Third World democratic experiences and development theory

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1. Introduction and Summary

This paper first looks at different approaches to the study of Third World democracy in major strands of development theory; four different paths of thought in the present debates are identified.It then proceeds to discuss the concept of democracy, stressing that the debate on democracy in the Third World is a) one-dimensional and b) based on a Western concept of democracy.

Next, the issue of consequences for economic development of democratic regimes is taken up. It is stressed that this debate remains unresolved; it cannot be maintained that democracy as a form of regime is a necessary precondition for economic development, but the opposite is not true either: non-democratic regimes are not necessarily better at economic development than democratic ones.

The final section of the paper identifies a dilemma which has to do with the need for a state which is at once both strong in the sense of being able to push economic development and weak in the sense of being responsive to civil society. However, the optimistic message is that in the vast majority of cases, democracy will mean that the developmental strength of the state is increased.

2. Development Theory and Democracy

When political scientists began looking at political development in Third World countries in the 1950s, it was perhaps not too surprising that 'political development' tended to be equated with the attainment of democracy in the vein of the West, i.e. liberal democracy. After all, the dominant modernisation paradigm in development research (see for example Hettne 1982:29-39) regarded the whole process of development as becoming 'modern in the Western

way', and the core value in modernisation thinking was the 'standpoint of the West' in the cold war climate of East-West confrontation.[36]

Mainstream political sociologists began a vigorous search for conditions conducive to the rise of liberal democracy in the Third World, focusing on such variables as income levels, literacy, degree of economic development, etc., sometimes tending to forget that the experience of the Western countries themselves could provide little basis for optimism in this regard.[37]

Concrete investigations quickly established the fact that liberal democracy was in very short supply in the Third World. This led to a questioning of the actual viability of liberal democracy in such societies. At the same time, it was increasingly realised that what the West needed in the Third World was perhaps not so much liberal-democratic regimes as it was *stable* regimes, capable of forming solid alliances with the West. Both factors led, in the second half of the sixties, to a new emphasis on *political order* as the goal of political development (e.g. Huntington 1968) with less attention being paid to the negative consequences of strong government (cf. Randall & Theobald 1985:178).

Dependency theory's attack on the whole body of modernisation thinking did not bring democracy back into focus, on the contrary. Economic relationships of dependency and exploitation formed the core of analysis (cf. Randall & Theobald 1985:ch.4; Hettne 1982) and the role of politics, not to mention variations in regime form, were given only scant attention, if any at all.

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36 Which was freely admitted by W. W. Rosatow when he subtitled his book on the stages of growth 'A Non-Communist Manifesto'. See also Spero (1981 ch. 7).

37 Democracy has only been with us (in the industrialised West) for a very brief period of time; we only have to go back to 1939 to find democracy ruling in a minority of eight out of seventeen OECD countries (cf. Therborn, 1977:3n). Therborn notes that "There thus seems to be little substance in any strictly evolutionist conception of democratization. The fact that all seventeen states are now democracies may largely be attributed to the two world wars.." (*ibid.*:35).

This state of affairs changed around the late seventies. Post- (or perhaps mature) dependency thinking brought the whole issue of state structures into the picture again (e.g. Fitzgerald et al. 1977, Evers 1977; Martinussen 1980) and there has been a renewed interest in the issue of democracy, stimulated by the movement towards more democratic regimes in several Third World countries.

Presently, I believe it is possible to identify four different main strands in research dealing with democracy in the Third World (although I readily admit that some contributions cut across my categories). In different ways, each of them draws on the theoretical bagage briefly sketched above. They are the following:
(1) Preconditions for (liberal) democracy
(2) Political economy of regime transitions
(3) Concepts and modes of democracy
(4) Structures of state; the influence of democracy

(1) carries on the tradition searching for preconditions for democracy (or the growth of democracy) in the Third World. This is done through sophisticated quantitative analysis of a long range of possibly relevant factors (e.g. Vanhanen 1987,1990) or through case-studies of Third World democratic experiences (e.g. Diamond & Lipset 1986; Berg-Schlosser 1985). While several of these studies are on the outlook for a 'golden key' which is *the* decisive factor in explaining democratisation, they seem to agree, generally, that in the final analysis a cluster of different factors will have to be taken into account.

Yet I believe that there is a methodological principle tying these contributions together and differentiating them, specifically, from the research in my second category. The principle is expressed in the following way by Vanhanen (1987:29n): 'I agree with S.M. Lipset and other proponents of modernisation theories, who have sought universal explanations for democratization, and I disagree with the proponents of dependency theories and others, who argue that it is impossible to find any universally valid explanations for the va-

riation of political systems and who consequently resort to various regional, local, and ad hoc explanations'.

It is exactly this universalism which is severely criticised by (2), the strand of political economy of regime transitions. The ambition here is to focus on 'the broader issue of the political economy of delayed and dependent industrialization, which leaves open the question of the type of regime under which it may be pursued' (Cammack 1985:6). It is thus specifically Latin American regimes which are the objects of study, and the argument is that 'we must abandon the search for a general model which explicitly seeks to abstract away from the structurally and historically determined specificities and internal logic of individual cases.' (Ibid.:5). Rather, the aim should be 'theoretically informed accounts of particular cases, repsecting their internal logic, specific dynamics, and unique patterns of causality' (Ibid.:13).

These starting points lead towards very detailed analyses of the interplay of politics and economics covering rather short periods of time, cf. the case-studies in Cammack and O'Brien (1985). What we get, then, is highly sophisticated analyses of both political and economic aspects of single administrations, including their relations with classes and other social forces. It thus provides an understanding, for example, of 'the retreat of the generals' in a specific historical conjuncture in a number of important Latin American countries (Cammack and O'Brien 1985); any ambition of a 'general theory of transitions towards democracy' is rejected.

Contributions in category (3) stress the difficulties involved in applying the basically Western concept of liberal democracy to many Third World countries. From this starting point, two different further paths may be discerned; one seeks to identify existing forms of government, containing democratic tendencies but falling short of 'full' liberal democracy. Another rejects liberal democracy and argues in favour of more far-reaching forms of democracy in the Third World.

Normally, the form of government called democracy is defined as follows:

"meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups ... for all effective positions of government power ...; a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections ... and a level of civil and political liberties - freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations ..."(Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1988:xvi).

But many political systems in the Third World cannot meet these demands; this has led towards the construction of concepts of semi-democracy and the like, in order to identify systems which are not outright authoritarian or democratic, cf. for example the categories in Sklar (1983).

In the opposite direction, we have contributions which are not satisfied with liberal democracy and thus search for a democracy which involves more than 'political formalities'. Lars Rudebeck calls this broader concept 'people's power' (both Rudebeck and Beckman (1989) analyse African experiences):

"People's power ... is both social, political and economic, thus not limited to the level of political structure. We may think of peoples power as emerging, when or if people jointly assume control of their own living situations. The concrete beginnings are local. The extension of people's power beyond more local levels is, however, inconceivable except in connection with democratisation." (Rudebeck 1988:24; see also Beckman 1989).

The final strand (4) is mainly interested in understanding how the state pushes (or blocks) broader processes of development, and it does not see the presence or not of democracy as the decisive factor in this regard. According to White,

"The developmental strength of any particular state cannot be equated with its size, coercive apparatus, ideological aura, or institutional character. If one controls for environmental differences, the 'strength' of a developmental state...rests on three basic factors:
(i) its social nature; the social character and political interests of the groups which direct and compose the state and the nature of their links with domestic and international forces ....
(ii) the state's politico-administrative capacity; we can distinguish three dimensions: (a) its political capacity to define and disseminate a new ideology of 'industrialisation' ...; (b) the existence of reasonably efficient administrative institutions responsive to political cues, resistant to penetration by special interests and relative free from the perennial problems of complex bureaucratic organisations; (c) a technical capacity to analyse problems, formulate feasible solutions and implement them in technically competent ways ....
(iii) the specific modes of involvement of state organisations in social and economic processes to further industrialisation ...." (White 1984:98-100, see also Evans et al. 1985, and Dige Pedersen 1990).

This does not mean that democracy is unimportant. What it means is that democracy may or may not have a positive influence on the elements decisive for the developmental strength of the state, but this is an empirical question. In general, 'Democratisation may strenghten the state and the government by increasing consent or support, yet it may weaken its capacity to provide a coherent longer-term development strategy which may demand politically difficult decisions' (de Kadt et al. 1990).

3. Democracy and Development, Development of Democracy: The Prospects

Even if there are profound methodological divergences among the four groups of contributions mentioned above, I believe - in a good pluralistic manner - that there are important insights to gain from each of them, concerning the issue of democracy in the Third world. They represent different approaches and provide different answers to the general question regarding the prospects for demo-

cracy and democracy's overall consequences for development in the Third World.

In the present context, I wish to focus on two items; one has to do with the concept of demcocracy; the other concerns democracy's consequences for economic development.

3.1. Concepts of democracy and the Third World

It is important to note that the discussion about the meaning of democracy, including the mainstream definition of democracy provided above by Diamond et al., is very much a discussion informed by the development of democracy in Europe and North America; traditions with other roots, for example in the Third World, play an unobtrusive role in this context (for an introduction of such Third World notions of democracy, see Pye (1985) on Asia and Nursey-Bray (1983) on Africa).

Yet even in the Western debate, there very different conceptions of democracy, from the narrow ones focusing on the political system or elements of it, to the broad ones also involving social, economic and other structural aspects. An important corollary of this is to be aware of one's own conception of democracy, especially when it is used to make democratic demands on others.

It is safe to say that most observers staking democratic demands on the Third World are rather modest in their expectations, probably because they want to be realistic. Richard Sandbrook, for example, found in 1985 that democracy did not have 'any real prospects in the limiting conditions of contemporary Africa'; what could be hoped for was 'decent, responsive and largely even-handed personal rule' (Sandbrook 1985:157).

Another important point is related to the broad concept of democracy, because this broad concept forces us to admit that there can be democratic elements in the actions of non-democratic regimes. One example: the progressive military junta that took power in

Peru in 1968 did away with the democratic political system. On the other hand, the military government went on to launch much more far-reaching measures against poverty and poor living conditions for the mass of people than had been seen under the previous, democratic government.

Now, which regime is the more democratic; the one which upholds a democratic political system serving mainly an elite, or the one which does away with the democratic political system in order to promote the struggle for freedom from hunger, disease and poverty?

If we hold on to the narrow, purely political definition of democracy, there is no doubt that the ousted regime is the democratic one, but in the wider context of discussing the preconditions for democracy, this is not immediately clear.

A similar problem can appear when employing Rudebeck's concept of people's power. In the short run, ther can be people's power at the local level without political democracy at the national level, cf. also Rudebeck's example of people's power in Mocambique in 1983 (Rudebeck 1988).

Let me give another example of the possible discrepancy between a democratic political system at the macro level and democracy at the micro level. India is one of the most stable democracies in the Third World, having adopted a democratic constitution in 1950; for only one and a half year, in 1975-77 during the so-called Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi, has there been non-democratic rule.

However, democracy at the macro level of the political system has not meant that democracy was brought to all localities. The Congress party achieved its dominant position in India's vast countryside through alliances which enforced the traditional patterns of domination. Congress dealt with the electorate through 'existing patron-brokers who, as landowners and caste-leaders, had no desire

to jeopardize their positions by transforming local social structures. In adapting to local conditions, the party thus increasingly became tied to age-old patterns of status and leadership' (Scott 1972:137; see also Frankel 1978; Vanaik 1985 and Bardhan 1984).

Against this background, it is perhaps not surprising that democratic India has set in motion programs which, while claiming to promote participation and and welfare and the local level, have in fact had the opposite effect: making the poor majority even worse off and strengthening the traditional structures of dominance and subordination (for an example of such a program, see Prakash and Rastogi 1986; see also Sørensen 1991, ch. 2).

In China, political democracy in the vein of India was never seriously on the agenda. The CCP is a Bolshevik party; it did not propose to fight for the interests of all Chinese, but for the interests of workers and poor peasants against internal and external class enemies. Secondly, the democracy is sought for workers and poor peasants was the democracy of leadership from above combined with some degree of participation from below, and with a special status to the small faction of the population (less than one per cent in 1949) who were members of the party (Blecher 1986:104).

At the same time, it can be claimed that the Communists within this overall structure of authoritarian socialist rule, also promoted elements of democracy at the local level, through what was called the mass line. The mass line took at least five different concrete forms (cf. Blecher 1986:25n); first, grassroots and county-level leaders were given a higher degree of latitude in ensuring that higher-level instructions were in accordance with local needs, conditions and opinions; second, cadres were sent to the villages to work and live alongside the peasants, under similar circumstances, to share their experiences and learn from rural life; third, secret ballot elections were held regularly at village, township, county and regional levels, providing a democratic and representative character to local government: 'The only restriction was the 'three-thirds' principle, according to which one-third of offices were to be filled

by CCP members, one-third by non-CCP leftists, and one-third by liberals...' (Blecher 1986:26). Fourth, popular political expression in the form of the 'big character poster' (dazibao) was encouraged, and finally, the armed forces were to take part in civilian affairs under rules which required subordination to civil authority.

The difference between China and India at the local level is quite clear: the authoritarian Chinese government has pushed structural reforms and systems of local participation which have done much more for democratic change at the micro level than the so-called reforms attempted by democratic India.

I am not suggesting that this contradiction between democracy (or lack of it) at the macro level and democratic tendencies (or lack of them) at the micro level can be widely generalised. The core of the matter is that a macro framework of democracry does not guarantee real democracy on the local level, while an authoritarian macro framework does not completely block democratic elements on the local level.

Yet such contradictions should also be expected to become less pronounced in the long run and it can be argued that India's democracy has grown stronger at the micro level since independence while overall authoritarianism is increasingly the order of the day in China. In other words, in the longer run democracy at the macro and micro level condition and reinforce each other, but in the short/medium there may be discrepancies between the two which are important to be aware of in the overall struggle for democracy on all levels.

3.2. Democracy and economic development

Does democracy push or retard economic development? A large number of analyses have addressed this question; the answer remains inconclusive. The perhaps most comprehensive study, a survey of 98 countries in the period 1955-70, has been made by Robert Marsh. He concludes that 'Political competition/democracy does

have a significant effect on later rates of economic development; its influence is to *retard* the development rate, rather than to facilitate it. In short, among the poor nations, an authoritarian political system increases the rate of economic development, while a democratic political system does appear to be a luxury which hinders development.' (Marsh 1979:244). A similar conclusion is reached in Cohen's study of economic growth in a number of Latin American countries (1985:123-36).

Berg-Schlosser's analysis of African regimes finds that authoritarian systems have a 'strong positive effect on the overall rate of GNP growth' (1984:143), but he also emphasises that democratic (polyarchic) regimes have done better than should be expected: 'Thus polyarchic systems fare quite well both in terms of GNP growth and the improvement of the basic quality of life. They also have the best record concerning normative standards (protection of civil liberties and freedom from political repression' (1984:121).

Dwight Y. King reaches a similar conclusion in his study covering six Asian countries: 'If performance is evaluated in terms of material equality and welfare rather than growth, and is examined diachronically over the past decade and within differentiated population groups (rural landless, and near landless), democratic-type regimes (Malaysia, Sri Lanka) have performed better than bureaucratic-authoritarian ones (Indonesia, Phillippines, Thailand).' (1981:477).

G. William Dick has examined the growth record of 72 countries between 1959 and 1968. He uses a classification with three different forms of government: authoritarian, semi-competitive, and competitive. Although the data are not, as the article readily admits, unambiguous, it is maintained that: 'these results certainly do not support, and tend to refute, the view that authoritarian countries are universally capable of achieving faster economic growth in the early stages of development than countries having competitive political systems...' (Dick 1974:823).

Dick's contribution is a good example of the problems involved in attempting to answer the question on the basis of search for a relationship between economic performance data from many countries covering a limited period of time and a questionable classification in terms of regime form.

First, is does not seem reasonable to base such an analysis on a period covering less than 10 years. Second, a very large number of countries invariably gives problems with regime classification. The best growth performers in Dick's analysis were the 'semi-competitive' countries, which were defined as follows: 'there is either one major and several minor political parties, with the major winning all elections, or one political party which conducts legitimizing elections from time to time. Also control over the population is not extensive.' (Dick 1974:818).

This definition means that such countries as Algeria, Ethiopia, South Africa, all the Francophone countries in Africa, and Nicaragua under Somoza are classified, not as authoritarian, but as 'semi-competitive', using 1970 data. But it would be easy to argue that such regimes should be considered authoritarian, and then the basis for Dick's whole conclusion disappears.

In fact, the other contributions mentioned here are plagued by similar problems. Thus, we have a large number of countries which are either not clearly identifiable as democratic (or authoritarian), and/or they move very fast between the categories, being semi-democratic yesterday, authoritarian today and semi-democratic tomorrow. Each time they make a stop in one of the categories, they lend their economic performance data, often covering only a few years, to a different argument in these investigations. This is not helpful by way of providing a conclusive answer to our initial question.

In my recent book (Sørensen 1991), I attempt to answer the question by the way of a detailed case-study of two long-standing Third World democracies, Costa Rica and India. Defining 'economic de-

velopment' as growth and welfare, I do not find a distinctly better or poorer growth performance in the two cases, compared with non-democratic regimes. As regards welfare, I conclude that there is no automatic link between a democratic form of regime and measures improving welfare for the mass of people. Democracy contains a potential in this regard, which may or may not unfold, depending on a number of circumstances; most important among these are the resources and strength, in terms of consciousness, organization and political influence, of popular forces. This should be seen in relation to the character and strength of elite forces, often cooperating in a dominant coalition. The position of the agrarian elite is of particular importance because it may block reform measures in the countryside which are often vital for overall welfare improvement.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that the conclusions from my case-study cannot be widely generalised; they are relevant for only a handful of fairly stable democratic regimes in the Third World, none of them African.

Thus, when we look at the form of regime (democratic or authoritarian) as the independent variable and economic development (defined for example as growth and welfare) as the dependent variable, it is not possible to reach a point where we can say: when this is the form of regime (democratic or authoritarian), then we can expect so and so in terms of economic development.

On the other hand, this should not be taken to mean that the form of regime is completely insignificant for economic development. The point is that the issue of regime form must always be seen in its specific interplay with a number of other factors which also influence the economic outcome. It can then be decided in each concrete case whether a democratic form of regime supports or retards economic development (see also Sørensen 1991, chs. 1 & 6).

In the present context, however, it must be maintained that democracy should be supported for its own sake; the basic civil and poli-

tical rights at the core of a democratic political system are as indispensable goals for a decent process of development as are the basic economic and social rights. In this situation it is sometimes forgotten that the road towards democracy is a long and difficult one; thus, going against the atrocities of basic human rights violation is only a feeble beginning of a long process of democratic struggle.

4. A Strong State and a Weak State: The Basic Dilemma?

Let me try to posit the question about democracy's consequences for development in another way, inspired by the contributions in category (4) above, where the central concern is the developmental strength of the state and democracy's role in this regard.

The starting point is that successful 'catching up' or 'late development' by Third World countries calls for a substantial role for the state. In the twentieth century, no successful process of late development has taken place without the state playing a significant role (cf. Senghaas 1982). It is immediately clear that if the state is going to take up this central role in an effective manner, it needs to be strong, it needs to have what White calls developmental strength.

At the same time, one needs to be careful when using the strong/weak dichotomy. As Laurids Lauridsen emphasises,

"it is possible to identify some serious pitfalls when a simple strong/weak dichotomy is utilized as an analytical tool. First there often is a tendency to define state strength by outcomes but then it cannot be used as an explanatory variable if one avoids being tautological.Second, state strength is often presented as self-reinforcing but such a static view fails to see variations in the role and efficacy over time. Third, the strong state argument tends to assume a uniformity in effectiveness of state intervention across issue areas thus eliminating more disaggregated studies examining the interrelationship between different aspects of state structure. Fourth, the relational character of state strength is often overlooked and the state is studies in virtual isolation from societal forces ... Fifth, many are

tempted to identify state strength with 'good policy', while is is not obvious why so-called strong states should follow an efficient, effective or optimal policy ... Finally, the strong state argument might leas one to idealize the developmental state in the same manner as dependency theory earlier idealized capitalism in the advanced capitalist countries." (Lauridsen 1990:13n).

Thus, we will probably seldom be able to find a state which is uniformly 'strong' on all dimensions and at all times, always being able to conduct 'the best' policies.[38] Yet for analytical purposes the distinction between strong and weak states is helpful and maybe it is possible to use the notion of a strong state as a heuristic tool while being aware of the possible pitfalls outlined by Lauridsen.

What is a strong state then? It is a state capable of making 'good policies', meaning a process speeding up late development. It might not always make good policies, but at least is has a) the capacity and b) the general intention to do so. This means that a strong has is defined by two basic elements. One has to do with capacity (or what White calls politico-administrative capacity). At its core is an effective bureaucratic machinery (cf. also Rueschemeyer and Evans 1985:50-60).

The other element (intention) has to do with the aspect White calls the social nature of the state (i.e. 'the social character and political interests of the groups which direct and compose the state and the nature of their links with domestic and international forces'). On the one hand, the state needs autonomy from those domestic and international forces which have interests going against late development. Agrarian elites opposed to land reform, or foreign bourgeoisies wishing to preserve a highly dependent economic structure are examples in this regard.

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38 For an analysis which demonstrates that the Indian state is at once strong and weak, effective en ineffective, corrupt and non-corrupt, see Dige Pedersen (1990).

On the other hand, a high level of autonomy can fall in the wrong hands, namely in the hands of state elites wishing to promote, not a general process of late development, but their own economic and other interests. What is needed then, is, with an awkward expression, autonomy in the hands of a developmentalist state elite.[39]

What is the influence of democracy on the strength of the state? It is sometimes said that democracy means a weak state in the sense that democracy makes the state more susceptible to 'outside' pressures which in turn decreases its effectiveness in providing the necessary long term development strategy. This posits a dilemma, between the need for a strong state to push late development on the one hand and a weak, responsive, democratic state on the other.

But the full picture is a bit more complex, mainly because there are several shades of authoritarianism which pose even higher problems for the state's developmental role than does democracy. According to the definition given above, there are two elements in a strong state: politico-administrative capacity and 'autonomy in the right hands'. If democracy is defined as basically liberal democracy (cf. the definition by Diamond et al. above), it is possible to draw out some possible effects on the state's strength, as illustrated in the table below (p. 18).

Even in this simple form, the table indicates that the effects of democracy on the two dimensions which constitute the developmental strength of the state is not unambiguous. Democracy may have negative[40] as well as positive effects. Whether democracy is a step

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39 I realise this brings me close to the pitfall of tautology mentioned by Lauridsen, but it should be stressed that such developmentalist elites do not necessarily carry out the good policies and are thus not necessarily succesfull in their efforts. Maybe Tanzania under Nyerere in the years following the Declaration of Arusha is an example of this, but Tanzania also had problems with the other aspect of a strong state identified here: an effective bureaucratic machinery.

40 The discussion of possible negative effects of democracy does not undermine the value of democracy in itself, as discussed earlier. But focus here is strictly on democracy's concequences for the developmental strength of the state.

forward or not in terms of state's developmental strength depends to a high degree on the non-democratic regime which democracy replaces.

The strong state - possible effects of democracy

	Positive effects	Negative effects
Politico-administrative capacity	*less corruption *visibility of policy design and implementation *public scrutiny of administrative processes	*cross-purpose policies *no long-term strategy
Autonomy in the right hands	*more difficult for state elites to pursue own narrow interests	*higher influence for non-development elites *less autonomy from strong social forces

In this context, I believe there has been a tendency to idealize developmental authoritarianism by building on a few cases from South-East Asia, primarily Taiwan and South Korea (cf. the discussion in Lauridsen 1990). The point to be argued here is that in the vast majority of cases, democracy will be a significant step forward in terms of the developmental strength of the state. This applies to Africa, where democracy will replace personalised 'clan-rule', often to the benefit of only a tiny elite in control of the state (cf. Hydén 1983; Sandbrook 1985).

It also seems to apply to Latin America, where authoritarianism has often meant a highly unenqual form of economic development, where the state elite has built alliances with the dominant social forces in society, i.e. domestic and international industrial bourgeoisies and agrarian oligarchies (e.g. Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia).

In Asia one only has to mention the case of Phillippines under Marcos in order to demonstrate that effective developmentalist authoritarianism may be the exception rather than the rule here also.

Yet it must also be stressed that the experiences from long-term liberal democratic India brings out some of the basic weaknesses of liberal democracy in terms of the state's developmental strength. The basic problem is the tendency to protect elite interests, especially the large landowners, to such a degree that the capacity for mobilising ressources is severely impeded. There has been talk of basic agrarian reforms involving redistribution of land on a large scale ever since independence, but no effective action.

Overall, state policies mainly benefit a minority alliance of bureaucracy, rural elite and industrial bourgeoisie (cf. Bardhan 1984, Sørensen 1991). Thus, there is no automatic link between a democratic form of regime and measures improving welfare for the mass of people. Democracy contains a potential in this regard, which may or may not unfold, depending on a number of circumstances; most important among these are the resources and strength, in terms of consciousness, organization and political influence, of popular forces. This should be seen in relation th to character and strength of elite forces, often cooperating in a dominant coalition. As already indicated, the position of the agrarian elite is of particular importance because it may block reform measures in the countryside which are often vital for overall welfare improvement.

5. Conclusion

Democracy does not guarantee social and economic development; neither does authoritarian rule. But democracy is a value in itself which should be seen as part and parcel of a decent process of development. Moreover, there is reason to believe that in the majority of cases, democracy will mean a substantial step forward in terms of increasing the developmental strength of the state. Yet there is a dire need for more studies of the effects of democracy in this respect. Even so, there is reason to be optimistic as regards the future of democracy in the Third World.

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