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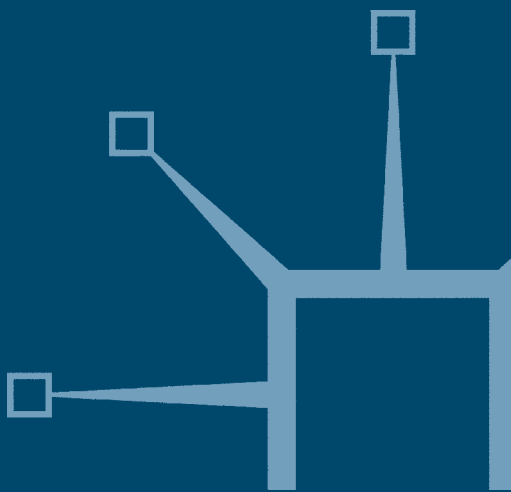
Democracy and Civil Society in Asia

Democratic Transitions and Social Movements in Asia

Volume 2

Edited by
Jayant Lele and Fahimul Quadir



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Democracy and Civil Society in Asia: Volume 2

Democratic Transitions and Social Movements in Asia

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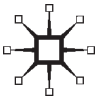

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This volume contains a selection of papers presented at the conference and subsequently revised for publication. The success of the conference and the publication of this volume is a result of the support from a number of institutions and individuals. The Centre for the Study of Democracy, then under the leadership of Professor George Perlin, provided intellectual and financial support. Professor Steve Page, Professor and Head of the Department of Political Studies was generous with his support and Evelyn McCaugherty and Shirley Frazer were instrumental in keeping the planning of the conference on track. Alex Choi and Paritosh Kumar carried the enormous burden of the planning and smooth running of the conference and have made valuable intellectual contributions to the project. They also helped establish and maintain ongoing liaisons with participating scholars, both before and after the conference.

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Jayant Lele
Fahimul Quadir

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AL	Awami League
APSAC	All-Party Students Action Committee
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asian-European Union
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of any Discrimination Against Women
CER	Consortium for Electoral Reform
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DECS	Department of Education Culture and Sports
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EMPOWER	Education Means Protection of Women Engaged in Re-Creation
EOI	Export Oriented Industrialisation
G-7	Group of Seven
GD	Good Governance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
GNP	Gross National Product
ICMI	*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KBL	*Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (New Society Movement)
LAMMP	Labang ng Makabayang Masang Pilipino (Fight of the Nationalist Filipino Masses)
LGUs	Local Government Units
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NAMFREL	National Citizens Movement for Free Elections
NCG	Non-partisan Caretaker Government
NCM	Non-Cooperation Movement
NCR	National Capital Region

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NYC	National Youth Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Officer In Charge
OJT	On the Job Training
PDI-P	*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjunagan* (Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle)
PDP-Laban	Pilipino Democratic Party – Struggle
PO-NGO	People's Organization – Non-Governmental Organization
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SEWA	The Self-Employed Women's Association
SK	*Sangguniang Kabataan* (Village Youth)
SKOP	*Sramik Karmachary Ooikkya Parishad*
SUCs	State Universities and Colleges
TERRA	Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TVE	Technical and Vocational Education
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VND	Vietnam Dong
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1

Introduction: Democracy and Development in Asia in the 21st Century: In Search of Popular Democratic Alternatives

Jayant Lele and Fahimul Quadir

In the new millennium, democracy remains a central concern for those engaged in fashioning the future or studying the present in Asia. Where transition to formal-procedural democracy has already occurred, the issues of its consolidation, stabilization and sustainability are pre-eminent while the fear of reversal is still very real. In countries where the transition is in an embryonic stage, the reversal of even the minor gains seems imminent. That fear deeply affects the strategies of the actors struggling to expand democratic spaces.

Contributors to these volumes deal with a number of these issues. They examine the key components of democracy and development: civil society, the state, the public sphere and globalization and the factors associated with transition and consolidation of formal democracies in Asia. They bring a diversity of perspectives on the prospects for and obstacles to the deepening of democracy and to the fulfilment of its promise of freedom, justice and greater substantive equality for all citizens. They discuss the impact of globalization and the associated patterns of growth on the livelihoods of citizens and on the civic organizations and social movements of the deprived sections of the population. They bring to bear the diverse experiences of the various countries of Asia in exploring these aspects of development and democracy.

One of the common themes of all of these contributions is the concern with the current state and future prospects of meaningful participation by all citizens in the practice of development and democracy. The case for popular participation in development decisions has already been made forcefully by both the theorists and the practitioners of development and is now part of the discourse of development

and aid agencies. The reality, as many critics point out, is far from approaching this vision. In this introduction we examine the factors responsible for this discrepancy.

History of democratization and reversals in Asia

In the early post-war years, many former colonies in Asia adopted the Western model of liberal democracy as the form of government, a consequence of the relative stability of the existing structures of administration and the class background of nationalist elites. Most countries of South Asia, for example, took this route. Most of them saw a rapid reversal of democracy. Freedom and democracy, fruits of prolonged struggles for political independence, held out the promise of a prosperous egalitarian future for all citizens. Continued monopolization of public resources by the old and new elite and growing pauperization of the deprived classes led to rapid disenchantment, popular revolts and an authoritarian reaction that suppressed democracy.

Other countries in Asia followed the revolutionary path of national liberation. They developed their own vision and corresponding models of popular participation in politics. Both in China and Vietnam, for example, the revolutionary communist parties established their own avenues for people's participation and representation at local, regional and national levels. Gough (1990) argues that in Vietnam, for example, these avenues were far more effective than the institutions of formal democracy in the United States, a country often seen as a model of a functioning liberal democracy. In China also the Communist Party was characterized throughout the Mao era and at all levels, by a tension between the advocates of decentralized popular initiatives and those favouring bureaucratic centralism. During this period, development took the form of campaigns involving a high level of informal participation of the masses (Maitan 1976).

A theory of democracy and democratization took shape in the fifties within the charged atmosphere of the Cold War. Theorists drew a sharp contrast between democracy, modelled on its existing practice in the older industrial countries, and other regimes characterized as authoritarian or totalitarian. The focus was on defining the attributes of a healthy democracy. Free and fair elections, rule based elite competition for political offices and a variety of 'political' freedoms for citizens were singled out. This model of formal democracy, as outlined in Dahl (1971), was in reality a description of elite pluralism in practice. It implied that in order to survive, democratic institutions must, first of

all, protect the interests of the dominant classes, through compromises and arrangements worked out by their competing elites (McClosky 1964; McConnell 1966; Sevrin 1972). In presenting this model as an ideal for developing countries, however, this aspect of democracy was downplayed. Polyarchy was presented as the best available and most desirable form of government for people-centred development.

After the failure of formal democracy in many developing countries, further theorizing about development occurred with the success of socialist revolutions as the backdrop (Almond & Verba 1965; Schudson 1994). Most developing countries were found wanting in the preconditions for a healthy democracy. They include not only economic growth but also the right civic/political culture, consisting of appropriate attitudes, norms and behaviour patterns and the associated social and political institutions. Such theorizing failed to give adequate consideration to one basic factor for the failure: the promise held out by political independence and democracy to those who had suffered under colonial rule and had struggled for liberation. There was anticipation in these countries of a national and international effort to ensure rapid advance towards authentic freedom from want and oppression, towards greater equality for all citizens, regardless of their class, caste, gender, and ethnic identities. Fulfilment of that promise was rarely listed as a basic prerequisite for the survival and flourishing of genuine democracy in politically independent but economically impoverished new nations.

The literature on democracy and development also rarely mentions the most obvious and perhaps the only necessary condition for the survival of formal democracy. It can survive and thrive anywhere as long as it protects the interests of the entrenched and dominant classes and as long as they can hold economic, political and ideological sway over the subaltern classes. Through their control of formally democratic institutions they can nurture their economic and cultural domination. These institutions are managed by a set of competing elites mostly from within the dominant classes. When the disadvantaged classes exert sustained and threatening pressure, through mass movements and civic organizations, formal democracy sheds some of its exclusiveness and co-opts a number of subaltern elites. India, the largest and longest surviving formal democracy in the third world, quite vividly demonstrates how this model sustains itself even under conditions of underdevelopment (Lele 1981). Orientalist myopia, however, has precluded its recognition as an example of formal pluralist democracy in much of the literature on political development (Lele 1993).

A number of countries in Asia moved towards formal democracy during the so-called Third Wave of democratization (see Huntington, 1991). Their earlier struggles for liberation and democracy had been crushed or de-radicalized by repressive military or other authoritarian industrializing regimes. Their complicity in the globally orchestrated strategy of export led growth, which degraded the living environments of most people and threatened their community livelihoods, belied the regime claims that through an economic miracle economic growth had dramatically reduced poverty for millions. The disenchantment with that pattern of growth played a major role in the emergence of popular challenges to the political status quo. It fed the demand for the establishment of formally democratic institutions. The transition to formal democracy was the product of sustained efforts and pressures exerted by popular social movements and issue-oriented popular civic organizations of the disenfranchised. Women's movements as well as those of other socially and culturally disadvantaged classes were central to these transitions. Their resistance to the regimes took enormously diverse forms, resulting from their specific socio-political history and the economic and geopolitical context. The current literature on transition gives only a minor importance to these indigenous popular origins of the drive to democracy.

Democracy and the public sphere

During the struggles for democracy, and since, critical scholars have questioned the relevance of polyarchy to the development of countries deeply polarized by privilege and deprivation. As a model of democracy, it holds no appeal for those engaged in democratic struggles in Asia or for those who are familiar with the diversity of the Asian experience (Phongpaichit 1999). They have been aware of the class divide that characterizes pro-democracy movements and alliances. This divide has serious implications for the prospects for true democracy after transition. They also recognize that this divide manifests itself in other patterns of privilege and deprivation. It perpetuates itself through discrimination in terms of gender, race and ethnicity. Formal democracy for them is not an end point but only a moment on the way to real transition.

Where the avenues for the expression of popular concerns are systematically suppressed, formal liberal democracy becomes a necessary step towards a more substantive transition. Its real importance lies in the possibility that free and open avenues will emerge for the forma-

tion of public opinion, in the classical sense of that term. A democratic form of government becomes profoundly legitimate only when it remains subject to public dialogue and scrutiny. Through such avenues of communication and debate people can receive and deliver information and transform it into relevant knowledge. It enables them to govern their own lives effectively and to resist encroachments of powerful vested interests. Protecting such avenues at the local level and gaining access to them at national and international levels becomes a key element in the struggle for democracy. Once such institutions for discussion and debate are established, struggle must continue to ensure that the voices of all citizens are treated as equal; that they are not only heard and ignored but understood and accommodated without prejudice. People also must be able to ensure that they are not overpowered through pacification and co-optation in the service of ideologically entrenched self-interest of the dominant classes. This is the key to the formation of truly 'public' opinion, which itself must be recognized as the precondition for the legitimacy of public policy and for the decisions of a democratic state.

One of the most important rights of citizens in a formal democracy is the right to information. Individuals cannot make sound decisions without adequate information (Palmer 1997: 209). Only a knowing citizen can actively and meaningfully participate in the promised free and open discussion of issues. But knowledge is not the same as information. It involves a 'critical competence' or 'reflexive capability' for making sense of received information in the light of one's own life experience (Lele 1996: 316–319). In democracy such critical competence refers to the capability of citizens to discriminate between the promises made in the name of democracy (such as equal, non-ritualistic and authentic participation by all citizens in the making of decisions that affect their lives) and its reality in practice. Such critical reflection reveals that formal/procedural democracies limit the role of citizens to deciding, through routine referendums, which sets of privileged elites will be elected to control the resources of the nation (Offe 1985). The plurality of such elites, while presenting an appearance of openness and broad-based participation, merely conceals the fact that in the absence of organized resistance from the deprived sections of the population, control over decisions that affect the nature of growth, employment and prices of essential goods and services and thus the basic conditions of life, remains firmly in the hands of big capital and associated vested interests. In the face of strong resistance, on the other hand, the surface of competition cracks and the deeply entrenched

coalitions and collusions between the elites come to surface through the repressive actions of the state.

During the early years of formal liberal democracy in the West, a nexus of institutions evolved and claimed that it was their task to act as the authentic public sphere. This meant that they were to be the instruments of the formation of an effective political will. They were to help accelerate the legislative process through which active and publicly motivated citizens would look beyond competition and conflict, associated with parochial attempts to protect competing individual or group interests, and give legitimacy to policies and programmes that would ensure the well being of all citizens. The earliest such institution was the print media. Political parties also emerged as agents for the formation of public opinion and as 'class parties' they facilitated the emergence of subaltern counter-publics. Critical evaluation of the attempts of private individuals and groups, to gain exclusive access to the society's resources, was to be the task of relatively autonomous institutions set up for critical intellectual pursuits, such as schools, colleges and the universities. Here professional intellectuals would be protected from private influence in the exercise of their freedom of analysis and their role in helping develop and offer shareable visions of a possible new social order that can be more just and substantively equal. Their freedom would also enable them; it was hoped, to critically examine the actual processes and outcomes of 'public' policy, ostensibly enacted in 'public interest'.

Habermas (1989) has analyzed in detail the systematic debilitation of the promise that the public sphere once held in Western formal democracies. Although political parties, the media and the institutions housing professional intellectuals (such as the universities) continue to hold on to the fiction of public responsibility, their claims have turned increasingly more hollow, as the onslaught of commercialization and privatization has engulfed them and turned information, partisan politics and critical reflection into commodities. Political parties have ceased to perform the original function of presenting responsible options for the development of public will, since they are neither class parties nor interest groups themselves. Today their only purpose seems to be that of aggregating every variety of vocal interest and articulating them into their lowest common denominators. In turn they manage to gain popular support for the periodic acclamation of an existing unequal political order and for their own pre-eminent role in maintaining it. In this age, where politics has become a spectator sport, the media concentrates only on the extraordinary, the political parties seek

more to deceive than to enlighten and critical reflections of professional intellectuals are tamed through control over resources or are simply ignored. Together they are all engaged in a concentrated endeavour of 'manufacturing consent' (Chomsky 1993).

In the contemporary discourse of democratization, the public sphere is either routinely ignored or merely subsumed under the notion of civil society. In its classical European sense the public sphere is constituted by the creation of a political space in which representatives of diverse groups and interests enter as citizens. Their task is to overcome apparent conflicts and go beyond diverse particular interests, interests that civil society organizations generate, so as to arrive at interests common to all citizens, regardless of their relative lack of wealth and power. In the ideal version, the public sphere was the equivalent of the market in the classical economic theory. It was credited with the possibility of creating general will. The 'hand' in this case was to be the rational actions of citizens or their representatives acting with full knowledge of possible alternatives and having competence to arrive at common will. It was expected to be visible and openly accountable. It was believed that common interests would emerge out of a commitment to the fundamental human values such as justice, freedom and equality. Knowledgeable citizens would be able, based on well-informed dialogue and critical self-examination of their particular interest in terms of these values, to arrive at a societal consensus. Consensus, according to today's democratic theory is also seen as essential. It enables the state to arrive at policies and decisions that are legitimate in the sense that they are not challenged by the people. In the classical version this consensus was to be rational and not manufactured through manipulation of citizens as is the case in formal democracies today.

In many countries of post-war Asia, during their transition to political independence, a potentially robust public sphere had emerged or was at least nascent, as a consequence of popular mobilization for their liberation struggles. Anti-colonial struggles and discontent against indigenous authoritarian regimes spawned the growth of an independent critical press, political mass movements and parties and courageous intellectuals who were willing to face hardships in order to develop and promote the vision of a free, just and egalitarian society for all citizens. In many of the countries of Asia, these institutions continued to grow until authoritarian reversals systematically suppressed or stunted their growth. The void caused by its suppression or demise was filled by social movements and civil society organizations. They emerged and survived, often in the

interstices of an oppressive social and political order, and within the framework of association were tolerated or ignored by authoritarian regimes. In many cases, the nurturing of such associations was in itself a heroic endeavour. The threat of extinction within a milieu of society-wide overt coercion, violence and incarceration, was ever present. Outright massacres of unarmed civilians suspected of lack of loyalty to or enthusiasm for the regime were not uncommon. The prospects for re-vitalizing the public sphere were far too dim to contemplate within this environment. In somewhat exceptional countries like India, where an apparent attempt at authoritarian transition was suddenly ended in 1977, the debilitation of the public sphere has proceeded, much along the lines of Western democracies.

Civil society and the future of democracy

The literature on democratization recognizes the importance of elite consensus as a prerequisite for the sustainable transition to formal democracy. It admits, obliquely, that the dominant class elites will want to protect their own interests but asks that they be prepared to make some compromises with organized and vocal groups of subalterns until a pliant political culture develops in which survival of the democratic form becomes a value for its own sake (Diamond 1994: 15). In the affirmative literature on consolidation of democracy the focus is only on the formal trappings of democracy: elections and the willingness of the dominant class elites to play by the rules, which only means that they not be sore losers if they are temporarily defeated by competing dominant class elites in such elections.

The literature on transition and consolidation also places a great deal of emphasis on the development of civil society. Both critical and affirmative theories of liberal democracy assign a central role to civil society in state-society relations (see, for example, Cohen & Arato 1992; Ehrenberg 1999; Potter 1997). The state, even a mature democratic state, is assumed to have a tendency to develop its own interests and will and the ability to enforce it with its monopoly of the coercive apparatus (Hayek 1944). In order to curb this tendency, it must be subjected to eternal vigilance by groups and organizations of active and alert citizens. The task of formulating diverse citizen demands and ensuring the state's responsiveness to them is now seen as the task of civil society which includes all groups and associations, formal and informal, which can articulate policy demands of their constituent members.

Some of the apparent consensus among democracy theorists, about the centrality of civil society in democracy, results from the fact that the concept harbours diverse and often contradictory assumptions and expectations about its origin and its role in democratization. Out of this diversity of understanding, civil society organizations face a great deal of criticism. The leading classes who are often prominent in civil society organizations are criticized for attacking the 'statism' of the poor while 'strengthening their ties to the treasury and military to promote and protect their dominant position in civil society' (Petras 1997–98: 5). Those civil society organizations that champion the cause of the subalterns such as women, the poor and the victims of environmental degradation, are found to be incapable of a viable and sustainable level of convergence, across these interests, to force a shift in state policy or reverse the tendencies that are detrimental to the survival and enrichment of subaltern classes. They are also blamed for being the allies of donor agencies in promoting 'free marketeering'. Hence it is argued that 'civil society is not a very deeply rooted locus of opposition to the free market' (Abrahamsen 2000: 1). Civil society is said to have given private property and its possessors 'a command over people and their daily lives, a power enforced by the state accountable to no one' (Wood 1995: 254). The roots of these diverse criticisms can be traced to two juxtaposed meanings, European and American, which refer to the 'top down' and 'bottom up' processes of civil society formation. Recognizing the polarity caused by these two processes, says Cox (1999: 7–8), Gramsci had 'insisted that the revolution must occur (in civil society) prior to the revolution (in the form of the state)'.

The middle class origins of many of the civil society organizations and new social movements, critics argue, makes them easily amenable to their use by the state, international financial institutions and big business, as agents of neo-liberalism. On the other hand, there are those who claim that the middle classes were the central force in the struggles for democracy in Asia. The confusion about the role of the middle classes originates, as Choi (2001) shows, in their ambivalent status with respect to the ultimate purpose of democratization.

In many countries of Asia, intellectuals from the emerging middle classes developed an inclusive vision of democracy and attempted to give it a practical shape. In countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, for example, educated professionals and highly motivated students from universities have had a history of deep involvement in the struggles for democracy and in developing partnerships with the rural classes. They helped articulate popular demands through

intense dialogues, and gave them a discursive form through which they could be presented to and understood by the official circles and international sympathizers. In other countries of Asia also segments of the professional middle class, women and men, previously excluded from politics by military or bureaucratic authoritarian regimes, expanded their demand for genuine participation to include the rural and urban working people. They formed alliances with workers and peasants based on their shared antipathy towards international and domestic policies of growth which were detrimental to the lives of poor people. They remained equally open to the locally anchored cultural influences and to those emanating from an emerging international community of democracy, environment and gender activists. They remained in close communion with the popular classes and were willing to share their frustrations and aspirations. Their willingness to join in the struggles of the deprived classes for survival gave them the cutting edge in struggles against domestically entrenched and globally connected vested interests of the still dominant military and traditional elites. Thailand provides an outstanding example of this convergence (Keys 1995). As a result, there is a growing recognition in Asia today that even under formal democracy access to such public spaces continues to be denied to those without substantial economic and political resources. The promise of equalized access to public resources and unrestricted inclusion of all in the making of decisions remains unfulfilled despite democratization.

A confused understanding of the history of the concept of civil society and the ideological roots of its contemporary conception as an intermediate sphere, standing between the individual and the state (Ehrenberg 1999: 173–195), leads to a rather dangerous neglect of the claims of the 'developmental state' (Leftwich 1993) to represent the common interests of all citizens. This claim led to its attempts to fulfil the promises made at the time of political independence. In order to understand the claims and the failure of the developmental state and the burgeoning of civil society in much of Asia, we need to pay attention to another concept, central to the idea of democracy, namely that of the public sphere. With the failure of the developmental state to fulfil the promise of becoming the embodiment of public will, the concept of civil society as an intermediate sphere standing between the state and the individual has gained ground in the discourse of democratization. But the failure of civil society organizations to make the state more responsive to the plight of its subaltern citizens, while making more and

more concessions to the demands of capital, and their dependence on big financial interests and the state for support have given credence to the strong criticism levelled against them.

The revolution in civil society, contemplated as necessary by Gramsci in order to transform the state, is difficult to contemplate in the absence of a renewed and robust public sphere. In its absence one sees the spectacle of civil society organizations often scrambling for alliances with other organizations in advocating specific interests of the segments of the subaltern classes, against the onslaught of economic globalization. These alliances tend to produce outbursts of anger and activity, but few lasting deliberations and actions that can effectively demand a paradigm shift in the actions of national and international power brokers.

Under the onslaught of a globalized commercial culture, the institutions that once held the promise of a vibrant public sphere are facing a decisive decline in Asia, a decline that parallels the one associated with the systematic citizen pacification of older industrial countries (Herman and McChesney 1998: 136–155). The process of cultural and political globalization seems to have accelerated the tendency towards commodification and privatization of the public media, the political party system and the university. Much has been written about the transformation of the media (Bagdikian 1990; Mattlehart & Mattlehart 1992; Stevenson 1999). The political parties are becoming catch all parties. They are losing their ability to articulate the interests and demands of the deprived classes. They have also become highly bureaucratic and insensitive to the rapidly changing social and political milieu and to the emerging needs of less vocal citizens. Their main preoccupation is their own electoral survival for which they become financially dependent on organized interests and affluent patrons. Educational institutions are being harnessed to 'voluntarily' create a type of civic consciousness that ensures the legitimacy of the regime. The effect is quite similar to that produced by direct coercion or threat of sanctions, but under a formally democratic polity. In much of Asia today, major political parties, institutions of formal education and the internationalized 'media of communication' are playing the role of citizen pacification, of manufacturing consent and legitimization of actually undemocratic regimes (whether formally democratic or not), as has already happened in the older capitalist democracies (Habermas 1989; Offe 1985; Chomsky 1993). Defenders of citizen apathy and critics of 'demand overload' among the advocates of formal democracy see these as signs of stabilization and consolidation.

The full pacification of citizens and the reduction of politics to a spectator sport are far from complete in countries with the recent experience of democratization. Hence, the fear that popular disenchantment with democracy will lead to mass movements, triggering renewed repression and reversal to authoritarianism, haunts the affirmative theory of democratization and leads it to offer prescriptions for stabilization and consolidation of democracy.

Globalization transition, consolidation and de-democratization

The four main pieces in the puzzle of democracy: Civil Society, the Public Sphere, the state, and globalization, receive diverse and contextualized attention of the authors of the chapters included in this volume. The chapters by Jing Lin and Edna Co examine the role of education in democratization while Heryanto and Quadir take a close look at the question of stabilization and consolidation of democracy after transition from authoritarian regimes and in the context of economic globalization.

A growing awareness of citizenship and other human rights in Asia is often attributed to the process of globalization of culture and politics. More and more people now have access to information, to ideas and opinions that their leaders may not want them to hear or reflect on. Reforms in education, guided by the revolution in information technology will, it is claimed, accelerate this process. It should help all citizens, especially those who are not yet in the circuits of the global information revolution, to gain access to the previously denied avenues of democratic discussion and debate and to participate in politics in rationally informed ways. With a growing number of well-informed citizens, the proponents of globalization argue, we are witnessing the emergence of a global culture, a global polity and a global civil society. They visualize the agencies of the United Nations and the international non-governmental organizations as helping to enhance the capabilities of national civil society organizations in making citizens more conscious of their rights and the state more responsive and responsible to public opinion.

One must contrast the plausibility of this scenario to the intentions and actions of those seeking a monopoly control over key global resources including information, and have the military-economic clout to enforce it. Any effective curbs on the latter will require the development of a strong links between revitalized local, national and global

public spheres, capable of designing a counter-globalization project that can capture the upsurge of popular support for a movement towards genuine democracy at all levels. At present the dominant financial institutions and transnational capital, working in close co-operation with the only superpower, rather than the United Nations, are directing the movement towards democracy in order to protect their own global interests (Robinson 1996). Rather than contributing to the broader projects of education that raise citizenship competence, civil society organizations tend to focus only on highly fragmented themes within a highly localized action frame (fair trade and sustainable development, for example), often in 'partnership' with foreign aid agencies and big business. Rather than confronting and challenging the state or working to establish principles for possible cooperation with it by engaging it in the political public sphere, they prefer to bypass it. Critics also point to the decline of progressive elements in civil society due to its isolation from the radical social movements of the poor. In effect, rather than educating citizens for politics, civil society may be contributing to their de-politicization.

At the same time education is itself undergoing dramatic changes in Asia under globalization. Demands for its privatization are part of the economic liberalization package. There is a growing and understandable insistence from the people that it should be geared to meeting specific needs of prospective employers. If that means downplaying the importance of creative and critical learning, so be it. The conventional development literature had already made that point through the invention of the term 'human capital'. Education is considered to be indispensable for growth. It may also lead to demands for political participation (Coleman 1965; Kabashima & MacDougall 1999: 275). The idea of education as contributing to human capital stresses the role of humans as workers and focuses on their capacity to fulfil the needs of real capital. The possibility of democratic consciousness is a side benefit and plays only a secondary role. Critical scholarship, on the other hand, stresses the critical and reflexive capability of citizens as the primary role of education, while also recognizing its importance as the provider of better employment and income.

The extent to which education as human capital and education as the development of critical competence will correspond to each other will depend on the priorities the state and the educational institutions are able to set for the use of this human capital. Under the current conjuncture the interests of capital, not people, will determine the direction of education in developing countries. Excessive emphasis on

technical education, so as to promote certain kind of employment opportunities, appears to neglect the development or exercise of critical competence. As it is, access to formal education is closely correlated to the economic and political power of the household. The quality of education one receives also varies according to the degree of privilege or deprivation of a household. This is true in all societies, formally democratic or not. The most important likely consequence of privatization of education, as already seen in some of the countries of Asia, is the denial of access to quality education to the youth from the deprived sections of the population. All educational institutions are being required to be sensitive to the demands of a private enterprise economy. They are already being forced to make a choice between democracy and capital.

The two chapters on 'Democratization and Education in China' and 'Education as an Instrument of Democratization and Governance' help us look at the overt and subtle ways in which citizen pacification is entrenched through formal education. In the older capitalist democracies there is a close relationship between the family of birth, educational opportunities and economic success. This has been well documented by critical studies. Equivalent privileges accrue to the members of the ruling classes in developing countries where kinship, caste, gender and ethnic identities bear a close link to economic and political power which in turn determines access to and quality of education available to the citizens. In their chapters, Jing Lin and Edna Co describe the overt ways in which access to knowledge, is controlled and monopolized by the ruling classes in China and the Philippines.

The economic reforms in China were accompanied by educational reforms, first introduced in 1985. A phased programme was to ensure compulsory education for all school-age children in urban, rural and the backward areas by the year 2000. Greater decentralization and autonomy were introduced into the university system. The state also shifted some of the burden of education on to the students. Jing Lin's chapter on 'Democratization and Education in China' points to the consequent growth in critical and independent thinking among university students. The severe economic crisis that followed rapid economic liberalization in the 1980s, combined with the rising critical competence of the youth, triggered the outburst of the democracy movement in 1989 (Mason 1997). Lin notes that the consequent shift in the 1990s to military training as a requirement for university students and control of opposition groups on campuses have contained political activism. Emphasis also shifted rather decisively towards voca-

tional and technical education in the 1990s, in response to the growing demand for trained personnel in the expanding sectors of manufacturing and trade. The government and businesses together actively promoted education that discouraged political reflection and encouraged careerism. Lin notes that a large majority of students have turned their attention to making themselves rich. University education now translates itself into an opportunity to find lucrative employment in the private sector or to become an entrepreneur in a rapidly expanding economy.

How many of China's young men and women will be able to fulfil their dream of becoming rich quick and for how long, is an open question. In early 2003 the *People's Daily* (January 1, 2003) reported that due to the enrolment expansion that started in 1999, the employment market had already been submerged by university graduates. It also carried a comment by a researcher on the factory-like approach of some of these institutions of higher learning, on their irrational curricula and on education that produces graduates who lack in knowledge and abilities. And Matthew Forney, reporting for the typically dramatic *Time Magazine* (Time Asia 29 July 2003), claimed that for every Chinese who escapes poverty, there are many others, young and old, who remain trapped in hellholes that blight the outskirts of major population centres. The government must fear that these citizens could one day rise up in revolt.

Lin notes that inequalities in educational opportunities have been intensified by social class stratification and ever-enlarging regional gaps… She also notes that these changes have been accompanied by the profound de-politicization of society. Today most girls want to be businesswomen or pop stars and not politicians. Most students want to become rich. Not many will be ready to die for democracy, she says; they are merging themselves avidly into the ethos of competition and personal achievement.

Lin still sees the expansion of private schools and the increasing participation of local communities and parents in educational matters, as indicative of demand and pressure for democratization of education through access to quality education. This, she hopes, will in turn contribute to the pressures for democratization of political life. Elite schools catering to children of the new middle class, she believes, will contribute to democratization because of the opportunities that exist to innovate and for local communities to participate in providing education. Fundamental changes in education in China will be gradual, just as democratic changes are likely to be evolutionary. Private schools

and greater autonomy in education will produce, she hopes, an open-minded and better informed generation, aware of its rights and tuned in to the worldwide trend of democracy.

One wonders what kind of democratic education will emerge from these private schools that limit access to the rich. Lin believes they will enable students to develop critical and reflective thinking. Studies of education in Western democracies show that when polarized by quality, it inculcates polarized values and attitudes among the young from elite and subaltern classes. The former grow up to believe that they have the right to rule and that the society is constituted by openness and opportunity for all. The latter learn to accept the second belief and blame themselves for their inability to succeed in such a society. Together they entrench the growing trend towards career and civic privatism (Habermas 1973: 75–78). Lin's description of the emerging scene in China bears a close resemblance to this scenario.

The importance of education, both in its positive and negative dimensions is also emphasized by Edna Co in her chapter entitled 'Education as an Instrument of Democratization and Governance'. In the history of the Philippines, students have always played a key role in social mobilization for democracy. Some of these young people left the university to organize the poor in the rural areas and among the urban working classes. As in China and Thailand, effective alliances between the worlds of professional intellectuals and the rural and urban working poor had emerged in the Philippines. This led to a more broad-based mobilization of young people in support of democratization. Subsequent developments in the Philippines, after the end of the Marcos era, Edna Co argues, have dampened the prospects for continued youth participation in the process of authentic democratization. The strategy of devolution of power and functions to the local governments has had a negative effect. Government officials now determine the extent and direction of youth participation in development decisions and programmes and have reduced it to tokenism. The once vibrant youth organization, *Sangguniang Kabataan*, faces shrinkage of relevant activity, youth apathy and predominance of non-youth officials. The momentous overthrow of Marcos and his authoritarian regime occurred in 1986. By 2000, Co found that prospects for meaningful consolidation of democratic spaces, especially in the rural sector had diminished, replaced by bureaucratic formalism and youth apathy. Revitalization of youth involvement in further democratization of the Philippines, she suggests, should begin by organizing young students first of all to bring about substantive reforms in educational policy so

as to make it an instrument of democratization and people-oriented good governance.

Negotiated transitions to democracy

Advocates of globalization contend that export led industrialization gave a cutting edge to the new middle classes in their desire for greater participation in decision-making and thus accelerated the process of democratization. The international financial institutions argue that the enhancement of trade, capital and technology flows to developing countries requires a reformed policy environment. The key elements of their demand are balanced budgets, increased competitiveness of the economy through liberalization and encouragement of foreign private investment, shrinking of public sector investment and employment, increased privatization of social services, and much greater export orientation. The negative impact of these policies was felt all across Asia with great intensity in the aftermath of the economic crisis of the 1990s.

Ironically the advocates of reforms have blamed the crisis on the same 'crony capitalism', a form of economic and political collusion between domestic and global capital, along with the implicated state elites, that had been previously praised for bringing about the economic 'miracle' in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, for example, the World Bank had praised the Suharto government's perseverance with the strategy of economic liberalization that pushed the export growth rate to 25 per cent a year between 1985 and 1991. The Bank also had much praise for Indonesia's healthy growth rate of seven per cent or more since 1991. Then a financial panic spread across the region, beginning in July 1997, and the Indonesian economy suffered a nosedive. The World Bank estimated that Indonesia went from its seven per cent growth rate of 1997 to a rate of minus 15 per cent in 1998. It was only when the previously suppressed popular anger exploded on to the streets and appeared to threaten the future of foreign investment along with that of Suharto and his family that the same global managers of finance, who had praised the regime for its sagacity in the mid-90s, were moved to aid the fall of the regime in cooperation with the United States. The IMF, acting on behalf of global capital, eventually declared that its money would come with strings attached and with measures that would root out the nepotism and corruption that supported the business interests of Suharto's family and its cronies (World Bank 1993; Bresnan 1999). The World Bank and the IMF, under the

initiative of the United States, then engineered a negotiated transition to democracy in Indonesia.

Like the United States and the international financial institutions, affirmative scholarship on democratization also favours a negotiated transition to democracy. Liberal democratic theory is built on the premise that the material foundation of freedom is private property (Ehrenberg 1999: 196). Under this dispensation rule of law, seen as the foundation of formal democracy, translates in practice into the rule of property. Negotiated transition to democracy therefore aims at introducing the rule of law so as to ensure protection of private property. Much of the pro-democracy activity of the IMF and the United States, in the wake of the Asian financial crisis, it becomes clear, was aimed at ensuring the interests of the propertied classes and specifically the massive investments of foreign capitalists.

China avoided the East Asian crisis because it managed to insulate itself from the movements of speculative international finance. It introduced and managed its economic reforms by uniquely combining 'the advantages of a command economy alongside the flexibility imparted by the functioning markets' (Patnaik 2003: 127). Scholars are debating the implications of this strategy. Some see this as a revised socialist path that presents a viable response to the dangers posed by rapid liberalization. Others see this as the renegade effort of an outdated regime producing a halting and inadequate march towards a fully liberalized economy. Others believe that despite the desire of the regime to fashion a unique path, both domestic and international interests of finance capital are now running out of control and one should expect to see the worst effects of inequality and exploitation associated with rapid economic liberalization.

Smaller countries like Indonesia and Bangladesh, with a history of failed formal democracies and without a revolutionary history, seem less capable of resisting the negative pressures of globalization. They also carry the burden of negotiated transitions, the continuing domination of those who benefitted from the authoritarian regimes, what Ariel Heryanto describes as the debris of post-authoritarianism. Suharto's original authoritarian reversal, which ended with a dramatic transition in May 1998, was accompanied by incarceration and massacre of thousands of civilians. His regime sustained itself through a complete reversal in foreign policy with a pro-West shift under the Cold War and an associated economic policy of liberalization and export-oriented industrialization. Various forms of violence became the hallmark of the regime which sustained itself through diplomatic

protection from the 'liberal-democratic' and 'human rights promoting' west. The consequences of the policy of economic liberalization in the end triggered the downfall of Suharto in Indonesia and of Ershad in Bangladesh.

Both Quadir and Heryanto question the standard interpretations of the transition process. Heryanto suggests that in the writings of the 'analysts', who believe that they come from more democratic countries, there is little recognition of how and why the debris of post-authoritarianism persists in Indonesia and of its enormous potency for sudden reversal of the gains of democratization. He examines the 'sympathetic foreigner' perspectives on the prospects for democracy and contrasts it to the perspective of the Indonesians who have been working towards democratic transition for a long time. These etic analysts offer a pessimistic assessment of the prospects for democracy. The Indonesian activists and analysts, on the other hand, are much more optimistic. They have focused on formulating selected pressing issues so as to communicate directly and effectively with the Indonesian people. Heryanto gives a review of these issues. He points to the evidence of complicity of the old regime and its loyalists in the continuing violence after regime change. The evidence of the post-Suharto events, he shows, does not point to complete acquiescence to repression nor does it indicate a complete submission to opportunism. Instead, Heryanto argues, pro-Reformasi movement has progressed as rapidly as possible towards further democratization of Indonesian polity, in the face of enormous and daunting challenges, economic and political. Heryanto finds the analyses of Indonesia's past and of its present by the outsiders to be insensitive to the history and the current dynamics of political reform in Indonesia.

Equally insensitive to the complex ways in which the struggles against authoritarian regimes in Asia were shaped during the Cold War era and since, are those who credit the process of cultural and political globalization for the success of these struggles. Globalization in their view entails freer flow of information along with that of goods and services, across national boundaries. As a result of these flows, it is claimed, the indigenous efforts were greatly aided by the acceleration of an international upsurge of protest and resentment against authoritarian regimes (Pinkney 2003). Active promotion of formal democracy in Asia by the United States and of good governance by the international financial institutions, as part of their agenda for economic liberalization, are also claimed to have emboldened democracy activists under repressive regimes. The delayed intervention by the US and the

IMF in Indonesia, that eventually accelerated the fall of the regime and produced negotiated transition, tells a different story about negotiated transitions. It is pregnant with major implications for our understanding of the process of democratization. A cautious awareness of these implications and of the dangers of unrestrained flows of not only goods and services but of information and advice from the motivated managers of Western finance capital permeates the progressive elements within the Reformasi in Indonesia.

The indigenous understanding of what democracy should be, among the various groups in the pro-Reformasi movement, expresses itself through the continuing tension faced by the state in its compliance, under pressure from the international financial institutions, with the dictates of economic liberalization. While the proponents of continued liberalization are counting on the appetite for consumer goods among the enriched middle classes to restore investor confidence and accelerate the growth of the economy, scepticism about this form of growth and the desire to restore some national autonomy to the development process is still alive and strong. The viability of the current growth path is being seriously questioned by the progressive elements within the movement, in view of the slowing economy with weakening exports, declining investment and rising unemployment. The battle over the continuation of the IMF economic bailout programme within the government also points to this inner tension (see the editorials in *The Jakarta Post* on July 14, 17, 30 and 31, 2003).

The first reversal of democracy in Bangladesh came in 1975 when General Zia came to power in the wake of the previous regime's inability to fulfil the promise of rapid social development after independence and under formal democracy. In his chapter, 'Going Beyond the Mainstream Discourse: Democratic Consolidation and Market Reforms in Bangladesh', Fahimul Quadir shows how Zia succeeded in co-opting the political parties into partnership in his neo-liberal agenda of economic reforms. He managed to construct his own political party out of the quarrels within and between fractious political parties to win a landslide victory in the 1978 and 1979 elections. The second reversal of democracy came in 1982 when General Ershad seized power. His reform strategy produced diverse but equally undesirable results for many groups within civil society, including workers and professionals; hence his failure to replicate the earlier co-optation strategy. Unlike Zia, Ershad provoked a confrontation with disenchanted groups within the civil society which had become, after a spell of formal democracy between 1978 and 1982, highly critical of military intervention in politics.

The end of Ershad's regime was just as dramatic as that in Indonesia but in a different way. In August 1991, the parliament replaced the autocratic presidential form of government, through a constitutional amendment. Quadir seeks an answer to the question: why even after this negotiated transition has the consolidation of democracy, held out as a promise by that dramatic moment, failed to occur? He explores the reasons of civil society's active participation in the democracy movement and the reluctance of mainstream political parties to join until forced by popular pressure. Both of these phenomena, he shows, were triggered, by opposite concerns stemming from the regime's sweeping economic changes which were of major benefit to only some of the privileged sectors, including the military officers and the private sector and of no benefit to the subaltern classes. Equally important, he believes, was the economic downturn of the 1980s, a phenomenon that is so common in highly liberalized economies in Asia.

Quadir goes on to show how the contradictions inherent in market reforms undermine the consolidation of constitutional democracy even after a negotiated transition has ensured the rule of property under the rule of law. In Bangladesh the failure of pro-market reforms to benefit the majority has made the formally democratic regime increasingly more vulnerable to violent protests from subaltern groups whose socio-economic expectations remain unfulfilled under a formally democratic regime wedded to aggressive economic reforms. Market reforms may thus upset the popular hope of institutionalizing democracy. Since most mainstream authors claim that market reforms create pressure for democratization, Quadir sees the need to move beyond this form of analysis and to focus on the forces that show some true ability to enhance people's choices.

Both in Bangladesh and Indonesia, negotiated transition from authoritarianism and subsequent return to economic liberalization, which had triggered the popular unrest in the first place, has left the politicized sections of the population disenchanted. The failure of the dominant political parties to effectively respond to these popular urges has left a vacuum in the public domain. In Indonesia the struggle between the promoters of economic liberalization and their opponents continues but the future of the popular opposition to the agenda of economic globalization remains uncertain, given the strong possibility of an alliance between the remnants of the New Order, the supporters of liberalization within the Reformasi movement and the current regime in the United States. In both countries the revival of a sensitive public sphere capable of responding to the popular apprehension of

elite pluralism of formal democracy will depend on the strength of an independent press, presence of political parties that are sensitive to the aspirations of the common people and cultivation of a critical spirit among the youth by critical and courageous intellectuals in universities and other places of learning.

Social movements and democratic alternatives: women, environment and popular democracy

The negative impact of globalization on the ordinary citizens of Asia takes diverse forms. Their recognition produces equally diverse responses and brings to light different facets of globalization. From local reaction and resistance due to ecological damage and disruption or degradation of the ways of life to international alliances and networks for securing justice, equality and survival for millions of deprived citizens around the world, we are now witnessing a massive upsurge of popular reaction to the ravages caused by economic liberalization and by the monopolization of political and cultural spaces by apparently invisible forces of the market and the media. To the extent that this upsurge crosses the north-south divide, it exposes the claims of formal democracy as the best form of government to bring about people-centred development. The two most promising developments in this direction, so far, have been the women's movement and the environmental-ecological movement. In both cases transnational networks of organizations have emerged with initiatives that have their roots in local issues and with local regional or national bases of popular support. These networks have demonstrated their capability to engage in developing shareable agendas that remain locally sensitive and are still able to go beyond local particularities while taking into account the differences based on the unique conjunctures in their histories of struggles against oppressions differentiated by class, gender culture or religion. Both the opportunities and the dangers, created by an increasingly integrated global political economy, with far reaching consequences for the lives of people, have made such linkages possible.

Where these linkages have broken the barriers that separate civil society organizations, such as the NGOs, from popular social movements, including trade unions and farmer's organizations, resistance to the ravages of globalization has shown far greater promise than where their spheres of action have remained isolated from each other due to mutual suspicion. Women's and environmental movements have been at the forefront in building broad based and lasting alliances. They

have been more successful than most other initiatives so far in going beyond routine protests against agents of globalization to develop universally acceptable alternative globalization agendas.

Women, globalization and democracy

Economic globalization has had a mixed impact on the women of Asia. In their chapters both Alissa Trotz and Le Thi Quy focus on the place on women in formal democracies and in democratization. Advocates of globalization claim, for example, that the entry of large numbers of women into the labour force has resulted in greater gender consciousness and activism and a resultant movement towards greater empowerment. Many new jobs for women did emerge in the productive and service sectors. Employment enabled some women to challenge some of the oppressive aspects of patriarchal household regimes. The increase in their ability to shape their daily lives was matched, however, by the fact that much of the work for working class women is poorly paid and demeaning, insecure and unhealthy. Upper class women of Asia have also gained a substantial share of the expanding service sector, especially in public-service employment. For some it has meant better working conditions and some influence in the public domain. But they also face discrimination and harassment in the workplace and the spectre of backlash and gender conflict.

Critics have pointed out that the deployment of women in the new sites of employment is characterized by asymmetrical gender relations and patriarchal gender ideologies (Moghadam, 1999). Flexibilization of labour pushes women out of the core workforce and into a pool of part-time, temporary, casual and sub-contracted labour. Fear has been expressed that this economic marginalization, coupled with the ideology of privatization, market freedom and low labour costs, may also dampen what little exists of the socio-political movement of women in Asia and thus prevent any radical improvement in their lives (Gills 2002). On the other hand, women's massive entry into the workforce at all levels has also coincided with the political mobilization of women and the expansion of women's organizations. The two most significant types of mobilization have been unionization and international feminist networks (Moghadam 1999).

Alissa Trotz brings the problem of exclusion of the disadvantaged sections of society into focus in her discussion of the opportunities and challenges posed for women by globalization. Her chapter, 'Engendering Globalization: Perspectives on Challenges and Responses', identifies the

transitions that began in the 1970s, with the induction of redistributive issues in the discourse of development. It opened an ambivalent space for women's issues. Since then and especially in the 1980s and 90s, we have witnessed rising disparities in the levels of human development between the north and the south indicating gross abridgement of human rights. At the same time terms like human rights and democracy have proliferated in the discourse of international organizations such as the IMF. The push for democracy and development has, so far, done little against the economic, social and political marginalization of women. Trotz surveys the growing feminization of labour, through the expansion of export and informal sectors. She examines the migration of female labour and the associated exclusionary citizenship practices of the older capitalist liberal democracies. Since the current global restructuring is profoundly gendered, in these and other ways, she argues that women have a unique possibility to move the discourse of democracy and development towards a commitment to substantive equality, universal citizenship and social justice. She reviews specific instances of women's collective responses to the impact of globalization which includes the growing burden of poverty, rising gender inequality, deteriorating working conditions, lack of organization in the informal sector, lack of access to credit and health care and the growing violence against women. Responses to all of these injustices point in one direction: need for a transition, in all societies, to a substantive democracy based on substantive equality of all citizens. Excessive optimism about women's responses coalescing into a movement for such democracy will be ill-founded, however. It must be tempered by a realization that these developments represent both the extension of a possibility and the reinscription of its limit.

Emerging development opportunities and challenges is also the theme of Le Thi Quy's 'Women, Development and Empowerment in Vietnam'. She shows how globalization is undermining the legal safeguards and official recognition of women as equal partners in development. Women often have to sign contracts promising to remain unmarried and not to have children for five years when they seek employment with foreign companies. Women also work between 16–18 hours while men get away with 8–10 hours of work every day. In a country heavily dependent on agriculture the labour intensity and hours of work of rural women are reaching an alarming level. Quy also notes the pervasiveness of violence against women in Vietnam. There is also the growing incidence of trafficking in women and children for labour and sex exploitation. Quy also draws the conclusion, based on

her wide-ranging evidence from Vietnam, that the project of gender equality and equal civil society is going to be very difficult and calls for a long-term struggle.

Environment, ecology and democracy

The inadequacy of formal democracy in protecting and enhancing the lives of those without economic or political privilege and of those who are thus excluded from the formal arenas of discussion and debate are nowhere demonstrated with greater vividness than in the rush towards growth in Asia and its devastating effects on the ecology and the environment. The rapid expansion of degradation and destruction of actual habitats of communities of plants, animals and humans, in the name of economic development, deliberate destruction of the environment 'in defence of democracy' (through ecocide associated with wars against communism in the past and against terrorism at present) and massive ecological damage inflicted by uncontrollable effects of climate change, transborder pollution and irrational and dangerous waste disposal, have been occurring in all countries of Asia, regardless of the form of the political regime.

Strong local action and global environmental and women's networks have had some, albeit highly formalistic, impact on the agencies promoting development. Environmental assessments and gender/social impact analyses have now become part of aid packages of most agencies. Similar demands about accountability are being made by aid agencies on the governments in developing nations, in the name of good governance. The idea of good governance dates back to the early days of Western democracies when the then rising class, the bourgeoisie, mobilized mass popular support against the exclusionary state, demanding that it be accountable and responsive to an emerging public of which it claimed to be the leader. In its pristine sense good governance would refer to the capacity of the state to ensure that its policies and decisions are in essence in consonance with what the citizens in their role as citizens have come to expect as in common interest of all. Today the critics of the agenda for political reforms and state accountability are legitimately asking whether the current proposals for good governance can and will take aim at those with privileged access to societal resources and their clandestine use by the dominant political actors, often against the interests of the public. These actors, who govern through the state, today include both domestic and international capital, represented by such transnationals as Enron and

Union Carbide. Does the current advocacy of good governance seek to ensure that these agents do not endanger the livelihoods of the common people or is it merely a camouflage under which the agents of capital are seeking to ensure its profitability by fair or foul means?

In his chapter 'Environmental Degradation and Social Justice: Implications for Democracy in Asia', Lawrence Surendra addresses this question after reviewing the complex relationship between ecology/environment, political economy and the issues of common property resources. He interrogates the uncritical faith in the power of science and technology as well as the opposite tendency towards cultural determinism and the recent upsurge in the discourse of governance and democracy. He highlights the exclusionary practices of formal democracies in Thailand, India and other states of Asia where they have been locating massive developmental projects in areas inhabited by the indigenous people. He expresses cautious optimism about the strength and vibrancy of the grassroots movements in Asia. The discourse of democracy, civil society and good governance, he argues, is guided by a desire for insurance against conflicts and destabilization of the global political economy. The hope of the middle classes is that democracy will act like a sponge against internal conflicts arising out of a reaction to inequality and injustice. Apart from the democratic processes that will have their own dynamic, he also cautions that these hopes will be belied as resource destruction and environmental degradation leave no alternative to the widening spirals of social strife.

Peter Stoett strengthens this sense of caution in his 'Democracy, Ecology, and Ecocide in Asia: Some Critical Reflections'. He points to the lack of rapid global coalition-building and action in the face of imminent disasters. People are dying, he says, as garbage dumps in Manila crush the marginalized, farmers in Thailand and the Philippines lose their livelihoods, the destruction of biodiversity is spreading rapidly in Asia, with many species already lost forever while toxic legacies of wars, old and new, continue to afflict the newborns. Stoett's careful survey of evidence leads him to the conclusion that the Asian political economy will continue to be subject to bursts and busts of growth, rapid and virtually uncontrolled industrialization and a compounding of the severity of environmental problems with massive dislocations of populations. Globalization, he believes will continue to divide and conquer Asia and the pockets of resistance will be severely tested, if not eliminated in the years to come.

An increasing awareness of these dangers is now spurring on the possibilities for a counter-globalization project with an agenda that seeks to bridge the gap between the nascent local and global publics. However, critics of social movements have pointed to their various inadequacies resulting in their myopic concentration on single issues and in their blindness to the universal dimension of the specific manifestations of those issues. Like civil society organizations, social movements are also faulted for their dominance by urban, educated middle class activists, whose interest and attention spans are conditioned and constrained by their class position. While social movements and civil society organizations are credited for being able to mobilize substantial support around causes that are localized, or constituency specific, they are far less successful in developing a coherent vision of societal transformation and hence they have not been able to contribute to the development of a local, national or global public sphere (Castells 1997).

The already existing feminist and environmental networks claim to have gone beyond most of those inadequacies. It remains to be seen, however, how and how well these global networks will become the building blocks of a global public sphere, by taking advantage of the massive protests of recent years. They have shown some striking capability for developing a sense of publicness in a spatially and socially dispersed cross section of the global population. As Trotz points out in her chapter, the struggles of working women in different parts of the world point towards a single universalizable demand for substantive equality and democracy. A global political culture that is guided by a basic universal quest, not for profit but for justice, equality and freedom for all, will have to emerge. It must remain deeply sensitive to the uniquely local and national manifestations of these values. Transnational communication and action networks have been able to take advantage of some of the space opened up by globalization. Their success holds the promise of revitalization of the public sphere at global, national and local levels.

Democratic alternatives and the public sphere

The chapters on environmental degradation and democracy address some of these questions. Surendra and Stoett look at environmental degradation, ecocide and lack of social justice with cautious optimism and pessimism. The intensification of environmental degradation, by far the most disastrous consequence of the 'rush to growth', accelerated

where not initiated by the pressures of international capital, has gone hand in hand with the victimization of the poor and the disadvantaged. In response to the pressures of the market, more and more domains of the everyday lives of people are directly and adversely affected through commodification. Intensified resource exploitation is also endangering the survival of people and nature in a hundred different ways. Popular local resistance movements have arisen all over Asia, in response to these pressures. What are the prospects for their becoming the vanguard of transformation of democracy?

Rocamora's 'Formal Democracy and Its Alternatives in the Philippines: Parties, Elections and Social Movements' presents an interesting example of how, in a national context, the energies of discrete social movements can be effectively harnessed to contribute to a vibrant public sphere. He begins with a critical review of the role of the multilateral institutions and the United States in fostering and pushing a certain form of democracy. Their advocacy of formal democracy and good governance is linked to their own agendas and interests that focus on the rule of capital. Emulation of the Western model of democracy is central to their discourse of democracy because it ensures the separation of politics from the real structures of power located in the economy. Their massive efforts to bring about regime changes in developing societies are being nurtured by the removal of socialism as an alternative and through the deepening economic penetration of the south by the West. The state is still needed but must be made responsive to the needs of globalized capital. Good governance is reduced to policies that establish tax and investment rules favourable to capital and institutions that help the market and correct its failures. The project of good governance offers different remedies for different states depending on whether they are strong or weak. The Philippines is a weak state because of the dispersal of political power among regional and local business interests and politicians. It has led to the lack of public interest in politics, except as a spectator sport and to the weakening of the political parties. In the Philippines, the decline of the Communist Party and the subsequent emergence of the new NGOs and people's organizations, at the end of the Marcos era, represent a constructive revitalization of the left. Globalization has brought the majority of the population into the circuits of national and international capitalism. It has also increased the potential surplus that can be appropriated by local governments. Local politics represents a fertile new arena for progressive politics. Rocamora believes that with the emergence of *akbayan*, the Citizens Action Party, as a new political party of the poor and disenfranchised majority, possibilities for mobilization around a programme of

radical democracy is now possible. Success of this initiative will depend critically on internal democracy in the party and its commitment to remain accountable to a dynamic and assertive mass movement.

Since a vibrant public sphere is vital to the transition from formal to substantive democracy, transforming social movements into political parties, ensuring that they do not lose their connections to local issues and constituents and encouraging and building on the political involvement of civil service organizations, is one possible way of revitalizing the public sphere at the national level. Similarly, if popular energies, are mobilized by these movements and organizations in support of critical journalism and in the battles of progressive print and electronic media can create the logical foundation for objective, Pro-People Journalism, further strengthening of the public sphere can be ensured. In many countries of Asia, critical intellectuals are increasingly endangered by restrictions on the institutions they work in, enforced either by the state or by the gendarme of the big business or of right wing politics. They also can benefit from the support of these organizations and movements. Chapters in this volume offer a small glimpse at the obstacles that lie in the way of such a democratic transition and point to the possibilities that are emerging.

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Democratization and Education in China

Jing Lin

This chapter first defines democratization and places it in the context of Chinese social and economic changes. Then it outlines some significant changes in China's education system and identifies dilemmas and lack of changes in many aspects of the schooling process. It highlights the role of private education development in democratizing the education process in China. The chapter is based on the many field trips that the author has made to China in the latter part of the 1990s, visiting over 40 schools and observing many changes in the Chinese society.

Definition of democracy and democratization

Democratization can be defined as the process of institutionalizing and/or building the culture of citizen participation in government. This involves power sharing, autonomy in society and equalization of opportunities. Democracy is an institution as well as a way of life (Dewey 1938). Democratic education should enable students to develop critical and reflective thinking and become active participants in the building of a democratic community. By this definition, it would be argued that democracy, in many developing countries, is far from becoming an institution as well as a way of life. However, democracy as a process, is taking place in developing countries like China. This process entails changes in the social, political, economic, cultural and educational systems toward greater autonomy, power sharing and equalization of opportunities.

Democratization is often posited in the dichotomy of 'state versus civil society'. According to Jang Jip Choi: 'Civil society is conceptualized as a network of organizations or a structure of classes which

emerge at certain historical junctures as articulate political and social groups to advocate common interests. The state, however, is society's ruling body and its controlling structure' (1993: 13). Civil societies are considered essential in democratization in that they form a cushion between government control and individuals; they allow individuals social space and independence, which are key to the formation of diverse voices and freedom of speech.

Context of democratization and education in China

From the 1950s up to late 1970s, China was under the strict control of the Communist totalitarian government. Social oppositions were strictly forbidden, and all social groups were politically categorized and treated differentially under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Education was instituted as a state-controlled machine, teaching obedience and loyalty to the communist cause. The general public enjoyed little autonomy and had no right for freedom of thought and speech (Lin 1991).

The economic reform launched by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s started a new era in Chinese history. The reform in the economic system and the opening up of China for foreign investment injected competition, accountability and autonomy into the economy, which simultaneously caused a great transformation in the Chinese society. In the 1980s, the appearance of a large number of social interest groups prompted the study of civil societies in the country, leading to speculation that they may provide new prospects for democratizing China or laying the foundation for democratic movements in the country (Lin 1994; Whyte 1992).

However, the context for democratization in China is very complex. First, under the authoritarian government, civil society in China does not fit its standard definition. They are 'forcibly depoliticized' (Choi 1993: 13) and given highly insignificant roles to play in the political system (Lin 1999). The social groups that will be discussed in this paper, therefore, are not articulate political groups but form a new social stratum that seeks ways to use their resources and connections to reconstitute the education system and to affect changes in school goals and curricula.

The two decades of economic liberalization in China since 1978 have brought about a great transformation of social classes and their roles in education. Notably, today, Chinese social classes are no longer singularly defined by their political affiliations and loyalty to

the government, as was the case in the first three decades of the communist regime. They are classified by their occupation, education, possession of economic resources, and political positions. About 10 per cent of the population that have 'made it' in the multiplication of opportunities in the new economy are now called the emerging new middle class, and a much higher percentage can be categorized as the latent middle class. This latent middle-class is composed of government officials, teachers, professionals, and public workers who not only earn a salary but also make a significant amount of income outside of their regular salary by kickbacks, bribery, moonlighting, and so on. It is these two new social classes that, more than ever, realize that their children's future hinges on a good education. Knowing that China is becoming a global economic power is putting pressure on people to have high levels of education and skills.

Along with changes in the social class structure, cultural and social lives in the country have become highly diverse and plural. The government's control over ideology has essentially broken down; what is in place is a multitude of religious authorities leaving a great void for moral authority. The profound cultural and social changes have been characterized by depoliticization of the society. Cultural plurality and the formation of independent social groups have prompted discussions about the formation of civil societies in China as a force for democracy, as just noted.

However, all these changes do not necessarily indicate the advent of democracy. The Chinese government remains highly authoritarian, despite the fact that it has had to enter into negotiation of power with diverse social forces. The Deng Xiaoping government and the government today, in order to attract foreign investment and stimulate internal economic development, as well as to appease the public, have enacted a series of laws and policies decentralizing the political and educational systems. However, these policies are often issued but not implemented. Further, horrific corruption in the government has channeled many policy measures to share power with 'thunders that bring no rain'.

Democratization in China is therefore a complex process. The communist government wants to maintain its dictatorship, however, it has also had to enter into renegotiation of power with newly rising classes that are formed under the capitalist economy. Plurality of values and fundamental changes of mentality have awakened the Chinese people to be more conscious of their rights and powers (Lin 1994, 1999; Mok 2000). However, overall, the government has tried to maintain a cap

on democratic activities, especially organized activities. This is especially so after the severe government suppression of the Student Movement in 1989. In short, radical political change in China is unlikely. Instead a gradual expansion and consolidation of civil societies, which may lead to sudden dramatic turns in government policies and social events, will be more apparent. In education, the experiment on democratic and critical education, as outlined by Paulo Freire (O'Cadiz et al. 1998) and John Dewey (1916), is yet to be attempted.

Within the framework of authoritarianism, Chinese government bureaucrats have also greatly evolved. They are no longer staunch communists like the old guard and most of them have come from technocratic backgrounds and have been put into leadership positions because of their education and expertise. This change adds new dimensions to democratization in China because a large number of these government officials at various levels tend to be open-minded, well educated, ambitious and pragmatic. These people may lead to gradual changes in the nature of the government in China.

Therefore, education in China operates within a transitional and an internally contradictory social context. As a part of society education is in itself a part of the social transformational process. In a transitional society, education can be used for political and social emancipation, but it also can function as a tool for affirming political control and cultural reproduction. In China's reconstitution of power, education has a key role to play in the distribution of opportunities. Today, educational credentials are more and more important for this purpose. Changes in Chinese education since 1990 have thus evolved around access to quality education.

Changes in Chinese schools, private education and democratization

Previously, it was mentioned that in the first three decades of communist rule, Chinese schools were turned into a passive tool for political control (Lin 1991). However, the last two decades of reform have created the social conditions that allow for significant changes in the education system. Chinese schools have gone through the process of politicization, hyperpoliticization, and depoliticization. Although political teachings mandated by the government still infiltrate all school activities, learning in school is no longer a one dimensional political preaching, and the intensity, in terms of political indoctrination, has

greatly reduced (Lin 1994). In the summer of 1999, the author and a colleague interviewed about 100 girls to discuss their concerns and interests. None of the girls expressed a strong interest in being a politician in the future. Most wanted to become businesswomen, scientists, pop stars, or educators. The students, however, expressed a strong sense of social conscience. For example, many girls brought up environmental protection as an issue of serious concern. The new generation of girls impressed us as being highly depoliticized and very humanized.

In the 1980s, the opening of the economy to the outside world and the introduction of Western democratic ideals caused many waves of student democratic movements. Critical and independent thinking among university students culminated in the student movement in 1989 (Lin 1994). Subsequent suppression by the government in the 1990s, such as military training as a requirement for university students to learn obedience, and the tight control of opposition groups on university campuses, effectively contained the political activism among the students. At the same time, the 1990s witnessed the whole of Chinese society being taken up by the rush to make money. In the big wave of jumping into the sea to set up their own businesses, a large majority of students have turned their attention to making themselves rich in the rapidly developing economy. Despite survey data indicating that students still admired Western democracy, Chinese students today can hardly be seen as a united group who will die for the dream of democracy; instead, they are merging themselves actively into the capitalist economic ethos of competition and personal achievement.

Simultaneously, structural changes are taking place slowly in all parts of the education system. School principals today are enjoying more decision-making power, especially in terms of school finance and personnel (Lin 2000). Educational provision has become much more diversified, and the rapid rise of private schools and other forms of schools is especially noticeable (Lin 1999). This indicates the advent of a new era in which social forces are getting actively involved in educational provision and eventually in the change of school goals and curricula.

The appearance of elite private schools attracts wide national and international attention, particularly by raising key questions relating to public education reform and social equality. By 1999, more than 70,000 private schools of all kinds existed in the country, of which 10 per cent were elite private schools that charge high tuitions. As I have discussed in my book, *Social Transformation and Private Education in China* (1999), in the 1990s there appeared a new middle class in the

country. It is formed of private entrepreneurs, white-collar workers in foreign-owned corporations, officials in the government, intellectuals with special skills, movie stars, stock traders, and so on. The new class makes an income many times higher than that of ordinary citizens. They therefore wish to send their children to high quality schools.

However, in China's public school system, secondary schools are divided into key and ordinary schools. The key schools have comparatively the best teachers and the best equipment. Yet these elite public schools take in only about 4 per cent of the students, and getting into those schools means one has to pass grueling examinations. The new middle class, therefore, aspires for an alternative type of good schools for which they are willing to pay hefty tuitions and fees. Meanwhile, private citizens and educators who were disappointed with the rigidity of the public schools also wanted to set up a new form of schools that would allow them to be innovative. Private entrepreneurs also sensed the advent of a golden market for high-fee schools, which prompted them to pump millions or hundreds of millions into building elite private schools for high returns. Given all these conditions, about 700 elite private schools were set up from the early 1990s to 1999.

The elite private schools encourage flexibility in teaching methods, and they all claim to make holistic development of students a central focus. Innovation in teaching approaches and the building of a positive community culture are noticeable features that are key to ensuring the survival of the schools in strong competition with each other and with public schools. The schools, in connecting learning with the rapid growth of transnational capitalism (Chen 2003) in the country, also provide intensive learning of English, computer science, and extracurricular activities, all of which aim to teach students multiple international skills. Some educators also attempt to inject the notion of independent thinking into the teaching process and the notion of appreciation of art as a form of character education. Fostering compassion for others and respect for the elderly are emphasized in many schools.

Another factor indicating the democratization of education in China is in the participation of local communities in providing for education. Again, one striking example is found in the setting up of private schools, but these are rural and urban ordinary private schools. The author visited several urban ordinary private schools. The founders were alumni of former private schools, retired schoolteachers and administrators or government officials. These people dedicated tremendous amounts of their time and energy to provide

low-cost education for urban school 'pushed-outs', namely students who could not get into public schools due to low scores on admission examinations. In the rural areas, three private schools visited by the author were set up by villagers. To place this in the context of some background, although the Compulsory Education Law enacted in 1986 states that all children can attend free school for nine years, rural public schools, due to shortage of funds, charge parents many different kinds of fees. Some schools demand rice as a substitute if students can not come up with cash. Most rural families have three to five children, and the fees demanded by public schools sometimes exceed the total family income.

Furthermore, the villagers are very dissatisfied with the quality of public school education. Many teachers were hired through the back door and they knew little about teaching. The villagers thus decided that they wanted their children to continue with quality education and that they must have their own schools charging affordable fees. A village would therefore pool money together by charging each family ten yuan per head and the villagers would make their own bricks and build a school with their own hands. The village heads were directly involved in the selection of the teachers and the principals for school administration and the new expansion plans. Although this and other rural schools had no pianos or computers, at least the rural children had a place to go to for learning where the quality of education was more ensured.

The linkage of democratization and education can also be viewed from the level of parental participation in education. Again, private schools have gone ahead of public schools in this aspect. In Chinese public schools, parents have very little say with regard to school administration. In elite private schools, however, parents are very involved in their children's education. They often come to school to consult with teachers about their children's academic progress. Some schools install telephones in the teachers' home so that the parents can contact the teachers after school hours. All elite private schools visited have Parents Consultation Committees that hold meetings with school administrators and teachers on a per semester basis. Some schools also ask parents to supervise student examinations. In rural ordinary private schools, parents are directly involved in the setting up of schools, teacher selection and administration of school affairs. In all, private schools have a higher level of parental participation, and teachers and administrators are held accountable to parents who have a sense of direct ownership of their children's education.

In terms of diversity of educational provision, another significant development is in the single-sex girls' schools that have reappeared to cater to the characteristics of girls' learning and to help girls learn skills so that they can find jobs in the ever-expanding service sector. Today, China has more than one hundred ordinary girls' high schools, vocational schools, women's colleges and departments. Some of these are wholly funded by private investment, while others are partly subsidized by the government. Some are co-ed public schools converted into single sex schools with government approval. Another significant development, in terms of diversity of educational provision, is private universities that had outnumbered public universities by 1999. While there are less than 1,200 public universities, there are more than 1,200 private universities. They offer programs that aim to meet the society's demands in rapidly developing areas such as accounting, computer science, business management, the decoration industry, etc. These universities are usually small in scale and they are seldom engaged in any research activities. Less than two dozen of these universities have won government approval to issue degrees recognized by the state.

Students of other private universities have to pass a national, self-study, higher learning examination for degree qualification and certification. Despite much criticism about the unfair treatment of private universities, the government has been reluctant to grant private universities degree-granting powers. These universities are usually small in size, have little research activity, and narrow their teaching to trades so that students can get a job. A deeper concern on the government's part is that a relaxed policy will encourage faster development of private universities and which could potentially turn out a group of university students that would be difficult for the government to maintain within its current tight control policy.

Restraints on democratization

While indications of democratization taking place in China are obvious in the private education sector, changes in the pubic education system are slow in coming. Recognizably, public school administrators have been given greater control over school finance and staff, however, they have little say in terms of policy making and educational orientation. China continues to have a highly centralized education system. The Ministry of Education maintains a top-down control over policy-making, school goals, curriculum, appointment of high ranking officials, and many other aspects of school affairs. Teachers are

still taken as the passive implementers of government policies. They are expected to fulfill the role of 'banking' students with government-sanctioned ideologies and making sure that students do not challenge the control of the communist government. All of these constraints curb teachers and administrators from adopting creative ways to reform the education system and inculcate critical and democratic thinking in students. Rote learning, therefore, remains the predominant teaching method in the classroom.

Another great restriction placed on the democratization of Chinese education is the National College and University Entrance Examination. Dubbed the 'steering wheel' for schools, the examination directs all school activities toward mastery of required subject contents and the educators' roles are restricted to systematically passing textbook material onto students for optimum performance on these examinations. Parents have similar expectations of schools, whereas governments reward schools based on their ranking in performance of the various examinations. The mode of teaching prevailing in Chinese public schools allows students to store information and facts for the sake of being able to regurgitate the same at University Entrance Examinations. Development of critical, independent thinking is rarely brought into the center of concern in Chinese schooling. Students, burdened with a huge amount of homework, suffer under tremendous pressures (Lin & Chen 1995).

A democratic ideal widely recognized is the right to education for all children. In China, inequality in educational opportunities has been intensified by social class stratification and the ever-enlarging regional gaps between the Han majority in the East and the minority groups in the West. Further, with the transformation of a public economy into a private, market driven-economy, there has been a massive redistribution of power and social benefits. Access to elite public schools (key schools which take in only 4 per cent of the students) is strictly based on the parents' possession of intellectual, political and economic power (Lin & Heidi 1998). Heidi Ross and the author have visited many elite public schools in the second part of the 1990s. These schools are far superior to ordinary schools in terms of teacher quality, equipment and facilities, and exposures to new technology and teaching approaches. In terms of funding, the key schools not only receive more funding from the government, but they are also able to use their advantageous positions to admit additional students at high costs. Some key schools have professional studios, television and star observatory stations, while ordinary public schools merely have tables and

chairs and a large number of half-minded and unmotivated teachers. More than 80 per cent of the students in the key public schools come from families that are advantaged government bureaucrats and intellectuals. Usually, more than 90 per cent of the key school students can go on to universities, while only about 5 to 10 per cent of the ordinary school students can do the same.

Similarly, access to elite private schools is highly related to inequality in income and wealth. The new middle class benefits from this new form of schools aimed at providing quality education. A contradiction in this discussion of democratization is that while elite public and private schools favour the already advantageous social groups, it is also these schools that provide the possibility for implementing democratic education. Many elite private schools that were visited make conscious efforts to encourage open-mindedness and creativity. They pay more attention to students' individual differences and involve parents actively in school administration. One school, especially, sets its motto as instilling in students 'great, generous love' towards the whole of humankind. The principal of this school and those of many other schools work hard to foster caring relationships among students.

Comparing China with the Philippines, we can find many similarities. For one, the government ignores the importance of education. In the Philippines, the government invests a very low percentage of GDP in education and this is also true in China. The Chinese government has, over the past two decades, reiterated that China's development relies on the development of science and education, and that the strategic role of education will be affirmed by increasing educational funding year after year. A series of laws and stipulations were passed, including the Nine Year Compulsory Education Law, the Law of Teachers, and the Law of Education in the 1980s and 1990s. Despite these gestures, the government has consistently decreased its investment in education, and the burden of funding to keep schools going is placed more and more on the shoulders of school administrators.

Today, elite and ordinary public schools receive less than 60 per cent of their funding from the central and local governments. Schools have to run businesses of all kinds, including factories, shops and extra classes in order to make up the shortage in funding. Many principals who were interviewed called themselves 'entrepreneurial principals'. While key schools can demand high fees for admitting additional students (such as for one point of a score lower than the admission line, the parents were required to pay 10,000 yuan), most ordinary schools

have to rely on collecting a variety of fees from parents in order to supplement school budgets. Some parents find it impossible to sustain their own living expenses as a result of the high demands of some schools. Rural parents have to pull their children out of school because they cannot afford the multitude of fees. As mentioned, the fees demanded by some rural public schools can exceed the total cash income of the parents in a year!

Striking inequalities between rural and urban schools persist. In funding, the investment per rural student is less than 20 per cent of those of the urban students. In terms of school buildings and equipment, rural schools usually have 60–70 students crammed into a poorly equipped, dimly lit small room who are taught by low-paid high school graduates who have received little training in teaching. In comparison, urban schools in general have bright classrooms with 40–50 students. More than 85 per cent of the students in the urban areas can complete senior high school, while less than 60 per cent of rural students can attend secondary schools and even fewer graduate. Since rural children represent more than 70 per cent of the population, the lack of access and low quality in education significantly slows China's pace toward democratization, which is largely hinged on a rise in the social and self-consciousness of well-educated citizens.

Public universities in China started to charge students tuition in 1995. Today, all public universities charge a tuition ranging from 2000 yuan to 8000 or more yuan per year. This amount is affordable for most urban residents, but for many rural students, this would mean that their families would have to carry a huge debt by borrowing from relatives and villagers. Many rural students are thus discouraged to continue their secondary education. Many students have to give up the opportunity even though they have worked for years for it. Consequently, only a very small percentage of rural people will be able to improve their social status through availability and achievement of a higher learning degree, while the majority will be compelled to remain at the bottom of society due to a lack of educational opportunities.

Conclusions

Is there a model of democratization for all countries? What does democratization mean for a developing country? Will the Western model of democracy work in Asia? How can the cultural and social heritages of developing countries be maintained while the Western form of demo-

cracy is being introduced and implemented? Democratization in Asia is closely linked with the issues of overpopulation, environmental pollution, poverty, arms control, religious conflict and regional tensions. However, the focus of this paper did not dwell on these issues. It is my conviction that in the 21st century, democratization in Asia will occur simultaneously with attention to these key issues. Education is only one aspect of this big picture. In China, overpopulation will coexist with poverty and the related shortfalls in educational funding for a long time, and the debate on democracy will accompany discussions on transformation and maintenance of China's traditional culture and values.

China has opened her doors to the world, and there is no turning back. This means that China is irrevocably connected to worldwide trends toward democratic development. Yet, it is not definite that democracy will necessarily be the result of the development of the market economy. What we need to wait and see is when and how the new social classes in China become articulate political voices, and true civil societies are formed to become the backbone of a central democratic institution.

How significant a role can education play in the democratization in China? For one thing, education is part of the change in the social economic context. It seems that the prospects of democratic changes in China may be evolutionary for some extended time and therefore the pace of fundamental changes in education will naturally be gradual also. They are inextricably linked. My belief is that the rise of private schools will prompt reform in the total education system in China and greater autonomy in education will turn out a new generation that is more open-minded and better informed about their rights and worldwide trends of democracy.

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3
Education as an Instrument of Democratization and Governance

Edna A. Co

Introduction

A traditional perspective on education and democratization is to view students as a potent force in the articulation of democracy, and to focus on students as activists and actors in the field of education. Although students do have a crucial role to play in democratization by way of social mobilization and political activism that puts pressures upon state institutions regarding democratic issues such as education, this chapter takes another viewpoint on the equation of democratization and education. It posits that due to policy negligence (particularly the negligence on education), democratization in a larger sense, and particularly students' engagement, are powerfully threatened. As such, policy as a highly political process and instrument creates a social exclusion of large segments of the youth in various ways. Such policy therefore needs to be challenged. Social exclusion of the young through the inaccessibility to education is an erosion of democracy and equally raises questions of governance. That education is essential to the life of a nation is a truism that persistently bears repetition among many governments, policy makers, and even among the youth and the students themselves. Just like the health service, the other basic social service that ought to be available to all among developing nations is education. Newly industrializing countries in the East, such as Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan, demonstrate the crucial role that education plays in human resource development both for social as well as economic progress. These countries have invested in education. However, in the Philippines specifically, education service has long failed to catch the attention of leaders and policy makers, thereby making it a neglected sector. The task of this paper is to

unravel how education policy in the Philippines, an important social service, continues to limit access to education to the poor.

The education sector in the Philippines: a glimpse

The structure of the Philippine educational system may be understood through the following programs:

- Optional school programs that include nursery and preparatory schools;
- Compulsory six years of elementary education;
- Compulsory four years of secondary education;
- A variety of post-secondary programs including three years of technical/vocational training.

Basic education, which refers to the six years of elementary and four years of secondary education, is provided free by the Philippine Government. There are state universities and colleges (SUCs) that offer post-secondary education, but people who want better quality education due to available facilities and equipment, go to private tertiary institutions of learning. The cost of education, however, in private tertiary institutions is beyond the reach of many Filipino families. Those who take the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are either students who do not qualify to take a post-secondary program, or those who cannot afford to pursue a University or college degree.

Elementary education

Among the elementary schools surveyed by the Department of Education Culture and Sports (DECS) in the mid-1990s, the government is unable to meet the requirements of a complete elementary education (EDCOM 1993). In some communities, school buildings cannot adequately meet classroom needs. The data on school-age population vis-à-vis classrooms in Table 3.1 bear this out.

According to DECS 1995 figures, 35.95% of government elementary schools could not provide education to all the six grades to complete elementary education. The existence of incomplete elementary schools implies that children have to wait for the next grade level to be offered further education; otherwise, they have to transfer to another school. In most cases, however, distant locations of schools becomes a variable

Table 3.1 Number of Elementary Schools in Relation to 7–12-year-old Population (school year 1993–94)

Region	*Population 7–12*	*Elementary schools*
National Capital Region	1,032,417	801
Cordillera Autonomous Region	167,262	1,190
1	510,619	2,277
2	374,683	1,824
3	899,133	2,618
4	1,213,682	4,158
5	709,629	2,879
6	866,782	3,153
7	689,550	2,666
8	518,868	3,168
9	493,568	2,486
10	537,810	2,533
11	643,640	2,389
12	458,618	2,240
National	9,116,261	34,382

Source: DECS Statistical Bulletin, 1994.

that prohibits schoolchildren from pursuing education. The children become less motivated to pursue schooling.

Secondary education

As a result of the government's free secondary education policy, there was a dramatic increase in enrolment in the secondary school level since 1987. While the number of students who joined secondary education may be a cause for celebration, some high schools started to convert laboratories and libraries to classrooms to accommodate increased enrolment. Consequently, the aptitudes for science and technology as well as reading suffered.

The drop-out rate is an interesting variable. Government secondary schools reflected increased drop-out rates with the highest noted in Region 8, the Central part of the Philippines, and which was placed at 11.5% in 1990 (EDCOM 1993) and continues to increase towards the end of the decade. The National Youth Commission (NYC) reports that poverty is the major cause of the high incidence of dropping out of school. Although free primary and basic education is widely available, household poverty and the need to contribute to family livelihood override the concern for basic education. The attendant costs of education are far above the reach of the poor. Despite free basic education,

other costs of sending children to school such as a uniform, school supplies, daily allowance, and school projects costs – make education prohibitive to the poor. The cost of sending more than one child to school amounts to at least 20% of family income (ILO 1995), which is too much for a poor family that earns an average of US$28–35.00 per month. The same ILO (1995) report on the Philippines notes that at least one to two children of a typical poor family leave school and go to work to support the education of siblings. The observation here indicates the correlation between dropping out of school and poverty and demonstrates that poverty is a bloc to the survival of children in education, especially of the youth who come from the low-income bracket.

Other reasons for dropping out include: the inadequate public spending on basic education, leading to inadequate facilities (including teachers and teaching aids) particularly in the rural areas, and the increasing lack of interest in schooling due partly to ineffective teaching methods. The inadequate public spending is, therefore, directly responsible for the ineffective teaching methodology, which creates the lack of motivation among state school teachers. There is also a shortage of classrooms in secondary schools given the large proportion of the school age population, thereby forcing government secondary schools, particularly in the National Capital Region (NCR) where the school population is the largest, to resort to three shifts of classes daily.

The access to basic education in the Philippines is interestingly intertwined with not just a question of school-related resource availability but also to poverty-related issues. Income levels and the ability of the typical Filipino family to cope with the demands of a decent life are among the factors that influence the pursuit and completion of even the basic education. It is therefore impossible to dichotomize access to education and various other variables such as a higher income level, food sufficiency, a steady employment that could sustain the attendant costs of education and the skills and interests of the individual. Education is intrinsically linked to socio-economic and political variables. A dichotomy between education and economics, education and resources, poverty and preferences for social mobility, and education and political policy is therefore unrealistic. Policy makers who wrack their brains on merely technical issues of education will find themselves wanting in explanations as to why and how education remains ineffective and inaccessible in the Philippines as indeed, education is a social, economic and political issue altogether.

Tertiary education

For tertiary or higher education, the Philippines has one of the highest college participation rates in the ASEAN region (Table 3.2) and probably ranks as one of the highest in the world.

Despite a relatively high enrolment rate in higher education, there are DECS data, however, suggesting that students who are of low socioeconomic status (SES) fail to enter higher education due to financial considerations and that because the previous education is of inferior quality, low SES students are at a disadvantage to compete for places at better institutions. Quality education and standards of learning are increasingly becoming inaccessible to those who cannot afford to pay the higher costs in private tertiary schools. Enrolment rates are one factor to look at by way of educational access, but the quality of education is another matter.

Students from the low and middle SES strive either to obtain scholarship assistance, or to go into public tertiary institutions, where, because of lack of equipment and facilities to meet the standard of learning, have no guarantee that the quality of education is comparable to private tertiary institutions. Certainly, government schools do not have sufficient allocation for school facilities to meet the standard of education akin to institutions of higher learning. State universities and colleges (especially the University of the Philippines) continue to suffer a budget cut from the national allocation in favor of changing fiscal priorities of the Estrada administration. The budget cut of about 20% from the national subsidy and an additional 50% from the operating costs are hurting the upgrade of equipment, laboratories and science and technology facilities that would enable at least the University of the Philippines to become competitive among Asian

Table 3.2 Comparative Enrolment in Higher Education in 1990 (by country in the ASEAN)

Country	*% of students enrolled in higher education*
Indonesia	6.5
Malaysia	6.0
Philippines	38.0
Singapore	11.8
Thailand	19.6

Source: Congressional Commission on Education, 1991–92.

institutions of learning. The budget cut among state universities and colleges have prohibited the institutions from hiring additional and more competent educators. This has also meant an inability to absorb more poor students into tertiary education. These factors largely explain the quick slippage of the University of the Philippines from the rank of 39th to 48th among the top universities in the region. The Philippine investment in education is shown in Table 3.3.

It is interesting to note from the above figures that while education apparently grabs a relatively bigger share of the budget allocation compared to other sectors, the said allocation has yet to be visible in terms of basic classroom facilities, education infrastructures and teacher salaries and benefits, all of which affect the quality and relevance of education. Resource utilization and management are crucial in this regard.

Investments in education

Government is the biggest source of funds for education. In 1961, the budget allocated for education was placed at 32% of the government budget, but this continued to decline over the years: 26% in 1968, 12% in 1972 during the Martial Regime, 11% in the 1980s, and only 10.7% in 1987. In 1992, the budget for education was 39.42 billion pesos, which was 4% higher than in 1991 (EDCOM 1993). The budget for education in 1992 was 12.8% of the national budget compared to 36.6%, which went to debt service. Under the Estrada administration, the education budget is placed at 30.51% of the total budget share. This figure, however, continues to slide with a chunk of the budget being diverted to defense as the onslaught of the Mindanao crisis in the Southern Philippines escalates and therefore demands enormous resources from the national government coffers. On the whole, govern-

Table 3.3 Allocation of Budget: Education and Other Sectors (1999–2004)

Sector	*% of GDP*	*Share to total budget*
Education	3.91%	30.51%
Health	0.46%	3.62%
Social Services & Welfare	0.83%	6.52%
Housing	0.14%	1.06%
Land Distribution	0.12%	0.91%
Defense	0.90%	9.13%

Source: General Appropriations, 1999. Republic of the Philippines.

ment's investment in education as a percentage of the GNP (1.3%) is the lowest in the ASEAN Region and far lower than the Asian average, which is 3.3% (EDCOM 1993).

A chunk of the education expenditures goes to basic education and the least amount goes to higher education. However, as in many other countries, there is pressure to invest in higher education if the country wishes to have more qualified manpower for the service and industry sectors. In the Philippines there is pressure on both ends – at the level of basic education to improve the literacy level, and at the level of higher education, to enable the country to modernize.

The government subsidizes private education at a minimal 2% to 3% of the total DECS budget, considering that the private sector shoulders 85% of enrolment at the tertiary level, 40% at the secondary and 5% at the elementary level. Because of the very low government subsidy, the private sector squeezes and passes on to the students the costs of private education. This explains the large discrepancy in the costs of tertiary education in the private and the public institutions.

The Filipino family at the poverty threshold cannot afford the attendant costs of quality education in most private institutions. Quality education has to be subsidized if it is to be accessible to the poor, particularly at the tertiary level which is crucial in accelerating social and economic transformation. Filipino families spend approximately 2.9% of the family expenditures on education (EDCOM 1993).

Are there external sources of funds for education? External funds come in the form of loans or grants. There have been debates amongst legislators and decision makers as to whether the Philippines should borrow money for investment in education, as education has higher private returns than social returns. Clearly, there is a serious perversion in this line of thinking. Leaders and decision makers view education as a sector that has minimal or low social returns. A leadership that would think along this line will probably need to go back to a basic education on governance. Civil society and democratization would refute that education has little to do with the social and economic progress of nations, productivity, industrialization, modernization, and above all, with human development which is premium not only to effective governance but also to democratization. If a country could borrow money for poorly managed infrastructures and real estates, not to mention the amount borrowed for private use and laundered, and the debt servicing passed on to its citizens, why shouldn't a nation borrow

money to invest in its human and social development? Why can it not count the social returns of education by way of potential employment, generation of jobs and enterprises, industrial growth, and inherent human and social development which clearly have high social returns?

Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) gets a 5.12% share of the budget on education, despite a low 2.1% of total enrolment. However, employers prefer to hire graduates of general high schools rather than those with TVET certificates. The hiring behaviour of employers shows that they prefer to train workers on the job (OJT) because these would adequately meet their particular needs. The advantage of TVET institutions is one of economies of scale, but the on-the-job training has precise relevance to the firm and to the trainee, and the more relevant the training is to the firm, the more willing the latter is to assume the cost of training. The comparative advantages of TVET training and the OJT program should be further studied to arrive at a sound allocation of resources for TVET.

The unevenness of government budget allocation is also observable in the regional budget allocations. Some regions receive proportionately larger shares of the budget compared to their shares of the total number of schools. Meanwhile, there are schools of arts and trade that get a smaller share of the budget in spite of a high percentage of enrolment, compared to programs on agriculture and fishery, which have a smaller enrolment.

Generally, enrolment is a main determinant of cost. However, the capital intensive laboratories and equipment which are essential to quality training and learning, especially in the applied fields, require high allocation from the budget. Apparently, the low cost of the program is always considered even as relevance and quality education suffer.

A few studies observed a 'glaring inequality' in the distribution of state universities and colleges in the country. There are provinces with only one SUC and a large college-age population; while on the other hand, there are 24 provinces with none at all. Obviously, the creation of SUCs was done without much planning for an integrated system of higher education, mainly because such SUCs have been created essentially for political interests or for a local reason. This indicates a serious problem of access to tertiary education. The bulk of tertiary institutions are private schools which charge extremely high tuition fees, the highest of which are almost equivalent to some private secondary schools in the United States.

Technical and vocational education

Technical and vocational education (TVE), usually classified as non-formal education, is taken as a post-secondary education. The TVE, however, is inaccessible to the general population. Approximately 86% of all technical, vocational institutes are located in urban areas, creating a disparity in the regional distribution.[1] Before 1986 or during the Marcos Regime, Regions 1, 2, and 8, which are the home regions of the Marcoses and Romualdezes, were so favoured that many schools of various kinds were established in these areas. Since the Aquino administration (1986–1992), however, and with a strong 'De-Marcosification' policy, Region 1 was stripped of all favours, including support for technical and vocational training institutes. Region 5, a major fishing area, has no college of fisheries, and only two fisheries institutes (Tan 1991). This suggests that there is no objective basis for the allocation of resources for infrastructure and shows how politicized the planning and allocation is for technical and vocational education. Furthermore, the bulk of technical and vocational learning takes place 'informally in the work place where the worker acquires particular skills and knowledge about the work and familiarity about production processes and the machines in use' (Tan 1991: 41).

The poverty of technical and vocational education requires attention and affirmative government action, particularly in the aspect of allocation of resources through scholarships and non-tuition subsidies. Unfortunately, such attention has not been extended to the sector.

Except for the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), no other agencies of the government seem to have taken root among the unemployed and the out-of-school youth. The latest TESDA update of 1998 reported that there were 59 regional and provincial training centers and community-based programs in 1,800 municipalities. However, the biggest weakness of TESDA is that it excludes in its program those who are not high school graduates, of which there are many among the out-of-school youth and the youth in the rural areas. Again, here is a reinforced policy of social exclusion of the rural-based out-of-school youth and the youth who have no means to pursue a tertiary education and who, precisely for such reason, would have been in need of a technical and vocational education.

Various research findings by the Congressional Commission on Education indicate that Philippine education has done little to equalize the opportunities for the poor, and to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor in the Philippines. This is especially so for those in the

depressed regions in the country, of which there are numerous. The schools in these regions tend to provide less quality service due to poorer quality of facilities, and also tend to register higher drop-out rates. They also fail to attract quality teachers and administrators due to poor pay and benefits. The better performing schools are those in favour of the middle and upper income brackets in the socio-economic ladder and who already enjoy better conditions and opportunities. In effect, the poor are likely to have less schooling and will therefore continue to remain poor. For education to be an equalizer of socio-economic opportunities in the Philippines, policy must reconcile with quality and relevant education for the poor and the depressed areas.

Resource utilization and management

The current policies and practices in the procurement of resources lend themselves to corruption, which diminishes the educational system's ability to carry out its mandate (EDCOM 1993). For example, the bidding for public school textbooks and materials has fallen into the hands of favoured contractors, not to mention the fact that bribery takes place in the bidding processes. At the start of the Estrada administration, there was a strong public reaction and a much publicized legislative investigation of the alleged bribery and badly managed bidding on school materials, discovered right at the Presidential Palace compound. A study on the different government agencies in the Philippines established the DECS as one of the top five agencies with a high occurrence of negative bureaucratic behaviour (Carino et al. 1989). Certainly, there is much room for improvement in the financial management of public school operations, particularly in hiring personnel, school-building construction and the purchase of books, supplies and other materials. With an efficient school operation, there could be substantial savings in public resources.

To assist a rational policy and planning system, including the basis for resource allocation, accurate baseline education data are necessary. Presently, the DECS documents on teacher and classroom shortages are based upon the projection of enrolment rather than on actual head count. Unfortunately, these projections do not reflect real needs and the changes necessary, particularly in the regions and provinces. The absence of rational criteria and standards to determine budgetary distribution contributes to political influence, especially in allocation to SUCs.

Furthermore, a policy that makes most SUCs heavily dependent on government subsidies puts a heavy toll on allocation on the one hand,

and adds to the inefficiency of the SUC on the other. With many assets lying idle, the SUCs could have been allowed greater fiscal autonomy, to find other sources of funding for their services and equipment and for upgrading their instructional capability rather than depending on the mere collection of tuition fees. With fiscal autonomy, SUCs could be encouraged to tap into other sources of funds, encouraging the utilization of their savings to upgrade services and competencies while reducing their dependence on the national treasury.

One of the main issues in educational governance and management is therefore, efficiency, which is not apparent in public education because costs and profits remain invisible and unappreciated. Furthermore, while there is a continuous dependence on annual appropriations, there remain no sanctions against wastage of resources or inefficiency. In this sense, there is no accountability of SUCs. Inefficiency and wastage are a given in the public educational system. It is probably desirable that local participation be encouraged in the management and operation of schools. Thus, for example, schools may be made more accountable through parent-teacher associations or they may even be made directly accountable to the community. In turn, their support and links to the community may render financial support for upgrading their facilities.

Accessibility through private education

The current system has hardly any choices for the poor to access education. One goes to a public education facility, whose quality and relevance are sacrificed because of stretched resources and inefficient operations. The other alternative is to go to private institutions especially at the tertiary level. But due to costs, the latter is not an alternative for the poor.

In many private institutions of higher learning in the provinces where tertiary education has a higher enrolment compared to public institutions, the common practice is to economize and cut costs by hiring teachers with lower qualifications, hiring part-time faculty, giving teachers more teaching loads, and giving lower salaries. Increasingly, private institution facilities are becoming inadequate and poor in condition. Poor students are forced to go into lower-cost, lower-quality institutions. The efforts to keep the costs of education down have, however, meant poor quality of the same.

Although private institutions are an option to education, these do not seem to be a choice among poor students. Moreover, the private

institutions have remained unregulated. The private institutions have not attempted to adopt a socialized tuition fee scheme for poor students. Neither has public policy encouraged the stock institutions to support education by converting themselves to non-stock foundations/institutions. There are no incentives to this effect. It is unfortunate that those who are potential sources of grants and donations do not contribute to non-stock higher education institutions. With more ODA agencies willing to lend bilaterally to private higher education institutions, a policy allowing private higher education that includes eligibility for ODA assistance should be made. But first, policies on ODA assistance should be examined.

Education has a tremendous social impact. The government should consider a Debt for Education Swap and appeal to creditor countries that the condoned debts should instead go to education with counterpart funds from the national government. This scheme should help accelerate educational development.

The question of privatization or particularly whether the state should move toward a policy of privatization of the education sector is a matter that bears careful scrutiny. On the one hand, there is an imperative for the state to take on many of the services in education, obviously, because in a developing country such as the Philippines, the majority who are poor, are unable to get access to education. In this regard, much is expected of the state as the guardian of basic social functions and the public good, to deliver and to provide an education for all. On the other hand, there is a strong, proactive private sector that gets into education both as business and service to society. While the governance framework encourages the participation of the private sector to assume its role and contributions to social service delivery, there remains an unregulated engagement by the private sector on education. Such liberal attitudes thereby keep spiraling costs of education, maintenance of quality education, updates on technology and facilities, research and development, and the opportunity for socialized education away from the eye of the state. The state's role in this regard is a matter of good governance. So is the challenge for the private sector to contribute to governance through education.

There continues to be a muted policy on education including its privatization. For as long as there is no articulation in regard to the policy on education and privatization, the public policy shall be eroded by the power and might of the private sector, and which then could be even more detrimental to governance.

The unifying message that cuts across this chapter's arguments is that the state has to be brought back in and to re-articulate its position on education, whether it is in the articulation of: a policy vis-à-vis privatization, in increasing the capabilities for better management of the sector, or in strengthening democracy by expanding the access to education to the poor. The state therefore remains to be an ultimate arbiter of education as a service and as a social good.

Programs and curriculum

The state of the graduate programs in the Philippines reflects that of the undergraduate level. Available graduate programs are mainly for teachers and managers. Graduate programs of low costs which do not require large capital outlay in terms of laboratory facilities are a common denominator with undergraduate programs. Moreover, research in the graduate program is relegated to a minor function. Most courses offered are in the fields of teacher education, commerce, and business management. Considered as the 'oversubscribed courses', these programs are where many students go because these are relatively inexpensive. Science and laboratory and technological facilities are not required. The course offerings beg questions regarding the quality of education, which includes relevance and appropriateness to the interests and ability of the individual as well as the usefulness of education in meeting the individual and societal needs. There is an increasing discrepancy between the courses taken or the graduates produced on the one hand, and the demands of the labour market, or employment availability and the industry on the other. Philippine education produces an enormous number of teachers, business managers and engineers, even as these courses generate a scarcity of placement after graduation. The problems include the growing number of college-educated unemployed and underemployed and the proliferation of academic degree programs, whilst there is a shortage of trained middle-level manpower in the economic sector, which is exacerbated by the recruitment of this type of manpower for overseas employment. The latter has also resulted in a drain of locally available trained faculty in technical and vocational institutions. Furthermore, there is a low number of high-level science and technology manpower engaged in research and development. The Philippines has a low 160 per million compared to Korea's 1,150 per million (EDCOM 1993). The main reason for such phenomenal stagnation of research and development of science and

technology is the minimal investments placed by public budget on this sector.

The absorptive capacity for technical and industrial jobs is extremely poor as there is very little incentive or investment placed in local technological and industrial development. As a result, those few technicians and industrialists find themselves queuing for employment overseas. Quality and relevant education also relates to determinants such as classroom time and length of the school year, competence level of teachers and administrators, and access, particularly at the basic education level.

Curriculum in virtually all education institutions in the Philippines – from the basic through to the tertiary levels – has significantly excluded the local culture, particularly the Muslim culture, in social science and civics courses. Comparatively, there is a strong orientation to Western, particularly American, culture, politics, history and government. Such lack of a two-way appreciation of the Christian-Muslim cultures explains the fragile socio-political ties between Christians and Muslims. It is of little surprise that the deep fission between Muslims and Christians quite easily contributes to the erosion of an ethno-religious base of democracy in the Philippines.

A politicized education sector

The services available to the youth and drop-out students depend on the discretion of local government officials and their personal and individual bias for education. Resource allocation for students and youth programs, whether formal or non-formal, curricular or extra curricular, remains largely in the hands of the local government officials. Under the Philippine decentralization policy or the Local Government Code of 1991, the local government units are given the autonomy to design and implement programs including education, which is one of the devolved basic functions in governance. With the discretion lying mainly in the hands of local government officials, education has become a highly politicized issue, inviting an even greater challenge to influence the educational policies including the process of resource allocation, utilization, and management of education. Rather than prioritize basic services such as education and promote investments in human resource development and productive manpower training for the rural youth, local government units have usually diverted resources for political campaigns and similar private interests. Education as a prime basic service remains to be challenged by the youth themselves

and by those who believe that education is a democratizing issue and that a clamour for a quality and relevant education should be an exercise of all citizens.

Besides such frustrating policies on education, the raging war in the Southern part of the Philippines exacts a heavy toll on education. Approximately 200,000 people from three towns in Maguindanao, a Muslim province in Southern Philippines, are temporarily housed in 29 elementary and four secondary schools in Parang Town (Fernandez 2000). Uncertain about when the conflict will end, education officials are worried about where to put the students who are deprived of schools now serving as evacuation centers for families. Are the schools for students or for the evacuees? The socio-economic-ethnic conflict which is deep-seated in Philippine history adds even more complexity to the texture of Philippine education and to the problem of governance.

Moreover, the military's stepped-up operations against the Muslim separatists and splintered rebel groups, have also grabbed a slice of the budget which should have gone into social welfare and services including health and education. The hostilities in Mindanao require a far bigger share of the budget than originally appropriated by congress. The executive had requested congress to increase the budget for ammunitions and ordinance in light of the declaration by President Estrada of an 'all out war' policy against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which are splintered by Abu Sayyaf. The Executive admitted that the war in Mindanao during the past three months has incurred a deficit in the national budget. Congressman Recto estimates that the 3-month old conflict between government troops and the Muslim rebels has already cost 1 billion pesos. No one knows when the war will end; much less do the poor students in war-torn Northern Mindanao know when they will be able to come back to school. Even if students could come back to school, they would find their school buildings ravaged by the war. Either that, or school houses spared by the war are now occupied by government soldiers. While a poor family pins hope on education as the only way out of the rut of poverty, the constant bombing has not only driven the children away from schools, but they must have also forgotten the letters of the alphabet they learned due to trauma (Fernandez 2000).

Some observers in our society ask whether the decision makers in Manila, the country's capital, have ever been educated about the supremacy of civilian rule over governance by the use of force. The

stepped-up budget on defense which snatches the shares of education, health and social services is not a good indication of a priority for a pro-poor program that the administration claims as its flagship.

The priority of the administration poses a threat to the reversal of democracy and civil society, which the Philippines had painfully restored from the rubbles of a dictatorship and Martial rule. The assertion – supremacy of basic services over defense, and of schools and education over bullets – should be an ongoing task of democratization in the Philippines. It is a task for government institutions, policy and decision makers, as much as it is a task for civil society. Civil society, particularly those directly affected by education such as the students and youth themselves, is not only faced with a misplaced priority of projects, but war and fission also clearly threaten what is already an ill-formulated policy on education. The priorities of the current administration are daunting to civil society and democratization.

Challenges of democratization upon the youth and the students

Education poses an enormous challenge to democratization and to the involvement of the youth and students who are principally affected by the policies. Over the years, the youth and students proved to be a force supportive of a mass clamour for democratization on various issues. The history of the Philippines is typified by the revolutionary movements led mostly by young people. The young revolutionaries collectively called the Katipuneros led the resistance against the Spanish colonizers. The intellectuals who were educated abroad were mostly young students who mustered a potent force in Spain. The efforts of these young Filipinos overseas inspired the nation to revolt against the colonizers through 1898. Revolutionary leaders at that time were mostly in their late teens and early 20's and are among the revered heroes of the Philippines. They are emulated by the Filipino youth to this day. Between the 1960s and the 1970s, the period of the Marcos dictatorship, the protest movement in the Philippines was again led by young people. The left, which was predominantly inspired by the re-founding of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), was led by students from the universities. The protest against the curtailment of freedoms, the lack of social justice and equity in society, the domination by traditional elites of formal politics and the continued subservience of the Philippine economy to foreign interests were amplified by the student-led movement on and off-campuses. Critical

awareness of social realities started in the campuses and spread outside to the larger population. The involvement of the youth and the students has never been the same as during the Martial Law regime.

Since the devolution of functions and powers of different government agencies including the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the DECS in 1992, the local government units (LGUs) have been trying to muster the initiatives of youth and youth development at the local level. In the municipalities and in the barangay (village) youth development and youth service are largely dependent on the local government officials, their interests and commitment to youth development. As such, youth services and involvement are varied and remain at the discretion of local governments. This then implies that resource allocation to youth programs depends on local government officials' bias for the youth and their education.

The most widespread youth organizations are the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK or village youth), which is a regular structure at all levels of the barangay, the lowest administrative unit in the Philippine government structure. The SK, through its Chair, is represented in the local council, the local legislative unit. The SK's activities are confined mostly to sports development, a program that many people, including government agencies, bewail as extremely narrow and parochial. Despite the SK's budget allocation from the local government, which is 10% of the local special funds, SK units fail to capture the enthusiasm and participation of the youth in most villages. And yet, the SK remain the biggest and most extensive youth organizations in the country. Most of their members are inactive and apathetic to many issues including those that affect the youth. The failure of the SK to capture the enthusiasm and participation of the youth, despite being themselves made up of youth representatives, is formulated in their use of the local entrenched political forces as tools. It is no wonder that the apathy and the failure to participate may be seen as a weapon of the weak having been convinced that nothing substantial nor significant comes out of these organizations in the interests of the youth. Government agencies, and the non-youth have appropriated upon themselves how the youth would have to be involved on matters that concern the youth. Today's youth activism is marginal compared to the scale and energy of the youth and students' activism in the 1970s. While the youth and student activism was intense in the past, this was limited to a few, educated, young people, some of whom left universities to organize the poor in the rural areas and amongst the working class.

Today's youth participation in democratization is being challenged on numerous grounds: (a) that the youth's role and involvement in democratization should transcend the boundaries of the universities as there are many more poor, young people in the rural areas now than ever before; (b) that there are many different venues of participation in democratization and there are varied forms of youth organizations that remain marginalized by entrenched political forces mostly present in the formal institutions of power. The SK, as mentioned earlier, are a case in point. Much more marginalized are the youth and the students by way of the gross lack of participation in issues that deal with education, an issue that tremendously matters to them. It is of little wonder that with the type of activities that the SK members are engaged in, the youth are disadvantaged by not being in the mainstream of issues that are ubiquitous to them as a sector, and by being politically imposed upon by other actors about matters where the young should count.

Curriculum, what is taught and learned, and how these are taught and learned are extremely political issues of education, but which many students hardly look at and challenge. Certainly, the onslaught of the information machines continue to amaze and have contributed to cripple the critical senses of the young. Indeed, the slogan of some 30 decades ago – 'youth participation in matters and issues that affect the youth' and the call for activism are still relevant today.

Conclusions

Education is quite a fertile social and political arena of governance and democratization that merits serious engagement by civil society, especially by the young. It is a valid ground for a strong policy on governance and democratization, as all its policies – budget, regulation, resource allocation, accountability, utilization and management, and so on – are ubiquitous upon all citizens. Policies on education, as a matter of governance, impact heavily upon virtually everyone, especially the poor. Policies regarding education, despite being strongly defined by those in power and authority, challenge civil society to reclaim the latter's stake on education and to participate in the democratization of education.

The challenges to democratization are varied and complex; the politics of participation particularly of the young is blurred by technology and the conveniences that technology brings. Moreover, the locus of politics has shifted from the informal to the formal. Democratization's relevance and impact are not confined to the massive mobilizations that pepper

state institutions with slogans and demands, but democratization and civil society are challenged to invade the halls of decision-making and to engage the state on educational policies and alter the same. Civil society and democratization are therefore faced with a formidable task to innovate in its strategy for policy intervention on education.

With policy as a locus and focus of governance and democratization, engagement with education shall probably require a different mode of activism, as policies interestingly demand rigor, an understanding of policy structures, an imperative to engage within the very structures that are responsible for such policies, or probably take on the diverse actors that shape and influence policies on education.

As indeed there are new avenues of participation, such as the large, indigenous organizations of the youth, particularly the young are summoned to participate from where they are, and eventually to defy an age-based social exclusion inflicted by an inequitable policy and an inaccessible education.

Moreover, the actors and players in the transformation of education and of its policies are not solely class based, thereby making the democratization process more inclusive. Policy makers, local government units, school officials and administrators, parent-teacher associations, and the students and the young are all contributors to a facelift of an education system if policies were to be the focus of change. Finally, the phases and levels of the policy process – formulation, implementation, reformation and innovation, both at the national and local arenas – should be reckoned by activists with a rational approach and a penchant for details, and by scholars with a more political perspective to policy and policy science.

Note

1 TESDA is the government agency involved in the upgrade and improvement of technical and vocational education in the Philippines. It replaces the old National Manpower and Youth Council, whose overall goal is to assist in the resolution of unemployment especially among rural youth.

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4

The Debris of Post-Authoritarianism in Indonesia

Ariel Heryanto

Introduction

Prospects for Indonesia's democracy, or the lack thereof, have drawn interest among analysts for years, usually in a critical and pessimistic vein. Understandably, attention to the topic grew remarkably at the time immediately following the resignation of President Suharto on May 21, 1998. The event marked the official demise of his heavily militarist authoritarian regime of 32 years, called *Orde Baru* (the New Order), the most durable among authoritarian regimes in capitalist states. Suharto's resignation took place only two months after his being re-elected for the seventh time by members of the MPR (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, People's General Assembly), and in the midst of the nation-wide and largely unorganized demonstrations that called for the end of his rule. Since then friendly diplomats and journalists have hopefully referred to Indonesia as the world's third largest democracy.

The incumbent head of state, President Abdurrahman Wahid, has more credentials and moral authority in public than most other present day politicians. Perhaps more than anyone else in Indonesia today, Wahid has both the capacity and the commitment to substantially reform the country's political as well as economic and cultural orders. However, he is bound by several and serious constraints; those restraints being his health for one and perhaps related to this is his idiosyncratic behaviour and contradictory statements. The uneasy coalition within the top government bodies has seriously destabilized the country and eroded confidence both domestically and internationally. One of his main challenges, upon which this essay will focus, is the debris of post-authoritarianism that the New Order regime has left

behind. Some analysts (for example, Robison 1999: 200) may regard him mainly as part of the legacies of the New Order regime. While such view is not entirely baseless, I would argue that he is better described as both a victim of that regime in the past and as a political hostage in the first several months after it lost power.

In order to understand some of the most daunting challenges that post-Suharto Indonesia faces, it is important to first recognize the discrepancies between the dominant views in Indonesia about the country's needs, problems and trajectory on the one hand and, on the other, what detached (mainly but not exclusively foreign) analysts have said over the years about Indonesia's potentials and problems in becoming a 'democracy'. What Indonesians decide to prioritize may not comply with the wish list of these sympathetic distant observers who look forward to seeing Indonesia upgrade its qualifications and soon enter into one of their taxonomic categories of democracy.

No solid analysis is yet possible given the extremely volatile nature of the country at the moment; any statements about the country's prospects are inescapably tainted with speculation. In the interest of focus and lucidity, in the narrative below I have decided to keep to a minimum any references to otherwise interesting events, as well as names of key figures and their statements.

Emic versus etic democracy

If some crude simplification is allowed, it is fair to say that for years there has been a rather striking contrast between the views of Indonesians who take an interest in their country's democratization (the emic view) and analysts (the etic view) who believe that they come from already – or more – democratic countries. Although this is a sweeping generalization, we can reasonably say that more Indonesians tend to be optimistic about the prospects, and less demanding with the process, than their detached analysts. This division appears to continue in their post-1998 analyses.

Private conversations with friends from other post-colonial societies give me the impression that a similar divide may in fact be found elsewhere. 'They can't believe that we are living beings and they can't believe our societies can change', a senior scholar from Asia once remarked. Undoubtedly, to an important degree, this divide reflects the different positions and personal interests of the beholders in relation to the subject matter concerned. This in turn entails the adoption – either consciously or otherwise – of different sets of conceptions of democracy. Neither

party seems to be exempt from the dominant discourses that impose different sets of imperatives upon their analytical procedures and tone of narration.

Of course analysts of contemporary Indonesian politics differ from each other in many aspects, but generally not in their pessimism about the prospects of Indonesia's democracy. Two notable exceptions are the political scientist Daniel Lev (1990) and the anthropologist Robert Hefner (1999). In one of the earliest and finest analyses on class structure and prospects for democracy in Southeast Asia, Harold Crouch (1985) concluded that Indonesia had no foundation to be democratic in any foreseeable future. Supposedly this was already determined by events two centuries ago, to do with the colonial transformation of the economy and polity that did not generate a strong and independent bourgeois class. Ten years later, he reaffirmed the same conclusion in an article specifically devoted to Indonesia and with arguments from more varied theoretical positions (Crouch 1995).

Like Crouch, the political-economist Richard Robison (1986, 1990, 1996, 1999) argues that the problem with Indonesia's nascent bourgeoisie is that it consists mainly of Chinese Indonesians who have been deprived of political and cultural rights. Although Crouch and Robison have different conceptions of the middle classes, both agree that Indonesia has no significant middle classes, mainly because of their small size and their dependence on state patronage. Vincent Boudreau (1999) offers important observations in his comparative study of mass protest that led to change of authoritarian governments in the Philippines and Indonesia. Unfortunately, in praising the Philippine democratization, Boudreau overstates the contrast between the two, confirming further the familiar dismissive view of the Indonesian case. From a different perspective, the political scientist William Liddle (1985, 1990a, 1990b) emphasizes the far-reaching power of Suharto, the military, and the state bureaucracy that rendered any opposition insignificant, as well as the economic success of the regime that ensured the general population's acquiescence. He suspects any attempt to analyze Indonesia with expectations that a process of democratization will evolve runs the risk of imposing a Western model and its past history upon Indonesia (1990a, 1990b).

Regardless of their various differences, all of these scholars – and many others – share the basic view that Indonesians were in fact quite content to live under New Order authoritarianism, either because of their backward 'traditional culture', some 'objective' historical past, or because of their inclinations towards modern pragmatism and opportunism.

The New Order authoritarianism delivered the economic growth and improved living conditions that many of these foreign observers believe placated the urban middle classes. The fact that there have always been Indonesians who challenged the authoritarian regime is usually dismissed. The dissidents are regarded as idiosyncratic radicals that are too few to be significant. The New Order's generous use of coercion and violence is only minimally considered. The absence of any strong, formal, and parliamentary opposition is quickly taken as clear evidence to support their arguments. The general increase in income and improvement in levels of mass consumption and lifestyle more generally are often cited to illustrate Indonesians' complacency, which again reinforces these conclusions.

The contrast of views between pro-democracy Indonesians and distant observers is not raised here in order to show that one is necessarily more accurate or legitimate than the other. There are definitely important insights and solid points in many of the critical analyses from foreign and sympathetic observers, as exemplified by the few above. Although not necessarily closer to the truth, many of the scholarly analyses have substantive and stylistic qualities that are necessary but rare in the writings by pro-democracy Indonesians, who tend to have difficulties divorcing their analysis from the spirit of critical activism prevalent in the country. However, the problem with many of the distant political-scientific and political-economic analyses is that Indonesia appears to be little more than a heap of mathematical formulae or statistical tables, or a series of institutional structures. The questions of history, memory, subjecthood or cultural dynamics are not adequately taken into account. When culture is incorporated in a handful of political analyses, it tends to be understood in a very static and homogeneous fashion.

In most of these analyses, the concept of democracy is generally deployed as an abstraction and without critical assessment. Again at the risk of crude oversimplification, I suggest that in many of these analyses democracy refers to a formally established political system that guarantees separation of powers, equality before the law, open political contests, free and independent elections, and freedom of speech. All of these are reasonable points. The problem with this general conception of democracy in an analysis of Indonesia is not that it originates from the West (there is absolutely nothing wrong with that), but that it is both formalistic and idealistic even by Western standards. Even in the West, one would have great difficulty finding examples of established political systems that match their idealized

conception both in norms and practice, where people's sovereignty is both formally institutionalized and effectively and evenly practised. I have neither the knowledge nor the need here to provide a survey of existing literature that has profoundly problematized both the conception and practice of democracy in the liberal West (see Arblaster 1994; Touraine 1995). Suffice it to note that the uncritical use of this key concept is a common shortcoming in many otherwise important and instructive analyses of Indonesia's democracy.

Admittedly, among Indonesian scholars and activists, too, democracy is often an unclear concept or an idealized slogan.[1] Foreign observers may be correct to point out that democracy is not an obsession among Indonesians (we can disagree with those who assume that it should be), and when Indonesians strive for democratization, they often refer to things other than what their foreign counterparts commonly understand by the word. With some exceptions, the more politically active Indonesians tend to be more passionate and optimistic in their analyses of democratization in their country. I suggest that a common reason for this is that they refer to some desired social change that is more immediate in effect, concrete in manifestation, and short-term. Understandably such considerations are prompted by a sense of exigency in their living circumstances. In other words, their conception of democracy is a lot more modest, and they demand a lot less from the process of democratization in comparison to their distant observers.

For instance, given the restrictions under the New Order, demands for democracy often implied demands for more than three existing and state-sanctioned political parties, for more than one labour union or association for journalists, for more room in the mass media for diverse views and reporting of abuses of power and state mismanagement, for more independent and accountable elections, and for no arbitrary detention, use of state violence and military intervention in social life. All of these pertain to the civil liberties and legal protection that are central to some of the dominant senses of democratization but are not reducible to them.

Of course it would be seriously misleading to suggest that Indonesians imagine and speak of democracy only to mean those things. Different Indonesians demand other things as well. Nevertheless, different pro-democracy groups and individuals have managed to formulate selective real and pressing issues in their advocacy that would communicate effectively with the general public at large and win their support, rather than proposing democracy in the highly abstract and formalist terms

that are generally conceptualized in intellectual analyses by Western-trained observers. Insofar as democratization is translated into these immediate agendas, one can say with confidence that Indonesian pro-democracy movements have reasons to be proud of the significant achievements they have made during the last few years.

Since the fall of the New Order, Indonesia has undergone several important changes, as had been repeatedly demanded by the activists who often risked their own safety and civil rights to do so. For illustrative purposes let me suggest a few examples. In the 1999 general election there were 48 political parties competing, instead of the nominal three under the New Order. Electoral laws were also radically revised to meet the demands of many segments within society. The election itself took many by surprise for its remarkable success in terms of the level of popular participation in all its stages; there was wide participation from people of all walks of life to prepare, administer, and monitor the process. This is one of the most peaceful elections Indonesia has had, in spite of – or perhaps one should say precisely because of – the minimal involvement of 'security' forces in the entire event.

The armed forces have been pushed to make all sorts of concessions that were unimaginable a few years ago (Bourchier 1999). Their reserved seats in parliament have been reduced from 75 to 38. Their involvement in various government, business, and social bodies has shrunk dramatically. Their moral authority has been seriously questioned. They are often jeered at and even physically assaulted in public; their property has often been damaged and burned (see Kompas 2000a). Meanwhile, the number of civic and professional associations has multiplied. The number of licensed newspapers and magazines increased from approximately 200 to more than 1,000. Most political prisoners have been released. Local residents in various rural areas have made very assertive interventions in local decision-making, often intimidating local government officials (Cohen 1999c). All of these things mean a great deal more to Indonesians than to their distant analysts.

Having said all that, one must acknowledge that the illustrations of change cited above do not necessarily amount to establishing a fully democratic and stable polity once and for all. Nor do they guarantee that popular sovereignty has now been secured and will be respected for a durable future. Many and seriously disheartening problems have come to the fore, some of which will be discussed in the remaining space. Disillusionments are already seeping into the public consciousness, and

new uncertainties loom large. Nonetheless, most Indonesians will not discount what has happened since 1998 as insignificant. Although old and new problems abound, Indonesia as lived by Indonesians is no longer the same. This is what distinguishes the frame of reference, the focus, and the direction of discussions on democracy between some of the most active players in Indonesia and their observers at long distance. For these Indonesians the fate of Indonesia's democratization is not simply an intellectual exercise; it will have major and immediate consequences upon their lives. For these reasons, the ensuing discussion will attempt to highlight some of the major concerns in Indonesia with regard to questions of democratization as they see them along with some of the constraints and possibilities of confronting them.

The debris of post-authoritarianism

It should be only too obvious that restoring the quality of modern social and public life in Indonesia at this juncture is far from easy, with or without consideration of its proximation to democratic ideals. This is both because of what is absent and, more importantly, because of what is omnipresent there. On the one hand, as many foreign analysts have shown, Indonesia lacks any strong foundation in the institutions, traditions, and historical resources that promote the values and practices of modernity. Worse still, the legacies of the New Order authoritarianism remain intact, both in the state apparatus and society at large. The authoritarian president has gone from office, but not everything and everyone that was part and parcel of the authoritarian New Order disappeared with him. Some of these elements may become obsolete legacies, but they will not go away quickly. Others are more actively redefining and adjusting their positions or revitalizing themselves in the new political environment in an attempt to resist social change more broadly. With the privileged access to state resources that they have managed to retain they seek new ways of maintaining the status quo in the face of attacks from pro-democracy movements.

Thus, it is inaccurate to say that the post-Suharto regime must strive to build a new and more democratic country from scratch; rather than starting from point zero, such an endeavor begins from a minus point of departure. Instead of concentrating on a new venture of building democracy in a new historical era, all pro-democracy forces in Indonesia (both in the state and civil society levels) will have to continue to be preoccupied with battling the deeply-rooted remnants, the debris, and the newly revitalized elements of authoritarianism long

after the resignation of Suharto. While such a battle is arguably a struggle against and from authoritarianism, one should perhaps resist the temptation to equate it with a transition to democracy.

One way to understand the difficulties of any immediate and radical social change in post-1998 Indonesia towards democratization is to examine the contexts and processes that brought Suharto down, and also how he first came to power in 1966. Suharto established his 'New Order' regime on the basis of one of the most notorious massacres in modern history. While the extent to which he was directly involved in the killings has yet to be studied carefully, as commander of the *Kostrad (Komando Strategi Angkatan Darat*, the Army Strategic Reserves Command), the then major general held one of the highest positions of responsibility in the country's security apparatuses. Beginning in the early part of October 1965 and continuing for several months, more than one million people, mostly unarmed and meek civilians, were murdered for being sympathizers (suspected or real) of the Indonesian Communist Party.[2] In the subsequent months the then President, Sukarno, was de facto stripped of his power prior to his official resignation in 1967. He was effectively under house arrest until he died in 1970.

Most of Sukarno's supporters were jailed from 1966. Tens of thousands of other citizens were detained or exiled for a decade without trial. All their kin and associates were attacked in the early years of New Order and then put under constant and severe surveillance for the entire 32 years of heavy militarist rule (Southwood & Flanagan 1983). Back in the final days of Sukarno's rule, a group of marine officers approached the besieged President and reported that they were fully prepared to launch an attack against Suharto-dominated Jakarta. Sukarno, the first president, a nationalist and the proclaimer of Indonesian independence, reportedly declined the proposal for fear of a bloodbath and protracted civil war (Toer & Praseto 1995: 202).

Thus, in stark contrast to Wahid, Suharto had both the capacity and the willingness to adopt one effective strategy to deal with the legacies of the regime he had succeeded to, in the form of physical destruction to the greatest possible extent. On the basis of successfully eradicating the old and unwanted past from Indonesia, or something close to that effect, Suharto established a new Indonesia officially dubbed the New Order. Subsequently it was necessary for the New Order regime to invent an imagined 'Old Order' to refer to what preceded it. While the break between the so-called 'Old' and 'New' Orders was far from complete, and the changing of the Orders more complex than the New

Order regime would like to admit, there were indeed significant discontinuities in several major areas. For instance, in the area of economic policy there was a radical shift of orientation towards world markets and a strong commitment to industrialization. In foreign policy there was a complete reversal from anti- to pro-Western Bloc in the Cold War. Politically and ideologically a militarist- and somewhat fascist - authoritarianism set in instead of a populist nationalism. State bureaucracy became more tightly controlled and centralized. Culturally, Javanese-style 'feudalism', inward-looking nativism, and xenophobia (especially against the Chinese minority) developed with the state's sanction.

Gross political violence was neither the only nor the necessary means for Suharto to assume power and succeed Sukarno. In retrospect, one can argue that he might well have achieved the same ends with a much smaller scale force and without such violence (Cribb 1990a: 22–3). More significantly, coercion and ruthless violence continued to be the hallmarks of Suharto's authoritarian rule (Heryanto 1999 forthcoming). Other characteristics of the New Order regime included sustained economic growth (which the World Bank often applauded), heavy foreign debts, blatant and pervasive corruption, and the generous material assistance as well diplomatic protection that his regime received from the so-called liberal democratic and human-rights sensitive West.

Unsurprisingly, when it was clear from the mid-1990s that the regime's very existence was seriously threatened, all forms of state-sponsored violence were deployed against perceived enemies and threats. Having set the precedent of extensive bloodshed as a perceived precondition for a successful change of government in the country and for radically transforming the social order (not to speak of the sustained state violence during his 30 years in power) Suharto must have had compelling reason to be anxious that he would be forced to leave office with violence. Many described his predicament as 'riding the tiger'. Suharto had to be sure that he would not leave the palace without sufficient protection for him, his family, and their wealth. There may be some truth in his son-in-law's claim that Suharto was in fairly good control of the terms and conditions under which he 'relinquished' power (Scott 1998), rather than being helplessly forced out.

In contrast to the fate of his predecessor during the final years of his political career and life, Suharto enjoyed a massive amount of both economic wealth and political influence after he left the palace, despite the public resentment against him. Until March 2000, or for almost

two years after his departure from palace, Suharto lived in his private residence under the special protection of state security troops on a remarkable scale. The street where his house was located was closed to the general public.[3] The greater part of his legendary but allegedly ill-gotten wealth and that of his family remained intact, and their companies ran business as usual (Delany 2000). The precise amount of his wealth remains unknown, despite great curiosity and some investigation. In one of its best- selling issues, *Time* magazine suggested a figure of $15 billion (*Time* 1999).[4] Many of Suharto's former loyalists in both the military and the bureaucracy continued to occupy key positions in the succeeding governments of Habibie (interim) and Wahid.

For Indonesia, the change of government from Suharto to Habibie, his Vice-President (1998–1999), and then to the elected Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2004) is, in several ways a historical novelty. From colonial times Indonesia had not seen a change of regime take place without violent confrontation and bloodshed. While there was a series of violent events and many lives were lost prior to Suharto's resignation, none of these events took the form of an all-out confrontation between the forces of the old and the succeeding regimes. Suharto's resignation was followed by relatively 'minimal' political violence to the surprise and relief of many.

The recent change of regime in Indonesia is also novel and ironic in another dimension. Insofar as there was protracted violence across the nation, this appeared to be instigated or supported by forces associated with the old regime that were not totally reducible to the former president. Any widespread and often refractory violence following a change of regime is generally perpetrated by the winning forces against those they conquered, exemplified by the 1965–6 transfer of power from Sukarno to Suharto. While one would not wish that any other post-Suharto regime would have the capacity and interest to repeat the bloody 1965–6 mode of transfer of power, one would not have expected the reverse. Political violence not only gave the New Order its way to power, and enabled it to maintain that power to outlast all the world's other authoritarian regimes in capitalist post-colonial states, but was also part of the cost that Suharto's New Order made Indonesians pay for denouncing and humiliating it.

No adequate evidence can be presented here to prove or disprove the widespread allegations against those responsible for the recent and extended violence in the country, but at least two things are worth considering here. The first is the parallel and immediately connected situation in East Timor. The second is a series of public accusations

from credible state and non-state agents about the complicity of the old regime or its loyalists.

The situation in East Timor immediately following the 1999 referendum for self-determination provides a parallel situation and a telling illustration of what occurred in Indonesia following the fall of Suharto in disgrace. During the few months preceding the East Timorese election in August 1999, the Indonesian armed forces deployed all possible measures, including intimidation and coercion, to ensure that a goodly number of the electoral votes would support East Timor's 'integration' into Indonesia with increased autonomy. When it was officially announced that the majority of the East Timorese had voted for total independence from Indonesia, elements within the Indonesian army, with the support of well-trained and armed local militias, conducted a systematic destruction of the entire territory. After enjoying so much power for so long, the New Order regime would not simply go away and lose its power, prestige, and honour without first making it extremely difficult for its conqueror to replace it and enjoy the fruits of its triumph.

Referring to the extended bloody conflicts in the various islands of Indonesia, more than a few credible figures in Indonesia publicly claim to have evidence of the complicity of the military, Suharto, and his closest circles, as well as the so-called 'central axis' (a newly established political alliance of not necessarily new politicians that presents itself as possessing predominantly modernist Islamic credentials and causes) that has become one of the main political contenders in Indonesia's top political circles. Surprisingly too, those accused have made no denials despite their capacity to do so if they wished.

President Wahid was one of the very first to make the accusation that many of the recent cases of ostensibly 'communal' violence were instigated by forces loyal to the former president (Murdoch 2000). Subsequent and reaffirming allegations came from the then Minister of Defense Juwono Sudarsono (*Tempo* 2000) and prominent academic Tamrin Amal Tomagola (*Jawa Pos* 2000). It is important to understand that such an accusation is not a cheap scapegoating to lay blame on a conquered political enemy without any recourse.[5] In accusing the former president of complicity, Wahid appealed to the public not to continue humiliating Suharto because it would provoke his loyalists to retaliate. Wahid's accusation was also an attempt to appease the public by implying that he knew who was responsible for the ongoing violence, and that he knew what had to be done to reduce it.

The fact that these accusations were made repeatedly in the face of unabating violence reveals the admitted failure of the current regime to exert any effective control over the situation. This is in line with Wahid's argument about the importance of not further humiliating the former president. Independent observers provide further confirmation of this view of a powerless government and of residual power remaining in the hands of the former president. These observers identify a series of correlations: new primordial conflicts breaking out, or old ones returning with new ammunition immediately following any major attack in public against the honour, wealth, or security of Suharto and his family. Bombs exploded in some of the busiest districts of Jakarta (including the Jakarta Stock Exchange and the Attorney-General's Office) each time members of the Suharto family were about to be questioned by the Office of Attorney-General for corruption charges.

The pattern repeated so neatly that it is too difficult for anyone to consider it accidental. Others relate the various manifestations of 'communal' violence to a conspiracy to subvert the existing government, led chiefly by those who used to enjoy state power (for example, the military) or other former allies of presidents Suharto and Habibie, who had initially hoped to seize state power but had lost it in the 1999 general election. In June 2000 the Army Chief made a similar accusation, claiming that certain unnamed military officers were complicit in plotting social unrest to undermine the existing government, in which 'communal' conflicts in Maluku were a transitional component (see below). He said that he was determined to deal with these officers sternly; furthermore, he anticipated that as many as 60 officers would soon be removed, demoted, or transferred (*Kompas* 2000b).

What we witness in Indonesia is not simply a gradual change (that is, a matter of time), but a partial one (in a more spatial sense) with no clear indication of it developing into something more extensive. So far, The Reformasi Movement has succeeded in replacing the president and a few other top state officials closely associated with him, but the movement has not proved to have the necessary manpower, leadership and support to seize state power and make a major transformation. Not only has Wahid had to spend a great deal of energy on negotiating and maintaining a coalition government with other and widely diverse participating forces of the Reformasi that claimed their share of power, but they all still have to coexist with the surviving forces of the New Order that still control many of the state bureaucracies.

President Wahid and his close circle represent only one faction in this highly fragmented coalition. Three other major contenders for leadership are the so-called Central Axis, the old New Order's ruling party Golkar, and the much resented but indispensable military. If they are not pushed too far and too quickly off the playing field, these forces will have an interest in maintaining political stability and economic recovery as they attempt to secure their own positions. Other forces of the New Order that were pushed off the center stage *en masse* have reason to be frustrated and may be tempted to undermine and resist the fragile measures that have been taken towards reform. Political violence would be the first and most familiar option for them.

Intimacy with post-colonial violence

Certainly the legacies of the New Order have come down to the present in variegated forms, and not only in the form of state functionaries, or political institutions and practices, and what I have termed obsolete debris. It would not be possible or necessary to make an inventory of their multiple and overlapping forms. One specific important legacy that I wish to highlight in the remaining space is an intimacy with political violence.

While there are legalistic difficulties to present sufficient and incontrovertible evidence of the crimes against humanity and human rights that have been committed in Indonesia both in the past and still continue in the present, and to bring the culprits to justice, it is not so difficult to understand why these violent events could have spread across the nation in the first place, and why so many fingers pointed towards those closely associated with Suharto's New Order. The significance of political violence in this discussion cannot be overemphasized. The preceding account of the New Order as a brief history of political violence should be taken as shorthand for a number of things. Since political violence is the extreme antipode of democracy, the New Order and its persistent legacies signify the extent to which anti-democratic culture overshadows any contemporary endeavors in the direction of Indonesia's reform. In other countries, elections, freedom of speech, and other modern political institutions have been established in order to prevent the possibility of violence as an option for conflict resolution. In Indonesia, implementation of such modern political institutions often provokes violence.

Under the highly militarized New Order, the prevalence of political violence became normalized and taken for granted for one generation

in several important regions, including the island of Java and the capital city, Jakarta – so much so that violence developed far beyond being simply an instrument of power in the hands of the perpetrators. It was signified and embodied in multiple ways. While the greatest responsibility in the long series of the disappearances, tortures, pogroms, rioting, and murders lies with state agents, and the military in particular, they did not by any means monopolize this intimacy with post-colonial violence. This refers not only to the victims – who were, of course, made painfully intimate with such violence, and whose numbers have been in the millions since 1965 – but also to non-state agents who were partakers in the orgy of violence. This latter included criminals (organized or otherwise) and, to a lesser degree, certain youthful activists and anti-government protestors who had survived the years of state brutality that confronted them and their protests.

However, by far the largest and most important groups of these non-state violence-inclined agents consisted of paramilitary personnel: thugs, vigilantes and militias who had direct links with the military, and enjoyed their protection, but also perpetrated political violence as a proxy for the authoritarian state agencies. These connections rendered the boundary between their formal status as non-state agents and their informal position as state-agents very hazy.[6] For the Reformasi movement, pushing Suharto out of power is one thing, but confronting these professional and para-professional offenders against humanity and human rights is quite another. Just like the New Order bureaucracy (with all the deeply institutionalized corruption, collusion and nepotism) that stretched across the nation and reached down to remote villages, militarized agents (as opposed to military officers) did not just go away when Suharto departed.

The above account of the New Order's intimate violence is also shorthand for the extent to which the institutions of justice have been corrupted. Far from simply being slow, powerless and passive, these institutions often became active and draconian extensions of the authoritarian regime. Rather than trying the perpetrators of violence, the courts often prosecuted the victims and survivors of state-sponsored terror. Having enjoyed seemingly unlimited impunity for more than three decades, New Order state agents had no fear of committing any violent act, in fact, they did not have to have any reasons for inflicting violence on any scale within their jurisdictions.

The current fledgling government, a product of the Reformasi, is far from the position of making radical reforms to the institutions of

justice. It has made commendable attempts at reform within the possible parameters, including drafting a new law to establish Human Rights Tribunals with potential power to investigate retrospective ad hoc cases. However, anyone familiar with Indonesia will recognize how difficult it will be to transform the existing systems and institutions of justice to meet the international minimum standards of justice, fairness, and impartiality (see Lindsey 2000).

With the exception of a few in the rank and file, no prominent military officers and state bureaucrats of the New Order have been brought to trial to account for the various and often overt crimes that they have committed. The ongoing intention to try Suharto is politically correct and imperative, but the prospect of bringing justice is less than bright in the current situation. And yet, trying Suharto may not be what the majority of the population feels right about in respect to past injustices. Victims of the numerous cases of human rights abuses (and their families) will not be able to fully and actively participate in building a new Indonesia unless their cases gain adequate recognition, their defense is heard publicly, some truth about the past and traumatic events are disclosed, and their sufferings obtain at least some token of recompense. Without any semblance in Indonesia of what in South Africa has come to be known as the work of 'truth, justice, and reconciliation', the old violence will likely be perpetuated, and new violence will occur in desperate response.

The above illustrates a condition that will be sufficient to allow violence to prevail across the country in the first few years of post-Suharto Indonesia. Unfortunately, Suharto's New Order has also left for today's Indonesia two additional legacies that have aggravated the condition. The first is the devastating economic crisis, and the second is the politicization of religion, most importantly Islam. Not only have prolonged economic difficulties in the country led to an upsurge in the number of crimes and level of violence that accompanying them; more distressingly, the urban poor, who often had to bear the brunt of these rising petty crimes, have often quickly turned into mobs when thieves or robbers were caught, and have killed them on the spot (Djalal 2000).

In the last few years of his rule, Suharto and the military as an institution ended their honeymoon. With the assistance of his protégé and vice-president, B.J. Habibie, Suharto courted selected groups of prominent Islamic intellectuals in the hope of shoring up his eroded legitimacy and revitalizing his support base. This was quite an abrupt reversal of his previous policy of repression of any independent politics of Islam. Robert Hefner (1999) provides a superb account of this historical

process and its complexity and significance in the years that followed. To cut a long and complex story short, Suharto's initiative met a conflicting response from the already divided Islamic communities in the world's largest Muslim nation.

Those who accepted Suharto's initiative were conscious of the risks, but went ahead even so. Some of them created the ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*, the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals) under the auspices of Suharto and chairmanship of Habibie. When people were already counting Suharto's final days, they held to their own purpose and pursued their own agendas, which included, among other things, promoting the interests of Muslim Indonesians as the 'first among equal citizens' after so many years of humiliation, deprivation, and repression. Unfortunately, history has not been on their side. In the 1999 general elections they lost rather badly, despite their privileged access to state resources by virtue of their closeness to interim President Habibie (Cohen 1999a, b). Unsurprisingly, voters gave the biggest support to Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle), the party that had suffered most under the previous government. The person who was eventually elected President by members of the MPR was Abdurrahman Wahid, the staunchest ever critic of the ICMI and the 1990s alliance between Islam and Suharto/Habibie in general.

In the course of the new politicization of Islam in the 1990s, a host of new developments unfolded. Some of these developments were commendable, for instance in the areas of intellectual discourses on modernity, Islam, human rights, and culture. Others have been less heartening, for example a new intolerance and suspicion of things un-Islamic or non-Islamic. Anti-Christian, anti-Chinese minority, and anti-Western sentiments have gained momentum. Critics of the alliance between Suharto and Islam, such as Abdurrahman Wahid, warned of the dangers of what he called 'sectarianism' in response to the new politicization of Islam in 1990 from the onset. To be fair, these developments were not necessarily or readily attributable to the Islamic political elite of the day, which was also plural and far from being homogeneous (see Falaakh 1999; Hefner 1999; Scott 1998), but neither were these seriously denounced.

In the early 1990s, Indonesia witnessed a series of protests, legal cases, and prosecution against individuals who were considered to have defamed Islam. Around the date of Suharto's resignation, Indonesia also saw inter-religious conflicts on an unprecedented scale.

Hundreds of churches and mosques were burned. Thousands of lives were lost on several islands that were torn for more than two uninterrupted years by civil wars between Christian and Muslim communities. During Habibie's interim presidency, the military and Habibie's close associates recruited thousands of youths who were victims of the economic crisis, and trained them as paramilitary forces to confront the student protestors who demanded that Habibie step down, parliament be dissolved, and new elections be conducted (Bourchier 1999: 157–65).

In some countries, such as Australia, a desire for a national reconciliation with a traumatic past has found strong expression among the general public, even though the Howard government refuses to accommodate the popular aspirations. In Indonesia, President Wahid took the initiative to visit East Timor, and expressed a public apology for the atrocities that Indonesian troops had committed. Back at home; he persistently proposed that parliament repeal the MPR decree of 1966 that banned dissemination of Marxist, Leninist, and Communist ideas as a step towards reconciliation with the legacies of pre-1965 Indonesia that are the biggest scar in Indonesian history. In response, an armed group of people, under the banner of Islam, stormed the palace and tried to intimidate the President not to pursue his proposal. Others intimidated former victims of the 1965/6 tragedy for having questioned the New Order's official history of the event and for demanding a fresh investigation for truth and reconciliation purposes.

Conclusion

Soon after Suharto resigned, Ben Anderson (1999) made his first public appearance in Indonesia since 1972, arguing that there was no real opposition in post-Suharto Indonesia because no one pressed hard enough for a national re-examination of past atrocities. 'Under the long hanging tendrils of the banyan tree only dwarfish, moldy plants can grow', he noted (Anderson, 1999: 9). There is no way for Indonesia to move forward without settling the question of the past, and most specifically the 1965/6 bloodbath that gave rise to Suharto's New Order. I hope that the foregoing discussion suggests how and why this project appears to be beyond the ability of today's Indonesia. This is partly due to the residual power of the New Order in post-authoritarian Indonesia both within and outside the formal institutions of politics and state apparatus. This challenge will continue to be of primary

urgency for Indonesians in the future, and this is not necessarily identical and reducible to the project of democratization as distant observers usually imply.

The picture is not as bleak as many outsiders would have us believe. Despite the long list of failings and rejections, President Wahid and other elements within the pro-Reformasi movement have moved as far as they have because of the larger dynamics of the competing forces in the nation and outside. Discussing the characteristics of the succession of dictatorial post-colonial regimes, the African scholar Achille Mbembe (1992: 14–15) has made the following powerful observation.

> What distinguishes the postcolony from other regimes of violence and domination, then, is not only the luxuriousness of style… Peculiar also to the postcolony is the fact that the forging of relations between those who command and their subjects operates, fundamentally, through a specific pragmatic: the simulacrum. This explains why dictators can go to sleep at night lulled by roars of adulation and support… only to wake up the next morning to find their golden calves smashed and their tablets of law overturned. The applauding crowds of yesterday have become today a cursing, abusive mob.

To reprise the opening paragraph of this chapter, Suharto was re-elected President for the seventh time in March 1998 unanimously and with a standing ovation from the MPR, chaired by Harmoko. Two months later, Harmoko was the first member of the parliament to propose that the President step down or be impeached. Within days, the President fell in disgrace (on 21 May 1998), following one of the largest protests the country had ever seen and a series of outbreaks of mass violence. Hundreds of thousands of students occupied the parliament building, some urinating on the roof, determined to stay there until Suharto stepped down.

What we are witnessing does not constitute 'democracy', as generally understood, neither does it necessarily lead to it. However, what has happened there, just as Mbembe illustrates in his anecdote, is not a situation of complete acquiescence, or the repression of powerless subjects by all-powerful autocrats; and neither is it a complete submission to the logic of pragmatism and opportunism to live comfortably under authoritarian nepotism and corruption as has been most often argued by too many scholars from across the sea.

Notes

1 I find it extremely difficult to suggest some specific examples of titles and authors from Indonesia that would serve the purpose of illustration, if not representation, here. A recent study in English of these diverse ideas of democracy among Indonesian activists and thinkers that would provide an excellent reference is Uhlin (1997). Other recent relevant publications are Bourchier & Legge (1995) and Budiman, Hatley, & Kingsbury (1999).
2 For more on the complexities and complicities surrounding these massacres, see Cribb (1990b).
3 Frustrated by the 'slow' pace of investigation into Suharto's alleged abuse of power and corruption, student demonstrators periodically had violent confrontations with the security officers barricading the former president's residence. In response to mounting public concerns and impatience, the Attorney-General decided in March 2000 to remove Suharto from his private residence and put him under house arrest in an undisclosed location.
4 While this is not to confirm the accuracy of the figure or endorse its journalistic credentials, one can assume from a business point of view that *Time* cannot be so foolish as to publish such a sensitive matter without careful investigation and editorial formulation. Angered by the publication, Suharto made a public statement claiming that he did not have a single cent invested abroad. He filed a legal complaint, but lost in the first hearing. Suharto's defence lawyers appealed.
5 Notwithstanding all their differences and quiet animosity, Wahid and Suharto managed to present to the public fairly civilized political contacts. Towards the very end of his time in power, Suharto wanted to be seen in public to be on good terms with Wahid and, in reverse, Wahid made regular visits to the former president after the change of regime was effected.
6 For a more detailed selection of articles on the topic, see the volume edited by Rafael (1999), which includes a number of chapters on Indonesia.

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5

Going Beyond the Mainstream Discourse: Democratic Consolidation and Market Reforms in Bangladesh

Fahimul Quadir

Introduction

In the early hours of August 7, 1991, an unprecedented event took place in the *Jatiya Sangsad*, the national assembly of Bangladesh. Putting aside their traditional rivalry, both opposition and government legislators were working together to give the newly achieved democracy a chance to survive. Their immediate purpose was to allow the national assembly to adopt the twelfth constitutional amendment, a bill to replace the autocratic presidential form of government with a democratic parliamentary system. Unlike the case of post-Suharto Indonesia, where the state, under the democratically elected regime of Wahid fell back on its promise to create a new, democratic structure of governance, *Jatiya Sangsad* made history on that day by unanimously amending the constitution and allowing the country to witness the creation of a democratic system under the leadership of Mrs. Khaleda Zia. However, what made the nation of 120 million people very emotional was the newly developed understanding of mutual cooperation between the governing and non-governing elites of Bangladesh. The events of August 7 indeed promised a complementary 'government-opposition' relationship, which the country had rarely witnessed in its post-independence history. Most political observers in Bangladesh viewed such a process of amending the constitution in a collaborative fashion as the successful ending of a decade long struggle for restoring democracy from military authoritarianism. It was no surprise that the twelfth constitutional amendment managed to generate a wave of optimism among the people about the future of creating a democratic political culture. The hope was that such an amendment to the

constitution would allow both the government and the opposition to cooperate and collaborate with each other in order to institutionalize the newly achieved democracy.

Ironically, despite such widespread enthusiasm, the collapse of military authoritarianism, the subsequent assumption of power by a democratically elected regime and the promulgation of a democratic constitution did not lead to a consolidation of democracy. Following the breakdown of consensus under Khaleda Zia's regime, Bangladesh witnessed the worst political deadlock in its 25-year history instead. With the failure of negotiations between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government and the mainstream opposition led by the Awami League (AL), the country plunged into a political crisis that took people's confidence away from the existing political institutions. The use of violence by competing political forces as a means to achieve conflicting political goals eventually led to the creation of an anarchic situation in which the future of creating a democratic political culture has simply evaporated.

By focusing on the relationship between pro-market reforms and democracy, this chapter explores how and why Bangladesh failed to consolidate democracy in the 1990s (1982–96). In particular, it revolves around the following three interrelated questions: Firstly, to what extent does economic liberalization enhance the likelihood of democratization? In other words, does the former contribute to or hinder the process of the latter? Secondly, under what conditions is democracy likely to be consolidated? And lastly, why has Bangladesh, despite prevailing popular enthusiasm, not been able to institutionalize democracy? More specifically, what factors led to the breakdown of democracy under an elected regime in the mid-1990s?

This chapter is divided into three major sections. Section one provides a brief theoretical overview of the literature on democratic consolidation. The second section examines the process by which Bangladesh made a transition to democracy from authoritarianism in 1990. It also makes an effort to identify the factors that led to the breakdown of consensus and/or democracy under the elected regime of Khaleda Zia. The final section offers some concluding remarks based on the findings of this research.

After outlining some of the contradictions generated by market-oriented reforms, this chapter suggests that instead of creating the basis for democratic consolidation, economic liberalization may undermine the future of constitutional democracy. Contrary to what most mainstream authors claim, it argues that, while market reform programs

create pressure for democratization, economic liberalization initiatives can equally upset the hope of institutionalizing democracy in places and times when the costs and benefits of pro-market reforms are distributed disproportionately. It suggests that the failure of pro-market reforms to benefit a vast majority make democratic regimes truly vulnerable to opposition pressure. Drawing attention to the inability of mainstream authors to explain the complex dynamics of democracy and development, it concludes that the future of democratic consolidation will largely depend upon the ability of both the market and constitutional democracy to enlarge people's socio-economic choices.

Democratic consolidation: A brief theoretical overview

The dominant literature on democratization and economic reform seems to be primarily concerned with the issue of consolidation of democracy. It is widely assumed that all major problems associated with these dual transitions can easily be overcome by creating democratic institutions, which are likely to provide the framework required for resolving various types of socio-political conflicts. Most authors strongly believe that the inability to consolidate democracy could undermine the state's capacity to neutralize political tensions generated by the transitions to both democracy and the free market. For this reason, the literature pays considerable attention to the ways through which democracy can be consolidated.

The discussion on democratic consolidation often begins with a procedural definition of democracy. Drawing upon Robert Dahl's notion of 'polyarchy' (1971: 3–20), most authors focus on three principal elements of democracy: free and fair elections, meaningful competition among political elites, and political freedoms. The expectation is that a democratic system will ensure the legal rights of most adults to participate in elections so that ordinary citizens can play a role in choosing their leaders. All democratic nations will hold periodic elections in which relevant political groups would freely compete for government power. A democratic structure also will make efforts to protect basic political liberties (Zakaria 1997) simply to ensure the 'integrity of political competition and participation' (Diamond et al. 1990: 6–7). In brief, democracy is defined as a process of sharing power among all major social groups, which allows common people to act as a political force, enabling them to exercise some kind of control over decision-making.[1]

Drawing attention to such a formal definition of democracy, most mainstream authors conceptualize the notion of democratic consolida-

tion. Przeworski, for instance, refers to democratic consolidation as a system 'in which the politically relevant forces subject their values and interests to the uncertain interplay of democratic institutions and comply with the outcomes of the democratic process' (Przeworski 1991: 51). He suggests that democracies become consolidated only when all major socio-political groups rely on the existing institutions for resolving disputes. In a similar vein, Diamond outlines the need for both behavioural and institutional changes that would minimize, if not eliminate, destabilizing factors. For him 'consolidation is the process by which democracy becomes so broadly and profoundly legitimate among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down' (Diamond 1994: 15).

Linz also provides a fairly similar definition of consolidation. Like Diamond and Przeworski, his minimalist explanation of democratic consolidation suggests that democracy cannot be institutionalized until and unless all groups truly comply with the rules of the game. Linz argues that an institutionalized and/or consolidated democracy is,

> one in which none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and that no political institution or group has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers (Linz 1990: 158).

By contrast, Huntington's attention is primarily devoted to periodic elections by which the peaceful transfer of power rotates among rival groups. Democracy is consolidated if all major groups come to both accept and defend democratic rules and procedures (Huntington 1991: 266).

While quite a few other mainstream authors, including Valenzuela and Hermet, adopt a similar approach to democratic consolidation, Sandbrook defines democratic consolidation from a somewhat different perspective. According to him, democratic consolidation means the process of institutionalizing all those procedures and organizations that 'facilitate the transparency, accountability and responsiveness of governance'. His definition appears to take the agenda beyond free elections and elite compliance with the fundamental governing rules of democracy. In order to eliminate the tradition of patronage-based politics, which is particularly prevalent in Africa and Latin America, he highlights the importance of limiting the personal power of elected government officials (Sandbrook 1996).

The mainstream literature also pays considerable attention to the conditions under which a transition is likely to be consolidated. Almost all of the mainstream authors tend to believe that transitions that emerge through political pacts involving major political elites often contribute to consolidation. By focusing on the typology of transitions, both Huntington (1991) and Karl (1990), for instance, claim that transitions through negotiations and/or pacts are more likely to produce stable democracies. The argument is that, in a negotiated transition, the elites can work out a mutually acceptable agreement through compromise that enhances the likelihood of consolidation. In her work on Latin America, Remmer also finds that political pacts between rival groups of elites have enabled quite a few countries in the region, including Colombia and Venezuela, to institutionalize democracy (Remmer 1992–93). O'Donell and Schmitter support such a view that negotiated transitions usually lead to viable democracies (O'Donell & Schmitter 1986).

Like most mainstream authors, Przeworski also assumes that radical approaches to transitions are highly unlikely to lead to democratic consolidation.[2] In order to enhance the possibility of institutionalization, he suggests, democracy should emerge from bargaining. He claims that 'managed transitions' have a better chance to institutionalize democracy as they give all major actors an opportunity to accept the rules of the democratic game. For this reason, Przeworski suggests that the reformers and the moderates must control the negotiation processes. Believing that the radicals may reverse the process of democratization, he advises that the reformers and the moderates should work together to develop a consensus on establishing democratic institutions. The moderates also need to control the radicals on the one hand, and the reformers should take necessary measures to politically neutralize the hardliners, on the other. Such tactics are likely to significantly reduce the ability of the radicals to pose any threats to democratization (Przeworski 1991: 80).

Higley and Gunther's study gives equal importance to elite consensus. For them consensus and/or compromise is the most important factor in the process of democratic consolidation (Higley & Gunther 1992: 339). By contrast, Diamond and Putnam stress the need for constructing a democratic political culture, which, among other things, requires the evolution of an autonomous civil society (Diamond et al. 1988). For Bratton and Van De Walle, the commitment of elites to introduce a system that is both open and responsive to popular demands is one of the major factors in democratic consolidation

(Bratton & Van De Walle 1992: 29). Karl's focus is slightly different as he stresses the importance of ensuring civilian control of the military in order to complete the process of institutionalization.

In sharp contrast to mainstream literature, critical authors do not see democratic consolidation as just a process of allowing the elites to settle their disputes through the use of prevailing political institutions. Nor do they contend that a polity becomes democratic only by holding periodic national and local elections. Although they recognize the importance of both, giving people the right to choose their leaders, and resolving conflicts of political interests through democratic institutions, they claim that the main purpose of creating a democratic political culture is to develop a new structure of governance designed to expand human capabilities. A system such as this not only allows people to participate in decision-making, it also ensures that people can hold governments accountable for all of their actions.

For instance, Bienefeld emphasizes a close link between democracy and development. He calls for the implementation of socio-economic policies that would pay equal attention to both social and political stability. The deepening of democracy requires, he continues, that governments and donors adopt policies that will promote popular participation in decision-making on the one hand, and will ensure economic success for the majority, on the other (Bienefeld 1995). In a similar fashion, Schmitz and Gillies claim that the success of democracy will depend upon the ability of democratic institutions to improve the human condition. For them democracy is not merely a system of organizing elections, but rather a process of creating jobs, improving living standards, and allowing ordinary citizens to determine their own future (Schmitz & Gillies 1992).

Bangladesh's transition to democracy from military authoritarianism

Unlike the Indonesian case, as analyzed by Heryanto in this volume, under a military authoritarian regime, Bangladesh began its journey toward the market in the mid-1970s when General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) came to dominate the decision-making process. The attempt to construct a market-friendly framework of national economic governance was further strengthened through the assumption of power by General Hussain M. Ershad in March 1982. Their policies focused primarily on restructuring the public sector, adopting an export-oriented growth strategy, strengthening the private sector, liberalizing the trade and

exchange regimes, and establishing an enabling environment for economic growth. Most studies claim that these liberalization initiatives not only failed to yield any tangible economic outcomes, but they also badly hurt marginalized groups such as public sector employees, peasants, and women,[3] thus setting the stage for anti-reform campaigns. What is interesting to mention, however, is that resistance to reform did not appear to be a serious threat to regime consolidation and/or political stability until General Ershad entered the political stage in 1982. However, during the preceding six years' rule of General Zia (1975–1981), Bangladesh hardly encountered any major anti-reform campaigns owing to Zia's ability to manage tensions in state-society relations. Contrary to the situation in Indonesia under both Suharto and Wahid, Zia was indeed able to use his market reform agenda to create a favourable political climate in the country. The failure of his predecessor's, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1971–1975), socialist policies to improve the country's deepening crisis of poverty provided a wonderful opportunity to Zia to ground his political programs in neoliberalism. His 19-point program pledged to make Bangladesh self-sufficient in food production and to ensure that everyone enjoyed an improved standard of living through the alleviation of poverty, illiteracy, and homelessness (Hakim 1993: 122–23).

In addition to pursuing a market reform agenda, he also relied on a cleverly designed co-optation strategy that aimed to undermine anti-military as well as anti-reform movements. He targeted key socio-political actors in such a way that they could come to form the core of his political coalition. In an effort to avoid a direct confrontation with opposition parties and civil society groups, he encouraged opposition party leaders to lend their support to his legitimization initiatives. He invited them to take a lead in launching his own political platform called the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The BNP was indeed formed inclusive of pro-Beijing leftists, Islamists, civil bureaucrats, and a group of nationalists representing a variety of different political parties, trade unions, and civil society groups. Both in the presidential elections of 1978 and the parliamentary elections in 1979, the BNP proved to be an effective means to legitimize Zia's socio-economic programs. He and his party registered a landslide victory in both elections, keeping the opposition completely disoriented and fragmented (Maniruzzaman 1980: 226). The opposition remained so divided that it simply failed to unite the people in its fight against Zia's market reform programs, which he implemented without developing a national consensus.

A negotiated transition to democracy

Unlike Zia, however, the military takeover of March 1982 that brought General Ershad (1982–1990) to the center of power, prompted the development of a highly confrontational state-society relationship in the country. Right from the beginning, the military regime faced a formidable challenge from major socio-political groups that remained very critical of military intervention in politics. Almost all key civil society groups, including students, trade union federations, and professional organizations, negatively reacted to the seizure of power by a military dictator. Their frustration resulted from the fact that Ershad staged a military coup at a time when the whole country was slowly returning to civilian rule. The nation was simply not ready to see another military coup within five months of the presidential elections that paved the way for a democratically elected government to rule the country. What made Ershad's legitimacy crisis even worse was his decision to find the military a permanent place in politics. Following the model of Suharto, Ershad sought to create a constitutional provision for the military to take part in the nation's political business (Rahman 1984). Such an initiative quickly put Ershad on a collision path with those setting the grounds for political resistance to his military regime.

The sudden economic decline resulted from his aggressive market reform programs that made the entire political situation even more complex. The slow economic growth, rising food prices, and stagnant agricultural production made it evident that the economy was quickly entering a period of uncertainty. The dismal performance of the manufacturing sector and extremely low levels of savings and investment also sent the signals of economic deterioration. Such a poor state of the economy further contributed to the erosion of public confidence in Ershad's military regime (Ziring 1992: 155–56). People openly blamed the regime for undertaking a drastic economic liberalization program that overlooked the necessity of meeting the economic needs of ordinary citizens. The popular sector, therefore, wasted very little time in voicing its opposition to market reform programs.

Against the silence of all major political parties, the first challenge to authoritarian rule came from students who are known for their traditional support for democracy. Considering Ershad's newly announced education policy as 'anti-people', all major student organizations took to the streets in order to force the regime to stop the implementation of the negative education policy. In February 1983, some 22 major student organizations, ranging from centrist and leftist to nationalist,

formed an alliance which came to be known as the All-Party Students Action Committee (APSAC). The APSAC carried out a massive protest on the streets of the capital city in mid-February, where the agitating students were confronted by the police and which resulted in the deaths of five and injury of several hundred students. Following this violent student-police clash, the popular protest quickly took a distinct political shape. All major civil society associations, including professional groups, cultural forums, women's organizations and public sector labour unions, soon raised their voices against the military regime by organizing demonstrations, public meetings and strikes, which provided the basis for a transition back to democracy.

The movement gained its momentum only after the decision of mainstream opposition parties to join the democracy movement which was initiated by civil society groups. Yielding to the pressure of civil society, major political parties formed two main political fronts, popularly known as the 15-party and the 7-party alliances, to give the democracy movement a chance to succeed. The former was led by the Awami League (AL) and was composed primarily of left of center parties. Under the leadership of the BNP, a total of seven pro-Beijing socialist and nationalist parties formed the latter. Despite popular expectations of forming a united political platform to launch a massive movement, the personal enmity between the AL leader, Sheikh Hasina, and the BNP chairperson, Khaleda Zia, resulted in the formation of these two separate alliances. However, as the pressure for launching a united movement continued to grow, both the alliances eventually managed to work together to develop a common basis for making a successful transition to democracy. After an exhaustive process of negotiation, the two alliances reached an agreement on the acceptance of a common formula for transition that came to be known as the five-point demand. This formula included, among other things, such demands as the immediate withdrawal of martial law, the restoration of fundamental rights, and holding of parliamentary elections preceding all other elections (Rahman 1984: 242).

While the announcement of a common formula for transition created unprecedented optimism about the country's immediate return to democracy, relentless bickering within the opposition prevented the nation from witnessing a successful movement against Ershad's authoritarian regime. The people of the country had to wait until November 1990 before they could see the launching of a united movement against Ershad's military regime.[4] On November 19, the three alliances developed guidelines for the transfer of power to an interim civilian

regime which was entrusted with the responsibility of making all the necessary arrangements for the country's return to constitutional democracy. A formula such as this included the formation of a caretaker, non-partisan government to which Ershad had to hand over power, the holding of a new parliamentary election under the caretaker government, and the transfer of power to a sovereign parliament. These three alliances also agreed not only to boycott, but also to resist all elections under Ershad (Hakim 1993: 32–33).

The opposition's unity quickly changed the mood of the anti-Ershad agitation, generating a true momentum for the democracy movement. Following the declaration of the state of emergency on November 27, for example, journalists stopped publication of newspapers and the professors of different universities and the physicians of Dhaka Medical College Hospital resigned from their jobs. Senior civil bureaucrats refused to work under Ershad's administration. Defying the curfew, the public held massive processions demanding the resignation of Ershad. Threatened by the movement, the military, the main constituency of Ershad, refused to support him any more, deciding to cooperate with the opposition to transfer power to a caretaker government. Ershad eventually decided to hand power over to a consensus-candidate, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Shahabuddin Ahmed, on December 6, 1990.

What was interesting about the entire process of transition from authoritarianism to democracy was that it was successfully carried out by continued negotiations that primarily involved the opposition and the military. Among the three political fronts, two moderate parties led the two major alliances: the AL and the BNP.[5] The only radical element involved in the movement and also in the bargaining was the five-party alliance. The role of this alliance was largely limited to acting as a broker between the 8- and 7-party alliances. Because of its insignificant popular support-base, the 5-party alliance neither had the ability to radicalize the formula for transition, nor the bargaining power to influence the leaders of the two main alliances to adopt a militant strategy. Under pressure from the AL and the BNP, the radicals were actually forced to adopt a moderate formula for the departure of authoritarianism. It is more important perhaps to mention that the military became a 'part of the deal' as they sought to avoid a direct confrontation with the civilians. Unlike the Indonesian case, the military was not in a position to dictate the transition. Nor was it able to maintain a veto power over the country's civilian rule.

Civil society organizations also adopted a non-violent strategy, acting as agents of promoting democratic rights and individual freedoms. In sharp contrast to Indonesia's political culture, where both the state and civil society groups used violence as a means to realize their political goals, most professional associations and unions in Bangladesh looked for a constitutional way of restoring democracy. The students and the *Sramik Karmachary Ooikkya Parishad* (SKOP), a federation of the labour unions, were probably the only two major organizations that occasionally relied upon violent means to press their demands. However, given their limited spheres of political influence, they were not able to radicalize the situation. The activities of most student associations were limited mainly to educational institutions. By contrast, the SKOP only remained active among the public sector employees, especially workers. Neither of them had either the political power to challenge mainstream political parties, nor the ability to question the opposition's constitutional path to the transition. In other words, the radicals were not in a position to shape the outcome of the transition, which was determined mainly through elite competition.

Bangladesh's negotiated transition to democracy, however, raises two important questions: Firstly, what factors led civil society groups to play such a vital role in the country's movement for democracy? And secondly, why did the mainstream opposition remain hesitant for such a long time to forge a united movement for making a transition to democracy? A vast majority of analysts often argue that the involvement of key civil society groups with the resistance movement resulted from their genuine commitment to democracy that was clearly reflected in the war of independence in 1971.[6] Most of those organizations explored ways to replace the autocratic state of Pakistan with a genuinely democratic structure of governance. They fought for democracy and individual freedoms during the liberation war. Yet this answers the question only in part. If democracy was their primary concern, they could have probably made every possible effort to mobilize popular sentiment against the military regime of General Zia. These organizations seemingly did not take on the fundamentally undemocratic government of General Zia as many of them fell prey to Zia's co-optation strategy.

Part of their growing interest in the democracy movement was due to the economic downturn of the 1980s and which was largely caused by Ershad's aggressive approach to economic reform. Many key civil society organizations felt threatened by sweeping economic changes,

encouraging them to participate in the anti-military movement (Kabir 1885). For instance, the SKOP lent their support to the democracy movement because of their desire to protect the interests of public sector employees through the creation of democratic structures of governance. Reacting to Ershad's economic reform programs, some 13 national trade union federations joined together, forming a united platform for the workers and employees in order to strengthen the anti-reform campaign. Its five-point program, which was designed to protect the interests of public sector workers, called for stopping the government's privatization program and demanded the raising of salaries of all workers and employees of both the public and private sectors (Hasanuzzaman 1991: 305). Clearly, the five-point program was mainly directed toward the advancement of various economic interests of the workers.

Continued cuts in government services, coupled with the government's militarization program, appeared as direct threats to bureaucrats, engineers, agriculturists, and physicians. These groups saw the democracy movement as a primary step toward regaining their dominant positions in the Bangladeshi society and politics. A variety of other civil society groups also became increasingly disappointed with the way General Ershad's market reform programs continued to foster the growth of a non-entrepreneurial wealthy class without helping the economy to grow (Sobhan 1991). Disappointments continued to grow over the military regime's policy of 'franchising state responsibilities' (Wood 1997), which mainly benefitted a small group of elites, including big business and military officers. Such frustrations eventually led to the disengagement of civil society from the state, creating an ideal ground for societal groups to initiate a democracy movement based on an anti-reform agenda. Their hope was that a democratic transition would enable them to construct a political environment in which they could make politicians more responsive to their socio-economic demands.

By contrast, the mainstream opposition's reluctance to quickly assume a major role in the country's democracy movement stemmed from a few important and interrelated factors. The historical enmity and distrust between the two women leaders, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, made it extremely difficult for the AL and the BNP to act decisively in order to launch a united movement. For this reason, even when they decided to join the movement, they operated independently of one another (Ziring 1992: 157–58). It is also important to mention that in the late 1980s, both of these parties faced the

challenge of maintaining internal organizational cohesions. They were suffering from major internal feuds, leading to one split after another. Both the BNP and the AL leadership were struggling to put their houses in order. This situation considerably weakened their abilities to lead a mass movement for democracy. Apart from internal conflicts, the growing dependence of the BNP and AL upon political donations by big business also served as a major disincentive for them to get involved in the democracy movement. The emerging entrepreneurs seemed to be more interested in maintaining the status quo than fostering a democratic political culture. A vast majority of business actors, many of whom already became General Ershad's coalition partners, saw the democracy movement as a direct threat to the creation and or maintenance of a market economy in Bangladesh (Quadir 2000). Their continued suspicion of the democracy movement prevented the mainstream opposition from taking a lead role in the anti-military agitation.

Both parties broke their silences only when they began to realize that they were on the brink of losing complete public confidence. They became increasingly vulnerable to the growing pressure from their supporters and civil society groups for taking on the military regime. As the prospect for reaching an informal agreement with Ershad on the retreat of the military began to fade, the AL and the BNP became almost compelled to strengthen their search for a system of democratic governance in the country. They eventually agreed not only to devote their attention to the ongoing democracy movement, but also to work together to identify a common ground necessary for launching a united democracy movement (Ahmed 1995: 330–35). Their five-point demand served as the final driving force behind the successful transition to democracy in 1990.

Problems of democratic consolidation in the era of market reform

Bangladesh's transition to democracy provided the basis, at least theoretically, for democratic consolidation. A closer look at the process of transition would confirm that the country's democratic transition fulfilled most of the requirements essential for institutionalizing democracy. Not only did democracy in Bangladesh emerge from a negotiated transition, the moderates were also in full control of the entire negotiation process. The relevant political actors worked together to develop a consensus on both the methods of democratic transition and consolidation. Under the leadership of two moderate

political alliances, civil society groups also played a crucial role in bringing down Ershad's authoritarian regime. What is unfortunate is that such an apparent successful transition to democracy did not set the stage for consolidating democracy in Bangladesh. On the contrary, over the next few years, political violence, economic turmoil, and an abortive military coup led to the breakdown of both consensus and democracy under a democratically elected regime.

The optimism surrounding the retreat of the military and the subsequent assumption of power by a neutral interim government was indeed very high. The holding of a free and fair parliamentary election in February 1991 further strengthened the enthusiasm. Under the leadership of Khaleda Zia, the BNP emerged as the majority party with 141 seats in the 300-member *Jatiya Sangshad*. Sheikh Hasina's AL won 88 seats, while the Jatiya Party (JP) of Ershad secured 35 seats. Soon after the assumption of power by the BNP, however, the great optimism about the future of democratic consolidation began to disappear as the two women resumed their political war over the question of returning to a parliamentary democracy. Like the popularly elected regime of Wahid in post-authoritarian Indonesia, Khaleda Zia's democratically elected government refused to undertake broader reform programs in order to institutionalize democracy. Mrs. Zia seemed to have paid no attention to the opposition demand for amending the constitution in order to replace the existing presidential system, which was seen as the basis for what is often called constitutional authoritarianism, thus forcing the opposition to take to the streets.

Despite the fact that the growing conflicts of political interest between the ruling BNP and the opposition created a precarious situation, the country escaped a breakdown of consensus when the BNP and major opposition parties reached an agreement on returning to parliamentary democracy. Such an agreement paved the way for the parliament to pass the twelfth constitutional amendment that created the provision for a 'sovereign parliament' for which the government would be formally responsible (Hakim 1993: 67–82). The entire proceeding was televised live and the enthusiastic viewers of the whole country stopped to watch this historic amendment. To the surprise of many, however, such an exciting event did not mark the beginning of an era of hope and democratic consolidation. The fervour surrounding the mutually dynamic relationship between the government and the opposition did not last long.

Within a year of the twelfth constitutional amendment, the widespread hope about the future of sustainable democracy had disappeared,

replaced by renewed conflicts between the ruling BNP and the opposition led by the AL. The crisis began in 1992, when the AL and its allies, Ershad's JP and the Jammat-i-Islami, demanded a constitutional amendment in order to allow the formation of a neutral, non-partisan caretaker government (NCG) which would be responsible for conducting the next three parliamentary elections. Frustrated by the electoral rigging in a few by-elections held under Mrs. Khaleda Zia's regime, they argued that the BNP government would do whatever it could to manipulate the polling to increase its chances of re-election. The BNP, however, rejected the charges, maintaining that the election would be fair (Kamaluddin 1993: 24). The opposition also charged Mrs. Zia's regime with corruption and demanded the dissolution of parliament and holding of early elections. Given Mrs. Zia's refusal to come to a compromise, the opposition parties called for a number of *hartals* (general strikes) in the country, causing enormous tensions in state-society relations (Kamaluddin 1994: 19). The government-opposition conflict deepened further in February 1994, when the opposition lawmakers walked out of parliament. With the failure of several negotiation attempts to resolve the political impasse, 147 opposition MPs resigned, en masse, from parliament on December 28, 1994 and which unleashed a series of violent strikes and demonstrations for the next two years (Chakrawarty 1994).

However, it was not until March 1996 that the political standoff entered a dangerously violent phase. The mainstream opposition began its non-cooperation movement (NCM) for an indefinite period in the March of 1996. The program was designed to force the BNP government to step down so that the country could hold the next parliamentary elections under a neutral caretaker authority. In addition to holding public rallies, street demonstrations, and sit-in programs of important political places, the NCM also encouraged public sector officers and employees to disobey directives of the BNP regime. Interestingly enough, civil society groups joined the opposition parties in this anti-government program and also participated in the NCM, demanding the resignation of the BNP government. What surprised even seasoned observers of Bangladesh politics, however, was the decision of a few key non-political groups to form alliances with the opposition. By breaking their tradition of being non-partisan, quite a few groups within the NGO sector, the business community, and government officers openly criticized the Khaleda regime for failing to resolve the crisis. More important perhaps was the fact that most of them organized public meetings in

support of opposition demands and called upon the government to step down (Hasan 1996: 9).

For instance, the Association of the Development Agencies of Bangladesh (ADAB), the apex body of the development NGOs, held protest meetings in support of the demand of the mainstream opposition. In association with other civil society organizations, the ADAB demanded that the government immediately hand power over to a non-partisan caretaker government. Likewise, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBBCI), which represents the interests of the business community, organized public rallies and called upon the government to end the political turmoil (Ashish 1996a: 13). A large number of public employees, including civil bureaucrats, also lent their unequivocal support to the opposition movement. In addition to expressing their grave concern over the political impasse, they formed a forum called '*Prajaatantre Karmakarta Samannaya Parishad*' (Coordinating Council of the Officers of the Republic) comprising of associations of all the cadre and non-cadre services and which began to participate in various programs sponsored by the opposition, particularly the AL (Ashish 1996b: 11).

With the involvement of various civil society groups, the NCM ultimately led to the creation of the most terrifying episode in the entire political history of post-liberation Bangladesh. The country virtually witnessed what is often called a statelessness syndrome, where politics was clearly overtaken by violence. Random use of bombs, guns, and the killings of innocent people created an extremely frightening political landscape in the country (Khan 1996: 7). The actions of the mainstream opposition brought the country to a complete halt. Luckily, Bangladesh narrowly escaped a total breakdown when Mrs. Zia's regime finally agreed to the formation of a non-partisan caretaker government. The two-year long political deadlock came to an end with the resignation of the BNP regime and the subsequent assumption of power by a caretaker government headed by former Chief Justice, Habibur Rahman, on March 30, 1996.

The failure of the government and the opposition to come to a compromise was partly due to the personal enmity between Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, which has its roots in the country's bloody political history. Sheikh Hasina regards Khaleda Zia as the product of the country's military establishment which was responsible for the killing of her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1975. Mrs. Zia, on the other hand, considers Shiekh Hasina as the product of the pro-Indian authoritarian regime of Mujib. She often claims that the AL led by Ms. Hasina

'wants to turn Bangladesh into a state of India' (The Economists 1996: 40). This rivalry negatively affected the ability of the two leaders to foster a democratic culture. For instance, when Mrs. Zia's BNP came into power in 1991, neither Sheikh Hasina nor Khaleda Zia made any meaningful efforts to resolve their political conflicts through constitutional means. In addition to refusing to use the existing democratic political institutions to reconcile their political differences, both leaders showed their complete reluctance to recognize each other as important decision-makers for the entire nation. The continued bickering between Sheikh Hasina and Mrs. Zia, which is better known as the politics of mutual distrust, pushed the country to the brink of anarchy.

What still remains to be explained is the apparent failure of civil society groups to come to terms with democratic values. In other words, what factors motivated civil society groups to play such a crucial role in bringing down the BNP regime? Part of the reason why most civil society organizations quickly became disillusioned about democracy was the inability of the elected regime of Mrs. Zia to address the socio-economic needs of different civil society groups. Most of them hoped that a democratic government would adopt a populist strategy in order to realize their economic goals. Many civil associations, including the SKOP, expected that a transition to democracy would at least allow them to participate in the country's economic decision-making and benefit from it. It was also hoped that the government would make an effort to change the current pace of economic reforms.

Contrary to the hopes of civil society associations, the BNP decided to ignore the demands of the popular sector. Mrs. Zia seemed simply not interested in allowing civil society actors to become involved in developing a consensus on economic liberalization. She adopted a more aggressive approach to market reform without holding any meaningful dialogue with key social actors, leading to widespread popular discontent. The growing dissatisfaction of ordinary citizens over the reform agenda was first reflected in the mayoral elections of January 1994 in which both of the ruling party candidates in Dhaka and Chittagong failed to hold their seats. Considering the election results as a clear indication of people's disapproval of the government's policy, most observers viewed the defeats of the two important BNP candidates as a real embarrassment for the BNP (EIU, 1994: 12–13).

A number of civil society groups also took to the streets to reject the government's approach to the market. The SKOP launched and led a massive anti-reform campaign that eventually took a violent shape. Its

anti-reform movement began in early 1992 when it organized mass protest rallies and strikes demanding the immediate scrapping of the government's privatization policy and a 10 per cent increase in salaries for the workers in the jute and textile sectors. Given the government's reluctance to pay heed to the agitating workers, the SKOP went on a 96-hour strike that began on February 12, 1995, sparking violent clashes between police and workers, killing a dozen and injuring several thousand civilians. The strike also caused a huge damage to the growing economy, badly affecting the export sector and foreign investment. A number of other professional groups, namely government sector engineers, agriculturists, college teachers, and university professors were also at the forefront of a non-violent campaign to raise monthly salaries and to increase professional and other benefits (Centre for Policy Dialogue 1995: 14).

Such deteriorating state-society relations in effect created the ideal ground for mainstream opposition parties to speed up their efforts to bring down the BNP regime. Not only did they wholeheartedly support these civil associations to carry out their populist demands, they also encouraged civil society groups to participate in their street agitation program to unseat Mrs. Zia's government. Believing that the BNP regime would do nothing either to meet their demands or to end the political turmoil, most civil associations lent their support to the opposition-sponsored NCM. In other words, the mainstream opposition was able to exploit the frustration of civil society groups for its own political gains.

Conclusions

The post-transitional political crisis in Bangladesh does not support the hypothesis that economic liberalization creates the opportunity for democratic consolidation. What is observed is that prior-economic liberalization created a complex political situation in Bangladesh in which the prospect for democratic consolidation became a remote possibility. Contradictions generated by structural economic reforms prompted the fall of General Ershad's military authoritarianism on the one hand, and impeded the process of institutionalizing democracy, on the other. Bangladesh's experience also suggests that the frustrating outcomes of market-oriented reforms can often help relevant political actors to keep their traditional rivalry alive. Contrary to what the mainstream literature argues, the two major political parties, the AL and the BNP, did virtually nothing to maintain the consensus achieved

through the anti-Ershad movement. Instead of proceeding with the program of institutionalizing democracy, they brought back old feuds, blamed each other for the breakdown of consensus and, more importantly, used civil society groups to achieve their own political goals, which ultimately led to political unrest and anarchy. Equally important is that the necessity of implementing rapid market reform programs virtually created the need for an elected regime to behave in a more or less authoritarian fashion. The BNP government indeed adopted a non-democratic process to carry out a massive liberalization program.

Most authors on political and economic liberalization assume that a vibrant civil society not only plays a crucial role in forcing an authoritarian regime to embark on liberalization programs, but also facilitates the process of democratic consolidation. Unfortunately, this did not happen in post-transition Bangladesh. While civil society associations played a key role in making possible a transition to democracy, their involvement in street agitation with the opposition alliance contributed to the post-transitional political stalemate in the country. Their hopes that a democratic regime could easily help them to realize their unfulfilled demands went to waste in post-authoritarian Bangladesh. With utter surprise, they witnessed that the immediate priority of the BNP regime quickly shifted from fulfilling popular demands to the removal of market barriers. It, therefore, did not take long before a new sense of despair returned to civil society groups, similar to what Indonesia has been witnessing since the fall of Suharto, which eventually pushed them to take to the streets one more time, jeopardizing the path to democratic consolidation.

Notes

1 For definitions of democracy, see Vanhanen (1990: 6–11).
2 Most mainstream authors, including Huntington (1991: 161) and Przeworski (1991), strongly believe that transitions through violent strategies are likely to create a political environment in which the inauguration of democracy becomes uncertain. In most cases, Huntington argues that radical groups, such as Marxist-Leninist guerilla leaders, not only oppose democratic elections, but also make efforts to hinder the process of bringing down authoritarian regimes.
3 For a detailed discussion of how market reform programs failed to accelerate growth, expand and improve employment opportunities, and restore fiscal balance, see Quadir (2000).
4 By then the 15-party alliance became a platform of eight parties. Having failed to arrive at a consensus on the question of the movement's strategy, a total of seven parties eventually left the alliance. Some of these parties later

formed a leftist platform, commonly known as the 5-party alliance, which offered radical programs to oust General Ershad from power.

5 Following the interpretations of both Huntington (1991) and Przeworski (1991), this study defines moderates as groups that reject the adoption of any revolutionary strategies such as guerrilla insurgencies for making a transition to liberal, procedural democracy. In other words, these political forces rely on largely constitutional means, particularly negotiations, in order to bring down authoritarian regimes.

6 This contrasts the Indonesian case, where, as discussed by Heryanto in this volume, popular organizations didn't really use the notion of liberal democracy to create an alternative socio-political order.

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6

Engendering Globalization: Perspectives on Challenges and Responses

Alissa Trotz

Introduction

In her chapter 'Women, Development and Empowerment in Vietnam', Le Thi Quy suggests that in Vietnam, legal safeguards and the official recognition of women as equal partners with men contrast with and are undermined by the gendered effects of neo-liberal policies in this global conjuncture, and the stubborn perpetuation of gender stereotypes. She concludes that globalization 'has generated new development opportunities for women, and on the other hand, has brought them new challenges and disadvantages'.

Between the 1970s and the present, we can roughly discern three overlapping moments leading up to the current neo-liberal environment concerning women's issues (Antrobus 2000). The first relates to the momentary disillusion with traditional economic growth models and partial 'mainstreaming' of redistributive policies in development discourse, which opened up an ambivalent space for women's issues to appear on the stage and which led to the Declaration of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975 (and the conferences in Mexico City, Nairobi, Copenhagen and Beijing) and the 1980 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Secondly, the 1980s have been described as the lost decade, which saw the implementation of structural adjustment measures. This process has only been intensified in the 1990s, directly resulting in an ever-widening gap both in as well as between nations. It is indeed ironic at this juncture that terms like 'democracy' and 'human rights' are now prominent in the discourse of international organizations (from the IMF to the Commonwealth Secretariat) when, as the *Human Development Report 2000* points out, 'so substantive are

the disparities in levels of human development between North and South that they violate human rights as defined by the United Nations'. Thirdly, as Quy's chapter proposes, the current period of global restructuring is not indifferent to questions of gender, a suggestion which this overview takes as its point of departure to engage with more generally.[1]

This chapter reflects generally on three issues that are germane to feminist discussions of globalization and development. The essay begins by looking at how labour market processes are fundamentally premised on the availability of a flexible and cheap female labour force. The second section examines some of the implications of neoliberal policies for women in their socially designated roles as household managers. It closes by reflecting briefly on some of the challenges involved in creating oppositional transnational feminist politics.

Gender and labour markets

In an insightful article, Guy Standing employs the term 'feminization' to refer to the increasing entry of women into the paid labour market, often as substitutes for men. Feminization also refers to the general lowering of standards – casualisation, loss of job security, loss of benefits, low wages – such that the labour market increasingly takes on the devalued and inferior characteristics previously associated exclusively with female-dominated occupations (Standing 1989). Feminization does not, therefore, imply increasing parity between women and men, except perhaps in a negative sense.[2] This concept is particularly useful as it designates the production of gender difference as a central feature of the current global conjuncture.

The economic disparities that have inevitably accompanied neoliberal adjustment packages have prompted growing numbers of women to seek paid work as a response to crisis conditions within their households. The United Nations (UN) estimates that the general economic activity rate for women in the 20 to 54 age group is now approaching 70 per cent, with women's employment increasing at a faster rate than men's in every continent since 1980, with the exception of Africa (UN 1999: 8). Nor do these official figures adequately capture the full extent of women's employment, given the vast size of the informal sector and the unpaid labour that women also shoulder.

By outlining emerging patterns in three arenas – the export sector, the informal economy and the employment of migrant workers – the sections below explore some of the ways in which gendered relations

and identities are constitutive of labour market restructuring processes in the current phase of globalization.

Export-oriented manufacturing

High economic activities for women have been partly prompted by the increasing emphasis on export-oriented industrialization (EOI) in the South and a concomitant rise in levels of demand for female labour. By the 1990s EOI had spread from its initial bases in Mexico, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore to other locations primarily across Asia (where the increase has been most rapid), Latin America and the Caribbean. Early patterns of EOI were female led; Bangladesh, for instance, with four garment industries in 1978, had 2,400 women with some 1.2 million workers by 1995, providing employment for 70 per cent of women in waged work (UN 1999: 9). However, it was unclear whether these emergent patterns of employment were simply reinscribing female subordination or providing women with new opportunities that challenged existing understandings and practices (Lim 1990).

We are certainly far less likely today to operate with the assumption of the female factory worker as uniformly young, single, childless and exploited. Extrapolations from the early research, much of which dealt specifically with patterns of industrialization across Asia and South East Asia in particular (except for studies of the maquiladoras in Mexico), could easily run the risk of recapitulating Orientalist stereotypes of passive Asian women as victims of capital. Instead, and recalling Stuart Hall's contention that '… in order to maintain its global position, capital has had to negotiate, has had to incorporate and partly reflect the differences it was trying to overcome' (Hall 1997: 182), some of the best feminist research seeks a more complex understanding of how global capital intersects with locally existing structures of power to produce specifically 'suitable' workforces which are both gendered and racialized,[3] resulting in heterogeneous contests for power not just across places, but also within them. Thus, in Indonesia, industries reassure the families of young rural migrant workers by presenting themselves in familiarly hierarchized terms (Wolf 1992); as Quy points out in an earlier chapter, Vietnamese women working with foreign companies often have to sign contracts promising to remain unmarried and not have children for five years (Quy 2000: 5). And in a fascinating study, Ching Kwan Lee (1998) explores how a single firm draws on differently stratified female workforces in Hong Kong and Southern China – older married women with children in the former and primarily

young unmarried rural migrants in the latter – and consequently employs different managerial and discursive strategies of control in each setting.[4] A more nuanced reading enables us to identify the variegated ways in which global capital insinuates itself into the local fabric, building on existing power relations while also producing new tensions and constraints. It also permits us to trace how different groups of women create and articulate 'opportunities' across spatial domains (both intra- and trans-national). These range from strikes and other more apparently individualized acts of resistance, such as the reworking of gender relations in the household based on wage-earning, to a renegotiation of personal and social identities (Ong 1987; Wolf 1992).

Foregrounding women's ambivalent relationships to the export-oriented manufacturing industries should not lead us to overstate the possibilities for radical transformations. The relatively unfettered mobility of capital continues to give it an obvious advantage over workforces that attempt to organize collectively. For a start, multinational corporations have tended to shift their investments away from Newly Industrialized Countries and towards newly emerging players such as Bangladesh, China, India, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Vietnam which also rely heavily on a female workforce (UN 1999). Moreover, by the 1990s, the consensus that EOI policies were always and everywhere female-led was being qualified by specific evidence that women's share of industrial employment was not rising across the board in all settings (Pearson 1998).

Nor, where they occur, have increased employment opportunities necessarily lessened gendered inequalities in the labour force. The existence of a large pool of women seeking work in export factories and export-processing zones helps to maintain a climate where low wages, no job security, sexual harassment, arbitrary layoffs and stringent conditions are the order of the day. The United Nations itself asserts that while EOI has opened up industrial jobs to women in the Asia Pacific region, thereby reducing levels of horizontal segregation, levels of vertical segregation remain the highest in the world (UN 1999: 17). Women are also more likely to be employed in industries that are labour-intensive and relatively low-skilled: the demand for women in emerging transnational data entry and call centre jobs in parts of the Caribbean (Barbados) and Asia (India) provides yet another example of the gendering of such work processes. The main pattern still seems to be that where production becomes increasingly capital-intensive, existing skill levels are redefined in such a way as to marginalize women

from the production lines (Pearson 1998; Phongpaichit 1988; Sklair 1993). For example, some research has indicated that male workers are increasingly the employees of choice in the electronics industry in the Republic of Korea following production changes to more sophisticated products, and similar gender shifts have also been noted for Singapore (for a discussion see UN 1999: 9).

The informal sector

It is estimated that the share of female employment is higher in the informal than in the formal sector in the South, the result of the increased casualization of the workforce. In India and Indonesia, for instance, the United Nations reports that nine out of every ten women working outside of agriculture are located in the informal sector (UN 2000: 122). The informal economy covers a wide range of activities, from small-scale enterprises to single workers accountable to the self. There is broad diversity even among the latter category. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), for example, outlines three categories of self-employment in India: small-scale traders; home-based workers; and manual labourers and service providers. The specific form taken by the informal sector varies. In some places – as in India – it consists largely of self-employed workers, while elsewhere one finds large numbers of waged employees in microenterprises. Ping Chun Hsiung's study (1996) of Taiwan's 'economic miracle' – eloquently titled *Living Rooms as Factories* – is a good example of the latter.

Global capital's relationship with the informal sector is perhaps most emblematic of women's subordination within the export sector. Rather than a vestige of so-called backward economies that would inevitably disappear as integration into the global economy proceeded apace (the way in which informality often gets constructed), the informal sector is, in fact, an integral – if often invisible – aspect of industrial restructuring. Moreover, it has a distinctly gendered face. The search for cheap labour has not only witnessed the relocation of industry from North to South, but has also prompted the proliferation of subcontracting arrangements between industries and workers who for the most part are home-based and female.[5] If women (and especially mothers with little access to child-care) find in home-working the possibility of combining some form of income-earning with their social obligations within the household, the ideology of the sanctity of the household and the assumed authority of the male breadwinner serve the needs of global capital seeking to circumvent state regulation and

production overheads. That is to say, the devaluation of the domestic space as feminine and the work that takes place within it as private and a labour of love results in and permits 'economic miracles' that are profoundly based on the ongoing invisibility and exploitation of women's labour (Hsiung 1995; Mies 1982).

For the vast majority of women, however, employment takes place outside of the EOI sector. Some estimate that only some 5–10 per cent of all economically active women worldwide are involved in industrial production, as factory employees or homeworkers (Pearson 1998: 182). Elsewhere in the informal sector, as own-account workers, women are also particularly vulnerable:

> They earn less than a minimum wage and have no assets of their own. Their employment is insecure and often there is no work at all. They have limited access to social services such as health and child care. They belong to the weakest social groups and, as women, they have few rights within the family (Bhowmik & Jhabvala 1996: 105).

Women are confined to a narrower and less valued range of opportunities than men. This results from a number of factors: gendered ideologies of delegation of 'appropriate' work; home-based workshops that privilege male apprentices; and less access to education that provides technical skills and the waged sector which provides an initial training ground for men. The scale of women's activities is also frequently restricted by domestic responsibilities, cultural and religious limits on their mobility, and their relatively lower access to the three C's: capital, credit and clients.[6]

Most emblematic perhaps of women's vulnerability in the informal economy are sex workers. Tourism has become a lucrative foreign exchange earner for Southern countries, promoted through the commodification of differences packaged as exotica. Women are central to such representations of otherness. Moreover, sex (euphemistically referred to as the hospitality industry) is frequently the 'officially unacknowledged' basis of this sector.[7] In Thailand, for instance, one study contends that the economic 'miracle' (up to 1997) depended heavily on a roughly $4 billion per year tourist industry that itself 'was built on the backs of women working on their backs' (Bishop & Robinson 1998: 251). The Thai state, in conjunction with international financial institutions, implemented policies that depleted resources for impoverished rural households and consequently precipitated an age-and gender-specific migrant flow for the tourist

industry. Prostitution is increasingly becoming an option for displaced women to support their families, working under highly exploitative conditions in a stigmatized occupation and with little protection or institutional support. The sex trade has also taken on a global dimension, with women crossing national borders to work in the entertainment industry in other countries (Kempadoo 1998). Not all 'choose' to do so; there is growing recognition of the need to address the question of women who are illegally trafficked across borders by increasingly organized and sophisticated operations. In 1998 it was estimated that seven billion dollars in profit accrued to those involved in the trafficking of over 4 million individuals, much of which involved women from Asia and Eastern Europe (see Sassen 2000). Kamala Kempadoo cites United Nations statistics that indicate that over three quarters of the 700,000 women and girls trafficked across the world in 1999 originated from Asia, Latin America and Africa (Kempadoo 2001). In her chapter, Quy indicates that Vietnamese women are trafficked to Cambodia, China, Thailand and Hong Kong (Quy 2000: 13). The Asian Coalition against Trafficking in Women estimates that 200,000 Bangladeshi women were trafficked to Pakistan in the last decade. In Thailand, it is estimated that as many as 30,000 Burmese women are trafficked to work as prostitutes, while in Australia some 300 Thai women are trafficked into the country for prostitution each year (UN 2000: 158).[8] There is undoubtedly a very real need to address the coercive and violent conditions that so many women in the global sex trade face. At the same time, some activists and researchers caution us against constructing all sex workers as trafficked victims. They also insist on the need to address trafficking in a broader context that does not focus on punishing individual traffickers while ignoring the complicity of neo-liberal agendas that continue to lead women to make difficult choices. Official pronouncements on trafficking can deflect attention away from the wider conditions that produce this phenomenon in our time, and can also lead to state and inter-governmental efforts that result in the further marginalization of Southern immigrant women, such as actions against trafficking that result in stringent and punitive controls on women migrants of colour in the West (see Kempadoo 2003, 2001; Pattanaik 2003).

Labour markets and migration flows

The restructuring of global capitalism and the economic dislocations visited unequally in different places result in the relocations of jobs

and labour. The demands placed on the family as a result of structural economic change and the high degree of co-operation required at the household level have underlined women's contributions, often taking them beyond the spatial confines of the national domain. Women are becoming increasingly visible in these movements overseas, and their remittances are a crucial mainstay of their households and the national economy, amounting to more than US$70 billion in 1998 (Sassen 2000: 520). Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that some governments (Bangladesh, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand) have invested resources into institutionalizing various 'labour export' programs (Sassen 2000: 520). Relying heavily on migrants to provide infusions of economic resources into the domestic economy (and as a consequence of this dependence), the state may also be actively engaged in cultivating nationalist ties that bind diasporic communities to 'home', in ways that are profoundly gendered. Thus, Brenda Yeoh and Katie Willis (1999) argue that Singapore's go-regional drive in the 1990s (intended to consolidate the national economy through external linkages) rested on an ideological foundation that constructed men as primarily driving the external momentum and women as responsible for maintaining the family, particularly now that it was split across more than one national space.

In Asia the average annual growth rate of female migrants between 1985–1990 was higher than that for men. This is likely an underestimation as it is based on official figures and does not therefore capture undocumented migrants to other destination countries in Asia (like Japan, Malaysia, Singapore), the Middle East, Western Europe and North America. In the Philippines (as in the Caribbean), for instance, women predominate in migration streams; this tendency of women to figure so visibly and to migrate independently of men is not the case across Asia.

The prominence of women in these migratory circuits is integral not only to the maintenance of households and families, but also to the operation of the global economy in ways that are enormously profitable to employers, middlemen, home and host governments. In her analysis of global cities, defined as 'strategic sites for the specialized servicing, financing and management of global economic processes' (Sassen 2000: 510, 1998), Sassen draws our attention to the central and strategically invisible roles of immigrant and migrant women. Thus, female migrants predominantly work in the service sector in sex-typed jobs – entertainment, teaching, nursing, domestic service, and prostitution.[9] They are also incorporated as cheap, flexible labour in unskilled

jobs in the manufacturing industry. In the context of globalization, production is not entirely relocated overseas where wage costs are considerably lower. Migrant workers are also used in place of relocation to offset the demands of organized labour. In the latter case, subcontracting has become a global phenomenon; the garment industries in Canada and the United States for instance depend heavily on sweatshops employing predominantly immigrant and often illegal female labour.

As several researchers have noted, the same promises and conditions of globalization that enable capital to enjoy unfettered mobility do not exist for labour.[10] Bakan and Stasiulis for example, through analyses of the working conditions of Caribbean and Filipina women arriving under the domestic worker's scheme in Canada (Filipina women constituted over 58 per cent of the foreign domestic workers arriving in Canada in 1990), have drawn our attention to the racialized and gendered discourses and practices that are central to the construction of exclusionary notions of citizenship in advanced capitalist liberal democracies (Bakan & Stasiulis 1997).[11] Rachel Salazar Parrenas refers to Filipina domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles, who she calls 'the global servants of late capitalism' (Parrenas 2001: 243), as partial citizens as a way of analytically capturing the contradictory pressures such women face by sending and receiving states (unprotected from economic/social vagaries in the former, refused full incorporation by the latter).

Women, adjustment and families

Neo-liberal policies are heavily implicated in the reorganization of household and familial life, with often deleterious consequences for women. Structural adjustment programmes (calling forth stabilization and adjustment measures that include devaluation, restructuring of the public sector, removal of price controls, and opening of the economy to foreign investment), with their emphasis on market relations, entail a reconstitution of the boundaries between 'private' and 'public' spaces. While community and household labour remain outside the ambit of macro-economic discourse, in reality the scope of the 'private' domain is radically expanded consequent upon the valorization of the market and the state's drastic pruning of its role as a provider of social services. Asymmetrical relations within the household – along lines of gender and generation – mean that it is women as managers of the domestic domain, and poor women in particular, who pay the highest

price and whose efforts continue to be largely unrecognized by policy makers.

We have already seen in relation to the export and informal sectors how the economic crisis has increased the numbers of female job-seekers, in a labour market that continues to be profoundly stratified along gendered lines. Restructuring in the public sector has also tended to differentially affect women, particularly as lower-level clerical employees who have been among the first to be retrenched as a result of divestment programmes, and as the public sector itself becomes increasingly feminized (both qualitatively in terms of the conditions of work as well as the result of men being more able to find employment elsewhere).

However, women's efforts to shore up their households through participation in the paid labour force have not been offset by significant changes in the allocation of household duties. Feminist critiques of development have noted that the renegotiation of domestic chores appears to be the area most intransigent to change. In fact, neoliberalism appears to have entrenched women's domestic responsibilities, while shrinking social provisions have intensified women's work in a number of ways.[12] The net result is that women spend far more time on unpaid work than men, a situation that is compounded where there are small children. As Quy (2000: 8) points out for example, Vietnamese women work between 16–18 hours a day, compared with 8–10 hours for men. Even this may be an underestimation, for while time-use surveys clearly document the disparities, they do not capture the full range of women's work as women frequently juggle several tasks simultaneously. In addition to extending their hours of unpaid work, women have also responded by enlisting the help of children (primarily female) and by creating confederations of resident and non-resident female kin to assist with domestic responsibilities. It appears, then, that under circumstances in which men's role as the main or dominant income-earner is severely eroded, gender divisions within the home may become more entrenched as a vestige of masculine identity and dominance.

Women heading their own households have also been given considerable attention in the literature. The 'feminization of poverty' thesis argues that female-headed households are not only increasing, but are associated with poverty, a position that has come under recent criticism (Jackson 1998; Varley 1996). Indeed, the paths to female headship are not the same across and within places and such differences are likely to have implications for how such households are perceived and

what access to resources they can marshall. Broadly speaking, for example, a significant proportion of female heads in the Caribbean have never been married and many have what are termed 'visiting relationships' that do not involve cohabitation, owing to historically specific cultural practices among the African population (the situation is quite different for other ethnic groups in the region); in Asia the picture is very different and widowhood or separation are more frequent roads to female headship. Access to extended kin networks is also a critical differentiating factor. Sometimes women-headed households emerge via female initiative (leaving an abusive partner for instance), which crucially turns on access to employment. Or a female head may receive remittances from her migrant husband. On the other hand, as a rural dweller she may end up assuming her absent partner's responsibilities on the farm in addition to her own work (Quy 2000: 6). And what of women living in households with men where they have little or no control over decisions and income, even their own – might a focus on the 'problem' of female headship obscure the difficulties that women living with men face? While the equation of female-headedness with poverty is problematic and cannot satisfactorily address such variations, and while the phenomenon of female-headed households certainly needs careful contextualization, it is equally important not to lose sight of the fact that as household heads, women are not starting off on an equal footing with men, whatever compensatory strategies they may employ.

One issue that definitively foregrounds gender subordination within the household is domestic violence. Quantitative and qualitative data on this issue is highly limited (in part due to the fact that domestic violence was not seen until recently as a 'development' issue), although ongoing feminist activism over the years has led to increasing awareness of gender-based violence as a very public matter (see, for example, Nagar 2000), and one that is profoundly related to and facilitated by wider forms of societal and state violence against women. Diane Elson (1998: 51) refers to a 1994 World Bank study that states that 35 per cent of ill-health for women between 15–44 years stems from poor reproductive health, violence and rape. Quy also notes the pervasiveness of violence against women in Vietnam, referring to statistics gathered from 18 provinces and cities that cited over 10,000 *reported* cases over the past eight years (Quy 2000: 13). The United Nations, in a recent publication, cites localized studies (which include some research from Asia) stating that up to 58 per cent of women report physical violence (UN 2000: 153–154).[13]

Domestic violence takes a number of forms – ensuring financial and emotional dependence, restricting women's movement, undermining or belittling of women, threats, physical abuse – all of which converge in their aim to keep women in their (subordinate) place, a place that is constructed in specific locales. Its occurrence has also been linked to gendered patterns of expenditure and particularly to men's spending on alcohol, gambling and tobacco (Elson 1998), although it is critical that we do not reduce all incidences of domestic violence to the actions of inebriated partners. It is precisely its unexceptionality, that is to say its routinization by men as a mode of control over women that has created silences around the violence that women experience in households. Once acknowledged, there is also the tendency to reduce such acts of violence to individual men, deflecting attention away from systemic factors that are local, regional, national and global which constitute women as dependent and vulnerable and enable the perpetuation of abusive relations on a number of scales.

In the absence of substantial research, one can only suggest possible linkages between globalization, economic crisis and domestic violence. Is growing awareness due to increased reporting, an actual rise in the incidences of domestic violence, mobilization around women's issues, or a combination of any or all of these factors? We need to investigate the bodily consequences for women of their transgressions of space and gendered norms in the current global conjuncture, where more and more women are entering the paid labour force, migratory streams and occupying spaces and responsibilities previously regarded as male preserves. When masculine embodiment has partly rested on men's superior earning power, how does the severe erosion of men's material advantage translate into particular struggles for control in the domestic domain?

Women and change

As the discussion demonstrates, the current period of global restructuring is profoundly gendered. Nor is it just that the effects are different for women and men. If one were to consider the myriad responses to economic and social immiseration, the centrality of women to such efforts is immediately obvious: dramatic rises in female labour force participation rates; intensification of women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere; and growing numbers of women in migrant flows to the North.

One way of comprehending these gendered dynamics is to locate the household at the center of our analyses as a site that critically mediates relationships between local and global processes. Feminist researchers, by addressing the household and the broader network of relations within which it is embedded, have challenged ideas of the domestic domain as an undifferentiated unit governed by altruistic principles. As a result of this work, it is now widely accepted that the household is neither a separate entity, nor a domain producing fixed social identities, but rather an economic and cultural configuration that is made meaningful through the activities of its members linked in multiple ways to the so-called public sphere. By seeing the domestic domain as productive of – and not just produced by – wider relations of power, it becomes possible to investigate how micro-level changes might 'influence larger scale social, economic and political processes' (Moore 1994: 88). This means that rather than see the familial setting as buffeted by and simply and always responding to the forces of neo-liberalism, the household becomes central to understanding global processes, influencing (not without limits) the shape they take. Focusing on women's lives and the meanings that they give to those experiences both individually as well as collectively, can provide analytical windows into the articulation of limits and change. To put it another way, in the current climate of neo-liberalism it is precisely the construction of gender in the domestic sphere that has brought women to the forefront at home and beyond, individually and collectively. These changes have come at immense cost; at the same time we should emphasize that they have not been uniformly experienced or represented in the same way for all women.

This raises an interesting paradox. It is essential, if the process of democratization is to fulfill its mandate, for the voices of those most hard hit by the economic crisis to be heard. Yet, as feminist critiques have pointed out, 'development and democracy' thus far has depended precisely on the economic, social and political marginalization of women. In relation to the latter for example, Table 6.1 on political representation across Asia illustrates how access to the corridors of state power remains profoundly gendered.

What is required is an analysis and platform of action that throw into relief the exclusionary nature of the development process itself, as well as the way in which it is becoming increasingly inadequate to attend to the resonances that are occurring globally between 'North' and 'South', epigrammatically represented perhaps by the figure of the migrant female worker. As Molyneux (1998: 84) succinctly puts it: '…

Table 6.1 Percentage of Women among Parliamentarians in Single or Lower Chambers of National Parliament (Asia)

	1987	*1995*	*1999*
Eastern Asia	18	12	13
South-Eastern Asia	10	9	12
Southern Asia	5	5	5
Central Asia	–	8	8
Western Asia	4	4	5

Source: Adapted from UN 2000: 164.

for many feminists in the developing countries the important issue is how to develop feminist politics which can also promote a general project of social justice. This implies some commitment to the principle of equality and to universal principles of citizenship, but in a way which does not presume an undifferentiated public with identical needs and interests'.

At one level, one could say that women are uniquely positioned in this regard. In its platform in Beijing, the southern based feminist grouping, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) suggests a principal role for women in leading the challenge to globalization by suggesting that:

> … women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, and therefore between economic growth and human development. They are the workers in both spheres – those most responsible, and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer the most when the two work at cross-purposes, and most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two (DAWN 1995: 21. See also Antrobus 2000).

It is certainly tempting to characterize such differentiated responses by women and men – implied by the DAWN statement – as part of an unchanging schema that reinscribes a hierarchical binary between male and female responsibilities and identities. Yet this would overlook the fact that if women are continuously denied adequate and equal access to resources, they are also increasingly demanding recognition of the worth of their socially devalued activities. While much of the mobilization would thus far seem to be taking place outside of the 'traditional' political arena *per se*, we

should not mistake this for a disengagement from the formal institutions of the state.

One example from Latin America of such connections being made, where gendered inequality and 'privacy' were transformed into collective demands on the state for social justice, comes out of women's very public struggles under military dictatorships during the 1970s. Women's social identities as mothers enabled them to stand up to years of economic hardship and political repression. This is certainly not an argument for women's biological roles as mothers and nurturers (not all women want to or become mothers), nor is it a case for women's inherent propensity towards selflessness. What this example demonstrates is that we have to begin by asking questions about the particular and different meanings of motherhood, in different places and at different times. We need to explore the specific ways in which women and men are defined, and the implications of this for varied modes of survival and resistance.

In the case of Latin America, intense political suppression of traditional channels of organizing (political parties and trade unions) and traditional organizers (men) precipitated new modes of opposition and social actors. Rising costs of living and women's increased visibility in the waged workforce led to the emergence of neighbourhood organizations in low-income areas in which female residents played a central role, setting up kitchens and co-operatives to provide communal goods and services. State repression and the disappearances of thousands of persons perceived to be opposed to the military dictatorships, also sparked protests by groups of women from Argentina to Chile, El Salvador to Guatemala, all demanding information on and justice for their missing family members.

Women's identities as mothers and wives were what brought them together across class, regional, and other divides. They did not uniformly or even necessarily support any religious programme, political party platform or particular ideology, and most would probably not describe themselves as feminist. Many were simply – and initially – asking for the right to mother effectively, to keep households and families together under increasingly debilitating economic and political conditions and in a context in which the responsibility for the day-to-day working of the household falls on women. At the same time and through their actions, women turned dominant gendered representations against repressive regimes, by struggling for the right to carry out their patriotic duty to mother at all costs. Representations of women as apolitical and passive (in contrast to politicized and resisting

male subjects) created spaces within which they – and not men – could insert themselves into the public arena. Women disobeyed dominant ideologies that mothers belong in the homes by refusing to remain in their place. Several groups began linking the political culture of violence to the violence and inequalities within their homes and in their everyday lives. As academics ponder the events of the last three decades across Latin America, it is virtually impossible to ignore the critical and ongoing contributions made by countless women to the transitions to democracy (For extended discussions see Alvarez 1990; Dore 1997; Radcliffe & Westwood 1993).

There are numerous instances across Asia of women's collective challenges to globalization, initiatives that address such issues as the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women; working conditions; the organization of informal sector workers; access to credit; inequality in health care; violence against women and inequality between men and women in the sharing of formal political power. To cite a few: the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India developed out of the concerns of poor women in the informal sector whose working conditions had been marginal to the trade union movement; by 1995 SEWA counted some 220,000 women among its members (Carr, et al. 1996). Organizations such as EMPOWER (Education Means Protection of Women Engaged in Re-Creation) in Thailand, although working on a small scale, seek to provide sex workers with options to either improve their positions within the industry or to leave it. Several organizations have also gone beyond their original remit to raise issues that were previously unarticulated publicly such as domestic violence (Nagar 2000. Also see Kabeer 1994: Chapter 9 for a discussion with specific reference to Asia). As migrant labour, immigrant women are leading the challenge to the structures of exclusion they face as racialized workers. They are also taking active roles in community building processes, precipitated partly by the responsibility for handling settlement issues and seeking services for their families (Sassen 1998: 92). In Canada, for example, InterCede represents and advocates on behalf of immigrant domestic workers, many of whom are Filipina (Bakan & Stasiulis 1997). Miriam Ching Yoon Louie (2001) eloquently documents the leadership roles taken by Latina, Chinese and Korean immigrants in organizing among hotel, garment sweatshop and restaurant workers in the United States, building connections across different constituencies while also challenging traditional forms of union-based organizing.

Many of these efforts, moreover, while place-specific, are not place-bound. Sassen notes:

> The needs and agendas of women are not necessarily defined exclusively by state borders, we are seeing the formation of cross-border solidarities and notions of membership rooted in gender, sexuality, and feminism, as well as in questions of class and country status, i.e., First versus Third World, which cut across all of these membership notions (Sassen 1998: 100).

For instance, women have conducted highly visible and international campaigns to include unpaid work in the national accounts, emphasizing that what gets defined as a productive asset is a matter not of natural fact but of socially constituted structures and discourses of power. The eventual recognition by the United Nations of women's rights as a human rights issue, the appointment of a special rapporteur in 1993 and the visibility of other women's issues at a supranational level owe much to feminist mobilizing.[14] Sex workers are organizing across national boundaries, challenging simplistic characterizations of sex workers as exploited victims by insisting on labour rights as well as on protection against forced trafficking (Kempadoo 1998). These responses are the logical outcome of an integrated world economy that is founded on social inequalities, dislocation and discrepant movements of capital and labour. In short, what we are witnessing are strategies for survival and change that cannot be confined within national boundaries, but rather straddle local and global scales (Basu 1995; Naples & Desai 2002). One challenge for researchers in assessing the effectiveness of these various initiatives is to avoid conflation and easy generalizations. Instead we must be sensitive not only to the dizzying array of transnational activism, but also to the politics of scale. Paying attention to the latter in particular requires us to carefully disentangle the various levels at which women's organizing is occurring, in order to map what connections and mutual influences are being actively forged.

Let me close by naming two issues to be considered in any contemplation of the political possibilities of women organizing transnationally. The first has to do with the potential for women's movements to be co-opted and harnessed to the neo-liberal project. The experience of feminist and women-centred NGOs in the last decade or so has led to numerous debates about accountability, raising questions over whether feminists have 'sold out' to the state, and leading to concern over what

some see as a growing disjuncture between a global feminist activist community that is increasingly attuned to the demands of the international circuit, and the majority of women on whose behalf they claim to speak.

Additionally, it is striking that several international agencies have incorporated such terms as 'empowerment' into their programmatic endeavours and speak positively of 'centring' women in the development process. Women become a means to an end, a way of achieving efficiency. Critically, the direction of limited resources towards women – under the guise of the empowerment of civil society – becomes a mechanism for further pruning the resources of the state. One example is the way in which microcredit initiatives (like the Grameen Bank) have been given new life by financial institutions and planners. Initially seen by some feminists as a direct way of reaching and empowering poor women with little access to the collateral required by traditional lending agencies, there seems to be a more recent acknowledgement that micro-credit may potentially but not automatically transform gendered inequalities. The targeting of women is now justified as central to poverty alleviation efforts (a move which indirectly, partly and ironically resonates with feminist work on gendered household responsibilities and earlier notions of maternal altruism that explained how and why women's patterns of expenditure differed from men's). As recent critical scholarship has shown, such microcredit programmes may frequently end up further entrenching neo-liberal agendas by focusing on women as rational economically efficient actors, by reinforcing an unequal household division of labour and intensifying women's work burden and by permitting further retrenchment of state responsibility for social and other expenditures (Kabeer 1994; Rankin 2001).

Secondly, while this essay has foregrounded the centrality of women to processes of globalization, it is important to see the critical challenges that have arisen thus far as a potential, and not as something to be taken for granted. That is to say, highlighting the gendered dimension of neo-liberalism should not lead us to conclude that any automatic identification among Southern women exists (what some might call the global sisterhood argument); this would be an ontological and ethnocentric trap. For while work and family life have become commensurable for so many women, similar social practices have not led to some shared awareness of gender subordination, reminding us of gender's intersection with other social relations and cautioning us against developing any easy and highly unrealistic notions of female solidarity.

This was the Achilles heel of the first conferences following the Declaration of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975, when constituencies from the South challenged the hegemonic vision of Western feminism both for its assumption of speaking for all women as well as its disengagement from material issues that divided 'North' and 'South'. Nor is it sufficient to see North and South in binary terms. Within the South, 'regional and cultural specificities necessarily pose different questions and elicit different political responses' (Molyneux 1998: 83). Additionally, some have observed that transnational feminist networking since 1975 has created its own constituency of Northern and Southern feminists who tend to focus more frequently on unequal relations between 'North /South; not that inside the South and between women of the South… . These same women, who are global in their activism, also have a more active and stronger relation to feminists of the North than to the struggles of poor women in the South, where they (partly) live' (Andaiye 2000). Local and global alliances cannot be fruitfully based on simplistic appeals to gender. Rather, it is differences and inequalities among various constituencies of women (conceived of as produced historically and existing both within as well as across specific places), which must become the point of departure, in the process of arriving at political consensus. Perhaps the real challenge of transforming unequal social relationships and building transnational feminist networks lies in the struggle to ensure that such alliances remain grounded in specific women's struggles – the challenge which is widening and deepening.[15]

To conclude then, it is clear that globalization and feminization go hand in hand, and that the implementation of structural adjustment policies are predicated upon the cheapness and invisibility of women's labour. One might argue that such an emphasis simply reinstantiates inequality, reinforcing the construction of women in specific locales as mothers, as unproductive household members and as secondary citizens. Such a conclusion, however, is overly deterministic and obscures the fact that the responses that this paper has sought to trace are primarily the result of female initiative; specifically, the other side of globalization is the emergence of local and transnational networks of women. Nor should this lead us to the other extreme, where we unproblematically attribute to women a generalized and heroic ability to resist the constraints in, through and against which they constitute themselves. The examples presented suggest instead that we pay attention to what takes place in the spaces between the limits of structural determinism and what Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) refers to as 'the

romance of resistance'. What we are witnessing, and what seems to be emblematic of globalization, is both the extension of possibility and the reinscription of limit.

Notes

1 For a thorough analysis that insists that global capitalism is constitutive of and constituted by complexly gendered relations and identities, see Freeman (2001), Gibson-Graham (2002).
2 For example, the closing of the wage gap between women and men under conditions of feminization is more likely the result of the downward adjustment of male wages rather than any improvement in levels of remuneration to women.
3 Thus, for example, the nimble fingers argument was a direct reference to the presumed natural ability women had for sewing in the garment industry or assembling small parts in the electronics sector, but it was also associated (sometimes explicitly through advertisements inviting foreign companies to invest) with racialized others. The same can be said for assumptions about Third World women's docility and hence their tendency to accept bad working conditions.
4 Not all EOI is necessarily driven by foreign investors; national firms have also been relatively important in East Asia, and more important, say, than in Latin America (see Gwynne 1990).
5 Of eight countries reporting home-based work between 1991 and 1999, six reported that women constituted between 70–80% of the workforce.
6 Gendered inequalities in property ownership and inheritance affect women's ability to procure credit, for example (for want of collateral), but women are also discriminated against by lending agencies.
7 Prostitution is not only linked to tourism; in Asia, prostitution – and similar processes of racialisation and othering in relation to the women – also developed to service the 'needs' of soldiers in military bases, with the collusion of militaries and governments alike (Enloe 1993, Moon 1997).
8 While trafficking is primarily organized around prostitution, this is not the only reason; women are also trafficked to provide domestic service and sweatshop labour.
9 There is also the phenomenon of mail order brides from the Philippines, serving a clientele primarily from Japan and the United States (Sassen 2000; Tolentino 1996).
10 Labour restrictions are unevenly felt. As Aihwa Ong points out, 'nation-states constantly refine immigration laws to attract capital-bearing subjects while limiting the entry of unskilled laborers'. The flexible citizens she speaks of are elite Chinese subjects who make tactical and economic calculations about citizenship in order to fluidly traverse global circuits and maintain family and work lives across multiple territorial terrains (Ong 1999: 112). At the same time, the vast majority of migrants from the South are excluded from such privileges.
11 Much of the migration also takes place within Asia itself. As the United Nations notes, the principal countries that 'export' female labour, primarily for domestic service, are: Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand,

while the main receiving sites are Brunei, Hong Kong, Japan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Taiwan (UN 1999: 34).

12 For example: spending more time looking for cheaper food and basic necessities, which in turn require more time to prepare; looking after sick household members and the elderly because of a faltering public health system. The nature of these tasks will vary across a number of factors that include place, class, and type of household, but it is clear that it is women who shoulder such responsibilities.

13 'Official' statistics on domestic violence are like figures on the informal sector: it is obvious that in both cases there is vast under-counting/under-reporting. In the case of domestic violence, some of the factors leading to under-reporting are: cultures of silence around gender-based violence; the normalization of violence as a private matter and a form of punishment that is justified; the reluctance of women to report violence to researchers with whom no sustained relationship of trust has been established.

14 The issue of rights based approaches to development (represented today in the emphasis on good governance as a prerequisite to aid) and particularly of universal human rights is a vexed subject in feminist theorizing, especially around questions of cultural difference and the danger of some feminist approaches that end up infantilizing women in the South and negating their complex realities. See Grewal (1999).

15 For one attempt to look at how difference might be made central to feminist projects, see Yuval-Davis' theory of transversal politics (Yuval-Davis 1997).

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7
Women, Development and Empowerment in Vietnam

Le Thi Quy

Introduction

Vietnam is one of the poorest, yet one of the most densely populated, countries in the world. The total area of Vietnam is about 331,113 square kilometers, three-fourths of which is composed of mountains and highlands. By the year 2000, Vietnam had a population of over 76 million, 51 per cent of which was women. In 1986, Vietnam attained an annual GDP growth rate of 8 per cent and although Vietnam was also affected by the regional financial crisis in 1999, it was able to maintain the GDP at 4 to 5 per cent. In terms of the GNP, per capita income was US$300 in 1998 and increased to US$330 in 1999 to 2000.

In 1986, the State announced the *Doi Moi* (economic renewal) Policy, shifting the national economy from a centrally run to a socialist oriented market economy. This policy has created major changes in all spheres of the social economy, including a new dynamism in modes of production, which has drastically altered people's lives.

According to some foreign experts, although Vietnam's current economy is deficient, its economic renewal policy has brought about encouraging results that have helped to improve people's lives. In 1996 Vietnam enjoyed a GDP growth rate of eight per cent. Vietnam succeeded in reducing poverty levels from 58 per cent in 1993 to 37 per cent in 1998. Vietnam is now the second largest rice exporter in the world. The literary rate of the Vietnamese people is at 90 per cent and newborn mortality rate is at 34 per cent; 98 per cent of the children have sufficient immunization (World Bank 1999).

Vietnamese government policy towards women

Marxism-Leninism has been the leading ideology in contemporary Vietnam. This ideology has initiated and supported gender equality. The 'Political Thesis' of the Communist Party of Vietnam, issued in 1930, aggressively implemented three tasks as part of the Vietnamese Revolution: *national liberation, class liberation and women's emancipation*. These three tasks have been instituted simultaneously and assist one another in the common struggle. This ideology was further enhanced by the August 1945 Revolution and the ensuing socialist construction in North Vietnam from 1954 to 1975. Immediately after the liberation of Northern Vietnam in 1954, the new administration declared equality between men and women. Before 1954, Vietnam had experienced nearly 2,000 years of feudal regimes and nearly 100 years of both colonial and feudal regimes. Most recently, Western culture has had some impact on Vietnamese socio-political issues, including women's issues, but the results have been rather weak. Confucianism remains the leading ideology of the Vietnamese society.

From a gender viewpoint, Confucianism robs women of their human rights in both the family and society. Confucius principles and criteria such as the three principles of obedience and the practice of male polygamy and female preservation of virginity for their husbands, tied women's lives and spirits down to the patriarchal regime.[1] These concepts were still very strictly followed even in the early twentieth century. Adulterous and extra-maritally pregnant women were severely punished through such methods as having their nape shaven and smeared with lime and being led around the village to 'expose the shame'. Other women were even killed by abandonment on rafts left afloat on rivers.

These factors led to a strong and persuasive revolution with the new government issuing timely and practical policies eradicating backward customs and habits such as polygamy, under-age marriages, wife-beating, and the like. The new regime asserted women's rights to participate in social activities such as attending school and being free to choose their spouse. Many laws and codes have been issued, such as the Law on Marriage and the Family, to affirm the status, responsibilities and rights of women in relation to men, to their families and to society in general.

It is safe to say that government policies in this period laid a foundation for women's emancipation movements that improved their status

from virtual slavery to relative freedom. Women could escape solitary confinement in their homes to partake in social activities as equally as men. It is for this reason that the August 1945 Revolution stands out as different from the previous ones. It was not only a social revolution but also a revolution within the family unit that emancipated Vietnamese women.

Gender equality remains a major target of the Vietnamese Government. It is not only a loyal and effective continuation of the initial targets of the Vietnamese Revolution, but is also suited to the current world viewpoint on civilization and development. The development that is articulated in legal documents is reflected in social life. In comparison with many other countries in the world, Vietnam has a rather good legal system with more than 40 Laws and Codes, more than 120 ordinances and over 850 legal documents issued by the Government and Prime Minister. The Vietnamese Government has ratified and participated in thirteen international treaties on human rights. Progressive policies relating to gender issues have been acknowledged in many laws such as the Law on Marriage and the Family (issued in 1959 and revised in 1986), the 1980 Constitution, the Law on Nationalities, the Labor Code, the Law on Inheritances and the Penal Code.

The State acknowledges equality between men and women, both within the family unit and in society. Men and women have equal voting rights and can both stand for elections. Both genders have equal opportunities for education. They are equal in work and working conditions and receive the same payments for the same work. The State endorses and protects monogamy. Men and women have equal rights to inheritances, to bring up their children and to receive property after divorce. In addition, the government also issues special policies on women based on their reproductive functions. For example, priority is given to women not to partake in heavy and hazardous work such as working in the mines, on high scaffoldings or to come into contact with hazardous chemicals. Female government employees are entitled to four months maternity leave. Important to mention is that Vietnam was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of any Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (UN 1999).

What is problematic is that many of these policies are simply not compatible with the market. In the market economy, for instance, trade unions often find it difficult to work closely with the state, causing serious trouble in the traditional friendly relationship between the state and unions in Vietnam. Until recently, the country had only

state and collective economic sectors. In state-owned agencies and enterprises, the trade unions coordinated with the Director Board and the Party Committee to encourage workers and civil servants to fulfill and surpass their work norms. The trade unions also ensured equal living conditions for people in difficult situations after the war. After Vietnam developed the market economy, the government acknowledged five different economic sectors able to operate within the country. This meant that in addition to the two above-mentioned economic sectors, Vietnam now also had the private economic sector, the joint venture economic sector and the foreign investment economic sector. In these enterprises, with different types of owners, the old form of trade union appears not to be suited to Vietnam's new market economy.

However, Vietnam has been extremely slow in improving trade union activities and almost no trade union organizations are able to protect the rights of workers against exploitation of the new and foreign forms of ownership and enterprise. Many owners, particularly foreign owners, do not abide by Vietnam's Labour Code and make their own laws to facilitate their enterprises. Many strikes and labour disputes have not been settled or settled in time and workers, therefore, remain disadvantaged. As these workers do not have many job opportunities it is the most disadvantaged – the women – who have been required to accept hard work with low pay. The females are having to endure renewed pressures of patriarchy and are being repressed or sexually harassed in their roles of mothers, wives and daughters within the family units. Therefore, having to conform to cheap labour in society and unpaid labour at home, women are exploited by both foreign capitalists and the renewed uncontrollable local patriarchy.

Further, the government's partial removal of its subsidies over education and healthcare, has to be characterized as a step backward in government policies. In the past, all citizens enjoyed free medical care and education. At present, the government only subsidizes primary school children and is looking to subsidize lower secondary school children. Students from upper secondary schools to universities have to pay school and other fees. Schooling and medical costs, which exceed the average income per capita, have caused many difficulties for labourers, particularly the poor. Many girls have had to drop out in favour of their brothers because parents cannot afford schooling for all children in the family and opt for education for the male counterpart, thus, fuelling the patriarchy.

The government has issued policies banning women from doing dangerous and hazardous jobs such as working in mines, on high scaffoldings and road constructions. However, in reality, because of job pressures, many women have had to lay asphalt on the roads. The fact that asphalt will severely deform unborn children is not a factor that is considered by either the entrepreneurs or the pregnant women themselves. Some female farmers still have to pull the plough in their rice fields which was work previously done with buffaloes and by men only.

Although gender equality was already included in government policies and implemented in some spheres of social life and social movements, no profound and serious studies have been conducted to date, particularly in the social sciences and the humanities. This gap was bridged only after the pioneer study of gender science was introduced into Vietnam at the Center for Women's Studies which was established in 1987.[2] Thanks to these studies, social scientists have been made aware that the women's emancipation movement in Vietnam has very good, basic, and favourable starting points. However, this fact does not mean that the road to equality for Vietnamese women is shorter and simpler than in other countries.

Women in Vietnam's economic renewal process

As early as the mid-1950s, on the basis of the then government policies, the attack on the notion of 'thinking highly of men and belittling women' had been strongly launched in all spheres of life, from the family unit to society in Northern Vietnam, causing changes to the economic base, concepts of morality, customs, habits, and particularly to women's status and positions. In comparison with feudal times women are now able to participate in almost all productive and service activities. They are economically independent and their status in the family has improved. During the war, Vietnamese women played an important role in production and service.

The economic renewal (*Doi Moi*) has removed many production and business constraints. In addition to the state-owned and collective economic sectors (the main economic sectors of the past), the government has assisted in the development of the private sector and joint ventures with foreign countries. These developments not only lead to competition among companies and enterprises, generating a gap between the rich and the poor, but also create a change in the division of labour and the labour force.

Currently, women play an important role in the national workforce. Women now make up 52 per cent of the total 38 million national workforce. At present, women in the workforce account for 70 per cent of the textile and garment industry, 60 per cent of the food processing industry, 60 per cent of the health sector and 70 per cent of general education. Women account for 53.3 per cent of the workforce in agriculture with nearly 10 million farming households, including 27 million farmhands. Women account for 45 per cent of the labour force in industry.

Women are very capable in the production processes and in business. Female directors and general directors successfully run hundreds of state-owned, private and joint venture companies. It is under the management of women that these companies have made profits and gained recognition in Vietnamese and international markets. Many women have received high awards from the government and foreign countries. In many branches of activities, women employees have been acknowledged for working with high quality standards and techniques.

However, one of the great disadvantages facing women in the market economy is employment. The unemployment rate in the whole country is now at 7.4 per cent and women account for half of this figure. It is difficult for women to compete with men who are stronger, have more access to education and do not carry the burden of human reproduction. Among the new graduates, men have more job opportunities than women. Unemployment forces women to accept heavy, low-paid and unstable jobs. For example, in order to get a job, many women in the central provinces have to sign contracts with foreign owners that are disadvantageous to them; they must commit to not getting married or bearing a child for five years after the initiation of the contract, to not going home during holidays, and to work extra time without payment. In desperation, some female workers in state-owned enterprises take a four-month maternity leave instead of the original six months so that they can return to work earlier and receive higher payment from the piecework system. Unemployment also forces rural women to migrate to the cities and participate in the informal economic sector where they lead a disadvantaged life, forced to accept any job to earn a living in such sectors as prostitution and drug trafficking.

Vietnam is an agricultural country with more than 80 per cent of the population living in rural areas. Since the introduction of the *Doi Moi*, Vietnam's agriculture sector has made great progress. In the mid-1980s, the country was still threatened by hunger but since the mid 1990s, Vietnam has become one of the largest rice exporters in the

world. However, in the market economy, the gap in living standards and income between rural and urban areas caused mainly by the shortage of farmland and cheap prices of farm produce has led to many complicated socio-economic issues such as migration from rural to urban areas, poverty, rapid urban population growth, and imbalances in healthcare and education. Therefore, sustainable rural development is essential and any Vietnamese policies and strategies should seriously consider and incorporate this important aspect.

Land use rights are very important in agriculture. At the start of the *Doi Moi*, farmland was allocated equally by household membership and labourers within villages and communes; however, this situation has now changed immensely. In the past it was completely forbidden to buy and sell, or transfer land use rights. Currently sales and transfers of land occur in many localities after a period of polarization between the rich and the poor. Many poor farmers cannot sustain the land and within a short period of time after the allocation of the farmland, have no choice but to sell and are then forced to work for the richer households. When both spouses are farmers, the woman has no right to have her name written on the land use rights certificate. However, this fact does not mean that Vietnamese women have no rights in production and in doing business on the piece of land allocated to their households – even when the husband wants to sell the rights to use that piece of land, he is required to discuss such a sale with his wife.

Changes in the form of land use rights also led to changes in labour divisions. In the past, labour division was done through the agricultural cooperative. It is now done within the household, creating household economies. In many localities, particularly poor localities, the breadwinners of the households have to migrate to the cities or other areas to earn their living. In these households, women have to bear the brunt of all the farm work: ploughing, harrowing, sowing, transplanting, weeding, fertilizing, spraying pesticide and harvesting. Moreover, these women are also required to work for hire by other households in rice transplanting and harvesting.

Besides working the fields, many women are also involved in other occupations such as producing noodles or in small trades. They work strenuously in the hope of earning enough for their families, building a small house and sending their children to school. Meanwhile, they still have to take care of the housework. The labour intensity and overtime hours worked by these female farmers are reaching alarming levels. Despite their dynamism in a multitude of activities, these women farmers are least likely to enjoy the benefits of social and welfare policies.

In Vietnam, the market economy has posed indirect demands on the formation of the labour market, and it is the labour market itself that has become a motivating force for population migration. The Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs estimates that every year in Vietnam there are about four million people who are totally unemployed and about six million others who are underemployed. The unemployed are found in both rural and urban areas, but are mainly in rural areas. The gap in living standards between rural and urban areas has been deepened. The open-door policy mainly facilitates the development process and international cooperation in the cities. Meanwhile in rural areas, availability of cultivable land has narrowed as population increases. Farmers still work very hard as their farming methods remain simple and backward, and natural calamities have caused further losses to their crops. Furthermore, farm produce is cheaper than other manufactured products. Not surprisingly, the income of farmers is the lowest in the society. Eighty per cent of Vietnamese people live in rural areas. However, since the enforcement of the open-door policy, a large number of rural people have migrated to urban areas and other locations.

The major forms of migration in Vietnam include working abroad on government contracts, urban-rural migration, and moving from rural areas to China, Cambodia, Thailand and elsewhere. What is important to mention is that most of these migrants are women. In most cases, the whole process of migration is translated very much into trafficking of women for prostitution.

The Vietnamese Government has just issued a policy allowing the export of labour. During the 1980s, the government already sent a large number of workers to the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and other socialist countries to work in factories and construction sites. Since the enforcement of the open-door policy, Vietnamese workers have been sent to work in several other countries such as the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Samoa and Iran. Their jobs now are diversified. Many women do not get jobs in factories but have to work as housemaids. Currently, Vietnam's laws relating to this issue are not strict enough to be able to satisfactorily settle the many problems between the owner and the labourer. The labourers are in a disadvantaged situation in most cases.

Most of the migrants come from locations that have a large redundant labour force. For example, the Red River Delta has 406,098 migrants, the Mekong River Delta has 424,540, the eastern part of southern Vietnam has 320,706 and the northern part of Central Vietnam has 333,477. Ha Nam Province has a total of 723,343 people,

but has as many as 30,932 migrants. Ninh Binh Province has a population of 812,750 but has 31,307 migrants. These ratios reflect the fact that, over the last five years, about two million people in Vietnam have moved from one province to another. The number of immigrants to big cities is rather high. In this same five-year period, 156,344 people have arrived in Hanoi. In making a comparison, we found that the number of immigrants is always four to five times higher than that of migrants. Ho Chi Minh City has received half a million migrants and Da Nang City, 44,532 people. About 40,000 women have migrated to China and Cambodia as a result of trafficking in women.

The number of male and female migrants is almost equal. Of the 2,001,409 people over the age five who have migrated over the last five years, 1,000,171 were women. The northern mountainous provinces bordering China and the southern provinces bordering Cambodia have received the largest number of female migrants.

Because their objective is to look for a job, most migrants are of working age (from 16 to 40 years old). A recent survey of 500 immigrants in the three big cities of Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh and Da Nang shows that 42.5 per cent of the men migrated to these cities because of poverty, and 41.5 per cent migrated during the slack season. Among the female immigrants, 38.8 per cent said they left their villages because of poverty and 43.3 per cent said they migrated during the slack season. Other reasons such as broken families or inducements by friends are statistically insignificant. The 'labour market' has appeared in big cities where male labourers are waiting at corners of streets to work for hire for short or long terms depending on negotiations.

A new migration pattern in Vietnam, over the last few years, sees parents following their sons or daughters to the cities. Universities, almost always, do not exist in smaller cities and provinces in Vietnam so every year, tens of thousands of young people pour into big cities to sit for entrance examinations. Many women follow their children, particularly daughters, to the cities to take care of them. They take odd jobs such as junk-dealers, housemaids or street vendors.

Forty-eight and one half per cent of the male and 79.1 per cent of the female immigrants earn less than VND 20,000 a day (which is equivalent to US$1.5). Unstable jobs and living conditions have strongly affected the perception and psychology of rural youth who have migrated to the cities. Many female migrants have also nurtured secret dreams of finding city husbands in the hopes of being able to live better and more stable lives than in their home villages. Big cities in Northern Vietnam, particularly Ha Noi, Hai Phong, Nam Dinh,

Thanh Hoa and Vinh have received migrants from almost all villages in the north and even from some villages in the south. Conversely, many northern women have ploughed a long way to southern cities and towns.

However, for many women, cities are not their promised land. They might earn more money in the cities than in their home villages, but they cannot have stable and safe lives. Many of them cannot find a suitable job and moreover, cannot get used to the diversified and complicated life in the cities in the wake of the current opening up of the country to the market economy. These women have performed almost all types of manual work to survive. They work for hire in small shops, restaurants, bars, karaoke parlors, and as house helpers, assistants to builders, small traders and junk dealers. They are desolate and helpless in the city, exposed to the strange and luxurious lives of some city people. A good many are seduced by the extraordinary power of money and have become victims of swindles, rapes, kidnapping and trafficking while others are bogged down by family dilemmas. Most times these women are helpless and they become the victims of various crimes. Many of them have been forced to become prostitutes.

In the development process, the numbers of women in positions of political and economic leadership have increased in both quality and quantity. Although the proportion of female deputies to the National Assembly have been progressively reduced in the previous terms (32 per cent in 1971–1976; 27 per cent in 1976–1981; 22 per cent in 1981–1987; 18 per cent in 1987–1992; and 18.5 per cent in 1992–1997), the percentage has increased to 26.22 (118/450) in the 1997 to 2002 term with a simultaneous increase in quality. The proportion of female representatives to the People's Councils at all levels was 12 per cent in 1989–1992 and is more than 22 per cent currently. The World Inter-Parliamentary Alliance ranks Vietnam second in the Asia-Pacific and ninth among 135 countries for its proportion of women in the National Assembly (National Committee for the Advancement of Women 1997).

Scientific jobs are one of the key aspects in the national economy and are considered difficult jobs for women. In the feudal and colonial times, there were almost no women participating in scientific activities. Over the last 50 years, female intellectuals in all science sectors of Vietnam have increased in both quantity and quality. However, if we compare the proportion of women in the national population (51 per cent) and the proportion of women in the labour force (52 per cent) and their actual capacity, we can see that the

number of female intellectuals remains very modest. Currently, women account for 37 per cent of the total number of college and university graduates: 132 of them are professors and assistant professors and 1,635 have received Ph.D. degrees (National Committee for the Advancement of Women 1997).

Over the last few years, many female scientists have taken initiatives in combining scientific research with reality in the service of people's lives. However, the number of female scientists participating in state management at all levels remains low and therefore involvement of women at the highest levels is almost non-existent. There are almost no women participating in the leadership of ministries on science and very few participating in leadership at the institute level. There are no women on the Director Board, nor are there any female Directors of Institutes under the National Center for Natural Sciences and Technologies and the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities which are the two biggest science centers in Vietnam. In the ten Research Institutes under the Ministry of Health, there is only one female Director and three Deputy Directors. In the six Research Institutes under the Ministry of Construction, there is only one woman Deputy Director. Even in the education and training sectors, where women account for more than 70 per cent, they only make up 29 per cent of the total number of directors and deputy directors. They constitute only 19 per cent of the total number of directors and deputy directors of that ministry (National Committee for the Advancement of Women 1997).

Currently the number of women with degrees and ranks reaches 18,000, but the number of directors of science and technology projects at all levels, particularly state levels, is very low. In the 1991 to 1995 period, Vietnam had more than 500 projects belonging to 31 key national science and technology programs. However, there were only 21 female project directors (less than 4 per cent). In the 1996 to 2000 period, although the number of female project directors increased to ten per cent, the figure was still very low and did not correctly reflect their capacity and contributions to important national scientific and technological tasks. It is very common now that, while most of the researchers participating in national projects are women, most of the projects are directed by men. In many cases, it is a paradox that the capacity and knowledge of the participating female researchers is higher than their male managers.

Currently in many countries, particularly those in the Orient, there remains the view that maintains that it is a 'function', an

'inclination', a 'sacrifice', a 'form of self-denial' and 'femininity' of women to unconditionally serve their own husbands and children in particular, and men in general. This viewpoint stems from patriarchal ideology. It has mingled in social lives for dozens of centuries now in the name of a social 'morality' and 'traditional customs and habits'. It has become a strong iron curtain covering the patriarchal ideology when gender inequality is likely to be exposed. To a different extent, in addition to the task of human reproduction, this viewpoint has assigned women the major heavy tasks of fulfilling all productive activities that might otherwise be assigned to men. Meanwhile, their enjoyment and entertainment are considered secondary, or even not taken into account.

Statistics show that on average, a woman works from 16 to 18 hours a day while a man only works from eight to ten hours (National Committee for the Advancement of Women 1997). This situation keeps the women very busy and they have little time to rest, study and enjoy their lives. Such a heavy work load also takes a toll on their health. A large number of women suffer from various health problems, which take away their happiness. What is even worse is that some husbands cheat on them on a fairly regular basis, making them feel virtually worthless.

In a study on domestic violence, I consider the phenomenon of women working too hard as a type of 'invisible domestic violence'. Nowadays, while many husbands love their wives and share with them the family burden, there are numerous others who remain indifferent or leave all the family responsibilities to their wives. In these families, the wives have to look after everything, including doing paid work to earn their living and managing housework such as shopping, cooking, washing clothes, taking care of elderly family members, and bringing up and educating their children. While the wife is busy from dawn to dusk, the 'king' of the family is idle and carefree, loitering about karaoke rooms or drinking in bars to 'relieve his sorrow'.

A major factor greatly affecting the division of labour without taking into account gender sensitivity at present is the insufficient knowledge about gender, concerning both women and men. People of both sexes still consider that almost all labour is the women's responsibility and function. Domestic labour division in general reflects and is affected by social labour division. In societies where the division of labour between men and women is somewhat equal, the same equity is reflected within the domestic division of labour. Meanwhile in a society of 'thinking highly of men and belittling women' and where men often

have well-paid jobs, the latter will become masters and very important people within their families with absolute control over other members.

Many families now pay more attention to economic activities while neglecting their moral and educational functions. The role of individuals is heightened while the community character of the family is loosened. Money has shown its positive and negative sides not only in the society but also in the family. Over the last few years, studies on gender issues have pointed to gaping contradictions in the labour division between men and women within the family, have outlined the reasons for these inequalities and have recommended solutions. Some scientists have advocated policies orientated towards the building of a new type of family where all members are ensured an equal life both physically and morally.

In population development, there remain many problems relating to the right to reproduction and women's reproductive health. Rural women give birth to too many children and this is closely related to the current deficient socio-economic development in these localities. Women are under pressure of old customs and habits to want many children and to prefer having male children in order to continue their lineage. These pressures require that they give birth to many children, without regard to time spacing and when they are both materially and emotionally poor. Rural women have very limited chances to access health care services due to the lack of medical doctors and nurses or due to the lack of affordability of high medical fees. Currently all family planning programs are targeted towards women only, with very little attention to paid to men, who are not considered to share such responsibilities. A large number of women are experiencing pregnancy and delivery complications and a large number of children are suffering from malnutrition and other diseases.

Another noteworthy issue is that in some rural and mountainous areas, men and women still have unequal access to information and education. Women, particularly female children, are the most disadvantaged. They have less access to education because of economic reasons. In a poor family when the parents cannot afford schooling for all children, very often girls have to give up the opportunity in favour of their brothers. The girls stay at home to take care of housework, working to earn their living or to get married at a very early age. Socially outdated views and practices have returned in some rural areas that maintain that girls do not need much education and that it is enough for them to know how to read and write. If the girls want to learn, they should learn farm work, cooking and taking care of their

smaller brothers and sisters. When the girls grow up they will work in the fields, do housework and take care of the family. It is not necessary to invest in girls, as they will soon become 'daughters of others'. In some other cases, girls and even boys cannot attend school due to the schools' distances of more than ten kilometers from their homes. This factor impinges especially upon children in remote rural and mountainous areas or fishing villages.

Women and social issues

Many complicated social issues have appeared in the current globalization process and women are the most victimized. They are victims of many social evils such as violence, including social and domestic violence, rape, sexual coercion and exploitation, and trafficking in women and children for labour and sexual exploitation.

Statistics of violence are incomplete. However, out of those provided by 18 provinces and cities, over the last eight years, 11,630 cases of domestic violence have occurred in localities which required intervention and settlement by the authorities and law-keeping forces. Among these cases, 515 occurred in Ba Ria-Vung Tau, 819 in Khanh Hoa, 1,123 in Thai Binh, 1,484 in Ha Tay, 967 in Ninh Thuan and 2,002 cases in Kien Giang People's Supreme Court 1999. Most of these cases involved husbands beating wives or adults maltreating children. The remaining cases involved the maltreatment of elderly parents by grown-up children and quarrels between brothers and sisters and between parents-in-law and daughters-in-law. However, these figures are only the tip of the iceberg and are based on administrative reports of cases that were already seen and settled by the public. Meanwhile domestic violence, by its very nature, is a sensitive issue often kept in the dark, and many victims do not denounce it for various reasons.

While domestic violence is on the increase, the scope of the violence has also widened. Domestic violence has even encroached upon highly educated and intellectual families who are working in social and humanitarian fields. These developments present a major worry for the women's emancipation movement.

Early in the 1990s, another abhorrent and international crime against women appeared and rapidly continues to develop: the trafficking in women and children. It is estimated that tens of thousands of Vietnamese women and children have been trafficked to foreign countries through two major roads, namely the border with China in the north and the border with Cambodia in the southwest.

Besides, marriage intermediary services and enterprises are very popular in the south. The trafficked women are often forced to be the wives of men in China and other countries, or to become prostitutes in countries like Cambodia, China, Thailand and the thriving city of Hong Kong. Trafficking in women is closely linked with migration, poverty and gender imbalances in Vietnam and China. It is a complicated phenomenon that has been strongly condemned in Vietnam.

Women's empowerment is one of Vietnam's current development strategies. This strategy has been included in state laws and government policies and has been physically carried out on a step-by-step basis. Vietnam has already endorsed women's empowerment in major campaigns and movements through government policies. What is expressly wrong with this scenario is that in the final analysis the real proof is that there is now, in Vietnam, a breakdown between the people and the State. This is a classic example of policies made at the top without consultation with the problems at the bottom. The top-down, bottom-up communications have to become more efficient. For example, a policy should be made on the basis of people's needs and implemented with people's initiatives and creativity in order to meet its final objective of serving the people. A policy on women's empowerment is no exception. To do this, first of all, researchers, policy-makers and social activists should investigate the problems to comprehend women's capacity, the use of that capacity in society and women's needs of empowerment. In this respect, we are required to answer the following questions: What is women's empowerment? Why do women need to be empowered? Which groups of women should be given priority to be empowered? Who will help with women's empowerment: the state, the society or the women themselves? How can we promote women's empowerment?

First of all, there is the question of creating awareness amongst all the players. Advocating change and social awareness on important gender and women-related issues will have a direct impact on guiding activities that lead to change. In this respect, communication plays a very important role. Attention has been paid to communicating the equality between women and men on gender issues through the mass media, including radio, television, newspapers and magazines. Attention has also been paid to many training courses on gender awareness which have been held from national to grassroots levels for different target groups. These groups include intellectuals, staff of women's unions, policy makers, managers, social activists and the women themselves. A large body of field research relating to gender

issues has been developed which has contributed initial results, improving social awareness on these issues.

In the Vietnamese society, farmers have an unstable life because they run short of farmland. Coupled with that fact, farm produce is cheaper than industrial goods, and production depends completely on nature. Therefore, farmers' incomes are the lowest in society. Poverty has led to poor living conditions and less access to education, cultural activities, information and knowledge in general, and especially information and knowledge about markets. Female farmers are in weaker positions than their male counterparts so that collectively, these women are the most disadvantaged social group with the least capacity for empowerment or for improving their lives. Both male and female farmers have to work very hard to earn their living, however, women also shoulder the bulk of the housework and suffer the most with the return of the backward feudal practices that have raised their collective ugly head. In many localities, women seem to be robbed of their basic human rights: many women have to accept illegal polygamy, under-aged marriage, giving birth to many children, discrimination in participating in village affairs, total dependence on husbands and the in-law families and finally, domestic violence. In an attempt to have a better life, it is the very painstaking nature of these women that encourages them to work hard, deny themselves rights in favour of their husbands and children, and reject those activities which they think do not relate to or do not benefit their families, including socio-cultural activities which could empower them. However, when they do not take part in social activities and have no access to information, they cannot improve their knowledge about human rights and their own rights and responsibilities. It is, therefore, not an easy task to attract this target group to activities relating to women's empowerment.

Over the last few years, in addition to macro activities, women's empowerment, and particularly that of female farmers, has been included in specific projects: the type of projects that meet women's actual needs and that strategize the needs of both genders. These specific projects place men and women equally in terms of needs, capacity, contribution and enjoyment, with attention to the characteristics of each gender and with particular attention to women who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged social group. Experience shows that this methodology has brought about effective results which have helped to improve not only the lives of beneficiaries, but also their activities and capacity, particularly concerning women. A number of projects have been evaluated as successful by people at the project sites,

including projects on poverty reduction, development of household economies, rural clean water, loans for poor rural women, reproductive health, literacy, and trafficking in women.

As an example, the research project on trafficking in women conducted by the Youth Research Institute in coordination with the Center for Family and Women's Studies is aimed at helping returned women reintegrate into the community. The project has formed various women's groups dealing with returned trafficked women, mothers of daughters who were trafficked to a country north of Vietnam, and other high-risk groups. Initially, the returned women were considered the 'offenders'. These returned trafficked women were very poor, had no land to till and were regarded in a doubtful and shameful light by the local authorities and by the local people. However, upon joining women's groups, they have been able to change their lives. The groups operate under the principles of voluntary work, self-confidence and self-reliance. Participants have access to loans under the Grameen Bank model in which the group acts as the guarantor of the loan. The loans are generally small, but the women are able to discuss and help each other to effectively use the funds in their economic activities. After a short period of time, their income and living standards improve. More importantly, participants become aware of their responsibilities and interests in society, gradually gain self-confidence and reintegrate into the community. As a result, their domestic and social status is improved and they become empowered. Group activities have helped local authorities change their outlook, their thinking and their way of working in solving this issue.

Another form of activity designed to empower women is the pilot campaign for women to be elected to the People's Council at all levels in year 2000. The National Committee for the Advancement of Women has coordinated with the Vietnam Women's Union in generating opportunities for female candidates to meet and talk with voters. They have organized training courses for female candidates and have advocated that people vote for women. These activities have obtained initial results: the number of women and quality of office won by women in the elections were better than before. This model will be studied and replicated in the coming period.

New and specific issues on social life have surfaced through studies and research and new recommendations relating to women and gender issues have been made. The foundational recommendation is for policy and lawmakers to formulate policies and laws closer to the realities of

social life. The researchers have, therefore, contributed to solving many problems relating to gender equality. Gender theories are being taught in universities in order to provide students with basic knowledge and research methodologies so that they can join this new field of research. However, these activities are just initial steps. Gender inequality remains serious in all social spheres. Challenges and difficulties mainly stem from the viewpoint of 'thinking highly of men and belittling women' by both men and women, poverty, and insufficient government policies.

Conclusions

The process of globalization has a profound impact on people's lives in general and women in particular. While it has generated new development opportunities for women, economic globalization also has created new challenges for women. Women are beginning to enjoy the fruits of economic and technological development. The recent progress in science and technology has helped improve women's physical and spiritual lives, freeing them from the burdens of outdated work of all types. They now have more time to study, to take part in social activities and to consolidate their family happiness. Another advantage is the expansion of domestic and international co-operations which has provided women with a chance to develop strategic coalitions with like-minded groups at the regional and international levels in order to improve their status both within and outside of the family.

However, rapid technological changes and fierce competition have negatively affected the labour market for women. While women remain the major force in non-paid jobs, namely housework and other informal and voluntary work, most important positions have gone to men. Mainly low paid jobs are currently available to women. Existing patriarchal values have made things even worse for them. Not only do they face discrimination on a regular basis, but they are also common victims of various socio-cultural crimes such as violence, rape, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.

While Vietnam has already made some progress in addressing the issue of gender discrimination and exploitation, the country will have to go a long way to achieve the goals of gender empowerment.

Notes

1 The three indicators of obedience are: i) obedience to father before marriage; ii) obedience to husband after marriage; and iii) obedience to son after the

death of husband. A woman is also expected to do the housework, beautify herself and keep her virginity for her husband.

2 It is now called the Center for Family and Women Studies.

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8

Environmental Degradation and Social Justice: Implications for Democracy in Asia

Lawrence Surendra

Introduction

The 1990s were a particularly significant decade for Asia. Deep transformations took place not only in the relationships between the state and capital, but also in the relationships between national and global capital, as part of globalization. As a result of the Asian economic crisis, many countries in the region went through painful processes of social and economic adjustments. These have deeply impacted their natural resources.

In an earlier paper on the ecological movements in Asia (Surendra 1996) I took, as case studies, three anti-dam movements in India, the Philippines and Thailand. The common thread that linked these cases was the status of democracy in each of the three countries and the responses of each of these states to these movements. The underlying theme in the study of the anti-dam movements as social movements was the latter's contribution to democratization in respective societies. The new trends of democratization in the region have once again provided us with an opportunity to review the dynamics between environmental and ecological activism and democracy.

From the perspective of social movements, my earlier paper looked at some aspects of social transformation in the engagement between social movements and the institutions of the state. The paper examined the struggle for participation and attempts to open up democratic spaces in order to resist anti-ecological development as well as to determine national economic development. The paper was not an environmental critique of dams; it used environmental perspectives to look at democracy. In that sense it is intimately connected to this chapter which will attempt to do the same, but in a significantly changed context.

This chapter begins with the definite belief and an unambiguous premise that resolving environmental problems, limiting ecological damage and achieving social and ecosystem sustainability are all firmly linked to the question of democracy[1] (here I mean substantive and not purely formal democracy). The three anti-dam movements were chosen in the last paper, not only because they were highly significant social movements in themselves but also because they were the forerunners of movements that link ecological causes to the broader questions of democracy and peoples' participation in development decision-making. As movements in three different countries of Asia, they also provided an opportunity to examine three different state systems: the Philippines as a martial law dictatorship, Thailand as a military backed regime and Kerala as an elected regional government in a functioning parliamentary democracy of India.

During the 1990s, movements for democracy saw some major gains. Democratic processes were taking root at local and national levels. There still remains an entire gamut of unresolved issues, relating to ecology and environment, which have profound implications for democracy at local, national, global and planetary levels.[2] This chapter is organized into a series of themes which I consider to be critical to any discussion on the environment and democracy. Here I offer only a broad sketch of the contours of salient issues. In summary they are:

- Emerging issues in the politics of ecology and environment in Asia;
- Asian democracy and responses to environmental degradation in Asia – issues of formal and substantive democracy;
- Ecology, ethnicity and the nation state;
- The political economy of ecology and ecological perspectives of political economy;
- Science, technology, culture and ecology;
- Globalization and natural resources; and
- Global governance, democracy and civil society.

Emerging issues in the politics of ecology and environment

The persistent dam technology, despite all new negative evidence and the continuing opposition to dams everywhere, has become an important symbol of mega development mindsets on one hand and of environmentalists' opposition to such mindsets, on the other. Though dam building and its financing have come under close scrutiny and power generation through hydropower is facing severe obstacles and is

in decline, the debates over dams persist. These debates have often pitched people into falsely manufactured arguments about 'environment versus development'. Such a dichotomy seems dear to those who think 'development' is a 'holy cow' that should not be questioned and whose vested interests are promoted by such false juxtapositions. However, these debates also raise wider questions, not only about the nature of economic development, but about how decision-making regarding development should proceed and about who benefits from and who pays the cost of development. These issues have drawn in a wide range of participants, as evidenced in the most recent debate in India over the Narmada Valley Dams. It has drawn in acclaimed writers in support of anti-dam activism. Arundhati Roy (1999) for example, opposes the building of dams not only because of the tremendous human suffering they cause to the resulting displaced people, but also because of the devastating consequences they have for wildlife habitats, downstream wetlands and bio-diversity.

Critical to the developing countries of Asia are also issues such as the destruction and privatization of common lands, common property resources and bio-diversity. Forests are annihilated by the encroachment of commercial forestry on forestlands and agricultural areas and by plantation forestry and the privatization of the global commons. The rapid expansion of economic activity in Asia, in the era of global predatory capitalism, is destroying common lands and common property resources everywhere. The speed at which the degradation and destruction of actual habitats and spaces and environmental degradation occur allows little time to resist or stop them or to undertake ecological and social restitution. A classic example is the expansion of shrimp farming for global consumption, especially for countries like Japan. Shrimps for export initially began in the 'newly industrializing' countries of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Thailand. A few companies and a few individuals reaped high profits through shrimp exports. However, because this economic activity has a short capital gestation, speculative illegal financial markets sprang up. Speculation about capital and earnings took many forms. Triads, gambling and other such economic activities had generated untaxed and illegal incomes which could be converted into investments. None of these economic activities create real economic assets and to make matters worse, they do not account for the use of natural capital such as land, ground water and other natural resources. These natural capital assets are exploited and destroyed by the few shrimp farming companies in order to make quick profits. Within a period of three to five years, these

farming operations move on to newer settings. They leave behind the devastated non-renewable resources including depleted ground water aquifers and salinated and poisoned soils. They have exploited newer and newer areas and made more and more land unsustainable. Coastlines from Taiwan to Thailand, from the Philippines to India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh attest to the vast destruction and exploitation left behind.

In response to such exploitation and destruction, protest movements started in countries like Thailand when shrimp farming and trawler fishing threatened traditional livelihoods of fishermen. These protest movements are an important part of the history of modern environmental activism in Asia. They have led to agitations and struggles against similar activities in other coastal states such as Tamilnadu and at the Chilika Lake in Orissa. As a result of these protests in India, the matter was finally taken up by the Supreme Court. It imposed a ban on further shrimp farming, recognizing the need to protect the livelihoods and common lands of rural people and to protect natural resources.

Natural resource conflicts or conflicts over common property resources and their destruction are not of recent origin. Such conflicts have been an integral part of capitalist development in Asia, both under the colonial state and later under 'modernizing' and 'developmental' post-colonial states. Historically, the development of capitalism and the rise of the modern nation state, as in England, occurred through the destruction of the commons and the enclosure of the commons as shown by Polanyi (1957) and Thompson (1991). These historical analyses help us counter the facile and simplistic explanations of environmental destruction, guided by subjectivism and instrumentalism. They also allow a better understanding of the dynamics of natural resource destruction and its relationship to class and social systems.[3] Here, when I refer to common property resources, I am not talking only of the actual physical common property resources that are accessible, managed and used in common, such as grazing lands, lakes, ponds, watershed areas and fishing areas by particular communities, but also of forests, bio-diversity and knowledge commons.

Conflicts have arisen between competing uses and users of resources. Conflicts have also arisen between people who traditionally had access to these resources and the institutions of the state, thus bringing people directly in confrontation with the state. A major dimension of resource conflicts is the notion of private property, based on the legal institutions of the modern state and common property, based on established and traditional relations in a community. This conflict is

increasingly coming into the open. One finds it revealed, for example, in the clashes over the framing of rules and implementation of environmental protection laws and in the manner in which actions of the courts, which attempt to ensure equity and justice, are circumscribed by the rule of property. It is slowly being recognized that these conflicts reveal the inherent contradiction between an entirely private-property based dominant jurisprudence and the problems that require development of alternate, common property jurisprudence. In the absence of a clear understanding of such a requirement, the emerging global and national struggles over the shape of intellectual property regimes, especially with regard to plant genetic resources, are bound to cause serious repercussions for food security and the control of communities over their knowledge resources.

Today, the extremely rapid speed of destruction of common property resources is countered by an extremely slow and sparse increase in the institutional remedies to mitigate this destruction. Serious dislocations of people, communities and livelihoods, coupled with the inability of democratic institutions to address the fundamental issue of the deprivation of basic rights, now calls for the best in social ingenuity and collective imagination. Hence, highly imaginative social movements are arising that are building alliances of solidarity across sectors and populations in and between the countries of Asia. Some of these have become visible in the public eye through academic research and dissertations. The best and most classic, but perhaps the least noticed and least written case, is the grassroots movement from Thailand, referred to as the 'Assembly of the Poor'.[4]

The spread of commercial forestry is linked to the destruction of common lands as well as to the growing pressure of demands from the pulp industry for consumption in the North (Carrere & Lohman 1996). Equally strong are the demands of industrialization and the pulp and paper industry in the South. The demand for forest plantations in the South, especially in the tropical countries of Asia, as 'carbon offset forestry', has emerged out of the North as part of its concern for conservation of the existing forest cover in the South and climate change. Whether it is commercial forestry or carbon offset forestry, the key point is that the ordinary people do not figure in the decisions. They are not only by-passed but are also made to bear the costs of these decisions. Tensions and conflicts between ordinary people and commercial interests are mounting in countries like Thailand and Indonesia. In Northern and North Eastern Thailand plantations were forced to withdraw after considerable investment had been made when people,

particularly the poor people who were most affected by them, revolted because they had not been involved in the decisions and the grand plans made for them by the state (The Corner House 1999). The collusion between the state and commercial interests, prevalent across Asia, was rather grotesquely exemplified by the Suharto regime in Indonesia where his family and a handful of his cronies made major personal commercial gains through plantations in East Timor and the outlaying islands. It played an important part in stirring up popular rebellions across Indonesia. This eventually led to the downfall of the regime.

The destruction of the knowledge commons is yet another issue of importance for the environmental movements. It has serious implications for democracy in Asia since justice is an integral part of democracy. Here the issues of sustainability of social and natural systems are closely linked. Knowledge commons are the soil in which democracy takes root, grows and flourishes. Parallel to these issues is the emergence of transnational corporate interest in seeds and the introduction of genetically modified seeds and organisms. These together threaten farming communities, especially the small and marginal subsistence farmers.

A final set of issues relates to the consequences of rapid industrialization. These can be broadly referred to as the problems of the built environment. Hitherto, the issues that I have referred to are those of natural resources and ecosystems with ecological dimensions. But the problems of environmental degradation and associated conflicts are not only those of rural/tribal natural resources. Problems resulting from urbanization and industrialization are just as serious and large. Levels of industrialization and hence the associated environmental problems of course vary from country to country in Asia. At one end we have Japan, a member of the G-7 and OECD, a global economic power and an economic rival of the US and Europe. South Korea, also an OECD member, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, now a special administrative region of China, have experienced a high level of export-oriented industrialization and are substantial industrial output economies. Singapore has, in addition, a strong service economy and a major financial sector. Malaysia and Thailand have abundant natural resources but are industrializing in ways that make their agriculture and natural resources subserve the industrial economy while they in turn become economic appendages of the global industrialized economies. Burma, Laos and Cambodia are far less industrialized and are heavily dependent on their natural resources. In their case, the shortage of financial capital leads to

direct plundering of their natural resources. Vietnam, still a war-ravaged country has, as a centrally planned economy, moved rapidly on the path of industrialization but is still dependent on agriculture and natural resources. China and India are large economies with significant industrialization even though agriculture is still relatively dominant. In both, industrial capital wields a great deal of political power and economic clout.

Total neglect of environmental impact and disregard for social justice are a regular feature of industrialization in most of Asia. While neglecting the immediate environment and the safety and health of the workers, the state and regulatory authorities cater primarily to the concerns and interests of industry and industrialists. This is what leads to disasters like Bhopal. The very occurrence of such incidents, leaving aside how the victims were and are currently being treated by the corporation and the state, shows how even in a so-called democracy, poor people, as people without power, matter very little. And there are mini-Bhopals happening everyday in Asia. Such threats to their livelihoods, through the destruction of their immediate environment, causes people to take direct and often violent action as was the case with the people of the fishing and coastal community on the Island of Phuket in Thailand who were driven by the circumstances to physically burn down a World Bank financed titanium plant that was more or less ready to go into operation.

The most tragic is the case of the death and destruction caused by mercury poisoning by the Chisso factory at Minamata in Japan. The callous response of the industry and the state, to the pleas of the poor from the fishing and agricultural communities around the factory, is well documented.[5] All norms of democratic behaviour even in a formal sense and including considerations of justice, were blatantly violated both in Minamata and Bhopal.

I should perhaps point out, before I begin to deal with some of these issues, that often in this chapter, both the terms 'ecology' and 'environment' are used. In my opinion, neither 'ecology' nor 'environment' alone captures the complex society-nature-natural resources dynamics. The concept 'ecology' is richer in meaning when it refers not only to an integrated ecosystem, but also conveys the dynamics between humans, the human society (as part of the ecosystem) and the natural ecosystem. References to the natural ecosystem do not always include the built environment or the natural environment where human beings have intervened and altered it to their needs; nor does it include human perceptions of the use that a particular natural

environment (an ecosystem), like a wetland, a river or a coastal area, can be put to. This is why I often use both terms.

Asian democracy and responses to environmental degradation – Issues of formal and substantive democracy

In the face of such extraordinary odds and difficult circumstances, the response to environmental degradation in Asia has been mostly in the form of resistance so as to keep the forces responsible for it at bay. There have also been some attempts at nullifying or neutralizing these forces. Only in rare cases has it been possible to reverse the processes by disempowering the wrongdoers and empowering the victims. Vested economic interests both domestic and transnational have, in collusion with the state and market forces, routinely engaged in the plundering and destruction of the environment.

When the struggles against environmental degradation coincide with struggles for social justice, they give substance to the formal structures of democracy. The Nam Chaon Dam movement, for example, brought together, in its opposition to the dam, a broad coalition of people and thus became a catalyst in the struggle for democracy in Thailand. Similarly, many democratic forces rallied around the struggle of the indigenous people of the Chico area. It came to symbolize the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines. Since then both the Philippines and Thailand have made substantial advancements towards democratization.

Have greater democratization and the demise of authoritarian regimes led to corresponding achievements in delivering social justice to the poor? Has democratization meant greater transparency, so as to prevent the rapacity with which natural resources are destroyed? Considering that sustainable use of natural resources is the key to the livelihood for a vast number of people, have democratic institutions worked to ensure such an objective? These questions apply equally to the countries that lay claims to a longer tradition of democracy, including India. Let us look at Thailand and the Philippines first, because they provide clues for an understanding of the puzzles of democracy in other countries, including India.

We notice that the manner of democratic transition in these two countries has conditioned the institutional response to the issues of social justice and sustainable development. In the Philippines, although poor people had participated in the struggle for democracy for many years, it was the middle class that dominated the EDSA revo-

lution that brought Aquino to power. In addition, the Philippines is still a country controlled by landed oligarchies and, hence, land reforms have not been made part of the democratic agenda. The dominance of the middle class and the landed oligarchies has meant that progress towards just democracy for the majority poor population or towards economic development that is sensitive to natural resource base has been minimal. Similar class relations characterize most other formal democracies in Asia. The basic question in all of these cases is whether democratization and the resultant formal institutional democracy is sufficient to guarantee the rights of all citizens, including the poor and the marginalized, and whether their rights to basic livelihood and life with dignity will ever be institutionalized and protected.

In Thailand, where the struggle for democracy itself has been long drawn out, often with violent and brutal setbacks, one notices greater institutionalization of democracy and ongoing participation by civil society in favour of broader democratic rights for all citizens. Some attention was given also to the interests of underprivileged citizens, such as farmers. An interesting debate dominates the deliberations of Thai civil society movements and activists, as to the ways of achieving these goals. Here active participation in the processes of formal democracy is juxtaposed to staying out of the politics, power and patronage that characterizes formal representative democracy and provides substance and content to the parliamentary democracy, or to practise a combination, so as to 'civilize the state'.[6] Given that the grassroots movements have played a key role in the struggles for democracy and have attempted to shape its substantive nature, questions inevitably arise as to what extent social and environment movements from within civil society should be engaged in providing a basis for strengthening the legal framework of a formal democracy as opposed to working towards the building of a more substantive democracy. What is clear from the ongoing debates within Thai civil society is that the very same processes that have positively contributed to democratization, also pose challenges to civil society movements. They are at the base of the tension, between spontaneity and autonomy against organization and institutionalization that plagues civil society organization.

Ecology, ethnicity and the nation-state

Groups that have suffered, perhaps, the worst kind of injustice, in colonial times and since, are the indigenous populations of Asia. Until recently, in some countries of Asia, they were treated as non-citizens.

Even now they are hardly ever treated as full citizens. Not surprisingly, many of the counter-state movements, termed 'insurgencies' by the state, are situated in areas populated by these tribal groups. Under the 'developmental' state and more recently under globalization, the tribal indigenous areas have come under massive projects of development. These projects, whether dams, mines and afforestation programmes or globally sponsored scientific conservation programmes or World Bank supported eco-development programmes, have all treated the tribal populations as if they do not matter. The greatest failure of formal democracy has been in its relation to these groups.

Cases of tribal population displacement, because of dams, power and mining projects are far too many to be catalogued here. They range, from countries like India with large tribal populations, to Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. Tribal populations in countries like Thailand and India are facing new threats to their ways of life, their livelihoods and culture, by a new international mainstream environmentalism wanting to preserve and conserve wild areas. Debates now rage amongst ecologists and wildlife conservationists as to whether wild and protected area conservation should or should not include indigenous peoples.

Underlying many of these debates are certain notions of ethnicity. Views held by the decision-makers, about ethnicity and nationhood, are often reflected in the role played by the state. They determine the fate, not only of particular tribal groups, but also of the natural resources located in their habitat. Some in India, for example, take the view that it is rather unfortunate that the areas with the richest sources of minerals are also the areas inhabited by the tribes, as is the case in Bihar and Orissa. One could question, however, if the minerals from these areas are seen as more readily available for extraction only because their inhabitants are far less powerful and more silent than those in other areas. Constructions of ethnicity and nationhood play an important role in decisions about the location of projects and the treatment of the resident population. The often unstated but dominant developmental view amounts to saying that such people are dispensable. Eco-development projects financed by the World Bank seem to take the same view of the tribals, as witnessed in the projects in Bihar, West Bengal and in Coorg in South India. Such views now seem to permeate not only those with the 'development mindset', but also among some promoters of mainstream environmentalism. Some of the environmentally conscious elites and sections of the middle classes in parts of Asia, in their concern for nature conservation, seem to hold

views similar to what Larry Lohman (1999) calls 'an environmental variation of racial oppression', where

> 'certain cultures are sealed off, not just from others but also from "nature" which is similarly conceptualized as the "other". Here it is the ecological version of identity, be it that of trees, wolves or watershed, that is seen as threatened due to the breaching of an imagined frontier, the boundary between humans and nature. The racist double bind applies here as well. Certain ethnic groups must either be physically separated from the imagined "nature" by other groups that have unilaterally decided what that "nature" is, or submit to being identified as one with it, as savages, noble or otherwise' (Lohman, 1999).

Advancing democratic values and resisting anti-democratic pressures under these conditions calls for a number of requirements. The first is to develop an understanding of nature and ecology that does not, by its inner logic, treat the nature-people relation as an antagonism. Second, is to ensure that individual or group identity is not constructed in ways in which the state comes to construe either development or ecological protection or both as requiring that some people be treated as dispensable. Whether the postulating of such normative stances can ensure democracy and social justice for the unprivileged, when the ruling elites are in the grip of neo-liberal ideology, is a moot question.

The political economy of environmental degradation and ecological perspectives of political economy

Considerations of ecology, environmental degradation and democracy are, of course, closely linked to the political economy in Asia and the world. Tropical forest destruction in South East Asia financed its early economic growth. In Thailand, for example, only when it was realized that deforestation was leading to flooding and destruction of other forms of economic activity, was logging banned. As a result, logging moved to the forests of Indo-China, especially Laos and Cambodia. One nation's attempt to preserve its natural resources went hand in hand with a willingness to support its capital in destroying the natural resources of a neighbouring country. Most states of Asia remain oblivious to the consequences of their actions on the ecosystems of neighbouring countries and their people.

'The East Asian Miracle' in Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea required the depletion of their own natural resources as well as those of developing countries from all of Asia, Latin America and Africa. Taiwan and Hong Kong maintained close relations with South Africa, in spite of the apartheid. It was the mutual need for natural resources and markets that kept this relationship alive. Japan has had a sustained exploitative relationship with the Asian hinterland and with other developing regions. It predates the economic success of the East Asian economies. Japan needs this exploitative relationship with the countries of South East Asia to bolster its affluent economy and is now expanding into Indo-China. There it must compete with the newly industrializing states of Singapore and Malaysia for the remaining natural resources. The lures of the tremendous richness of minerals, natural gas, precious stones and timber wealth of Burma (Myanmar) prevents industrialized countries from dealing sternly with its corrupt authoritarian regime.

The current confusion about the relationship between political economy, ecology and democracy can be captured by the analysis of at least three perspectives on natural resource destruction and environmental degradation. The first of these is a popular (populist) perspective that I call cultural relativist and revivalist. It sees the destruction of natural resources as a planetary phenomenon in which the West, driven by Judaeo-Christian traditions, ravages nature. Asia is seen as a victim. I concede that this may seem like a bit of a caricature. However, since it is the dominant and popular perspective among environmental activists, both in the West and among sections of the educated Asian middle classes, it needs identification in its essential terms. For the Asian environmental elite, when it confronts the ills of 'modernization' that accompany rapid economic growth under globalization, it becomes convenient to attribute the destruction of the environment to 'outside forces'. They can then embrace the romanticism of ecological saneness of traditional culture. This form of 'modern environmentalism' also propagates an exclusivist definition of culture. It sees nature as separate from people and easily falls prey to Lohman's 'environmental variation of racial oppression'.

The second perspective speaks in terms of some sort of an ecological-political economy. Gadgil and Guha, for example, posit three broad ecological groups: the 'omnivores', 'the ecosystem people' and 'the ecological refugees' (1994). For them the first group belongs to a coalition of ruling elites who enjoy all the fruits of the biosphere and whom Dasmann (1988) calls the 'biosphere people'. In developing countries,

this would be a group with material consumption levels comparable to the citizens of the industrialized world. The 'ecosystem people' are the bulk of the population in developing countries who must depend on the environment and on natural resources for their material needs. They are, for the most part, outside the formal monetary economy or only minimally in it. The last group of 'ecological refugees' are the millions of people who have been directly displaced by development projects such as dams and mines. They eke out marginal livelihoods and live near but outside the islands of prosperity.

The third perspective has its origin in the attempts of economic theory to come to terms with the problems of the environment as they affect economic growth and income distribution. It encompasses a vast body of literature on environmental economics, natural resource economics and ecological economics. It addresses the issue of the relationship between economic growth and natural resource depletion and attempts to resolve the conflict between sustainability of natural resources and sustained economic growth. Here the economists are trying to make up for the fact that the discipline has been unable, so far, to integrate the ecological dimension. They recommend the use of economic instruments to regulate pollution and to protect the environment and natural resources. While their solutions may appear feasible, in theory, in both practical and political terms, they are beset with serious difficulties.

Given the inadequacy of these prevailing methods, it seems necessary to look for ways to create a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between ecology and political economy. Any sketch of such a comprehensive framework must begin with a thorough examination of the institution of property. The relationship between the legally sustained private property relations and environmental degradation must be carefully examined. This is particularly important in the developing country context where communal property and natural resource relationships still exist and are closely linked to the struggle for survival. Such analysis will offer the much-needed counterpoint to the tendency of neo-liberal economic theory to attribute every environmental problem to the lack of private property rights.

As the environmental problems become increasingly more global, international institutions and initiatives are emerging to deal with the problems of natural resource destruction. Often these initiatives speak of a 'global commons'. And yet they seem to downplay the significance of the same perspective for environmental problems within national boundaries. In dealing with the resources of developing countries, such

as bio-diversity, they speak of the 'common heritage of mankind', while propagating private property as the answer to the questions of equity and fair share of the resources of the developed world or in reaping the benefits of scientific and technological knowledge. Here the discourse of intellectual property is brought into play. Within national contexts and globally, common and communal property approaches to natural resources constantly conflict with private property interests. It is necessary, therefore, to develop a framework that accounts for contradictions in the linking of ecology and political economy at both national and global levels. We must also recognize that conflicts between national and global interests, regarding ecology and environment, are likely to further intensify. This is bound to pose serious problems for natural resource sustainability. In Asia, where rapid economic growth is privileged over social justice and ecological and social sustainability, such conflicts pose even more serious threats to both democracy and nature.

A critique, of the theories of economic development and of popular, but flawed, counter-theories or of theories that try to integrate environmental and ecological issues into economic theory, is slowly emerging. Herman Daly and Goergescu Roegen, economists who are using concepts such as entropy from the natural sciences, show how obsession with economic growth is the basic problem with economic theory and with the solutions it offers. They see its attempts to integrate 'ecological concerns' into economic thinking as akin to Columbus' voyage. They do set out with a set of logically correct principles, but land in the wrong place. Their logic leads to the advocacy of economic instruments of property rights, taxes and trading permits. While these instruments may make an economy ecologically more benign and sustainable, the incorrectness of their premise, that economic growth must not be questioned, invalidates their conclusions and produces environmental disasters.

Science, technology, culture and ecology

In the history of capitalist development, alongside the questions of political economy, questions about the relationship between culture, science and technology have occupied the minds of social theorists. In the early years of development theory, as is well known, the technological backwardness of Third World societies was blamed on culture. In more recent times, culture, Confucian culture in particular, became the explanation of the economic success of East Asian countries. In either

case, the long history of direct and structural exploitation of native and immigrant populations as a historical factor, in the context of global strategic politics, was blissfully ignored. This chapter in development theory is relevant for us because much of it resonates with today's invocation of culture and traditions in juxtaposing concerns about the environment and ecology to economic modernization. While celebratory Western writing sought to establish East Asian economic success in culture, those critical of rapid economic growth and its ravages tried to build culture into a bulwark of resistance against it. Here also, approaches totally bereft of cross-cultural and historical understanding were used to assign blame for the destruction of natural resources to 'outside forces', to 'westernization' and to 'modern western science'. Critical perspectives, which are based on and uphold the principles of democracy and social justice, can and must counter these types of ahistorical and orientalist interpretations and uses of culture.

The positive end of this spectrum of emphasis on science and technology is represented by a technological optimism that swears by the ability of technology to solve all problems including those of environmental degradation, both local and global. Take, for example, the 'clean development mechanism' advocated as a solution in the discussions on global warming. It seems that when disciplines such as economics fail to understand and address the fundamental causes of environmental degradation, recourse to technology is increasingly taken as an explanation and a remedy. Science and technology have often been used in the past to justify the dominant patterns of social and political relations. Today technology is being offered as the panacea for global warming, whereas science was being used earlier to deny that there was a problem of global warming. Such a quick fix to explain away problems using single factors, such as culture, technology and science, will prevail as long as the more fundamental issues of equity, democracy and social justice are not made a necessary part of the discourse of ecology and natural resources.

Single-minded attention to science and technology, either as a cause or a solution for ecological and environmental problems, also has an adverse effect on policy formation. It may be recalled that earlier attempts at the development of science policy were triggered by the need to ensure democratic control and accountability of science in view of the misuses of science and technology during the two world wars. Similar concerns must now be directed to environmental, ecological and natural resource policy, with a focus on democracy and democratization. Environmentally

and ecologically damaging activity, when it also puts people at a disadvantage in terms of social justice, must be made democratically accountable. For this reason, at least, one needs to construct and examine the inherent uncertainties of science, technology, culture and ecology (Surendra 1993).

Decades ago, when the Club of Rome pointed out the limits posed by the earth's natural resources on the profligacy of capitalist production and the associated consumption of resources, not much attention was paid by the ruling classes who did not see resources as limiting the growth of capitalism. It was assumed that new technologies would inevitably help overcome such limits. Thus, economics and technological optimism came together to counter the dire predictions of the Club of Rome. What soon became obvious is that while the scarcity of resources or resource limits could be overcome through technology and political domination, the capacity of nature to absorb the waste produced by the consumption of resources and uncontrolled economic growth had finite limits. This is now called the problem of the 'sink limits': the capacity of the earth's atmosphere to act as a sink, to absorb the waste gases of human production and consumption, is limited. Global warming and ozone layer depletion are products of growth that have to be dealt with soon so as to avoid disastrous consequences for the planet. Although new architecture for global governance of planetary environmental issues is emerging, it is being shaped by the unequal nature of global democracy, and under conditions of globalization and neo-liberalism. Such an international regime, as Richard Falk says, is akin to the old apartheid system in South Africa (see Surendra 1993).

The irony of the situation is that both modern capitalism and the economic theory that underpins it have been premised and driven by the notion of 'scarcity'. Long before environmental economics or natural resource economics acquired prominence as disciplines, resource economics theory and policy were framed around questions of scarcity and growth. The first classic on this question, written as a report of a US Presidential Commission in the 1900s, was titled 'Scarcity and Growth'. This theme was re-examined in the 1960s and a new book, called 'Scarcity and Growth: Revisited', was published.

Globalization and natural resources

Globalization, of course, constitutes the most critical challenge to the efforts to avert environmental degradation and promote substantive

democracy in Asia. A major consequence of globalization is the appearance of a global elite consensus on the neo-liberal doctrine of development. It requires that the state withdraw from as many spheres of activity as possible and give the market free play. As a consequence, in the countries of Asia, the state has been required to impose cuts to public spending and thus to its role as a protector of citizens and their natural resources. These cuts do seem to produce beneficial side effects in the short run when, for example, public funding for some projects, such as dams, declines. Also, for example, when fertilizer and pesticide subsidies are cut, chemical farming becomes unprofitable. In the long run, however, withdrawal of the state in favour of the market leads to widespread privatization of mineral and other resources and the alienation of people and communities, living close to such resources, from their lands and their livelihood resources. We have already witnessed this in many parts of Asia.

Heavy reliance on uncontrolled market forces, in societies divided between the powerful and the disadvantaged, functions only in the interests of the propertied and the powerful, even under conditions of formal democracy. This pattern also prevails in the relationship between nation states. This is perhaps more true when it comes to ecology than it is for the economy.

Negotiations between states about global warming and treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol seem to always avoid the issue of burden sharing. The major burden for the implementation of such protocols is being routinely shifted to the poorer regions. Such deliberately undemocratic behaviour only strengthens existing global inequity. The major cause and, therefore, the solution for global warming lies in the North, but the North is unwilling to restructure its economic production and consumption patterns. Instead it finds ways to shift the responsibility and burden to the poorer societies in the South. A relevant example is the attempt to promote 'carbon sinks' through plantation. The tropical forest areas of South East Asia now face the prospect of plantation forestry as 'carbon sinks', officially promoted as 'carbon offset forestry'. Once again science and technology are being put into service without any consideration for the participation of those whose lives will be deeply affected as a result (The Corner House 1999).

International climate negotiators are getting agreements for investment in large scale tree-planting as a way in which the South can 'assist' the North in 'achieving compliance' with the Kyoto Protocol requirements. Japanese scientists were dispatched to South East Asia for five years to research how to 'create an ideal carbon-dioxide reducing

forest' to offset emissions from the Japanese industry. The American 'Wise Use Movement' which opposes environmentalism, recommends clear-cutting of old growth forests which do not 'subtract much, if any, carbon from the atmosphere'. It wants to replace them with fast growing plantations. The US Department of Energy officials have claimed that such tree planting will allow the current US energy policy to continue till 2015, when it must fully comply with the agreements made in international climate change negotiations (Lohman 1999). These developments will further intensify the already severe resource conflicts between the rising demand on natural resources and the sustainable livelihood practices of poor communities in Asia.

Economic globalization has extracted huge costs and sacrifices from the poor of the region, coupled with, and through, the destruction of its natural resources. Private propertied interests from the North and the South have continued to aggressively push their strategies of resource extraction, while a weakened and retreating state pleads inability to intervene. What then is the future of sustainable social and ecological systems and democracy in Asia?

Global governance, democracy and civil society

The expectation of the middle classes and elites in liberalizing and globalizing economies of Asia is that democracy will act like a sponge and take care of the conflicts that are inherent to unequal and unjust societies. Globally, the North seems to expect that limited formalistic democracy in the South will help ameliorate the current international problems without any changes in the undemocratic and unequal ways of international governance. These, I am afraid, will turn out to be a false hope. Issues of natural resource destruction and environmental degradation, which impinge on the lives of the deprived peoples of Asia, have no alternative but to lead to ever-widening spirals of social strife and conflict. When combined with their democratic urges they will generate their own dynamics of resistance and struggle.

To succeed, democracy must, both at national and global levels, be informed by a vision, a vision of democratic rights and full participation of people in decision-making. It must challenge the use of representative democracy institutions as alibis for blocking peoples' participation, especially in decisions that fundamentally affect and alter their lives. Human rights must not be narrowly confined to civil and political rights but should include economic, cultural, social and other rights. The forgotten North-South dialogue on 'The Right to

Development' of the 1970s has to be brought back to the centre of international discourse. It must now focus on the right to sustainable development of people and communities and not merely that of the states or domestic and international interests of capital. This requires that the discourse of 'global governance' shift away from the one originating from and dominated by the multilateral institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. Their form of global governance and 'good governance' will only ensure that their writ is obeyed or that the risks to investments, their own and those of other banks and corporations, is minimized.

Well before the Asian crisis and before the subsequent revelations of Joseph Stiglitz, ecological economists like Herman Daly (who had also resigned from the World Bank) had pointed to the ecologically and socially unsustainable nature of World Bank advice. International civil society has, through protest demonstrations, drawn our attention to the undemocratic nature of these organizations. However, these civil society organizations from the Northern democratic states, have not been able to establish agendas for more substantive democratic politics or to demand substantive shifts in domestic formal democratic politics as well as a restructuring of global governance through larger civil society alliances.

Building of global alliances and intervention in domestic formal politics by civil society organizations in the North could help achieve the objective of limiting and reducing the power of global corporations, both domestically and globally. So far, due to the absence of effective mechanisms for cross-learning, some of the most innovative civil society movements, such as the 'The Assembly of the Poor' in Thailand, have not been able to help strengthen democracy movements and alliances at the global level.

Without undervaluing their importance, we should recognize that modern financial capitalism can afford, and even encourage, occasional demonstrations of democratic protest against its governing institutions, since they are unable to force changes to any of the basic rules under which the globe is managed, economically and politically. Excessive focus on those who protested at Seattle, or at other such venues of WTO or G-7 meetings, should not be allowed to make the ongoing resistance and protests at the grassroots level invisible. Most of this resistance is against the destruction of resources and livelihoods. The international civil society has a duty to make sure that these grassroots protests of resistance remain visible, for they clearly show that formal democracy, in both domestic and global arenas, is highly

dysfunctional in the area of ecology and environment. Ongoing local struggles do not make pretty pictures and are not considered newsworthy; neither is the steady destruction of natural resources and degradation of the environment in Asia. The challenge for democracy, whether it is in the North or in the South, and for international civil society, is ultimately that of building a just and democratic order for global and local governance. Without the latter, the conditions for the survival of democracy and ecology in Asia are rather grim.

Notes

1 The decade saw the rise of a whole host of new movements to protect ecology and people's livelihoods. It will not be possible to catalogue all of them here. At the same time the older struggles over the Narmada Dams have continued as well as the prolongation of the agonies of the victims of disasters such as Bhopal.
2 Since this chapter was first written, the Narmada struggle received a setback with an adverse judgment from the Supreme Court of India. It did, however, set in motion a series of commentaries on the judgement. They have raised important questions about the fairness of court action in passing such a judgment.
3 I refer in particular to the diverse writings of environmentalists and social commentators such as Vandana Shiva, Ashish Nandy and Claude Alvares.
4 Documentation on the Assembly of the Poor is vast. In the English language one could refer to the publications of the Thai Volunteer Service (TVS) and Watershed, the excellent journal brought out by TERRA (Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliances, Bangkok.
5 Documentation and literature on Minamata is vast and it is difficult to refer to any particular work. A very moving history is that presented as a photo story by Aileen Smith, *Minamata – The Story of the Poisoning of a City and the People who Chose to Carry the Burden of Courage*. Unfortunately this book is out of print. See, also Lawrence Surendra, *Living with a Poisoned Post – A Report from Minamata*, AMPO, Japan Quarterly Review: 20(4) .
6 Plantation struggles in Thailand, refer to *Watershed*, Bangkok.

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9

Democracy, Ecology and Ecocide in Asia: Critical Reflections

Peter Stoett

Introduction

It is fitting to begin with an admission that this chapter suffers from a multiple purpose disorder. It is intended firstly to comment upon the preceding chapter written by Lawrence Surendra, which is an excellent survey of the current state of resistance to industrialization in contemporary Asia (and is in itself an update of an essay presented to a seminar entitled 'Asia in the 1990s: Making and Meeting a New World'). Not surprisingly, Surendra applies his broad knowledge of Asian issues and politics with his usual depth for the particular to produce an engaging and challenging essay.

This chapter is intended to add conceptual insight to both Surendra's piece together with the central themes of the present conference as a whole, and to comment on the effect of the recent Asian financial crisis on environmental and social movements coupled with the political potential of transnational alliances and solidarity. Simultaneously, I take the liberty of updating my own contribution to the previously mentioned seminar on Asia, where I discussed the complex interplay between ecology, industrialization, human rights, and the Mekong River Commission in Southeast Asia. Beyond all this, the chapter also offers some broad reflections on the twin processes of ecocide and globalization, and links them to the concepts of formal and substantive democracy. Obviously such a wide agenda casts grave doubt on any possible claims to parsimony. Thankfully, Surendra has provided a thematic framework to organize his range of thoughts and, without attempting to replicate their substance, I will adopt this framework here as well. I will, therefore, comment on his thoughts, add my own, and relate issues to the Mekong and other areas where

intense development threatens the livelihood and cultural integrity of marginalized people, and also where intense development is itself threatened by strategic challenges on the ground and conceptual concerns with sustainable development abroad. I have taken the liberty of changing one title in the process. We will recall that the Surendra chapter divides the discussion into the following headings:

- Emerging Issues in the Politics of Ecology and Environment in Asia;
- Asian Democracy and Responses to Environmental Degradation in Asia – Issues of Formal and Substantive Democracy;
- Ecology, Ethnicity and the Nation-state;
- The Political Economy of Environmental Degradation and Ecological Perspectives of Political Economy;
- Science, Technology, Culture and Ecology;
- Globalisation and Natural Resources- and
- Global Governance, Democracy and Civil Society.

I will adopt this format here stressing the many themes cutting across these arbitrary divisions. What arises from Surendra's treatment of the above analytic categories is a healthily cautious optimism. On the whole I am relatively pessimistic. The Asian financial crisis, spurred on by a currency failure as well as related over-speculation, and which tied the Asian governments closer to the western financial institutions as a result, is only further evidence that globalization in Asia is driven by the most self-interested and internationalized of forces: global capitalism. To expect a genuine concern with sustainable development amongst the transnational elite, both accumulative and technocratic, would be chimerical.

Indeed, the outer appearances of democracy have increased; and protest groups have found limited, though often romanticized, modes of expression within them. This can be discerned in many Asian states, such as South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia and Taiwan. But given the state of environmental decline in Asia (indeed, throughout Asia: though there are pockets of industrial avoidance, the larger states such as Japan and China are casting long and dark ecological shadows), formal efforts at increasing state legitimacy strike one as a process of reconciling democratization with ecocide. Deeper democratic development, meanwhile, will, by necessity, threaten the extant power structures, and the non-sustainable extraction and production systems operating in the region, the latter in particular with western as well as Asian origins. Social protest,

communal survival strategies, civil society, all of these attractive features of resistance are, as always, alive in Asia; but they labour under incredible odds against their ultimate success.

Emerging issues in the politics of ecology and environment in Asia

Few regions have been cut as deeply by the blades of industrialization as in Asia, and the onslaught is just beginning. This holds almost regardless of the specific region under discussion. We might venture to say that, taking a panoramic view of the situation; the process of ecocide is gaining steam. That the term 'ecocide' became fashionable when the Americans destroyed vegetation in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia should not be lost on us, since many of the current sites of ecological destruction, from forestry to fishing to mining, have western origins dating back to colonial days.

Ecocide may seem a strong term to employ here. I use it in two fashions (Stoett 1999: 51–72). The original meaning implied the deliberate destruction of the environment for specific military purposes, either to expose enemy positions and hiding places (including villages and farms), or to substantially reduce their subsistence base. Though this application has been evident in parts of Asia (for example, in East Timor) it is perhaps more contemporarily appropriate to discuss direct surgical strikes intended to advance capital and/or state-capital accumulation, either with attendant and overt political colonialism (as in the case of Tibet) or with the support of patron-client relations (as in the case of Japanese forestry practices in Indonesia). But there is a broader, second meaning to the term 'ecocide', one that is employed by members of environmental protest movements and it can also refer to the more general ecological damage sustained via the imposition of modernity on peripheral regions, including the large-scale problems associated with global warming, trans-border pollution, and unsafe (and uneven) waste disposal. While many Asian regions are affected by the application of precise force to alter ecosystems, for military or developmental purposes, all are affected by the latter, more diffuse type of ecocide. There is yet another use for the term 'ecocide', referring to the environmental consequences of military production. Here, as well, Asia is not spared and an example is the former American military bases at the Clark Air Field and Subic Naval Bases, in the Philippines that were abandoned in 1992. Since then deadly toxins have been found, including methyl mercury, nitrates, aldrin, dieldrin

and benzene in 21 water sources near the bases. Local activists claim the bases are responsible for the loss of over a hundred lives (Bengwayan 2000).

The Asian miracles of the past two decades have exacted a high price that is beyond the re-organization of affected societies to follow the post-Fordist, export-oriented and authoritarian Japanese model of production. They have also resulted in scarred landscapes, insurmountable collections of refuse and toxic chemicals, and severe reductions in biodiversity. China is one of the most polluted states on earth today, with massive releases of sulfur dioxide and smog in urban areas and desertification, all of which are a serious threat in most rural areas. The construction of the Three Gorges Dam and China's troubling nuclear safety record add more concern for activists who point also to the political record of oppression and international collusion in the construction of the dam in the Yangtze River Valley (Barber and Ryder 1993). Although Japan has improved its environmental record at home and remains at or near the forefront in the development of environmental technology, it is correctly seen abroad as a voracious consumer of the resources found in rainforests and oceans. Heavily populated India has earned the terrible distinction of the Bhopal industrial disaster. Indonesia is infamous for its burning forests and ravaged coasts. The Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia have been deforested at an alarming rate. Slash-and-burn aquaculture, as described by Surendra in terms of shrimp farming, has become prevalent in Cambodia and Vietnam. Of course, this depressingly partial list is only more overwhelming if we include Russia and the other Eurasian former communist states.

One of the most pressing concerns remains the production and distribution of energy in the region. This is especially so for political scientists and for several interconnected reasons. The production of energy for industrialization involves large groups of people; it is not a process one can even attempt without large-scale coordination and bureaucratic direction, whether it is committed in the public, private, or a hybrid sphere. Many forms of energy production present high risks to people both in the immediately affected area and for future generations. For example, the use of nuclear power implies storage of nuclear wastes, always in peripheral regions and for thousands of years to come. Also, large-scale dams usually entail flooding thousands of acres for the creation of reservoirs. Even oil and coal-based energy production have obvious health risks related to storage, distribution, and atmospheric pollution.

The potential is there for a shift towards solar, wind, geothermal, or even natural gas as the main sources of energy, but most Asian states are far removed from such a conversion. Although some attention is given to energy conservation planning, the very nature of the widely embraced market economy production system inherently limits planning capacity. But what interests us most is the tangible political nature of energy production. What other source of production could entail such a communal obligation for open discussion, including the toleration of dissent while at the same time has so often been cloaked in the brutal cover of state security and national development? What other form of activity is as vital to the well-being of entire communities? And in international terms, few types of investments generate the same funding and concern as large-scale energy projects, eliciting both praise and condemnation for the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and others.

Typical energy production schemes still, prevalently, require massive infrastructure construction, bringing large contracts to both national and foreign firms. Given the continued emphasis on economic growth as the eventual panacea to the problems caused by economic growth, future energy consumption will only increase, necessitating more dams. If the west is able to continue to compensate for domestic slumps with increased exports, there will be nuclear power plants in the region. For states such as Laos, energy is the primary export product. For others, such as India, projected urban demands have led to death-defying protests. And as the economic crisis impacts on public sector employment, more and more people turn to immediate sources of energy, such as forest woods.

We will return to this primary question throughout this paper. Another environmental issue with tangible political connotations is the destruction and/or enclosure of the 'commons', an age-old process perfected in Europe that has gradually spread throughout most of the world. As Surendra laments, 'it is not only the degradation and destruction of actual habitats and spaces, but also the speed at which it happens, allowing little time to resist, stop, or undertake ecological and social restitution activities' (Surendra 2000: 3). This process goes beyond the obvious privatization campaigns in Russia and China. The currency crisis brought about by the switch to convertibility in Thailand and elsewhere was, arguably, an incentive to think about the need to limit the influx of foreign capital; instead, prodded by free market ideologues in the international financial institutions, it has encouraged governments to seek further investment, and controlling

property rights is an essential prerequisite. One can add, as Surendra does, the notion of enclosing the intellectual commons through the gradual imposition of a system of intellectual property rights designed primarily to protect western patents. Though there are possible conduits to protect indigenous peoples in this regard, such as the 'Convention on Biological Diversity', it remains an ongoing project to colonize and commodify knowledge, much of which is derived from ethnobotanic discourse.

The type of capitalism adopted by most Asian states is a hurried path to the consumptive society, and the end result will be an almost incomprehensible amount of waste and resource use. China, for example, will need the combined energy output of Brazil and India (in 1990 terms) just to keep its economy growing, and similar increases in coal, steel, cement, nitrogen, and grain consumption (Smil 1993). The automobile is just beginning its assault on the Asian environment, and many governments are determined to develop, in collusion with western automotive firms, national industries. Japan has experienced difficulty disposing of its electronic-gadget waste, but this will shy in comparison to the problems awaiting India and China as greater fragments of their economies convert to electronic workplaces. While there are undeniable benefits to the mass production and consumption of commercial goods, disposing of the leftovers will be a particularly political issue, raising questions of ecological justice and furthering the tendency to export toxins to areas newly enclosed for the purpose (it is also likely that dumping hazardous material at sea will continue, despite efforts to mitigate this activity).

Agricultural production and access to clean drinking water remain major causes for concern, again with political implications. In parts of Northern China and Mongolia, severe drought has challenged the ability of small-scale farmers to survive, and plans for irrigation projects have come under scrutiny because they involve Tibetan land (Eckholm 2000). It is not intended to delve into the overpopulation debate here; high southern populations probably cause much less overall ecological damage than highly consumptive low populations in the North. Nonetheless, it is clear that agricultural space is running out due to land pressure, overuse, commercialization, and the sheer number of Chinese, Indian, Bangladeshi, and other citizens using ecologically inappropriate farming techniques in areas such as hillsides that require patience and knowledge to farm. Flooding and other 'natural' disasters further exacerbate the loss of arable land, leading to understandable unrest amongst affected groups.

Most of the direct ecocide, however, is the result of extractive activity, mainly forestry, mining, fishing, and conversion of land for commercial farming. There is a further, and indeed extremely significant, political concern: the rest of the world. Understandably, Surendra does not spend time on this facet. However, we cannot ignore the long-term impact that Asian industrialization will have on the global environment. Climate change negotiations have become fixated on the North-South question because of the future threat posed by the mega-economies of China and India. Trade between Asian states and Europe and North America continues to grow as trade liberalization increases participants and expands opportunities. Concerns about biodiversity, whether on land or in the sea, are popular in the west, and Asia will continue to receive critical attention in this regard. In short, Asia cannot be analysed in isolation. If it is a gross generalization to take the region as a whole, it is equally problematic to ignore its many and complex ecopolitical relations with the west and, for that matter, the rest of the southern hemisphere.

Asian democracy and responses to environmental degradation in Asia – Issues of formal and substantive democracy

To begin this section on a somewhat cynical note: democratization is the latest in a string of buzzwords designed to give development administrators in both the North and the South something constructive to do (or worse, to appear to be doing). The trappings of formal democracy – most visibly the electoral process – are certainly insufficient in the deeper quest for substantive democracy, by which I refer to a greater level of social equality, governmental accountability, and community participation than presently exists in most of Asia today. Even the well-established democracies with relatively free presses, such as Australia and Hong Kong, have substantial portions of their populations virtually excluded from the public policy decision-making processes. If we assume that formal democracy will lead to substantive democracy we make a rather big leap of faith; however, we would also be confused were we to assume that substantive democracy is the true goal of development administrators in the first place.

One could argue with Surendra's assumption that in the past decade we have seen states in Asia go through deep-rooted processes of democratization. Elite rotation is certainly occurring; even sweeping the government (but not the economy) of Indonesia, which is almost, clean of Suharto's

lengthy influence. But the neo-liberal agenda of globalization continues to drive long-term development thinking, limiting, rather than encouraging progress toward substantive democracy. This requires ongoing dialogue, difficult and inefficient inclusionary negotiation with civil society, and the pursuit of common principles of justice and equity. These are not good for short-term foreign investment.

Coercion and manipulation might, of course, secure normative legitimacy, but not communicatively achieved legitimacy (Habermas 1993). As Seyla Benhabib insists, 'the legitimation of power should be thought of as public dialogue' (1989: 143). One sees little concrete evidence of this admittedly demanding development in Asia where most states resemble giant workhouses and most governments remain so far removed from the masses that it is difficult to believe they have much genuine legitimacy in the first place. However, the state is entrenched in the affairs of citizens, and vice-versa; people are dependent on the state/capital nexus, as the post-crisis scaledowns demonstrated, and though there is usually a thriving informal sector to which they may turn for subsistence, this does not provide political representation at the formal level.

Nonetheless, there are surviving labour movements and more to the point here, environmentalist protest groups which have had an impact on national politics. Surendra's description of the 'Assembly of the Poor' in Thailand is fascinating, though Leninists would consider it hopelessly romantic in orientation. Protest groups share a common dilemma across Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas: to what extent should they ingratiate themselves with the extant formal power structure? Is it better to run for office, as 'large-G' Greens have opted to do, or to work from outside the system, as 'small-g' greens insist? Surendra refers to this as the 'challenges to civil society movements regarding the resolution of tensions between spontaneity and organization' (2000). The answer here may be surprisingly simple and pragmatic: it is best to have both arms working, if not together then at least united in cause.

The 'Assembly of the Poor' seems to be a compromise between these two approaches in and of it, composed of people from rural and fishing communities who are able to negotiate in Bangkok and show solidarity with localized protests, such as that ongoing over the Pak Mun Dam site. The Assembly was formed on December 10, 1995 on International Human Rights Day, composed of representatives from six networks of people that were affected by dam projects, land and forest conflicts, government infrastructure projects, slum problems and other work. It

was immediately transnational, involving discussion panels of international NGOs, students and networks of people from ten countries. Several days later, at the Dan Kao Village in Khongchiam District, the Pak Mun Declaration was released, calling for greater inclusion in development planning. ASEAN governments were urged to review their economic development policies.

The statement was initially ignored by the government, but another Assembly gathering during the 1996 ASEM (Asian-European Union) summit in Bangkok, attended by 25 states, generated more attention. In March that year, more than ten thousand people affected by four sets of problems in 21 Thai provinces established the 'Village of the Poor' on the street opposite the Government House. This highly visible protest forced the government to concede to pressure, open dialogue, and make, what would prove to be, false promises. Later that year Thailand's political crisis intensified, leading to the parliament's dissolution and the resignation of Prime Minister Banharn Silpaarcha. In January 1997, with the economic crisis looming, the 'Village of the Poor' was re-established in front of the Government House with renewed vigour; a one-kilometer stretch of the Nakhon Pathom Road was filled with more than 20,000 villagers.

From this has evolved a working system where non-governmental representatives are at least given some opportunity for input. Following yet another change in government, the Democrat Party led a new coalition, with Chuan Leekpai as Thailand's 20th prime minister. This government has been, on the surface, more responsive to the Assembly's demands, but no one is under the illusion that promises will be kept this time either. Many controversial government projects have been cancelled, such as the Sai Buri Dam project in Yala, the Kam Saming Industrial Estate project in Ubon Rachathani, and the Hazardous Waste Treatment project in Rayong's Pluak Daeng District. It is uncertain whether these cancellations are stories of protestors' successes, or of the baht's collapse and renewed emphasis on limited state economic intervention. Nonetheless, the Assembly represents what may be an embryonic model of mass mobilization, *sans* violence, and it is in this direction that one wishes that Surendra had put more detail and analysis.

Overall, however, this may be more anomaly than future trend. As Surendra would himself argue, the 'in-built conflict (a conflict that is coming more and more into the open), between private property constructions of modern institutions of state and the common property

based relations of community' (2000: 4) continues to hamper the development of a wider democratic movement. The fault line between private and common property is seen as a civilizational divide, and with good reason. This cultural discrepancy figured prominently in the Narmada River dispute; as a former Indian Administrative Service official and current World Bank advisor writes, the 'arguments initially given by resettlement officials that land could only be allotted to families who owned land could not be appreciated by a community in which land, at least until recently, was an unlimited resource' (Gill 1995: 237). When protest groups are incorporated into planning, they are generally given the nebulous role of 'advisors', and where a clash between private and common property rights takes place, some advice is more welcome than others.

Nonetheless, it is clear that such groups, when organized, can play a catalytic role in pushing for government transparency and accountability. This is evident, as Surendra points out, in the Nam Chaon Dam movement in Thailand as well as the Chico Dam movement in the Philippines. Similarly, the so-called 'green movements' played a role in the transitions within Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. However, as in the latter case in particular, while environmental movements may be one of several catalysts for broader democratic changes, they are often disregarded or abandoned after such changes appear to have been put in place, outfashioned by other necessities. Protests against nuclear power in Taiwan are another important instance of environmental issues raising deeper questions about democracy (Huang 1999). These protests were carried out largely by the Environmental Protection Union formed in 1987 to protest a decision taken by President Lee Teng-hui and his ambitious premier, former General Hao Po-ts'un, to revamp plans to build Taiwan's fourth Nuclear power plant in a remote fishing community in northern Taiwan.

The environmental movement was met with determined force by the Taiwanese government. American involvement in construction and lucrative post-construction contracts were part of this (the west has been trying to save its faltering nuclear power industry with southern clientele for decades), but equally so the new business class of Taiwan was largely convinced that economic growth was much more important than environmental protection. The protests were part of a broader movement by those disaffected by Taiwan's economic miracle. Taiwanese residents had already begun the so-called self-salvation, Tzu-li Chiu-chi movements, aimed at helping each other cope with the

vicissitudes of rapid industrialization, and forcing investors to relocate their glaringly damaging production plants. Indeed, in most cases we can see that the reductionist view held by many northerners that such a thing as an 'environmental protest' even exists is false. On the contrary, ecological considerations are usually one of many stimultants, and in some cases the primary, stimulant. Governmental response has been grudging, slow, noncommittal, or oppressive.

Ecology, ethnicity and the nation state

This is indeed a difficult section of Surendra's chapter, and one might argue he fails to make explicit some of the linkages he is claiming here. Ecology has been linked to ethnicity in various ways, including the notorious ecofacism epitomized by the Nazi Party and others interested in mythic bonds between people and the land. However, this link cannot be viewed as inherently fascist, of course. Indeed, the Chipko movement stresses this link, which supercedes other forms of self-identification for many people, be they dwellers in forests, on mountains, in villages, or farmers (or, for that matter, people who spend most of their lives on water). However, it is best to avoid the temptation to romanticize these forms of identity, lest we fall into the trap of the caricature decried by Surendra himself.

That development policies are often racist in connotation is not at debate here, though it is certainly problematic to lump the indigenous peoples of Asia together as a single race. While the eruption of sustained protest may in itself mould renewed senses of identity along ethnic lines, it is as likely – as in cases where refugee flows are resisted by local populations – to provoke counterproductive violence. Further, within ethnic groups, there are usually a wide variety of opinions and interests. Many people affected by development might calculate that the benefits outweigh the harm, whether or not this is the result of conceptual manipulation by technocrats. This is why dealing with ecocide in Asia and elsewhere is not, expressly, a simple matter of disempowering the wrong-doers and empowering the 'victims', as Surendra suggests (2000: 7).

Additionally, as if the threat of forces of industrialization were not enough, indigenous groups face threats from European and American environmentalists, who approach development dilemmas with their own prepackaged conception of the sanctity of nature and natural resources. This is especially evident in the animal fur trade and the consequent debate over the utilization of natural resources. That

indigenous groups can integrate their own lifestyles within a market economy (providing they maintain essential control over their territory) should not come as a surprise to us: people are, after all, notoriously adaptable creatures. Trading in animal products is a source of income that, when taken in measure and without excessive outside exploitation, creates incentive to preserve, not drive into extinction, related wildlife. However, a dogmatic western 'preservationist' perspective would negate cultural aspects of subsistence living as readily as the forces of industrialization.

This hardly implies that transnational solidarity cannot be expressed across different ethnic groups. Taiwan's Environmental Protection Union, mentioned briefly above, has attempted to aid the threatened Yami people of Lan-yu, where the government has created low-intensity nuclear waste sites. When western activists express support for this intervention, they are not only protesting the negative consequences of nuclear power, they are also defending the existence of a unique cultural heritage. The process of state formation, in a very universal sense has never been bereft of some tie between class and ethnicity. Surendra believes it entails 'unwittingly a construction of ethnicity and nation and who constitutes nation, by those who make decisions regarding locating projects in such areas and how the population in that area will be dealt with' (2000: 9). Just how 'unwittingly' this occurs is, of course, a matter of interpretation.

But though the link between social injustice and ecological damage is empirically strong, we need more evidence to sustain arguments about its relation to ethnic identity beyond the generalization that indigenous people are usually declared the disposable citizenry. Surendra also argues that if international neo-liberal ideology's recipe for success is the tacit acceptance of inevitable losers in the game, or those who 'cannot be saved' or are dispensable, 'its counterpart within the context of nation states requires a similar perspective with regard to some sections of the population'. This is somewhat tautological, since it is, by most accounts (radical and neo-liberal) a state's position within the world economy that ensures that some of its own population is deemed dispensable in the first place. However, there are few states where the process of capital accumulation has not created what Marxists refer to as a lumpen-proletariate. In an interesting essay on the Nimrod River, activist and author, Anil Patel, mentions a definition of power 'in the objectionable sense of the word, the capacity to direct the energy and resources of others to the services of values that those others do not share' (1995: 200). Ethnic identity will be but one of the

determinants of the self-identity of the managerial and investing classes, and the tools of commercialization will often suffice to impose new sets of values on younger generations.

The political economy of ecocide

The biggest long-term threat to the health of Asian citizens, beyond unsafe drinking water, beyond the spread of AIDS in prostitution corridors and beyond the vapour of toxic fumes covering the major cities, is probably tobacco. Asia has become a huge export market for the American tobacco industry, and smoking remains quite fashionable in many East Asian states in particular. While it is obvious that mass smoking brings on mass health problems (including lost work), governments pressured by the United States to keep their markets open, and individuals attracted by advertising, will make decisions which will, in 20 years time, lead to a health catastrophe. This should not come as a shock. Traditional economic theory, or what we might term classical western theory, exhibits a profound belief in the power of individual incentives to effect aggregate changes. Self-interested individuals shape the political economy by market behaviour and electoral behaviour alike. This is difficult to apply to the environment, however, since there are many diverging perspectives on what is in one's self-interest. Asia cannot escape this fundamental discrepancy between the need for collective preservation and individual incentives for polluting, extracting, and degrading the land. The tragedy of the commons, as Garret Hardin (1968) explained in his now-classic piece, maintains its own energy: where there is an individual incentive to overexploit, the common incentive to preserve will usually fall prey. At the same time, it is clear that the burgeoning industrialization of Asia benefits some more than others, and that the survival strategies of corporations and governments differ fundamentally from those of the masses.

If we succumb to the rational-choice temptation to look for incentives to explain economic behaviour, we see that the incentives pulling Asia into a vortex of industrialization are widespread and quite difficult to overcome. There is, for the Asian investor and western mutual-fund holder alike, too much money to be made, too quickly, despite the pain (and threat to the west) inflicted by the currency crisis. This is the political economy of international casino capitalism, where bets are hedged via electronically connected (but socially disconnected) networks of barter and exchange. An ecological perspective would recognize this as sheer folly, as a system dependent on the accumulation of

unacceptable risks. Yet it prevails, because the pockets of resistance where an ecological perspective remains a feasible collective response to security threats are themselves surrounded by the broader material conditions in which they must either adopt or enter. We have indeed witnessed the solidification of transnational patterns of resource exploitation, from the extractive to the productive phase, and this made such a large number of people dependent on what is, at the heart, an ecocidal enterprise, from Japanese banks to Indonesian military officials to Malaysian peasants to construction workers in Delhi to American schoolteachers with Asian funds, that the process has become seemingly ubiquitous. Forestry is a good example. In the case of Japan, the sogo shosha, or general trading companies, representing the largest Japanese forestry firms (which are in turn highly diversified) are using funds borrowed from 'affiliated banks, finance loggers, shippers, exporters, plywood manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, and final consumers (often construction companies)' (Dauvergen 1997: 33). They also 'keep resource prices low and artificially stimulate demand to maintain large trade volumes. Viewed this way, it is apparent that sogo shosha need wasteful consumption to survive' (ibid 34; see also Chew 1995). In the collective sense, a major industry with multitudinous patron-client links and which is dependent on wasteful consumption is perhaps one of the heights of irrationality.

But viewed from the political economy of ecocide, and not ecology, and from each link in the chain, it makes perfect individual sense. This is where Surendra's chapter is somewhat disappointing in that it is full of dichotomous references to 'victims' and 'wrong doers'. On the one hand, it may be refreshing to put such labels of what are too often either excluded or exonerated groups. On the other hand, it is simplification at the highest order and does not reflect the international and thickly webbed patron-client global economy and its attendant state/society/civil society linkages. Alternatives to the present development path will have to emerge from that context, whether they are imbued with fierce resentment, pragmatic compromise, or quiet acquiescence. Of course in the globalization paradigm, none of this matters. Alternatives have been neatly wrapped up and put aside.

This bothers economic nationalists on the right almost as much as it does international socialists on the left, although even the left, by and large, is at a prescriptive standstill. As Augelli and Murphy suggest, 'the recent inability of Marxist intellectuals to offer a convincing vision of the transformation of global capitalism within the lives of our children helps explain the waning significance of fundamentally egalitarian

international political movements, especially when, at the same time, convincing, coherent Keynesian, social-democratic visions of desirable, middle-run class compromises with our globalizing economy are also in short supply' (1997: 35). It is necessary, therefore, to move toward a new political economy that is infused with the challenges presented by sustainable development, and which transcends the question of globalization and the attached question of transnationalism. Explicit recognition of resistance to the former and acceptance of the latter is a promising new beginning.

But the grip of global capitalism is so pervasive that this may well be a task beyond the present abilities of the activist and scholar alike. Not only is the process of dislocation and ecocide affected by economic growth, it is also the result of economic constriction. In Asia, the economic crises resulted in millions of lost jobs, forcing urban migrants to return to the farms. Construction workers, food vendors, and petty traders who had settled in large cities such as Bangkok and Jakarta put additional pressure on rural infrastructure, such as Thailand's irrigation system and drought-affected island of Java. The privatization and environmental transformation that China could have will be influenced by China's continued integration with world markets, but any serious recession in Chinese growth will have equally destabilizing impacts (there are already some 20 million habitually migrant unemployed young men in China). The fear of slippage (the metaphor is apt for present-day modernization theorists, who are afraid of going back in time) drives governments to ensure the success of a development paradigm that comes complete with widespread costs and breeds further fears.

Science, technology, culture and ecology

Technological convergence, we are often told, is the wave of the future. Despite different cultural orientations, most leading industrial states have developed remarkably similar technologies to produce consumer goods, standardize agriculture, hurl men into space, threaten each other with destruction, and chat on the internet. Naturally, much of this convergence is simply the result of the slightly altered application of stolen, borrowed, or purchased blueprints that have crossed borders. But with time, the teleological tale tells us the universal dependence on such technologies can only blur the harmful distinctions between cultures, bringing us all onto the same page, in the same modern era. This can be seen as the mechanical end of cerebral and social evolution, as a

cyberstep toward something better and brighter, or as the shameful end of the human race.

This is an extreme version of a softer and rosier neo-liberal sales pitch, but the point should not be missed, especially in Asia, where Japan's technical prowess continues to amaze other states around the globe and where India's and China's abilities to absorb foreign technology is steadfastly impressive. Nonetheless, Asia is still faced with the exigency of technological dependence. Even Jeffrey Sachs would agree that the technological divide is instrumental in forming the new world economy, but the way towards greater equality and, therefore, overall stability (in other words, the operationalization of enlightened self-interest on the part of the endowed North) is in sharing the patents and research and development opportunities with the less fortunate. This is modernization theory, deja-vu, complete with spasmodic references to the information highway. But in no way does it contradict the general framework put forth by Robert Cox (1987) and others that capitalist hegemony is located in a structural alliance between state elites, and monopoly of capital and science.

Another issue maintaining consistent concern is that of technology transfers (and, in this age of bioprospecting agreements and information transferring, including genetic information seems as relevant). We should keep in mind the admonition that as long as the recipient-state 'lacks the capacity, locally, to deal with a technology, then the technology has been transported and not transferred' (Salomon and Lebeau 1993: 122). Nonetheless, an attempt to get Mongolia 'online' seems beyond extravagance and ventures into the perverse. Will local cultures be crushed by the electronic wave of the future? Do the technocratic/managerial approaches to environmental problems threaten the prospects of substantive democracy in the region? Is it too late to even ask these questions?

Rumours of technological convergence are, however, greatly exaggerated. Western science may be the cognitive order of the day at international symposia and within international organizations where its influence is quite evident. But religion is hardly defeated, and the instability generated by globalization is resented by hundreds of millions of wage labourers. There is no mechanical *fait accompli* at work here, but a political economy based on mass consumption and the acceptance amongst the technocrats of ecocide as a means to eventual success. Certainly, the current spate of globalization 'seems to have a momentum and a market dynamic of its own, [yet] it is no more autonomous than in its earlier phases, requiring overt and extensive

political support, whether in the form of aid conditionalities, privatization, weakening of labour, and the strengthening of enforcement mechanisms under the hegemony of the United States' (Yash, 1999: 246). A glimmer of hope for many here is the rise of counter-hegemonic utilization of the technologies of communication and surveillance. There is no doubt that advocacy groups of all stripes (some of which many of us would be reluctant to consider progressive by any stretch of that term) can use the Internet for international communications to generate fundraising and letter campaigns. The state/capital nexus may outweigh this potential and maintain its firm grip on most forms of surveillance and 'counter-terrorist' espionage, but it remains a potential source of irritation for the forces of globalization.

In the Mekong River Basin we see the continuation of a process of environmental alteration that challenges the natural ecosystem in the area and the people dependent on it for their survival. This is done with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank and contributing western governments. The 'Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance' (TERRA) and the Government of Cambodia have claimed the Russian-financed Yali Falls Dam in Vietnam. This is just 20 kilometers upstream from a larger project proposed by the ADB (on the Se San River) and has affected the livelihoods of some 20,000 people in 59 villages where water quality has become a central concern. Similar concerns have been raised about the Theun Hinboun Dam in Laos which is on the Nam Theun, one of the largest tributaries of the Mekong and which was partially funded by a US$60 million loan that is still being repaid. Reports have surfaced of problems with declines in fish catches, transportation difficulties, the flooding of vegetable gardens and the erosion of fertile riverbanks.

The Mekong Delta region is often cited as the next frontier of globalization. In 1992, the ADB created the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) economic cooperation program to integrate the economies of member countries (Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Yunnan province of China). The work of the Mekong River Commission, which replaced the Mekong Committee of 1957 and the Interim Mekong Committee of 1978, continues as well. As I have written elsewhere, such regional bodies offer much in the way of hope for co-operation amongst states in a conflict-prone zone, and they can help attract development assistance funding and technology transfers. However, this is of little benefit to local communities if they are displaced to make way for large-scale dam projects in the process (Stoett 1996). Similarly, the richness of the region is threatened by extensive alterations of the river itself.

According to the International Rivers Network, the problem from the Pak Mun Dam in Thailand is widespread in South East Asia. It affects the San Roque Dam in the Philippines, which threatens the indigenous Ibaloi peoples of Itogen and the peoples of Benguet in the mountainous Cordillera region. It affects the Bakun Dam project in Sarawak, Malaysia (postponed in 1997, but even though it appears to be moving forward again as a scaled-down version, the government has been relocating thousands of people from the area). It affects the proposed construction of a mega-dam in the Sindh province near Kalabagh, Pakistan.

In India, of course, the Sardar Sarovar and the Maheshwar Dams are still in construction and are still being protested against by the millions to be affected. The World Bank has pulled out of the funding of the one billion dollar Arun III hydroelectric project in eastern Nepal. There is still a tendency, as decried in Surendra's earlier discussions of the Chico, the Nam Chaon and the Silent Valley projects with the opposition movements, to equate energy with electricity (1995: 87). But such huge energy demands would not be possible without the pressures and opportunities of global markets. Another point that must be mentioned here, and that Surendera does not cover, relates to conflicts amongst states over resource acquisition, a theme with links to both ecocide and democracy. Such conflict can be driven by immediate consumption and often has ethnic connotations. But it can also involve actors and actions stimulated primarily by the global marketplace, as, for example, the fight for oil demonstrates.

In Asia this may be most visible in the case of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea where Brunei, the PRC, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam have all put forth claims to sovereign jurisdiction. Malaysia and the Philippines claim sections of the islands according to stipulations in the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), whereas China, Taiwan and Vietnam claim the entire chain through historical right of discovery. There are a number of factors making the island chain attractive to local players including the 2.5 billion tons of fish, the value of a sea lane between Asia and the world and a present geopolitical weakness of China which could be a future strength (Catley and Keliat 1997: 47). The largest prize, however, seems to be the hydrocarbon deposits as Vietnam has been an oil-exporting state since 1988, and all the other states are well aware of the value of oil. The threat of future violence between these countries may be tempered by intra-regional diplomacy, but it is too early to tell. Similar conflicts may erupt over shared waterways, mountains, forests, fisheries, and other sources of both income and subsistence.

There is nothing new about this tendency, and in fact, such conflicts can be seen as the territorial stuff of traditional international relations, though they have given birth to a new subfield linking environmental scarcities with violent conflict (Homer-Dixon 1994). However, they will contribute to the continued militarization of the region, despite rosy predictions that integration into the world economy will make states such as China, or Indonesia, less prone to be militarily equipped. Where warfare does take place, we can expect, at the least, low-intensity ecocide to accompany it. This can occur in an interstate context, or in an intrastate context (we alluded to Indonesia and East Timor above, and many would include counter-rebel activity in the Philippines and elsewhere in this category).

However, one might argue that the structural adjustment programs imposed after the currency crisis of 1997 will exacerbate ecocidal conditions as well, since states are further pressured to produce primary commodities for export. This is not, however, unique to the post-1997 situation. Shrimp farming, described in some detail by Surendra (2000: 3) provides a fascinating example of the intensification of resource exploitation. In its current form, this practice is done at such speed that there is little time for the affected marshland to recover. Yet, prior to the flooding of the Southeast Asian capital markets, shrimp farming assumed a different character of patient harmony with the flow of the Mekong flooding cycle (which was also described as a threat to development by the Mekong Delta's primary 'developers'). Though the crisis of 1997–98 may have lead to an increased awareness of the value of long-term, sustainable resources not based on fast capital and speculation, it appears to have had the opposite effect, encouraging further desperation amongst wage earners and short-term thinking amongst investors.

Related to this, we must also consider the immense mass of human migrant labour that is driven to ever-heightened risks to achieve employment security. In radical cases, we see the steadily rising resort to human smuggling as a means to provide labour to foreign markets, which represents on the one hand, genuine attempts by refugees to flee war zones and impossible political environments and, on the other hand a calculated effort to ensure cheap labour supplies in relatively upscale economies. But we should not forget the impact of the larger-scale, yet less publicized, daily movements of labourers who, through privatization, land degradation, or developmental authoritarianism (or quite often, a volatile mixture of all three) are forced to engage in short-term cash cropping, to settle in ecologically sensitive areas, and

who face further ethnically complex confrontations in the process or processes.

Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable. More than seven million Asians work outside their own country and send foreign currency home to aid their families. They are often subject to inhumane working conditions and sexual exploitation. Yet, with the temporary nature of the economy, many are sent home as excess labour. Of course, all the above is at best a gross overgeneralization, and I gladly leave it to Asian specialists to arrive at more concrete conclusions. It may be the case that we have yet to see the lessons from both the currency crisis and the ecological crisis filter into current practice. Further, hope remains that the overarching concept of environmental security (which can be said to form the first pillar of all life) can form the basis of what John Rawls refers to as an 'overlapping consensus' (1993): a normative theme upon which even those with diverse material interests can converge. But it would seem premature to entertain such hopes at this stage.

Global governance, democracy and civil society

The theme of global governance shall be given, admittedly, a short shrift here. This is because there is none. Certainly, there are international regimes which, bolstered primarily by a few western powers, have various levels of influence on the affairs of states and their citizens. In the environmental field, these are numerous and infamously troubled. However, there is nothing approaching an empirically identifiable hierarchy that even aspires to formal global governance, and attempts to establish such a system have little legitimacy in most parts of the world. Although transnational solidarity amongst those affected by industrialization has emerged, it would be equally phantasmal to speak of a civil society 'organized' at a global level even if one were to assume that civil society could be organized in the first place (its identification may rest on its inherent lack of organization). Even seemingly irregular treatments of the traditionally state-centric field of international politics are dependent on a fairly realist-liberal approach to world politics, albeit with an innovative nod to civil society (Wapner 1996). The state system is, of course, evolving, but it is not immediately dissolving either. The concept of civil society, meanwhile, has been subject to detailed treatment elsewhere, and one may argue with Alejandro Colas that it holds great promise for the international relations theory (1997).

On a critical note, however, there is a discernable tendency to equate NGO activity with civil society, irrespective of the rich philosophical tradition of the latter. This is problematic because it reduces civil society, with all of its complicated and often contradictory impulses and imperatives, to a singular form of representation. It also frees NGOs from much critical evaluation, since they are so frequently assumed to be progressive organizations operating outside of the profit motive and free from the grip of the state/capital nexus. Indeed, the vital and progressive work in which such actors engage could be threatened by attaching their role (or place) in world politics to such a vague, even confusing, term. Rather than connoting a truly transformative phenomenon, it could be decried by opposing forces as a merely decorative mantle adopted by the self-righteous (Stoett & Teitelbaum 2000).

International campaigns can attract newspaper headlines, but the objects of the campaigns have every right to question the role of NGOs in the process. According to William Fisher, NGOs became a symbol for the struggle for local autonomy against forced displacement associated with state-directed and internationally funded development (Fisher 1995: 7). Indeed, there is a wide coalition of NGOs supporting the Narmada Bachao Andolan, and 'large-scale economic development projects have a unity of identity and a structure of control that makes them ready focal points for local and transnational mobilization to a much greater extent than more incremental or diffuse sources of equally profound and disruptive changes. The actual consequences of a court victory, a policy change, or cancellation of a project are not necessarily experienced in the same way by the local populace as by more distant NGOs who can declare the battle over and move on' (Kingsbury 1999: 367–8).

Further, the implication that NGOs hold legitimate claim to the space of political representation is in itself problematic. NGOs are engaged in activism in a particular sector of concern, although some of them do combine varied interests with coalition formation. But to argue, as some western NGOs often do, that they represent the voice of those affected by environmental degradation or other manifestations of the political economy of ecocide described in this paper opens them up to accusations of voice appropriation which is hardly a thing a good postmodernist activist would want to incur. In many cases, such as in Bangladesh, analysts have argued that development NGOs acquire goals that are tightly intertwined with those of the state (White 1999; Edwards & Hulme 1996). Funding distribution and competing priorities amongst NGOs can even lead to what one analyst, evaluating their

impact in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve, calls the 'Balkanization of the landscape' (Sundberg 1998).

Of course, it would be much more mistaken to assume international financial institutions and, for that matter, United Nations agencies, have any right to claim legitimate representation either. Surely, they are in fact, despite the best of intentions of thousands of their employees, constrained by the needs of dominant economic states in terms of what they do and how far they may go in conceptualizing concrete political change.

Conclusion

Beyond the need to thank Professor Surendra for such an engaging chapter to read, I will conclude with five general statements which I believe link many of the central themes of both chapters and point the way toward future research and policy directions.

Firstly, things are getting worse, and we must avoid the cozy propaganda telling us otherwise. The rhetoric of globalization is often difficult to recognize, but it must be separated from local and international descriptions and analyses of what is happening on the ground in Asia and elsewhere. The elusive promise of trickle-down economics has not, contrary to what often seems like academic opinion, been put to rest. Rather, it continues to drive the development agenda, especially in the export-oriented states. The currency crises have done nothing to change this, except perhaps to force a short-term caution on speculators and Asian banks; and the adjustment programs brought in by the ADB and IMF following the crises rely on the same essential foundation. While the potentially infectious currency crisis ignited world attention, the ecological crises currently unfolding (as both human and environmental disasters, if we need to separate the two) struggle to gain recognition. This leads to the next point.

Secondly, the situation is urgent. People are dying as garbage dumps in Manila crush the marginalized. Farmers are losing their livelihoods and are being forced to further aggravate urban pressures. Biodiversity is being reduced daily, and many species are lost forever due to short-term thinking. The toxic legacy of past military production and destruction is still affecting newborns. Sensitive ecosystems, such as marshlands, are under continued strains. It is essential that we keep this urgency in mind, both from the perspective of thinking about sustainability, and putting pressure on Western governments to reduce their own contribution – through support of adjustment programs,

investment in military regimes, reluctance to identify rights abuses, support for engineering firms and others benefiting from large-dam construction, and other factors – to ecocide. Asians and Westerners should continue to explore pathways to demonstrate and utilize solidarity with affected groups.

Thirdly, institutions, both national and international, can offer only limited help in the task of alleviating damage. It would be just as foolhardy to rely on governments as it would to rely on corporations. The process of democratization has been limited to the opening of political space that does not interfere significantly with the privatization of the commons and the increase in world trade as have been seen in the past few decades. Despite Surendra's selective optimism and the healthy prospect of reunification in the Koreas, etc., one should not be over-expectant here. Substantive democracy will require a much longer period of incubation; on the other hand, it may already exist in many local contexts. Surendra makes reference to not only ecosystem sustainability, but also to social sustainability. The two concepts are immediately interdependent, but are both troubling as well. Change is natural and inevitable; in many cases the last thing people need is social sustainability as the present order is destroying their habitat and culture. Ecosystem sustainability, meanwhile, can be construed as suggestive of the type of naturalistic first-world tokenism that Surendra decries elsewhere. Western NGOs must be especially careful to avoid such a caricature.

Fourthly, civil society remains, at best, a contested concept. NGOs have agendas derived from those that run them; though many have and maintain grassroots identities and relatively open decision-making patterns, they are also subject to hierarcharization, a process one can expect given the systems in which they interact and seek to change. The iron law of oligarchy has not subsided with the age of the entrepreneurial NGO. On the other hand, what choice is there but reaching for the impact, if possible, of the organized representatives of various groups, as in the 'People's Assembly in Thailand'? These patterns of survival strategies, reactions to what remain largely exploitative and imperialistic trends, remain the best operational definition of development available to us. Again, however, we cannot expect such strategies to eschew violence, nor can we expect state authorities to avoid it.

Lastly, the disconnection between the world of financiers and government technocrats on the one hand, and the hundreds of millions of urban or rural Asians employed in wage labour or the informal sector on the other, is extreme. This can only be exacerbated as the enclosure

of previous commons proceeds, especially in China, where, as in Russia, we witness 'what amounts to the greatest enclosure movement in history – virtually a continent-wide expropriation of social property, far surpassing in scope the historic enclosure movements of England and Europe of centuries past' (Smith 1999: 255). It is quite uncertain that formal democracy can bridge this gap, and equally improbable that, in the short-term, environmental issues can provide the necessary common interest. In the long-term, the latter may occur, but by then it may be too late to reverse environmental decline.

The pursuit of ecological justice is linked inextricably with the development of a substantive democracy, but it will also involve active, and often armed, resistance to development projects that threaten entire ecosystems and cultures. To argue otherwise is wishful thinking. And, in response, states will be employed to crush opposition, as has been the case around the world and throughout history. There is hope that concerted and intense scrutiny by the international community can help to avoid the bloodshed, but this will necessitate continued pressure on western governments and financial institutions to respect the rights of those who, in many cases, can be exploited for the former's benefit. I am reluctant to end on a note of pessimism, and even more unwilling to pass final judgement on the future of environmental politics in Asia; this is best left for those who live, work, and study there. Yet my reluctance is tempered by an assessment of the overwhelming odds against changes to the prevalent political economy of Asia which will continue to be subject to bursts and busts of growth, rapid and virtually uncontrolled industrialization, and a compounding of the severity of environmental problems and dislocation of massive populations. The survival of resistance and its diffusion through transnational solidarity may be taken as a hopeful sign. But it is necessary to avoid hyperoptimism at this stage; in the years to come globalization will continue to divide and conquer Asia and pockets of resistance will be severely tested – if not eliminated.

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10

Formal Democracy and Its Alternatives in the Philippines: Parties, Elections and Social Movements

Joel Rocamora

Introduction

The Philippines has the most persistently undemocratic democracy in Asia. Except for the period of dictatorship under Ferdinand Marcos between 1972 and 1986, the Philippines has had a functioning democracy since independence from the United States in 1946.[1] At the same time, a small group of powerful families has dominated politics and kept the economic benefits of power to themselves. Many analysts use the modifier 'elite' when referring to Philippine democracy. Effective participation by citizens outside of elections is limited. Unlike Malaysia and Singapore (much more obviously unlike the military dictatorship in Burma) with their Internal Security Acts, the Philippine state does not impose too many formal limits to the self-organization of disadvantaged groups. But a combination of bureaucratic rules and informal means including violence continues to make organizing difficult; without effective popular pressure, government is generally not accountable.

While labour and peasant organizations remain weak, other civil society organizations, NGOs and new social movement groups including women and environmental groups are strong and continue to build significant political capability. Initiatives to build new kinds of political parties come from this section of Philippine society. They also constitute a strong base of support for initiatives to reform Philippine politics; to transform a weak, incompetent government dominated by rent-seeking elites.

Democratization and international capital

We need to locate the process of democratization in the Philippines in the context of contemporary democratization discourse. The main

source of 'democratization' discourse in the 1990s are multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the OECD and Western governments led by the United States. Of the multilateral banks, the Asian Development Bank is a latecomer. Given these sources, the 'good governance' (GD) discourse cannot be understood outside of the interests and international agendas of international capitalism and the national and multi-national public institutions that support them.

Although 'democracy' has always been part of the ideological arsenal of international capital, 'democratization' discourse in the 1990s has been strongly influenced by post-Cold War conditions. The removal of socialism as an alternative has led to all manner of Western triumphalism, the grossest being Fukuyama's 'end of history' conceit. Western style liberal democracy, Fukuyama asserts, is the final goal of political evolution (Fukuyama 1989). Therefore, history has ended.

Another source of Western pressure on governments of the South to democratize is the acceleration of Western penetration of the economies of the South usually labelled globalization. To facilitate this thrust, specific elements in the Western conception of liberal democracy have been pushed, most importantly, its anti-state bias and the equation of democracy with market. Trade and other forms of liberalization have been packaged as 'democratization'. Since governments are corrupt and inefficient, the argument goes that democracy can be advanced only if many of the economic functions of government are privatized – turned over to the market.

The most important reason for problematizing governance and democratization discourse is that it is being pushed by international capitalism, by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the governments of advanced capitalist countries led by the United States. After supporting authoritarian regimes throughout the world from Somoza to Marcos to Mobutu for decades, why has international capitalism shifted to support for democracy? Why is democratization in countries of the South in the interest of international capitalism?

The attempt to equate democracy with capitalism by neo-liberal ideologues is only one part of the problem. Surely, history will 'end' much later than Francis Fukuyama. Arguing against the proposition that markets lead to democracy should not be too difficult given the many examples of markets prospering under various forms of authoritarianism in the past and today. The opposite direction of the argument, that democracy requires markets, demands more attention because it leads to the issue of state building under conditions of accelerating globalization under the aegis of capitalism.

The question might be posed in the following manner: if globalization is the current stage of the expansion of capitalist relations into countries of the South, what is it about the particulars of this expansion that makes democratisation the preferred political strategy of international capitalism? Is it part of the anti-state aspect of neo-liberalism? Does movement away from authoritarian states in the South mean weaker governments? Or is international capitalism mainly interested in moving against protectionist, nationalist ruling class fractions to enable modernizing elites to come to power and make way for the expansion of capitalist relations into new areas of the economies of the South?

We might begin to answer these extremely complex questions with some initial clarifications. To start with, the kind of democracy that is being pushed by the North is very specific. It is formal, constitutional, and Western-style democracy. It is a form of democracy that separates politics from the structures of power in the economy. Ideologically, it is very much part of the anti-state aspect of neo-liberalism. Harking back to Lockian arguments, but with a more modern Thatcherite patina, democracy here is understood in the simplest of ways as less government. In its academic garb, the argument is that you can have democracy, but only if you leave the economy alone. For a foreign investor, a crucial condition to assure relatively free entry and exit and the least possible intervention in profit-making while in country.

It is no accident that the intensification of Western demands for democratization go hand-in-hand with demands for trade liberalization, privatization and financial and other forms of deregulation. The latter can more easily be read as part of the process of opening up the South for Northern investment and trade. What is less often pointed out is that an anti-state interpretation of democracy comes down to (roughly) the same thing. If you are going to demand changes in economic policy with distinct, often upper class losers, does it not make sense to garb your demands in the glittering raiment of democracy?

Here it is important to make a distinction between democratization in former socialist states and in countries in the non-socialist Third World. In the latter, especially in the relatively newly independent countries of Africa, ruling elites tend to be economically weak. In the face of more powerful economic competitors, whether those from former colonial masters or those brought in as part of colonization such as Chinese and/or Indian business groups, control over the government is seen as one way for ruling elites to make up for economic weakness.

The process of state formation in many countries in the South, whether those decolonized in the nineteenth century in Latin America or only in the 1960s in Africa, created a situation where ruling elites tended to come out of the civilian and military bureaucracies created by colonial governments. Economically weak, bureaucracy-based elites working in the unsettled political conditions of post-colonial countries often easily availed of authoritarian means. This authoritarian tendency was buttressed by external players, often American, anxious to prevent Marxist liberation movements from winning.

In the 1990s, democratization in the South might best have been seen in relation to the convergence of the collapse of the socialist bloc, the renewed thrust towards trade liberalization under the auspices of the World Trade Organization, and the emerging markets phenomenon. With the collapse of the USSR and the socialist bloc, one of the major reasons for Western support of authoritarian regimes in the South also disappeared. To make way for accelerated entry of goods and services, most importantly financial services, protectionist and authoritarian regimes had to be removed or forced to democratize.

We might now ask a question posed earlier: does movement away from authoritarian governments in the South mean weaker government? From the vantage point of the West, why then is the anti-authoritarian thrust of Western pressure accompanied by governance programs meant seemingly paradoxically to strengthen government capacity?

The seeming paradox exists if we look only at the ideology of Western-style democratisation. If we look at the process from the vantage point of the requirements of international capitalism, there is no contradiction. Authoritarian governments in the South have, in fact, tended to be controlled by elite groups based in agro-mineral exports or in manufacturing built up during the heyday of import-substitution industrialization in the 1950s and 1960s. The modernizing elites in these countries are in the financial sector or in import-dependent non-traditional exports. These democratizing elites, not surprisingly are also the class fractions most needed by international capital as local partners in the ongoing acceleration of globalization.

Whether authoritarian or not, governments in the South also tended to have limited governmental capacity; in the current political science jargon, they were 'weak states'. For foreign business, this creates problems in both the political and economic realm. Weak governments also have weak capacity to assure political stability, a major requirement of investors. At a minimum, governments have to have a monopoly over

the legitimate uses of violence to assure peace and order and end armed challenges to the government.

Transparency, one of the most important elements of the GD thrust might best be understood from the vantage point of the explosive expansion of international capital flows, a key element in globalization. The velocity of these financial flows is such that fund managers require up-to-the-minute data on monetary and fiscal accounts. Authoritarian governments – usually accompanied by 'crony capitalism', by cozy relationships between government officials and their business clients – require hiding or often doctoring this kind of data.

Two current concerns of Northern governance programs in the South, decentralization and anti-corruption, can also be understood best from the vantage point of foreign investors. Decentralization programs need not be seen as necessarily weakening central governments if they strengthen the capacity of local government units to implement central government programs. This is particularly true for government economic services such as infrastructure. In the same vein, corruption is seen as an added cost for investors that distort local factor markets.

For our purposes, there are three major intellectual biases in Western discourse on democracy that affect the way we look at politics in countries of the South. First, formal democracy, not popular (participatory) democracy, is the goal. The second related point is the equation of democracy with capitalism, and the restriction of the government's role in the economy. Lastly, external factors do not play a significant causal role in politics in the South.

In a world increasingly dominated by the international capitalist system, national politics in the South – or in any other part of the world for that matter – cannot be properly understood in national isolation. External factors, ranging from IMF-World Bank conditionalities, to foreign military assistance, to more direct forms of foreign military, political and economic intervention, are often decisive in determining the outcome of socio-political conflicts in countries of the South.

The roots of Philippine politics

From the time of the municipal governments formed by the Americans at the turn of the century through various constitutional and extra-constitutional changes to the present, Philippine politics has operated within institutional parameters limiting and shaping interaction to factions of the elite within a presidential form of government. The most important aspect of the Philippine political system is elite domination.

It is crucial to point this out first because it relates directly to two characteristics of the political system, its ineffectiveness, what analysts call a weak state, and the low level of effective political participation.

The dominant patron-client framework of analysis of Philippine politics masks elite dominance. In particular, much of Western writing often describes Philippine politics in terms of patron-client ties, a pattern of reciprocal exchange between superiors and inferiors that maintains society in a state of equilibrium. More recent studies, however, especially by historians and anthropologists who have an easier time escaping the theoretical limits of mainstream political science, paint a different picture. 'Instead of a mythic past of village amity, social relations in La Carlota were marked, *ab initio*, by systematic violence and conflict. Although some planters may have cleared unoccupied lands, several expropriated vast tracts from peasant pioneers through a combination of fraud, corruption, and violence' (McCoy 1991: 109).

It is not unique to the Philippines that power groups work to influence government. That is what politics is all about anywhere in the world. What has kept the Philippine state weak is that no one class has been strong enough to bend the state to its will. Instead, our upper classes are divided into class fractions dependent on government. Their competing demands on government have made it impossible to formulate and implement a coherent economic development policy or to develop political institutions capable of providing a reliable regulatory framework for the economy.

The underdeveloped and dependent character of the economy, especially at the time our political institutions were given their characteristic shape in the 1930s, provides some of the explanations. Subsistence agriculture and share tenancy do not provide adequate structures of capital accumulation. Commerce and trade were in the hands of the Chinese. Because the central government controlled access to export agriculture, and could generate financial resources, it became the main target of local elites.

McCoy's description of the Lopez family,

> … illustrates the symbiosis between the weak Philippine state and the strength of the country's dominant political families. A contradictory pairing of the state's broad economic powers with the executive's role as a political patron has made rent seeking an imperative for major Filipino families. Through their reliance upon rents, these families can exploit the state's financial resources and regulatory

> powers to create optimum conditions for the growth of their corporations … Even if they are not so inclined, elite families are forced to cultivate alliances with the state, particularly its executive branch, if only to defend their established interests from unfair competition by ambitious courtiers. On the other side of this symbiosis, successive Philippine presidents have used their discretionary authority over the state resources to punish enemies and reward allies. By denying established elites access to rents, an administration can quickly reduce the wealth of a family. Similarly, a president can create vast wealth for a favoured few by granting a de facto monopoly or approving low-interest loans (McCoy 1995: 517).

Indonesia and Thailand have similarly fragmented upper classes, but they have powerful state institutions that have successfully controlled business interests and harnessed them to developmental goals. The presidential form of government (including Marcos' fake parliamentary government), which we have had since 1935, perpetuates the weakness of the state and exacerbates divisions in our upper classes. Without stable political parties, presidential candidates have to piece together coalitions of provincial politicians to win elections. Without programmatic coherence, political parties cannot facilitate the formulation of long-term economic policy. They merely act as brokers for deals with the bureaucracy.

The other side of the coin of elite dominance is a low level of effective political participation. It is important to emphasize the modifier effective because the high turnout in elections might mislead observers into believing that political participation levels are high. It's not just that popular participation in policy decision-making is low, Philippine elections cannot really be seen as models of political participation despite high voter turnouts. People participate in Philippine elections for the same reason they go to cockfights; it is highly entertaining as spec-tator sports. The apparatus of exclusion of popular groups from the formal political system extends to legal and extra-legal limits on their ability to organize themselves. These instruments were sharpened during the long years of martial rule under Marcos and justified as counter-insurgency.

Another aspect of Philippine politics is the prevalence of violence. Political violence is a function of the central state's failure to secure a monopoly over the legitimate uses of violence. 'Unlike the Manila elites who operate within a culture of metropolitan civility, provincial families are forced to engage in systemic political violence either as

agents or opponents. With its competition over public lands, precincts, and transportation routes, provincial politics involves a zero-sum struggle for hegemony over an electoral or commercial territory that encourages organized violence' (McCoy 1995: 21).

John Sidel characterizes Philippine politics as 'bossism' as a 'sophisticated form of brigandage'. He points out that 'an examination of the complex processes through which inequality, indebtedness, landlessness, and poverty are created has highlighted how so-called patrons have – through predatory and heavily coercive forms of primitive accumulation and monopoly rent-capitalism – expropriated the natural and human resources of the archipelago from the broad mass of the population, thereby generating and sustaining the scarcity, insecurity, and dependency which underpins their rule as bosses' (Sidel 1995: 509).

The weakness of the Philippine state is also manifested in the contradictory character of local-central government relations. The Philippines' unitary and presidential form of government is, by most measures, a centralized government. But because the central government has not had a dominant ruling class behind it and has been either formally or informally dominated by foreign powers, the central government has, historically, been a weak body. Among other things, the ability of the central government to impose its writ on local governments has been, in practice limited.

Most local politics in this century can be characterized as competition among local elites for who would be first in line for central government largesse. Tax collection is centralized and customs levies, the other main source of government revenue, are collected by the central government. Until recently, local government units had minimal taxing powers. The structure of the bureaucracy was highly centralized. But because of the weakness of political parties, the President and other national government officials are dependent on local politicians to organize votes during national elections. Local politicians dominate the national legislature, especially the powerful Lower House.

This pattern of contradictory local-central government relations can be traced back to the colonial period. 'The tension between centralism and localism has historical roots. Although the Spanish colonial administration established a central government in Manila, the small size of the colonial bureaucracy prevented the central government from having an effective presence in the hinterlands of the colony, leaving the exercise of authority to the local indigenous *principalia* (the native aristocracy) and the friars' (Doronila 1992: 90).

Americans also played a major role in developing the institutional setting for central-local government relations. Where the Spanish had violently resisted the attempts of a nascent Filipino elite to be integrated into national colonial structures of power, the Americans carefully orchestrated this integration. Because few Filipinos held economic power that stretched beyond the local it made sense that the Americans began the process with municipal elections. Provincial elections became occasions for coalitions of municipal elites. By the time a national legislative body was formed, the coalitional pyramid, which became the characteristic structure of Philippine politics, had been set.

The centralizing role of the American governor general was replicated in the powerful presidency tailored to the requirements of Commonwealth president Manuel Quezon. It is easy to understand why the form of government developed under American colonial tutelage was presidential. '… the institution of the presidency in the new presidential democracy inaugurated in 1935 … was, in many respects, an institutional replica of the office of the governor general with its wide ranging executive powers. These vast executive powers were almost literally transferred, with little contest, to the Philippine presidency by the drafters of the 1935 constitution' (Bolongaita 1995: 85).

The political system established by the Americans reached its definitive form in the Commonwealth government of 1935. Although several changes were made in the course of the next decades, this is the form of government and the political party system that has survived to this day. There was a short interregnum during the years of the Marcos dictatorship (1972–1986), but the pre-1972 political system was re-established with the approval of the 1987 constitution. The various elements of this system include the presidential form of government, the contradictory character of local-central government relations, and for our purposes, a party system anchored on coalitions of local elites and shifting membership.

Elections and political parties

In many ways, elections constitute the central political act for both the elite and the people. The electoral system is anchored on a presidential form of government, single member district constituencies for the national legislature, and 'first past the post' system for all elective positions. The zero sum character of electoral contests in this system raises the highly personal stakes of election contests. Without effective political parties, families and clans have become the effective political units

in local politics. Since victory and defeat in elections determines the economic fate and honour of the clan, the use of all available means to gain victory including violence and fraud is understandable.

Since people know from experience that elections are mainly occasions for choosing between one member of the elite and another, there is pronounced cynicism towards the process. Why not make a little bit of money by selling your vote when election results do not directly affect you. Since politicians do not have programs that they follow, voting on the basis of establishing personal, clientelistic connections become the other major criteria for choice.

Strangely enough, Philippine political parties are often defined by what they are not. Following the conventional Western definition, the Philippine Omnibus Election Code of 1985 says, 'a political party is an organized group of persons pursuing the same ideology, political ideas or platforms of government' (Leones & Moraleda 1996: 2). But nobody would accuse Philippine political parties of being such an animal. Philippine political scientists cannot even agree whether the Philippines has a multi-party system, a two-party system or even, as some have seriously suggested, a one-and-a-half party system (Tancangco 1988: 87–89).

Because Philippine political parties are so organizationally indeterminate, it is difficult to analyse them on the basis of their internal development. More than parties in the West, it is more fruitful to analyse the development of Philippine political parties in relation to other institutions. Philippine political parties cannot be understood outside of their relation to the Philippines' presidential form of government, or the nature of local – central government relations and elections. Most importantly, they are best understood in relation to political factions and political clans.

Carl Lande, perhaps the most influential student of Philippine politics in the last four decades, defines Philippine political parties in terms of:

> members of the (Philippine political) elite, ranging themselves under the banners of two national parties, compete with each other for elective offices. Each is supported by his kinsmen, both rich and poor, by his non-kinsmen clients, and by whoever else among the 'little people' of his community can be induced, by offers of material or other rewards, to vote for him. The two rival parties in each province, in short, are held together by dyadic patron-client relationships extending from great and wealthy political leaders in each

> province down to lesser gentry politicians in the towns, down further to petty leaders in each village, and down finally to the clients of the latter: the common tao (Lande 1969: 156).

Filipino sociologist Randolph David's definition goes further than Lande's politically neutral anthropological definition.

> 'Political parties are therefore nothing more than the tools used by the elites in a personalistic system of political contests. The elites themselves do not form stable or exclusive blocs or factions. Their boundaries are provisional and porous at any point in time. They revolve around political stars rather than around ideologies. They nurture networks of followers and supporters who are dependent on them for money, jobs, favors and political access, not party members loyal to party principles and alert to any perceived betrayal of party causes' (David 1994: 24–25).

Lande's and David's descriptions, it should be noted, are separated by some three decades, three constitutions, and by at least fourteen years of Marcos' dictatorial regime in the 1970s and 1980s. The period before Marcos' declaration of martial law in 1972 was marked by the dominance of two major parties, and the period after 1986, by what might be characterized as a multi-party system. But the parties remain apparently the same.

The most important characteristic of Philippine political parties is that they are parties of the elite. In some senses, parties anywhere in the world are elite formations whether one defines elite in functional terms, as those who lead, or in sociological terms, as those who hold economic and political power. But many parties at least attempt to organize regularized support from a broader segment of the population or to institutionalise discourse-justifying mal-distribution of economic and political power. These efforts result in more or less stable membership, regularized patterns of interaction within and between parties, and characteristic forms of ideological or political self-definition.

In contrast, Philippine political parties are unabashed old boys clubs. There are non-elite individuals, mostly men, who identify with one or another party, but all of them are followers of elite individuals. These individuals are linked together in shifting coalitions from barangays (the lowest government unit) all the way to the national government in Manila. 'Philippine political parties are two vast national coalitions of local political organizations, bound together by the vertical hierar-

chy of public offices and their rewards and the social hierarchy of wealth' (Shantz 1972: 113).

This electoral system, and the actual practice of elections have been one of the most important factors shaping political parties. The intensely personalized character of parties derive partly from the fact that individual candidates are elected in a 'first past the post' system. 'During elections, it is not so much the political parties that are the real mobilizing organizations but the candidate's electoral machinery and network of relatives, friends, political associates and allies' (David 1994:1). Because at the base of the electoral system, the municipality, the power and status of families are at stake, all means are availed of including cheating and violence to achieve victory.

Although elections were held during the Spanish colonial period and during the short period of revolutionary government at the turn of the nineteenth century, the experience of elections most relevant to the current situation trace back to the American period starting in 1900. The elections for municipal officials in 1900 were limited to those towns already pacified by the occupation army. Elections were by viva voce. Although broader than elections during the Spanish period that were limited to former officials, the right to suffrage was, at this time, confined to a very small, elite segment of the population.

Over the course of the next decades, the electorate expanded. Property requirements were lifted; the age limit was lowered first to 21 in 1935, then in the 1970s to 18; reading and writing English or Spanish was replaced with simple literacy liberally interpreted to mean ability to write one's name and that of candidates; then in 1937, women were given the right to suffrage. The number of registered voters rose steadily from 123,294 in 1905, to 1.6 million in 1935 to 32 million in 1992.

These changes in the character of elections provide a useful way to conceptualize changes in the nature of Philippine political parties. The increase in the size of the electorate, combined with urbanization and extensive radio and television use, has changed the way election campaigns are organized and, therefore, also the character of political parties. Elections during the Spanish period provide a kind of prehistory of Philippine political parties. There was no need to organize parties because elections were no more than discussions among officials, incumbents and former officials.

Elections in the early American period did not significantly expand the electorate in quantitative terms. But while the expansion may not seem like much from a contemporary vantage point, by expanding

elections outside of the circle of officials, the Americans brought other sections of the elite into the circle of governance and began the process of shaping the elite into an instrument of local rule. Political parties were formed at this time, but electoral campaigning was mainly a matter of organizing elite factions.

Where elections during the Spanish and early American colonial periods were limited to the elite, once the electorate broke elite boundaries, elites now had to convince non-elites to vote for them. At first, patron-client ties and deeply embedded traditions of social deference were sufficient. The organizational requirements of electoral campaigning remained simple. This allowed elites to concentrate on the task of building factional coalitions in ascending order of complexity as elections moved from municipal, to provincial, to the national level.

This process was facilitated by the fact that differentiation in the elite at this time was not very complex. Most of the elite were landowners so differentiation focused on geographic representation and whether they were exporters of agricultural products or not. Combined with Quezon's organizational skills, this was a major reason for the dominance of the *Nacionalista Party*. This sociological situation changed radically after the Second World War.

The Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945 weakened the Philippine elite by disrupting the colonial economy. Landlord control over their tenants and farm workers was attenuated because landlords moved out of the countryside and their collaboration with the Japanese occupation army impaired their moral hold on the peasantry. New elite factions, especially guerrilla leaders, moved into this power vacuum. Although the returning Americans facilitated the political exoneration of pre-war elites, many guerrilla leaders were able to consolidate their positions through electoral politics.

The more complex differentiation in the elite after World War II complicated the organizational task of political parties. Where factional dynamics could be accommodated within the *Nacionalista Party* before, a two party system came into place during the first postwar elections in 1946. *Nacionalista Party* leader Manuel Roxas bolted from the party and formed the Liberal Party. Pre-war leader Sergio Osmena allied the *Nacionalista Party* with guerrilla leaders in the Democratic Alliance.

The next stage in the development of political parties was set by the candidacy of guerrilla leader Ramon Magsaysay in the presidential elections of 1953. Where campaigning for national positions in the past had been mostly a matter of negotiations among provincial elites,

Magsaysay went directly to the people during his campaign. With the help of the American CIA, Magsaysay formed the Magsaysay for President Movement and traveled extensively throughout the country. In the process, he undercut patron-client ties already weakened during the Japanese occupation.

The Magsaysay campaign in 1953 generated significant changes in political parties. Where municipal party organizations were relatively simple in pre-war years, at this time, elite families began constructing municipal political machines. 'The new faction was a machine, an organization devoted primarily to the political support of its leader and the maintenance of its members through the distribution of immediate, concrete, and individual rewards to them. Closely related to these changes was an increase in the importance of provincial and national considerations and a decline in the importance of local considerations in shaping the faction's character and its actions in all arenas' (Machado 1974: 525).

The continuing rapid growth of the electorate, combined with the expansion of mass media in the 1960s amplified the impact of changes brought about by the Magsaysay campaign. National campaigns now had to be organized on the basis of the segmentation of the vote into what could be called the 'controlled vote', mobilized by local party leaders, and the 'market vote', which required increasingly elaborate campaigns adding media strategies to Magsaysay-style barnstorming.

> It is the imagery of the urban-based national media that fuels a national campaign. Rural leaders frequently try to anticipate the direction of change in order to be associated with leaders who have strong images as national candidates ... Many national politicians pay vast sums of money to representatives of the mass media for a good image, not to win votes but to bandwagon sub-elites concerned about their future successes. Once the tide begins to flow, the national politician assumes judicious urban financiers will follow (Shantz 1972: 97).

These developments led to significant change in political parties. The vastly increased financial requirements of national campaigns strengthened the national leadership vis-à-vis local party leaders because the amounts required could only be raised from sources at the center, especially in Manila. Since campaign costs for local contests also increased, local candidates became more dependent on national party leaders for their own campaigns.

Marcos accelerated this process even more. There was a geometric jump in campaign expenses during the 1969 election campaign due mainly to Marcos. In addition, '… the Marcos administration sought to broaden the flow of resources and executive contacts beneath the congressmen and into the municipalities, minimizing its dependence upon the political brokers in the legislative branch who have historically proven to be such a disappointment to incumbent presidents seeking re-election' (Shantz 1972: 148). The centralizing effect of these moves culminated in Marcos' declaration of martial law in 1972 when he cut out Congress altogether.

Because no elections were held for many years, combined with Marcos' monopoly of political power, the pre-martial law political parties were severely weakened. Even after Marcos' downfall in 1986, both the *Nacionalista Party* and the Liberal Party never recovered their power and dynamism. Marcos built his own political party, the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (New Society Movement), creating a virtual one-party state. It was not until the last years of the Marcos period that other political parties such as UNIDO arose to challenge KBL in elections.

The downfall of Marcos and the Presidency of Corazon Aquino generated a lot of hope for a more democratic political process. 'The increasing recognition of the limits of elite-oriented politics and the emergence of mass-based popular democracy is reflected in the realignment of the various electoral parties and the opening up of a broader democratic sphere under the Aquino government. With the ouster of Marcos, the dynamics of the pre-revolution political terrain have been fundamentally altered' (Tancangco 1988: 110). Instead, Aquino presided over the same elite-dominated, undemocratic politics of the pre-martial law period.

President Corazon Aquino had an opportunity to transform the party system. She failed because she refused to become a member of any party, but allowed her brother to sabotage the reform process by recruiting KBL and other unsavoury *trapo* (traditional politician) types into what became the de facto ruling party, the PDP (Pilipino Democratic Party-Struggle). She had so much personal authority that if she had chosen to do so, she could have led in the formation of a political party that incorporated the reform thrust of the EDSA revolution which toppled Marcos. In particular, she could have worked with then Minister of Local Government Aquilino Pimentel to use the appointment of local government unit OIC's (Officer in Charge) in 1986 as a way of either building a new party or strengthening the more reform oriented PDP part of PDP Laban.

The system of constitutional democracy put in place by Pres. Aquino created a contradictory situation for the development of political parties. The presidential form of government put in place by the 1987 constitution restored the conditions for a two party system. But the two dominant parties of the pre-martial law period were, apparently irretrievably, weakened. Other parts of the constitution including the party list system pushed in the other direction, towards a multi-party system. Indeed, in the ten year period since 1987, the Philippines had what appears to be a multi-party system, but with rather weak parties.[2]

President Ramos' rise to power provides a perfect example of the weakness of political parties relative to government, and political clans. *Laban nang Demokratikong Pilipino* (*LDP*) had been the ruling party since the 1987 elections when it won an overwhelming majority of contested seats in both national and local elections. Because President Aquino, however, refused to support LDP's candidate, instead supporting Ramos, by campaigning for him and using the resources of the government, LDP's candidate, Mitra lost badly. LDP won the majority in both the House and the Senate, but a few months after the House convened, LDP lost most of its members to Ramos' party.

The same thing happened in the 1998 election when the presidential candidate of Ramos' party, *Lakas*, lost badly to Joseph Estrada and his ragtag coalition party, LAMMP. Estrada secured control over the Congress when a large group of *Lakas* members in the Lower House joined LAMMP. Manuel Villar who went on to become Speaker led them. Two years after the 1998 election, the ruling party LAMMP did not have a party constitution, officers or a headquarters. It was only in June 2000 that early organizing efforts were made in anticipation of the May 2001 local and Senate elections.

Three aspects of Philippine party behaviour derive from this dynamic. One is that the incumbent president and the opposition presidential candidate, the 'presidentiable' in Filipino pidgin English, are dominant in their parties. Many 'parties' in fact are no more than vehicles for presidential ambitions. Second, is that 'turncoatism', movement from one party to another, is the rule rather than the exception. Some politicians become members of four or more parties, sometimes moving out then later back into a party, in the course of their political careers. Two provisions in the Revised Election Code of 1985 have aggravated turncoatism. Section 70–71, Art. IX provides that a political party may nominate and/or support non-member candidates. An elected official may change his party in subsequent elections provided he changes one year prior to that election (Leones & Moraleda 1996: 21).

Third, party behaviour tends to be determined mainly by whether they are in power or in the opposition. Because Philippine parties are indistinguishable from each other ideologically or in terms of programs, the only real parties, in effect, are the parties of the defensive ins and the raucous outs. 'The party in power tends to emphasize the customary, family-based alliances of local political organizations because it has economic resources and no equally useful criteria for their distribution capable of maintaining popular support … The party in opposition tends to emphasize the legalistic and constitutional aspects of party organization since it has few resources for distribution, apart from those of its prominent members, with which to bargain for public support and only a legislative forum in which to present itself' (Shantz 1972: 98).

Shantz' description of the organizational characteristics of political parties in the pre-martial law period remains valid some thirty years later. '… the organization of the two parties is tantalizingly vague in practice, exceedingly explicit in written form. They are reflections of the social system, hierarchical coalitions of all who wield influence from every social level, sharing public resources commensurate with their social position and aligned at every level of the social hierarchy against their peers – who seek through similar hierarchical coalitions to deprive them of their resources' (Shantz 1972: 98).

Another analyst, University of the Philippines professor, Randy David says Philippine political parties '… are chronically unable to maintain an organizational continuity and a level of professional existence that one expects parties to possess in mature democracies. As a result, their activities are confined to elections, their potential for political education completely lost underneath the frenzy of personal political contests' (David 1994: 26).

Parties and political reform

Philippine political parties are not very popular in the Philippines. The media and academia are almost uniformly critical. Public opinion is not any less unkind (Miranda 1994). The popular term used to refer to politicians is *trapo* (from traditional politician), which literally means 'dirty dishrag'. As unpopular as political parties are, they continue to be the main political instruments for social mobility.

> If the parties are accountrements of the status quo, and they are, that is not to say that they are unresponsive. The status quo in

> Philippine politics happens to be very fluid, related more to the familiar than the changeless. If rapid social change does not occur it is because most people, however favorably disposed toward change in their lives, prefer to seek it through the certainty of the familiar practice with minor modifications … The clamor for change is individual rather than systemic. Filipinos have one of the highest rates of participation of any democracy. Politics comprises a vital element of hope in their future (Shantz 1972: 295–296).

While Shantz' observation is undoubtedly true, mobility occurs within a society that over time has become more and more unequal. While allowing ambitious young, mostly men, from the provinces to move up in the world, such movement is worked out within political parties which remain instruments of a narrow upper class. Attempts to set up political parties representing the interests of the poor majority of workers and peasants have been suppressed or more often, have been unable to survive in a political system biased against such attempts. In the end, it is not that Philippine political parties are not ideological, but rather that because they are all or mostly instruments of the same upper classes, their members share the same conservative ideology. Their political parties, therefore, are not distinguishable from each other on the basis of ideology.

> There are several reasons for the dim prospects for a peasant-labor third party in the near future. The most important reason is that the traditional sociopolitical structure has tended to persist in spite of its transformation and disintegration in some parts of the country and that, even where the traditional structure has disintegrated, a new structure that is conducive to class-based politics has not yet developed sufficiently. This is reflected in the fact that only a relatively small portion of the peasants and workers are organized and the unorganized peasants and workers are not generally sympathetic to peasant and labour candidates. Even those who are organized are not necessarily solidly behind those candidates. Also, poverty-stricken peasants and workers are vulnerable to short-run material inducements such as offers of money, jobs, various kind of donations and instant assistance, etc., which most peasant and labor candidates cannot afford and to provide. Furthermore, the organized peasants and workers are seriously fragmented under their divided leadership. In addition, the electoral system under the new constitutional adopted a single-member district system for the lower

> house, which makes it extremely difficult for minor parties to translate their votes into congressional seats (Kimura 1990: 59–60).

If the clan and faction-based Philippine political party system has managed to remain impervious to class-based politics, it may be unable to resist pressure to change based on the functional requirements of the economy. Philippine political parties developed within a political system crafted during the period of American colonialism when the economy was mainly agricultural. Today the economy is much more complex. Its demand for a predictable regulatory framework, for economic services and for development planning is much greater than can be provided by the government (Rocamora 1997: 90–133).

Accelerating economic growth naturally steps up the pressure on rent-seeking. 'The Philippine political system was not based so much on the extraction of "surplus" from the production of new wealth but on a redistribution of existing resources and the artificial creation of rents-in effect, rewarding favoured families by manipulating regulations to effect a reallocation of existing wealth. If it can be shown that recent economic growth is generating newly created wealth, "profit-makers" should understandably be less and less tolerant of rent-seekers' (Rocamora 1997: 124).

One of the functional requirements of the current economic situation is political parties capable of aggregating interests and translating them into policy. Because Philippine political parties are loosely structured and faction-based, they have been unable to fulfil this function in the past. It is not as if Philippine political parties have remained inert, having not adjusted over the years. While change has been slow, parties have moved from the clan-based elite circles at the turn of the century to local party machines in the 1950s and 1960s to the more centrally controlled post-1986 parties. These changes have occurred less because of conscious efforts by party leaders than as often-unconscious responses to developments occurring outside of parties.

Changes in local politics have proceeded even faster than in national politics. Until recently, there has been no real local politics in the Philippines. Local political contests were not struggles over the allocation of local financial and other resources, which was virtually non-existent, but over who would control the flow of central government resources to the locality. These resources included funds for the budget of the local government, the local offices of line agencies, and congressional pork barrel funds. More often than not, the only strictly local sources of funds were from illegal activities, such

as gambling, illegal logging and smuggling, often controlled by local politicians.

The nature of local politics has been changing at an accelerating pace. Commercialization of agriculture, urbanization, and the incorporation of by now the majority of the population into the circuits of national and international capitalism have changed the socio-economic ground upon which politics is played. Although it is not yet clear in what way, the experience of millions of overseas contract workers abroad cannot but have affected the way they look at and participate in politics. If nothing else, living in countries where governments actually work is likely to lower tolerance for a government that does not.

The acceleration of economic activity in many localities has increased the potential surplus that can be appropriated by local governments. The balance between illegal and legal economic activity is shifting with the corresponding increase in influence and political assertiveness of business groups. With more resources available locally, local politicians are demanding more control over revenue generated locally and appropriated by the central government. Correspondingly, they are becoming less and less dependent on central government largesse.

The Local Government Code that began to be implemented in 1992 is both the cause and effect of these trends. Financial resources available to local government units have been significantly increased through the automatic appropriation of 40 per cent of internal revenue collections, greater taxing power, authority to incur debt, and to solicit official development assistance. The Code's implementation is uneven, but given the incentive, one can only expect that local officials will learn quickly.

With greater financial resources available to local government units, local politics is going to move away from its preoccupation with securing central governments funds. Combined with the acceleration of local economic activity and the changing social composition of local economic elites, decentralization as mandated by the Local Government Code is generating profound changes in local politics. The process is certainly uneven, but the direction of change is clear.

Other forces are also pushing more accelerated change. Movements for electoral and political reform, such as the Consortium for Electoral Reform (CER) and the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), are campaigning for electoral reforms that cannot be resisted forever by *trapos* in Congress (National Democratic Institute 1996: 56–59). By limiting opportunities for cheating, electoral reforms

such as continuous registration, tamper-proof voters' identification cards, and counting machines will significantly change electoral behaviour and, of necessity, political parties.

Other political reforms mandated by the 1987 constitution, such as those providing for recall and referenda, for sectoral representation in the Lower House of Congress, and for party list elections in the 1998 synchronized elections, will also add pressure on political parties to change. The party list law provides for the election of 20 per cent of the members of the Lower House by proportional representation (Mastura 1995: 18–33). While the implementing law (RA 7941) has many infirmities which will weaken the impact of the concept, providing for an alternative to the single member district constituencies of the Lower House will encourage the formation of new types of political parties which may, over time, acquire enough strength to challenge the old parties.

The party list election in 1998 was a mess (Wurfel 1999). The Commission on Elections hardly did any public education. As a result, less than a third of the electorate voted, and because election officials often knew less than the public, votes cast were often not counted or miscounted. Only 14 out of a possible 52 seats were allocated. Parties who managed to make the 2 per cent minimum percentage of votes were repackaged *trapo* parties, special interest groups or parties with narrow sectoral constituencies. To understand the potential of political party reform, however, we have to look at party list parties and their history in Philippine social movements.

Governance and the progressive movement

The contemporary Philippine progressive movement traces back to the 're-founding' of the Communist Party of the Philippines in 1968, and the dynamic student movement that preceded it. The CPP has not been the only progressive force around. But throughout most of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the CPP was a hegemonic force on the Left. By the early 1980s the CPP had become so strong that it forced all other progressive groups, including anti-communist groups, to relate their ideological and organizational life to the CPP and to measure themselves by the standards set by the CPP.

Born at the height of the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' in China in the second half of the 1960s, the CPP's analysis of Philippine society, its program for a 'national democratic revolution' and its strategy and tactics were classic Maoist. Debates on the CPP founding chair-

man Jose Ma. Sison's framework for analysing Philippine society continues to this day. In party history, the most important debates, however, were over the CPP's strategy and tactics. It was the party leadership's failure to adjust its strategy and tactics that led to its decline and split in the 1990s.

CPP strategy emphasized rural over urban, armed over unarmed, clandestine over open organizing. It was this strategy that enabled the party to, not just survive, but also actually benefit from the conditions of martial law and dictatorship from 1972 onwards. It was so successful that even areas of work that it de-emphasized developed forcefully. Open, unarmed, urban mass movements under the leadership of party cadre rapidly built up in the first half of the 1980s. During this time, key party leaders pushed for a re-evaluation of party strategy to take advantage of the decline in the dictatorship's repressive capabilities, the explosion of mass movements especially after the murder of opposition leader 'Ninoy' Aquino in 1983, and the restoration of constitutional democracy after the fall of Marcos.

Instead, the party leadership chose to boycott the February 1986 'snap election' for president that became the pivotal struggle, which led directly to the downfall of Marcos. In the famous 'EDSA revolution' that followed the election, the CPP and its followers were on the sidelines. As it turned out, this 'tactical error' led to a strategic decline of the CPP. In 1986, it provoked a veritable avalanche of polemics within the party and outside that examined many different aspects of party life. What was not examined carefully enough were the ramifications of being 'unable to lead or influence' the people. The problem is not just what happened at EDSA in February, but the way the party abandoned hundreds of thousands of people that it 'aroused, mobilized and organized' into political action because it later decided that their particular political action did not fit the party's strategic framework after all.

The CPP reached its highest point of development in 1986 and 1987, precisely at the transition from dictatorship to elite democracy. It declined slowly thereafter then went into a steep dive starting in 1990 and culminating in the split of 1993 and 1994. In 1986, the party had 35,000 members and some 25,000 guerrillas. Today, the mainstream CPP faction is estimated to have 7,000 to 8,000 guerrillas. Smaller breakaway groups may have a total of 1,000 combatants. There are certainly other factors that explain the decline of the party starting in the second half of the 1980s.

From development to governance

The decline of the CPP in the latter half of the 1980s was also marked by the rapid growth of the NGO movement. The tens of thousands of young people politicized during the last few years of the Marcos dictatorship could not be incorporated into the national democratic movement (ND). The CPP, at this time, was in the throes of profound disorientation. With the support of the Cory Aquino government that took over from Marcos, many new NGOs were established, soaking up all this youthful energy. NGOs also provided a way for party members who left the CPP to continue to do progressive work. Non-party political formations, what we call 'political blocs', provided more comprehensive ideological frameworks.

At this time, these NGOs mainly engaged in development work. The preferred framework, emphasizing people empowerment, was distinctly political. Forming people's organizations, as cooperatives or sectoral organizations (peasant, labour, urban poor, indigenous people, women) would invariably be the first step. In the Philippines, we never refer to NGOs on their own, rather always as PO-NGO, that is People's Organization-NGO. The range of experience with development work is enormous, from simple subsistence projects, to commercial production, to micro credit, to export trade. People's lives have certainly been improved. But the enormity of problems of poverty in the country and the difficulty of sustaining development projects in the face of government indifference and often obstruction has generated a lot of frustration.

The PO-NGO movement naturally moved into governance and democratization work. This process was facilitated by a number of developments. The most important was the passage of the Local Government Code in 1991. The transfer of power and significant fiscal capacity to local governments fed into PO-NGO preference for grassroots work. It helped that the LGC provided specifically for PO-NGO representation in local special bodies including powerful bids and contracts committees. International agencies such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) also moved into governance work at this time, providing funds and new ideas for PO-NGO work.

From active involvement with local governments to electoral work was a short step. PO-NGO staff easily saw who among local government officials were corrupt or inept and who were innovative and reform oriented, and whom therefore they should support in the next election. The next steps were more difficult. Starting in 1987, PO-NGO

electoral initiatives coordinated at the national level were abject failures. One of the lessons drawn from these experiences is that it does not make sense for PO-NGO initiatives to only support established national politicians. They have to build their own political parties and establish electoral bases at the local level. This is where Akbayan (Citizens Action Party) comes in.[3]

Akbayan started out at a series of meetings of leaders of four political blocs (non-party political formations) in April 1996. Building on the success of progressive participation in the May 1995 local elections, the group formulated a concept paper, which was discussed widely in a series of consultations throughout the country. Organizers invested the resources necessary for these extensive consultations because they wanted to break a standard pattern of the Philippine Left where parties and other organizations are started by a small group of intellectuals in Manila. With the consultations, they not only benefitted from a wide range of ideas and experiences, they also started the party with a lot of stakeholders throughout the country.

Firstly, one of the most important elements is the Akbayan goal of mobilizing the people around a program of radical democracy. As a progressive organization, Akbayan's program is anchored on the economic and political empowerment of the poor and disenfranchised majority through redistribution and entitlement programs. Akbayan also believes that democracy – constitutional government, a Bill of Rights limiting the power of the state, the rule of law – is essential to the well-being of modern societies.

Secondly, Akbayan participates in elections to win. This may seem self-evident. From past experience in the Philippines, this point is in fact crucial because progressive participation in elections tended to be mainly for propaganda purposes. Since the CPP strategy for achieving state power was armed struggle and the CPP saw elections as meaningless ruling class exercises, they mainly used election campaigns to popularise certain issues. This then is a crucial point of departure for Akbayan, that elections would be Akbayan's main strategy for accumulating state power.

Thirdly, Akbayan emphasizes participation in local elections, again in contrast to past Left experience, which focused intervention at the national level. This is both a matter of principle and practical politics. Akbayan participates in elections initially at the local government level where they have the resources to win and only slowly build up to the national level. Given people's alienation from a political system dominated by upper class groups, restoring a sense of effective participation

– the essence of radical democracy – can be best done at local government levels.

Fourthly, unity is built around a progressive political project, not a specific ideology. Groups and individuals following different ideologies are welcome in Akbayan. There are practical reasons for this choice. At a time of rapid change and ideological crisis, of splits and bitter ideological struggle in the Left worldwide, organizers did not want to bring these tensions into the party. In addition, because Left groups in the Philippines remained small, electoral impact required working together. The Akbayan political project is a work in progress. Organizers see it as being constantly in a process of shaping based on conditions outside and the democratic process within the party.

Lastly, Akbayan can remain a progressive political party only if it continues to be accountable to a dynamic and assertive mass movement. While asserting a leadership role on matters of government policy, Akbayan will defend and promote the autonomy of organizations in civil society. Akbayan leadership will be a matter of political persuasion, not organizational fiat.

Since its founding Congress in January 1998, Akbayan has taken small but solid steps towards its long-term sustainability. As Akbayan leader Melay Abao put it, 'We are not in a hurry. Life is hard enough as it is without having to run at a forced pace. Our target is to win a few more seats in every election we participate in. In 1998, we won one seat and got cheated out of another. It is not much given that the Lower House alone has 250 seats. If we can win three seats in the next election, we will be happy. More importantly, we need to at least triple the ten town mayorships we won in 1998.'

Notes

1 One could argue that the 1935 constitution fulfilled enough of the requisites of formal democracy.
2 Interview with Aquilino Pimentel February 19, 1998.
3 I should point out that I am in the leadership of Akbayan.

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