CHAPTER V

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asian nations, with the exception of Thailand, got Independence from colonial rules in the backdrop of, more or less, intense nationalist struggles. The ideas and institutions of liberal democracy found considerable appeal among the leaders and intelligentsia. But their democratic experiments proved to be short-lived. The trend was initiated by Indonesia towards the end of 1950s where, in a gradual shift “fifty percent plus one” democracy was replaced by “Guided Democracy” of Sukarno and later, by the same logic, even his brand of semi-democracy had to pave way for authoritarian rule of Suharto, which continued for three decades. One of the reasons for authoritarian takeover in Indonesia was the threat of communism. The same threat was invoked by democratically twice-elected Marcos in Philippines who towards the end of his second term, imposed Martial Law in 1972 and established himself at the helm as dictator. His idea of “constitutional authoritarianism” was marked by importance of stability over participatory politics.¹ In Malaysia, the complex numerical configuration of three principal ethnic group and economic imbalance between the majority and minority communities imposed limits from the very beginning upon the liberal progress in an otherwise fully functional democracy. The same problem along with extremely small size, easily facilitated the practice of single party rule in Singapore.

Immature, fragile and non-secular political culture and lack of institutionalization of democratic procedures was attributed behind the collapse of

democratic regimes after the Second World War. Lucian Pye contrasted two conceptions of authority in Southeast Asia. While one was influence by colonial tradition, the other was rooted in indigenous cultural traditions. Initially, the former prevailed but during the course of time, in the absence of structured institutional support, the latter revived. Sukarno took the lead in this respect when he abandoned the liberal democratic structures in favour of patrimonial rule (Guided Democracy) based on the traditional principles of muafaqat, musjawarah and gotong-royong.

A brief description of the process of political development followed by the important polities of Southeast Asia is imperative for the purpose of present analysis to arrive at generalizations and of delineate the model of political development in Southeast Asia, if any.

Thailand

The political development in Thailand has followed far more complicated trajectory than any other country in the region. It was the only country to escape European colonialism. It was not influenced by the foreign factors to the same degree in its political development as was the case with other nations of the region. There was no particular external power whose model could be copied or which could induce political changes in the political system of Thailand, unlike Malaysia or Philippines, which decisively modelled their political systems on the British and American patterns, respectively. The traditional institutions and practices were not abruptly thrown out or given up. The political process and political culture of the country is constantly evolving and maturing on the path of democratization, though, with occasional setbacks. The process of political development in the country is not

unilinear or unidirectional. Whatever be its course, the process is relatively self-directed as can be expected in societies with non-colonial background.

The initial modernization drive undertaken by the kings Mongkut (1851-68) and Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) had unleashed modernization currents in the society and produced a group of educated people who could not be easily excluded from power sharing.\(^4\) A coalition of soldiers and intellectuals engineered a bloodless coup d’etat in 1932 that radically altered the political landscape of the country.\(^5\) Although, it did not ushered in the persistence of democracy, yet changed altogether the character of monarchy viz., from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy. Monarchy has survived since then but in limited sense only.\(^6\) Therefore, 1932 can be considered as a watershed year in Thailand’s political development. Political activism expanded considerably after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy. Thais were led by People’s Party led by Pridi Phanomyong. It received considerable support from the workers and students. A constitution was proclaimed which provided for unicameral national legislature but half of its members were to be appointed by the executive. It guaranteed universal suffrage to men and women, but various elections were excluded from exercising it. Elections were held next year. The debates in the first National Assembly were quite vigorous and illuminating reflecting the broadening of political space. However, the monarchists attempted an armed rebellion but could not find public support and were defeated by the government.\(^7\) However, the conflict between the monarchists and the democrats did not end. It continued with low intensity, which gave military increasing space, conversely, narrowing down the free democratic

space. By 1938, the military firmly established its control. The military had tasted the political power and now, was in search of directly controlling the political system. The military regime started introducing policies which smacked of increasing authoritarianism. It cooperated with Japanese. The soldiers and bureaucrats were appointed to the legislature in large numbers and were also given dominant role in the executive organs of the government.

With the end of second world war, Phibun, The Prime Minister/ a military man, stood discredited and was succeeded by his longtime chief civilian adversary, Pridi Phanomyong. Thus, civilian rule was re-established. A new constitution was proclaimed in 1946 providing for bi-cameralism, with the lower house popularly elected and the members of the upper house elected by the lower house. Pridi got substantial legislative majority in the elections held under the new constitution in 1946. However, he once again entered into rift with the royalists after first coopting them. By mid-1946, the assassination of King Mahidol forced Pridi's resignation. It created once again a situation for the military to intervene. The military under the leadership of his old rival Phibun staged third successful coup d'état, in November 1947. The next decade might be considered one of clear-cut military rule despite the retention of semi-parliamentary framework. Phibun, though less dominant now, was able to maintain his position by coopting military and police officers into important government positions. Thus, strong foundations of military-bureaucratic polity were laid down. Although, his cabinet was technically responsible to the lower House of the Parliament, half of the members of that House were government appointees.

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
Press was relatively free during those days. Due to intra-elite conflicts and public discontentment, Phibun’s position started weakening and he embarked on the process of democratizing the polity. Elections were held in 1957, which were widely contested amidst high-level political debates. Phibun’s party won the elections by a narrow margin for the elected-half of the national legislature. However, the charges of corruption against the government, a thin margin of victory for elected seats and growing public discontent provided a pretext to the military to stage another coup under the leadership of General Sarit Thanarat.

Sarit abolished the constitutional regime by abolishing the Constitution and the Parliament, outlawing political parties and unions, and putting curbs on the Press. A fully authoritarian regime was established accompanied by persecution of political opponents and communists, and curbs on all sorts of political activism. Thus, while the Thai public was pressing for more responsible government what it got, finally, as a result of yet another military coup was absolute authoritarian government. Tremendous changes took place in Thai politics and economy during Sarit’s regime, but not certainly in the direction of democratization of public policy or political culture. Sarit won the support of royalists and civil servants. The model of bureaucratic polity was consolidated during his regime. He resurrected the prestige of monarchy embodying a paternalistic notion of representation. After Sarit’s death in 1963, authoritarian rule continued for another decade under General Thanom Kitticachorn and General Prapass Charusathiarana. Anti-communism provided the

13. Ibid.
rationale for the maintenance of repressive policies by the military regimes during the
1960’s, which also got support from the US.

Thus, except for a brief interlude during mid-1940’s the military continued to
rule with the help of efficient Civil Service. Wilson argues that a combination of
Military and bureaucrats dominated the political system completely during the 1950’s.
He gives a cultural explanation for the apolitical masses and politicized bureaucracy.
He explained that the culture of deference to the authority and Buddhism stifled the
development of strong political interest among the masses, leaving enough scope for
the politicized elite to dominate the political system.\textsuperscript{16} In a later work, Riggs
characterized Thailand’s society as “prismatic” which lies somewhere between the
two ideal types identified by him as traditional or “fused” society at one side of the
political spectrum and the modern or “diffracted” society at the other. By “prismatic,”
he meant bureaucratic polity which could be defined as a system of government that is
neither traditional nor modern in character.\textsuperscript{17} Riggs agreed with Wilson that
bureaucracy along with military was in total control of the system. The bureaucratic
forces were able to dominate the system, according to Riggs, because the
modernization and differentiation in bureaucracy had occurred at a much quicker pace
than in the other organs or components of the polity.\textsuperscript{18}

With the end of the Indo-China war, the US commitment and support to
military regime declined. People had openly started demanding the widening of
democratic space and responsible government. A new constitution was promulgated
in 1968 and the elections followed under the new constitution, for the first time since
1957. However, these elections were marred by accusations of rigging. The campaign

\textsuperscript{17} F.W. Riggs, \textit{Thailand: op.cit.}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid}, p. 32.
for increased political participation continued. Much of the increased political activism involved students and academics not the political parties as such. Finally in October 1973, students’ led demonstrations brought hundreds of thousands onto the Bangkok streets and broke the pernicious cycle of authoritarian military bureaucratic rule. The uprising won the support of the common citizens and the king. The uprising, though, partly accidental, was caused by an interplay of various forces and factors. A new pluralistic constitution with accountability safeguards was demanded.

A civilian government was established. The powers of the lower House were increased and all of its members were now to be elected by the people. Political parties were given the freedom to organize and contest the elections. The 1975 elections were contested by as many as forty two political parties. However, the civilian rule lasted for three years only viz., 1973-76. This period witnessed intense political competition, rivalry, conflict and instability. The governments changed frequently, resulting in the failure to maintain effective controls. The conflict between the Right and the Left intensified. Although, the democratic space created by the civilian rule was the widest ever experienced in Thailand, the parliamentary regime failed to maintain it. Inflation, unrest, disorder and frequent labour strikes plagued Thailand. A military coup was staged in October 1976. Anti-communism was one of the logic of the coup as the communist regimes had triumphantly seized power in the neighbouring Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The authoritarianism was re-established.

Because of democratization of political culture during the brief three-year democratic interregnum, Thai politics quite opened up. Although, it continued to be

ruled by military-bureaucratic apparatus, ordinary citizens had tasted participation in politics and in the process acquired new democratic values. Therefore, the emergent democratic space could not be totally ignored by the subsequent military regimes. Under the democratic constitution of 1974, the government and military officials were for the first time excluded from politics unless they resigned their positions. The prime minister was to be an elected member of the lower House of the Parliament, with the Cabinet accountable to the lower House. The upper House was to be appointed by the President of the Privy Council (the body of senior advisers to the king) rather than by the Military.21

The Thai politics could not return to the old roots. A new constitution was promulgated in 1978, which had more longevity and stability than the earlier constitutions. (It was abrogated in 1991 by another coup). Since 1978, the governments led by military rulers made certain deliberate attempts to loosen the authoritarianism which has been called by some analysts as a period of semi-democracy.22 It was a blend of Western-style, parliamentary-procedural democracy and the authoritarian values developed over a long period in Thai political culture that buttressed military involvement in governmental business. Former General, Prem Tinsulanand remained the Prime Minister from 1980 to 1988. During his regime, evolution towards democratic norms and procedures took place, uninterrupted. Although, he enjoyed support of the important military factions as he had earlier served as commander-in-chief of the Army and later as defence minister, too. He forged a power-sharing compact between military-bureaucracy and political parties. The civilian-dominated legislature was given precedence in the formulation and

21. Ibid. p. 32.
approval of policies. Political parties operated freely and the Press was also free in publishing conflicting viewpoints. During 1978-1991, the country witnessed four general elections as well as tremendous political stability.\textsuperscript{23}

The most visible sign of democratization in Thailand under 1978-Constitution was the ascendancy to prime ministership of the first elected member of Parliament since 1976, Chatichai Choonhawan who became Prime Minister following the 1988 Elections, even without the backing of military. He formed a coalition government after his party received the largest number of seats in the lower House of the legislature. In the earlier Prem regime, the decision-making and policy continued to be concentrated in the hands of military-bureaucratic complex, while the popularly elected politicians were increasingly accommodated into the system. The Chatchai administration, emphasized the dominance of elected representatives and asserted civilian control over the military. Due to coalition arrangement, however, the corruption increased and the newspapers published the cases of corruption against various cabinet ministers. Still, the Press was not curbed. Although, the rampant corruption was the proclaimed legitimizing logic behind the military coup in 1991, the more direct reason was the exclusion of military in some important aspects of decision-making and the attempt to subordinate it to civilian control.\textsuperscript{24} In February 1991, Army commander-in-chief, Suchinda Kraprayoon staged a coup, dismissed the government and set up a temporary National Peace-Keeping Council (NPKC) with powers of martial law.\textsuperscript{25} The progress towards democratization was halted but some elements of earlier semi-democratic period could not be abandoned. The Army this time did not directly take control of the system. A civilian,

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{24} \textit{Ibid.}
\bibitem{25} \textit{Ibid.} p. 34.
\end{thebibliography}
Anand Panyarachun was appointed prime minister with the Cabinet consisting of technocrats, scholars and senior officials. The political parties were retained and a national legislature was installed retaining some old faces and other new appointees of the military to frame a new constitution. Anand's brief rule proved to be very efficient. He over facilitated the passage of new laws designed to streamline the bureaucracy and to promote economic development. However, he could not rein in the NPKC leaders who insisted that the proposed constitution should give the upper House (appointed members) powers equal to that of lower House (elected members) of the Parliament. Anand was not prepared to concede this ground to the military clique which could have constitutionally ensured political power directly into the hands of the military. The military leaders sponsored their own political party, Samakkhi Tham and enough money was pumped in. The March 1992 elections were notable for vote-buying, party switching and horse-trading.\(^{26}\) The pro-military political parties won the elections while the pro-democracy parties fared poorly, mainly because of the narrowed political space, excessive use of money in the elections and the rigging of elections. The coup leader, Suchinda, who had earlier refused to assume the premiership in case pro-military group won the elections became the Prime Minister and immediately stuffed all the higher appointments with his cronies and relatives. There were charges of use of money to buy offices also.\(^ {27}\)

The democratic ideals had taken strong roots in the political culture of Thailand by that time. Such an open disregard for established democratic norms and practices was not tolerated by the educated middle classes of Thailand. After just forty-eight days in office, massive demonstrations took place throughout the country.

\(^{26}\) Ibid. p. 34-35.
\(^{27}\) Ibid. p. 35.
against the Suchinda government. Finally, after the police-firing at demonstrators resulting in heavy casualties and injuries on May 18-21, 1992, the king Bhumipol Adulyade sided with the public and advised Suchinda to step down. Vast dissemination of information to the public through the modern means of communications helped people to rise to the occasion as they could not afford another stint of authoritarianism under military rulers when the outside world was democratizing. Suchinda stepped down and the king once again reverted to Anand to provide interim administration till the fresh elections could take place, which were scheduled for September 1992. Anand immediately carried out two important constitutional amendments, one requiring the Prime Minister to be an elected member of The Parliament, and the other, curtailing some powers of the military-dominated Senate. He also demoted some army officers from important political and administrative positions. The pro-democracy parties won the elections this time. The five-party coalition formed the next government choosing a civilian Chuan Leekpai who had proven to be a modest and honest long time leader of the Democratic Party.

This time, the shift towards democratization was far more decisive, concrete and irreversible, though marred by frequent elections and political instability during the initial phase. Although, the military was assigned its rightful place in the barracks and seemed reluctant to intervene in the political process again, the progress, so far, had not been entirely in the liberal directions, as the developments were to prove later. Thailand has still to come out completely from the illiberal mould which grips the southeast Asia in general. The Leekpai government started with great promises and started deepening the political reforms, and made some progress towards liberal democracy. However, as usual with coalition arrangements, this government was also

28. Ibid.
caught by charges of corruption and indulgence in unethical partnership. A major pro-
military political party, though led by a moderate, former prime minister Chatichai, Chat Pattana Party was brought into the coalition as a replacement for New Aspirations Party, which had opted out of the coalition. This decision of Leekpai more than any other, detracted his many democratic supporters. Sensing crisis, Leekpai called for snap elections in July 1995.

A decisive shift occurred in the composition of the ruling elite. The balance of power started gradually shifting from previous military-bureaucratic elite towards business elite.\textsuperscript{29} The capitalist development continued with sharpened pace during the 1990's. It provides a partial explanation for the loosening of military's hold over the political system and the growing clout of the elected representatives and the business class.\textsuperscript{30}

The July 1995 elections were vigorously contested among twelve political parties for 391 parliamentary seats. Again, no political party won the absolute majority. The largest number of seats were won by Chart Thai (Thai Nation) Party and its leader Banharn Silapa-Chara headed the coalition of seven political parties. The Democrats led by Leekpai sat in the opposition. The government collapsed soon amidst disagreement among the coalition partners. The opposition parties and some ruling coalition partners contemplated an alternative government. Banharn, however, proved to be too shrewd for them and instead of resigning himself (he had promised to resign in lieu of support at the no confidence motion) called for the dissolution of the House.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}
Fresh elections were held in November 1996. The money-use was more pronounced during these elections. The Campaign expenditure, including the illegitimate vote-buying was estimated at about 20 billion baht by the Thai Farmer’s Bank Research Centre. A lot of defections took place from the ruling Chart Thai Party, which helped the New Aspirations Party (NAP) to win the largest number of seats viz., 125, two seats more than its rival Democrat Party’s 123. The NAP leader Chavalit dropped Banharn’s chart Thai in favour of more popular Chart Pattana Party led by former prime minister, Chatichai Choochawan. The rest of the parties were retained in the coalition.

A Constitutional Drafting Assembly was convened in early 1997 consisted of academics, lawyers, NGO leaders and metropolitan business elite. A People’s Constitution was drafted by this Assembly aiming at durability of parliamentary governments, the decentralization of political power and eradicating the ills of vote-buying as well as party defections. The proposed charter encouraged horizontal accountability with parallel independent state agencies now proposed to be sharing the burden of governance and putting checks upon the government. The draft was the result of wide public consultations and had the strong backing across various sections of the public. When the constitution came up for adoption in the Parliament, it met with strong resistance by the government itself. The New Aspirations Party was dead against its adoption and was also joined by various vested interests including some elements of the military.

Amidst deadlock over the proposed constitution, the country was severely struck with the worst financial crisis in the mid-year. The currency collapsed, massive

32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
capital flight took place from the country, many financial institutions and corporations became insolvent and the government got bankrupt. The crisis which had just begun to erupt provided a much-needed impetus to the political-constitutional reforms. Forced by the circumstances, the ruling elite were encouraged to reorganize their relations on more conciliatory lines. They ultimately decided to cooperate on the passage of the constitution, of course, forced by the public outrage over the issue. The NAP-led government, meanwhile, contemplated declaration of state of emergency, but the military refused to cooperate this time - unthinkable for many observers of Thailand’s recent politics - “an important milestone in democratic persistence.”

The constitution was finally passed in September 1997 after a month of continuous debate and came into effect in May 1998. Shortly afterwards, Chavalit resigned. The country once again turned to Leekpai at the head of another fragile coalition to bring it out of the financial mess. The new Democrats-led government matched its political performance with the reforms in the financial sector. Fifty-six of the ninety-one financial companies were closed down. A US$ 17.2 billion loan ultimately bailed the country out of the financial mess. By 1999, Thailand was on the path to financial recovery.

The new constitution was reformist in nature. It brought sweeping changes to the political system. An independent Election Commission was set up to supervise and conduct the elections. Earlier, the Interior Ministry was performing that role, thus, inviting frequent allegations of poll-rigging. The multi-member constituencies were given up altogether and were replaced by single-member constituencies. The strength of House of Representatives was increased to 500 out of which 400 were to be

36. ibid.
directly elected by the people while the rest were to be elected by a proportional party-list system. However, the parties were required receive five percent of the total votes to qualify for representation on the basis of party-list. Thus, the uncontrolled proliferation of parties was averted. In addition, restrictions were placed on party defections. The candidates were also required to possess bachelor degree before contesting the elections. One of the far-reaching measures aimed at political stability was the provision of constructive no-confidence on the pattern of Germany’s constitution. The no-confidence motion can now be proposed by 200 members of the House and must be accompanied by the nomination of an alternative prime minister. To free the ministers from the pressures emanating from their local constituencies, they are required to resign their legislative seats upon entering the offices. They are also required to declare their personal assets before entering the office. The Senate, for the first time, has been made directly elected.

The constitution appears to be one of the most progressive written document in the region entailing provisions for a Human Rights Commission, an Ombudsman, Right freedom to Information, national health care, twelve years of public schooling, consumer rights, gender-equality and consultation with relevant NGOs over projects having environmental impact. It was widely believed that the application of the constitution will bring tremendous improvement in the quality of governance and the electoral process. Its reformist provisions were supposed to challenge the political behaviour and attitudes of vast number of entrenched sections in the society. It would test the resilience of the Thais to persist with, and further deepen, the democratic

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39. Ibid. The Constructive Motion of No-confidence, however, can guarantee legislative stability but not executive stability. In case of hung parliaments and immature political culture in coalition experiments, it can further lead to political instability at the Executive level as was experienced in France during 1946-1958.
experiment. Notwithstanding the authoritarian strands show no sign of loosening grip over the Thai political culture. Rather, the soft authoritarianism was re-introduced within the democratic framework by initially highly successful, but now discredited Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra.

The elections under the new constitution took place in January 2001. Thirty-seven parties competed for the 500 seats of the lower house and the voter turnout was unprecedented seventy percent.\(^4\) Thaksin, considered to be the richest man of Thailand made a blitzkrieg and successfully used his wealth as a springboard to rise in politics. He had since mid-1990’s served as foreign minister and twice as deputy prime minister, albeit for very brief stints. After abandoning the Palang Dharma Party in 1997, he founded his own political party that came to be known as Thai Rak Thai (Thai Loves Thai). Over the next two years, he used his vast wealth to attract a large number of sitting representatives from other parties, a practice known locally as \textit{duat} (the Suck). In order to hasten the extinction of smaller parties to ensure political stability, the Election Commission had relaxed anti-defection provisions for a brief period that benefited Thaksin’s party.\(^5\)

After consolidating his party machinery, Thaksin made many populist appeals to woo the voters across different sections of the society. He promised a national asset management company, relieving big banks of their non-performing assets and loans, while easing the terms of restructuring for corporate debtors. Catering to the provincial business, he promised a new Bank geared to small and medium-sized enterprises. Appealing to farmers, he pledged three-year moratorium on debt repayments to the banks, and most ambitiously, a revolving credit scheme of one

\(^4\) \textit{Ibid.} p. 535.
\(^5\) \textit{Ibid.} pp. 536-37.
million baht for each of the country's 77000 villages. He also promised generous state subsidy for medical treatment. Thus, he had something for everyone. He forged a cross-class coalition that linked big businessmen, insecure small proprietors, farmers and alienated masses. The masses perceived some vision in his promises against the stale and defensive campaign of the Democrat Party. Combined with the free flow of money available, Thai Rak Thai, made history in Thailand's electoral politics by becoming the first party to won the absolute majority on its own.

At personal level, equally important triumph came to Thaksin when the Constitutional Court acquitted Thaksin in an assets-concealment case. Thaksin had put strong pressure upon the judges warning of unrest in case of conviction as he was the legitimately elected leader of the country and he also stressed that the country needed his leadership at that critical juncture. Different sort of pressures and even the money-use can't be ruled out as the Constitutional Court had found guilty each of the seven defendants previously in similar cases.

Although, there was downward trend in the economy the following year, he went ahead to fulfill some of the important election promises that entailed heavy expenditure on the part of government. His government brought debt relief for a period of three years to the eligible farmers. By the mid-2001, the scheme of allotting one million baht per village for development purposes was launched. The equity measures were laudable, but those were attempted strictly within the capitalist

44. The TRT's parliamentary majority was, however, negated when the Election Commission annulled the election of thirty-two of its candidates, with five prohibited from contesting again while others permitted to go through second round of elections. All except three of them staged comeback but still leaving the party two seats short of majority. This did not trouble the party in the least as it had already envisaged a three-party coalition with the NAP and the Chart Thai Party taking the strength of the coalition to 350. However, TRT, on its own gained majority when in July the same year a small party merged with it. Ibid.
45. Ibid. p. 92
46. Ibid. pp. 94-5.
framework. As the economy picked up from the next year, by the end of year 2003, the government’s policy came to be called as ‘Thaksinomics’ as it produced a growth rate exceeding that of all the major economies of Asia except China.\textsuperscript{47}

The resurgence of economy and political stability was, however, accompanied by the reverse swing in the democratization process. Despite the conditions being ripe for deepening the quality of democracy, Thaksin is no believer in the liberal approach towards politics. Like his counterparts in the region, he also believes in the concept of strong state and does not mind soft authoritarian practices alongside vibrant procedural democracy in order to achieve quick development as well as order in the society.\textsuperscript{48} He became increasingly oblivious of state excesses and human rights violations. Before the leaders gathered for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit at Bangkok in October 2003, Thaksin ordered the streets of Bangkok scrubbed and tens of thousands of homeless people removed out of town. The government banned some 500 human rights and social activists from entering the country and threatened potential organizers of protests with possible arrests.\textsuperscript{49} The same year the government cracked down hard on narcotic drug dealers in a widespread campaign, which continued for several months. This measure of the government became very popular across different sections of the society but also got mired in controversy over the suspected violations of human rights of the suspects as the police indulged in innumerable cases of firing upon the alleged drug traffickers.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
Thaksin assumed a hard line, punitive approach towards the Muslim insurgency in three southern provinces, which even worsened the situation.\(^\text{51}\)

By mixing his financial clout with populist measures, Thaksin seemed to have worked out a strategy of electoral dividends in terms of military support. However, by January 2006, his family was alleged by media making rich profits from a private sale for which tax laws were subverted through parliament in its favour.\(^\text{52}\) This revolution brought some resentment among the urban middle classes and disarrayed and weakened opposition got united demanding Thaksin's resignation. To overcome this impasse Thaksin held snap-polls that were boycotted by opposition but Thaksin's coalition won 57% of the votes.\(^\text{53}\) However, a number of seats remained vacant for the Lower House of the Parliament and could not be filled after the subsequent by-elections.\(^\text{54}\) The Constitutional Court's Ruling declared the parliamentary elections unconstitutional and asked for fresh elections.\(^\text{55}\)

These developments precipitated a crisis situation and military usurped political power in yet another coup.\(^\text{56}\) It marks, so far, the most high profile coup of the present century. Initially, it was popular with the masses as it ended a stalemate.\(^\text{57}\) The 1997 constitution was abolished. A new military administration was set up.\(^\text{58}\)

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53. Ibid.
54. The 1997 constitution stipulates that Parliament must convene within 30 days of the election but only when all 500 seats are filled up. Even the unopposed candidates are required to garner at least 20% of the popular votes in their constituencies in order to win. *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, April 24, 2006.
55. Ibid. May 09, 2006.
58. The Council for National Security was set up under the command of military chief, Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratglin, and another General, Surayud Chulanont was named Prime Minister.
It can be safely concluded that the progress towards liberal democracy is neither smooth nor promising. How the military regime paves the way for ushering again the democratization process has to be seen. It seems, unless the system matures a little further, it would not be easy for Thailand, like other countries of Southeast Asia, to come out of its illiberal mould. It is clear that political values and beliefs are being transformed. The unquestioned deference to authority and the military's role in politics is receding. The bonds of patron-client relationships are weakening. The political culture has been democratized and secularized to an extent, but the momentum for democratization is lost time and again. The political development is occurring but not exactly along western lines. Southeast Asian nations are devising their own ways, which suit their traditional culture, needs, distinct values and the level of economic and political development. Thailand is no exception to broad pattern of political development in Southeast Asia. Still, in many respects its progress is unique. It has never been straight, but cyclical. It has witnessed eleven successful coups and almost equal number of unsuccessful coup attempts since 1932. At the same time, it has experienced sixteen constitutions and twenty elections in its chequered history of political development. Its political development has been described as a "vicious circle" patterned by a coup d'état, military rule, public unrest, constitutional reform, general elections, parliamentary governance, corruption, instability, another coup d'état, resumption of military rule, and so forth, as a general rule. The political system in its recent history has been inundated with fragile coalition arrangements, inter-party and intra-party maneuvering and disagreements, cabinet reshuffles, scandals, corruption, snap elections, no confidence motions, vote-buying and defections and finally the latest bloodless coup. Till the promulgation of 1997 constitution, the situation was chaotic, which stabilized for some time but again became chaotic with
the Thaksinisation of the political process. No military coup occurred for twelve years. The new constitution was supposed to take care of some of the fundamental problems associated with stability, coalition arrangements, civil rights, vote-buying, defections, frequent no-confidence motions and certain discrepancies in the electoral process. But these hopes have been belied. Though, it is not the failing of the constitution as such. The setback is the direct result of undemocratic political culture, authoritarian leanings of the leaders and the preponderance of clientilist electoral democracy. The political balance is gradually shifting into the hands of big business on the one end of the spectrum and the middle class on the other. Thaksin was a police cadet previously and has good connections with the police officials. This partly explains the free hand given to the police in anti-narcotic drive. Similarly, the former army general Chavalit, who also served as prime minister earlier, was Defence Minister in Thaksin’s cabinet. He still enjoys strong connections with important factions and officers in the military. Thus, the government-military-police nexus persists. The big business and military-bureaucracy enjoy supremacy over the political system as can be best deciphered from the rise and consolidation of Thaksin and his party and later his ouster.

In the early 1990s, the competition was between pro-military and pro-democracy parties but later significant changes occurred in the composition of political actors. The competition mainly shifted to the civilian-cum-businessmen dominated political parties most of which are centrist parties, neither extreme rightists nor far leftists. The traditional elite came from military, bureaucracy or aristocracy but by the end of 1990s business class constituted the majority group in the Parliament.\textsuperscript{59}

With the abolition of official seats under the new constitution, the military officers could not easily dominate over the system. Many retired officers joined electoral politics and succeeded. But then, democracy faced internal crisis and military got the opportunity to intervene.

Voting behaviour, especially in rural areas is frequently based on patronage but not of traditional type under which powerful local bosses used to dictate to their social inferiors. Later the patronage came to be based on money, called “vote-buying.” It takes many forms, the simplest one is the straight-forward handover of cash to the voters through the local agents, or the “vote leaders” or the “opinion builders” in the constituencies just before the elections. Sometimes, votes are committed to the candidate in lieu of particular favour to the village, say a road or well or clinic in case the candidate wins.\(^6^0\) As there was no prosecutorial watch dog agency before 1998 in Thailand (The Election Commission was created by the new constitution), “vote-buying” had become almost an institutionalized practice and huge, and often unaccounted, funds were spent on campaigns. Poll Watch Committee (PWC), a monitoring group was established by Anand administration in 1992 but this body had the power to investigate only, not to punish. This body did a yeomen’s service in monitoring the polls and in educating the citizens. But “Vote-buying” continued with impunity and even the Election Commission could not significantly contain this practice during subsequent elections.\(^6^1\) In the last elections, 20-billion baht were alleged to be spent on vote-buying.\(^6^2\) Accompanied with “vote-buying” as a result of excessive use of money in elections is the practice of candidate-buying which is known by different terms such as horse-trading, defections or party-hopping.

\(^{60}\) Ibid. pp. 138-39.
\(^{62}\) Michael Montesano, “Thailand...” op.cit., p. 90.
Once the elections are announced, former members of Parliament and other prospective candidates are offered financial incentives to switch over their political parties. Thai Rak Thai party of Thaksin owed its tremendous success largely due to this practice just before the elections as the party had just been newly formed and did not have many prospective candidates to its side, otherwise. The Election Commission showed some teeth during 2001 elections by banning campaign entertainment and ordering a new round of elections in as much as 63 constituencies and disqualifying some victorious candidates for flouting election rules, still, a lot of dirt was left to be removed.63

Multi-party system prevailed but in highly disorganized and disarrayed form with candidates as well as parties kept on changing sides. Ideology is absent particularly in the recent past. Regionalization and proliferation of political parties occurred. The 1992-elections saw sixteen parties in the fray, 1995 elections twelve parties and the 2001-elections saw as many as thirty seven parties in the fray.64 The regionalization and fragmentation militates against the emergence of pan-national political parties as well as ideologically inspired broad based two-coalition system or healthy two-party system.

The track record of Thailand in terms of ensuring fundamental civil liberties to its citizens, in comparison to its counterparts in the region, is relatively better. The most positive aspect in this regard is that the Press has, more or less, always enjoyed some free space. Most of the time, during the military regimes too, the practice of self-censoring in the Press was more prevalent instead of frequent curbs imposed by the government. A very important safeguard with regard to the freedom of the Media

63. Ibid.
64. William case, "Thai..." op. cit., p. 479.
was that the 1997 constitution prohibited the government from censoring, banning, or otherwise, restricting the Media, except by legislation during a crisis.\textsuperscript{65} The government's indulgences in corruption, authoritarian practices and human rights violations were frequently reported by the Media. Although, some major national television and radio networks were controlled by the government, the Media, generally, offered pluralist views and the increasing number of private networks frequently criticized the government.

The role of the Press in the political development process can't be ignored. The pro-democracy demonstrations in 1992 could not have succeeded if the Press had not played the vibrantly responsible role of disseminating information to the public. The government of Suchinda struck newspapers by resorting to censorship but the editors of many important national dailies boldly left out large sections of their publications as blank, indicating disapproval of government's authoritarian measures.\textsuperscript{66} The fundamental freedoms like right to vote, contest, assembly, speech, association and religion are well protected in Thailand as compared to its neighbours. The state religion is Buddhism and the king must be a Buddhist. However, all citizens are free to practice the religion of their choice. There is some problem with Muslim Malays in the south who constitute roughly nearly ten percent of the total population. They face unofficial discrimination at various levels.\textsuperscript{67} Private sector workers have full scope of bargaining. The government sector workers are free to join the unions

\textsuperscript{66} C.D. Neher and Ross Marlay, Democracy, op.cit., pp. 41-2.
but cannot negotiate wages or other matters through strikes. The 1997 constitution contained a Bill of fundamental human rights.

The new Prime Minister promised to the people in the beginning of 2007 the restoration of democracy by the year-end. The Generals, however, have the propensity to perpetuate their rule if the conditions favour them. Though the strongest bulwark against the continuance of military rule in Thailand is civil society, the very institution assertion by which led to political chaos, propelling the military to intervene. However, people didn’t invite the military. The chaos was all part of the pains of democracy in a transitory phase.

The latest and biggest case of democratic deficit shows the danger of “People’s Power,” in certain contexts. The assertion by civil society, this time had just the reverse effect. Instead of ushering in democracy this time, the resultant chaos led to the military coup. It represents a trend, the deeper crisis of elite democracies in developing countries where institutionalization falls short and civil society has overgrown, and the mismatch between two processes leads to the occasional breakdown of democratic apparatus.

Indonesia

The pattern of political development followed by Indonesia is as unique as Malaysia or Thailand but for entirely different factors. It can’t be equated with any other country of the world. It is also very complex to be fit into any generalized pattern of political development. Unlike with the assistance of colonial powers, Indonesia’s process of political development began with the armed revolutionary movement against the Dutch after the Second World War. Instead of granting

68. *Freedom, op.cit.,* p. 480.
independence after the defeat of the Japanese, the Dutch returned and re-asserted their control. In fact the very idea of Indonesia as a socio-political unit, hence an independent entity, could only be conjured up on the basis of anticolonial nationalism generated remarkably during this phase.

It was after a lot of bitter armed struggle and international diplomacy, the Indonesians gained independence. Earlier, a constitution was proclaimed on August 17, 1945 by the revolutionary government under the leadership of Sukarno. This constitution provided unitary structure and strong elective presidency but was intended to be provisional and in fact given up at the time of independence when Dutch actually surrendered sovereignty to the Indonesians. Strangely enough, the 1945 constitution continued to serve Indonesia except for a brief period of experiment in parliamentary democracy in 1950-1958. It remained in force throughout a long phase of authoritarianism between 1959 to 1998 during which it was distorted and manipulated consistently to suit to the requirements and the fancies of the rulers of the day. Still, it has not been abandoned during the democratic transition phase since 1998, having undergone a series of progressive amendments mandated by democratization wave. The political process in Indonesia after independence can be divided into four phases for the sake of comprehending its political development.

1945-58 phase: When the process picked up amidst insurmountable problems linked to low level of integration and cohesion at both social and political level, parliamentary instability, underdeveloped economy, disorder unleashed by revolutionary struggle, and communist threat.

1959-65 phase: The soft authoritarian phase of Sukarno’s personal rule based on his advocacy of “Guided Democracy.”
1965-86 phase: The ascendancy of Suharto and the New Order Regime represented by entrenchment of the military into the state apparatus, rapid economic development, deepening authoritarianism and unchallenged personal authority of Suharto.

1986-98 phase: Softening of authoritarianism by the confident regime accompanied with the rising middle class and strengthening of civil society. The rift between the President and the ABRI over the possible future successor of Suharto during the closing years.

1998-2004: Overthrow of the New Order Regime resulting from ABRI disenchantment with Suharto, radical mass demonstrations against misrule, cronyism and authoritarian style in the wake of financial breakdown. The transition and consolidation towards civil rights and political democracy took place.

The participatory democracy after the independence following the revolutionary armed struggle accompanied disorder and dislocation. It unleashed a variety of strong societal forces, which the democratic regime found hard to control, later. The armed struggle to remove the Dutch and the role played by the revolutionary troops (later converted into Angkatan Bersenjata Republic Indonesia – ABRI, the acronym for Indonesia’s military) in the movement had great implications for the future political development of the country. The Army’s importance increased after the independence instead of diminishing when nation-building project began within the unitary framework. The leadership under Sukarno opted for strong central government with no parallel arrangements at local level in order to achieve the unity of the country and to contain the separatist tendencies. The nationalist feelings that had been shaped during the freedom struggle could not be maintained with same

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70. At the time of independence in 1949, a federal constitution was adopted mainly with Dutch brush, which provided for parliamentary form of government at both centre and states. However, within a year of its adoption it was given up in favour of a unitary constitution with parliamentary democracy.
intensity in the remote areas like the central parts of Java, Sumatra etc. Therefore, the role of army was perceived to be quite significant and instrumental by the nationalist leadership in its task of nation-building as well as state-building. Thus, the army, in continuity, was assigned a central role in keeping peace and suppressing separatist currents.

Along with the Army, two other social forces had great bearing over the pace and direction of future political development. The communists organized under the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) had earlier attempted to snatch control from the nationalist leadership in 1948 but were defeated and purged by the ABRI. The communists, however, retained their hold over a large section of people particularly, the rural peasants in off-shore areas. Sukarno had strong left leanings but was not prepared to give the political initiative to the communists or to the particular creed they espoused. The other notable group was Darul Islam, a group of hardcore Islamists who were committed to the ideal of establishing Indonesia as an Islamic State. This sect was quite strong in West Java, northern Sumatra and Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo). This group did not recognize the legitimacy of the central government as it was not based on Syriah. So, there were four popular streams in those days each having some weight in its own right and each having large number of followers. They counter-balanced each other. Sukarno occupied the centre-stage. He could retain hold over the political system despite the weak presidency due to his revered personal charisma as well as continuous parliamentary instability. There was mushrooming of political parties after the independence and no political party gained

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majority in the first elections in 1955.\textsuperscript{73} The elections held for the Constituent Assembly to draw up a permanent constitution also threw hung results. In such a scenario there could not be any agreement over fundamental issues such as Islamic or secular state, federal or unitary constitution, parliamentary or presidential system, socialist or capitalist framework, and so forth. In 1959, Sukarno dissolved the Constituent Assembly as no agreement could be reached among the parties as well as between the President and the Assembly over the structure of the constitution. The President unilaterally restored the 1945 constitution which vests executive power in the hands of the President independent of the legislature.\textsuperscript{74} The following year elected Parliament was also dissolved, the elections were postponed indefinitely and two parties opposed to his policies were banned. The Parliament was arbitrarily reconstituted with appointed representatives from nine approved parties with curtailed powers. It was subordinated to a super-legislature – the Provisional People’s Congress, which later came to be known as People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR). More than half of its members were nominated and appointed by the President.\textsuperscript{75}

The way to authoritarianism was earlier paved through strong Army backing to the President in the wake of a series of regional revolts in 1956-58 which were crushed by the Army, thus strengthening the logic of a strong and stable central government.\textsuperscript{76} Thus, it is quite clear that the events throughout the first decade of independence brought about a decline in the parliamentary regime culminating in its overthrow and strengthening the hands of Sukarno with the help of military. It led to the gradual narrowing down of the democratic space. The early years were, however,

\textsuperscript{73} Richard Butwell, *Southeast, op.cit.*, pp. 43-44.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
very important from the point of view of nation-building marked by the degree of social mobilization, political participation and integration of the polity. The experiment did not succeed, however, because of the interplay of various factors – the most important factor being the lack of democratic will on part of Sukarno. His style of functioning throughout those years shows that he did not have any love for parliamentary democracy and he did not like parallel sources of power to his own authority. The experiment failed not just because political power was diffused and widely spread in the system but because the chief political manager operating the system had contempt towards Western-style parliamentary democracy which he occasionally referred to as “fifty percent plus one democracy”.

Sukarno articulated his own notion of democracy as “Guided Democracy” applicable to a diverse, underdeveloped country like Indonesia which had distinct culture of its own rooted in musjAWarah (consultation and discussion) and muafakat (unanimous agreement). He held that European liberalism was ill-suited to a diverse country like Indonesia as the Western model was divisive in nature, while the governmental system in Indonesia should be based on traditional values which emphasize authority over disobedience, hierarchy over equality and order over liberty. The consultation and consensus could help in maintaining peace, harmony and growth. He made “gotong rojong” (mutual aid) and Pancasila to be the guiding pillars of his conception of democracy. The former stressed social cohesiveness based on obedience to authority after wide consultation while the latter emphasized five principles of unity in society, humanism, monotheism, social justice, and democracy.

78. Ibid. p. 135.
informed by cooperation and consultation. In a system of “guided democracy,” the guidance and the decisions had to flow from above, which could be debated but not disobeyed. The discussion and consultation did not mean much when all the real authority was concentrated in the hands of the President, whose decrees could not be challenged.

Although, the authoritarian structure and style of functioning was adopted by Sukarno but he did not indulge in repression by any substantive means. The Press was relatively free. No elections were held. The political parties were weakened, but retained their independent social bases. Civil society had not been completely depoliticized. Army, though, given representation in People’s Consultative Assembly, yet, it was subordinate to the civilian control. Sukarno drifted closer to the largest political party, the PKI. Sukarno wanted to balance the communists and the military against each other. More than that he needed the support of both.

The command economy was adopted. Many industries had come under the direct control of the state while the private sector was regulated at strategic points. However, the economy did not improve and the government suffered high budgetary deficits which led to inflationary pressures. The state enterprise could not generate sufficient capital. The inflation spiraled to 400 percent per annum by 1965. The production declined and the government could not proceed with its many development projects. As hardships increased, the people’s unrest also increased. Fed up with Sukarno’s mismanagement and his increasing reliance on the Left, some disgruntled army officers plotted a coup. It was crushed under the command of Lieutenant General Suharto. However, it triggered a chain of events in Indonesia.

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which amidst claims and counter-claims from both sides (the real reasons behind the attempted coup not clear to the people) led to the purge of communists, sanctioned and encouraged by the Army. The bloodbath continued for two years and resulted in around five lakh casualties.\textsuperscript{84}

Suharto who had been named Chief of Army Staff by Sukarno after the failed coup in 1965, occupied the centre-stage in the politics of the country since then. He went on increasing his power base in the government and in a gradual phase with the strong backing of Army forced Sukarno into retirement by what is called by Neher and Marlay as "an incremental coup." The New Order Regime was declared and the Army took control over all the political and social forces of the country. The Army led by Suharto established distinct supremacy over civilian authorities in the country. Suharto became President in 1968 and assumed the role of a paternal guardian of the country.\textsuperscript{85} The Pancasila ideology was developed further by the new regime to bring bureaucracy, civil society as well as opposition under control. The following years were of deepening authoritarianism but Suharto always kept a symbolic gesture of exercising power, democratically. Under the 1945 constitution, the power to elect the President lay with the People's Consultative Assembly. It is altogether different matter that half of the members of 1000 members of MPR were appointed by the President, and that too, predominantly, from the Army. The rest were also controlled by the government as its political organization, Golkar,\textsuperscript{86} through electoral

\textsuperscript{84} C.D. Neher and Ross Marlay, \textit{op.cit}, pp. 78-9. In a startling revelation, an American journalist, based on extensive research, claimed that the anti-communist pogrom in Indonesia was carried out with the direct support and intervention of the American government. The American Embassy officials provided the ABRI with a list of thousands of rebel communists. According to her, the pogrom took 250,000 lives See, Donald Emmerson, "Indonesia in 1990: A Foreshadow Play," \textit{Asian Survey}, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, February 1991, pp. 181-82.


\textsuperscript{86} The ABRI founded Golkar as a political federation of labour unions, retired army officials and veterans cooperatives in 1964. The army aimed to compete with communist and radical
The New Order brought political stability, stabilized the economy, crushed opposition, established military control over the civilian and annihilated the communist threat. As a result, the authoritarian trends and the state's control increased. The New order was firmly committed to a programme of capitalist economic development. It also got support from the West because of its anti-communist purges. The economy picked up steam after the foreign aid increased since 1968. By 1970-71, the growth rate of seven percent had been achieved. With the inflated oil revenues since 1973-74, the economy picked up new heights, which gradually helped the New Order regime in gaining performance legitimacy among the masses, particularly the elite sections who had greatly benefited in the early years.

A network of corporatist institutions, economic as well as political, were created to establish control over the key sectors and sections of society. With the consolidation of power in the first few years, there was sustained effort to depoliticize the society and to politicize the military. Gradually, many of the societal forces which had helped Suharto's takeover of power from Sukarno found themselves

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87. Ibid.
88. Jamie Mackie, op. cit.
gradually constrained and alienated from the New Order as the regime became increasingly patrimonialist and authoritarian. As the bureaucracy and the army stretched their muscle and increased control over the state apparatus, conversely, the de-politicization of the civil society was the logical result. Therefore, the same logic which had worked earlier by which the active politicized sections of the society had been excluded from the mainstream worked again, this time in a more sophisticated and systematic manner.

Applying the *Pancasila* to reduce the opposition and friction in society, the government forced nine political parties to amalgate into two after the General Elections of 1971. By clubbing these parties into two groups, the intention of the government was not to unite the opposition, but to create factions within the two groups. The electoral opposition to the government assumed state-licensed forms represented by the Islamic United Development Party (PPP) under which four Muslim parties were clubbed together, and the Indonesian Democratic Party which united the five nationalist and other moderate parties. The amalgamated political parties were forced to work within the ideological framework as determined by the military regime. There was too much interference by the governmental authorities in their internal affairs, particularly, in the selection of party leaders and determining their ideological positions which could not be highly divorced from the official ideology as represented by *Pancasila* principles and concern for stability. An important restriction imposed was the doctrine of the “floating mass” i.e. the isolation of the villages from

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89. *Ibid*, p. 76.
90. During 1971 elections, the Golkar was able to defeat the nine parties capturing sixty-three percent votes while its nearest competitor Nahdwaul Ulama gained nineteen percent of the votes. *Ibid*.
party politics except during the month prior to each national election. The chief opposition came from the rightist Islamic front PPP in which Nahdhatul Ulama was quite dominant. The PPP took independent position over various issues of the day and cornered around a quarter of the votes at the elections held in 1977 and 1982. Still, Golkar continued to repeat its 1971-performance. On the whole, it seems that the opposition parties were retained by the government merely as a ploy to gain legitimacy as well as a safety valve. They could neither threaten the government, nor control the legislation in the Assembly, but continued to provide a vent to the oppositional forces against the government, just enabling the government to control and subdue the opposition at the door side, thus, not allowing to snowball into protests or violence.

It is quite clear that there was no right to free association available to the citizens. No third opposition party could be established. The two opposition parties that continued to function had derived their sanction and mode of operation from the state. Therefore, they could function within the parameters determined by the authoritarian state. The traditional patron-client relationships continued through the functioning of Golkar as being the government-backed party, it linked the people to the state upon which people became increasingly dependent. The Golkar just became an electoral vehicle for the military-dominated regime to ride the roughshod of politics with continuity. Its initiatives were never autonomous but always sponsored by the government.

The military increasingly assumed political role. Suharto backed the military to promote his own interest. Its loyalty was secured with the help of a system of extended patronages. It was only with the complete domination by military of all the important decision-making centres by the close of 1980's and its conflict of interest with Suharto over his succession matter, he started co-opting other potential forces in the society, particularly the Islamic elements as a counter-weight to the military during the 1990's. The regime, so far, had worked on the principle of cooptation of all the important elements that could not pose challenge but serve the regime, with primacy to the military interests. The armed forces' political role was legitimized through the doctrine of dwi-fungsi (twin-functions), viz. the function of national defence as well as positive socio-political role needed for internal coherence and national integration. Logically, the doctrine of dwi-fungsi subordinated all independent bases of power and other organs of the society to the military projecting it as

Juru Selamat (Savior) of the nation in moments of crisis .... that it is the pemersatu (unifier) of a pluralist nation; the pengayom (protector, as a banyan tree protects with its shade) of an unsophisticated and easily deceived rakyat ("people," in the sense of the led as distinct from their leaders); and the dinamisator (driving force) of a people and economy that need to develop but have no source of political will other than the armed forces.

With so much interdependence between the President and the military and military's sway over the bureaucracy and bureaucracy further controlling the society, there is problem in characterizing such a system. The problem is further confounded when the President was not directly deriving his powers from the military but from

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95. R.W. Liddle “Soeharto’s...” *op.cit.* p. 82.
96. *Ibid.* p. 84.
the MPR which had the handpicks of the President, the presidential appointees from various socio-economic and functional organizations, regional representatives, military officials, bureaucrats, at the same time, substantial but not decisive numbers of elected representatives of the people. There is little doubt that the President was supreme and retained the final word. The New Order Regime has been aptly described as “Presidential-military-bureaucratic complex” by some observers. The military officials held the key positions in Golkar. In 1985, out of thirty-seven cabinet ministers, fourteen were from military background. Military men filled three-quarters of the twenty-seven provincial gubernatorial posts.

Another important factor that strengthened the hold of Suharto over the political system was the consistent and rapid economic development throughout the period, based on oil boom and foreign investment, resulting in the steady rise of living standards and opportunities. Special attention was also given to education. The private sector, despite its modest growth, increasingly became dependent upon state for goodwill, while the state, conversely, became less dependent upon private sector due to the increase in the funds at the disposal of state with the oil boom and FDI inflows. There was tremendous improvement in government revenues and balance of payments. While the public expenditure had been a meagre four percent of the GDP in 1965, it rose to twenty-five percent of the GDP by 1980. Therefore, the patrimonialist character of the state was distinctly visible. Development and order had got precedence over liberty and the people were not averse to bear with the authoritarian regime as long as it delivered.

97. Ibid.
98. Ibid., p. 72.
Despite its completely authoritarian character, the regime was not repressive, generally. Not all sort of opposition was crushed. Although there was no clear-cut distinction between tolerable opposition and non-tolerable opposition, but as a general rule, the opposition that was directed at destabilizing the regime or which was beyond the pale of \textit{pancasila} orthodoxy$^{100}$ was crushed by relying upon force. The Communists after the purge never posed threat. The Rightist Islamists posed some challenge but that was always within manageable limits. They could never reach even one-third mark in the legislature. Some elements among them were later begun to be accommodated and co-opted by the regime though not with much success. It was only in the 1990’s that Suharto in order to checkmate the ABRI leadership started steadily drifting towards the Right. Thus, the opposition, faced by the government in the 70’s and 80’s was always within manageable limits for which Aspinall uses the phrase “semi-opposition” that was not dominant and it was willing to participate in power without fundamentally challenging the regime.$^{101}$ The state was largely unfettered by societal interests in its determination of policy.

The third phase was accompanied by slight progressive changes in the political discourse. These changes were not deep structural and institutional in character but the next decade certainly witnessed, more political space to the civil society, deregulation of business, and small-scale civilianization of governmental structures. All such developments did not lead to any discernible pattern towards democratization, still, broadened the democratic space, paving the way for the later push to the democratization wave in post-Suharto phase. The oil prices in international market plummeted to all time low in 1986. It severely affected the export

income, therefore, the economy was badly hit as the government had to cut back hard on its developmental expenditure. The economy suffered a sharp recession in 1986-87. The government, therefore, was forced to deregulate some of the terms for the private sector and rely on private business to invest more. Although, much of the cake and the privileges were still cornered by the regime-connected business groups, including Suharto’s own family, yet, the capitalist class in its own right was emerging as the terms of bargaining started shifting towards the business class away from the bureaucracy with the maturing and diversification of the economy. The State’s patrimonialist character remained intact but it increasingly became more susceptible to the pressures from business class. By the end of 1980’s the economy recovered fully.

The change in economy was also accompanied by the co-optation and accommodation of the civil society, thus strengthening it, but this change was more the result of intra-elite struggles. The previous convergence of interests between the President and the ABRI was falling apart, at least, his relationship with some dominant sections in the ABRI deteriorated. However, his own supremacy over the ABRI, in other words, over the political system, remained unchallenged. The unquestioned persistence of the New Order Regime was based on the very close congruence of interests between the President and the ABRI, both complementing and consolidating each other’s position. However, as his age was increasing, the politics of succession came to the foreground by the closing years of 1980s. ABRI leadership was not happy when a man disliked by ABRI was imposed as the vice-president by Suharto in 1988. The election of Sudharmono to the vice-presidency was criticized openly by the

102. Ibid. p. 86-7.
dominant sections of the ABRI led by Benny Murdani who was just recently replaced as the ABRI commander. Thenceforward, a subtle rift ensued that lingered on.

As an interesting development, both President and dominant Murdani faction in ABRI started advocating political openness, not as a move to kick-start democratization of the political system but to outmaneuver each other, particularly, over the presidential succession choice. Suharto himself came out in support of Keterbukaan (openness) in his Independence Day speech, stating, “Democracy requires a great deal of consultation, discussion, exchange of ideals and dialogue ... we must view differences of opinion as dynamics.” Just after the President’s speech, various liberalizing measures, not concrete enough to be a real push for democratization, but certainly facilitating and paving the way towards opening up the political debate, were undertaken by the government. The Coordinating Minister for Political Affairs and Security announced that the publishing licences for the Press would no longer be revoked, and there would be no interfere with the choice of the articles to be published in newspapers and magazines. Although, the government could not keep its promise for long and in June 1994 ordered the closure of three magazines.

An important link in the policy of openness was the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission (HAM) in 1993. Such a body, how much government-controlled, ultimately works to expose the human rights violations and sometimes can be embarrassment to the government – as it later proved, to some

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104. For Eastern Economic Review, 6 April, 1989.
extent. The human rights activists, however, saw it as a window-dressing, with no teeth and its members to be appointed and paid by the government. The period also witnessed the release of many political prisoners, accommodation of dissidents, increased tolerance towards protests, demonstrations and criticism of the government's policies, and co-optation of Islamic elements in the regime. Some prominent intellectuals, human rights activists and ex-officials released an open letter to a press conference in Jakarta in August 1990 describing Suharto's rule from 1968 to 1993 as more than sufficient and asking him to step down in 1993 while also recommending that terms of future presidents be restricted to two and also that the MPR and the legislative Assembly (DPR) should be made fully elected bodies.

The most remarkable feature was the Islamization of public face of the government. There was no threat to the stability of the regime by the Islamic elements, who had been quite active in the society, particularly, the largest Islamic group, Nahdhatul Ulama led by Abdurrahman Wahid. They were never a radical force in the society. Suharto sponsored a Muslim Intellectuals' Association (ICMI) in 1990. By naming his close protege, B.J. Habibie as its head, he maintained a close control over its structure and functioning, thus co-opting the Muslim Intellectuals who could prove to be a potential source of support to the government as well as providing a vent to Muslim elements against their growing resentment at westernization and modernization of the society. The more potent reason was Suharto's well-crafted strategy to counterbalance the ABRI. This was also followed by the appointment of increasing numbers of orthodox Muslim bureaucrats and military officers to important positions.

107. Ibid. 330.
110. Ibid.
This strategy was extended further to the civilianization of the regime, although, to a smaller extent. Sudharmono, who had background of a military lawyer, as Chairman of Golkar had tried to reduce the influence of ABRI both within and outside Golkar. Habibie and Harmoko, two civilian ministers close to Suharto were continuously promoted and empowered in 1990's. Harmoko was made Chairman of Golkar. His elevation was publicly resented by the ABRI. By the time of 1995, the relative decline of military personnel in political and official positions was discernible. ABRI's representation in Parliament was curtailed from hundred to seventy five and numbers of ABRI men in cabinet had also been slightly reduced.

The polity had opened up but not enough to make for free competition for political power, not even at the level of DPR. There was only restricted democratic space available to the opposition and the masses. The President retained his hold over electoral vehicle for presidency i.e. MPR by keeping the non-elected seats. There was no right to free association, particularly at the political level. The right to Assembly could be curtailed. The right to freedom of speech and expression, despite the open debate on some issues, was quite restricted as the regime's legitimacy or the Pancasila principles could not be opposed. The middle class had come into its own but still had much dependence upon the state and remained, more or less, tolerant of the regime. As one observer succinctly puts it:

Most activists have a more or less instinctive feel for the boundaries of tolerated political action beyond which their activities will attract repression .... In recent years, numerous activist groups have taken great risks to push open the boundaries into previously unimaginable areas ... and have profoundly affected the character of contemporary political debate and action. But such activists remain a minority in middle class legal oppositional circles. For the larger group, the effect of the ever present threat of coercion is that they

learn to identify the boundaries of state toleration and how to avoid overstepping them.\textsuperscript{113}

At electoral level, the main opposition was emerging from the PDI, although not threatening the stability of the government in any way. The partial Islamization move by the regime had weakened the PPP. The withdrawal of the Nahdhatul Ulama from the PPP led to its vote share dropped from 28 percent in 1982 elections to 16 percent in 1987.\textsuperscript{114} The PDI became more activist and increased its vote percentage from eight percent in 1982 to eleven percent in 1987 to fifteen percent in 1992, overtaking PPP as the second largest party.\textsuperscript{115} In 1993, the party leadership came into the hands of dynamic leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri, Sukarno’s daughter. The government started harassing her and stage-managed under the supervision of top army officials, the ouster of Megawati in favour of Soerjadi in June 1996. Soerjadi was also not liked by the regime as he acted independent of government’s control during his earlier stint as President of the PDI but he was preferable to more assertive, charismatic and independent Megawati. The immediate impact of the ouster of Megawati was that the PDI was routed in the elections for the DPR in 1997 getting just three percent of the votes while the Golkar was able to increase its share from the all-time low of less than sixty percent in 1992 to all-time high in 1997 at seventy-four percent.\textsuperscript{116} It was the most violent campaign under the New Regime and widespread rigging and irregularities in counting of votes were reported by the KIPP, an NGO that monitored the elections.\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{flushright}  
117. \textit{Ibid.}  
\end{flushright}
The economy was growing well around seven percent of the GDP per annum for the last decade.\textsuperscript{118} A strong middle class had emerged by now. However, the lack of the institutionalization of political and decision-making processes, authoritarian personal rule and restricted democratic space proved to be the Waterloo of the New Order Regime in the wake of the financial crisis that engulfed the whole of Southeast Asia and the Far East. It had most far-reaching repercussions for Indonesia. The developments in 1998 paved a decisive and, perhaps, irreversible shift towards the democratization of the system. The consistent economic growth kept a lid on the democratic urges of the people for many years. Once, the economy slided, the lid was off and the absence of institutionalized democratic space led to the violent outbursts, and killings, which not only led to the overthrow of the regime but also to the disruption of civil society. More alarmingly, it brought to the foreground numerous regional currents for autonomy amounting to even separatist tendencies in many parts. The following months also saw a lot of inter-racial riots, killings of minority groups taking place at the hands of majority group.

The things started falling apart for the New Order Regime immediately in the aftermath of the financial crisis during the latter part of 1997.\textsuperscript{119} Despite the severe economic crisis and pressure from international community, Suharto still decided to run for the seventh term of his presidency while choosing Habibie as his vice-president. The latter move was highly detested by the ABRI over the imposition of a civilian as a possible future successor. Just after the formation of new cabinet the

\begin{footnote}
119. Suharto was forced to sign a series of agreements with the IMF surrendering his sovereignty to the IMF in lieu of bail-out aid in the wake of extreme plunge in the rupiah vis-à-vis dollar (17000 rupiah to a US$ by the end of January 1999) and precarious balance of payments leading to closure of many banks, dried up capital supply and severe inflationary jolts to the regime. See, Judith Bird, "Indonesia in 1998": The Pot Boils over," Asian Survey, 1992, vol. XXXIX, No. 1, pp. 27-8.
\end{footnote}
reformasi movement gained momentum aiming at the overthrow of the dictatorial regime and introduction of the democratic process. It involved students in large numbers as well as peasants and workers from a cross-section of society. The movement was, however, highly disorganized, violent & sporadic. The immediate impetus came from the killing of four students in police firing on the twilight on May 12, which led to lot of upheaval in Jakarta resulting in anti-Chinese rioting, killings, looting and torching of shops. The military as well as Golkar leadership deserted Suharto at this critical juncture. The ABRI Commander General Wiranto said he would protect Suharto if he steps down, thus, bringing a direct pressure upon Suharto to resign. Suharto resigned on May 21 and Habibie was sworn in.

Habibie immediately strengthened his position within and outside the government. He removed the restrictions from the Press and the electoral system. The MPR session held in November 1998 agreed to a mid-term election in 1999 under new rules that included reduction in military appointments in the DPR, multi-party system, open election for presidency along with reduced powers of the president and promises to investigate the corruption charges against Suharto’s family.

The democratic elections were held for the second time in Indonesia’s history (the first in 1955) for the popularly elected House of People’s Representatives with open competition for political power. Forty eight parties competed for the 462 seats (The representation of armed forces had earlier been reduced from seventy-five to just thirty-eight increasing the elected seats by thirty-seven). Simultaneous elections were held for legislatures in twenty-six provinces as well as for the local bodies. Ninety

122. Ibid., pp. 30-1.
percent of the registered voters turned up for voting. PDI-P under the leadership of Megawati emerged as the largest party capturing 153 seats and thirty-four percent of the votes. Golkar got 120 seats and twenty-two percent votes while the share of National Awakening Party was fifty-one seats with twelve percent votes and National Mandate Party (PAN) winning thirty-four seats and seven percent votes.

The elections for the President and Vice-President were held democratically by the MPR with the reduced strength of its non-elected members. They were reduced from 500 to 195, with 130 representing the regions. For the presidency, the direct fight was between Habibie and Megawati but Habibie was forced to opt out from the race just a day before, when his accountability speech was rejected by the Assembly. The political configuration immediately changed with Wahid emerging as a contender for the post. He was hitherto supporting Megawati. However, with the help of other Muslim parties, the PAN, the PPP and the Habibie faction of Golkar, he defeated Megawati by 373 to 313 votes. Megawati was chosen Vice-President, the next day.

The removal of General Wiranto from the military command first, and later as Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security too, could be marked out as an important political development, which went a long way in the establishment of civilian superiority over the military. Indonesia continued to be ravaged by separatist movements and accompanied violence particularly in Aceh and Irian Jaya provinces.

124. Ibid. The Nahdhatul Ulama, a prominent party during 1955 elections and later important faction of fused PPP withdrew from active politics in 1984 but revived before the 1999 elections, not directly, but through its political offshoot PKB under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid also known as Gus Dur. NU represents Islamic traditionalism, whose followers adhere to the Syaфи’s jurisprudential school of Sunni Islam.
125. Ibid. PAN is the political offshoot of Muhammadiyah, Indonesia’s largest modernist-Muslim social and educational organization led by Amein Rais who later became the speaker of DPR. The modernist-Muslims reject all of the Sunni jurisprudential schools in favour of direct interpretation by the faithful of the Quran and the Hadith.
126. Ibid. pp. 35-8.
as well as inter-racial riots in many parts, particularly in northern Moluccas, Ambon and central Sulawesi.

Within a year of his presidency, Gus Dur stood discredited partly because of his poor managerial skills and partly because of very poor support base in the legislature. The government remained elusive on taking bold economic decisions, particularly over corporate and debt restructuring. Wahid was finally impeached and removed by the Assembly on grounds of corruption and replaced by Megawati amidst high-voltage drama. Earlier, efforts to clamp down Emergency were repudiated by the military and police chiefs. His bid to dissolve the House and the Assembly was also negated by the Supreme Court declaring it as unconstitutional. Megawati started on a high note but she too was soon dodged by the same problems and controversies that confronted Wahid. However, she continued to rule till the completion of the term of the presidency till 2004. She was widely criticized not so much on account of personal integrity, but for her inaction and tolerance of corruption at various levels. The process of political development, however, was marked out for tremendous leap forward during her regime, especially, on two fronts. First, the revolutionary changes at the institutional level were introduced consolidating the democratic apparatuses. Second, despite high level of corruption, violence and divisions in society, the government practised consociational democracy by co-opting all the major ethnic and functional groups and extending the cultural and financial autonomy, thus, contributing significantly to the secularization of political culture.

128. Ibid.
Four sets of constitutional amendments during the period 1999-2002 in the 1945-constitution altered and reformed its several provisions. The direct result of all these amendments was the abolition of military's representation in the DPR and MPR, making them democratic and fully elected bodies, vesting the people with the ultimate power to choose their legislators, the establishment of a Constitutional Court with the power of judicial review, decide the election-related disputes and pronounce over the alleged charges against the President and the Vice-President for their impeachment, and protection of basic rights of the citizens.\textsuperscript{130}

The DPR was made a fully elected body with the increase in seats to 550, at the same time abolishing the remaining thirty-eight reserved seats for the military. The elections are now held on the basis of universal adult franchisehood requiring the voter to indicate his choice for the candidate as well as political party as a result of open list proportional representation system with province serving as electoral constituency.\textsuperscript{131} The Regional Representative Council (DPD) represents regions and it is also directly elected. But it does not enjoy any powers in the passage of laws along with DPR. It can just propose and participate in discussion over bills relating to regional autonomy, relations between central and local governments and grants to the states.\textsuperscript{132} The MPR has been made fully elected body consisting of DPR and DPD.

The most remarkable, as well as indigenous feature of constitutional development pertains to the election of the President and the Vice-President, making the system neither presidential nor parliamentary, strictly speaking. A departing

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feature from the presidential type is that though the candidates are elected by the people, but nominated by the political parties. Voters choose from amongst the pairs of candidates (presidential and vice-presidential) put up by the political parties, which have earlier secured at least three percent of the seats in the DPR or five percent of the nationwide vote. If no pair of candidates gets the absolute majority of the votes cast directly by the people together with at least twenty percent of the votes in half of Indonesia’s provinces, then, the second ballot takes place in which the top two pairs of the first round compete.\footnote{133} Given the multi-party system in Indonesia, there are remote chances of any pair elected in the first ballot unless the political parties enter into electoral arrangements.

Independent candidates cannot fight the elections for either legislature or executive. It impinges upon free choice of the voter as well as contestant, when the internal democracy is lacking among political parties. Although, presidential and vice-presidential nominees are elected by the members of the respective political parties at their national conventions, yet, the organizational structures of the parties are not democratic. This method seems to have been prompted by the desire of the leaders to continue their hold over respective political parties and play role in the selection and nomination of candidates. Otherwise, the system has great integrative value and it is fully consonant with the principles and prerequisites of consociational democracy. Not only it excludes the smaller parties from putting up candidates thus, avoiding the proliferation of candidates and confusion, but by adopting the second ballot system the polity has been able to target the divisive political culture and differentiated socio-ethnic configuration in the country. The principle of absolute majority along with the requirement of twenty percent votes in half of the provinces ensures that the winning

\footnote{133. Leonard C. Sebastian, "The Paradox ...., \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 258-9.}
candidate represents the cross-sections of people as well as regions of the country. Otherwise there was always an impending fear of Javanese candidate emerging as a winner as more than half of the population is concentrated in Java island. Therefore, the innovation augurs well for nation-building project that has suffered major jolts recently.

An interesting feature of constitutional development is that the same constitution has been serving since it was first adopted as a provisional document in 1945. The same document served the semi-authoritarian personal rule of Sukarno during 1959-66 as well as New Order Regime of Suharto from 1967 to 1998. After going through radical and progressive changes, it can be supposed to stand as a bulwark against the future attempts at authoritarian practices. The structural changes have also been accompanied by the people’s mobilization and participation. In the elections to the DPR ninety percent of the electorate cast their ballots in 1999 polls while 84.06 percent of the electorate cast their votes in the 2004 elections. The culture of violence and demonstrations is giving way to institutionalized political behaviour, both at the individual and group level. The successful completion of the democratic elections for the DPR, local assemblies and presidency in 2004 in a peacefully organized manner augurs well for democratic consolidation. Money politics,” however is creeping into the political culture of the country, Vote-buying is also reported in many instances at the local level.

Philippines

136. Ibid.
Philippines has experienced a very different trajectory of political development than the rest of southeast Asia. It remained a colony for a longer period of time but the nature and stages of colonialism in Philippines were markedly different. It was the first to be exposed to the modern forms of political participation and governance. It was the first colony in Southeast Asia to get Independence. It is the only country in the region where nationalism had taken firm roots by the end of the nineteenth century. The U.S. attacked Philippines and defeated the Spanish in the wake of intense nationalist upsurge against the Spanish, which continued in guerrilla form against the Americans, too. However, the American rule was not based on repression and intense exploitation as was the case with the Spanish rule. Within a decade, the institutions of self-government were conceded by the U.S. By 1916, the elected legislature was in place. In 1934, the U.S. pledged to grant independence by 1944 following an interim commonwealth in which the colony was promised internal autonomy. The Japanese instituted a nationalist puppet government. After the re-takeover, the Americans thought it safe to transfer power to the conservative elite who had cooperated with the Japanese, rather than the radical elements who had fought the Japanese.

Independence was proclaimed on 4 July 1946. The Americans helped the elite consolidate control over the system. Special concessions were clinched by the U.S. over privileged status to American citizens with regard to business activities in

137. Nicholas Tarling, op.cit., pp. 73-8.
138. Ibid. pp. 24-5; Richard Butwell, Southeast, p. 27.
139. Nicholas Tarling, Nations, p. 151; Milton Osborne, Southeast, op.cit., p. 147.
Philippines, on tying the Philippines peso to the American dollar and retention of American military bases in Philippines.\textsuperscript{141}

Philippines adopted a democratic constitution inspired by the U.S. constitution. It provided for presidential form of government, unitary structure of state, separation of powers, a bill of rights and independent judiciary. The plurality vote system was adopted for the presidential election. Each voter was to cast a single direct vote and the winner was to be determined by whoever could obtain a simple plurality. This method was different from the U.S. where the President is elected by absolute majority principle through an indirect electoral college. The term was four years and the President could run for maximum two terms.\textsuperscript{142} A distinctive feature of the political system of early era that contributed a lot towards stabilizing the system was the growth and persistence of two-party system. The political power revolved between the two political parties, namely, the Nationalists and the Liberals. The first President of independent Philippines, Mannel Roxas came from the latter.\textsuperscript{143}

The Congress consisted of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The twenty four members of the Senate were elected from a nationwide constituency. The voters were not just required to indicate their choice but write the names of the candidates they preferred, since the electoral ballots did not carry the names of the contestants. The same method was used for all kinds of elections, including presidential elections.\textsuperscript{144} The presidential veto over a bill could be overridden by two-third majority in each house. However, generally, the President used to have his way and the tradition of strong presidency on the pattern of U.S. was maintained.

\textsuperscript{141} Nicholas Tarling, \textit{Nations, op.cit.} pp. 25-6.
\textsuperscript{143} Richard Butler, \textit{Southeast, op.cit.,} p. 28.
\textsuperscript{144} Jungug Choi, \textit{Southeast, op.cit.,} p. 422.
The democratic institutions functioned unhindered during the first two decades. However, the acute disparities and the feudal culture in society hampered the progress of procedural democracy towards substantive democracy. And finally, the gains of two decades of political development were lost in the course of rise of authoritarian regime of Marcos from 1972 to 1986. The traditional patron-client relationships that characterize and influence the political culture of Southeast Asia in general were much more pronounced in Philippines. With the democratization of the governmental structures, the economic and political elite fused together. The political democracy did not lead, significantly, to the erosion of traditional pattern of class divisions. The big landowning families reinforced their privileges by entering the competitive politics. The democratization of polity rather suited the interests of elite class. Since money power as well as muscle power was extensively concentrated into the hands of a few extended families, and like everywhere success in elections is based on money and muscle power, a few dominant families monopolized important legislative and executive positions in the government. Their hold, particularly in the rural and semi-urban areas was quite pervasive. To U.S. observers, Philippines resembled the wild West. But the real trouble lay deeper.

Behind the façade of democracy stood the fundamental fact that Philippine society was riven by extreme class differences. A few self-aggrandizing rich families controlled every facet of society... the same families who had dominated their respective provinces for centuries now controlled the Senate and the house of Representatives. The new democratic political system actually provided them with a way to ensure and prolong their dominance.

To deepen the democracy, land reforms were imperative. All the Presidents talked about land reforms, some even initiated legislation, but none succeeded. Magsaysay, the most popular leader, came closest to push some land reform measures but faced recalcitrant legislature most of whose members came from elite class. Magsaysay, however, could not live long enough to carry the programme to any logical conclusion. The only mass level opposition to the elitist framework came from the communist Huks who did not take up the constitutional methods. Their activities were crushed by the government under the dynamic leadership of Magsaysay by adopting a combination of political and military strategies.\(^{148}\)

Despite the unresolved problem of extreme inequity, the credit must be given to the leadership provided by Roxas, Magsaysay and Macapagal carrying forward the tasks of state building and nation-building during early years. They tried to govern the state in a constitutional manner, provided political stability, held regular elections, strengthened the democratic institutions and facilitated wide political participation.\(^{149}\) The leadership accomplished the stupendous task of reconstruction after the havoc and dislocation caused by the Second World War. The legislature behaved independently and those men never tried to act dictatorially. The Press was free although, controlled by a few dynasties. The people had the right to criticize the government, to assembly and to form associations. Habeas corpus was available to the citizens. Powerful interest groups had emerged and sought to influence decision-making of the state. The civilian control over the military was well established. Over and above, the Philippines democratic process was considered to be one of the best


among the Asian countries in terms of institutionalization of polity and evolving political culture.\textsuperscript{150}

Marcos was the first President to be elected for a second term in 1969. His first stint had been a moderate success. He, however, had begun to politicize military during his first tenure. Marcos’ campaign for the second term was marked by excessive misuse of money including public money spent lavishly to ensure his return. This precipitated public unrest, which found expression in students’ demonstrations against the government. The devaluation of peso just after his reelection added to the unrest. At economic front, there was rising concern over the likely affects of the abrogation of the Laurel-Langley Agreement in 1974 that would take away the preferential access available to sugar and other commodities in the U.S. market. At the deeper level, the gross inequalities ingrained in the system were a cause of dissatisfaction with the socio-economic conditions. Another reason of public unrest was the loss of sense of national sovereignty over American neocolonialism, the only beneficiary of which was perceived to be the elite class. Corruption was widespread. Violence ensued. An opposition rally was bombed in August 1971, killing and injuring many. Marcos suspended the writ of \textit{Habeas Corpus}. In September 1972, strangely enough claiming a conspiracy between the Rightists, Oligarchs and the Maoist revolutionaries, Marcos declared Martial Law.\textsuperscript{151} Both left wing and right wing opponents of Marcos were arrested. A new constitution was promulgated in 1973 that provided for a parliamentary form of government after an interim period.\textsuperscript{152} The elections for the interim national Assembly did take place in April 1978 but those were manipulated by Marcos’ party, New Society Movement

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid. pp. 101-02.
(KBL) amidst widespread malpractices. Therefore, Marcos continued to enjoy real powers utilizing executive decree-making powers until 1985 facing no challenge from the puppet legislature and prime minister.

In fact, the background for imposition of martial law was provided by the Constitutional Convention's (convened to frame a new constitution in 1970) failure to either extend the two-term limit on the presidency or switch over to the parliamentary form of government. Marcos was not prepared to relinquish power at any cost at the end of his second term, which was drawing closer. He got crucial support from the U.S. by taking anti-communist stance as well as from the military of Philippines by giving it large pie in budget and role in politics. In the beginning, Marcos got some popular support by justifying martial law with the promise to end oligarchic rule, break the monopoly of the dynasties and to carry out land reforms.\(^{153}\) No doubt, he broke the monopoly of the oligarchic dynasties over the system. But that was replaced with much more concentrated, arbitrary and personal power of Marcos and his cronies. In the process, a new class of cronies, loyal businessmen and privileged bureaucrats was created while the power base of the old oligarchy remained intact, just lying a little dormant. New and far more entrenched monopolies were established fusing political and economic power.\(^{154}\) No serious effort were made by Marcos towards socio-economic reforms, particularly, land reforms.

During early years, however, Marcos regime was successful both on economic and administrative fronts. Peace and stability ensued. The reformist agenda, if not policy enforcement, strengthened the regime. Revenues as percentage of GDP

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increased, considerably. Riding on the support, Marcos’ party succeeded in the Assembly elections in 1978. The confidence helped in loosening some controls over the citizens’ freedoms and the Press. The opposition had resurfaced as a consequence of re-introduction of electoral politics, making the regime defendant and vulnerable over many issues. Cronyism was at its peak and the people friendly stance of the regime in its early years had given a decisive shift to governmental corruption and conservatism. The economic stagnation had eroded, whatever, little support the government was enjoying earlier.\footnote{Ibid. pp. 1148-9.}

Benigno Aquino, the dynamic and fiercely independent opposition leader who had been in jail from 1972 to 1980 was released in May 1980. He was forced into virtual exile in the U.S. till he was allowed to come back in August 1983. But, he was assassinated at the Manila Airport while stepping down. People sensed conspiracy by authorities\footnote{The government was pressurized to appoint an independent Agrava Commission of Inquiry. Its report published in October 1994 pointed out military conspiracy behind the murder. It indicted 25 military officers including Chief of Staff of Armed Forces, General Fabian Ver. Their trial ensued, but it was manipulated by the regime and they were acquitted [See, Ian Brown, \textit{op. cit.} p. 1166.]} that led to widespread organized as well as unorganized public rallies and protests. As the opposition to the government was increasing, the economy also started deteriorating. The annual growth rate dipped. The public sector enterprises, which had grown enormously by 1984 were showing huge losses. The interest rates due to oil crisis began to rise sharply making balance of payments precarious. To improve his tarnished image as well as bowing to pressure from the U.S., Marcos called for snap presidential elections in February 1986. Corazon Aquino, widow of the slain leader who had become a national martyr, was hailed by public with great enthusiasm as a symbol in her deceased husband’s footsteps to fight against the corruption and authoritarianism of the regime. The previous presidential election was...
boycotted by the opposition. But this time the opposition united behind Aquino after the personal intervention of cardinal Sin, the head of Roman Catholic church in Philippines. Marcos was declared winner but only after the serious allegations of gross irregularities in counting of votes by the officials. At this juncture three important developments tilted the scale in favour of Aquino and forced Marcos to flee the country.

First, the revolt by some disgruntled army officers that was joined by Minister of Defence, Juan Ponce Enrile and Chief of Constabulary, General Ramos. They denounced the election results as fraudulent and asked Marcos to step down in favour of Aquino. When Marcos tried to put down the revolt, the progressive rebel forces were joined by hundred of thousands of civilian demonstrators led by cardinal Sin. They forced the tanks to turn back as military refused to fire at unarmed demonstrators. Their ranks swelled and the last hope of Marcos, the U.S., too, withdrew support from the regime. He was taken away in the U.S. helicopter to Clark Air Base from where he was allowed to proceed in exile to Honolulu. Thus, a combination of factors unseated Marcos. The most remarkable feature was the role played by the civil society, especially all its segments. This assertive role of the civil society and its further consolidation was later to prove the greatest bulwark against the reversion to authoritarian rule. The People’s Power, as it came to be called, reflected truly the desire of the common people for meaningful democratic

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157. The 1981 presidential election was boycotted by the main opposition parties, though it was held after lifting of Martial Law and certain structural changes to the constitution. However, a few restrictions upon the opposition remained intact. See, William H. Overholt, “The Rise .... op. cit., pp. 1151-2; Wilfrido Villacorta, “Contending Political Forces in The Philippines Today,” Contemporary Southeast Asia, 1983, vol. 5, No. 9, pp. 185-204.

158. Ibid, pp. 1161-2.

159. For a focus on role of the U.S., see, Gary Hawes, “United States Support for the Marcos Administration and The Pressures that Made for Change,” Contemporary Southeast Asia, 1986, vol. 8, No. 6, pp. 18-36.

participation. As soon as the country was redemocratized, the family constellations based on clientilistic followings resurfaced to compete with one another but the people’s power was not washed away. The “ascendancy and dominance of political clans”\(^\text{161}\) has not displaced the evolving political culture in its enduring aspects that has witnessed the weakening of the personalism and the traditional patron-client bonds. Particularly, in the urban areas, it is accompanied with the ever-widening middle class, which provides strength to the civil society.

The democratic revolution was accompanied by two contradictory strands in politics, one pushing the process of political development further while the other arresting the process. Aquino started with very weak organizational base.\(^\text{162}\) Still the real accomplishment of Aquino came with the adoption of new constitution, patterned on pre-Marcos era 1934 constitution albeit with certain safeguards. In a plebiscite 76.37 percent people approved it while only 22.65 percent voted against it.\(^\text{163}\) The separation of powers with checks and balances on the old pattern was adopted. The structure of the Senate is the same twenty-four seats, to be filled through nation-wide election. One half of the membership of senate is elected every three years. Treaties are required to be approved by the Senate by two third majority. No senator can serve for more than two terms while no member of House of Representatives can serve for more than three consecutive terms. The lower House can have maximum 260 seats which are filled through a combination of geographical representation based on single-member constituencies and a party-list system.\(^\text{164}\) The presidential appointments must be approved by the Commission of Appointments, which consists

\(^\text{164}\) Ian Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 1190.
of twelve members each from both the Houses to be elected through proportional representation. Not only the constitution trimmed the powers of the executive but also reduced the Presidential tenure to one term only so as to limit the President’s sphere of influence which had led to authoritarian regime in the early 1970’s. At the same time single term was extended from four years to six years so as to account for greater stability. The constitution also provides a Bill of Rights, including freedom of speech and free Press, right of access to the official information on matters of public concern, habeas corpus etc. Another significant development was that the constitutional amendments must be ratified in a nation-wide plebiscite. The constitution also prohibited the political dynasties from political power but details about the prohibition were left to the Congress to be determined. The Congress passed a bill prohibiting the candidacy of relatives of high-ranking government officials with the second degree of consanguinity.

While strengthening the structural roots of democracy from above, Aquino government failed to strengthen the socio-economic roots of democracy from below. Her contribution in opening up the economy and dismantling the monopolies of crony corporations of Marcos era and introducing competition in hitherto closed sectors, was immense. She failed to institutionalize the overwhelming personal support she got in the beginning from the masses to break the personalistic patrimonial system of the past. She could not build onto the initial support and left the Agrarian reform package in the hands of the legislators. Of the 200 elected congressional representatives, 132 came from established landowning families and another 39 were

165. Ibid.
166. Ibid. p. 1191.
relatives of big farmers. \textsuperscript{168} In the face of steep inequalities in society, more than half of the population living below poverty line, absence of social security net, unemployment, the "people's power" failed to make a dent into the traditional bonds between the prosperous patrons and poor and dependent clients as the leadership was not willing to consolidate the gains towards substantive democratization. Her own coalition controlled all except two seats in the Senate and about seventy percent seats in the House of Representatives. This shows that Aquino had relied heavily on landowning elite families. \textsuperscript{169} Hence, the elite-controlled Congress got bogged down over the modalities of the comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP) enunciated by the Aquino administration and was never taken up in the right earnestness with resolute political will. And when it was adopted, it progressed at the glacial pace with implementation lags. In effect, the programme failed to pick due to antipathy of the government and bureaucracy.

Another setback to the process of political development was a series of coup attempts by the military, which failed, of course, but not without making the position of Aquino increasingly vulnerable. To an extent, the problem was targeted at its root with the passage of the anti-coup law in 1990 that made rebellion punishable by life imprisonment and non-bailable. \textsuperscript{170}

Many observers of Philippines' politics consider Philippines a dependency of the U.S. The neo-colonialist approach has been applied to understand political development in Philippines, which has been supposed to be influenced by the

\textsuperscript{168} C.D. Neher & Ross Marlay, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 57-8.
\textsuperscript{169} Aquino herself came from a powerful landed-elite family. Therefore, anti-elite extremist stance can't be easily expected from a leader of elite background. Still, her approach was moderate.
American business and military interests. This approach may not be adequate to understand the dynamics of political change in Philippines, yet, it points out the foreign factor which impinges upon the autonomy of the political system. The constitution had specifically mentioned that the foreign military bases will not be allowed after the expiry of U.S. – Philippines Agreement in 1991, except under the provisions of a treaty approved by the Senate and if required by Congress to be submitted to the electorate in a national referendum. Thus, a renewed military-base treaty between the two countries entitled “A Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Security” strongly backed by Aquino was rejected by Senate by a vote of 12 to 11 ending nearly a century of American presence in the country. Even a lucrative offer of payment of more than two billion dollars by the U.S. in lieu of retention permit for U.S. bases could not bind the Senate. The rejection of treaty, though, detested by the U.S., was hailed as a great triumph and a matter of pride, by the Filipinos.

Philippines is a huge country in terms of size as well population. It is also divided along ethnic, linguistic, religious and class lines and these divisions are reflected in voting pattern also. Yet the country has always been governed under a unitary framework despite the occasional voices and protests by various regions and groups for a larger share of local autonomy. The absence of federal framework increases the significance of decentralization initiatives by the government. During the last year of Aquino’s rule, Local Government Code was passed which paved the way for devolution of extensive powers (particularly pertaining to local services such as health, education, public works, management of agriculture etc.) to the local

authorities. The code also seeks the active involvement of civil society particularly the NGOs in local governance. The elected Mayors and municipal councilors govern the 1500 municipalities of the country. The villages (barangays) are also headed by elected heads.\textsuperscript{174}

Ramos won the presidential elections in 1992 by capturing just 23.4 percent of the votes, among seven contestants. This was departure from the pre-authoritarian era, when two party system prevailed and the winning candidates required majority of votes. In 1992 elections, even the combined share of the President-elect and his runner-up did not constitute the majority. This is a clear drawback of the plurality vote system, particularly for such an important post in a presidential system. The Philippines in future will have to tackle this problem, if multi-party system persists. The divisions in society are reflected in party-system. A high degree of ethnic-linguistic pattern of voting is observed in the elections.

Ramos established Presidential Anti-Crime Commission (PACC) to deal with crimes at high levels. He also established Presidential Commission Against Graft and Corruption to deal with corruption cases involving presidential appointees while another, the Commission on Good Government (PCGG) was established to investigate all cases of graft or corruption.\textsuperscript{175} Ramos envisioned a programme “Philippines 2000.” It sought to transform Philippines into a newly industrialized country in league with Thailand and Malaysia by the turn of the century. His plan called for the democratic political system to take the lead in overturning undemocratic economic system in pursuit of the goal of rapid growth. Its key components were

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid. pp. 142-43; Vincet Boudreaux, \textit{op.cit.} pp. 883-4.
envisaged as removal of corruption and feudal land system, export and oriented industries and FDI inflows to be sustained by high rates of growth.\textsuperscript{176}

Ramos’ coalition, Lakas-NUCD-UMPD\textsuperscript{177} controlled overwhelming majority in House of Representatives throughout his tenure and it was able to cobble majority in Senate too after the 1995 mid-term elections, still, the strains in executive – legislature relationship directly as a result of separation of powers principle came to the foreground during his tenure. The weak party discipline, absence of whip and independence of both institutions from each other led to deadlocks over a number of bills which were not seriously taken up by the legislature. This led to the demands for parliamentary system in which executive and legislature work in close cooperation, which is imperative for developmental policies of the government to be translated into action. However, such demand was opposed by important sections of civil society including Cardinal Sin as well as Senate lest they feared the perpetuation of Ramos’ rule and weakened and legislature. Attempts were also made by the supporters of Ramos to extend the term of the presidency but that was also opposed by the different segments of civil society.

Another important development of the period entailing far-reaching consequences for the internal cohesion of the polity was Peace Agreement signed between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front in 1996.\textsuperscript{178} The

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\item \textsuperscript{176} C.D. Neher and Ross Marlay, \textit{Democracy, op.cit.}, p. 60.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Lakas-National Union of Christian Democrats-United Muslim Democrats of the Philippines
\item \textsuperscript{178} The provinces in the southern part of Philippines are Muslim majority provinces and they have never been comfortable with the central government’s attempt to stamp its authority in these areas. The MNLF picked up the arms in response to the imposition of martial law by the Marcos regime in 1972 after which more than 100000 people have been killed on both sides in the conflict. Although Tripoli Agreement was signed between the MNLF and Marcos government in 1976 envisaging meaningful autonomy in the thirteen provinces and nine cities of Mindanao but the agreement was broken as the progress was stalled over interpretation of the terms and implementation legs. The 1996 Agreement was an improvement over the Tripoli Agreement. The cornerstone of the 1996 Agreement was creation of interim Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCDP) covering the area of the original thirteen provinces where
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agreement was signed in good faith by Indonesia and Organization of Islamic Countries. A more radical Muslim group, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was not a party to the Agreement but entered into negotiations just after the signing of the pact.\textsuperscript{179}

Ramos was also successful in consolidating the civilian control over the military. The factor that he himself belonged to military greatly helped him. He proved, ultimately to be a true democrat. The military was not allowed any role in civilian matters. One legacy of the U.S. colonialism in Philippines had been the tradition of civilian control over military despite the military occupying important position and role in the scheme of the state. Marcos loosened that control to maintain his dictatorial grip over the system with the help of loyal supporters in military, the repercussions of which were faced by Aquino who faced a series of coup attempts. Ramos bought peace with the rebel military factions opposed to the government, finally, through negotiations in 1996, by extending a generous amnesty programme to the past coup plotters.\textsuperscript{180}

The 1998 General Elections turned out to be one of the fairest and least violent elections in electoral history of Philippines. An NGO, National Citizens’ Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), which had been monitoring elections since its

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\item The SPCDP finally paved the way for Autonomous Region in the Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Many sections from the MNLF joined the ARMM institutions, but the MILF along with Abu Sayyaf group continued to wage violent struggle in the region. The communist New People’s Army (NPA) has also become quite active in violence in the region. However, all these fronts have some semblance of acceptance and tolerance among the local people. See, John Linatud, “The 2004 Philippine Elections: Political Change in an Illiberal Democracy,” \textit{Contemporary Southeast Asia}, 2005, vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 80-101 (87-9).
\item No coups took place against Ramos (1992-98). Afterwards, the defence of successive civilian governments has kept some leverage of Army in the power echelons, but has kept it within barracks, and, more or less, subjected to civilian control. See, \textit{ibid.} p. 87.
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creation in 1951 certified the elections as relatively free. In the exit poll conducted by another NGO, the SWS, eighty-eight percent of the respondents stated that voting in their precincts was free and fair. Under new rules, twenty percent of the seats in the House of Representatives were to be filed by Party-list system on proportional basis. This system is extremely representative as instead of bigger parties, it is meant to ensure representation to the smaller parties. The three biggest parties are excluded (based on performance in previous elections) from the list system while any smaller party getting at least two percent of the votes becomes eligible for a seat (one seat for each two percent). Since hundred of parties participated in the elections in the hope of getting a pie, only thirteen parties crossed the minimum threshold of two percent. Thus, thirty-eights seats in party-list component remained unfulfilled out of fifty-two.

The presidential race was won by a former film actor and incumbent vice-president, Joseph Estrada. Estrada fought the elections on popular slogans and pro-poor agenda. He got substantial plurality of votes at forty percent in spite of eleven candidates in the race. While Lakas-NUCD won a majority of congressional seats, over one-half of them defected to Estrada’s, LMP soon after the election results were announced. So, it was the repeat of the trend of previous elections when the LDP candidates had defected to Ramos’ coalition.

Four factors make party system very weak in Philippines. The first and the foremost, as usually the case with all presidential systems in some degree, is the absence of concern for legislative majority, homogeneity and party discipline. Second, there is no anti-defection law in Philippines unlike Thailand or Malaysia. Thirdly, ideological divisions are not pronounced in Philippines. The opportunism is

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the guiding factor. Fourthly, and not the least important, is the extended culture of clientilism in politics. Carl Lande, figuring out the reflection of social relationships within Philippine society into the political party system wrote a long time back, which, to a great extent reflects present reality too,

*The Philippine polity... is structured less by organized interest groups or by individuals who in politics think of themselves as members of categories, i.e., of distinctive social classes or occupations, than by a network of mutual aid relationships between pairs of individuals... i.e. bonds between prosperous patrons and their poor and dependent clients.*

The clientilist culture remains the same, while bonds based on personal ties and family traditions are loose, unstable and often shifting. The crucial thing is political offices and favours. Issues and ideology are just window dressing for personal ambitions. Politics is a struggle to control the resources. However, this is not peculiar to Philippine alone. The culture of defections is found in all the democratic politics of Asia unless regulated by some anti-defection laws.

Estrada had come into power by promising programmes to uplift the poor but within a year, instead of reaching out to the poor, he was seeing shifting towards the elite interests. He was criticized for creating new monopolies, for instance in the petrochemical industry, port services and telecommunications. In August 1999, a huge protest, “Rally for Democracy” under the leadership of Aquino and Cardinal Sin was organized in Manila against the government’s moves to extend economic deregulation by removing the limits on foreign ownership in land and public utilities. Most business associations landed support to Estrada. Despite the creation of

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National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), the progress on alleviating poverty was slow. The World Bank withdrew certain funds, intended for development projects, ostensibly aimed at benefiting the poor, because of governmental inaction.\textsuperscript{187} Legislations were passed in year 2000 allowing the foreigners to enter into retail industry and giving them right to buy the domestic banks. The image of the government was shattered when the allegations were made that policy decisions were made during late night drinking and gambling sessions in what came to be known as the "midnight cabinet."

The process of institutionalization got a beating with the exposure of corruption charges against Estrada and the resultant proceedings forcing his ouster that did not take place exactly within institutional framework provided by the constitution. Yet, once again, the events proved the strength of the civil society making its mark on political development. The tiff was originally billed as the elite versus the populist Estrada.\textsuperscript{188} In the aftermath of the accusation that Estrada had received bribes and indulged in favouritism, the Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (the daughter of former President) resigned from President’s Cabinet. The coalition which enjoyed more than two-third majority in each House of the Congress was reduced to just half of its size in House of Representatives and one-third of its size in the Senate as a result of defections.\textsuperscript{189} The lower House, as result of defections, moved the Impeachment Motion against the President to the Senate on charges of bribery, corruption, betrayal of public trust and culpable violation of the constitution. A two-third majority in Senate (15 out of 22) was required to Impeach the President.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid. p. 1174.
As the trial progressed, the culpability of the President in amassing millions of dollars in banks came to light, which was suppressed by pro-Estrada factions in the Senate. On this account the prosecutorial team walked out from the Senate charging the pro-Estrada senators with manipulating the trial. Meanwhile, the street demonstrations and protests supported by Ramos, Aquino and Cardinal Sin snowballed. One by one, members of the cabinet withdrew their support and the final blow came with the military chief’s announcement of withdrawal of support for the President, forcing Estrada to resign.

The fact remains that the formal institutional procedures were by-passed despite the democratic apparatus well in place. Extra institutional process unfolded and the former presidents, opposition political parties, Church and business leaders made a covert lobbying to the military, police and allies to withdraw their support from Estrada. But such crisis itself got precipitated in the wake of resignation of prosecutors against the manipulation of proceedings in the Senate. The military’s involvement in the end (which was hitherto maintaining a neutral stand) was a minor setback, otherwise, the civil society was able to reassert, once again, vis-à-vis the manipulations of state authority. Nevertheless, the whole episode was a setback for the process of institution-building but good for evolving democratization of political culture ‘People Power’ is not a constitutional devise since its initiation, conduct and contextual justification can’t be delineated in the constitution. In any particular instance, it may degenerate into petty partisan and unprincipled politics. Although, Estrada, legally tried to assert his claim to the presidency and thus immunity from


\( ^{191} \) Ibid.

prosecution, the supreme court ruled against both the claims and formally declared the presidency vacant, thus legalizing Arroyo’s ascendancy to the presidency. Estrada was taken into custody. Arroyo, however, was able to consolidate her position in the most violent election in the Post-Marcos era, won the overwhelming majority in the lower House and eight of the thirteen seats at stake in the upper House.¹⁹³

The money politics and the elite character of the democracy dilutes, rather, impedes the process of political development in Philippines. The politics even today, particularly at local level is considered to be a power struggle to dominate and control resources between the two or more well entrenched powerful clans. Majority of the members of House of Representatives come from old ruling dynasties. According to a 1993 Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism study, 145 out of 199 members of the lower House had relatives who were occupying or had occupied public office.¹⁹⁴ More than ninety percent of the members of the Congress were millionaires. Elite domination of sectoral politics is reinforced by the failure to enforce conflict of interest laws in Philippines. The legislators continue with high stakes in big business and public agencies. Benedict Kerkvliet has defined the political parties as “political machines”. It has brought money politics into sharper focus. The elite groups use them to seek lucrative offices, personal fortunes and to control the resources. Showing the relationship between money politics and political parties, Benedict Kerkvliet puts it succinctly,

*Candidates rely heavily on their own social networks, wearing together cascading tiers of client supporters and supplemented where necessary with money, material incentives, and promises. ... Personal networks, while vital for stitching factions together, are

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insufficient and inefficient for winning offices in large electorates. For that reason, “political machines” became apparent in the 1950s-1960s, fell on hard times during the Marcos years when his machine was the only game in the country, but have been resuscitated since the mid-1980s. ... Elections that are battles between large political machines require politicians to come up with vast financial resources in order to stay in the game. This imperative, in turn, encourages politicians to concentrate on pork barrel programmes to curry favour with voters, to use public funds to finance their political machines and to resort to other illegal practices.

Philippines political process is interpreted to be characterized by various scholars as built upon patron-client relationships (ties of mutual assistance), domination of elite families (based on excessive wealth and uninhibited access to state’s resources), or bossism accumulation and exploitation of resources by the big states actors. Jennifer Franco, in an illuminating study, classifies Post-Marcos regimes as clientelist electoral. She describes a clientelist electoral regimes as “an electorally competitive national regime which falls short of the minimum democratic threshold because of the persistence of local authoritarian enclaves.” All these characterization are variants of the same model viz., elite democracy. The elite uses its power to still greater access to the state resources. The political and economic power gets fused and perpetuated in the process. The ‘elite democracy’ framework, though valid, but a little inadequate to comprehend the fuller scope and dimension of political development in Philippines. It obviously leaves out important threads like

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196. Ibid. Carl Lande, Leaders, op.cit.
197. Fric Gutierrez, All in, op.cit., Paul Hutchcroft, Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1998. Hutchcroft likens his concept to the concept of patronial oligarchic state in which powerful oligarchic clans monopolise the financial system to advance their personal interests even at the expense of state’s developmental objectives, pp. 16-20.
people's power, grass-root democracy, peasants assertion in the southern provinces and the growing strength of civil society including vibrant press. There is a class dimension, too, to the violent conflict brewing in southern parts. Hence, it becomes imperative to integrate some socialist framework to the elite framework of democracy in Philippines.

In spite of the high level of economic growth attained, the countervailing forces that growth would be expected to have nurtured have not pressed as hard for democratization as might be expected. In Singapore, where the middle class is large, it could be expected that it would take the lead in demanding further democratization. Singapore’s small size means that its population forms a relatively intimate community, one in which information is widely shared, conformity is encouraged, discipline is imposed and dissidence is instantly detected and effectively suppressed. Growth produced a complex, differentiated class structure, including a strong middle class and a large working class. The Singapore middle class has prospered, but so has the large working class, despite the absence of a militant trade union movement. The early low-wage policy was accompanied by a huge expansion in public housing, schools, and health services, while during 1979-81 the government implemented a series of sharp wage increases. Singapore’s overwhelming reliance on foreign capital and its aspiration to consolidate its position as the regional centre for financial and commercial services make it imperative that its reputation for political and economic stability be maintained.

202. Ibid.
The key to the middle class' effectiveness in Southeast Asia can be found in its status and wealth, and it becomes increasingly independent of the state as growth continues. The significance of higher education becomes clear in the light of the students, generally being the most active group in the occasional organization of ‘People’s Power’ for democratization across the region. The students constituted the core group in the pro-democracy demonstrations in Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia that eventually ushered into the establishment of democracies in these countries.\textsuperscript{203}

The big-business class pursues its interests more independently than the other classes. In Southeast Asia, businessmen have generally been reluctant to take a political lead for democratization until the opportunities are ripe and the trend is clearly in favour of democratic wave. Thus, it is very conservative and opportunist class. However, there are internal contradictions within capitalist class in an authoritarian regime. It is because only a handful of crony capitalists find full opportunities and facilities under authoritarian regime. A large chunk of enterprising class is not satisfied with the command structure of the economy, due to intermarriage of politics and business, finds itself tied to the entrenched power structures. With the establishment of democracy, these ties remain but the balance is titled in favour of business class as a whole away from a few cronies of the regime.

The degree to which each society has been divided by ethnic, religious, and cultural differences among its indigenous inhabitants and later immigrants, has been a powerful factor in the politics of a number of Southeast Asian countries. Where the divisions deep, they are seen as threats to national unity and, thus provide additional

justification for authoritarianism. In Indonesia, for example, where the Javanese are the largest single community (although constituting only 45 percent of the population), the alienation of various non-Javanese communities was a principal cause of the regional rebellions that broke out in the 1950s, and the felt need to suppress them was an important rationale for the authoritarian regime that followed. The regional movements resurfaced as part of democratic wave in late 1990's, the moment the authoritarian. As a result of the decentralization package and political stabilization at the centre, some movements have subsided while some others like the Acehneze separatist movement continue. The adoption of federal framework can be one of the solutions of the problem.

Of all the states in Southeast Asia, none has been so far, able to practice liberal democracy. Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia were swept under so-called third wave of democratization, but soft authoritarian strands are ever present in these democracies. Thailand has even reverted back to military dictatorship. If we judge the liberal-democratic yardsticks of “free and fair electoral contestation for governing offices based on universal suffrage, guaranteed freedoms of association and expression, accountability through the rule of law, and civilian control of the military,” no system fully fits in this mould. The schism between the notions of liberal and illiberal democracy is all the more present in case of Malaysia, a vibrant procedural democracy in most of the respects. But such kind of schisms must be analysed against the backdrop that nation building and state building in these nations is still an ongoing process.

In Southeast Asia, with the possible exception of Thailand which was not colonized, the state came before the nation. The task of the

independent state therefore was to create a nation, i.e. to commence the nation-building process while at the same time maintaining racial harmony, social security, political stability, and economic development. In dealing with the multifold challenges of post-independence nationalism and regionalism, the track record of Malaysia and Singapore has been singularly impressive despite a few blemishes on the overall record.  

It is not to emphasise that there are no democratic virtues in Southeast Asian variants. In fact, the track record of Malaysia, Indonesia or Thailand in providing relatively free space to the media and civil society and maintaining electoral procedures is non-comparable to authoritarian regimes in West Asia or military dictatorships of Latin America or even the communist regime of adjoining China. They have remained colonies for long that seriously affected their socio-economic development for centuries. After getting Independence, neither they had mature political culture and institutions nor the economic wherewithal to sustain the democratic experiments. In this connection, Dr. Mahathir’s remarks are noteworthy, “there is a strong correlation between rapid economic growth and strong stable governments in East Asia for they provide the necessary stability consistency, and predictability so essential to long-term investments and economic progress.”

The regimes like Malaysia and Singapore not only rejected the western-liberal model of democracy but, to a extent, have been successful in providing some justification for their own brand of democracy. The leaders with authoritarian streaks have made good use of the precarious multi-ethnic nature of their societies, continuous high growth rates and pursuing free market policies gaining international acceptability for their brands of democracy.

There is too much emphasis in liberal-democratic model upon state-neutrality, whether in the distribution and providing access, to national resources or managing the plural identities. However, the state is well justified in playing assertively interventionist role if the market fails to rectify the inequity\(^{207}\) (In fact, it promotes inequity) or if any ethnic group faces acute backwardness.\(^{208}\)

The Southeast Asian Economic Development Model, as it has been practiced with variations in these countries, while delivering growth and raising average incomes has also resulted in growing class-disparities and marginalization of the poor from the development process.\(^{209}\) It is a universal phenomenon, though. Still, it does not dilute the imperative of equity policies in addition to growth strategies and priorities.

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