 4 April 2014).

Denied entry to the Muslimah salon, I decided to have lunch at a halal restaurant next to it, Bebek Goreng Haji Slamet (Haji Slamet Fried Duck). There is a *musholla* (prayer room) inside the restaurant, a practice which is quite common in restaurants in Jakarta. What is less common is the 'halal' logo on the restaurant menu; most restaurants run by Muslims in Indonesia are presumably halal, but forgo the logo. Also, on each table are two small signs, stating *'Jangan lupa do'a sebelum makan'* (Do not forget to pray before you eat) and *'Bersyukurlah atas rezeki-Nya'* (Thank God for His gifts) (field note, 4 April 2014).

What makes this restaurant appear more religious than other restaurants, is not that it serves halal food, but its commitment to running religious activities, both inside and outside the restaurant. Together with Waroeng Steak and Shake, Bebaqaran and other eateries, the Depok branch of Bebek Goreng Haji Slamet is part of the Spiritual Company Waroeng Group. As proposed by its owner, Jodi Brotosuseno, and endorsed by popular preacher Yusuf Mansur, since 2010, Spiritual Company has aimed to transform from a conventional business model to one that upholds morality and spirituality; it claims to develop its business by following the teachings of Islam. All the staff working for the restaurants under Spiritual Company are encouraged to follow Islamic teachings, perform prayers and recite religious texts at work every day. Moreover, the company judges its staff not only on their work performance, but also on their religious observance (Damanhuri 2011). It is obvious that Islam plays an important and visible role in the making of the above-mentioned salon and restaurant, yet it is unclear whether such places have linkages to PKS or other Islamist-minded groups.

The politics of place-making in Bangi, Malaysia

The spatial Islamization described above is not peculiar to Jakarta, but also develops in other Muslim-majority cities, such as Beirut (Deeb and Harb 2013), Istanbul (Cavdar 2013) and Kuala Lumpur (Fishcer 2008). Bandar Baru Bangi (Bangi New Town), about half an hour's drive south of Kuala Lumpur, in the state of Selangor, is a peri-urban town that shares similar traits with Depok. It was developed by the Malaysian government in 1970, to host new middle-class Malay Muslims who were mostly originally from rural areas. Today, more than 95 percent of Bangi residents are Malay Muslims, mainly of middle-class backgrounds. It is a popular residential town for government servants who work in nearby Putrajaya, the federal administrative centre of Malaysia. It is also a university town, where the National University of Malaysia (UKM) and the Islamic College University of Selangor (KUIS) are situated.

Bangi is a stronghold of Islamic activism: it hosts the offices of many Islamic organizations, such as ISMA (Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia, Malaysian Muslim Solidarity, a right-wing Muslim NGO) and Islamic Relief (a Muslim charity organization), as well as Islamic government agencies, such

as ILIM (Institut Latihan Islam Malaysia, the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Training). Places such as Islamic-themed bookstores, Islamic kindergartens, Islamic schools, sharia-compliant hospitals, Muslimah fashion boutiques, Muslimah beauty salons and halal restaurants dot the urban landscape of Bangi.

There have been plans to build a cinema in Bangi, yet these proposals have all been rejected by the municipal government; karaoke has also been disallowed. Then-Bangi state assemblyman Shafie Abu Bakar, from PAS, explained in 2002 that such rejections intend to uphold Islamic values. He claimed that most residents in Bangi were against having a cinema in their neighbourhood, as 'the majority of the people in Bangi, about 97% are Muslims. Bangi folks are religious and prefer going to religious and educational classes'.[5] He stated further, 'having a cinema will lead to vice activities and there will be films not in line with Islamic and eastern values … we do not want that there to corrupt the minds of our young', and added, 'besides, there are cinemas not far from Bangi. We want our place clean, free from such elements'.[6] The last statement reveals the contradictions in or the limitations of such Islamization of places: it is easier to clean a place (Bangi) of 'un-Islamic' elements than to control a person's mind and behaviour, because one can still travel to a cinema nearby.

Instead of cinemas and karaoke spots, fashion boutiques and cafes are popular places for young and middle-class Muslims to hang out and to pursue 'moral leisure' in Bangi (Deeb and Harb 2013). Operating since 2015, Bangi Central is a newly established business district in a booming part of Bangi. Packed with stylish Muslim fashion boutiques and hip halal cafes, it is now considered the most popular Muslim fashion hub in Malaysia. Some shops combine functions as 'boutique cafés', so one can check out the latest fashion trends while sipping coffee and eating cake. Although situated in the stronghold of an Islamist party, instead of strengthening Islamic activism, fashion boutiques and cafés are sites where moral norms are negotiated, if not contested. Food (e.g. 'halal bacon'), drinks (e.g. non-alcoholic mojitos) and fashion (e.g. form-fitting robes and colourful headscarves) reflect the creativity of some Muslims, who subtly challenge conservative Islamist viewpoints, albeit conforming to religious orthodoxy.

One of the fashion boutiques I visited, called Sugarscarf, sells various exclusively designed headscarves, such as the Jane Chiffon Plain Shawl and the Juliette Madison Glitter Shawl (all are named in English). A young, female shopkeeper wearing a pink headscarf told me, 'Our brand is named Sugarscarf. The message we would like to deliver is simple – when someone wears our scarves, she will look as sweet as sugar' (field note, 17 February 2016). As she said, the interior setting of the boutique was inspired by English vintage design, with decorations such as a photo of young women wearing fashionable headscarves, hip glasses and form-fitting long dresses with a European streetscape as a backdrop. Interestingly, not many of these fashion boutiques use Malay language for branding. As another female

shopkeeper explained, 'Of course, we are not going to use names such as Azizah to brand the boutique. It sounds outdated and not cool' (field note, 17 February 2016). Instead, the use of English words in branding and promotion is extensive, including brands such as Sugarscarf, Marshmallow Scarf and Pretty Pop; with 'Stylish, Modest, And Elegant' and 'A Story for Your Wardrobe' as taglines. Of course, there is no lack of 'modern' Arabic names as well, such as Q'Manda and Zawara. Others use a combination of two languages, such as Tudung People, Aisya Queen, Fabulous Heejab and Bella Ammara. Such creativity and diversity is not only reflected in names, but also in styles.

Many of these fashion boutiques are run and visited by young Muslim women. Some of them are Islamist-oriented, seeing fashion as a way of *dakwah*, to encourage non-veiling Muslim women to cover up (field note, 16 February 2016). Yet, as I observed, many of the female entrepreneurs in the fashion industries lack strong connections to an Islamic movement. Instead, the growing appeal of such fashion trends among Muslim women might be partly due to the fact that these clothes challenge conservative Islamist views of appropriate Muslim women's attire and endorse women's agency to negotiate moral norms. Indeed, some conservative Islamists have criticized such fashion trends for being 'un-Islamic' – although covered up in long dresses and headscarves, women in some of these trendy clothes still reveal their body shape, and the clothes' excessive decoration runs against the notion of modesty which, according to conservative critics, should characterize Muslim fashion. On the other hand, some secular-minded Muslims have criticized the followers of such fashions as 'superficial', 'hypocrites' and 'trend followers without critical minds'.

Oscillating between these two spectrums of Muslim religiosity, Muslim fashion offers a medium through which many ordinary Muslim women exercise their moral agency, within certain constraints. The popularity of Muslim fashion shows that while many female Muslim youths do not challenge Islamic conservatism, they do not see themselves as 'victims' of Islamization; instead they mediate growing conservatism in creative and playful ways. As one of my interlocutors said, 'I am not interested in political Islam … I wear a headscarf because most of my friends do so. But I also want to be different from them. I want to wear headscarves that have different styles and that could make me appear more attractive' (field note, 19 February 2016). Through fashion, some Muslim women reclaim their individuality and their rights regarding how to cover their body.

While most of the fashion boutiques cater to Muslim women, some of them target male Muslim consumers. I visited a boutique in Bangi that sells trendy male *jubah* (long robes, originating in the Middle East). Instead of *baju Melayu* (traditional Malay clothing), *jubah* are growing more popular among Malay men at official events and celebrations.[7] Some commenters have viewed this trend as a sign of 'Arabization' (often linked to Wahhabism) among Malay Muslims. Yet, a more detailed exploration of the

jubah trend and styles suggests that it speaks to more than just 'Arabization'. The *jubah* is not new to Malaysia. In the past, it was worn mainly by religious teachers and scholars; today, it is also popular among young professionals and celebrities. On one hand, the *jubah* has been perceived as *pakaian Sunnah* (Sunnah clothing, or following the clothing practices of the Prophet Muhammad), such that wearing it is a sign of religious piety; on the other hand, *jubah* have been promoted as a new fashion trend, which many Muslim men follow because they are 'easy to wear', 'more comfortable' and 'look different' – some even think slim-fitting *jubah* show off their body shape (field note, 30 April 2016).

One of the more renowned male fashion boutiques is AisyAsyraf boutique, run by Muhammad Asyraf, best known as Imam Muda Asyraf, as he was the winner of Imam Muda in 2010, a TV reality show that selects the best young imam. Imam Muda Asyraf is a preacher, a celebrity, a fashion designer and an entrepreneur at the same time. Besides colourful *jubah*, AisyAsyraf boutique also sells trendy *kurta* (upper garments originating in South Asia) and *baju Raihan* (traditional Malay men's upper garments). Imam Muda Asyraf emphasized that, 'The *jubah* we sell are different from what the Arab people wear. We are still culturally Malay. We are not becoming Arab because of wearing *jubah*' (interview, 19 February 2016). Indeed, the *jubah* promoted by the Malaysian fashion industry have been adapted to local tastes and fashion trends, many of them brightly coloured, innovatively designed and form-fitting. For example, most of the *jubah* sold in AisyAsyraf Boutique use *butang Melayu*, buttons commonly used on the upper garments of traditional Malay men's clothing. In short, while the *jubah* conveys 'Islamic authenticity' because of its Arabic origins, wearing *jubah* does not necessarily negate a Malay cultural identity. Furthermore, there is no necessary correlation between clothing options and religious piety. Hence, Malay Muslims' wearing of the *jubah* today is perhaps a selective and creative adaptation of 'Arabness', instead of a form of sweeping 'Arabization' – a fashion statement more than a sign of religious piety.

Besides fashion boutiques, halal western cafés are also mushrooming in Bangi, among them, Zawara Café, Jigar Café, Si Tompok Cat Café and Chemistry Café+Lab. Such cafés are popular hangout places for young Muslims, as well as ideal spots for shoppers to rest and relax after shopping at nearby fashion boutiques. Both Jigar Café and Chemistry Café+Lab offer live band performances every Friday and Saturday evening. On one Saturday evening, a young local band called 'Saturday Cover', featuring a female vocalist, a male pianist and two male guitarists, performed in front of a mixed male and female audience, singing Malay and English pop songs (field note, 20 April 2015). As cinemas and karaoke are prohibited in Bangi, such cafés provide an entertainment space where young Muslim men and women can intermingle rather freely. Another café, Zawara, serves non-alcoholic malt drinks and mojitos; these menu options unintentionally

challenge the viewpoints of conservative religious authorities who disapprove of the consumption of such beverages among Muslims.

Contestation of Muslim practices also takes place in other sites. One example is a Muslimah beauty salon with the tagline 'sharia-compliant beauty', Al-Zahrah. The salon not only rejects male customers, but also does not welcome non-Muslim female customers. According to the owner's understanding of Islam, the *aurat* (parts of the body to be covered by clothing, under Islam) exists not only between male and female, but also between Muslim and non-Muslim women (field note, 24 February 2016). However, as I observed, there are also some Muslimah salons that welcome non-Muslim female clients. In contrast to Al-Zahrah salon, a newly opened bookstore in Bangi Central, DuBook Press, offers space for critical engagement with Islamic conservatism. DuBook Press is a local Malay independent publishing house, which has published a few books that are critical of conservative Islamists and religious authorities. The entrance to the bookstore is decorated with quotes from dissident poets, such as Usman Awang from Malaysia and Wiji Thukul from Indonesia. In short, all these places in Bangi, be they fashion boutiques, cafes, bookstores or beauty salons, are sites where ideas and practices of Islamism are promoted, enforced, negotiated and even contested.

Ethical consumption and liquid politics

The rise of Islamically labelled consumer places, which blend both religious ethics and market logics in the process of urban place-making, is not totally unique. 'Green', 'fair trade', 'organic', 'vegan' and 'eco-certified' have been used frequently to describe products and places, such as urban projects, shops, hotels and restaurants in many Western cities. Is such a 'greening' process a political ideology (linked to the Green movement or the Green Party), a form of environmental commitment, an urban lifestyle for the middle class, a brand for a marketing strategy or a combination of these options? Many concepts have been developed to investigate such trends – commodity activism (Mukherjee and Banet-Weiser 2012), ethical consumption (Lewis and Potter 2011), green gentrification (Checker 2011) and liquid politics (Lekakis 2013) – that might help us to better understand the dynamic of Islamically labelled consumer places.

Recently, developers have used environmental discourses and green idioms to promote contemporary urban renewal and place-making projects. Studies have critically analyzed such developments. In New York, Melissa Checker has coined the term 'environmental gentrification' to encapsulate how property developers use environmental discourses to justify high-end development (Checker 2011). In Jakarta, Abidin Kusno has used the term 'green governmentality' to examine how middle-class citizens deploy green idioms to reclaim urban space in the city centre (Kusno 2014). Both works show that green represents not only an ideological commitment to

environmental issues, but also a pragmatic device for different actors to claim urban space. Arguing along the same lines, I have suggested the term 'religious gentrification' to understand the process by which pious developers and middle-class Muslims appropriate Islamic discourses in the course of urban place-making, including to justify spatial segregation based on religiosity and class (Hew forthcoming b).

Yet, for many pious, middle-class Muslims, Islam does not merely serve as a marketing label or a developmental tool; rather, the religion offers a framework for the moral order of society through appropriation of urban places. Indeed, religion has been articulated as a moral force that can be mobilized as 'a bulwark against the imputed immorality of urban life and excesses of modernity' (Hansen 2014, 370). By promoting 'ethical values', Hansen (2014, 378) suggests that religious observance can be commoditized and turned into matters of consumer choice and style preference. Can we then understand and analyze Islamic consumption as a form of ethical consumption? Generally speaking, ethical consumption refers to consumption practices popular among the middle class, marked by a coherent shared politics or set of values. It has become an umbrella term covering a wide range of concerns, from animal welfare, to labour standards, human rights and environmental sustainability. Yet, ethical consumption has been criticized for displacing responsibility from governments and corporations to individuals, reinforcing a doctrine of personal responsibility and undermining direct political action, which fits well with dominant neoliberal trends (Lewis and Potter 2011).

Inspired by Zygmunt Bauman's work on liquid modernity (Bauman 2000), Eleftheria Lekakis proposes the term 'liquid politics' to conceptualize the politics of fair-trade consumption and consumer citizenship. Having described the ambivalent relationship between fair-trade consumption and consumers' political commitments, Lekakis (2013) suggests that increasing consumerism marks the key parameters of liquid politics, yet does not deny solid collective political acts, such as voting. However, the potential solid politics of fair-trade consumption needs to be anchored in a political agenda which is clearly connected with further action beyond consumption, and in a sustained effort to press against waves of liquid politics as fragmented, individualized and divorced from concrete promises. Therefore, she argues that 'a consumer politics in liquid modernity can enable insights into situations where consumption might be one of the few opportunities for political engagement with a cause, but also disable the articulation of that political engagement by providing the assumption that this would be enough' (Lekakis 2013, 15).

Arguing along similar lines, by examining processes of urban place-making, I propose the concept of 'liquid Islamism' to explore the ambivalent connections between Islamic consumption and politics in contemporary Malaysia and Indonesia. The notion of 'liquid Islamism' suggests that Islamically labelled places are sites where ideas and practices of Islamism are not only enforced, but also challenged.

Spaces of liquid Islamism

Taking inspiration from the concept of 'post-Islamism' proposed by Asef Bayat (1996, 2005, 2013), Ariel Heryanto analyzes how certain segments among Indonesian Muslim youths have rejected the dictates of dogmatic Islamism, and in its place, have attempted to construct an alternative to reconcile the realities of modernity with religious observance, through practices of popular culture (Heryanto 2014). In contrast, Dominik Müller proposes the concept of 'pop Islamism', to capture the interconnection between Islamic consumerism and an Islamist political agenda, by studying how some Islamist youths in PAS use pop culture to oppose post-Islamist tendencies in Malaysia (Müller 2014). My study of Islamically labelled place-making reveals even more diverse and diffuse trends than can be captured by these concepts of post-Islamism (using pop culture to challenge dogmatic Islamism) and pop-Islamism (using pop culture to promote an Islamist agenda). Instead, 'liquid Islamism' allows us to understand the politics of Islamic consumption in the marketplace and in an urban setting among pious, middle-class Muslims. This term is not intended to refute or replace broadly discussed concepts such as 'Islamism' and 'post-Islamism' (Bayat 2013; Boubekeur and Roy 2012; Hasan 2013; Mandaville 2007), but to interrogate and examine what might constitute 'Islamism' and 'post-Islamism', especially in urban contexts in Malaysia and Indonesia today.

Bangi and Depok, the two peri-urban towns I described above, are both strongholds of Islamist parties, popular amongst pious, middle-class Muslims, yet they are also sites where various spatial orders and moral norms are negotiated. Some of the entrepreneurs who run places such as Muslim gated communities, halal restaurants and fashion boutiques have close connections to Islamist parties, while others do not. Many pious consumers prefer to buy Islamically labelled products and visit Islamically labelled places, yet such expressions do not always lead to a solid commitment to political Islam. Instead of consolidating an Islamist movement, such developments allude to open forms of engagement and broader definitions of religiosity which both include and exclude traditional political categories of Islamism. Here, I would like to tentatively point out three interrelated features that underpin the emergence of various formations of liquid Islamism: the disintegrating of Islamic activism into consumerism and urban lifestyles; the liminality between formal and informal politics, and between public and private space; and the diversification of actors and approaches involved.

First, liquid Islamism illuminates the disintegrating of Islamic activism into consumerism and urban lifestyles. Instead of formal political and social activism, many pious Muslim activists and businessmen gradually and subtly spread their Islamist-inspired ideas by promoting an 'Islamic way of modern living', through place-making and business development. Similarly, many Muslim consumers prefer to shop at Islamically marked places. At first glance, such Islamic consumption seems perhaps more a symbolic

expression of religious piety than a substantial commitment to political Islam. However, it does not necessarily negate solid Islamism. For some of those producers and consumers such activity does not imply that they have given up their struggle towards an 'Islamic state' – instead, they are diversifying and multiplying their sites of struggle to achieve their Islamist ambitions. For others, their commitment to Islamization might stop with buying Islamically labelled products and living an Islamically marked lifestyle. For example, a shopkeeper of a fashion boutique says, 'I just want to live my life in a beautiful way without violating Islamic principle. I am not so much interested in the implementation of Islamic laws' (field note, 17 February 2016). As I observed, many of the producers and consumers of Islamically labelled places stand in between these two poles, constantly and often simultaneously adjusting their commitments to political Islam according to market considerations and modulating their business operations according to Islamic principles.

Second, this concept seeks to explore the relationship between formal Islamic politics and other spaces in which various actors and movements promote urban lifestyles defined in terms of Islam. It captures the fluid politics of Islamic consumption and place-making, as well as the liminality between formal and informal politics, and between public and private space. Marketplaces might turn out to be platforms for the exercise of politics. Private acts of consumption could double as public political statements. Muslim gated communities are privately owned real estate, yet they have also turned out to be public spaces where residents interact with a religious community and where Islamic agendas are promoted. Individualized Islamic consumption, such as veiling practices, might not count as direct political actions, yet even these represent subtle ways in which conservative Islamism is promoted, negotiated or challenged. Some Islamist-minded Muslim women see trendy fashion as a way to promote their interpretations of an Islamic dress code to non-veiling fellow Muslims. Many other young Muslim women deploy fashion as a means to challenge dogmatic Islamism and to reclaim their individuality.

Third, while pious, middle-classes Muslims have played important roles in the making of Islamized places, not all of them are members or supporters of Islamist parties. Some of the actors involved do have connections with Islamist parties, but Islamist parties do not necessarily play a direct role in these places. While all share a similar, broad Islamization agenda, there is no single format for promoting it; different actors have different opinions on how to make a place 'Islamic', as well as on the ultimate goal of Islamization. These different approaches both reflect and influence their degrees of commitment to political Islam, as well as their understanding of what constitute proper Islamic practices.

In other words, there is no direct and coherent correlation between Islamic consumption, politics and place-making. Places such as Muslim gated communities and fashion boutiques are places where various ideas and practices

of Islamism are not only enforced and promoted, but also negotiated and contested. The essential fungibility of religiosity in practice – what I term here liquid Islamism – makes Islamically branded urban places *potential* political spaces, and Islamic-oriented consumer behaviour, a *potential* form of political participation, without requiring that either be deployed as such.

Notes

1 In this chapter, I quote my informants in two ways. If the quotation is based on a formal interview and the informant agrees to use his or her real name, I note 'interview', followed by the name of the informant and the interview date. If the quotation is based on informal discussion or chit-chatting, and/or the informant prefers not to reveal his or her name, I cite it as 'field note', followed by the date.
2 'Minimalist' design has been a major trend in current housing developments in Jakarta and its surroundings. Such design appeals to both small-scale developers and middle-class consumers for its affordable cost, simple features and manifestation as modern.
3 See http://pemilu.okezone.com/read/2014/04/09/568/968005/pks-menang-di-tps-nur-mahmudi, accessed 19 February 2015.
4 See http://depoknews.com/antara-kemandirian-dakwah-dan-pemberdayaan-perempuan, accessed 19 February 2015.
5 See 'PAS firm on Bangi cinema ban', *Star Online*, 15 February 2012, http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2012/02/15/PAS-firm-on-Bangi-cinema-ban, accessed 15 March 2015.
6 See Oh Ing Yeen, 'Cinema still a no-no in Bangi', *Star Online*, 19 October 2011, http://www.thestar.com.my/story/?file=%2F2011%2F10%2F19%2Fcentral%2F9693227, accessed 15 March 2015.
7 See http://www.therakyatpost.com/news/2014/07/28/jubah-quickly-becoming-fashionable-among-muslim-men, accessed 15 May 2015.

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Part III

The policing of political space

8 Political discourse on the Internet in China

A multifarious virtual space

Teresa Wright

Since 2010, China has had more Internet users than any other country in the world. Concurrently, China's Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-led government has employed the most sophisticated Internet surveillance and control measures in the world. As a result, many have viewed the Chinese Internet as a site of state–society conflict, wherein China's paranoid totalitarian state feverishly attempts to repress all political discussion, and China's freedom-loving citizens courageously and doggedly fight to express their political concerns.

However, the reality is much more nuanced and complicated. Although China's political authorities certainly have tried to shape and control political discourse, they also have tolerated and even welcomed citizens' online grievances and input and have even allowed citizens to use the Internet to run for office. Moreover, although some Chinese citizens have used the Internet as a vehicle to express liberal democratic political dissent or to oppose CCP rule, this has been rare. A far greater portion of Chinese Internet users has gone online to criticize specific examples of corrupt or abusive behaviour on the part of individual political officials, hoping that by drawing the attention of (presumably benevolent) higher-level authorities, these localized problems will be resolved. Similarly, citizens regularly have used the Internet to vent their anger about socioeconomic inequalities and injustices – not infrequently creating online 'storms' that involve tens of thousands of netizens. In addition, China's citizens have used the Internet in a wide range of ways that are not explicitly focused on traditional political concerns, but nonetheless can be conceived of as 'political' in that they question and/or subvert established authorities, power structures and hierarchies, and/or create alternative discourses, identities and relationships.

This chapter unpacks and analyzes this complex reality, by examining the multifarious ways that both Chinese citizens and Chinese governing authorities have engaged in political discourse via the Internet from the late 1990s through to the present. In so doing, the chapter argues that traditional dichotomies such as 'authoritarianism' versus 'democracy' and 'state' versus 'society' must be discarded and replaced. Instead, the chapter proposes broader conceptualizations of 'democracy' and of the 'political', as

well as a heterogeneous view of the various individuals and groups that constitute Chinese society and the Chinese political system. In so doing, we can arrive at a more accurate understanding of the non-dichotomous, fluid and multifarious nature of the Chinese Internet as a political space.

Definitions and propositions

Typically, China is categorized as having an authoritarian governing system, characterized by a lack of freedom.[1] In the West, this system is viewed negatively, and in contradistinction to the democratic political systems of the West. But what do we mean by 'democracy'? Most scholars – particularly those from the West – focus on liberal democracy, defining democracy as a system with 'fully contested elections with full suffrage and the absence of massive fraud, combined with effective guarantees of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and association' (Collier and Levitsky 1997, 434). However, there are other ways to define 'democracy'. A broader definition derives from the Greek origins of the word: *demos* (the people) and *kratein* (to rule). In this conceptualization, democracy may be defined as a system wherein 'the people rule', in that government obeys, or is responsive to, the will of the people.

Under this more basic definition of democracy, elections and civil liberties can serve as means for achieving democratic rule, but they may not be necessary and sufficient conditions to ensure it. If government officials respond to the desires and demands of their citizens, then they may be seen as acting democratically in a broad sense, regardless of whether or not they were elected. Conversely, if a politician does not listen and respond to the wishes and demands of the people, that politician may be seen as acting undemocratically, even if s/he was elected. Similarly, if citizens enjoy freedom of expression, association and assembly (i.e. their civil liberties are protected), but political leaders do not heed the expressed will of the people, then those leaders are not acting democratically in a broad sense. Accordingly, this chapter proposes that in evaluating the political use and consequences of the Internet in China, it is more fruitful to assess the extent to which the Internet has facilitated governmental responsiveness to the people than it is to focus on whether or not the Internet has undermined China's 'authoritarian' government and increased the likelihood of 'liberal democratic' change.

Relatedly, this chapter employs a broad definition of the 'political'. Clearly, discourse related to China's political institutions, leaders and governmental policies is 'political'. When one speaks of 'political activism', typically the focus is on collective contention of this sort – such as political dissent that seeks to replace existing political institutions, leaders and/or policies. But, as many social scientists have pointed out, discourse related to economic, social and cultural issues also can be implicitly or explicitly political. This is most obviously true in more totalitarian political contexts (such as China under the rule of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976), wherein all aspects of

life are penetrated and controlled by the state. In China's post-Mao period, the state has pulled back its earlier reach into economic, social and cultural affairs. However, the government continues to play an extensive regulatory role in the economy. In addition, state-designed social categorizations remain in place. And political leaders (especially Xi Jinping, who has led the polity since late 2012) regularly make pronouncements about 'appropriate' cultural ideas and pursuits. (See Johan Lagerkvist's chapter in this volume on Xi's campaigns.) In all countries, even liberal democratic ones, the government and its leaders are never entirely removed from the economic, social and cultural spheres, but in China the state's involvement in realms that are not explicitly 'political' has been more pronounced. Thus, discourses on topics that might superficially appear to be economic, social or cultural in nature often have political undertones.

Further, this chapter embraces the view of many scholars that the 'political' can also be more broadly construed as anything related to power, including all forms of authority and hierarchy. In this conceptualization, even issues that cannot be clearly connected with formal political power can be viewed as 'political'. With regard to Internet discourse in China, this category might include postings that question or subvert dominant cultural beliefs, socioeconomic hierarchies or social identities.

Finally, this chapter emphasizes the non-monolithic, heterogeneous constitution of Chinese society and the Chinese state and the intertwinement of the various actors and groups therein. China scholars have long made this point: both the state and society include a multitude of individuals and organizations with wide-ranging and often contradictory interests and goals. And these interests and goals are in continual flux. Recognizing this reality, this chapter examines the many discourses that have emerged – often in an interactive fashion – among Chinese citizens and representatives of the various parts of the Chinese party–state. (For similar arguments, see Yang 2014 and Yuan 2015.)

The Internet in China: history and context

Before diving into the various ways that the Chinese Internet has been used as a political space, it is important to understand the structural and historical backdrop that has framed Internet use in China. Through the end of the 1980s, Internet access in China (as in most of the world) was almost unheard of. In the early 1990s, CCP leaders allowed some of China's top universities to experiment with Internet use. In 1995, the first commercial Internet accounts appeared. Initially, only an infinitesimal number of citizens utilized such accounts. Since 1998, Internet use has skyrocketed. As of 2016, more than 721 million Chinese citizens (52.2 percent of the total population) were online – more than double the number (nearly 287 million) in the United States.[2] Further, although at first citizens could access the Internet only via public computer terminals, as of 2013, more than 460 million Chinese did

so through mobile devices. Also as of 2013, China had an estimated 300 million domestic microblog users (Freedom House [2015]). In terms of who uses the Internet most, age is a significant factor: as of 2014, 85 percent of Chinese Internet users were under the age of 45, and 62 percent were under the age of 35.[3] Further, as in most countries, Internet use increases with level of education, and is much more common in urban areas than rural ones (China Internet Network 2014).

Nonetheless, access to information and the ability to communicate via the Internet has been restricted by the Chinese party–state's 'Great Firewall'. This 'firewall' consists of a variety of measures designed to prevent the populace from accessing or disseminating via the Internet information that central leaders perceive as threatening. (Vietnam's cognate party–state has similar concerns; see Bui's chapter, this volume.) Some of the most important such mechanisms include: (1) a mandate that all news-providing websites register with the government and relay news only from official news units; (2) a requirement that all blog-hosting sites sign an agreement with the government pledging to monitor the site's content for untoward postings, and holding the company responsible for such; (3) the use of firewall and surveillance software to block access to 'unsuitable' sites,[4] remove 'offensive' content from sites and filter domestic e-mail messages for 'sensitive' content; and (4) the use of human monitors. Since the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, the central government reportedly has hired roughly 20,000–50,000 Internet police and another approximately 250,000–300,000 '50 cent party' (*wumao dang*) members to monitor and post criticisms on suspect sites, and to plant information that favours the party–state's interests. Provincial and local governments employ thousands who engage in Internet surveillance, as well (King, Pan and Roberts 2013).

However, these controls have not been so effective, strict or all-encompassing as one might imagine. Looking from the bottom up, most savvy and intrepid Internet users have been able to circumvent blockages and access censored sites and content. Further, Internet users track and publicize banned terms, topics, pictures, etc., and create pseudonyms and other alternatives that allow users to evade censors. Their ability to do so has been facilitated by the decentralized and fragmented nature of China's party–state. Many different party and state offices issue directives regarding Internet censorship and 'guidance'; they each focus on and have authority over different jurisdictions. A recent study of these directives indicates that they have been remarkably ineffective at achieving their stated goals (Esarey and Xiao 2015). Relatedly, a 2012 study found that although postings calling on Chinese citizens to participate in concrete protest actions in particular physical locations frequently were deleted and their authors subjected to punishment, other postings that included 'scathing criticism' of the government and/or its leaders regularly circulated online (King, Pan and Roberts 2013).

At the same time, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) elites appear to have recognized various benefits of Internet use, and this has provided a

counterweight against the regime's fears that the Internet might be used in a way that would threaten its power. To begin, party–state officials know that the Internet is essential to the continued growth of China's economy. Moreover, the profit orientation of the many companies with a presence on the Chinese Internet has spurred these companies to seek ever-increasing numbers of users. This has been accomplished by allowing, and even encouraging, the posting of scintillating material that will 'go viral'. In addition, political officials in China have recognized the usefulness of the Internet in enabling improved government responsiveness. As discussed below, many party–state institutions have set up websites designed to make their activities more transparent and to solicit citizen input.

Nonetheless, the 'openness' of China's Internet has declined in recent years. From the late 1990s through the middle of the first decade of the new millennium, access and communication were hindered by the 'Great Firewall' measures described above, but – with a few notable exceptions – most determined users did not experience significant punishment, and were able to successfully reach sites and disseminate information. From the latter half of the first decade of the 2000s through to the present, central party–state efforts to curtail 'threatening' Internet use have been greater. This change began in the context of the Beijing summer Olympics in August 2008, which top CCP leaders saw as an opportunity to bolster China's international image. In their minds, this meant that there could be no appearance of public opposition to CCP rule. Also contributing to heightened Internet controls during this time period, in December 2008, a group of scholars and human rights activists posted an online manifesto called 'Charter 08', which called for fundamental liberal democratic reforms. The instigator of the manifesto, Chinese literature professor Liu Xiaobo, was sentenced to 11 years (and remains in prison as of this writing, preventing him from being able to accept his Nobel Peace prize in 2010). In 2009, following ethnic unrest in Xinjiang province, Chinese authorities banned the use of Facebook and Twitter in China. Although these sites remain blocked in China to this day, other blog-hosting and instant-messaging sites have been allowed to emerge and grow. Most prominent among them is Sina Weibo (with more than 261 million active monthly users as of early 2016),[5] followed by WeChat and Tencent. However, they, like other such companies with an open mainland China presence, both engage in self-monitoring and censorship of posts (in keeping with government requirements) and are subject to government monitoring and censorship.

Internet restrictions increased again in the years following Xi Jinping's ascension to the party–state's top ranks in the fall of 2012. In August 2013, Xi reportedly called on CCP cadres to 'wage a war to win over public opinion' and 'seize the ground of new media' (Freedom House [2015]). Shortly thereafter, individuals with large microblog followings were subjected to deletions, locked accounts, arrests and interrogations. Perhaps the most high-profile example was the arrest of Chinese-American businessman

Charles Xue, whose web commentaries on social and political issues reportedly had 12 million followers. Although Xue was taken in for allegedly soliciting prostitutes, his arrest was publicized on China's official state television, which criticized Xue's microblog for trying to 'influence public opinion' (Freedom House [2015]). In addition, central authorities closed popular 'public accounts' that commented on current events on WeChat (Human Rights Watch [2015]). Also in late 2013, China's top judicial officials announced that online speech would be subject to more severe and expansive considerations of what constituted a 'criminal offense', and that prosecutors would be allowed to bring criminal defamation charges for postings deemed to threaten 'public order' or 'state interests'. Moreover, if a post was determined to be 'false' or 'defamatory', and was viewed more than 5,000 times or reposted more than 500 times, the user could be sentenced to up to three years in prison. In this context, hundreds of social media users have been detained and interrogated. In February of 2014, a new Central Internet Security and Information Leading Group was formed, headed by Xi and also including the second-ranked leader in the CCP (state Premier Li Keqiang). Further, in early 2015, party–state authorities began to successfully interfere with the virtual private networks (VPNs) that many users have relied on to circumvent 'Great Firewall' blockages (Freedom House [2015] and 2015).

Overall, at the time of this writing, China's Internet 'space' is more constricted than it was during other periods between the late 1990s and the present. Yet, as has been the case since the Internet first emerged in China, the boundaries of what is legally permissible and of what can safely be said and done online, remain unclear and in constant flux. Regime authorities retain the ability to decide for themselves on an ad hoc basis what they will and will not allow, and which individuals and organizations they will punish and how, in reaction to what appears online. This way, political leaders have retained maximal leeway in their effort to simultaneously reap the benefits of Internet use and diminish its potential to threaten their rule. At the same time, netizens have taken maximal advantage of this situation.

Online activities

Within this fluid context, political authorities, social groups and individual citizens have been active users of China's Internet. Their multifarious activities online have resulted in a highly interactive, many-voiced and wide-ranging flow of information, discussion, expression, connection, reaction and collective action. As will be described below, despite the restrictions outlined above, the Chinese Internet has functioned as an important political space that has improved governmental responsiveness and has made China more democratic even without multiple political parties and popularly-elected national leaders. This does not mean that China is anywhere near the ideals of 'freedom' or 'democracy', or that it is inexorably moving in that

direction. Nonetheless, the Internet has served as a space that has enabled China to become much more free and democratic than it was prior to the Internet's appearance there.

Government-initiated

Regular Chinese citizens certainly have contributed to this development, as will be examined below. But Chinese political leaders and official bodies also have played an important role. They have not just attempted to control and repress citizens' use of the Internet; they have also been actively engaged in more creative and responsive online activities. Perhaps most importantly, political authorities have used the Internet to open up channels of communication between party–state offices and the public. Specifically, governmental entities have used blogs and other online functions to provide citizens with information and to allow for citizen input. These developments have made it possible for regular people to gain greater knowledge about official policies and procedures, while also enabling China's party–state to be more responsive to the 'will of the people'. At the same time, however, regime leaders have sought to manipulate popular discourses online, both by providing information that is intended to bolster regime legitimacy through official online channels, and by hiring '50 cent party' members who pose as ordinary people to post pro-government content and to discredit netizens who circulate potentially inflammatory material.

In 2009, the CCP's top leadership pushed 'a major initiative' that has encouraged government agencies and officials at all levels to set up their own microblog accounts and 'tweet' their own messages (Yang 2014, 138; also Schlaeger and Min 2014). The provincial government of Yunnan was the first to do so, in late 2009, and other provincial and lower-level government offices quickly followed suit. In 2011, the national Ministry of Foreign Affairs became the first central government agency to establish a microblog. By 2013, over 176,000 government offices at all levels had their own microblog accounts (Schlaeger and Min 2014, 192). Through these accounts, scholars have found, political officials 'actively' have tried 'to engage the public by providing … information, answering user questions, and interacting with' citizens (Schlaeger and Min 2014, 190).

Government agencies and officials have established blogs for many reasons. Beyond complying with central regime directives, political cadres below the central level have established blogs because one of the key criteria upon which they are evaluated on a yearly basis is their success at maintaining 'social stability' among the residents within their jurisdiction. Blogs are thus seen as an important way to keep one's 'ear to the ground'. In addition, horizontal competition among individuals and agencies that are at the same level and/or have overlapping mandates, has fuelled the proliferation of official blogs (Ma 2013). This reality underscores the heterogeneous nature of the Chinese political system: rather than a monolithic entity with a single

interest, engaging in unified action, the party–state is in reality a collection of individuals and institutions with varied, and often competing, interests, who pursue self-interested actions and regularly do not work in tandem.

Indeed, a study based on the work of Chinese scholars shows 'considerable' variation among government microblogging practices, with each entity exhibiting unique characteristics (Schlaeger and Min 2014, 194–5, referencing Guohia Xingzheng 2013). Schlaeger and Min's examination of government blog activity in one municipality provides concrete examples. They find that the local propaganda department and government information office primarily use microblogs to disseminate information; the local police department relies on microblogs to learn about public grievances so as to prevent local 'disturbances' that might attract media coverage; public service and policy-implementing agencies (such as the local environmental protection agency) are less involved in microblogging because they lack sufficient resources and are more wed to existing operating procedures; and municipal government leaders try to use blogs in order to improve service provision, reduce corruption among street-level bureaucrats and directly connect government employees with citizens (Schlaeger and Min 2014, 197).

Government blogs also illustrate the multi-faceted relationship between China's 'state' and 'society', in that agencies and officials wishing to create an account on Sina Weibo or another blog-hosting company must be approved and authenticated by the company; they cannot simply demand an account or establish one on their own terms. Relatedly, the postings of the agency/official on that account are archived on the company's servers and are not under the direct control of the government account-holder. Moreover, offices and officials do not enjoy special access to the user data housed by the company. Indeed, there is not even an established procedure by which a government office can demand such access (Yang 2014, 138–9).

Government offices also have used the Internet to solicit citizen feedback on government policies. In 2008, China's central state council announced its intention to 'make use of the Internet as a standard method of inviting public opinion on draft laws and regulations' (Balla 2014, 218, citing China Daily 2008). Since that time, China's legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC), has posted on its website over forty draft laws, inviting public comment by post or e-mail. In 2011, roughly 83,000 people submitted close to 250,000 suggestions about a proposed income tax law. In 2012, about 10,000 people commented online on a draft of a new environmental law. Perhaps most notably, in 2011, when the NPC posted a draft of a new Criminal Procedure Law that would allow authorities to secretly detain individuals for up to six months, the site was flooded with complaints. In the end, the law was revised to require that authorities notify the detainee's family that s/he has been detained (Ford 2012). Similarly, in 2008 the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) elicited public comments on a proposed revision to China's health system, providing details of the proposal online. During

the 30-day feedback period, the NDRC received nearly 30,000 comments, 6,000 of which included the submitter's e-mail address. Unlike the NPC, which generally does not reveal the content of the public comments that it receives, the NDRC posted the public submissions on its website (Balla 2014, 218). Government offices at all levels have engaged in similar efforts to encourage popular input. For example, local environmental protection bureau officials have reported that they hold weekly meetings at which they discuss citizen reports that come in through their website (Wang 2015, 160). Although these activities represent only a limited form of public participation in policymaking, to the extent that government officials and agencies have used the Internet to receive and constructively respond to public input, the regime has been more democratic in the sense of being responsive to the citizenry's will. Indeed research by Minard (2015) has found that in areas of China with greater ICT penetration, local governments budget more money toward health and education (which directly benefit the people) and less toward capital construction (which provides local officials with opportunities for kickbacks and high-profile projects that may not be in the public interest).

At the same time, political authorities have been actively involved in trying to shape the citizenry's will through the manipulation of online discussions. What the public thinks about a particular topic is shaped in part by the decisions made by officials and official entities regarding what information (such as which draft laws, or which parts of which draft laws) they make available online. But regime leaders have gone much further than this: they reportedly have hired hundreds of thousands of individuals to monitor online discussions and try to influence the direction of 'sensitive' discussions by posting comments that move the conversation in a direction that is more favourable to the regime. As noted earlier, scholars estimate that there are 300,000 or more such individuals working for government agencies at all levels. These individuals are derogatorily referred to as '50 cent party' members, due to the accusation that they are paid 50 cents for each pro-CCP post (Chen and Peng 2011).

In 2011, the widely followed Chinese artist Ai Weiwei tweeted that he would like to interview one of these individuals, and got a taker. The self-described 'online commentator', a 26-year-old university graduate with a formal education in media studies, reported that every morning he received an e-mail from his employer – the local government's Internet publicity office – noting the relevant news or events that day and providing 'instructions on which direction to guide the netizens' thoughts, to blur their focus or to fan their enthusiasm for certain ideas'. The informant stressed that doing so 'requires a lot of skill. You can't write in a very official manner, you must conceal your identity, write articles in different styles, sometimes even have a dialogue with yourself, argue, debate … [it] must look as if it's an unsuspecting member of the] public … you want to guide netizens obliquely and let them change their focus without realizing it'. He elaborated,

> for example, each time the oil price is about to go up, we'll receive a notification to 'stabilise the emotions of netizens and divert public attention'. The next day, when news of the rise comes out, netizens will definitely be condemning the state … At this point, I … post a comment: 'Rise, rise however you want, I don't care. Best if it rises to 50 yuan per litre: it serves you right if you're too poor to drive. Only those with money should be allowed to drive on the roads …' This sounds like I'm inviting attacks but the aim is to anger netizens and divert the anger and attention on oil prices to me. I would then change my identity several times and start to condemn myself. This will attract more attention. After many people have seen it, they start to attack me directly. Slowly, the content of the whole page has also changed from oil price to what I've said. It is very effective.

Although it is impossible to definitely prove or quantify the exact effect that these paid manipulators have had on online discourse, this informant believes that their influence has been significant: 'Wherever public opinion has been controlled relatively well, there will always have been commentators involved' (anonymous 'online commentator', quoted in Ai 2012). To the extent that this assertion is true, it is hard to assess the degree to which the Chinese government has been responsive to the public's 'true' will. For, on the subjects that regime authorities have chosen as targets for public opinion shaping, netizens have had their 'will' consciously shaped by agents of the regime.

Overall, then, government-initiated activities online have had a mixed impact in terms of ideals of 'democracy' and 'freedom'. Although the blogs and policy consultation mechanisms that have been created have provided new channels for political transparency, citizen input and government responsiveness, the manipulation of public opinion by government-hired '50 cent party' members has worked in the opposite direction.

Society-initiated

Meanwhile, members of China's citizenry have been far from passive in the online world. As the 'online commentator' cited above stresses, Chinese netizens have become quite savvy and thoughtful, and have not been easily stymied by government censors or fooled by its 'online commentators'. Further, the activities of China's rank-and-file Internet users have been wide-ranging, including political dissent directed at systemic governmental change; muckraking; efforts to use the Internet to run for office; collective contention involving both online and on-the-ground protest; anger-venting; parodies; and identity expression. Each of these varied activities has been 'political' in the broad sense of the word. Thus, each has demonstrated how the Internet in China has functioned as an important new political 'space' for citizen expression and interaction, both among citizens and between

citizens and the many agencies and officials that constitute the Chinese party–state.

For those who hold a dichotomous view of China's state and society as monolithic entities that are inherently opposed, political dissent is seen as the natural expression of this conflict. As articulated by Yuan, this view is expressed in analyses of Chinese Internet use that focus on efforts by the public to achieve 'liberation', and by the government to achieve 'control'. In this conceptualization, *why* citizens engage in such behaviour is assumed: their freedom is being repressed by an authoritarian regime (Yuan 2015, 216). Without a doubt, the Chinese Internet has been a site for the expression of this kind of overt political dissent. However, there has been much less of this type of activity online than one might imagine. To be sure, regime authorities have made every effort to ensure that activity of this nature does not appear or spread online. Indeed, virtually all known Chinese dissidents are currently either in prison, under surveillance or living overseas in exile. Because China's citizens are aware that this is likely to be one's fate if one engages in public acts of dissent that attract the government's attention, very few dare to do so. As a result, it is reasonable to assume that many who hold dissident views engage in self-censorship. Consequently, it is impossible to ascertain the extent to which members of the Chinese populace hold truly dissident beliefs. All that we can say for sure is that almost nobody expresses such beliefs openly online.

As described earlier, a rare case of explicit dissident activity on the Internet occurred in 2008. In December of that year, Liu Xiaobo and over three hundred well-known Chinese academics and activists signed and posted online a manifesto called 'Charter 08'. They called for the fundamental transformation of China's political system, including an end to one-party rule, the establishment of an independent legal system, and the right to association free from CCP control. More than 10,000 signed on to the manifesto after it was posted. As noted above, Liu was sentenced to eleven years in prison, where he remains to this day. Approximately seventy other notable signatories were harassed and punished as well. However, some of the original signatories, as well as those who later signed the manifesto, do not appear to have faced sanction.

Much more common—and indeed quite widespread—online activity by citizens falls into the category of political muckraking. These discourses and actions are often highly critical and indignant, but their ultimate aim (unlike that of Liu and the Charter 08 signatories) is not to replace China's CCP-dominated political system with a liberal democratic one, but rather, to reform and improve the existing political system. Many who have engaged in this type of activity online have been punished in some way, including in some cases, jail. But many more have been able to do so unimpeded and even have found their efforts to have a positive effect.

Perhaps the most prominent citizen muckraker in China is the world-renowned artist Ai Weiwei. In late 2005, Ai began to blog on Sina Weibo,

'turn[ing] out a steady stream of scathing social commentary' and 'criticism of government policy' (Ai 2011, 'Overview'). Following a devastating high-magnitude earthquake in Sichuan province in 2008, Ai brought a team to the area to investigate the damage. Finding that political authorities were covering up key information, he launched a 'Citizens' Investigation' online, asking for and then posting the names of children who had died in school buildings that had fallen due to shoddy construction as a result of local corruption. In May 2009, Ai's blog was shut down. In August 2009 he was beaten by police in the Sichuan city of Chengdu, to which he had travelled to testify on behalf of one of his co-investigators. In 2010, he was placed under house arrest, and in 2011, he was detained for nearly three months. Since his release, he has been under government surveillance, but has continued to be active on Twitter and Instagram, including documenting with pictures the surveillance equipment that has been installed at his residence.

But Ai is only one high-profile example of an online muckraker. Countless regular citizens engage in this type of activism on a daily basis, and most suffer no negative consequences. Indeed, their actions not infrequently result in a positive government response to their complaints. The vast majority of these postings concern immoral and/or corrupt behaviour on the part of individual party–state cadres and/or their family members. For example, in October 2010, the son of high-ranking local public security officer Li Gang killed one pedestrian and critically injured another while driving drunk. When confronted after trying to escape the scene of the accident, the young man apparently yelled, 'Sue me if you dare. My father is Li Gang!' News of the incident spread quickly online, with netizens rapidly figuring out and posting Li Gang's status and his son's name and other personal information. Ten days later, the official mouthpiece of the CCP, the *People's Daily*, published an article on the matter, urging authorities to conduct an official investigation. In January 2011, the son was arrested, sentenced to six years in prison and ordered to pay restitution to the victims' families. The phrase 'my father is Li Gang' has since become a shorthand expression for avoiding responsibility, as well as for the arrogant behaviour of and unfair privileges enjoyed by political authorities and their families.[6]

The Li Gang incident is an example of the use of 'human flesh search engines' by Chinese netizens. The first known case occurred in 2006, and began with the posting of a video of a woman who killed a kitten with her stiletto heels. Outrage over the video created an online 'storm', wherein the identity and personal information about the woman was found and posted, including her address and place of employment. She was fired from her job, as was the cameraman who had filmed the video (Downey 2010). Since then, countless cases of alleged immoral or corrupt behaviour – most often on the part of government officials – have been uncovered and railed against in similar online 'storms'. These have included photos/videos of political cadres caught in all manner of untoward actions, including engaged in extra-marital sexual activity, wearing extremely expensive watches and

speaking condescendingly or flippantly about the plight of regular citizens. Typically, once the perpetrators are identified, they receive some sort of official sanction, ranging from being fired to being arrested and thrown in jail (see Dai, Zeng and Yu 2015; Tong and Lei 2013, 146–73). Although these online actions surely invade the privacy of individuals and are a form of 'vigilante justice' that does not involve a free and fair adjudication of the alleged transgression, they have served as a form of mass political participation that has resulted in the punishment of party–state officials who, in the eyes of the people, are not serving the public interest.

Chinese citizens also have used the Internet to campaign for office. Although China's political system remains 'authoritarian' in the sense that its top leaders are not chosen via popular election, many lower-level offices are elected by regular citizens. These include seats on local 'People's Congresses' (PCs) at the township and county levels. All adult citizens are eligible to vote and run for these offices. The number of candidates often is quite large; as reported by Shen (2015), the five open PC seats allotted to one university attracted six hundred initial candidates. Most candidates are nominated and/or endorsed by CCP leaders. But, especially since the early years of the new millennium, independent candidates have pursued these offices. In the spring of 2011, a female worker who had been laid off announced her intention to run in her local PC election on Sina Weibo. By the end of the year, more than two hundred other independent candidates had done the same. Lacking the Party's endorsement, these candidates saw the Internet as a low-cost way of communicating with the voting public. Shen's analysis of the postings made by 130 of these independent candidates (who were overwhelmingly young males under the age of 35), found that around 70 percent questioned political authorities on different issues, more than 60 percent posted muckraking information and nearly 27 percent expressed some sort of anger. Around 30 percent had more than a thousand followers. Although Shen was unable to track down the fate of all of the candidates, only two of the 130 were known to have been elected. Although this represents an extremely small percentage, the Internet clearly has provided independent candidates such as these with a new political space in which to spread their message and even possibly win election to a government post.

Citizens also have used the Internet to facilitate collective actions to address specific issues that directly impact them. These issues have included localized environmental degradation (or plans for development that threaten local environmental harm), unjust 'land grabs' by local officials and employers' ill treatment of workers. In some cases, outraged citizens have posted online information about the problem, including details about the harm that is being done (or is being threatened) and/or relevant laws or policies that are being violated.

In addition, albeit less frequently, Chinese netizens have used the Internet to call on others to join them in some sort of offline street protest. The most prominent such example occurred in 2011, in the northeastern city of

Dalian. City residents were concerned about the threat of future environmental damage caused by a factory jointly owned by the city and a private company. The Party chief in Dalian had approved the factory. When a film crew from the party–state-affiliated China Central Television (CCTV) that had come to investigate the safety of the plant was beaten and the crew's news report was pulled, outraged online discussion spread. Following an anonymous Internet call for citizens to gather in the city's central square, more than 10,000 demonstrators appeared. By the end of the day, local party–state officials had announced that the factory would cease production and be moved out of the city. Thus, the protest succeeded in achieving its aims. Further, there has been no reported punishment of those involved in the demonstrations.

Incidents such as this have been rare. When farmers and unskilled private sector workers (most of whom come from the countryside) have attempted to collectively organize to protest against a specific local problem, they only occasionally have attempted to use the Internet to facilitate their efforts. Not only are few of them able to afford Internet access, but they have relatively little knowledge about how to use the Internet effectively in this way. As documented by Wang, rural residents much more frequently utilize their mobile phones to help organize collective actions (Wang 2015). Moreover, as noted earlier, online posts that call for offline protest gatherings are the most likely to be censored and punished by authorities (King 2013). Thus, texting and other forms of mass communication have been seen as safer and more effective methods of organizing mass street protests.

Much more common have been mass 'anger-venting' 'storms' online. These mirror similar 'anger-venting' street disturbances that have appeared with increasing regularity in the past two decades. Generally speaking, mass online anger-venting incidents do not ask for a specific change in policy or resolution to the problem in question. Instead, they feature emotional accusations and criticism. One notable example occurred in 2011, following the crash of two high-speed trains in the city of Wenzhou. Immediately after news of the crash became public, Weibo users began to express their outrage online. Over the course of the next ten days, at least ten million Weibo users participated in the discussion and topics related to the accident ranked as the top three Weibo topics. Indeed, so many posts appeared that Weibo staff set up a specific page devoted to the train crash. Researchers found that roughly half of the posts expressed anger, with the central complaints being safety issues, corruption, the secretive handling of the crash and prior official boasting about the high quality of the trains. Roughly six percent of the posts called for specific protest actions to be taken, but the vast majority did not (Bondes and Schucher 2014).

A less emotion-laden expression of disapproval of the political status quo can be found in online sarcasm or parodies, known in Chinese as *egao* (see Gong and Yang 2010). Perhaps the most well-known is the 'grass-mud horse' (草泥马, cǎonímǎ), which literally means 'f--- your mother'. Originally

designed as a way to circumvent government censorship of vulgar content, it became synonymous with saying 'f--- the CCP' following an online posting of a music video depicting the grass-mud horse defeating a 'river crab' ((河蟹, héxiè) that symbolized the official promotion of 'social harmony' (和谐, héxié) under former CCP leader Hu Jintao.[7] As Gong and Yang argue, '*egao* provides an alternative locus of power, permitting the transgressing of existing social and cultural hierarchies. Satiric and ludicrous in nature, *egao* playfully subverts a range of authoritative discourses and provides a vehicle for both comic criticism and emotional catharsis' (Gong and Yang 2010, 4).

A less clearly political, yet still subversive, use of the Chinese Internet has involved the expression of identities that do not support social norms or that question existing social hierarchies. A particularly fascinating example is self-identified 'losers' (屌丝, diaosi; literally, 'penis hair'). *Diaosi* publicly embrace a lowly identity as young people who are poor, short, ugly, rural, uneducated and – for males – lacking the necessities to successfully find a girlfriend: namely, a house and a car (Szablewicz 2014). In so doing, Szablewicz argues, these individuals 'imagine and articulate alternative identities that pose a challenge to mainstream visions of what success entails' (Szablewicz 2014, 262).

In the varied ways described above, China's citizens eagerly have utilized the virtual space of the Chinese Internet to initiate and participate in discussions and actions that have had real political consequences. In the process, they have enjoyed a greater degree of freedom and a more responsive government than was the case in China's pre-Internet era. At the same time, the pervasiveness of expressed online discontent indicates that many public grievances remain unresolved.

Conclusion

Overall, China's Internet has been the site of much more positive and creative discourse and interaction than mainstream Western media outlets typically portray. Although China's political leaders have been perhaps the most determined controllers and manipulators of the Internet in the world,[8] even within this context, the Internet has had many positive political consequences. In part, this paradox derives from CCP leaders' desire to maintain their power. As much as this desire has driven their efforts to repress (real or perceived) threats of revolution, it also has propelled them to find ways to be more be more responsive to public concerns, with the goal of increasing the regime's legitimacy and forestalling the need to use force to maintain control. Meanwhile, Chinese netizens have proven themselves to be intrepid and savvy, and unwilling to quietly accept constrictions of the freedom and level of political participation that the Internet thus far has enabled them to enjoy. Moreover, as demonstrated by Lei (2011), China's Internet users are more politically opinionated than non-Internet users and are more likely to support democratic norms and to be critical of the CCP-led government and

general political conditions in China. Further, they are also more likely than non-Internet users to participate in collective action.

To the extent that China's political leaders need the Internet in order to maintain the responsiveness and economic vitality that legitimate their rule, they will need to allow the citizenry to use the Internet as an authentic political space. If restrictions on Internet use result in a decline in government responsiveness and/or inhibit economic growth, China's political elites may elicit precisely the kind of fundamental political crisis that they so diligently have been trying to avoid.

Notes

1 See, for example, Freedom House, which categorizes China as 'not free': https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/china.
2 http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/china/, accessed March 16, 2017.
3 http://www.statista.com/statistics/272385/age-distribution-of-internet-users-in-china/, accessed April 12, 2015.
4 For example, the *New York Times* website has been blocked in China since late 2012, after the paper ran a series of lengthy articles exposing the wealth of family members of former Chinese Premier and CCP Politburo Standing Committee member Wen Jiabao.
5 https://www.chinainternetwatch.com/17509/weibo-q1-2016/, accessed March 16, 2017.
6 See Barboza 2011; and 'My Dad is Li Gang', Know Your Meme website: http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/events/my-dad-is-li-gang-%E6%88%91%E7%88%B8%E6%98%AF%E6%9D%8E%E5%88%9A.
7 'Grass-mud horse', *China Digital Times*, http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Grass-mud_horse.
8 Freedom House's 2015 report on Internet Freedom in the World ranks China as the year's 'worst abuser of Internet freedom' (Kelly *et al.* [2016]).

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9 When democracy is questioned

Competing democratic principles and struggles for democracy in Thailand

Bencharat Sae Chua

On February 2, 2014, the general election in Thailand was disrupted by protesters who called themselves the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC). The PDRC had been demonstrating since November 2013 and camping on Bangkok's streets since January 2014. The protesters, in some cases with support from election staff who boycotted the election, successfully barricaded or forcefully closed down 10,284 polling stations in 18 provinces. 28 out of 375 electoral constituencies were not able to hold elections anyway, because there was no candidate, as some opposition politicians boycotted the election and potential candidates were blocked by protesters from accessing relevant agencies to complete the election candidacy application process (Matichon 2014b).[1] The PDRC was protesting against the government's proposal for a 'blanket amnesty bill'. The bill, if passed, would give amnesty to anyone accused of wrongdoing by the 19 September 2006 military coup government, including ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who had been ousted by the coup and was at the centre of the PDRC protest. The bill would also give amnesty to anyone related to the 2010 Red Shirt demonstration, mostly supporters of Thaksin, including both protesters and state authorities involved in the violent crackdown on demonstrators.

The PDRC demonstration in 2014 was not targeted at protesting an undemocratic election, as one might expect in a country like Thailand, with a history of mass demonstrations against dictatorship. Nor was it a criticism of failed representative democracy. It was, in fact, a rejection of democratic principles and rule of law. The only fault of the February 2014 election was that it would potentially bring the political party Thaksin backed to power, like every other general election had since 2011. The PDRC argued that only 'moral' people should be allowed to govern, and that rural Thais were not capable of choosing moral people via the electoral system. The PDRC also called for military intervention in the political deadlock. Their wish came true when the military staged a coup d'état on 22 May 2014.

The protests to oust elected governments, the call for military intervention and the disrupted general election are symptoms of anti-democratic sentiments in Thai political society that have been unearthed and brought

into the limelight during the political conflicts of the last decade. It is within the context of this underlying hostility towards representative democracy that pro-democracy movements have continued to operate, particularly since the 2014 military coup. Democratic movements, therefore, face not only authoritarian and coercive military rule, but also challenges from civil society groups and Thai citizens who view democratic elections as not suitable for the Thai political system and culture.

This chapter explores democratic movements in Thailand in this context by tracing the development of anti-dictatorship mobilization after the May 2014 coup. While discussing evolving democracy movements in general, the paper focuses on the groups called Resistant Citizen and the New Democratic Movement, both of which became prominent in 2015 for their creative and subversive activities. Through participatory observation and documentary review of these movements' claims, framing strategies and repertoires, the chapter analyzes how the movements have sought to reaffirm and remake democratic principles of equality, accountability and liberal rights after the 2014 military coup.

The first section of this chapter analyzes the Thai political culture that shapes the public's perception of electoral politics and leads sections of the population to support the military coup. The second section discusses how, in addition to grounding its legitimacy in the people's consent, the junta uses coercive measures to suppress opposition voices, their political space and calls for democracy. Then the chapter examines the conditions and development of pro-democracy movements in such a context of hegemonic and coercive powers. The chapter shows that state suppression and the need to counter an anti-representative democracy discourse led these movements to resort to symbolic actions and to campaign through social media instead of taking direct action, at least during the initial stage. Given that the future of democracy in Thailand is still dim at the time of writing, with a draft military constitution that circumscribes the growth of electoral politics, limits human and political rights and sharply delimits political space for pro-democratic forces, the chapter ends by discussing the implications of the movements' activities for the shaping of a new democracy discourse and polity in Thailand.

Democracy and politics of morality

The military coups d'état in September 2006 and May 2014 were welcomed by a proportion of the Thai public who saw them as saving the country from political chaos, corrupt politicians, and a perceived threat to a traditional political order. In fact, in the recent political conflict, some civil society groups that claim to work for human rights endorsed military intervention and extra-parliamentary politics to rid the country of politicians and 'money politics' at the cost of civil rights and participatory democracy. Given Thailand's experiences of democratization, with at least three mass

demonstrations against military dictatorship since the 1970s,[2] and growing participation of civil society in politics through both formal and informal channels since the 1990s, such support to the military may seem surprising. Examining how deeply democratic principles are entrenched in Thai political culture, however, tells another story.

Democracy is a contentious concept in contemporary Thailand. The political conflict has unearthed and reinforced a political discourse that seeks to bypass representative democracy for rule by those considered morally superior. As a result, while democratization since the 1980s has created political opportunity structures favorable for a democratic movement to evolve, the movement has had limited cultural opportunity to shape democratic claims that are 'visible for the public, resonate with public opinion and are held to be "legitimate" by the audience' (Kriesi 2004, 72). In this section, I discuss the nature of the politics of morality, and how it shapes understandings of democracy and consent for military rule among the Thai public.

Politics of morality

The middle classes had called before for the military to intervene in what they perceived as failed democracy (Kurlantzick 2013, 17–18). The argument that representative democracy cannot really represent its constituencies and disappointment in electoral politics that seemingly cannot produce effective governments to cope with economic and political crises are found in the democratization processes of many countries (the recent revolution in Egypt, for example). What makes Thailand's experiences distinct is that the protest against the elected government was not only due to frustration with the failure of representative democracy, but revealed rejection of basic democratic principles – in particular, of equality and of the people's sovereign political power over the state.

An elite revolution in 1932 changed Thailand's political system from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, but democratic values have not yet taken deep root in political culture. The idea of the People's Party that staged the revolution that 'every citizen should enjoy equal rights (the royals should not be allowed to have more rights than the citizens as it is now)' has not become mainstream among different sections of society and political interests, even after eight decades.[3] An underlying conservative belief in the inherent inequality among people still shapes individual relationships in Thai society. In her study of the role of key intellectuals in constructing and promoting nationalism and the idea of Thainess, Saichol Sattayanurak (2014, 593) found that the mainstream ideal or conception of Thai culture and society in Thai people's minds is a society with 'people of different classes … [who] relate to each other according to the Buddhist moral rules. People from each class know "their own places"' in this order.[4] With this mindset, elite intellectuals in Thai political history, both before and after the 1932 revolution, have promoted the idea that a centralized

state and an unequal social structure are natural (Saichon 2014, 594). These ideas have been promoted through various channels, including literature, state-sponsored projects and textbooks.[5]

This belief in inherent inequality defines what are seen as proper relationships between people and how structural problems linked with politics should be solved. Nidhi Eiewsriwong (2004) argues that the Thai nation was presented in primary education textbooks in the 1980s as a harmonious family unit. Economic and social problems were presented as moral problems, not as structural ones (Nidhi 2004, 57) – a framing salient to the current conflict. Problems could be solved simply by getting rid of the 'bad people' and replacing them with 'good' or 'moral' people. In addition, traditional social hierarchies and patron-client relationships are seen as the best solution: rich people should help the poor while the poor lend support to the rich (Nidhi 2004, 58).

When translated into political discourse, the portrayal of the Thai nation as a moral community has significant implications for how politics and democracy are interpreted. First, politics is seen as a corrupted space where immoral politicians pursue personal interests. As Hewison (2015, 58) summarizes, '[P]oliticians were untrustworthy; voters are bought, duped or ignorant; and so electoral politics is the core of the corruption problem'. Second, the discourse of dirty politics implies that politics and society should be governed by someone who is morally superior. It places the general public, in particular the less-educated rural masses, in lower positions, with no rights or political roles. The populace is not seen as an agent of political change and should only cooperate with the authorities for the benefit of the society and nation at large (Prajak 2015, 16).

The military and monarchy as democratic agents

While the politics of morality blames politicians and people who voted for them for political problems, it views the monarchy and military as moral, legitimate political agents and rulers. Although the Thai constitutions after the 1932 revolution put the king above politics, different governments, especially the military ones, tried to relate their legitimacy to the monarchy, which holds a highly revered position among Thais. The current generation of the middle class, who made up the base of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and PDRC (or the yellow shirts), is highly influenced by the concept of state security and legitimacy constructed by the dictatorial regimes of the 1950s. This discourse of the Thai state emphasizes upholding of the 'Nation, (Buddhist) Religion, and King'. In the 1980s, this discourse was further reinforced by the government of General Prem Tinsulanonda, who had 'turned Thailand into the Chakri Dynasty's property' (Attachak 2014, 37). The government thereafter closely allied with and based its legitimacy on the monarchy. The monarchy's hegemonic power was thus further strengthened, although it does not have formal political authority.

Scandals around former prime minister Thaksin simply reinforced these moral values. The politics of morality was actively brought to life during protests against Thaksin and his allies led by the PAD during the period 2005–11 and the PDRC in 2013–14. One of the PAD's key proposals was to get the king to name a new prime minister to replace Thaksin by invoking the power of Article 7 of the 1997 constitution, which was interpreted as vesting all power in the king whenever there was a situation not provided for by the constitution. The PAD argued that an election (then planned for April 2006) would lead to 'the end of politics' and that Thai political transition could only happen peacefully by invoking Article 7 (Suriyasai Katasila, PAD spokesperson, in *Manager Online* 2006a). Although the PAD claimed that sovereign power belonged to the Thai people, it reiterated the idea that it was actually the king who had the higher power. The PAD's petition to the crown argued:

> the people's sovereign power was bestowed by the monarchy. Therefore the people have full and absolute right to give the power back to the king and request the king to exercise it together with the people during a time of legitimacy crisis of the government.
>
> (Republished in *Manager Online* 2006b, my translation)

The PAD's idea was maintained and advanced more directly against representative democracy when the PAD evolved into the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) seven years later, in late 2013. This time, the politics of morality was not only about proposing to use moral values as the basis for political legitimacy, but the PDRC even went so far as to attack and police other citizens who were exercising their political rights. In the PDRC's campaign for 'Reform Before Election', it argued that an approaching election in February 2014 would not solve the country's political problems since vote buying and populist policies would bring corrupt politicians back to power. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the PDRC disrupted the 2 February 2014 election, not only by boycotting it but also by physically blocking people from voting. It proposed that a political reform process should be completed before an election took place. While the PDRC's proposal for reform before election has never been spelled out in concrete terms, the rough idea was to lay ground rules that would ensure that only a 'good' person could win the election. Like the PAD, the PDRC also called for military intervention to lead political reform.

Political reform is in itself not a new idea in Thai political history. After a mass demonstration in May 1992 that led to the overthrow of a military government, political reform was also on the reform agenda that culminated in the drafting of the 1997 constitution with public input for the first time in Thai political history. The 1990s reforms also targeted corruption, but saw institutional reform as the solution to control politicians. The drafters of the 1997 constitution aimed to redesign the election system to achieve

that goal and to promote pro-poor policies (Aim 2014, 528–9). In contrast, the proposals of the PAD and PDRC in the 2000s fall outside an institutional democratic framework. The PAD's discourse of corruption led to the campaign for 'righteousness' as it promoted the idea of having 'good people' rule and maintained that the majority of the people were incapable of choosing a good person (Aim 2014, 533). In a similar way, the PDRC proposed a People's Council, which would be a body of selected professional representatives and PDRC-nominated people, to act as a legislative body and to select a 'decent' interim prime minister (*Bangkok Post*, 4 December 2013, 1). The council would also lead the process of political reform and design a new electoral system.

It was within this politics of morality that the military staged the coup in May 2014. Echoing public perception of the military coup in September 2006, these sections of the elite and citizenry welcomed the 2014 coup as a way out of political conflicts and violence and as good people's stepping in to prevent the return of corrupt politicians. Democratic voices, however, remained and still actively engage in contention over democracy. Resistance and protest against the junta emerged and met with a harsh response from the military. In the next section, I discuss how the military junta keeps people under control by using both the consent it gains from those in support of PDRC's ideas and coercion to suppress democratic demands.

Consent and coercion: Policing democratic movements in the name of 'happiness'

> … Please wait until we get over all the hostility.
> We will keep our promise. It won't be long.
> Then the beautiful country will be back.
> We will be honest. Please trust us and keep your faith [in us].
> The land will be good soonest.
> We will return the happiness to you, the people.
> …
> No matter how tired we are today, we will fight the danger.
> [We], the military blood, will never give up.
> This is our promise.
> The country is under threat. Over time the country is burning, we will be the ones who walk in. We cannot leave it too long.
> The land will be good soonest. Happiness will return to Thailand
> (Vichien 2014, my translation).

This song, 'Returning Happiness to Thailand', with lyrics by General Prayut Chan-o-cha, the military leader who named himself prime minister after the coup, captures well the hegemonic discourse the military is trying to establish. The junta claims their legitimacy to rule by arguing that they are 'good' rulers bringing 'happiness' back to the land – referring to physical and

mental losses caused by political violence in the past decade – and who are 'reforming' the political system to make sure dirty politicians cannot control it. At the time of this writing (March 2017), there has not yet been a mass demonstration against the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), the government formed by the May 2014 military coup d'état.[6] Dissenting voices are overruled quite quickly while the former Yellow Shirts, or PDRC supporters, remain largely ardent supporters of the junta, despite the fact that the NCPO is also faced with a number of corruption accusations[7] and is pursuing a range of policies affecting livelihood rights.[8] The junta's civilian supporters sometimes even police dissidents on its behalf.

Together with military suppression, moral politics effectively curbs any demand for democracy. Janjira Sombatpoonsiri (2015) contends that the military junta effectively suppresses the democracy movement by securitizing resistance.[9] The military frames anti-junta movements as threats to national security and stability and therefore claims public support and legitimacy in suppressing opposition voices (Janjira 2015, 99–105). While I agree with Janjira that the public's silence and consent to the military's suppression is partly explained by the effects of securitization, I argue that the NCPO's suppression is only possible because of the existing politics of morality in Thai political culture, as discussed above. In Janjira's analysis, it is the junta that is the active agent in controlling the people; I put more weight on the cultural values that make many Thais susceptible to military influence and control.

One of the bases of legitimacy on which the military builds its power is the claim that it is working towards morally led politics. While the military says that it will return power to the people after the next election (at the moment, no election date has been set), the junta is working to ensure that the future political system does not fall into the hands of politicians. The military government's draft constitution of 2016 sets new ground rules for Thai politics. It allows the NCPO to remain in power until a new government is established following the first general election and to maintain influence over the selection of the new prime minister. One of the drafts included a proposal for an 'Assembly of Righteousness' to be in charge of monitoring corruption among politicians. This suggestion represented an attempt to bypass electoral democracy and put power in the hands of a non-elected few who are seen as morally superior and the constitutional framework is designed to prevent the development of strong mass-based political parties or a strong party system.

The junta stresses the need for time to 'set things in order' (*jad ra-bieb*) as part of the scheme to bring back happiness and to reform political institutions in such a way that popular elections will play a less important role in the future. Policies to set things in order range from rearranging taxi-van terminals and getting rid of vendor stalls on Bangkok sidewalks to protecting forests from illegal loggers and forest dwellers and monitoring cybercrimes – anything the military defines as a threat to national security and the

monarchy. These policies, like other development projects, are implemented swiftly and decisively, with no room for public participation. Many of these projects and policies have gone unquestioned by the public.

The tacit consent the public gives the junta is not only because they believe in what the military is doing, but also partly due to existing trust in the military. The junta's references to 'happiness' and 'public order' fit well with the anti-politician mentality of the Thai middle class who, as leading historian Attachak Sattayanurak (2014, 49) points out, prefer any actors who would bring security and stability, even through dictatorial force. The military are praised in Thai political culture as heroes fighting the nation's enemies (Nidhi 2004, 71). This image has been kept alive and reproduced actively by the military regime since the latest coup.

In addition to drawing consent from much of the middle class, the junta also strengthens its control through the use of coercive measures and does not allow space for those who withhold their consent. Unlike the period after the September 2006 coup, when the military-led government did not strictly control opposition voices, the NCPO that came to power in 2014 has higher capacity to penetrate into and control society. As Tilly (2006, 76) suggests, a high-capacity nondemocratic regime may be able to police contentious claim-making and limit the range of permitted claim-making. While some truly believe that the NCPO are 'good' people doing good things for the country, others keep quiet due to fear of coercion and suppression by the military.

In the weeks that followed the coup, the junta summoned a range of people, including leading politicians, activists, academics and former political prisoners from both camps to report to coup authorities. As reported by iLaw, an NGO monitoring political rights after the coup, altogether, 992 people had been summoned or visited by soldiers, including for informal meetings, as of December 2016. Most of these individuals had to sign a memorandum stating they would not engage in political activities afterward. Some of them were arbitrarily detained without charge, although most were later released.[10] NCPO Order No. 37/2557 (2014) announced that any crime under Articles 107–112 of the Criminal Code (including the notorious Article 112 on *lèse majesté*, which outlaws any acts, speech or writings that may be deemed critical of the institution of the monarchy), any wrongdoing that harms internal security (Articles 113–118) and any acts against the orders of the NCPO would be under the jurisdiction of military rather than civilian courts. Those who do not appear when summoned are charged with disobeying the NCPO's orders and also prosecuted in military court.

In addition to the use of intimidation and surveillance to prevent opposition, the junta attempts to contain other forms of political participation. Soon after the coup, people engaged in public protest activities to oppose the military's seizure of power. The pro-democracy movement gradually evolved, trying to navigate through any possible channel (as detailed in the next section). The junta suppressed the first few mass gatherings after the

2014 coup. The day after the coup, two men were arrested when they joined a gathering against the military in Bangkok. The following day, a group of 200–300 people marched in the Bangkok city centre for a few hours to protest the military. There was a strong presence of armed police officers near the protest sites (personal observation, 31 May 2014). One person was arrested that day for breaching martial law, which prohibits political gatherings of more than five people.[11] Although the NCPO avoided violent suppression or severe use of force against protesters, its use of arbitrary arrest, martial law and legal charges sent a clear message that it would not tolerate opposition.

Public demonstration then gave way to symbolic acts of defiance and contention through cyberspace. Protests and demonstrations are tactics quite familiar to Thai civil society, especially since the turn to democratic civilian governments in the 1990s, which opened space for broader participation in politics. Many large scale and/or protracted demonstrations were organized during the recent decade-long political conflict. Under the current military regime, however, activists' repertoire has been strictly controlled. No mass gathering was organized for at least a few months. Instead, anti-junta movements have to resort to more creative, individualized resistance actions that do not directly violate the prohibition against mass gatherings, barred first under martial law, then, after martial law was lifted in April 2015, by an NCPO order.

Examples of these symbolic actions included standing in groups of five people in crowded public space and reading books on resistance politics; raising the three-fingered salute from the movie, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay*, which became a symbol of resisting power; or organizing seemingly irrelevant activities, like having a picnic on Bangkok sidewalks, simply to show defiance. These kinds of activities allow participants to disperse quickly when the authorities intervene. It should be noted, however, that symbolic actions, though less confrontational, are also strictly controlled. Some of the people who joined these activities were arrested when the military or police followed them after the activities were over. For instance, one university student was arrested for eating a sandwich alone while reading George Orwell's book, *1984* in front of a department store (SCMP 2014), while other students were detained for raising the three-fingered salute in front of a movie theater screening *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay* (Khaosod 2014).

ILaw's latest report documents at least 465 political-related cases through the end of November 2016, including 270 cases of peaceful association.[12] Many additional cases saw no formal charge, but the security forces requested or ordered activities to stop in the middle of an event or completely prevented it from happening. This monitoring, intimidation and control is applied to any activity that questions the legitimacy of the junta, including public seminars on rights and liberties and on the impacts of state policies. When the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol

University, where I work, organized public seminars on issues related to the human rights situation after the coup, for example, uniformed soldiers always came to attend and observe. This was not the case before the coup. In some instances, the military tried to stop the Institute from discussing issues they saw as sensitive.

The junta has also tried to control cyber-activism by tightening internet control. While social media have proved to be useful platforms for civil society engagement, especially in authoritarian regimes (see the chapters here by Bui on Vietnam and Wright on China), they are also spaces of contention. The NCPO closely monitors social media. Some activists who accused the NCPO government of corruption or wrongdoing have been charged under the Computer Crime Act for producing 'false' or 'distorted' information.

Given strict control by the military, activists have not raised explicit demands for representative democracy, as they endeavour find ways around prohibitions while at the same time expressing dissident opinions. Instead, pro-democracy movements focus on exposing the illegitimacy of the military and on affirming founding values of democracy, including equality and justice.

Redefining democracy, reclaiming popular sovereignty and political space

Within this context of military rule by both consent and coercion, efforts to resist a suppressive military government and push for the re-installation of a democratic regime are significantly also struggles to redefine democracy. Under a repressive regime, large-scale protest is hardly possible. Movements instead must adopt inventive repertoires to challenge the junta's hegemonic discourse and draw support from the general public. Despite these difficulties, movements have gradually garnered support and increased their presence on the streets, in other public spaces and in the media. While so far unable to launch a powerful struggle for regime change, recent pro-democracy mobilization has claimed political space by aiming to give sovereignty back to the people, not to the monarchy or those with 'morality' – in the process, reframing 'democracy'. In this section, I analyze the development of these anti-coup movements and how they engage in contention over what democracy entails. I suggest that pro-democracy movements proceed on two key fronts: opening physical and virtual spaces for citizens to participate in politics and re-imagining the meaning of democracy and their rights as citizens.

Reclaiming democratic political space

On the day of the coup in May 2014, Red Shirt protesters (supporters of ex-prime minister Thaksin) who were demonstrating in a Bangkok suburb were removed by the military, then sent home over the following few

days. The military's swift action clearly signaled that they would not tolerate political activism. The Red Shirts, who are *de facto* direct antagonists of the military leaders who took power, were crippled by military control and could therefore not assume the leadership of anti-coup movements. Subsequent anti-coup activities, as I discussed earlier, were mostly symbolic and sporadic.

In February 2015, with the launch of the Resistant Citizen group, activists began to reclaim public spaces for political activities and to spell out clearly the objectives of electoral democracy. Resistant Citizen organized a campaign on Valentine's Day to commemorate the 'stolen election' of February 2, 2014. The campaign was called 'The Beloved (Stolen) Election' (*Lueak Tang Tii Ruk* [*Luk*]), in a play on words: *ruk* (love) and *luk* (steal) sound similar in Thai. About a hundred supporters showed up that day, despite security forces' attempt to hold the protest ground (personal observation, 14 February 2015). Four of the group's leading figures were arrested during and after the event. They were charged with sedition and violating martial law. With more than twenty people gathered in front of the police station to protest the arrests, the four activists were released on bail that night. Their case will be tried in military court (Kongpoband Thaweeporn 2015). Unlike previous intimidation of pro-democracy activities, the arrest of Resistant Citizen's leaders did not stop the group from organizing activities (more below). The group is also active on social media, using platforms like Facebook to convey its messages and to coordinate activities.

Reclamation of public space and public political expression was strengthened a few months later, in May 2015, after more than thirty university students and activists were arrested in Bangkok and in the northeastern province of Khon Kaen for organizing political events to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the coup. Protesters gathered and camped overnight in front of the police stations where the activists were held. They were released but fourteen of them, mostly those who refused to sign memoranda pledging not to engage in political activities again, were later charged with sedition. The students and activists, however, continued to defy summonses and warrants, and filed counter-charges against the police for brutality during their arrest.

When their arrest warrant was issued, the Bangkok and Khon Kaen students grouped together and made a public statement affirming five principles: democracy, human rights, public participation, justice and non-violence. They then announced the formation of the New Democracy Movement (NDM). Rather than flee, they let the police arrest them in front of a crowd of journalists who were following the case.[13] During their two weeks' imprisonment, they became front-page news, with national and international campaigns for their release (see Scholars for Solidarity 2015). They were finally released when the military court did not allow an extra period of detention before their trial. Their cases are still pending under the military court.

Resistant Citizen and NDM, often in collaboration, continue their campaigns for democracy via a wide range of activities, including public seminars, protest marches, demonstrations at the military court and more creative activities, like cultural events and dissemination via social media of subversive songs or videos mocking General Prayut. Public gatherings on political issues have become common on Bangkok streets again. There are also activities in other provinces, but much less frequently. In other words, these campaigns, both through social media and by simply exercising rights to public assembly, have helped normalize the use of public space for political participation – a basic political right taken away by the military junta.

It is important to note here that despite growth in the number of activists and the frequency of public political activities, the junta continues to try to curb resistant voices. Core members of Resistant Citizen and the New Democracy Movement still face legal charges and harassment from the military. In December 2015, when they led a trip to Rajabhakti Park, a public park being built in Prachuab Kirikan province to honour Thai kings, as part of a campaign to expose military corruption in the project, they were arrested and interrogated. Although they were released that night without charge, the military court prosecutor pressed charges against them in April 2016. The activists were granted bail on the condition that they not engage in political activities again (Thai PBS, 25 April 2016). Also, in early 2016, one of the NDM leaders was abducted during the night by soldiers. He was detained and tortured for a few hours before being released (iLaw 2016; Human Rights Watch 2016).

In a way, by not completely suppressing these movements, the junta leaves some space for defiance. The NCPO's power is therefore not absolute, in part because severe use of force might harm the junta's legitimacy. When Resistant Citizen and NDM occupy these public and political spaces, activities that were unimaginable in the first few months after the coup become imaginable and expand. The space in which those without power, or stripped of power, can make their claims and their voices heard is slowly being restored.

Significantly, the democracy movement challenges the military's claim to bring 'happiness' and 'normalcy' back to Thailand. In other words, while the democracy movement normalizes the use of public spaces and engagement in political activities, at the same time, it exposes the military junta's false claims and brings the wrongs of the military to public attention. In so doing, it also contends with meanings of democracy and sovereign power, two key ideas corrupted by the politics of morality.

Redefining citizenship and democracy

As discussed earlier, what challenged pro-democracy movements more than the dictatorial regime were public perceptions and understandings of representative democracy. The dominant political culture in Thai society is

rooted in the idea of inherent inequality and patron-client relationships, while valuing morals and one's origin over an individual's merit. The situation worsened when the recent political conflict encouraged the public to associate representative democracy with corruption and street demonstrations with violence. The junta's supporters interpret a demand for democracy as merely an effort to bring Thaksin back to power and as disrupting the junta's process for restoring peace. Such views have lead to occasional confrontations between junta supporters and pro-democracy activists.

This political culture affects movement leaders' efforts framing the process by which they 'assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions' (Snow and Benford 1988, 198) to mobilize their members, generate support from a wider public and undermine their antagonists. As Zald (1996, 266–7) argues, a social movement has to premise its frame on the 'cultural stock' of what the society in which it operates sees as unjust or appropriate. Cultural resources include existing ideologies, beliefs and values in society that movements can make use of (Snow and Benford 2005, 209). In the Thai case, when cultural resources have not aligned with the movement's goals, democracy activists have resorted to re-interpreting existing culture and values in pro-democracy terms and opposing the discourse on democracy that ruling military elites aim to establish.

Since the coup in May 2014, the military has been active in constructing and defining 'democracy' in a way that fits with Thai hierarchical culture and makes people submit to military rule. One of the NCPO's policies is to lead the 'transition [of] Thailand to absolute democracy with the king as head of the state',[14] implying that the representative democracy the country had before the coup was not genuine. While there is no clear definition of what the NCPO means by 'absolute democracy', the fact that the NCPO drafted the new constitution with little to no participation from the public, the continued postponement of elections and the restrictions on and violations of people's basic political rights make it obvious that this 'absolute democracy' does not entail genuine people's participation and elections.

Meanwhile, the junta actively engages in cultural indoctrination to spread their idea of democracy and preferred social order. Among its main policies in this realm is the promotion of 'the 12 Values of the Thais'. One of the twelve is a 'correct' democratic system, with 'the king as the head of state'. Other tenets include the manners a person is expected to exhibit, for example, respecting people in higher positions in the social hierarchy, having more concern for national interests than for personal interests, displaying moral strength and preserving Thai culture. Soon after General Prayut announced these values to the public, they were included in the school curriculum and textbooks. It is common to see large billboards with these values in front of government offices, a practice that has been welcomed by the Ministry of Education (Nation 2014). The Ministry of Culture promptly produced and publicized a series of music videos for an official 12 Values song (National News Bureau 2014). Other songs the Ministry picked to promote the values

reflect well how it interprets their meaning; most are songs that promote nationalism and patriotism (see Matichon 2014a). Together with the song, 'Returning Happiness to Thailand', the 12 Values song is aired on public television and radio channels once or twice a day.

Democracy activists engage in contention over the term 'democracy' and Thai values by questioning the legitimacy of the coup, extending the meaning of democracy beyond representative democracy and reinterpreting Thai traditions in a manner that values human equality. In a powerful challenge to Thai hierarchical culture, Resistant Citizen organized a Songkran (Thai new year) festival by organizing a blessing ceremony in reverse. Instead of the elders' giving blessings to younger participants, the ceremony was organized with youths' blessing leading senior like-minded intellectuals. The group also added democratic values to their Songkran ceremony and organized a public apology session in which elders apologized to the younger generations for letting the coup happen. These activites, which inverted Thai culture, drew harsh criticism from the public.

The democracy movement further counters the military's claims that they staged a coup in the name of 'absolute' democracy by pointing to the fact that it was the coup that destroyed democracy. At the initiative of Resistant Citizen, fifteen citizens claiming to be victims of the NCPO's acts, filed a criminal case against the NCPO leaders for treason, using force to overthrow the constitution and violating the people's rights and freedom. Although the Criminal Court found the case inadmissible on the grounds that the interim constitution that the NCPO put in place in 2014 gave amnesty to the coup body and any act of 'relevant' persons, the court admitted that the coup was 'not in accordance with principles of democratic regime' (Khaosod 2015). While its effort to press charges against the coup makers failed, the movement reaffirmed democratic principles and had them recognized by the justice system. In another move, in October 2015, the NDM and Resistant Citizen organized a protest in front of the army headquarters in Bangkok. The protest's theme was military reform, to subvert the PDRC's 'Reform before Election' campaign, which included the idea that the country needed a break from electoral politics to complete a political reform process first. The junta had made the 'Reform before Election' argument to counter growing demands to accelerate the election. The pro-democracy movement countered by pointing out that it was the military, not Thai politics, that needed to be reformed, to make the military a professional armed force that would work for a civilian government (Prachatai 2015).

While democracy activists emphasize that elections are the basis of democracy, they also expand the meaning of democracy beyond electoral politics. The My Beloved (Stolen) Election campaign mentioned above, for instance, reclaims elections as a 'beloved' asset stolen by the PDRC, who blocked the February 2014 election, and by the coup. Yet the NDM's five principles of democracy expand the meaning of democracy further by insisting that democracy is not only about elections, but also about equality,

human rights and justice. The NDM's Khon Kaen-based members, who are from a Dao Din university student group, also bring democratic values to life by linking them to their work in providing legal aid to communities negatively affected by development projects in northeastern Thailand. The principles NDM affirms, therefore, are not merely a set of philosophical values, but are interpreted in a way relevant to the daily life of the people.

When citizens take to the street, democracy is redefined

> Sovereignty, rights, and freedom are inherent in all of us. No one gives them to us. But the people are made to believe that we are indebted to the rulers who are above us. We have to follow whatever they order. But in fact, the rulers themselves are equal to other people. Their authority to rule comes from the consent of the people. The people need a government system in which the rulers represent the people and serve the people. The people want a government system that treats them equally, honestly protects their interests, and does not deceive them to be indebted to rulers' generosity and then take the advantage to exploit them as it has always been in the past.
>
> (New Democracy Movement 2015, my translation)

The NDM's bold declaration sharply criticizes the Thai hierarchical culture that has been an impediment to democracy and powerfully asserts the people's rights over military rule. In this chapter, I show the significance of subversive activities in challenging both the repressive military junta and sections of the public's negative perception of representative democracy.

While democratic principles are still far from taking root in Thailand, Resistant Citizen and the New Democracy Movement in Thailand have been asking crucial questions of Thai culture and attempting to reinterpret it in democracy-friendly ways. Resistant Citizen's Beloved (Stolen) Election campaign on Valentine's Day 2015 broke the atmosphere of fear that had been lingering in the Thai political environment since the coup. The group paved the way for increasing public resistance and direct demands for democracy in the following months. It has also given rise to new forms of protest in which democracy, rights and justice are being defended and reimagined. This campaign is not only a demand for the return of elections or democracy, but a counter-hegemonic resistance that seeks to redefine democracy and citizenship, win the support of the public and make citizens rethink democracy and the future needs of the country.

Notes

1 The Constitutional Court later nullified the election on the grounds that, given the twenty-eight constituencies with no candidate, the general election could not be held on the same day throughout the country as required by the Constitution.

2 Namely in October 1973, October 1976 and May 1992.
3 It should be noted, however, that the military took power and ruled for most of the 1950s–1980s. The longest continuous stretch of civilian rule in recent history was from 1992 to 2006.
4 *Khon tae la khon tang ko 'ru ti tum ti soong' (*my translation).
5 See Nidhi 2004 and Nucharee 2008 for examples of textbook analysis.
6 There have been small demonstrations against certain NCPO policies, but not yet a large-scale demonstration to oust the NCPO.
7 The most notorious corruption case concerns the Rajabhakti Park project. The military allegedly paid a hugely over-priced sum to the contractors and broker. While the military themselves admit corruption was found, they insist no action is needed because the money was paid back to the government. Those who tried to expose the corruption, including the New Democracy Movement group discussed in this chapter, faced prosecution. See details in Saksith Saiyasombut (2015) and Rangsiman (2015).
8 For example, the policy to 'take back the forest', which results in the eviction of traditional forest dwellers. See details of the impacts of the policy in Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (2015).
9 Similarly worried, though differently oriented, the Chinese state has likewise opted for a securitzing approach, benefiting as in Thailand from available cultural frames; see Johan Lagerkvist's chapter in this volume.
10 See iLaw's reports, 'The Development of Summons and Visits under the Martial Law', at 'http://freedom.ilaw.or.th/Getthereport2015, and 'Report of Political Charge after 2014 Coup', at http://ilaw.or.th/node/3119, accessed October 25, 2015, as well as updated information on iLaw's homepage, https://freedom.ilaw.or.th/node/209/, accessed April 1, 2017. The information on the junta's suppression hereafter comes mainly from these reports, unless stated otherwise.
11 Martial Law was declared countrywide from May 20, 2014, two days before the coup, until April 1, 2015.
12 See iLaw's September 2015 report at http://freedom.ilaw.or.th/en/report/september-2015-civil-court-did-not-imprison-defying-summon-order-more-summon-stay-military-co, accessed October 15, 2015, and the latest update (as of this writing) at https://freedom.ilaw.or.th/politically-charged, accessed April 1, 2017. An individual may face more than one case.
13 See the timeline on NDM at http://www.prachatai.com/english/node/5226.
14 NCPO's Announcement of One Month Accomplishments, http://www.thaigov.go.th/th/news1/item/84106-id84106.html, June 25, 2014, accessed May 20, 2015.

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10 Political space in refugee camps

Enabling and constraining conditions for refugee agency

Elisabeth Olivius

Refugee camps are frequently perceived as aberrant spaces of emergency, misery and social breakdown. Agamben has famously conceptualized the camp as a space of exception where regular laws cease to apply and people are reduced from political subjects to 'bare life' (Agamben 1998). Indeed, the refugee camp context forecloses many forms of political participation; refugees are generally prevented from exercising formal political rights in their country of origin as well as in their host country. Thus, refugees have few opportunities to affect and change their situation in the sense of finding alternatives to camp life or long-term solutions to their displacement.

Nonetheless, refugee camps also constitute societies of their own, with particular institutional structures and governance arrangements. Since the end of the Cold War in particular, refugee camps have increasingly become semi-permanent, closed villages and cities where refugees, in some cases, spend their entire lives. As such, refugee camps are also spaces where millions of people's everyday lives are lived – where people seek to make ends meet and build a life for themselves to the best of their ability, much as people do in any other context (McConnachie 2013). Within the confines of the camp, refugees can and do seek to shape their lives and affect camp society. Thus, refugee camps are political spaces, where struggles over the right to influence life in the camps and shape how they are governed are continuously ongoing. In this context, what are the opportunities for political participation for refugees living in camps? How and to what extent are refugees able to carve out political space where they can engage with and affect their lives and their situation, despite the constraints imposed upon them by confinement in camps?

In this chapter, I address these questions through an analysis of two refugee camp situations in Asia: in Thailand and in Bangladesh. The analysis draws on a total of fifty-eight interviews with humanitarian workers and refugee activists. In the analysis, I identify successful as well as unsuccessful attempts by refugees to organize and act in order to influence their immediate situation or achieve political goals related to their long-term future. Based on the identified instances of political mobilization, I examine how host government policies, humanitarian aid practices and forms of refugee

organization create enabling or constraining conditions for political space and refugee agency.

Next, I conceptualize the camp as a political space that can accommodate diverse structures of power, authority and governance and where repression as well as resistance may be enacted. This is followed by an overview of the refugee camp situations in Bangladesh and Thailand. The analysis then follows, providing an account of how political action by refugees is inhibited, but nevertheless takes place, in these two camp contexts. In the conclusion, I discuss political and ethical implications for the governance of refugees.

The refugee camp as political space

How can the refugee camp be understood as political space? First of all, camps are spaces where political authority is highly dispersed and contested: camps are far from unanimously controlled by one governing authority. Formally, camps are under the jurisdiction of the host state, whose authority is enforced by the presence of police or paramilitary personnel, typically focusing on controlling the movement of refugees and punishing offences committed by refugees. In contrast, the day-to-day running of camps and the distribution of material assistance is carried out by United Nations (UN) humanitarian organizations and humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), usually coordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1995, 210). As a result, the refugee camp is governed by a diverse constellation of international humanitarian organizations and host state authorities. As the Bangladeshi and Thai camp contexts analyzed here will illustrate, the composition of these constellations varies considerably between different camps, as do their specific divisions of responsibility and relations of authority. The involvement and role of refugees themselves in the provision of aid and the governance of the camps also differ widely.

Thus, in refugee camps a multitude of different actors with different interests and motivations are present and struggles over the power to influence camp life are constantly ongoing. As emphasized in the introduction to this volume, political spaces are consistently sites of struggle, contestation and change (Hansson and Weiss, this volume). Further, refugee camps aptly illustrate the fluidity of the boundaries between state and non-state political spaces. As Hewison (this volume) makes clear, contemporary governance is characterized by coalitions and overlap among state authorities, NGOs and businesses, all of which increasingly operate according to similar logics. While refugee camps may constitute quite peculiar political spaces, they do exemplify a broader trend towards network-like forms of governance and highlight the importance of questioning how political space and possibilities for political participation are shaped by the interaction between overlapping and competing forms of authority.

Moreover, an analysis of refugee camps as political spaces adds to our understanding of how political space is policed and controlled. While state authorities frequently work to police, control and suppress political space and, in particular, political protest (for instance, Bencharat, this volume), such policing work is not only conducted by state actors. The analysis presented in this chapter illustrates how governments as well as humanitarian organizations employ various practices and discourses which constrain the space for refugee agency in different ways. The policing of political space is also closely related to constructions of legitimate and illegitimate political actors: refugees are expected to be passive recipients of aid, not people with political subjectivity and voice. When refugees do assert political agency they are often perceived as threats that must be contained and controlled (Edkins 2000; Duffield 2010; Olivius 2014a; Holzer 2015).

An understanding of refugee camps as political spaces must also account for the fact that refugee camps are exceptionally confined, spatially enclosed spaces. Refugee camps constitute enclaves ambiguously situated outside of the social and political systems of the host state. While the delimitation of enclosed political spaces may constitute a strategic choice (Macaspac 2015), in the case of refugee camps, the demarcation of spatial boundaries results from forcible exclusion. In a world order of nation-states, refugees are anomalies or 'misfits' who simultaneously threaten the nation-state system and, by being its constitutive other, reaffirm the norm of territorial belonging and citizenship (Haddad 2008). In this context, the refugee camp is a preferred model for the delivery of humanitarian aid to refugees, and a key technology to make refugees governable. Host governments and humanitarian agencies prefer encampment of refugees because it enables spatial control of refugees and their movement, efficient delivery of aid, as well as isolation from the host society (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005).

Finally, however, refugee camps are also contested political spaces where resistance and protest take place despite often repressive tactics of policing and controlling political activities in the camps. As Foucault emphasizes, the exercise of power is never without cracks and openings where resistance takes place (Foucault 1990, 95). Drawing on a Foucauldian conceptualization of resistance as integral to power relations, and thus always potentially possible, this chapter demonstrates how refugee camps nevertheless can become bases for resistance to humanitarian aid practices or host government policies, and give rise to new forms of political mobilization and agency.

Refugees and humanitarian aid in Bangladesh and Thailand

Most of independent Myanmar's (Burma's) history[1] has been marked by military dictatorship, civil war and ethnic conflict (South 2008). However, in recent years significant steps towards democratization have been taken, accompanied by a peace process which has managed to halt fighting in much

of the country. While this improvement is promising, ethnic discrimination and persecution have not ceased, and violence between the government and armed insurgent groups still occurs (International Crisis Group 2015). Further, internal displacement remains high, and nearly 500,000 refugees from Myanmar remain displaced in neighbouring countries. Conditions are still not deemed to be conducive for refugees to return to Myanmar (UNHCR 2015a). Bangladesh and Thailand are the two main host countries for Burmese refugees, and the refugee situations in Bangladesh and Thailand are two of the most protracted in the world.

Bangladesh

The Rohingya Muslim minority in Western Myanmar has endured harsh discrimination and persecution, including denial of citizenship, since the onset of military rule. Waves of intensified violence following a population registration exercise in 1978 and in the aftermath of the 1990 elections, have caused two mass exoduses of Rohingya into Bangladesh in recent decades. In both cases, the majority of refugees were eventually forcibly repatriated by the Bangladeshi government (Pittaway 2008; Barnett and Finnemore 2004).

Approximately 20,000 refugees managed to remain in Bangladesh after the last major repatriation exercise in 1994/1995, and these now make up the majority of the 32,000 refugees living in two official refugee camps, Kutupalong and Nayapara (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, UNHCR 2014). These camps are managed by the Bangladeshi government. The government is responsible for refugee shelters, camp offices and law and order in the camps, and carries out the daily administration of the camps and coordinates delivery of services (UNHCR 2010, 57). In addition, the government provides the bulk of health care services to the camps. Apart from the government, the UNHCR is the main humanitarian actor in the camps, and it coordinates and funds a large share of humanitarian aid programmes implemented by partner agencies in the camps. Humanitarian aid is also provided by other UN organizations such as the World Food Program (WFP) and by a number of international and national NGOs. However, education and health services are limited, and experiences of persecution in Myanmar, repeated forced repatriation movements and lack of security and opportunities in Bangladesh have created a camp environment pervaded by fear and insecurity (Pittaway 2008; UNHCR 2007).

Although large-scale repatriation has not resumed after 1995, there has been continued pressure from Bangladeshi authorities to coerce refugees to go back, involving abuses such as false accusations and imprisonment, beatings and confiscation of belongings and ration books. The government has persistently stated that the refugees will not be allowed to stay and must go back, and has repeatedly used coercion and violence to return refugees to conditions of insecurity, abuse and persecution in Myanmar.

While the Burmese government argues that the Rohingya are Bangladeshi, not Burmese, the government of Bangladesh refuses to grant them citizenship or to allow local integration in Bangladesh. In effect, the Rohingya are stateless, not considered as nationals by any state (Pittaway 2008, 95, 99). A small-scale repatriation programme was initiated in 2007, giving rise to renewed hopes for a durable solution for at least some Rohingya refugees. However, the Myanmar government halted the resettlement programme in 2010 (Refugees International 2011).

Despite the conditions in the camps, due to continued violence and persecution in Arakan State, Rohingya people have continued to flee to Bangladesh. However, later arrivals have been denied refugee status and access to the two official camps. As a result, it is estimated that 200,000–500,000 unregistered Rohingya live in villages in Eastern Bangladesh and in camp-like settlements in the vicinity of the official refugee camps (Lewa 2003; UNHCR 2014). The Bangladeshi government does not authorize provision of humanitarian aid to unregistered refugees outside the official camps (Refugees International 2011). Furthermore, several thousand of the refugees in the official camps are unregistered and do not receive food rations. Thus, only a minority of Rohingya refugees are actually recognized as such and eligible for humanitarian assistance.

Outbreaks of anti-Muslim violence in Western Myanmar since 2012 have resulted in renewed internal displacement as well as outflows of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh, and by boat to countries such as Thailand and Malaysia (UNHCR 2015b).

Thailand

Throughout Myanmar's civil war, Thailand has been a main destination for political exiles, refugees from among Burmese ethnic minorities, as well as ethnic insurgent armed forces. The first refugee camps on the Thai side of the Thai–Burmese border were established in 1984, when Karen refugees fled across the border following advances in the counterinsurgency campaign of the Burmese military against the Karen National Union (KNU) (Lang 2002). Pervasive human rights abuses committed as part of the government's counterinsurgency campaign have forced people in the border regions of Eastern Myanmar to live in constant fear, displacing many people several times during 60 years of war (South 2008). Since the establishment of the first camps, the number of refugees in refugee camps in Thailand has steadily increased due to gradual losses of territory controlled by the KNU and other minority armed forces, as well as continued insecurity and deprivation as a result of the conflict (Lang 2002).

Currently there are about 110,000 refugees in nine camps along the border.[2] The majority of the refugees are Karen, but there are also refugees from minority groups such as Karenni, Shan and Mon, as well as some Burman refugees (The Border Consortium 2015a).[3] Humanitarian aid and services

are mainly provided by a network of about 20 national and international NGOs. The Thai government has historically taken a comparatively hands-off position, although military police are present in the camps to maintain law and order and monitor the movement of refugees. The UNHCR did not begin operations on the Thai–Burmese border until 1998, 14 years after the establishment of the camps, and have an unusually marginal role compared to many other camp contexts (Thompson 2008).

Further, aid and services are coordinated and partly implemented by the refugees themselves through a system for community-based camp management. This model gives the refugees a considerable degree of self-governance and is significantly different from the way humanitarian assistance is usually administered (McConnachie 2012; Thompson 2008). The camps are governed by elected refugee committees – in seven out of the nine camps, the Karen Refugee Committee (KRC) – and a camp committee is responsible for the day-to-day running of each camp and coordinates services such as education, health and justice (Banki and Lang 2008). In addition to the KRC and its subcommittees, there are also a number of other community-based organizations (CBOs), for example, women's organizations, youth organizations and student organizations. Many of these CBOs are included in governance structures, but are also involved in political activism relating to the situation in the camps and in Karen State in Myanmar. The most prominent of these is the Karen Women's Organization (KWO), an organization founded in Myanmar in 1949, with a membership exceeding 49,000 women in Myanmar and in the Thai border camps (KWO 2014).

Since 2005, a large-scale resettlement programme has been ongoing, and to date more than 80,000 refugees have left the camps to be resettled in Western countries. However, people have continued to seek safety in the camps, so the total camp population has not decreased significantly (Border Consortium 2015b). Recently, developments in Myanmar have raised hopes that political reforms and the still fragile peace in Eastern Myanmar may eventually create conditions in which repatriation is possible (UNHCR 2015c).

The policing of political space in refugee camps

Based on analysis of the cases, I here identify three conditions which serve to constrain political space in refugee camps: the suspension of human rights that, in effect, leaves refugees in camps without legal protection as well as without options; widespread de-politicization of refugees; and cultural hierarchies constructing humanitarian organizations as modern and progressive and refugees as traditional. Evidence of how political action by refugees is treated as suspicious, threatening and undesirable are drawn from both cases. Further, the case of the Thai camps, where refugees have succeeded in establishing and retaining a comparatively strong position in camp governance and where various forms of political activism are flourishing, is used to

discern the conditions which have, despite constraints, enabled the carving out of spaces for political mobilization, agency and resistance.[4]

Suspension of human rights

An important condition which seriously constrains opportunities for refugees to act politically in refugee camps is the lack of legal protection for the human rights of refugees, their dependence on the goodwill of their host and the organizations which aid them and their lack of options. As noted by Hyndman and Giles (2011), in refugee camps, many basic human rights are, in effect, suspended. For example, refugees in camps are typically not allowed to work or to move freely outside the camp. In Thailand as well as in Bangladesh, refugees are denied freedom of movement and prohibited from working outside the camps. When they do so anyway in order to make a living, supplementing often insufficient aid rations, they put themselves in a legally precarious position in which violence and exploitation are frequent problems (Brees 2008; UNHCR 2007). In the case of Thailand, restrictions on the movement of refugees have been more strictly enforced since the military coup in 2014, eliminating previous informal openings for refugee self-reliance (The Border Consortium 2014, 5).[5] Further, when refugees are victims of crime and abuse, their opportunities for legal redress are often virtually non-existent. In both Bangladesh and Thailand, the UNHCR has been working to improve refugees' access to the host state's legal system, for example, to prosecute rape cases, but with very limited success.[6]

A recent situation in the Bangladeshi camps vividly illustrates the potentially grave consequences of refugees' lack of legal protection. Until about 2008, the Bangladeshi camps were informally governed by a government-supported network of criminals, the Mahjees. The Mahjees terrorized the refugee population in numerous ways, with abuses such as arbitrary detention, confiscation of identity documents and sexual assault being frequent occurrences (UNHCR 2007; Pittaway, 2008). In 2003–04, the Mahjees, acting on behalf of the government, released a campaign of violence and coercion aiming to force refugees back to Myanmar. In this period, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) saw itself forced to withdraw from the camps, leaving the refugees without access to healthcare. The forced repatriation exercise and the departure of MSF led to significant refugee protests; however, those who protested faced severe retaliation from the Mahjees and were subjected to detention, beatings and rape (UNHCR 2007).[7] The repatriation exercise was ultimately stopped, and the Mahjee system has been dismantled in recent years, following sustained UNHCR advocacy directed towards the Bangladeshi government.[8]

Arguably, this situation was an extreme example of the abuse and insecurity that refugees may be exposed to due to their status as effectively without legal rights. However, while the situation in refugee camps is not always so severe, the Bangladeshi case demonstrates how the suspension of

human rights in refugee camps produces fear, insecurity and dependence and thereby closes down political space and discourages refugees from taking the risk of acting to challenge or change the conditions of camp life.

De-politicizing refugees

A second constraining condition derives from the widespread construction of humanitarianism as an apolitical sphere of activity, delivering impartial, life-saving aid insulated from the moral pollutant of politics (Barnett 2005). This understanding of the nature of humanitarian aid work further shapes expectations of what a refugee is, or should be. Refugees are constructed as victims in need of aid. While it is obviously true that refugees often require aid, the reduction of refugees to mere victims amounts to a denial of agency and political subjectivity. Humanitarian discourses and practices tend to, in Agamben's terminology, reduce refugees to 'bare life' (1998, 133). Thus, refugees in camps are seen as lives to be saved, but not as people with political voices. They are 'expected to be passive recipients of aid, and the camp is the location where that passivity is expected to be played out' (Edkins 2000, 14).

Due to these expectations, humanitarian agencies and host governments often neglect, bypass or even repress the political activities and self-governance structures that nonetheless exist in refugee camps (Kaiser 2004; McConnachie 2012). Indeed, political activities by refugees are frequently seen as dangerous, constituting security threats and breaches of humanitarian principles. This perception is clearly exemplified by the reaction of the Bangladeshi government to recent attempts by refugees to initiate youth organizations in the camps. Initiatives by refugees to organize were seen as threatening government authority and control over the refugee population, and were therefore met with a severe crackdown, including arrests of youth organization leaders.[9] For many years, refugees were prohibited from forming organizations for refugee representation in the camps (UNHCR 2007, 10). When the government finally allowed the formation of committees for refugee representation, they were initiated and highly structured by humanitarian organizations, and can be described as forums for consultation with refugees rather than ways of providing for actual refugee influence (Olivius 2014a).

In Thailand, humanitarian organizations and donors have been highly suspicious of the refugee leadership structures as well as of CBOs such as KWO. While the model of community-based camp governance that has emerged in the Thai camps has enabled the camps to be run with relative efficiency and success (Banki and Lang 2008, 66), it has also given rise to criticism and efforts to rein in refugee activism (McConnachie 2012). For example, a UN worker explicitly describes the 'politicization' of refugee leaders as a problem because it makes it hard to control them: 'we have very little control over these camp committees, because they are much more related, we believe, to KNU and other political forces'.[10] As argued by an NGO worker critical of this attitude, humanitarian organizations and

donors see the fact that refugees have political goals and agendas as itself problematic: 'I think a lot of what it is about is neutrality versus politicisation. Donors see it as politicisation if the community is in charge because they have a political agenda, but then don't governments and humanitarian organisations?'[11]

While humanitarian organizations today do encourage refugee participation, for example, in various forms of consultative exercises, refugees who organize independently and outside the control of humanitarian organizations are frequently perceived as threatening and unruly (Olivius 2014a). Thus, when refugees do not conform to the image of passive victims, void of agency, they are instead perceived as security threats and challenges to host-government and humanitarian control. In effect, passivity is made a precondition for assistance and a criterion of refugeeness (Nyers 2006). This conception of appropriate refugeeness causes political activities and mobilization by refugees to be met with hostility, and it constrains opportunities for refugees to exercise political agency without repressive consequences.

Cultural hierarchies

Another recurrent discourse which serves to constrain the space for refugee agency constructs refugees as culturally underdeveloped. In humanitarian policy and practice, refugee communities are regularly assumed to be traditional societies where norms and ideas such as democracy and human rights are unfamiliar. By contrast, humanitarian organizations are assumed to be bringing modernity and progress into new territory. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee for humanitarian coordination (IASC) exemplifies this assumption in the following statement on the importance of education in emergencies:

> Education in emergencies provides a channel for conveying health and survival messages; for teaching new skills and values, such as peace, tolerance, conflict resolution, democracy, human rights and environmental conservation. An emergency can be a time to show and teach the value of respecting women, girls, boys and men equally in society.
>
> (IASC 2006, 50)

Notably, values of peace, tolerance, democracy, human rights and gender equality are assumed to be absent in societies affected by emergencies. Humanitarian aid interventions are thereby seen as providing the foundation for the improvement and development of these societies.

Consequently, international humanitarian aid workers frequently express a default assumption that they are more qualified than the refugees they assist in issues ranging from how camps should be governed to how human rights norms should be interpreted. In Thailand, such attitudes towards

refugee women's organizations, which themselves implement a number of programmes promoting women's rights and addressing violence against women, have led to tension and conflicts. Humanitarian workers question the legitimacy and capacity of refugee women's organisations as agents of change towards gender equality because the women in these organisations are seen as belonging to a 'traditional' culture (Olivius 2011). The arrogance of this attitude and the resulting failure to cooperate with and build on the work of refugee organizations have sparked considerable anger among refugee activists:

> They [international humanitarian workers] are speaking like they are the highest, like they know everything about gender equality, but by the way they speak I'm not sure they understand at all! [...] they think they have all the ideas and principles about gender equality but how can you disregard to learn from what is already there?[12]

In effect, the assumption that international humanitarian organisations are culturally more advanced and normatively superior denies refugees a role as political actors in the transformation of their own communities.

Further, the construction of refugee communities as traditional and 'backward'[13] also precludes some forms of refugee agency from being recognized as efforts to participate and engage with camp life. Refugees in the Bangladeshi camps are routinely described as passive, dependent and lacking community spirit. 'They are not a close knit community. They don't have this sense of community cohesion [...] everyone is an individual by themselves', a UN worker explains.[14] However, while the refugees' alleged passivity is problematized, many humanitarian workers recount examples of refugees' mobilizing to resist humanitarian programmes which they disagree with, often based on perceptions of these programmes as culturally inappropriate.[15] Yet, such instances are not recognized as expressions of agency or considered as a potentially legitimate critiques of humanitarian ways of working, but dismissed as symptoms of the cultural backwardness of the refugee population.

Contesting and claiming political space: the case of the Thai camps

Despite the constraining conditions discussed above, the case of Thailand in particular demonstrates that political mobilization and resistance is nonetheless possible in refugee camps. Below, I discuss three conditions that are important in explaining the high degree of political mobilization in the Thai camps: a history of refugee self-governance; strong links to a wider struggle for ethnic self-determination in the homeland; and the appropriation of international norms, communicated by aid agencies in the camps, as bases for new forms of political mobilization.

Refugee self-governance

Throughout the first decade after their establishment in 1984, the refugee camps in Thailand were relatively self-reliant, as refugees could grow crops across the border, complemented by only minimal assistance from international NGOs already present in Thailand. Refugees organized and governed the camps, modelling them after the villages they had left behind, and the Thai government accepted their 'temporary' presence without much interference (Thompson 2008). When the first NGOs arrived, they were impressed by what they found to be well-organized Karen communities, and they took an approach of working in partnership with refugee governance structures (Thailand Burma Border Consortium 2004, 19).

Thailand is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and did not want to draw attention to the refugees along its borders. The UNHCR was therefore not allowed to operate in the camps. However, with the gradual loss of territory controlled by the KNU and other minority forces, the stream of refugees into Thailand intensified in the 1990s and the size of the refugee camps increased. In addition, between 1995 and 1998, twelve refugee camps were attacked and burnt by the Burmese military in cross-border operations. These changes resulted in a shift in Thai policy. The camps were consolidated into fewer, larger camps to be able to guarantee security and control the movements of the refugees, who were no longer allowed to travel or work outside the camps. Thailand also invited the UNHCR to provide protection and monitoring, and the international humanitarian presence in the camps increased significantly (Lang 2002; Thompson 2008).

The gradual establishment of the camps and the minimal involvement of external actors thus enabled the establishment of refugee self-governance and, eventually, the evolution of relatively democratic structures. While refugee self-governance has been challenged and modified in recent years, the degree of refugee involvement and actual decision-making power in the camps is still remarkable and unusual. Among the camp population there is a strong sense of being a community in exile, which rightly should enjoy self-determination, and there is a high level of public engagement in various forms of political activism and organizations (McConnachie 2013). While many humanitarian workers are critical of refugee self-governance, there are others who defend it, seeing it as an issue of justice but also an issue of making it possible to live with well-being and dignity in displacement:

> [L]iving in a camp for twenty-five years, it's like having an indeterminate prison sentence, you know? And the only way to manage with some semblance of sanity and some semblance of mental and emotional wellbeing, is to have control over your own life. We know that, that's not any kind of secret. It's not news. We know that having control and being an active participant in your own destiny, that's what people need.

> And people do that through, they don't do that as individuals, they do that through being part of organisations rooted in the community.[16]

Thus, the history of self-governance in the absence of external actors in the Thai camps has contributed to the development of a culture of widespread popular political engagement and a relatively strong position for refugee groups in the governance of the camps.

A common struggle for the homeland

Moreover, a significant driving force for various kinds of political activism in the Thai camps is the association with a broader Karen struggle for ethnic self-determination in Myanmar (McConnachie 2012; Lang 2002). For more than 60 years, the KNU was engaged in an armed insurgency against the Burmese government in pursuit of this aim. In recent years however, negotiations have been ongoing and fighting has ceased (International Crisis Group 2015). Links between the refugee populations and the Karen struggle in Myanmar have remained strong, and the camps have provided important bases for Karen nationalism and political activism (South 2007, 62–3).

Thus, in the work of many refugee CBOs in the camps, the aims of influencing camp life and working for long-term change in Myanmar are interlinked as different aspects of taking responsibility for the welfare of the Karen people.[17] For example, the Karen Women's Organisation (KWO) is actively involved in camp governance and social service delivery in the camps, as well as in peace advocacy and social welfare work related to the situation in Myanmar (KWO 2013).

Links between refugee communities and non-state armed groups are generally seen as problematic in humanitarian policy and practice, particularly due to concerns about the presence of 'refugee warriors' among the refugees, diversion of aid for military purposes and exploitation of the wider refugee population by military actors (for example, Da Costa 2004). While such concerns are often rational and necessary, McConnachie (2012) forcefully argues that the role and influence of armed groups in refugee communities is not always and exclusively negative. Such groups can also contribute to refugee protection and welfare. Further, 'refugee warrior communities' have been described as highly politically conscious communities where the integration in a broader political struggle brings with it positive attributes such as the assertion of agency and political identity (Zolberg *et al*. 1989).

In the Thai refugee camps, the link to the KNU and to a broader Karen struggle is an essential ideological driving force, motivating political engagement and sustaining hope in a better future. While the identity and political ideas of the Karen people are by no means homogeneous (South 2007), the vision of self-determination in a future, peaceful Myanmar nonetheless provides the refugee communities with a strong sense of common purpose. In this context, a refugee leader in one of the camps describes his work

as a preparation and training for the eventual return of the Karen people to Myanmar:

> When we go back to a democratic Burma, we can apply the experience from here: we can show them. We see your future; some day we will go back, whether Burma has become democratic or not, if the political stability is considered to be there. So we need a lot of preparation and political knowledge is important. We can share this with some communities in Burma. So this is a good example, a good situation.[18]

Thus, instead of viewing the situation of encampment as a situation of indeterminate waiting and relative powerlessness, it is reinterpreted as a meaningful and useful experience in preparation for the fulfilment of the goal of Karen self-determination in Myanmar.

Further, the KNU link has brought vital political and management skills that essentially enabled refugee self-governance of the camps to function as effectively as it did in the early years of their existence. The KNU had in effect developed a parallel civil service in Eastern Myanmar, and thus had experience of governance and service delivery. When the camps were established, KNU leaders therefore took up leadership positions in camp management and established KNU governance structures could be transplanted into the camp context. 'Almost certainly', McConnachie concludes, 'the refugee population was better served as a result' (McConnachie 2012, 17). While the relationship between the KNU and camp leadership structures has been restructured in recent years, partly in response to donor and aid agency criticism, it can be argued that this relationship was, and to some extent still is, an important condition enabling the creation of a camp in which refugees have a comparatively strong role in governance and decision-making regarding their own lives.

International norms as tools for mobilization

As discussed above, humanitarian agencies frequently construct ideas such as democracy, human rights or good governance as emanating from 'the international', and thus as external and even contradictory to refugee cultures and communities. Gender equality policy and programming is a prime example of how this logic plays out. As the long-time presence of strong women's organizations in the Thai camps makes clear, ideas about gender equality and efforts to promote it were by no means absent before the arrival of humanitarian organizations. However, women's organizations testify that the increased international pressure to take gender into account in delivery of services and governance of camps has enabled them to strengthen their position within camp communities and better achieve goals such as women's representation in leadership positions. Describing changes in the camps over time, an activist relates that,

> compared to in the start there has been a lot of change. Before there were no women in camp committees, no women security guards, no head teachers. The change is not only a result of our struggle, but also due to donor requirements, international requirements are also important. So change takes not only the struggle of women here but other people have to contribute.[19]

Other refugee activists emphasize how education on women's rights by humanitarian agencies 'has opened our eyes and given women self-confidence', thereby increasing their political awareness and engagement.[20]

Thus, refugee women have been able to use norms and guidelines emanating from donors and aid agencies to mobilize support and achieve results for their own political agendas; however, in doing so, they have also reinterpreted and modified these norms and ideas to make them useful for their own purposes. For example, in the area of programmes addressing violence against women, international agencies and women's organizations have disagreed on issues regarding the goals, content and ownership of programmes (Olivius 2011). Refugee women have also been able to strategically use international efforts to increase women's participation in camp governance due to assumptions that it will improve aid efficiency to increase their influence over issues they find important (Olivius 2014b). Such processes, in which refugee women actively appropriate and use ideas about gender equality and human rights transmitted by humanitarian organizations, are examples of how governing tools can be modified and reclaimed as tools of resistance (Foucault 1990). Despite the obvious inequalities present in the encounter between humanitarians and refugees, it is not simply a unilateral relation of dominance.

Appropriation of international norms for the political agendas of refugees can also be noted in the case of democracy and human rights more broadly. Notably, refugee leaders and activists explain that being in camps gives them opportunities for learning through their interactions with the international community. Learning about international norms, they argue, equips the Karen people to govern themselves better, in the camps and in the case of their eventual return to Myanmar:

> The international community provides understanding of human rights, political awareness, opportunities to learn about the way the international community works, women's rights, women's participation. There was no talk of this in Burma. Here we are communicating with the international community, with the UNHCR, donors. We can learn a lot, it improves our community a lot. There are many trainings and workshops, and we are already experiencing the changes.[21]

International norms promoted in refugee camps are thus made useful for political projects that challenge and go beyond the agendas of aid agencies

and donors. As Reilly (2007) observes, human rights discourse can be a tool for Western dominance and false universalism reproducing global inequality, but it can also be a tool for political mobilization and social change from within diverse local contexts.

Conclusion

Based on case studies of refugee camps in Thailand and Bangladesh, this article has examined the conditions for political participation for refugees living in camps. The analysis demonstrates that political mobilization among refugees in camps frequently meets with scepticism or hostility from, and repression by, humanitarian aid agencies, as well as host governments. Despite recent emphasis on participatory and community-based approaches in humanitarian policy (see Olivius 2014a), recognition of refugees as political actors remains fundamentally at odds with the logics currently shaping the global governance of refugees. When refugee behaviour does not conform to images of them as passive victims to be acted upon by external actors, aid agencies and host governments instead come to perceive them as threats and to question the authenticity of their claims to protection and assistance.

Nevertheless, as this analysis also demonstrates, despite the constraints imposed by encampment, refugees can and do organize and act politically to shape their situation and their future. Here, the case of the Thai camps exemplifies how refugees resist de-politicization and victimization and assert political agency and identity. Notably though, is it precisely the relatively low level of government intervention, the limited role of international humanitarian agencies in managing the camps and the strong connections to a broader political movement for ethnic self-determination that has allowed refugee self-governance and political mobilization to function in this context. Thus, several of the specific conditions in the Thai case that have enabled the creating of political space exist *despite* the current humanitarian regime, which in itself is not conducive to refugee agency. However, the Thai case also shows how politically engaged refugees have been able to appropriate humanitarian policy goals such as the promotion of democracy and human rights, making such norms useful as tools and bases for mobilization for their own ends. Refugees also utilize the context of encampment itself and make it meaningful for their political projects, for example, when it is constructed as an opportunity to prepare for Karen self-governance in a future, peaceful Myanmar. Thus, the structures and norms that are used to govern refugees also create openings for resistance, contestation and new forms of political action by those who are governed.

However, the fact that it is possible for refugees to reclaim political space in camps, at least under relatively favourable conditions, does not make it any less problematic that the current humanitarian regime remains premised on a narrow, dualistic image of refugees as victims to be saved and threats to be controlled. This approach to refugees amounts to a dehumanizing

denial of agency and political subjectivity. Holzer has succinctly characterized humanitarian aid as 'compassionate authoritarianism', a form of rule which rests on a commitment to refugee welfare but refuses to recognize refugees as political actors (Holzer 2015, 161–2).

Could the governance of refugees take other forms? Indeed, as Holzer argues, treating politically active refugees with suspicion is not inevitable but a result of political choice (Holzer 2015, 162). The existence of numerous humanitarian workers in the Thai camps who have made a different choice in supporting refugee self-governance, despite criticism from their donors and colleagues, testifies to the possibility of devising other approaches through which refugees could be treated as people worthy of living with dignity, not merely as lives to be saved. Given the current context of widespread and increasing securitization of refugees as threats to be controlled and contained, not least in wealthy Northern states, it is likely that large numbers of people will continue to live their lives confined in refugee camps. It is therefore essential to fundamentally challenge and transform dominant humanitarian approaches to aid in order to enable meaningful political participation and self-governance in refugee camp contexts.

Notes

1. For simplicity I henceforth use the term 'Myanmar'. However, where interviewees quoted in the chapter refer to the country as 'Burma', their usage is unchanged.
2. In addition, an estimated two million Burmese are in Thailand as 'illegal immigrants', many of whom have also fled political oppression and economic deprivation (South 2008, 81). This study primarily focuses on the three camps closest to the border town of Mae Sot: Mae La, Umpiem Mai and Nu Po. While many aspects of my analysis may be relevant in all nine camps along the border, my material primarily covers humanitarian agencies and refugee organizations in the three Mae Sot camps.
3. 'Burman' refers to the majority ethnic group.
4. For further analysis of political space in the Thai camps, see also Olivius, 2017.
5. For more detail on the political situation in Thailand, see Bencharat, this volume.
6. Interviews with UN worker in Thailand, Mae Sot, 11 November 2011; UN worker in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar, 7 March 2011; NGO worker in Bangladesh, Dhaka, 15 March 2011. On Thailand, see also McConnachie 2013.
7. Interview, NGO worker in Bangladesh, Dhaka, 15 March 2011.
8. Interview, UN worker in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar, 7 March 2011; telephone interview, UN worker, 31 May 2011.
9. Field notes, Bangladesh, 4 March 2011; interview, UN worker in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar, 7 March 2011.
10. Interview, UN workers in Thailand, Mae Sot, 28 April 2010.
11. NGO worker in Thailand, cited in Olivius 2014c.
12. Interview, CBO activist in Thailand, Mae Sot, 1 November 2010.
13. Interview, NGO worker in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar, 12 March 2011.
14. Interview, UN worker in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar, 11 March 2011.
15. Interview, UN worker in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar, 7 March 2011; telephone interviews, UN workers in Bangladesh, 31 May 2011 and 30 August 2011.

16 Interview, NGO worker in Thailand, Mae Sot, 1 November 2010.
17 Interviews with CBO activists in Thailand, Mae Sot, 1 November 2010; CBO activists in Thailand, Mae La refugee camp, 5 November 2010; CBO activists in Thailand, Mae Sot, 8 May 2010.
18 Interview, CBO activist in Thailand, Mae La refugee camp, 5 November 2010.
19 Interview, CBO activists in Thailand, Mae Sot, 1 November 2010.
20 Interview, CBO activists in Thailand, Mae La refugee camp, 5 November 2010.
21 Interview, CBO activist in Thailand, Mae La refugee camp, 5 November 2010.

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11 Policing politics

Myanmar's military regime and protest spaces in transition

Marco Bünte

For a long time, Myanmar was considered one of the most repressive countries in the world. The sheer neglect and limitation of political space for participation and the repression of members of the political and ethnic opposition left Myanmar listed near the bottom of all democracy indices. From 1990 to 2011, human rights organizations regularly counted more than two thousand political prisoners; the country's most famous opposition politician, the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Aung San Suu Kyi, spent most of this time in jail or under house arrest. International human rights organizations documented innumerable human rights violations and the violent repression of peaceful protest – most visible in a crackdown on peaceful monks (the so-called Saffron Revolution) in September 2007 – led to an outcry and public condemnation from the international community.

Yet, much seems to have changed. Since the inauguration of President Thein Sein in March 2011, Myanmar has witnessed a series of significant reforms that have transformed the long-term repressive military regime. In his first two years in office, Thein Sein released approximately two thousand political prisoners, ended press censorship and enacted new laws to broaden civil liberties and political freedoms. These new freedoms have widened political space for opposition parties and civil society considerably. The NLD boycotted the elections in November 2010, but since the April 2012 by-elections, Aung San Suu Kyi and her party have been influencing the country's reforms from within Parliament. All these changes culminated in the historic November 2015 elections, which the NLD won in a landslide.

Since 2012, we have seen the re-emergence of political protest. The country's nascent civil society is mobilizing for, inter alia, constitutional reforms, media freedom and protection, education reforms, decentralization, land reforms, local influence over development projects, access to livelihoods and fair energy prices. The free exercise of democratic rights and protest is hardly surprising, since we know that the degree of repression normally declines with decreasing levels of military influence and increasing levels of democracy (Davenport 1995, 2007). Yet, the evolving protest landscape is hardly that clear cut. Not all protests have been tolerated and not all

groups have been freed from state repression; observers have been discussing possible backsliding in reforms. Moreover, political space has been used for uncivil political action, as demonstrated by the mobilization of ultra-nationalist monks.

However, the 'explosion of collective social actions' (Prasse-Freeman 2015, 71) in Myanmar has evaded academic attention so far. While scholars have addressed a number of salient aspects of Myanmar's transition – such as the ongoing dominance of the military (Bünte 2014; Egreteau 2017; Jones 2014), the role of political institutions such as parliament (Kean 2015; Egreteau 2015), the court system (Cheesman 2015) and political parties (Stokke *et al.* 2015) – the evolving room for collective action has gone largely unnoticed. Although Prasse-Freeman (2015) has looked into the landscape of grassroots protest movements, his anthropological study of protest repertoires omits the central role of the state. A book chapter by Kyaw Soe Lwin deals with the changing space for labour protests (Kyaw Soe Lwin 2014). Other works in this vein are few.

This chapter looks into the reforms initiated by the military state and the policing of the new quasi-military order and analyzes how several protest movements have used evolving space for political action. It demonstrates that the political is still contested terrain: it is restricted, expanded and policed by both state and non-state actors. While government authorities have become used to a certain type of protest, authorities still try to narrow political space through the use of old laws, repression and stifling of criticism directed at the military. The emergent political space has also been used by conservative elements within the former regime party and ultra-nationalist monks to push the state in a more nationalist, illiberal direction.

Policing, as it is used in this chapter, is not confined to the 'state's response to protest' (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 197), nor is it institutionally restricted to members of the police force. Policing is a broader, societal ordering function that is carried out by an increasingly wide and diverse array of state and non-state actors. The state is not only the reflection of society's dominant groups, but also a fulcrum for the mediation of social conflicts and a regulator of society's needs (Tarrow 2011, 71).

That breadth notwithstanding, to establish social control, states have developed specific institutions and arenas for consultation. This approach is related to the emergence of a (liberal) democratic state, the protection of citizens' rights and the ability to administer control (or social order). Seen historically, the repressive arms of the state are a relatively recent phenomenon in modern state building and the police are 'sequentially the last of the building blocks in the structure of modern executive government' (Marenin 1985, 102). Charles Tilly has described these state-building processes as an outcome of war-making, which in early modern Europe, led to taxation, demands for the protection of citizens and, ultimately, to the establishment of citizen rights (Tilly 1992).

For the case of Myanmar, in contrast, Mary Callahan has shown that state formation had adverse effects. The army's prolonged guerrilla war led to an overconcentration of political power in the military's hands. State-building consequently laid the foundation for the extraordinary durability of the military regime (Callahan 2003). Even after the military's transition to a quasi-civilian government in 2011 and the free and fair elections held in 2015, the core of the military state remains intact, and the military is actively guarding and guiding civilian politicians (Bünte 2017).

This chapter looks into three dimensions of policing as elements of establishing social control: legal-institutional, physical and ideational (Michalowksi 2008; Della Porta and Reiter 1998). It starts with an analysis of Myanmar's praetorian regime, the lack of space for political activity and the state's response to burgeoning protest.[1] The section that follows discusses the slow transformation of political space due to liberalizing reforms of the still-quasi-military regime. It describes the legal changes thus far and broadly maps the evolving protest landscape. The final section examines three protest incidents in detail: the mobilization for constitutional reform, the Letpadaung copper mine protests and the mobilization of ultra-Buddhist monks. The chapter is based on interviews with activists and government officials in 2013 and 2014.

Political spaces and policing of protests under military rule (1962–2011)

During military rule in the 1990s, there were hardly any public spaces for political activities outside the realm of the military state. Even the private sphere was heavily policed. Consequently, Steinberg describes Burma's civil society under the military regime as a 'void'. He claims that 60 years of repressive direct military rule since 1962 and the military-cum-party state under Ne Win's Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP, 1974–88) effectively 'murdered' civil society (Steinberg 1999, 2). Yet, the explosion of social movement organizations and the formation of the 1988 democracy movement[2] made it clear that 'the military actually was never able to wipe out civil society organizations' completely (Kyaw 2004, 200). It was only those groups that were engaged in advocacy that were shut down by the BSPP, although a number of them continued to exist underground as informal networks or reading groups. After the failed 1988 revolution and the return of direct military rule, the military junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC, reconstituted in 1997 as the State Peace and Development Council, SPDC) narrowed political space in three ways: it expanded the coercive arms of the state (military, police force, intelligence); it used legal provisions extensively that prohibited any form of political activity outside the narrowly defined scope of the military's own roadmap to 'disciplined democracy'; and it established state-sponsored organizations that helped to monitor political space and repress dissent.

Expanding the military state: Repression and policing after 1988

The 1988 revolution was conceived by the *Tatmadaw* (the armed forces) as an imminent threat to military rule. Consequently the military junta was prepared 'to take whatever measures were required to recover and reconsolidate its grip on government' (Selth 2002, 33). First, the SLORC/SPDC negotiated ceasefires with some of the ethnic rebel groups.[3] There was a concern within the military that some insurgent groups might try to collaborate with other anti-government forces in order to bring down the government. Second, the junta started to modernize and expand the security apparatus, which aimed at giving the military the ability to achieve a countrywide presence and crush any countrywide uprising or ethnic rebellion. This entailed an expansion of the armed forces from 186,000 to more than 370,000 soldiers (Selth 2002, 257–9). The intelligence apparatus was modernized as well. The Directorate of the Defence Service Intelligence (DDSI) had thousands of agents and informers who spied on insurgents, dissident groups, students and members of the public (Selth 2002, 114). As Amnesty International stated, 'Surveillance by Military Intelligence officers of critics or people connected with critics of the government is pervasive in Myanmar' (Amnesty International 1996, 4).

To control the domestic political scene, the SLORC/SPDC enforced various older laws and new legal decrees, which tightened the room available for political action dramatically. There was no freedom of the press, movement or organization. Government censorship was heavy-handed and pervasive. While the opening up of the economy since 1988 led to a proliferation of private magazines, the organs of state censorship kept pace with these developments. The government censorship board watched every word and every photo the indigenous media produced – even pictures of opposition politician Aung San Suu Kyi were banned. Exile media and the foreign press were carefully monitored and controlled. Internet access was restricted (Liddell 1999).

After the restoration of military rule in 1988, civil society organizations had three options: to dissolve, to turn into political parties by registering with the election commission, or to turn into non-political organizations registered with the Home Ministry and refrain from political activities. Those activists who did not follow these orders and continued to engage in anti-government and pro-democracy activities were arrested and sentenced to long prison terms.

Political parties were permitted to form for the first time in the years after the SLORC came to power in 1988, but of the 200 parties which registered to compete in the 1990 elections, only ten survived a harsh deregistration campaign and remained legal by 1993. The military never honoured election results and claimed that the country lacked a constitution under which to transfer power. The regime subsequently convened a National Convention to draft that document, but prolonged the process from 1993 to 2007 (see

below). During this repressive period, the NLD had little chance to organize itself. NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest for 15 years; other party members or elected members of Parliament were also imprisoned or had to flee abroad. The military also outlawed all political organizations of the Buddhist *sangha* (monastic community) and brought the sangha under control of the military state (Kyaw 2004, 206) – an important move, since the body has been traditionally at the forefront of social justice movements in Burma. The junta closed down all schools and universities for three years to prevent student protest from re-emerging after the 1988 protests. Even after schools and universities were reopened, the government shut them down again whenever student groups tried to organize. As a consequence, many politically conscious students fled to border areas to join overseas Burmese democracy groups (Kyaw 2004, 408).

State-sponsored organizations: Repression and co-optation of civil society groups

The junta created new organizations, such as the Women's Affairs Organization and the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), with the explicit aim of supporting the policies of the military government. This tactic offered a mechanism to control civil society and to police evolving groups. USDA members are widely believed to have orchestrated an attack on Aung San Suu Kyi's convoy and violent clash with members of the NLD in central Burma on May 30, 2003 (Kyaw 2004). The junta also created new business organizations, such as the Union of Myanmar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Rice Millers and Rice Merchants Association and the Border Trade Merchants Association. Most of these organizations were co-opted by placing senior officials in top positions. The junta also tried to control arts, writers' and musicians' organizations by replacing their executive committees with people it trusted (Kyaw 2004, 406).

Despite all these repressive measures and strict surveillance by the military regime, Myanmar was not completely totalitarian. By the end of the 1990s, a vast number of local groups and community-based organizations had emerged throughout the country, although the majority were either centred on religion or active in areas where the state was not able or willing to help, such as the education and health sectors (Lorch 2008b). These groups had some room to operate, but had to stay out of politics (South 2009; Lorch 2008a). The rallying point in this process was Cyclone Nargis, which triggered the creation of a huge number of NGOs that helped to work in disaster relief and aid (interviews, civil society groups, Yangon, 2013).

Even with its vast network of informers, the security forces could not prevent sporadic protest against the military junta: 1996, 1998 and 2007 saw a number of student protests, which were quickly dissolved by the riot police and the military. Students were arrested and sentenced to long prison terms. The peaceful protests of Buddhist monks in September 2007,

triggered by the removal of fuel subsidies and economic hardship, were initially tolerated. When the protests grew in number and students and political activists joined in late September – their mobilization enabled by the internet and new technologies – the military cracked down on the peaceful protests. Approximately thirteen protestors were killed and several hundred people were arrested or detained (Kyaw 2008). The military regime did not tolerate deviation from sanctioned spaces, even as these opened up during the implementation of the military's own 'roadmap' to 'disciplined democracy'.

Military sanctioned spaces 1990–2011: Roadmap to 'disciplined democracy'

In September 2003, the military announced its roadmap to a 'disciplined democracy', in which it promised to transfer power back to an elected government. The whole process did not entail any form of liberalization or opening up. The military controlled every step, and political space outside the formal realm of this military prescribed 'roadmap' was narrow. The first step in the process was to reconvene the National Convention to finalize the constitution's basic principles, which had been introduced at the 1993 National Convention. The members of the National Convention were handpicked and the final principles codified the military's leading role in the state. Like the first National Convention, the second was 'marred by a lack of inclusiveness, heavy restriction on public debate and little input by the participants in the final product' (Pedersen 2011, 50).

The draft of the new constitution was finalized in February 2008. The constitution ensured that the armed forces would maintain a preeminent political role and enjoy considerable representation in executive and legislative affairs, and also hold extensive immunity. The draft was formally approved in a nationwide referendum in May 2008, which was apparently manipulated: the official results of 94.4 percent in favour, with a voter turnout of 98 percent, lacked any credibility.

The SPDC also staged elections in 2010. The election results polarized the political landscape. The junta fielded its own proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) – an offshoot of the USDA – which won 76 percent of votes across all three levels contested (the upper and lower houses of the national parliament and the state/regional assemblies). The elections split the opposition: while the NLD remained an anti-system party,[4] a splinter group, the National Democratic Force, stood for election and secured sixteen seats in the new parliament. Some ethnic parties also opted to contest and were able to secure a number of seats – for example, the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (57 seats), the Rakhine Nationalities Democratic Party (35 seats) and the All Mon Region Democratic Party (16 seats). Consequently, the elections managed to co-opt parts of the opposition, while repressing the hardline, anti-system opposition.

When the State Peace and Development Council handed over power to the new government, it significantly changed the rules of the political game (Bünte 2016). Even so, while new power-sharing institutions were created, the military background of those in top leadership positions did not change at all, since junta chief Senior General Than Shwe managed to place his close protégés at the helm of the most important state institutions. The transition from direct military rule to quasi-military rule thus not only institutionalized military hegemony, but also allowed a generational change within the military, promoting the second generation of military leaders and allowing the old guard to retire (Bünte 2014).

The liberalization of the military regime and the opening of political space

After almost five decades of international isolation and repressive rule by various military governments, Myanmar began a gradual transition to 'something else' in March 2011. Upon his inauguration, President Thein Sein, a former military general elected by the military-dominated parliament in early January 2011, initiated a series of reforms that opened up space for political participation and economic development. Thein Sein had released approximately 2,500 political prisoners by the end of 2013, leading the Office of the President to declare that the country had no more political prisoners. Thein Sein also encouraged trade unions and NGOs to form. In mid-2011, he met with civil society organizations and invited them to work with the government. With growing liberalization and the opening of political space, the country's nascent civil society started to influence the political debate.

In addition, Thein Sein approached opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and invited her to work with the government. Opposition parties were allowed to register for and participate in by-elections in April 2012, which were generally seen as an important test of the new government's will to reform. The NLD won the April by-elections in a landslide, taking 43 out of 44 possible seats. Aung San Suu Kyi herself was elected to Parliament in a rural township near Yangon. The elections were relatively free and fair, and civil society organizations were active in awareness campaigns, poll-watching and civil education (Bünte 2016). Importantly, although the by-elections represented a major step in Myanmar's transition, their overall political importance was constrained, since only a limited number of seats were open and the outcome could not significantly alter the balance of power in Parliament, which was dominated by the ruling USDP and military officers. The real breakthrough was only achieved with the November 2015 elections, which the NLD won handily.

Nonetheless, NLD politicians still have to share power with the military, which is guaranteed representation in executive and legislative affairs. Several positions within the government are reserved for individuals in uniform, and the 2008 constitution also reserves a 25 percent share of seats in

Parliament for the military, which can thus veto any change to this constitution. The extent of political liberalization is consequently clearly delineated and policed by military elites. In the private sector, too, economic liberalization benefits mainly oligarchic actors with ties to the government and the military (Ford *et al*. 2015; Jones 2014).

Myanmar's transition to something else thus is a top-down process whereby limited democratic reforms and increased economic openness benefit primarily autocrats and oligarchs. At the same time, the political opposition is challenging the military's dominance by mobilizing for constitutional reform. Moreover, students and various grassroots movements are seeking to engage in order to promote far-reaching, substantial democratic reforms.

Liberalizing the military regime: Legal reforms

Liberalization has also included expanding political freedoms. The 2008 constitution, which came into force in 2011, allows freedom of association, but only as long as the exercise of these freedoms does not contravene existing security laws. Among the new laws passed after Thein Sein's inauguration were a new Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law enacted in December 2011, which established a legal framework for exercising freedom of association.[5] The new Assembly Law has broadened freedom of movement considerably, leading to an increase in the number of protests. For instance, following the suspension of two magazines in July 2012, journalists rallied in Yangon and Mandalay, urging the government to protect press freedom. However, several applications to protest made by ethnic groups and opposition parties have been rejected, such as the NLD's and the Yangon University Student Union's requests to commemorate Martyrs' Day in 2012 and the Yangon University Student Union's wish to honour the 40th anniversary of a student protest at their university.

Moreover, internet control and censorship were also relaxed in 2011, and the government lifted restrictions on certain international and independent news websites. In August 2012, the government proclaimed a complete end to prepublication censorship and the dissolution of the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division. These reforms have contributed to a steady increase in press freedom. In 2016, Reporters without Borders listed Myanmar as 143rd out of 180 countries in terms of press freedom; earlier it had been ranked 144th of 179 (2015), 145th (2014), 169th (2012) and 174th (2011). The abolition of official press censorship, the easing of repression against journalists and journalists' release from jail have together created a remarkably different climate for the media.

Limits to liberalization and resistance to reform

Despite this encouraging trend of opening up, authorities still resist reforms. Military intelligence still watches civil society groups – particularly those

working in conflict areas (interview, CSO, Yangon, 25 September 2014). Despite attempts to liberalize the legal framework, there are still older laws and guidelines in place that call for prison sentences for those who disseminate certain types of information that are perceived as posing a threat to national security, domestic tranquillity or racial harmony; that report on corruption or ethnic politics; or that portray the government in a negative light. Criticism of the military in particular is considered a taboo. The government has also used its powers to suspend press freedom in recent years, whenever it has felt the press violated its responsibility. For instance, in July 2012, the magazines *The Voice* and *Envoy* were suspended for reporting on a possible cabinet change. In February 2014, the government arrested five journalists and banned the privately owned *Unity Journal* for 'disclosing state secrets': it had published a story on the construction of a chemical-weapons factory in central Myanmar. The reporters were sentenced to ten years in jail based on the 1923 State Secrets Act; the sentence was later reduced to seven years. Not all this has changed with the coming of the NLD government in March 2016. PEN Malaysia counts 38 journalists who have been jailed since Aung San Suu Kyi's party took power, and NLD ministers continue to press defamation cases against reporters. For instance, the CEO of the Eleven Media Group has been persecuted for reporting about alleged corruption of a chief minister. All in all, some activism is tolerated, but authorities still often use existing laws to arrest activists and stifle certain protests (Amnesty International 2015), such as student protests in 2015 and land-rights protests (see below). Consequently, the Association of Political Prisoners Burma reported a backsliding in democratic reforms in 2014 and 2015, documented an increasing number of activists' arrests (see Figure 11.1) and criticized the government for reducing space for political action. While their figures show that more activists were released in 2016, they also indicate that reforms are fragile and that authorities are using provisions in new and existing laws to restrain civil society and the press, which has led to continued restrictions of civil liberties.

Protest incidents: Mobilization and the reaction of the state

An analysis of mobilization among three groups – the NLD's attempts to amend the constitution, activists' protests at a copper mine in Letpadaung and the mobilization of ultra-Buddhist monks – demonstrates the still-incomplete process of political liberalization and the complexity of constraints on political space. It shows that the quasi-military state continues to control political space and the extent of political change, and to serve as gatekeeper for what demands may be voiced.

NLD protests for constitutional changes

The NLD has attempted to mobilize to push for a change of the 2008 constitution since 2014. Calls for constitutional changes began to gain momentum

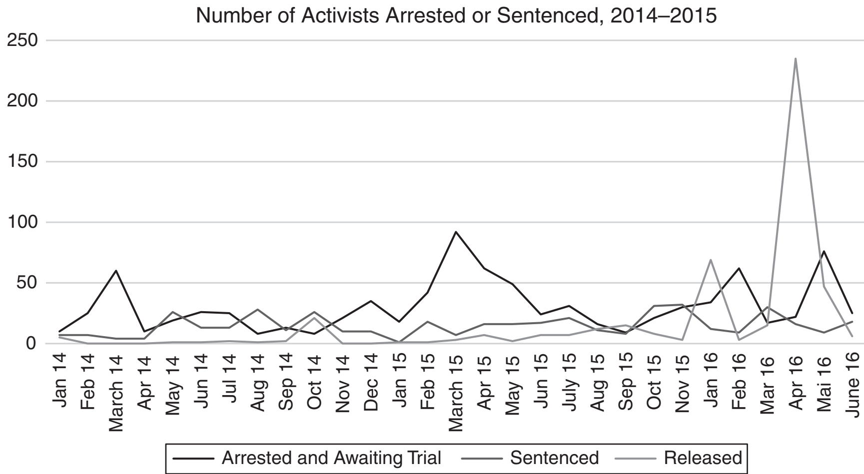

Figure 11.1 Constraints on activists.

Source: Data taken from the APP(B) (2014–2016) .

in March 2013, when senior members of the ruling USDP submitted a proposal to form a committee to review the document. Between August 2013 and October 2014, two parliamentary committees discussed possible amendments and considered submissions made by the public, political parties and government officials. The committees worked by and large in secrecy, although each committee produced a report which summarized their debates. Apart from these efforts in Parliament, Aung San Suu Kyi tried to call for a tripartite meeting with President Thein Sein and Army Chief Min Aung Hlaing (Bünte 2016). When it became clear that the amendment process was going to fail, the NLD started to mobilize more widely. Together with lawyers' groups close to the 1988 generation and several student groups, the NLD tried to campaign for charter change (interview, 1988 Generation, 4 December 2014, Yangon). Starting in February 2014, Aung San Suu Kyi toured the country and organized mass rallies for a change of the constitution. In several towns throughout the country (Haka, Nat Mauk, Magwe and Myint Htay), local authorities banned the demonstrations, saying the protests would lead to unrest. President Thein Sein had already warned his ministries in February that the debate about the constitution might lead to civil unrest and ordered local authorities to be prepared (*Irrawaddy* 2014). The campaigns were generally peaceful. However, these efforts did not lead to the creation of a mass movement for reform. Though the NLD could submit five million signatures to Parliament in June 2015 to show the people's desire for charter change, the party failed to mobilize large segments of the population.

In June and July 2015, two bills were presented to Parliament. The military bloc in Parliament, however, vetoed most of the proposed changes

supported by the opposition and ethnic groups. The movement to change the charter, reduce the influence of the military and enhance Aung San Suu Kyi's prospects to become president – she is currently barred by a constitutional provision disqualifying anyone with a foreign spouse or children – failed. The episode shows that the NLD could lobby for charter change, despite attempts by the authorities to stifle widespread protests. However, their attempt to forge a mass movement for charter change failed. The outcome of the revision debate shows that conservative forces within the military and the ruling party are still using their power to limit drastic constitutional changes.

Letpadaung copper mine protest

Since 2012 we have seen innumerable protests related to the problem of land-grabbing, such as the Michaungkan protests northeast of Yangon (Prasse-Freeman 2015) or protests against the expansion of a copper mine in Letpadaung, in Sagaing Region. The resistance of villagers in Letpadaung started in March 2012, when villagers refused to vacate their lands for the expansion of a copper mine operated by a consortium of a Chinese company, Wanbao Mining Copper and the military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEH). The project is of great national prestige for the state and the military. The villagers did not accept the company's compensation scheme and did not trust the commitment of the local authorities who promised them an equal-sized parcel of land elsewhere (Zerrouk 2015). The villagers applied to the local police a few times for permission to assemble and protest against the land seizure. The police, however, rejected their application and demanded that they use democratic channels, instead (interview, NGO, Yangon, 15 April 2013). Urban students and activists got involved, after which the evolving protest movement started to demonstrate without police permission. In September 2012, 5,000 villagers, monks and activists demanded in a public protest the closure of the copper mine, claiming it had led to forced relocations, illegal land confiscations and environmental destruction (interview, student leaders, 26 April 2013).

Cheesman shows that villagers framed their struggle as 'rightful resistance' against outside and predatory interests. Demanding equal rights for themselves, protesting villagers, monks and activists marched through a nearby village carrying red and white banners that demanded, 'Respect the Law' – the message of the current government and past governments. He explains, 'In the absence of legal institutionalization, people with rights claims resort instead to the methods of civil disobedience based on demands for substantive legal equality that are deliberately not in accordance with law' (Cheesman 2014, 224).

The Home Ministry reacted and issued a formal warning to demonstrators in the Letpadaung Hills to clear their encampments or face the consequences, stating that its officials would act in accordance with the law and

democratic practice, and to protect the interests of the state and the public (*Weekly Eleven* 2014). The situation escalated when the police raided encamped demonstrators, firing tear gas and white phosphorus, which caused extensive burning among the protestors. The attack on the camps received international news coverage, in part because the majority of the wounded were Buddhist monks (*Wall Street Journal* 2012). The incident represented the most substantial use of force since President Thein Sein had taken office in March 2011.

The crackdown led to a public outcry and a rare apology by state authorities, in light of criticism from home and abroad. However, state media still insisted that people who want democracy, not anarchy, obey the law. President Thein Sein appointed an investigation commission under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi. The commission included numerous parliamentarians, a minister and a member of the 1988-student generation, Min Ko Naing. The commission's findings were published in March 2013. Cheesman argues that the commission 'treated the exercise not as an opportunity for dialogue with the affected villagers as "substantive political and legal equals", but as a mechanical exercise in which questions of the rule of law were subordinated to the findings of the commission'. Far from holding the police and local authorities responsible for the violent attacks on the demonstrators, the commission placed the blame on an ignorant population and stated that administrative agencies need to put more effort into educating people about the law (Cheesman 2014, 225). The commission did, however, also recommend prompt reform of the police. While the report acknowledged that the villagers had not received enough compensation for their land and urged the company to pay more, it did not recommend the closure of the mine. In a visit to the protest site, Aung San Suu Kyi told activists that they had to respect the rule of law and sacrifice their lands for development. She also demanded that protestors use official channels like Parliament in future (interview, students, 24 September 2013).

The villagers vehemently rejected Aung San Suu Kyi's conclusions. Anger has been directed in particular at the failure of the ten-page report to call for punishment of the police offices responsible for using white phosphorus to disperse demonstrators (*Myanmar Times* 2013). Villagers accused Aung San Suu Kyi of siding with the wrong camp. Laments one statement, 'All the love we had for you, now it's nothing. We put so much hope in her. But now her report is like a death sentence for the people. … Don't come here, Daw Suu, we feel bad for Aung San's name' (DVB 2013). A subsequent report published by the Lawyers Network shows pictures of the injured monks and begins with the dedication:

> 99 monks sitting steadfast in circles,
> One heart beating true for land-loving peoples,
> Channeling the power of powerlessness,
> Flutt'ring on butterfly-wings of compassion,

> Chanting peace sutras under fire-bombs flying,
> Tossed like sticks amidst storms of sacred suff'ring,
> Flames and flesh, blood and water, inter-mingling,
> Just!—As an all-mighty oceans' ceaseless roar!—
> Can such devotion ever be defeated?
>
> (Lawyers Network 2013)

This dedication presents the protests against the copper mine as a holy obligation of the powerless and as rightful resistance of the weak against corrupt politicians and the military. At the same time, the villagers' rejection of Aung San Suu Kyi's intervention suggests the extent to which even purportedly reformist forces also police or suppress mobilization.

As of now, the recommendations of the commission have been only partly implemented. The company has promised to deal with the environmental damage caused and to increase the compensation paid (Zerrouk 2015). Protests are ongoing, flaring up from time to time. In December 2014, renewed violence by the authorities killed one woman. A report by Amnesty International criticized both the police and the government for their handling of the protests, insisting: 'far from opening an independent investigation, the police have refused to even register an initial criminal complaint about the attack and victims have faced barrier after barrier when trying to get justice. … The Letpadaung Copper Mine project has come to represent all that is wrong with the Myanmar government's approach of prioritizing profits and foreign investments over human rights' (Amnesty International 2015).

The mobilization of ultra-Buddhist groups

The country's liberalization has seen the rise of several Buddhist nationalist groups, first the so-called 969 movement[6] that emerged in 2012, and more recently, the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion (Ma Ba Tha, also translated as the Patriotic Association of Myanmar), which was formed in early 2013. The most prominent of the nationalist monks has been U Wirathu, who was featured on the cover of the July 2013 issue of *Time Magazine* as the 'Buddhist Face of Terror'. These groups have distributed nationalistic pamphlets and videos that members say are designed to 'protect the country from Muslim infiltration'. Xenophobic, nationalistic, anti-Muslim sentiments have been spread on the internet, as well. While 969 defenders argue that they are merely encouraging Buddhists to more fervently practice and defend their religion, the movement's literature presents Islam as a threat both to Buddhism and to the Burmese nation and often calls for 'taking actions' against that threat. That the actions of the group are, however, framed as defending Buddhism makes it very difficult for lay Buddhists to criticize them (Walton 2014, 124). The general respect for the sangha in Myanmar means that for most Buddhists, even publicly

questioning a monk would be unthinkable. The official group of high-ranking monks, the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Council, remained noticeably quiet during the unrest, until it finally issued a statement at the end of August 2013 barring groups from using the 969 symbol for their political activities (Walton 2014, 125).

The mobilization of these Buddhist groups also contributed to the outbreak of communal violence. In June and October 2012, clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine State left almost 200 people dead and approximately 140,000 displaced. In January 2013, the violence spread to central Myanmar. Anti-Muslim violence occurred also in May 2013 in the town of Lashio, in Shan State. An independent commission established by President Thein Sein following the initial outbreak of communal violence identified the main causes leading to the outbreak of violence as rising extremism on both sides (Muslims and Buddhists in Rakhine), political polarization and lack of economic opportunity and development. Its report highlighted the breakdown in communication between the two sides and called for measures to promote reconciliation and co-existence, including inter-faith dialogue, civic education, implementation of the rule of law and economic development (Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2013). In many of these violent incidents over the past couple of years, local security forces, particularly the police, have appeared unable or unwilling to stop violence and rioting. In some cases, they have been accused of participating in the violence (International Crisis Group 2013).

Moreover, there have been reports that the Buddhist groups enjoy the support of the ruling USDP (*Myanmar Times* 2015a). In September 2015, President Thein Sein bowed to political pressure from Ma Ba Tha and signed four so-called Protection of Race and Religion bills, which were seen as advancing an anti-Muslim, ultra-Buddhist nationalist agenda. Ma Ba Tha also claimed that the NLD would not protect Buddhism. Political parties and observers expressed their concerns about the mixing of religion and politics, which is prohibited by the Myanmar Constitution (Min 2015). Despite this restriction, Ma Ba Tha continued to lambast Aung San Suu Kyi's liberalism, insisting that as a woman, she is unable to be a good president and defend Buddhism. The group did not support her attempt to change the constitution and openly campaigned against her in the general elections (Myanmar Times 2015b). Walton points to the fact that the group commands significant support in the general population, since nationalism and Buddhism are inseparably intertwined in Theravada Buddhist societies. This connection becomes particularly emphasized at moments in which the majority population feels threatened (Walton 2014, 123).

Increasing liberalization has allowed nationalist groups to mobilize along racial and religious lines more aggressively than previously. Their agitation finally led to an exclusion of the Muslim Rohingya from the 2015 elections. The Rohingya were not only blocked from standing in the elections but even denied the freedom to vote. As nationalist groups stretch their own

freedoms of speech and organization, in other words, they have come to constrain other communities' rights.

Conclusion

Myanmar has changed significantly in recent years. The transition to 'something else' has opened up political spaces for legal political activities often denied by the military governments over the preceding decades. While under direct military rule, room for political activities outside the realm defined by the generals was extremely narrow, the transition towards disciplined democracy has clearly expanded space for political participation. Since the military has also institutionalized its leading role in the political arena, it can tolerate protest movements without fearing it will lose power. Yet, this confidence does not mean that we have seen unambiguous liberalization.

On the one hand, the state still controls most political space and represses political dissent. Consequently, the number of people arrested in recent years for exercising their democratic right to protest is still high. Moreover, among protest groups and demands made is a moderate opposition (NLD) and its aim of charter change. Since the military regime has institutionalized its political role, these demands do not put the military's pre-eminence in danger. However, radical dissent and radical demands for accountability for past human rights abuses or repression are not tolerated. State authorities have targeted activists, farmers and those organizing around issues, including land ownership and land rights. On the other hand, the state is not the only force patrolling and curbing political space. The transition has brought illiberal movements to the fore, which themselves police political space for certain minority groups. In particular, the mobilization of radical Buddhist groups has successfully limited the rights of Muslim citizens. The terrain of Myanmar's 'something else' is thus not just rocky, but would require more than simply state reform to smooth the path toward more thoroughgoing liberalism.

Notes

1 For a discussion of long-term trends of repression and contention, see Boudreau 2004.
2 For an analysis, see Schock 1999 or Lintner 1990.
3 Most of Myanmar's ethnic groups have been fighting for independent, ethnically based states or at least some degree of greater autonomy from Yangon under Myanmar's loose federal system. From 1988 to 2011, the regime negotiated ceasefires with seventeen of these armed groups. Most of the groups were given some form of autonomy to develop their regions.
4 The NLD was invited to participate but declined due to a lack of civil liberties and democratic freedoms.
5 Under Section 18 of the new law, demonstrators are required to inform authorities in advance of the time, place and reason for their protests. They also have to indicate the planned route of the protest and summarize the content of any

slogans and songs. The law prohibits protestors from blocking traffic or causing other types of disturbances during the gathering. Those who protest without permission are subject to one year's imprisonment.

6 The movement imagines 969 as a symbol to counter the number 786, a numerological shorthand for Islam used among some Muslims in Asian countries. The symbol has practical purpose, as Muslim businesses display a 786 sticker to indicate to customers that they serve halal food, although it also functions as a more general notification that the business is Muslim-owned (Walton 2014, 124). In this way the '969' has functioned as a sort of 'Buy Buddhist' campaign; its supporters claim that they are merely responding to similar practices among Muslims.

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12 Participation and space

Themes, patterns, and implications

Meredith L. Weiss and Eva Hansson

Asia's political landscape is in flux. Conventional, institutional taxonomies are limiting: classifying regimes along an authoritarian–democratic continuum suggests a static, homogenous categorization that aligns imperfectly with the experience of most citizens and with the expansion of political participation displayed in the region recently. Indeed, what sparked this project was our dissatisfaction with the inability of theories of democratization and political regime change to account for the fairly pronounced shifts across Asian societies and politics over the last few decades.

It is not just a matter of regimes' being stuck in an endless 'consolidation' phase. Many have not yet experienced a democratic transition or are already considered consolidated democracies, yet remain impervious to popular demands for substantive democratic rights, accountability, inclusion, representation and citizenship. Mainstream theories of democratization focus largely on measurable institutions and elites, evading more complex issues relating to power, participation, and representation. This omission is especially apparent when claims are channelled through novel strata within the public sphere or when they fall along new axes, whether of material distribution or for recognition and standing (Fraser 1996). Nor do even fairly nuanced typologies of regimes (for example, Collier and Levitsky 1997) capture the variation we see within and across democratic and non-democratic states, particularly where boundaries between state and civil society, and between formal and informal institutions, are porous or mutable. The typologies offered thus far tell us little of citizens' lived experiences of political regimes (Grugel 2003) or of power, participation and substantive representation.

That messiness calls for a more nuanced approach, in which ontological assumptions of either 'the state' or 'civil society' as rational, autonomous, coherent actors may be challenged, as may be imprecise (and sometimes pejorative) conflations of 'regime', 'state', and 'government'. Hence our determination to place 'political space' at the centre of our analysis. From this vantage point, we aim in this volume to decipher patterns of political participation and change in Asian contexts.

The cases and analyses presented here offer diverse perspectives on dynamics of political participation and dimensions of political space. Our goal in this brief conclusion is not to attempt to summarize that complex picture, but rather, to extrapolate patterns and trends. Comparing across chapters illuminates three dimensions in particular: whether (and if so, how) regime type matters to the nature of political space; how we should understand the shape and character of civil society; and common patterns in how political space has changed or is changing.

Does regime matter?

Core to what defines democracy, per any but the most minimal of electorally centred definitions, is citizens' ability to participate in politics and be represented, whether in terms of identity, substantive interests or otherwise (Powell 2004). As the cases considered here demonstrate, however, these minimal attributes are uncertain at best, even in the region's purported democracies – whereas citizens in less politically liberal regimes may still find space for voice and influence. To what extent, then, does regime type matter to the scope and quality of political space, and how much does economic regime temper or trump the effects of political characteristics? If we see similar access to participation in liberal and illiberal regimes, that resemblance may pose a challenge to democratic theory.

A key theme that emerges from across these chapters is the extent to which economic ideologies and priorities shape possibilities for both participation and representation. As Hewison's chapter details most clearly, 'businessification' conditions both state and civil society: business power dominates, such that business interests prevail over others' preferences. Doucette's, Shin's, and Lagerkvist's chapters echo and augment this insight, through distinct lenses. Doucette's goal is to disentangle the erosion of democracy, particularly in South Korea; Shin's chapter homes in further on labour, considering how the specific ways workers organize and the alliances they form matter to the expansion and structuring of political spaces; Lagerkvist aims to explain not just increased repression in China, but also the specific ideological framing of that approach and the concomitant transformation of society into 'market cells' that internalize the neo-liberal ideology promoted by the leadership of the party–state. Like Hewison, all three find their answers in neoliberalism, even if those states that have never democratized are awkwardly labeled as 'post-democratic'. Governments and states seek to foster certain kinds of citizens and citizenship, in the name of coincident political and economic objectives.

An alternate perspective on whether and how regime type matters comes through in several other chapters. Wright's chapter argues explicitly for a shift in how we understand democracy: to recognize that responsiveness and accountability – the purported end goals that render democracy desirable – need not exclusively be tied to or result from elections (even if undemocratic

states still offer little by way of civil liberties or protection from repression). If consciousness-raising and protest over social media spark a response from the state, or press government officials themselves to embrace these platforms (as both Wright and Bui detail, in China and Vietnam, respectively), we might read that shift as indicating a semblance of democracy. On the other hand, Shin finds that, particularly in light of the specific timing and sequencing of political regime change (and of transformative economic events), particular actors or types of organization find outlets or are pushed to street protests and struggles for inclusion; however defined, democratization is never evenly distributed.

Meanwhile, contestation may be more about borders themselves – who has a right to participate, or whose views are legitimate – than about specific claims on the state. Bencharat's contribution in particular suggests the extent to which political culture may not favor political democracy, as commonly understood (e.g. norms of egalitarianism and popular sovereignty). When authoritarianism is as embedded in and reproduced by civil society as by state institutions, we might find it more analytically helpful to assess the relative accessibility and encumbrance of domains of political space than to rate the political system overall. That caveat is all the more germane when subjects of a given regime are structurally unequal – a possibility especially stark among the refugee communities Olivius investigates, but *always* at play, given omnipresent axes of inequality even among full citizens.

Characterization of civil society?

Throughout the volume, the authors grapple directly or indirectly with how to characterize civil society, given the power of economic society over both political and civil realms, changes in movement organization across new online or offline planes of political space, and the mix of informal and formal organizations and structures within civil society, particularly where these overlap with those of the state. Overall, the case studies herein suggest that while there *are* differences in protection of civil liberties and risks to taking political action in more and less liberal contexts (e.g. Bünte's, Bui's, and Bencharat's chapters), that dimension is insufficient to explain variations across civil societies. It is worth revisiting here, in our conclusion, an insight with which Hewison begins the volume. He notes the risks of an overly 'romanticized view' of civil society, which is home to 'bad' as well as 'good' actors and groups. This domain struggles not only with the state, but also within its own ranks and with business interests. It may effectively be inhabited less by organizations and movements that compete and struggle, than by clients and customers, to be surveyed and served.

Indeed, a core insight tempering our understanding of civil society, as of the state, is the extent to which economics structures the possibilities for participating in political space, and physical space is controlled by economic space, constraining expression. (The latter dimension is most clearly obvious

in Hew's chapter on participation and space-making through consumption, but apparent in Doucette's and others, as well.) Citizenship and circumstance do matter: Karen National Union leaders and supporters face a radically different environment as a would-be government within Myanmar's borders versus as organizations essentially within civil society, under the aegis of a Thai host-state (per Olivius's chapter), for example. But where political citizenship is less an issue, and actors face a freer choice of whether to work through state or civil society, that distinction may be less straightforward than the literature tends to presume. Doucette highlights both the question of whether we should understand civil society as a supplement to the state or as 'a space of conflictual and transformative politics' and the fact that both conditions may apply within a given polity. Conservative or reactionary forces may react disproportionately angrily against some types of challengers (e.g. particularly progressive voices or labour, given neoliberal restructuring and hegemonic ideology), but be happy to work with others as partners.

The topography of political space

Taken as a whole, this volume indicates that political space is multidimensional, that certain domains within that space are especially salient or free or constrained within particular polities (and that the mix thereof depends in large part on the political and economic regime in place), and that the characteristics, boundaries, and inhabitants of political space are never static.

The fungibility of political space is most evident when we consider online space: a fairly new domain, more discursive than structural, difficult to control or patrol, and useful to states and challengers alike. The space for protest in China or Vietnam looks very different when we include social media and other online platforms rather than just the organizational realm of civil society, but how should we understand this component? Is web-based activism a 'second-best' or disarticulated space, or does it represent an equally salient arena for accountability and voice? Wright implies the latter, especially given the breadth of what is 'political'; Lagerkvist and Bui seem less optimistic, given economic or political impulses for securitization of that space, in light of a wider emphasis on 'regime security' by both states' governing communist parties. And yet, as these authors explore, social media also offer platforms for waging and publicizing intra-elite/state challenges or competition, as well as for grappling with that state, and enhance any government's ability to communicate with and engage the public, including in the interest of social and political stability.

When considering changes to political space, economic attributes again loom large. On the one hand, the prevalence of complaints against multinational corporations as planners and employers, for instance, may deflect pressure from governments as targets of claims (even when those same corporations are interwoven with state actors). On the other hand, consumerism

changes (and perhaps homogenizes) interests and makes it harder to think in terms of cultural explanations for differences across states, or of even domestic space as being immune to politicization.

Lastly, we note the emancipatory potential of political space, as revealed through these chapters, particularly given a premise of equality, but even just by dint of ability to disrupt 'existing orders of domination', in Doucette's words. As Olivius, Bencharat, Hew, and Bünte trace in different ways, the spaces in which people live and function are those in which they seek agency, however presumed apolitical; challenging prevailing framings of what is appropriate or 'political' is a necessary first step toward countering depoliticization or even producing counterhegemonic ideas and forces. Whether in the context of regime transition and consolidation (e.g. Myanmar, South Korea, Thailand) or determined systemic stasis, as in Vietnam or China, would-be claimants find ways to craft and situate their targets, their media of expression, and their strategic alliances in light of endlessly context-specific and changing political opportunities.

Implications

In sum, these case studies and analyses recommend a deeply complex approach to understanding the who, what, and how of political participation. We conclude not with a grand summation, since to do so would necessarily and unhelpfully over-simplify, but rather, with a set of three trends or dimensions to watch as they develop across Asia, or to assess in and compare with other regions.

First: modes of engagement. How much *does* the availability of online space 'democratize' illiberal polities, and for whom? Does the standardization of social media platforms across so many states (even allowing for home-country cognates) entail homogenization of modes of 'activism'? And how should we weigh the relative extent of empowerment conveyed by engagement online, via civil societal organizations or through formal, state-based channels, particularly if we recognize more than just policy influence as salient?

Second: who is the relevant community or demos? Changes in political space have opened opportunities for intra-elite rivalries to play out on new terrain, even as they bring new categories of actors or previously disengaged individuals into the public sphere. Do these new spaces have an upper limit to their carrying capacity: is there space for all members of the polity to participate? Even as space expands, targets shift with the issues, actors, and roles engaged and as specific actors encounter repression or claim wider scope for self-expression. When the complaint is economic disempowerment or debilitation, how much should the target be corporations themselves, and how much, the neoliberalism-promoting state?

Third: how does actual, physical space, including juridical state boundaries, matter? Most importantly, given the similarities the case studies here

reveal across countries – from governments' repressive tactics, to new forms of labour organization, to strategies for translating online motivation to offline mobilization – how do these repertoires travel? Do cognate circumstances simply produce similar responses, or do officials or citizens learn from counterparts abroad (and if the latter, is there a specifically regional dimension)? If innovations in political participation do travel, how should we adjust our conception of audiences (e.g. who are movement constituents versus possibly solidaristic bystanders), discourse and images, and frames?

We thus end with a plea for more case studies, more comparison, and more productive blurring of state and non-state, formal and informal, empowered and marginal, to allow a more realistic and useful understanding of how, when, and for whom political space and options for political participation change.

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