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DEMOCRATISATION, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNMENT IN ASIA

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Abstract: Should Western governments adopt policies encouraging democratisation and good governance elsewhere in the world? This paper addresses the legitimacy of such a policy approach. Furthermore should the emphasis be on 'good government' or on the broader issue of 'good governance', including transparency, accountability, rule of law, etc? Giving rewards, rather than imposing sanctions and conditionalities, is more likely to yield results. Aid policies for democratisation are going to be limited in effect, in the best of circumstances. They are not in themselves likely to be decisive to 'make' societies democratic that would otherwise be reluctant. Most long-term benefit is likely to come if recipients feel that these policies are supportive of 'own' initiatives rather than those of external agencies and donors.

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1.   Introduction.

Should Western governments adopt policies encouraging democratisation and good governance elsewhere in the world? There is no doubt that governments in various countries in Asia (and elsewhere) reject this as unjustified interference in their internal affairs. Yet both the United States and EU member countries still persist with this policy approach, so do international economic organisations such as the World Bank, and so do international aid agencies. Why?

This paper will address some of the normative as well as positive issues involved in answering this question. First, it will discuss the legitimacy of such an approach. Second, it will question the focus of these policies on democracy -- should they not instead focus on the 'process of democratisation'? A further related question is whether the policies should focus on 'good government' or on the broader issue of 'good governance', including transparency, accountability, rule of law, etc. Third, any normative approach obviates the need for some kind of 'audit' of the extent of democratisation; however, what would be the possible criteria for such an audit?

2.   Is it legitimate for the international community to advocate 'democracy'?

The possible advantages of democracy can be divided between those relating to the international community, and those relating to the domestic community. This does not mean that they are completely separable. As we shall see, the effects of one can slip over into the other. But they are distinguishable for the purposes of analysis.

First let us deal with the international community. One fundamental reason often offered for such policies is that it contributes to international peace and stability. It is often said that democracies do not go to war with each other. Since it is ordinary citizens who bear the brunt of the fighting, then when they are consulted over the possibility of going to war, they tend to reject it. This was offered as a justification for US policies encouraging the spread of democracy in the aftermath of the Cold War. The simple fact of spreading democracy, insofar as it could be done, would in itself increase the prospects for peace across the globe.

Subsequent writings have suggested that history is less clear-cut on the subject. In particular, it has been suggested that whilst well-established democracies may not go to war, democratising societies may be more prone to do so.[1] The conflicts in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and the Former Yugoslavia (FY) would seem to suggest that there is truth in this. Europeans should remember that the parliaments of all the major powers voted for war in 1914. And the recent build-up in tensions between India and Pakistan occurred whilst both had popularly elected governments. It is true that this did not lead to conflict, but popular opinion in each country seemed extremely inflamed against the other. And in both countries there seemed widespread popular support for the development of national nuclear weapon programmes, even though the consequence of such conflict would be enormous loss of life. Democracy does not necessarily make people more moral, but it may reduce the risks of individual leaders being free

to display enormous immorality. So in itself democracy would not seem an automatic guarantee of international peace and stability.

There is, however, a lesser benefit that democracy can bring to the international community that is not to be underestimated. That is transparency and predictability. Where decisions are made behind closed doors and concentrated in the hands of a few leaders, other countries may always be suspicious about possible aggression. They may fear sudden attacks inspired by a diplomatic game plan of which they were unaware. Even developed countries equipped with sophisticated electronic equipment and sophisticated diplomats may be taken by surprise. Leaving aside Iraq's unexpected invasion of Kuwait, the former Yugoslavia has suffered considerably because of the secretiveness of President Milosevic. His ability to disguise his intentions so successfully and mislead his opponents enabled him to take the other leaders of the former republics of FY (who probably thought that they knew him already), not to mention Western European leaders, repeatedly by surprise. The consequence has been hundreds of thousands of deaths and the biggest war in Europe since the end of WWII.

A democratic system of course is no guarantee against duplicitous and unscrupulous political leaders. Cynics would even say that politics encourages deceit, and democratic politics provides more opportunities for more politicians to practise more of it. Nevertheless the process of having to submit proposals for political action and reports on government behaviour to regular public scrutiny certainly increases the opportunities for others, both at home and abroad, to gain a better sense of governmental priorities and likely governmental action. It also helps to identify who actually makes policy. Electoral campaigns, reports to parliament, questioning by the media – all this cumulatively makes policy-making more open. Openness leads to predictability. As governments in general have increasingly to interact with each other, predictability as a basis for trust becomes ever more important, because it provides reassurance. So authoritarian countries of whom others are suspicious because of the opaqueness of their decision-making procedures would find it easier to reassure them if they became more open, and one way of achieving that would be through democratisation.

Most of these benefits from democratisation would accrue to the community of states. But there is another kind of benefit that the encouragement of democratisation broadly understood would bring. No theorist of democracy or democratisation would now argue that democratic institutions – elections, parliaments, parties, etc – would be sufficient to ensure that a country would practise democracy. It is now commonly accepted that other elements are essential too. These include the notion of 'civil society', although attempts at definitions of civil society have suggested that this is rather like the Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland: the more you look at it, the more it seems to dissolve, until all that is left is its smile. It is as amorphous a concept as that of a country's political culture. But in broad terms, this is a collectivity of inter-dependent and inter-influential organisations not part of or controlled by the state. By no means all of these organisations will be concerned with advocating particular causes or policies to the state. Most in fact are overtly a-political. But a crucial element in the notion of civil society is that at least some of its activists co-operate with each other in pushing for new legislation or new decisions from the government.

The main feature of civil society from a political point of view, and the reason why it is stressed, is that it represents a check upon the complete freedom of manoeuvre of the government or of politicians. Though the latter may have a democratic mandate, this should not be interpreted as meaning that they have complete freedom to do as they choose until the next election (if they are elected in a presidential system), or provided they can maintain a majority in parliament. In general terms civil society embodies the political culture of a people and therefore helps to determine what is or is not regarded as the proper thing to do. It does not mean that civil society never takes to the streets, although it might be said that the upsurge of non-violent protest in various states in Eastern Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, and especially in 1989, was a manifestation of the power of civil society. The same could be said for non-violent protests in the Philippines in 1985, in Thailand in 1992, and at various times in South Korea.

In addition to the benefits of security, however, there is another element in democratisation that can have a major impact upon the international system. One of the principles underpinning democratic institutions are human rights. That is the notion of UN-backed covenants on civil and political rights, and on economic and social rights. The Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has now been ratified by 140 countries, whilst 42 have signed the optional protocol of the Covenant recognising the authority of the United Nations Human Rights Committee to consider claims from those alleging abuses of their rights. What is important to remember is that these are now international agreements, not simply 'Western' ones. Thus encouraging states to sign, ratify and implement these covenants is part of a more general process of developing an international network of conventions and agreements, that can underpin international relations. So a willingness to abide by these agreements is an indication of the extent to which a particular country is in general willing to abide by international treaties, and that in itself can help to provide reassurance and stability.

3.   Should EU policies focus on promoting 'democracy' or 'democratisation'?

It is important to stress here two things. The first is the motive of Western governments in urging democracy or democratisation on others, because sometimes it is questioned. It is claimed that they are interested in democratisation because it is a way of weakening such states, thereby facilitating interference from the outside. So the urging of democracy is equated with the urging of social weakness. Since democracy is usually thought to require political parties, which by definition can only represent part of society, this is alleged to exacerbate social division. By giving voice to sections of society, it makes the process of unified national action impossible. And since divisions paralyse national action, it helps to prevent countries from mounting vigorous national responses to challenges. So democracy encourages division and weakness, which then others may seek to exploit.

It is easy to understand why past colonial experiences should encourage cynicism. In addition the leaders of some countries, even if they have been elected into office, believe that the kind of democracy urged by the West is aimed at undermining their own authority and power.

Nevertheless Western governments are primarily concerned with encouraging strength and resilience in those societies, not weakness and fragility. One of the primary benefits of a democratic political system is that it helps to ensure relatively smooth social change. At any rate

it certainly helps to avoid revolution, or the violence that is sometimes needed for change in more authoritarian regimes. What Western governments learned through their own history is that absolute monarchs would have to be deposed if they stood in the way of change, which often led to the violence of revolution. Changing a party in power in a democracy can be much less bloody and usually is. In more recent times, however successful individual governments may have achieved economic development and increased prosperity, but in the end they may lose their way. If there is no widely agreed procedure for bringing about political change, then tremendous loss of life can ensue. The recent large turmoil in Indonesia is a reminder of the risks of a state having no agreed mechanism for political change.

Thus support for democracy should actually be understood as a desire to help societies manage their own social and political change in a less violent manner. Far from it weakening society and making it more vulnerable to outside intervention, it is actually a way of assisting it to find its own resources for managing change by involving wider sections of society in the decisions. Far from making societies more weak, it is supposed to make them more stable.

The second point to make is that no state anywhere in the world can claim to be a perfect democracy. Even in states with well-established democratic institutions, political parties, the rule of law, a democratic political culture, etc., such as the United States, there are still problems about participation and political activism. In every state that has some kind of public election, women account for a smaller proportion of elected representatives than their share of the population as a whole. Fewer people than ever before are members of political parties in the US, or vote in elections. Money is even more crucial than before in determining the success of electoral campaigns. The European Union is not itself a model of democratic decision-making with its own democratic deficit, while individual countries are also concerned about declining political activism.

It may be that the size of current nation states may itself be an obstacle to some kind of 'perfect' or Athenian democracy. Already 30 years ago Robert Dahl argued that polyarchy would be a better term to characterise democratic government in the modern age. This connoted the importance of various elites in making authoritative decisions rather than ordinary citizens.[2]

Nevertheless this means that Western governments do not have an ideal form of democracy to 'teach' others. This is obviously a fact that other countries and leaders in other parts of the world have pointed out. There is regular stress upon the social weaknesses of developed Western societies, particularly the US, with its increasing crime rate, disintegrating families, etc., which is then associated with the 'excessive freedom' that democracy allegedly encourages. And after over 50 years of democracy in India against all the odds, no-one should preach to a country like India about the desirability of democracy.

Nevertheless they do have an experience of democratic evolution that is worthy of sharing, though lessons on democracy might not always be sought from them. It is part of a richer democratic experience in various parts of the world, e.g. Latin America and possibly Africa and Eastern Europe, that is also worthy of study.

But given the problems over the term 'democracy', it would be better to talk in terms of *democratisation*, a process which, however complex, more or less all countries are still undergoing.

4.   Is democracy in Asia distinct and different?

The next question is: are there any major differences between democracy in Asia and in other parts of the world? Certainly it has often been declared by advocates of 'Asian values' that politics in Asia is distinctively different from that found in other parts of the world, that Asian democracy is different too, or even that it may not be appropriate for Asian societies. Examples of differences that have been suggested include: a) the high priority accorded to the family in Asian societies, which is contrasted with the perceived low esteem in which family values are held in the West (although this is usually only contrasted with the US); and b) the high priority accorded to economic development and the increase of prosperity at least in East Asia, as well as the ensuring of basic levels of welfare, although this does not include a welfare state as such. What is striking about this is that 'democracy' is here understood to connote not institutions as such, but rather the social context within which they operate and the focus upon economic growth.   In practice very few states in Asia openly reject forms of rule associated with democracy – Burma, Afghanistan, Pakistan (at present). Even N. Korea *claims* to be democratic. The institutions which are typically thought essential elements of a democracy – a parliament, elections, political parties – are as much present in Asian democracies as elsewhere.

It is also clear that the minimal institutional form of democracy – elections, a national parliament, some degree of government accountability, and a pluralist press – is not enough to ensure democratic stability.   The example of Russia since 1991 is salutary in this respect. Although some contest the idea that political parties are essential for democracy, the fact that parties and democracy are both so fragile in Russia seems to go together. Stable democracy requires that a whole network of intermediate institutions such as parties, elected local government, etc. provide adequate links between the central government and the people. They help to attract people into politics and give them incentives to operate politically.[3]

One irony of Western countries advocating the establishment of political parties to strengthen democracy in formerly authoritarian or communist countries is that in the West nowadays membership of political parties is declining almost across the board. Political activism seems to be declining, as is the turn-out in elections that are not compulsory. It is partly for this reason that some are looking to information technology as an alternative way to mobilise democratic deliberation and involvement.[4] Does this undermine Western aid policies? Possibly, but it could also be argued that the creation of parties is a necessary stage in the evolution of democratic political systems, even if later their significance or salience may decline.

In any case, there is a difference in the ways in which these institutions operate in different countries. Chan Heng Chee, for instance, has argued that Asian democratic systems display quite different common characteristics from those of the West:

- communitarianism – the group is more important than the individual
- authority – Asians display a greater respect for and acceptance of authority
- longevity in power of ruling parties
- strong states with prominent bureaucracies that intervene to promote development.[5]

Others have added other characteristics, e.g. the significance of the family as a political as well as a social value, patron-client relations, etc. It is of course an interesting question whether the same could be said of India, or Bangladesh. Are these primarily *East* Asian characteristics? Could they be applied to regimes in other parts of the world, e.g. Mexico, or several states in Latin America? For years one might have said the same of a number of African states, such as Tanzania and Zambia. There is no doubt that Prime Minister Mahathir regards Western liberal democracy as morally inferior. He has declared: 'Too much democracy leads to homosexuality, moral decay, racial intolerance, economic decline and one-parent families.'[6] But even if one accepts that these do constitute a different 'model' of democracy – and they relate more to political culture than to political institutions - one could ask whether the differences simply represent differences in stages of modernisation.

5.   How to audit the process of democratisation

At any rate there is a need to develop a kind of methodology which would enable both academics and policy-makers to indicate whether a political system is, if not democratic or undemocratic, democratising or not. So there is scope for work to establish common terms, i.e. a kind of 'democratic audit'. At present Freedom House has the most elaborate checklist for determining whether a country is free or not and how far it respects political rights and civil liberties.[7] Within the scope of what this technique tries to achieve, Freedom House seems to operate with a fair degree of rigour and after a high degree of searching for information. But to some extent the reputation of these surveys has been affected by the association of Freedom House with US judgementalism. The outcome is analogous to a golfing score-card. It is not clear that people from the countries themselves are in any way involved in this process, either in determining the questions asked or assessing the evidence.

Others have attempted to construct the bases for 'democratic audits'. One version is presented as an Appendix at the end of this paper. It explicitly rejects the notion of arriving at a composite 'score-card', which is probably a good thing. It is based upon 30 basic questions that are intended to bring out information on all the relevant dimensions for assessing how democratic a particular country is. On the other hand, more work would certainly need to be done if it were to be applied in a government assessment process, for each of these questions would need to be turned into subsidiary questions that showed degrees of change.[8]

It is not clear that it is worth trying to construct a whole alternative composite index to that of Freedom House. Nevertheless if assessment of an individual country's democracy is to form any part of EU aid policies, it would be helpful for further work to be done identifying the most logical and most helpful criteria that should be used. As far as possible, this should aim at a consensus on the most helpful criteria. And this should most sensibly be done through the

involvement of representatives of the European Commission, of representatives of likely aid recipients, and of political scientists from both the EU and aid-recipient countries.

6.   Should the focus be on Good Government or Good Governance?

Western governments and international economic institutions such as the World Bank, however, do not just focus on democratic institutions as such. Especially where developing countries are concerned, they also urge 'good governance' upon them. Indeed they focus more upon 'good governance' than democratisation as such and they devote more aid to the former. This reflects the fact that Western governments are as much concerned with assisting developing countries to integrate into the world market as with democratisation. And in a world capitalist economy, that means facilitating freer flows of trade and investment across borders as well as the gradual deregulation of the domestic economy so as to invigorate the market.

The World Bank first became officially concerned with 'good governance' in the late 1980s, as a response to a decade of apparent failure in aid policies towards sub-Saharan Africa. In 1992 it produced a booklet *Governance and Development* that was intended to summarise its thinking on the subject to date, and this has served as the basis for later debates.

In that booklet 'governance' was defined as: 'exercise of authority, control, management of a country's economic and social resources for development'. It recognised, however, that this was too broad a concept for the Bank's own needs, so it offered an alternative, narrower definition: 'the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development.'[9]

Thus 'good governance' largely means encouraging the conditions that will allow this to take place within individual countries. It means trying to incubate conditions that will encourage foreigners to trade with and invest in these countries.   There are roughly four different dimensions to this process:

-   government accountability, an efficient public administration and public participation, generating legitimate public authority
-   freedom from corruption in business and public administration
-   governmental transparency and public access to information
-   a legal and rights-based framework

In fact all of these conditions are inter-linked and all of them could be associated with democratisation too. Let us consider each of them in turn:

Accountability and Legitimacy. In 1997 the World Bank published its annual Development Report with the title *The State in a Changing World*.   This outlined the new priority of concentrating upon the state and its policies as crucial elements in a strategy to encourage economic development. True, one of the chief pieces of evidence that it cited for this policy innovation was a large-scale survey of foreign investors. This was used to highlight the things that discouraged or hindered foreign investment. So the criterion was not the views of the citizenry of a given country, nor the extent to which a government's policies were accountable to

a parliament, but rather of the views of outsiders. Nevertheless, this would not matter insofar as it could be assumed that foreign and domestic investors would share many of the same concerns.

The main thrust of the recommendations was summarised as a two-part task: 'The first task is to match the state's role to its existing capability – to establish the institutional rules and norms that will enable the state to provide collective goods and services efficiently. The second is to reinvigorate the state's capability through rules, partnerships and competitive pressures outside and within the state.'[10]

Chapter 7 of this Report argued: 'A state that ignores the needs of large sections of the population in setting and implementing policy is not a capable state.'[11] It went on to outline various strategies for enhancing accountability through participation (whether through elections or through the activities of NGOs) and decentralisation to grass-roots levels as ways of enhancing social capital.

Potentially these policies could be viewed as destabilising and intrusive by governments that would feel threatened by such an endorsement of increased participation on economic grounds. East Asian states which had managed to achieve very high and sustained growth rates had not been noted for high levels of participation. Nor had they found a great deal of difficulty in attracting foreign investors. Nevertheless the rationale that the World Bank offered was not the moral superiority of democracy over authoritarianism, but rather the increased effectiveness of the public sector as a way of enhancing appeals to foreign investors.

Critics suggested that this account of what countries needed to do was an over-simplification and idealistic. One claimed on the basis of Latin American experience that the Bank's emphasis upon enhancing grass-roots participation as a check upon excessive power of the state could in certain circumstances be counter-productive. It might prevent a radical reforming government from carrying through necessary reforms. Disgruntled representatives of the old way of doing things might take advantage of their participation to obstruct reforms. So, unusually, the Bank's notion of good governance was criticised for being antithetical to strong executive power.[12]

Not surprisingly, governments in several East Asian countries have been similarly disturbed by this external encouragement for criticism from below. Whilst they accept the need to weed out corruption in administration, they tend to aim instead at 'good government', i.e. more efficient and honest administration.

Freedom from Corruption. Especially since the financial crisis of 1997, East Asian governments have been repeatedly criticised for tolerating large-scale corruption, 'crony capitalism', etc. These complaints have come both from the IMF, foreign investors, and also their own citizens who have lost heavily. Nor is this criticism confined to countries that were badly hit by the financial crisis. President Jiang Zemin of China, for instance, regularly complains that corruption is the most serious challenge facing communist rule. A substantial literature is developing on corruption in the region.[13]

There is no doubt that this is perceived to be a serious problem for doing business in Asia. According to the most recent survey by Transparency International, Asian countries figured towards the bottom of their Bribe Payers Index. This survey covered 19 countries in Western Europe and East Asia. It was based upon evidence collected from a number of multinational corporations. Singapore was the first Asian country to appear, and that was only in 11th place, whilst Japan and Malaysia were 14th and 15th. Italy came 16th, but then Taiwan, South Korea and the Peoples Republic of China (incl. Hong Kong) came 17th, 18th and 19th.

Transparency International also compiles a general Corruption Index of 100 countries. Most recently Singapore came 7th and Hong Kong joint 15th. But Japan was joint 25th, Taiwan joint 28th, Malaysia joint 32nd, South Korea joint 50th, Philippines joint 54th, the PRC joint 58th, Thailand joint 68th, India joint 72nd, Vietnam joint 75th, Pakistan joint 87th, and Indonesia joint 96th, only followed by Nigeria and Cameroon.[14]

Yet although there is widespread condemnation for 'corruption', there is no agreed definition of what exactly it is. An early attempt came from Huntington: 'Corruption thrives on disorganization, the absence of stable relationships among groups and of recognized patterns of authority… Corruption is most prevalent in state which lack effective political parties, in societies where the interests of the individual, the family, the clique or the clan predominate. In a modernizing polity the weaker and less accepted the political parties, the greater the likelihood of corruption.'[15]

However, this focuses too much on the role of politics in encouraging and protecting corruption. Another academic approach focuses upon the dichotomy between public and private interests. Perhaps the best-known definition of this type was Nye's: 'Corruption is behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding (personal, close, family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private regarding influence.'[16]

This is a definition that could fit well, for instance, the substance of complaints by Chinese leaders about cadres who allowed themselves to become suborned from the goals of the party. It would also apply to public officials elsewhere.

Unfortunately, however, it will not fit the circumstances of corruption in business. An alternative type of definition focuses on the economic incentives that lead to 'corruption', i.e. rent-seeking, which stands in the way of the efficiency of the market. This certainly is more appropriate for business environments. But it, too, faces a problem particularly typical of East Asian societies, namely the principle of using gifts to elicit 'humanity' (*ren*) or 'human' relationships from a counterpart.[17] In such societies, where is the line to be drawn between this kind of 'humanity' and corruption?

Here Pye offers a different criterion. He suggests that it is primarily the scale of corruption that provokes condemnation. It was this that provoked the backlash in Japan against at least some of the practices of politicians who had previously been assumed to be raising funds in a traditional fashion, Japanese-style. Ordinary Japanese 'knew' corruption when they saw too much of it.[18]

The conclusion is therefore that most people are opposed to 'corruption', but the concept of corruption may vary according to cultures. This certainly implies that it is difficult for people from outside a given society to give guidelines on what to condemn. Those inside a society will condemn it when it seems excessive. In this sense anti-corruption activity can be a form of democratic participation, since it is a judgement that reflects the collective view of large sections of society. It does not necessarily require democratic institutions to be implemented, though this may help. Governor Patten in Hong Kong, for instance, explicitly linked his proposals for democratising the Legislative Council there to the need to ensure greater openness and discourage official corruption. On the other hand, democratic institutions do not in themselves guarantee an absence of corruption, as the recent history of Venezuela shows.

Thus insofar as good governance policies aim at reducing and eradicating corruption, it would be helpful to try to arrive at a commonly agreed definition of what 'corruption' is. This would require constructive inputs from the countries where it is supposed to exist. And those would best be achieved by trying to solicit advice from governments as well as from grass-roots NGOs (who may be better able to perceive it) and from academics familiar with the cultures. It may also be helpful to encourage study of societies which are reported to have been successful in overcoming corruption (e.g. Singapore, Hong Kong), and how they have achieved it, so that good governance policies might embody their experience.

Transparency. Even if it is very difficult to pin down corruption, there is no doubt that one feature of it is its covert nature. Whether it is public officials or businessmen, they wish to keep the relationship secret. So some of the effort in trying to control corruption should be directed to increasing transparency.

As far as business is concerned, the NGO Transparency International is trying to develop a network of chapters throughout the world that will help to develop systems for business relationships that will make corruption more difficult and hopefully get rid of it. In government aid donors, whether agencies of national governments or international agencies, also encourage openness and the design of administrative systems that will make information more easily available, not least because it may benefit their own nationals who wish to do business there.

But the increasingly the Internet will make information more widely available as governments adopt it to make administration more efficient. Whether or not they explicitly adopt this as an objective, governments will find that putting documents on the Web will make information spread more widely. Even the Chinese authorities, as they announced that 1999 was to be the year when government was to go on-line, stated increased 'transparency' (*toumingdu*) as one of their objectives.[19] Of course, not everything will get put on the Web and the change will be gradual. Nevertheless even the fact of making some documents more widely available will help to reduce the possibilities of misrepresentation and misinformation.

Legal and Rights-Based Frameworks. Lastly there is the emphasis upon encouraging states to develop a 'rule of law' and implement international legal conventions which they have signed. The importance of a rule of law is that: a) it provides greater predictability in the state's dealings with society; b) it can provide a check on politicians provided they are not treated as though they

are above the law; and c) it can also provide reassurance to foreign traders and investors, who may be concerned about avenues of redress if their contracts are broken by the other side. So it is regarded as socially, morally and economically desirable.

As for the international conventions, these are primarily the UN Conventions on economic and social, political and civil rights. Although these are sometimes viewed in the Third World as inappropriate to their particular conditions, the fact that these are precisely UN Conventions and therefore of universal validity is crucial. If countries are criticised because they fail to observe these conventions, then it is not surprising that states should raise the more general question of their willingness to observe other international conventions. International legal frameworks and conventions help to provide stability and predictability in an otherwise potentially anarchic world.

7.   Good governance or democratisation

In practice there is considerable overlap between the broader definition of 'good governance' offered above by the World Bank and 'democratisation'. For example, in 1994 the OECD came out with an alternative overarching concept that contained the following five dimensions:

- participatory development
- democratisation
- good governance, including the rule of law, public sector management, controlling corruption and reducing military expenditure
- human rights
- coherence and co-ordination of donor policies.[20]

Here democratisation and participatory development are given a much higher profile than in the World Bank's definition quoted earlier. In fact, what is striking about this list of dimensions of good governance is that most focus on areas that are not explicitly 'economic', although with the exception of 'democratisation' they are subsequently broken down to include economic objectives.

More recently the World Bank has been developing a Comprehensive Development Framework, which is intended to direct future assistance programmes. The main principles are:

- The country, not assistance agencies, should own its development strategy, determining the goals, timing and sequencing of its development programmes.
- Governments need to build partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, assistance agencies and the organisations of civil society to define development needs and implement programmes.
- A long-term, collective vision of needs and solutions should be articulated that will draw sustained national support.
- Structural and social concerns should be treated equally and contemporaneously with macroeconomic and financial concerns.[21]

This is clearly intended to respond to complaints from recipient countries over the intrusiveness of foreign aid agencies and their imposition of external priorities. The idea of

countries themselves being the 'owners' of their development programmes is fundamental. At the same time, however, it is not difficult to foresee that there will be corresponding pressures on recipient governments to demonstrate their accountability for the use of resources. There is a certain 'aid fatigue' in Western countries, i.e. a feeling that too much has been given to developing states in aid, with little or at any rate inadequate effect. This feeling may well be exacerbated by the information that is beginning to leak out about the sums that have been 'lost' in Russia. The scale of reported losses there, if true, will dwarf those in other parts of the world. If individuals are perceived to enriched themselves enormously at the same time as democracy has been fatally wounded and Russian criminal gangs have established prominent positions in the international drugs trade etc, there may well be an even greater reaction against aid programmes.[22]

At the very least this means that international aid agencies will be under even greater pressure to demonstrate the accountability of aid recipients over the resources they have received. And in turn they will go outside governments and turn to grass-roots organisations, NGOs and the press or media to gain information on possible misuses of funds. In time that will also increase transparency and the development of institutions that will support further democratisation. Hopefully, too, they will take advantage of the Internet to publicise their activities and the use of the resources, as well as the outcomes. That in itself will inform sections of civil society about what happens within their own state and enable them to make a stronger voice.

This raises the question of what other governmental and non-governmental institutions might themselves do to facilitate change. Do they have to follow in, say, the World Bank's footsteps? Clearly the fact that the World Bank has large resources of its own, and in addition tries to use them to leverage even larger co-operative programmes with other aid-giving institutions, means that it drags a lot of programmes along in its broad wake. There is also an extensive literature on aid issues that emphasises the damage done to recipient countries by different aid agencies pursuing contradictory objectives. Whether or not the World Bank's objectives and policies are ideal, at the very least it would be better for them to set a lot of the parameters for other forms of aid.

However, equally obvious, international financial institutions such as the World Bank have a particular difficulty, in that they are explicitly prevented from involving themselves in 'politics'. So the concept of 'good governance' is the closest that they can come to attempting to affect political realities and structures in individual countries. Individual countries will not necessarily have the same problems if they set out to encourage more explicitly political change and it does not seem unreasonable that they should provide assistance and advice to countries or institutions that wish to develop a democratic tradition. But because such activities may antagonise governments that feel threatened or undermined by this, it makes more sense for such assistance to be provided by 'arm's-length' institutions or foundations, such as those associated with political parties in Germany and France, or the Westminster Foundation in Britain.

At any rate, one general conclusion that is said to come out of the American experience of aid for democratisation abroad is the need to take the long-term view and, as far as possible to sequence the stages. At best progress can only be slow and incremental at best.[23]

Openness and the Future

For a few countries in Asia there will continue to be a need and an opportunity for assistance with basic democratic institutions such as election organisation, e.g. Cambodia, Laos and (possibly at some time in the future) Vietnam, Burma, North Korea, Pakistan. No doubt there will continue to be support for village-level and possibly higher-level elections in China. And there will also be support for party organisational development in individual countries. But for most Asian countries this is unlikely to be a major form of external assistance. Most countries already have the basic democratic institutions in place.

After a survey of US programmes to assist democratisation, Carothers argued that in practice these had been conducted without much reference to US economic aid programmes. Partly that was because of the difficulty of integrating the ideas behind the programmes, and partly it was because the respective officials feared being taken over by the others.[24]

One suggestion for at least a partial synthesis is precisely the objective of 'openness'. This has the advantage that it is a value in both democratic and market systems. Openness is the first objective of democratic participation, although it is not the ultimate objective since it is expected to permeate decision-making as well. And both in politics and economics, openness can help to combat corruption, although there is no neat correlation between democracy and lack of corruption. If we compare the indexes of Transparency International and Freedom House, we find that Japan, Taiwan, South Korea are ranked ahead of Singapore for freedom, but behind Singapore for corruption. The PRC is ahead of the Philippines for lack of corruption, but behind it for lack of freedom. Nevertheless the fact of having the same value as a policy objective, whether in politics or economics, means that it can be applied in a lot of different circumstances, with the particular emphasis varying according to local conditions.

Some countries may fear that increased openness will be used for exploitation by foreigners, as in the colonial era. And there are occasions when governments are able to introduce change by being less than completely open about their long-term objectives.[25] But increasing openness will be a feature of government in the future anyway, as long as those governments are committed to increasing integration into the world economy and global trade and investment flows. This is a process that will gather momentum as countries seek to collect the economic benefits of using the Internet for business. Several in East Asia have embraced this with enthusiasm. Indeed some countries in the region have already experienced the impact of the Internet in opening up society. And it is possible to think of using the Internet actively to encourage democratisation.[26] Within the US there are increasing pressures for a policy on information or openness to be made an explicit part of the US aid efforts. For example, a recent study for the Rand Corporation of the Chiapas events in Mexico suggested that it was the efforts of NGOs inside Mexico, and the computers that they helped to distribute, that made a crucial

difference in the impact of the uprising on world public opinion, as well as in limiting the ability of the state simply to suppress it.[27]

And one of the lessons of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia is the possible use of the Internet to keep alive criticism of human rights abuses from within the country, despite attempts at repression.[28] A recommendation by a journalist from Serbia coming out of that experience is that, to take advantage of the potential of the Internet, domains and web-sites should be created that aim at helping to open societies, resolve conflicts, combat censorship and create societies that are politically and economically liberal. So citizens in mixed societies or those where conflict is imminent, should be provided with access to electronic mail free or as inexpensively as possible. And to enable this to happen, NGOs should be provided with facilities for training to make use of it.

Others, e.g. the leaders of China, argue that it is more important to ensure the supply of basic means of life – food, water, etc., than to concentrate upon human rights and democracy. Only when that has been achieved does democracy become appropriate. There is a lot of validity in such claims. But now most states in Asia have gone beyond that. It has become more difficult to say that democracy is a value that still has to be subordinated to the priorities of economic development. And societies may also find that increased popular participation may be compensation in times of economic hardship. That at any rate helps to explain the surprising success of democratisation in Eastern and Central Europe at a time of economic downturn.

But at the same time it is important to appreciate that the effectiveness of these policies does depend on the co-operation of recipient governments. As the policy-making literature emphasises, implementation is a key element in the policy process. To a large extent this is outside the control of the donor countries or agencies. If the recipients are unenthusiastic, then the policy is likely to be ineffective. Many of the states in East Asia already have the basic democratic institutions. Offering electoral assistance to Malaysia, for instance, would be unlikely to be welcomed. So the principle of increasing openness would be more likely to be attractive, not least since it could be linked to enhancing opportunities for business with the outside world. One of the advantages of a policy of encouraging openness through information technology, would be that it would also contribute to the increased familiarity with the technology more widely within society and to increased opportunities for making use of it in business, government administration, etc.

At any rate, it is extremely important for good governance policies to work that consideration be given to ways in which recipients themselves become enthusiastic about implementing them. Carothers makes the following point: 'Assistance will not succeed at all if it is not matched by a clear will for reform on the part of the recipient government.'[29] The Canadian example of giving rewards, rather than imposing sanctions, is more likely to bring results, especially as aid policies for democratisation at best are going to be limited in effect and are not in themselves likely to be enough to 'make' societies democratic that would otherwise be reluctant. Most long-term benefit is likely to come if recipients feel that these policies are as much 'theirs' as those of aid-givers. And certainly aid-givers should try to give special attention to efforts at increased democratisation and better governance that emerge from within developing countries.[30]

Conclusion

Finally let me recapitulate the main suggestions for future programmes of democratic and good governance assistance in Asia:

- emphasis upon the implementation of UN covenants
- encouraging a stronger and more just legal framework
- encouraging greater openness in the practice of business and politics, e.g. through the Internet
- developing through consultation frameworks for measuring progress in democratisation and in reducing corruption, both of which should include inputs from within aid-recipient countries, NGOs and academics as well as governments
- consideration should be given to including progress in reducing gender discrimination as an indicator of democratisation
- treating aid policies for economic and democratic development together rather than separately.

Not all of these need to be seen as essential for all the states in Asia. Some would be more relevant to some than others. But they would all enhance even a basically democratic regime.

APPENDIX: [*] **Thirty indices of democracy**

A The Electoral Process
1. How far is the appointment to legislative and governmental office determined by popular election, on the basis of open competition, universal suffrage and secret ballot?

2. How independent of government and party control are the election and procedures of voter registration, and how free from intimidation and bribery is the process of election itself?

3. How effective a range of choice and information does the electoral and party system allow the voters, and is there fair and equal access for all parties and candidates to the media and other means of communication with them, and an overall balance in the treatment of the various parties and candidates by the media?

4. To what extent do the votes of all electors carry equal weight, and how far is there equal effective opportunity to stand for public office, regardless of which social group a person belongs to?

5. What proportion of the electorate actually votes, and how closely does the composition of parliament reflect the choices actually made by the electorate?

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[*] From: Beetham, 'Key Principles and Indices for a Democratic Audit', pp.36-9.

B Open and Accountable Government?

6. How systematic and open to public scrutiny are the procedures for government consultation of public opinion and of relevant interests in the formation and implementation of policy and legislation?

7. How accessible are elected politicians to approach by their electors, and how effectively do they represent constituents' interests?

8. How effective and open to scrutiny is the control exercised by elected politicians over the non-elected personnel and organs of the state?

9. How extensive are the powers of parliament to oversee legislation and public expenditure, and to scrutinise the executive; and how effectively are they exercised in practice?

10. How accessible to the public is information about what the government does, and about the effects of its policies, and how independent is it of the government's own information machine?

11. How publicly accountable are elected representatives for their private interests and sources of income that are relevant to the performance of their public office, and the process of election to it?

12. How far are the courts able to ensure that the executive obeys the rule of law; and how effective are their procedures for ensuring that all public institutions and officials are subject to the rule of law in the performance of their functions?

13. How independent is the judiciary from the executive, and from all forms of interference; and how far is the administration of law subject to effective public scrutiny?

14. How readily can a citizen gain access to the courts, ombudsman or tribunals for redress in the event of mal-administration or the failure of government or public bodies to meet their legal responsibilities, and how effective are the means of redress available?

15. How far are appointments and promotions within public institutions subject to equal opportunities procedures, and do conditions of service infringe employees' civil rights?

16. How far do the arrangements for government below the level of the central state satisfy popular requirements of accessibility and responsiveness?

17. To what extent does sub-central government have the powers to carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the wishes of its own electorate, and without interference from the centre?

18. How far does any supra-national level of government meet the criteria of popular control and political equality, whether through national parliaments or through representative institutions of its own?

C. Civil and Political Rights

19. How clearly does the law define the civil and political rights and liberties of the citizen, and how effectively are they defended?

20. How secure are citizens in the exercise of their civil and political rights and liberties; and how far is their equal enjoyment of them constrained by social, economic or other factors?

21. How well developed are voluntary associations for the advancement and monitoring of citizens' rights, and how free from harassment are they?

22. How effective are procedures for informing citizens of their rights, and for educating future citizens in the exercise of them?

23. How free from arbitrary discrimination are the criteria for admission of refugees or immigrants to live within the countries and how readily can those so admitted obtain equal rights of citizenship?

D. Civil Society

24. How effectively are the major institutions of civil society subject to external regulation in the public interest?

25. How easy is it for the citizen to gain redress if his or her vital interests are damaged by the activities of such institutions?

26. To what extent are the major institutions of civil society subject to control internally by their own members, employees or beneficiaries?

27. How widespread is political participation in all its forms: how representative of different sections of society is it; and how far is it limited by social, economic or other factors?

28. How open are the media to access from all sections of opinion and social groups, and how effectively do they operate as a balanced forum for informed political debate?

29. How far do the traditions and culture of society support the basic democratic principles of popular control and political equality?

30. To what extent do people have confidence in the ability of the political system to solve the main problems confronting society, and in their own ability to influence it?

NOTES

[1] Edward Mansfield & Jack Snyder, 'Democratization and War', *Foreign Affairs*, 74(3), 1995, pp.79-97.

[2] For an updated version, see Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, Conn: Yale UP, 1989).

3   See, for example, Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully (eds), *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995), p.22.

4   For examples, see Peter Ferdinand (ed.), *The Internet, Democracy and Democratization* (a special issue of *Democratization* to appear in 2000).

5   Chan Heng Chee, 'Democracy: Evolution and Implementation. An Asian Perspective', in Robert Bartley et al (eds), *Democracy & Capitalism: Asian & American Perspectives* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies,1993), pp.21-4.

6   Quoted in Stephanie Lawson, 'Culture, Democracy and Political Conflict Management in Asia and the Pacific: An Agenda for Research', *Pacific Review* 6(2), 1994, pp.91-2.

7   For a detailed but still not entirely complete explanation of how Freedom House compiles its index, see: http://freedomhouse.org/survey99/method/

8   David Beetham, 'Key Principles and Indices for a Democratic Audit', in David Beetham (ed), *Defining & Measuring Democracy* (London: Sage 1994), pp.25-43.

9   *Governance and Development* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1991), p.3.

10   *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World* (NY & Oxford for the World Bank: OUP, 1997)

11   ibid., p.110

12   George Philip, 'The Dilemmas of Good Governance: a Latin American Perspective', *Government & Opposition* 1998, pp.226-42.

13   See for example Jon Moran, 'Patterns of Corruption and Development in East Asia', *Third World Quarterly*, 20(3), 1999, pp.569-87; and Fiona Robertson-Snape, 'Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism in Indonesia', ibid., pp.589-602.

14   http://www.transparency.de/documents/cpi/index.html

15   Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Have, Conn: Yale UP, 1968), p.71.

16   J.S. Nye, 'Corruption: a Cost-Benefit Analysis', *American Political Science Review,* LXI(2), 1967, p.419.

17   For examples of the complexity to which this can give rise, see Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Gifts, Favors and Banquets: the Art of Social Relationships in China* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1994).

18   Lucian W. Pye, 'Money Politics and Transitions to Democracy in East Asia', *Asian Survey,* XXXVII(3), 1997, pp.217-8.

19   See http://www.gov.cn/news/xinw2.htm

20   'DAC orientations on participatory development and good governance' (OECD Working Papers, No.2, Paris: OECD, 1994), cited in Peter Nunnenkamp, 'What Donors Mean By Good Governance', (*IDS Bulletin*, vol.26, no.2, 1995, pp.9-16).

21   *Entering the 21st Century: World Development Report 1999/2000* (Oxford and NY: OUP for the World Bank, 1999), p.21

22   For a devastating account of the failures of Western aid policies towards Eastern Europe and especially the Former Soviet Union, see Janine R. Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998). This also has lessons for Western aid policies in general.

23   Thomas Carothers, 'Recent US Experience with Democracy Promotion', *IDS Bulletin*, vol.26, no.2, 1995, pp.62-9.

[24] Thomas Carothers, 'Democracy Assistance: the Question of Strategy', *Democratization* , 4(3), 1997, pp.129-30.

[25] Robert S. Jenkins, 'Liberal Democracy and the Political Management of Structural Adjustment in India: Conceptual Tensions in the Good Government Agenda', *IDS Bulletin*, vol.26, no.2, 1995, pp.37-48.

[26] See Dana Ott and Melissa Rosser, 'The Electronic Republic? The Role of the Internet in Promoting Democracy in Africa', in Peter Ferdinand (ed), *The Internet, Democracy and Democratisation*.

[27] David Ronfeldt, John Arquilla, Graham Fuller and Melissa Fuller, _The Zapatista 'Social Netwar' in Mexico_ (Santa Monica: Rand, 1998),

[28] For a graphic account of the attempt to keep the dissident radio station B92 alive inside Serbia using the Internet, see www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/balkan/Matic0299.html

[29] Carothers, 'Recent US Experience with Democracy Promotion', p.67.

[30] Nunnenkamp, 'What Donors Mean by Good Governance', p.13.