

A TREND TOWARDS AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE THIRD WORLD

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The transfer of representative institutions to the Third World

It was assumed that the orderly transition to pluralistic political development pioneered by the Westminster model of Parliamentary democracy would be duplicated in the Third World under the modernization process. But events have changed this assumption. What we are witnessing in most developing states is a retreat from democracy and in some ways a throwback to traditionalism.

Perhaps representative government is inappropriate in modernizing societies and the models we derive from the concepts of equity and justice in the Western experience may fail to take root in these societies. For new nations problems of political overload and the consequent generation of widespread tensions in the Third World state are seen to favour authoritarian rather than democratic rule. One of the surprising developments in East Asia is that high levels of modernization have taken place with low levels of political participation as is seen in the miracle economies of the Four Dragons of Asia - Hongkong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea in the last two or three decades.

Stable democratic institutions necessitate a close fit between these institutions and society. The experience of political development in the developing societies confirms the view that the transfer of alien institutions from one society to another without the attendant political culture either results in their rejection or total transformation. The latter process is taking place in the developing states.

Trend towards departicipation in Third World Politics

At Independence these new states of Asia and Africa had each been endowed with the formal trappings of democracy by their departing colonial overlords - a democratic constitution, a two Chamber legislature, elective politics, a framework for multiparty politics - all the ingredients that made for Western style democracy. But in occasion after occasion one sees the distortion of these institutions in the politics of the Third World state.

A growing tendency towards departicipation is discernible, brought about by governments bent on destroying the very institutions intended to facilitate popular political participation.

Opposition excluded from politics

In country after country in the Third World opposition forces have been excluded from politics. Chun Doo Hwan's Korea in the 80s showed no signs of tolerating an effective opposition. As a sequel to the Kwangju riots in 1980 all political parties in South Korea were dissolved for 8 months. 811 people - virtually every leading politician - were banned from politics for 8 years.

Single Party States

The Single Party state has evolved as an effective means of warding off oppositional popular mobilisation. Singapore has remained a Single Party state since 1959, and although multi-party politics has recently been permitted, Singapore remains virtually a One Party state. Kenya has been a Single Party state with KANU dominating politics since 1982 and recent attempts at multi-party politics have been stifled.

Hand over of power as an outcome of elections

Elective politics prevail but the outcome of elections often remains in doubt. When the Sandinistas lost the elections in Nicaragua this year it was doubtful at first whether there would be a voluntary hand over of power to Opposition Leader Violet Chamorro. Similarly Burma's military held elections recently but was not prepared to abide by its outcome and hand over power to the opposition 'National League for Democracy'.

Political Participation centres round the incumbent regime

Political participation on the contrary centres round government created institutions in order to mobilise support for the incumbent regime. The Gulf States have organised 'Majlis' (Councils) to redress citizens grievances - a limited

outlet for participation – giving a semblance of legitimacy to the states.

Ayub Khan's 'Basic Democracy', giving the masses a chance to vote in local elections, was designed to rally the populous round the Military.

Political institutions inherited at independence have thus been distorted from their original purpose.

Ethnicity and Religion as central issues in Third World politics

Far from fading, ethnicity and religion have come up as central issues in the politics of Asia, Africa and the Middle East – providing a popular base for political participation.

Marginalisation, displacement and dispossession are defined in ethnic, religious and linguistic terms – not class terms. Some of the widespread political movements during the past decade have centred round religion or ethnicity – the Shiite clergy in Iran, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, and the Mujahideen in Afghanistan. With the Islamic Revolution under Khomeini the clergy has emerged as a ruling class.

Religious strife in Lebanon

Some of the worst effects of religious strife in the Third World are seen in the politics of Lebanon. Here Maronite Christians, Druse and Shiite Muslims are each trying to establish political control – dismembering the Lebanese state in the process.

Claims for political power in Africa

Claims for political power in Africa are increasingly being fought on religious lines. The Islamic Salvation Front has captured power in Algeria. In Sudan's recent military coup the governing elite was

part military and part Islamic. In Nigeria – a state where there is no legal opposition – Islamic institutions play an important role. Islamic Fundamentalism has of late started to play a part in Egyptian politics.

Politics of Protest

The pathology of violence associated with much of the radical Islamic and ethnic groups has resulted in the spread of the new 'politics of protest' in much of the Third World.

NEW ACTORS ENTER THE POLITICAL ARENA

With the older political structures in disarray, new political actors enter the political arena. The Military, Student Radicalism, Guerrilla movements and Trade Unions constitute these new actors on the political scene. They all employ extra-Parliamentary techniques to influence politics. Of these new forces The Military has by far played the most active role in Third World politics.

The Military in Politics

Military regimes although currently in comparative retreat especially in Latin America, still continue to play a significant role in the politics of the new nations. Barring Cuba, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Mexico, Haiti and Paraguay – 13 Latin American countries have witnessed at least one military coup since 1960. The Military dominated Brazilian politics for 2 decades until 1982. Twenty of the thirty years after Independence in Nigeria have been under military rule. In Korea a coup brought Park Chun Hee to power in 1961, starting a generation of military rule ending only in 1987. Pinochet's Chile saw the end of military rule in 1989 after 16 years of authoritarian rule. In Burma, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Liberia military regimes prevail.

Rapid socio economic change brings about tension and conflict leading to regime breakdown. In this situation the Military steps in to provide the legitimacy to a weak state. It sees itself as the only institution capable of enforcing a measure of stability and order in volatile societies constantly plagued by insurgency and other forms of protest politics. Introducing a repressive apparatus is almost a reflex response to political opposition.

Counter insurgency tactics, measures against drug trafficking, its role in the economy – all tasks outside its conventional military role have tended to politicise the military and condition it for its new role in politics. The absorption of military personnel into civilian Cabinets gives the Military the apprenticeship it requires for its new political role. In the present South Korean Cabinet of 25, 7 members possess a military background. In the Thai Cabinet the Commander-in-Chief of the Army – General Chavolit Youngchaiyudh – holds a Cabinet post. All these factors have made for the widespread presence of the ruler-General in Third World politics.

The Military has become a highly professionalized institution – playing a role in the economy. In Bangladesh the post Independence Army was conceived as a 'People's Army' that should engage in production tasks and became known as 'plough soliders'. Chun Doo Hwan presided over a military regime that brought about a remarkable economic growth enabling South Korea to reach the threshold of developed country status.

Student Radicalism

Student radicals clamouring for greater democratisation of the polity and a more open society, constitute one of the newer forces

agitating for political change in developing societies.

Perhaps in South Korea the Confucian respect for scholars explains the prominent role played by students in Korea's political life. In 1960 student activism was instrumental in toppling the right wing regime of Syngman Rhee. In 1980 in the Kwaju riots, students demonstrated against Martial Law. Again in 1987 student radicals launched a democracy movement which brought about the collapse of the Chun Doo Hwan regime.

In Thailand the Thammasat University student demonstrations were a landmark in the history of student politics.

Armed police have been deployed in the Bangladesh campuses after student clashes.

Presently in Burma University students are carrying on an insurgency in alliance with ethnic minorities.

Guerrilla Activity

The Shining Path of Peru, the New People's Army in the Philippines, the JVP of Sri Lanka, the Mujahideen rebels in Afghanistan, the Salvadorean rebels, the Karens in Burma, the Eritrean rebels in Ethiopia - all illustrate the widespread nature of guerrilla activity in the Third World.

Coming under the wide umbrella of liberation struggles, some of these movements like the Shining Path and the NPA are anti-systemic while others such as the Karens in Burma and the Moro rebels in Mindanao have ethnic purposes.

The new extra-Parliamentary forces that have made themselves felt in contemporary Third World politics have all the capacity to destabilise the state, but barring the Military, they do not display a capability to capture and retain political power.

Evolution of Third World political structures as a response to modernization

Increased levels of political participation by Parliamentary or extra-Parliamentary methods and the attendant strains of growing economic and political demands made on the state, necessitate higher levels of economic development. Further these demands on the state come at a time when



Burmese Opposition Leader - San Suu Kyi

disorderly protest movements create unstable conditions not conducive to economic development. Unlike in the First World, managing the rapid process of socio economic change thus becomes a vital characteristic of development. The evolution of authoritarian political structures and the new extra-Parliamentary claims to political power in the Third World can be seen as a political response to the strains of Third World modernization.

Twilight of the Generals?

In spite of these authoritarian and extra-Parliamentary developments taking place in the developing

world, there is since the mid 80s, a trend towards what is seen as a greater degree of political liberalization. More democratic regimes have sprung up in Argentina in 1983, in Brazil in 1982, in Guatemala in 1986, in South Korea in 1987 and Chile in 1989. Most of these regimes Brazil, Argentina, South Korea and Guatemala depend on sizeable doses of Aid for survival. Is this democratisation process a response to World Bank IMF strategy which requires a measure of democratisation as a condition for the disbursement of Aid? Or is this a trendy Third World reactor, in an atmosphere of global Glasnost?

A repressive political apparatus serves a useful economic purpose?

The East Asian miracle economies of South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hongkong demonstrate that economic success has been built on authoritarian political structures. In volatile Third World societies confronted by insurgency and student radicalism and other forms of protest politics, warding off de-stabilisation becomes a priority for economic success. In such a situation both Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary mobilisation must be curbed to assure economic stability. An elaborate military/ police/ bureaucratic apparatus assures the conditions for capital to thrive. In Gunder Frank's terms "the repressive political policy has very clear economic purposes and functions to make these economies more competitive in the world market by lowering wages..."

Falling economic growth in South Korea - The price paid for greater democratisation?

South Korea was destined to be a second Japan with a GNP rate averaging 12% per year in the years 1986 to 1988. The Hyundai Excel made a most successful entry into the United States market. Leading Edge personal computers

produced by Daewoo won market shares from IBM. Korea's rapid growth in the 1980s owed much to relatively low wages which enabled companies like Hyundai, Daewoo and Samsung to carve out a competitive wedge in industries ranging from autos to ship-building. However, GNP in 1989 fell to 6.7%

South Korea's economic success has been built on authoritarian political structures. Under Chun Doo Hwan's military regime in the 80s a close oppressive political system placed a lid on all forms of political activism which would endanger economic stability. Under Roh Tae Woo a limited democratisation process was initiated - reforms in respect of elections, Press Freedom and permitting the establishment of labour unions.

The democratisation process instituted by Roh Tae Woo led to a period of wage strife and wage hikes which eroded the competitive advantage of Korean industry. In another way it fostered dissent and strife with repercussions on economic stability and showed how much Authoritarianism had become part and parcel of the Korean economic miracle.

According to South Korea's Deputy PM Lee "Democratisation has meant the subjugation of economic efficiency to the politics of economic equity." As political unrest surged the Korean companies gave way to wage hikes. In the years 1986 to 1988 when growth averaged 12% per year, average wage increases for organised workers averaged 20% each year. For Hyundai Motor Company three straight years of nearly 20% wage hikes virtually doubled labour costs, and largely contributed to its loss of competitiveness. After a wave of industrial strikes in 1989 in an atmosphere of falling exports, the government clamped down on the unions - enforcing a provision of the Korea labour law that bars workers from getting paid when they go on

strike. When Kwangwon steel-works Pohang went on strike the government invoked Emergency powers and arrested union leaders.

Overt manifestations of an authoritarian legacy remain in South Korea, as is evidenced by the recent action taken against the unions. A resurgence of the Military and reversion to authoritarian rule appears plausible given the unprecedented degree of labour activism promoted by the democratisation process that has occurred. The Military is disillusioned and is not supportive of Roh Tae Woo's handling of the existing situation. Forces in the military and the ruling Democratic Justice Party are already calling for a return to old methods of deal with dissent.

Taiwan - a consolidation of Authoritarian KMT rule

Liberty and Democracy are recent imports to Taiwan. Up to 1988 one party - the mainland bred Nationalist party - the Kuomintang ruled Taiwan unchallenged. Martial Law was lifted only in 1987.

In Taiwan democratisation has meant introducing reforms into a still exclusive political system. Two thirds of the Taiwanese legislature is still dominated by aging Kuomintang representatives who came in when the Nationalist were driven out of the Communist mainland during the Chinese Revolution. A proposal to retire these aging KMT representatives did not meet with approval. The political reforms introduced by Chiang Ching-Kwo were a way of mustering support among the Taiwanese who compose 85% of the population in a move to guaranteeing Kuomintang rule. Measures such as permitting the formation of political parties and a proposal to retire aging KMT representatives were means of bringing in more Taiwanese into the legislature not to challenge, but consolidate authoritarian KMT rule.

The infusion of a few democratic reforms in Taiwan did not change its authoritarian base. Under Chiang Ching-Kwo's guidance Taiwan developed a robust export driven economy that had netted more than \$75 billion in foreign exchange reserves, and raised annual per capita incomes to \$7000. Taiwan has a rapidly expanding manufacturing and service industries ranging from ship-building and auto industries to high tech electronics. The Taipei Stock Exchange ranks as one among the 4 most active in the world.

A stranglehold on state enterprise and an unwillingness to yield control dates back to earlier days of Kuomintang rule. These state ventures provide a power base for the ruling Kuomintang elite. A wavering privatisation policy reflects the ruling party's disinclination to lose control over a powerful sector of Taiwan's economy. **Fine tuning of Singapore's political system to ensure economic stability.**

As in the three other East Asian economic successes, the fine tuning of Singapore's political system has made for her stability and economic success. Like the KMT in Taiwan, the People's Action Party has dominated the legislature since 1959 and although multi party politics has recently been permitted, Singapore remains virtually a One party state. Power is concentrated in the hands of the Executive. The Communist party is outlawed. Campus protest is diffused. The all powerful People's Action Party controls the labour unions - building its own power base. All opposition quelled, the system has the 'correct political mix' for economic stability and for the entry of transnational capital. Singapore's economic success is maintained on high doses of repression.

"Imagine a country run like a Company and you've got Singapore... Under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew its Chairman and Chief Executive for the past 1/4 century Singapore Inc. has prospered

"mightily." These quotes from the Economist of 9-15th June 1990 describes Singapore's performance very aptly.

Government identified objectives assure a favoured place for transnational capital. The right to 100% foreign participation facilitates the entry of foreign capital. The US remains the largest investor-generating 1/3 of all foreign investment in Singapore.

GNP has averaged 9% per year during Lee Kwan Yew's tenure.

There is a heavy emphasis on electronics - 30% of exports being confined to this sector. Efforts continue to make manufacturing more capital intensive and high technology based. A tightening labour market is making labour intensive industries locate outside Singapore. Singapore has no foreign debt problems.

Will Capitalism continue to propel Hongkong's future?

The political system prevailing in Hongkong does not favour democracy. Under British rule she has not enjoyed universal suffrage. A powerless colonial legislature has been installed with a British appointed Executive. The Basic law - Hongkong's mini-constitution after 1997 drew the line at letting the territory go its own way politically. It provides for direct election for 1/2 Hongkong's legislature only - with ultimate power residing in Beijing's national people's Congress - the final interpreter of the Basic law. Deng's promise of 'one country 2 systems' after 1997 is an idea rather than a politically guaranteed plan. Few in Hongkong are hopeful of creating a homegrown democratic movement by 1997 with a leadership able to resist Beijing.

Hongkong was leading China to economic prosperity through Deng's open Door policy. In most ways the colony was the economic hub of South China with investments totalling \$1.8 billion and providing direct employment to 1.1 million workers.

As of the first quarter of 1989 approximately 80% of Hongkong's re-exports accounting for 61% of China's total exports. China has become Hongkong's 2nd largest market in terms of value. Two China related political events have shaken business confidence in Hongkong. The first is the suppression of The Democracy Movement in China which has had adverse repercussions on Hongkong's investments in the Chinese mainland.

The second was the move to revert Hongkong to China by 1997 in an amalgam with a Communist state in what Hongkong sees as an end to Capitalism. This has led to a severe brain drain and a capital flight from Hongkong.

Hongkong remains a disputed domain between 2 rival ideologies - Capitalism and Communism. Its existence as a Capitalist enclave if not an East Asian success will depend very much on what basis it comes to terms with China on the Communism/Capitalism relationship.

Authoritarianism and economic success

In East Asia hence facts seem to point to a close correlation between Authoritarianism and economic growth. Authoritarianism has not been an undiluted ingredient propelling these economic to success. The American factor, in building and maintaining a Capitalist enclave as a bulwark against the expansion of Communism in the Pacific region, was a vital factor in nurturing and expanding the capitalist thrust of these newly emergent nations of East Asia. The 70's reached the Zenith of Communist expansion. Taiwan was conceived as a base against Communism by the United States during the Korean War even during the 1950s, and US military and economic support during the Vietnam War was an important factor in its expansion. South Korea relied on a fair dose of Aid for

her economic expansion. The US remains the largest investor in Singapore generating 1/3 of all foreign investment. Moreover these countries had the advantage of an early start when world economic conditions were in comparative boom.

Political regimes and economic structure

Authoritarian regimes do not necessarily have an edge in the promotion of economic growth. In Asia, Thailand has seen an evolution to democracy with parallel spectacular economic success. Since the Student Revolt of 1973 the democratic process has been growing - strengthening and legitimizing political parties and Parliament. From public relations groups, parties have grown to become institutional party systems. There has been a shift from personalized to institutionalised politics. Chatichai Choonhavan was the first elected member of Parliament to become Prime Minister.

Since 1986 growth rates in Thailand have touched 10% - among the highest in the world. The export sector has grown faster than any other sector - nearly 25% per year from 1986-1989. Manufacturing is now responsible for a larger share of G.D.P. than agriculture-achievements which most developing nations have been striving for in their development plans.

Latin American experience

The experience of regimes in Latin America points to the fact that regime form may not be a determinant of economic development. If one takes the changes in per capita GDP in 1980 constant dollars from 1960 to 1980 Authoritarian Brazil led Latin America with an average of 137%. Two non oil producers with more competitive civilian regimes - Columbia and Costa Rica did well with 92.5% and 83.5% respec-

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tively. Countries governed by military authoritarian regimes for most of these decades – Guatemala and Peru grew by 66% and 36% respectively. Argentina performed well under the civilian government of Arturo Illia in the 1960's as well as under the military authoritarian rule in the early 1980's.

The East European Experience

More importantly Eastern Europe is discarding its Authoritarianism and adopting democratic political structures in a race to imbibe the economic and technological know-how from the West, and go in for the current economic outfit in vogue – the now fashionable Market Economy. For Eastern Europe economic reform is being based on an open political system. In changing global power structures and alignments, a different set of structures and economic tools may be more relevant for economic progress.

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