

Power, Authority, and the Advent of Democracy

OVERVIEW

By the time a wave of peaceful democratic transitions and political liberalization movements had swept Eastern Europe and part of Latin America in 1989, several nations in Pacific Asia were already deeply immersed in their own democratic transformations. The most dramatic of these occurred in 1986-88 in the Philippines and Korea, but throughout the region in the late 1980s the stirring of democratic forces was being felt. Rising middle class wealth was an important stimulus for these movements, even if in some cases it merely strengthened democratic impulses that had begun much earlier. This chapter will focus on the exercise of power, authority and the transition toward democracy in several capitalist states that are undergoing such transitions, leaving the echoes of democratization within the communist states of Vietnam and China to be dealt with in later chapters.

The rise of Asian nationalism and independence movements both before and after World War II stirred debates over what form new governments should take, but such concerns were often overwhelmed by the struggle for political control. Once independence movements had managed to prevail, factional rivalries and instability complicated early efforts to establish independent judicial structures and representative forms of government. The search for workable, stable

forms of democracy resulted in compromises, modifications, and setbacks that in Western eyes might be seen as the "failure" of democratic reform.

In fact, democracy was not the highest priority for most developing Asia-Pacific governments in the early postwar period. The fundamental concern was with economic and political stability backed by a sufficient base of power and authority. As a result, the outward forms of democracy, such as legislative bodies, did not necessarily reflect truly representative government. Leaders often bolstered their mandates to rule by promising social stability and rapid rates of economic growth even if their governments might not be deemed "democratic" or sensitive to human rights. By the late 1980s, however, a resurgence of democratic impulses revealed that authoritarian control could no longer be rationalized merely on the basis of economic growth and stability. Those in power had to confront the reality of a rising, affluent and influential professional class whose access to news, ideas, and information from "outside" had made them less tolerant of authoritarian control. As will be seen, even the emergence of this new constituency has not always led to significant political change, but leadership transitions of one sort or another have begun or are about to occur across the entire map of Pacific Asia. All will be influenced by ongoing political, economic, demographic and cultural changes in the region.

"If we were to run elections among China's one billion people now, chaos ... would certainly ensue.... Democracy is our goal, but the state must maintain stability."

—Deng Xiaoping to George Bush,
February 1989

POWER AND AUTHORITY IN PACIFIC ASIA

Ideals of Behavior

Asia-Pacific societies share with the West the sense that unmanaged political power is dangerous, but unlike Westerners they do not conceive of their political development as derivative from some early, more primitive state. Rather, they see themselves as having had to maintain always a precarious balance between stability and chaos. Nor do they view political power and authority as being inherently dangerous, except when authorities have discredited themselves through incompetence or ruthlessness. This general acceptance of authority derives from deeply rooted notions of what is appropriate and obligatory behavior on the part of those who legitimately exercise power, the broader patterns of which can be compared and contrasted between East and Southeast Asia.

In Southeast Asia, power arrangements were traditionally mirrored in a social hierarchy interlaced with a broad network of personal obligations. By maintaining their stations within this hierarchy, people believed they were contributing to the cosmic order and the preservation of stability. The pinnacle of their order was a semidivine ruler, as noted in chapter 1. Kingly powers were to be used to maintain this harmony, not so much by intricate social management as by mediation with powerful cosmic forces.

Authority in East Asia, particularly China, had a similarly divine connection as typified by the "Mandate of Heaven," also described in chapter 1, with which every successful and legitimate ruler was said to be endowed. Governance soon

came to be viewed in secular terms as Confucianism grew dominant and authority was imbued with concepts of ethics and order. Society looked upon the supreme ruler as the ideal of proper conduct. His exemplary behavior and moral authority were expected to bring benefits to everyone, and beneath him each individual accepted his or her place in a carefully ordered hierarchy.

There are certain disadvantages to a Confucianist system that grants so much responsibility to so few people, as in the case of China where governmental authority was granted to a supreme leader, his ministers, and an elite group of bureaucrats. This relatively small body was expected to serve a great number of people impartially. At the same time, the elites' Confucian tradition required them to give total loyalty to their family and clan, creating a fundamental and insoluble contradiction — one that has underlain charges of corruption and nepotism against power-holders from China's distant past down to the present day.

Managing Competition and Criticism

In both East and Southeast Asia, leaders were traditionally revered to a degree that made it dangerous to criticize their rule, however constructively. Voices of dissent could be taken as a challenge to the entire system of order. Even the most prestigious Confucian scholar in China, for example, risked imperial retribution if his criticism was seen as undermining the authority of the court. If this stifling of criticism might seem "authoritarian" to Westerners, it was also a "paternalistic" relationship between patrons and clients that helped maintain the social order. The problem, particularly in the East Asian Confucian system, was the absence of any means by which legitimate adversaries could contest publicly and peacefully for power. Those who held the throne considered themselves to be the representatives of the entire society, not merely a constituency within it. Competition for power took place through intrigue and personal attacks, the tactics most compatible with a stable hierarchical system.

If these general attitudes toward power and authority are shared broadly between societies with Confucian traditions, there are also important

differences between them. As noted by Lucian Pye, one of the most striking contrasts occurs between China and Japan:

*"In contrast to the Japanese approach to power, which evolved out of feudal pluralism and was based on primary relationships, the Chinese started with the ideal that all power should emanate from above, from the center, from a single supreme ruler. In contrast to the near anonymity of the low-postured Japanese leaders, the Chinese have consistently made their top leaders into larger-than-life figures. Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping are names that dominate the history of modern China, while only the aficionados of Japanese history can recount the names of those involved in carrying out the Meiji Restoration or can list the prime ministers who made the Japanese economy the third greatest in the world . . . The Chinese conviction that all power should reside in the central authority . . . has been one of the most powerful factors in shaping Chinese history."*¹

A further contrast between Chinese and Japanese power relationships can be seen in the extent to which Japan finds it much easier to accommodate competitive forces within its society than does China. Whereas Japan has long accepted the struggle for supremacy among factions, as occurred regularly among feudal lords, China sought to repress such aggression as inimical to social harmony. In Japan, the network of loyalties and obligations extended beyond the family to include whatever superior governmental authority the family acknowledged. Thus, a changeable hierarchy of competing families emerged that also accepted the authority of a central Japanese leadership. By contrast, the Chinese hierarchy developed not among families but within an officialdom whose members were expected to harmonize their relationships in support of a supreme ruler and an idealized vision of an orderly state. Japan's dramatic leap toward interaction with the West in the nineteenth century involved broad factional competition and dynamic societal changes that China's leaders would have found unacceptably chaotic and dangerous.

"The gentleness tempered with severity used in governing the household is indeed like that which is required in governing the state."

—Yen Zhi Tui, sixth century
Chinese scholar

To summarize, a key challenge for developing nations in modern Pacific Asia has been to permit competition for power and legitimate authority among constituencies without undermining the basic social order. We will examine how this problem has been confronted, first in Southeast Asia where it is complicated by colonial legacies and ethnic divisions; then in East Asia where rapid economic growth and national political boundaries have influenced the course of democracy in Korea and Taiwan.

TRIALS OF DEMOCRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Thailand: Steps Toward Parliamentary Democracy, 1932-1945

Thailand's escape from colonial occupation, as noted in chapter 2, came at a price: King Mongkut and his son, Chulalongkorn, had to accept serious encroachments on the territory of what was then called Siam by both France and Great Britain. Yet by playing the imperial ambitions and strategies of the two rivals against one another, they bought precious time in which to educate and effectively modernize a fledgling bureaucracy that would soon manage the emergence of modern Thailand.

Although Thailand entered the twentieth century with an enlightened monarchy bent on forging a modern state, the search for a more representative form of government, such as a constitutional monarchy, was not on the king's agenda. Chulalongkorn and his successors resisted the increasing pressure from some members of the royal family and a growing number of Thai intellectuals to modernize politically as well as economically. In 1912 an unsuccessful military

coup attempted to install a republican form of government. It was to be the first of many coup attempts in the decades to come.

Resistance by the throne to democratic reform was rooted in doubts about the suitability of democracy for Thai society. Calls for parliamentary democracy troubled the kings and the senior princes who responded that the society lacked a middle class or educated electorate. In their view, a parliament would have power without real accountability to a knowledgeable and aware populace. They were especially concerned that a parliament might quickly become dominated by Thailand's ethnic Chinese communities.

Yet modernization required an enlarged bureaucracy. By the late 1920s the size and power of the Thai bureaucracy itself created a constituency for constitutional government that could no longer be contained. Leading the call for change were elements of the Western-educated military who in June 1932 staged a bloodless coup and installed a constitutional regime. Although the immediate period that followed (1933-38) could hardly be called more democratic than the one it replaced (power was still highly concentrated in the hands of the reformers), it succeeded in moving forward with a liberal program of mass education and public health under the constitutional monarchy of the boy-king Ananda, led by prime minister Phraya Phahon. The military officers who had formed the People's Party for purposes of staging the coup rapidly increased their power and influence at the expense of their civilian counterparts, mainly because they were a more cohesive, organized political force.

During this period, until the end of World War II, Thailand's only formally recognized political institution was its unicameral legislature which was half appointed, half elected. The People's Party was dominant and absorbed a broad spectrum of the political elite, but it was not formalized as a legal entity. Its potential role in educating and mobilizing the populace was left to the bureaucracy whose membership overlapped considerably with that of the legislature. As a result, the legislative and bureaucratic processes became closely intertwined and political parties as such emerged only a decade after the end of the war.

With the fall of Phraya Phahon's government in 1938, Thai politics entered a strongly national-

istic and authoritarian period under Prime Minister Luang Phibun Songkhram, a former army colonel who cooperated closely with the occupying Japanese during World War II. Phibun's government collapsed with the defeat of the Japanese and was replaced by his rival Pridi, who had helped stage the 1932 coup and later led underground support for the Allied powers during the war. Pridi was not able, however, to break the grip of the military over Thailand's government.

Thailand's Military-Civilian Balance of Power

The Japanese surrender gave Thailand's legislative body, the National Assembly, a significant role in government for the first time. A civilian coalition attempted to minimize the role of the military in politics but the result was highly unsatisfactory: Political bickering and economic hardships led to eight cabinets and five different prime ministers in the span of two years. Finally, in November 1947 the military staged a coup. By early 1948 the old constitution had been abandoned and a general was the new premier. Yet even this new government proved unsatisfactory to the military because the constitution still limited their direct involvement in politics. By late 1951 the same generals who organized the 1947 coup staged the so-called silent coup of 1951 that enabled them to retain greater control. The resulting "semidemocratic" government has been subject to innumerable coups ever since, most of them bloodless, as competing factions led by the military continue to rise and fall.

What would seem on the surface to have been a chaotic postwar political development in Thailand was actually a process through which political forces remained in a dynamic balance. An elected parliament was permitted to function even though the real center of power was the executive branch, controlled by elite military and bureaucratic groups. A further stabilizing influence has been the king who remains by far the most revered leadership figure in Thailand. By the early 1990s King Bhumibol had survived more than a score of prime ministers and thirty cabinets by staying above politics except in matters of extreme national crisis when the mere hint of his





Figure 8.1 Thailand's generals have long been the governmental power brokers. This picture, taken in 1984, shows then-Supreme Commander Arthit Kamlangek in the center. On retiring from the military, Arthit became deputy prime minister in the democratically elected administration of former general Chatichai Choonhavan. After the 1991 bloodless coup, both Arthit and Chatichai were briefly imprisoned, then sent abroad "on vacation."

disapproval restrained military leaders from ill-advised attempts at coups. As a focus of loyalty and national cohesion, his support for a political regime is deemed essential to its survival.

However unique the position of the king may be, the ideal of behavior he represents is also expected of the ordinary political authorities in Thailand. Officials, it is said, should be compassionate, accommodative, and supportive of their subordinates without intimidating them. The responsibilities of a benevolent superior to his subordinates serve as a counterweight to any exploitation that might otherwise develop in the relationship. This has contributed to the stability of Thai political changes since power is not seen merely as a repressive force but as an expression of superior stature and an ability to serve a dependent public.

The use of military coups to effect political transitions seemed to diminish in Thailand by the early 1980s as yet another general-turned-civilian,

Prem Tinsulanonda, took the position of premier. Prem's rule was to be challenged several times, including another unsuccessful coup attempt in 1985, but he remained acceptable to a broad enough coalition of Thai parties to last until 1988 when the first truly democratic election of a new premier in many years, former general Chatichai Choonhavan, took place. At the same time, business leaders and members of the parliament appeared to be increasing their ability to play a forceful role in Thai politics.

On February 23, 1991, however, the image of a receding military role in Thailand's parliamentary democracy was shattered by yet another coup under the leadership of the military Supreme Commander General Sunthorn Kongsompong and his deputy General Suchina Kraprayoon. The United States, acting on principle, quickly terminated all development assistance programs to Thailand as a sanction against the coup even though most of the Thai people,

BURMA'S AGONY

The Burmese strongman, Ne Win, seized power in a military coup in 1962 and, until an outbreak of popular protest in 1988, he held the country in the vise grip of a loyal army and secret police. Ne Win officially retired in 1989 but remained in charge behind the scenes. The military government slaughtered many unarmed antigovernment protesters in Rangoon during the 1988 demonstrations. A year of confrontation followed between civilians and the army in which additional thousands were killed. In retaliation, the authorities used a technique similar to that employed by Cambodia's infamous Khmer Rouge: they depopulated and razed entire neighborhoods of Rangoon known to have supported the democracy protests, moving the inhabitants to shanty towns rife with disease.

In 1990, having become confident that the opposition had been rendered ineffective by the previous year of repression, the authorities decided to permit a showcase popular election. To their shock, a sufficient number of candidates within a broad opposition coalition were elected to lay the groundwork for a representative national assembly.

Yet no action to create such an assembly was permitted and by 1991 most of the opposition leaders had been rounded up and jailed, the most prominent among them being Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize and daughter of the revered "founding father" of modern Burma, Aung San.

Burma stands out in Asia for the thoroughness with which its authoritarian government acts to control opposition voices. Today the country is effectively held by an indigenous army of occupation recruited from impoverished rural areas. More than half the gross national product is devoted to "defense."

while apprehensive, had welcomed the military action. King Bhumibol had been consulted and effectively condoned the coup. What had happened since Chatichai's election to precipitate yet another democratic crisis?

Although he was a product of Thailand's military apparatus, Chatichai had taken measures to place the military more firmly under his authority. His moves were deeply threatening to powerful military rivals who were determined not to relinquish their considerable control over the bureaucracy, nor were they supportive of Chatichai's aggressive efforts to privatize public utilities in which they had financial interests. The fact that his administration also stood widely accused of rampant corruption made it much easier to justify his overthrow. The generals soon named an interim prime minister, the respected businessman Anand Panyarachun, but they also moved to stack the membership of a new National Assembly whose new members they appointed. Nevertheless, the military cast themselves in the role of

reformers and crusaders as they announced a crackdown on the pervasive influence (including in the National Assembly) of gangland figures. They also indicated that they would change the constitution so as to remove the linkage between the legislative and administrative branches, a notorious cause of graft.

Some Thai observers accuse the 1991 coup of having upset the delicately balanced interests of the military, the elected Assembly, the monarchy, the middle class, and the business community. For them it represented a "regression" to the earlier system of government-by-coup. Others suggest that the stabilizing role of the military and its disgust with rampant corruption in Thai politics signaled a shift, however modest, toward a more regular and "clean" political system. They believe that it was Chatichai, not the military, who upset the balance of interests. In any event, the coup signaled a continued dominant role for the military in Thailand, one that future civilian governments will ignore at their peril.

The Ethnic Setting

The stark division of Malaysia into two parts by the South China Sea is matched by its deep division ethnically, one that has given the term “communal politics” a special meaning in that country. Malays constitute slightly less than half the population. The second largest group, the ethnic Chinese, comprise roughly thirty-five percent and dominate the nation’s commercial and professional spheres. They reside mostly in the urban areas of Borneo and the west coast of the peninsula. The Malays are Sunni Muslims whereas the Chinese and the other major indigenous group, the Indians, follow their own religious traditions. Occupation, race, and religion are thus all closely correlated in Malaysia. As a group, the Chinese are much better off economically than the Malays.

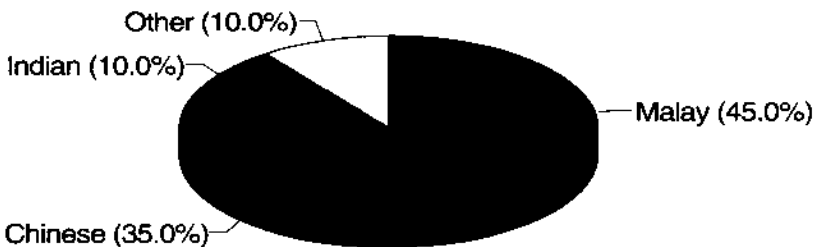
This diversity and the pressures it places on the Malay population lie at the center of Malaysian politics. To be a Malay is to be a Muslim, yet unlike the political environments found in the

Middle East, the pressures on Malaysia’s Muslims are divided between accommodation of diversity and the shunning of it. On the one hand, Malays recognize that they lack a majority status in their country and are reliant on strategies of compromise to achieve political dominance. On the other hand, the identification of Islam with “Malayness” and the fact that Islam is interpreted as an entire way of life has made it difficult for them to accept the intrusion of the modern secular world or the customs of other ethnic groups in their midst. Further complicating the picture are the Malay traditions on which the Islamic faith has been superimposed. A set of non-Islamic folk beliefs rooted in Malay traditions imparts a distinctive quality to Islam in Malaysia and provides a clear example of how Islam was modified by the many cultures in Asia wherein it spread and flourished.

Political Evolution

As elsewhere in the region, Japanese occupation during World War II had a profound effect on the economics and politics of colonial “Malaya.” Those who held out against the Japanese in a steady

Malaysia’s Ethnic Mix



Graph 8.1





Figure 8.2 One of the most famous scenes in Malaysia's modern history. Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman cries "Merdeka!" ("Freedom!") after reading the Proclamation of Independence on August 31, 1957.

guerrilla warfare were primarily ethnic Chinese Communists whereas the Malays were far less resistant to the invaders. This contrast only served to heighten tensions between the groups after the British returned to Malaya in 1945. In attempting to initiate some local self-government, the British sought to encourage the notion of "citizenship" as applying to all residents including the non-Malays. To move the independence process along, the Malay elite accepted that citizenship rights should be extended to non-Malays prior to independence, but that "special rights" would, at the same time, accrue to those who were indigenous Malays. This informal and profoundly ambiguous "bargain" was intended to display a united front to the British and convince the latter that stable government could be formed in their absence.

At first the British attempted to reorganize "Malaya" politically as a unified state which excluded Singapore (still to remain a separate colony) and abrogated the rights of the sultans of the separate states. This proposal alarmed the Malays who saw it as a serious diminution of their power in the future independent nation. They

organized massive protests and soon formed what was to become the dominant political party of the nation: the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). In the face of such resistance, the British abandoned their original proposal and replaced it with one calling for a Federation of Malaya, still excluding Singapore and the British territories of Borneo, but resembling the old order of state structure and nonelective councils dominated by Malays.

In the years that immediately followed, two other important political organizations were formed, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), both of which were created as ethnic parties. By 1952, the MCA and MIC had teamed up with UMNO in countrywide legislative council elections to form an intercommunal Alliance Party. This was the supposedly united front which the British accepted as the precondition to independence, even though the British clearly would have preferred parties that combined different ethnic groups rather than a political "alliance" of parties divided along ethnic lines. Constitutional talks

ensued which resulted in independence for Malaysia on August 31, 1957.

This delicately balanced, multiethnic coalition was led by Tunku Abdul Rahman, a man whose special appeal was that he had not only led the struggle for independence, but also appeared to be above communal chauvinism. The British administration, too, needed a figure with the Tunku's attributes, someone who believed in British notions of popular government, including parliamentary democracy. Yet even the Tunku could not successfully balance ethnic demands without paying a political price. In the end, many Malays saw him as having "sold" the country to the non-Malays, while non-Malay leaders close to the Tunku could no longer keep their own followers in line in the face of greater demands for opportunities and access to the system.

The Alliance, as it came to be known, remained dominated by the Malay majority but it suffered a serious loss in the 1969 elections. In fact, the opposition, while fragmented, gained a total of 52.5 percent of the votes to the Alliance's 47.5 percent.

To the Malay elite who led the Alliance it seemed that Malay political supremacy, the core of national stability, was seriously in doubt. Amid the victory celebrations of non-Malays and rumors that one or more state governments would be led by non-Malay chief ministers, counterdemonstrations by UMNO supporters led to four days of communal rioting that left nearly two hundred people dead.

The "May 13" rioting of 1969 remains the great political watershed of Malaysian postwar history. Although the rioting was soon contained, the nation was deeply shocked by it. A state of emergency was declared immediately and a "National Operations Council," controlled by the Malays, temporarily replaced the parliament.

Responsibility for diagnosing and solving the problem was given to a high-level National Consultative Council whose recommendations, when implemented in 1971, led to the restoration of parliamentary democracy. The Council concluded that the Malay (or *bumiputera*) population had lost faith in the "bargain" struck on its behalf in the years prior to formal independence. That bargain was understood to have guaranteed Malay access to a greater share of the nation's wealth and the protection of the distinctive Malay cultural heritage. These assurances needed to be reinforced, it

was agreed, through measures that included guarantees for educational access, Malay language instruction, and special redistributions of wealth and ownership rights in commerce and industry. After 1989 the Alliance was reformed into the Barisan Nasional (National Front, or BN) comprising at times as many as ten different parties including a larger number of Chinese groups.

By 1971 a broad coalition of Malays and non-Malays had reached an agreement that destabilizing issues, particularly those related to the political dominance of Malays, could no longer be questioned or raised in any way in the course of public debate. Paradoxically, then, as Malaysia returned to parliamentary government in 1971 it did so with the understanding that democracy Malaysian-style would hereafter be contained within strict guidelines of political discourse.

The new, multiethnic "grand coalition" of political parties that followed the 1969 riots placed the Malay leaders on a much firmer footing. Concern over the potential instability that would result from a renewal of interethnic violence reinforced the institutional changes that were imposed during the brief period of nondemocratic emergency rule. An increased strength of the communist insurgency in the 1970s, combined with the prospect that Vietnam might attempt to militarily dominate Southeast Asia (described in chapter 11), also impelled the diverse interest groups of Malaysia toward compromise and accommodation.

Mahathir and the "Limiting of a Limited Democracy"

Running directly counter to these stabilizing forces was the increasingly authoritarian voice of Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the prime minister who took over in 1981. Mahathir's policies placed new strains on the Malaysian system of internal cooperation.² Unlike his predecessors, he had not been educated in Britain and his experience was that of a young professional rising amid the opportunities and frustrations of a multiethnic, developing country. The result was a new "style" in Malaysian politics and a new voice that seemed to echo the views of early Asian revolutionaries who rejected the models provided by the West.

DILEMMAS OF INEQUALITY: MALAYSIA'S NEW ECONOMIC POLICY, 1970-1990

The 1969 race riots in Malaysia changed profoundly the way the Malaysian government managed its economy. Prior to 1969, the government had taken a relatively hands-off approach to economic development, assuming that standard market-oriented approaches would provide the necessary "trickle down" effect to the poorer *bumiputera* (indigenous Malay) population. The Malays in control of the government interpreted the riots in economic terms and decided that such a passive approach would only lead to new frictions. This conclusion led to the creation of a "New Economic Policy" (NEP). The goal of the NEP was to eradicate poverty among all races in Malaysia as well as any connection between race and occupation. In effect, the aim was to redistribute wealth over a twenty-year period. Malay ownership of corporate assets was to rise to 30 percent while non-Malays would own 40 percent. Foreign ownership, it was agreed, would shrink dramatically over the same period.

The results of the NEP were mixed. Thousands of jobs did open up to Malays in the higher productivity manufacturing and service sectors, but major regions comprising mostly rural Malays continued to stagnate. In general, job creation for Malays did not keep pace with their accelerating entry into the labor force.

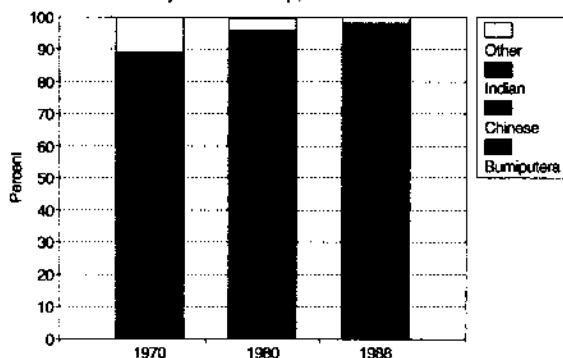
The Chinese were nevertheless opposed to the NEP because it clearly discriminated against them. Malays were given preference in government contracts, Chinese business expansion was regulated, Chinese businesses were forced to hire Malay managers, and they had to sell shares at discounts to Malays. At the same time, the Chinese could see no prospect that they would gain political equality with the Malays if the NEP succeeded.

For the first ten years of the NEP, the greater part of corporate asset redistribution was affected by purchases of strategic stakes in firms by government investment companies. In the 1980s, under Mahathir's influence, the focus shifted towards privatization. Stakes in state companies were sold to the public, especially Malay investors. This, too, met with limited success until government measures in the late 1980s succeeded in bolstering the capital and skills of Malay businesses. This privatization effort continues today.

In the end, the NEP (which was more or less abandoned in 1991) had a dampening effect on the most vital and dynamic part of the Malay economy: the ethnic Chinese businesses. In this respect, it was counterproductive even though it may have succeeded in its larger goal, which was to ensure national political stability. Malay elites were not blind to this cost, but they faced a difficult choice. Unless they could hold out the prospect of economic improvement to poorer Malays, creating a vision of the future that placed them on an equal footing with the Chinese, the divided nation might again have been plunged into civil strife.

Malaysia presents an example of the complex choices facing leaders in a developing country where there are stark income inequalities. Economic models will not tell them how to make the choices that face them: between free market capitalism and interethnic equality; between free-for-all democracy and political stability.

Malaysia's Registered Professionals
By Ethnic Group, 1970 - 1988



ONE-PARTY RULE IN SINGAPORE

In 1984, when Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's Political Action Party (PAP) won the general elections with seventy-seven out of seventy-nine parliamentary seats, what should have been hailed as a landslide in other countries was viewed as a defeat for PAP: For the first time since independence it had failed to score a clean sweep.

Voting is compulsory in Singapore. So is voting for PAP some would say, since constituencies voting for the opposition automatically lose the extensive services of community organizations controlled by PAP. One of the regime's reactions to the 1984 shock was to intimidate further those who participated in opposition politics. In 1987, for example, twenty-two young Singapore professionals were rounded up and detained without trial for months on the grounds that they were engaged in a Marxist conspiracy. Most were later released after many weeks of harsh interrogation. Similarly, the regime launched an all-out attack against key independent news sources, such as the prestigious regional weekly magazine *Far Eastern Economic Review*, expelling its correspondent and virtually banning its distribution.

On the other hand, the regime's response to the 1984 elections was to inquire urgently into how PAP had failed its constituency and what needed to be done to bring that constituency back. The "strongman" rule in Singapore, which formally ended in 1990 when Lee passed the premiership to his chosen successor, Goh Chok Tong, belies the glib generalization that power corrupts. Lee's leadership, exemplary in the Confucian sense, was never tainted by accusations of corruption or self-seeking. He sought, in a paternalistic way, to determine the interests of his society, to protect it from perceived dangers, and to guide it in adapting to global economic change.

Instead, Dr. Mahathir called for his countrymen to "Look East," that is, to learn the work ethics and strategies of Japan and Korea. His aim was to combine private and public sector enterprise in ways that would accelerate the country toward industrial modernization.

At first, Mahathir's approach seemed to indicate a "liberal" political trend when he released detainees under the Internal Security Act (ISA). This tolerance of dissent soon evaporated, however, as he began to claim a mandate to rule derived from the majority support he garnered at the polls rather than from any parliamentary processes. A more confrontational style of politics appeared that opened divisions within his own party and within the Malay community at large. By 1986, in an unprecedented development, Mahathir's chief deputy and heir apparent, Dato' Musa Hitam, resigned. The party was effectively split into two factions.

In subsequent elections, Mahathir still managed narrowly to defeat the opposition in elections, but his position was weakened by the internal

dissension. Racial polarization in the country grew worse. Mahathir reacted by cracking down on the freedom of expression. Beginning in October 1987, he had some 106 persons rounded up and imprisoned under the ISA, and he closed three local daily newspapers. Mahathir said that the arrests were necessary to prevent racial conflagration and the disruption of public order, but they also enabled him to silence some of his most dangerous critics.

The Nature of Democracy in Malaysia

Democracy since the crisis of 1969 has been sustained in Malaysia at the cost of significant curbs on political freedoms, particularly those of the press. These limitations have been justified by the view that too much political discourse in an ethnically divided society like Malaysia is more likely to inflame passions and result in political violence than it is to resolve them. One observer has called the result the "limiting of a limited democracy."

On the other hand, politics in Malaysia since the 1969 crisis have been stable. Although fully democratic conditions have not been allowed, there has been a sense of broad political participation. General elections continue to be held, the leadership succession continues under constitutional authority, and a significant political opposition is allowed to operate. In short, it is a resilient political system which in spite of occasional convulsions and crises has served the needs of a divided, tense, multiethnic society. Ethnic and religious factors explain why the rules of the game remain so "tight" and why the predominance of a secure Malay majority remains essential to the stability of the nation.

INDONESIA: FROM "DEMOCRACY" TO "GUIDED DEMOCRACY," 1950-1966

Background

In considering the political development of Indonesia, it is important to keep in mind that it is a vast archipelagic nation of more than a thousand inhabited islands. The island of Java contains more than half the population of Indonesia and exerts a powerful influence over the course of Indonesia's economic and political development.

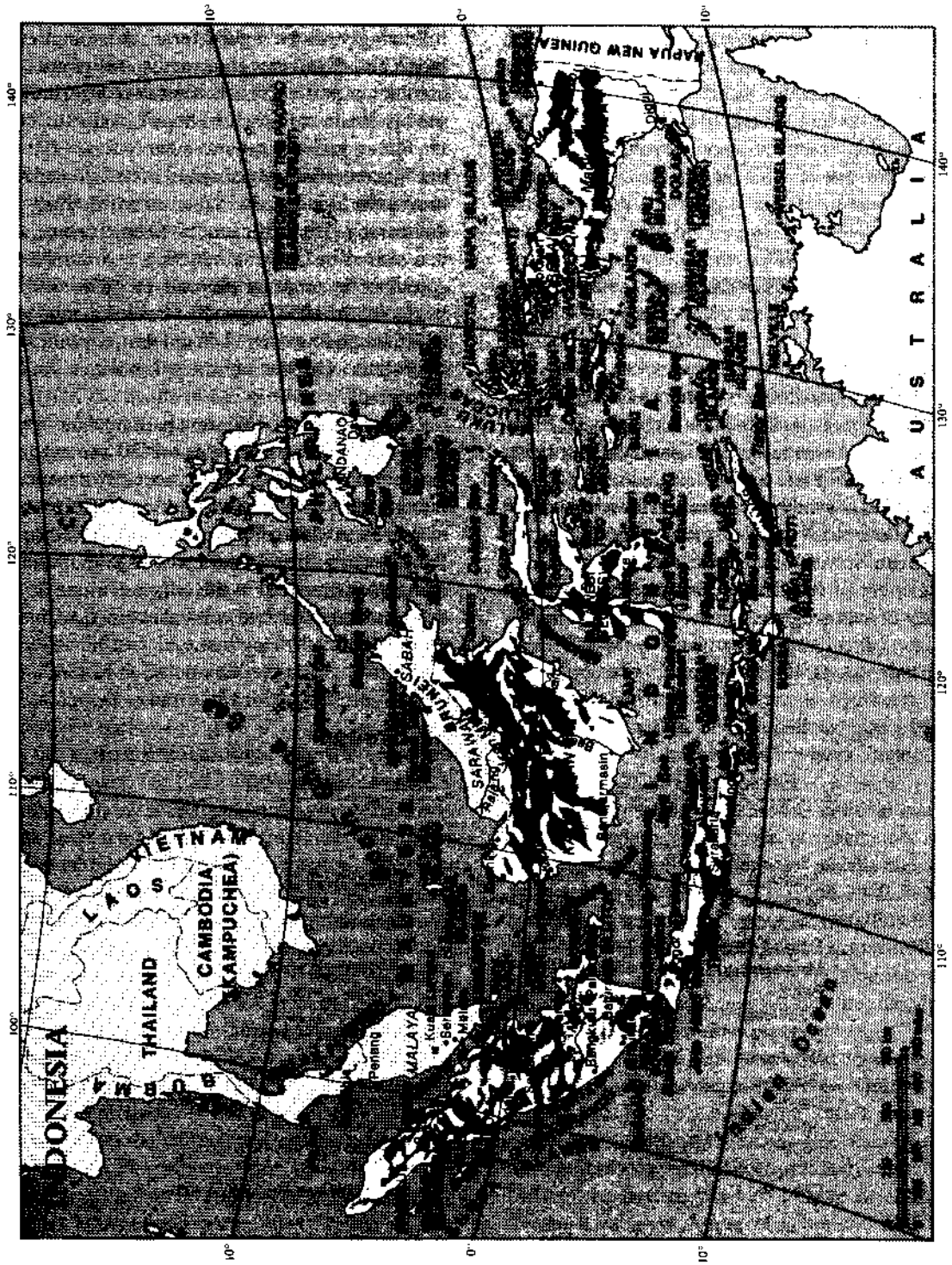
Despite a huge Muslim population of more than 130 million, Indonesia is not an Islamic state. Unlike Malaysia, where the constitution declares Islam to be a state religion (but which remains vague as to whether Malaysia is an "Islamic state"), Indonesia prides itself in officially embracing all religions. At the same time, Islam occupies such a special place in Indonesian society that there is a separate state system of Islamic education and Islamic courts. Moreover, the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have been under even greater pressure than in Malaysia during the post-independence period. Indonesia (like Thailand) requires the Chinese to speak the national language (special Chinese language schools are permitted in Malaysia) and to adopt indigenous names. Restrictions on Chinese in Indonesia became especially severe after President Suharto came into power, with chambers of commerce,

guilds, and Chinese-language books all forbidden. The regulations eased slightly after diplomatic relations with China were restored in 1990.

The independent, federated United States of Indonesia emerged in 1949 after being shaped by two fundamental forces: Dutch colonial rule and the Japanese occupation which was followed by a protracted military struggle with the returning colonial forces (chapter 5). In this sense, Indonesia is the product of artificial boundaries that were super-imposed on an ethnically diverse island world. Initially, this forced a federalist structure on the new nation, with considerable autonomy given to the outlying, non-Javanese regions. But the revolution's leaders, whose intent had been to establish a republic with a centralized authority located on the island of Java, deeply resented this fact. With the final departure of the Dutch, they moved quickly to establish a republican, parliamentary structure with Sukarno as figurehead president.

There followed several years of rapid turnovers of cabinets and shifting alliances among political factions. The Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) expanded rapidly during this period and made a startlingly strong showing in the popular vote in the 1955 elections. Meanwhile, tensions were growing between the export-producing "Outer Islands" and the import-consuming, densely populated center of Java. By 1956 regional army commanders in the outer islands of Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi (Celebes) had, with the backing of the local populace, formed resistance movements to the Javanese authorities. These leaders saw even Sukarno as a threat as he began to denounce Western-style, liberal democracy as inappropriate to Indonesian customs. In 1958 the resistance flared briefly into armed revolt on Sumatra. Islands such as Aceh and South Sulawesi were hotbeds of Islamic insurgencies, angered by the refusal of Indonesia's leaders to incorporate Islam into the new constitution.

Although the Sumatran insurgency and other uprisings were quelled, they left the nation in a state of political paralysis. With the backing of Nasution, the leading general of the revolution, Sukarno discharged the constituent assembly and launched a new system of governance known as "Guided Democracy," the influence of which



continues to be felt in Indonesian politics. These developments and their consequences are described below in excerpts by two leading analysts.



SUKARNO AND GUIDED DEMOCRACY

— by Ulf Sundhaussen

Sukarno was influenced by traditional Javanese thought, as well as Marxism, Western European social democracy, and Islam, without being totally committed to any of them. Rather, he attempted to synthesize them and thereby become acceptable to all major streams of thought as the great unifier of this diverse society. Yet, at the beginning of his Guided Democracy, he practically disenfranchised most ethnic minorities as

well as the intellectual community. During the following years he argued for a continuing revolution and the unity of nationalist, religious, and communist parties for this common cause, only to see his dream collapse in a huge bloodbath.

Future generations are unlikely to see him as the “great unifier” he purported to be, but may hail him as the founder of a viable form of Indonesian democracy. His criticism of liberal democracy had started in 1949, culminating in a number of speeches he made at the end of 1956 and the beginning of 1957, when he stressed that he was a Democrat; however, “I do not desire democratic liberalism. On the contrary I want a guided democracy.”

Sukarno opposed Western parliamentary practices and majority decisions — “50 percent plus one are always right” — as essentially enhancing rather than solving conflict, putting minorities forever in the position of permanent losers. Rather, he felt Indonesia should return to the age-old form of democracy practiced in the villages, where deliberations were held until consensus emerged, in the

Indonesia's Ethnic Groups

Ethnic Group	%	Location	Major Religion
Javanese	45	Java	Orthodox santri, abangan
Madurese	7	Madura/Java	Orthodox santri
Sundanese	14	Sumatra	Modernizing santri
Coastal Malay	7	Sumatra	Modernizing santri
Minangkabau	4	Sumatra	Modernizing santri
Batak	2	Sumatra	Christian., Mod. santri
Acehnese	2	Sumatra	Modernizing santri
Buginese	4	Sulawesi	Modernizing santri
Minehasa	2	Sulawesi	Christianity
Balinese	2	Bali	Hindu
Dayak	1	Kalimantan	Animism, Islam, Christianity
Ambonese	1	Moluccas	Christianity, Islam
Papuan	1	New Guinea	Christianity, Animism
Chinese	3		Confucianism, Buddhism, Other

Table 8.1 Many Indonesian Muslims are the so-called *abangan* who adhere to the “Javanese religion,” an amalgam of animism, elements of Buddhism and Hinduism, with Islam only the last layer. The *abangan* have resisted Islamization of society with as much determination as Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist minorities. Even the “good” Muslims, the *santri*, are divided into an orthodox and a modernizing yet devout wing, competing with each other through different parties and organizations. (Ulf Sundhaussen)

spirit of mutual cooperation. This, in his view, was true democracy, brought about under the guidance of a trusted elder who could summarize and aggregate all expressed sentiments and pronounce the decisions of the assembled.

Musyawarhara ["deliberation"] became the apparent practice in the legislative assemblies of his Guided Democracy. Yet this kind of democracy must be pronounced a failure not so much because it had proven unworkable, but because these assemblies were unrepresentative, with no elections ever held during Guided Democracy, and large groups excluded from the process of decision-making, which increasingly came to rest solely in the hands of the president. The army's attitudes toward democracy have been no less ambivalent. Although alienated by the early socialist cabinets and the conduct of parliament between 1952 and 1950, army leaders have in the main supported or at least tolerated the system of parliamentary democracy as long as parliamentarians were able and willing to put together government coalitions. Only when parliament ceased to function did they seek to involve themselves in the processes of decision-making, not as usurpers of all power but as one of the forces determining the fate of the nation.

Of particular importance are the views of Nasution, who has had by far the greatest impact on the evolving ideological platform of the army. As a Batak from North Sumatra he was well aware of the ethnic problems of the country, and while he abetted the smashing of the federalist order he has also continued to call for adequate preservation of the rights of the Outer Islands. He committed himself implicitly, and often enough explicitly as well, to maintaining some form of democracy.

At the beginning of Guided Democracy civil servants, as well as cabinet ministers, had to choose between party membership and their jobs, and their promotions and assignments became dependent on their allegiance to the president and his policies. The military, under its concept of the "dual function" — both as an agency in charge of external defense and internal security, and as one of the sociopolitical forces of the land — had started to penetrate all state branches and services from 1958 on. But with the ascendancy of the New Order many, if not most, of the top jobs in the civil service came to be occupied by military officers.

These different penetration patterns have prohibited the bureaucracy from becoming an autonomous, truly professional service. Equally damaging has been the fact that Sukarno allowed civil service salaries to decline to such an extent that state employees could not possibly feed their families on their official income and were thus forced into succumbing to the temptation of corruption. It is only because of the widespread suffering of the masses as well, and the existing feudal values with their inbuilt respect for authority, that the bureaucratic arm of the state did not suffer irreparable damage.

Almost the same maladies affected the armed forces. From 1945 on, party politicians have tried to use the military for their own particular purposes in total disregard of the need to keep officers out of politics if the military was to abstain from intervention. The relationship between the officer corps and the politicians was so tense that one of the earliest goals of the army was to remain free from party ideologies, and to serve the nation rather than the ever-changing "government of the day." The army headquarters had loyally served the democratic order and ceaselessly attempted to inject into civil-military relations a rational and professional system of prerogatives until parliamentary rule was abandoned by the politicians in early 1957.

The army has not increased its political power by coups against legitimate governments, but rather has stepped in whenever vacuums needed to be filled, especially in 1957 and 1960. It has come to see itself as the savior of the nation from rapacious and incompetent politicians, as well as rightist and leftist extremists endangering the unity of the country, a role that has become enshrined in military doctrine.

During Guided Democracy, and increasingly so under the army supported New Order [see below], the life of autonomous social, occupational, and cultural organizations, trade unions, and business associations has been gradually strangled. Only in the last ten years or so have new forces striven to attain a degree of autonomy like, for instance, KADIN (the Chamber of Trade and Commerce). But with the state still the major investor and main proprietor of banks, mines, industries, and trading houses, even potentially independent-minded businessmen can rarely

afford to lose government contracts by exhibiting too much autonomy. While private fortunes are being made, though, they are often made by Chinese businessmen who depend on the government and the army for their personal safety, the myriads of licenses and concessions required to do business in Indonesia, and the truly lucrative connections. The trade union movement remains firmly under state control.

The most important democratic thrust in Indonesia was that toward what can be described as "confederate" democracy, involving primarily not individuals, but whole minority groups intent on seeking a degree of autonomy within the larger framework of the state, with a system of democratic dialogue as the means to achieve and maintain that autonomy. Almost all significant ethnic minorities, as well as the Catholics and Protestants, were strongly in support of such democratic order, and the major parties representing their interests were all staunch defenders of parliamentary democracy. When their political rights appeared to be threatened they were prepared to oppose the essentially Javanese and increasingly authoritarian government, sometimes even to the extent of taking up arms in defense of their perception of democracy.³



DESCENT INTO CHAOS

— by John R. W. Smail

Indonesian political power rested in a competitive alliance between the army, with most of the machinery in its hands, and Sukarno with his vintage charisma along with the loyal support of the PKI. This oddly constructed political tripod remained surprisingly stable during the descent into chaos. Exports shrank as army officers made away with the assets of former Dutch plantations, Java no longer reliably supplied the staple foods its growing population required, inflation rose faster and faster. The government launched two major "confrontations," the first (1960-62) against Holland for recovery of West New Guinea, which it successfully achieved in 1962, the second (began

in 1963) against the newly formed state of Malaysia. For these campaigns, among other reasons, Sukarno's government imported a great deal of Soviet military equipment. In due course it proceeded also to expropriate British and Indian assets, in addition to the earlier Dutch ones. Sukarno himself propagated a stream of new slogans which became part of an official ideology in which all civil servants and students were indoctrinated. In 1964 the PKI, more and more openly sponsored by Sukarno in alliance against the army, shocked the rural leadership of Java with a vigorous land reform and rent reduction campaign.

As Guided Democracy moved into 1965 the mounting inflation turned into a classic hyperinflation. The army worried about what Sukarno might do next for the PKI and stood by its guns. The PKI, unable to do anything but mount another strident campaign, agitated for a people's militia, which might arm some of its supporters, and clung ever tighter to Sukarno. As for Sukarno, his extraordinary talent seemed spent.

The crisis burst before dawn on October 1, 1965, when a group of middle-rank officers assassinated six senior generals and proclaimed their own assumption of power under Sukarno's aegis. In Indonesia the coup is officially attributed to the PKI; foreign scholars diverge widely in their interpretations. At any rate it was the aftermath of the coup — suppressed within a few days by forces shrewdly deployed by General Suharto — that was decisive.

With both Sukarno and the PKI shaken by apparent complicity in the coup, and the martyrdom of the six generals for a rallying cry, the army set out to destroy the PKI forever. In late October, after an ominous three-week silence, the massacres began, in Central Java, then East Java, then Bali. Army units themselves seem to have killed comparatively few people; they provided assurance of support and sometimes firearms, but it was mostly neighbors and youth bands who did the killing. Hundreds of thousands were massacred, systematically and — most awfully — without resistance. (Estimates of the number of victims range, shakily, from fewer than a hundred thousand to a million. The main killings outside Java and Bali were in North Sumatra. In Aceh and West Borneo large numbers of Chinese were also massacred.)⁴

Amid these horrors, on March 11, 1966, Sukarno was tactfully compelled to transfer effective authority to Suharto, and Indonesia passed from what later came to be called the "Old Order" into the "New Order." On the one hand Suharto moved swiftly on economics and foreign policy. At home, aware that he could do nothing with hyperinflation raging, he built a strong connection with a group of U.S.-trained Indonesian economists, his "technocrats" of the sixties, seventies, and eighties. Abroad, he promptly canceled Sukarno's two major foreign policy initiatives of the moment, military "confrontation" with Malaysia and intimate association with China. These steps opened the way to closer connections with the West and Japan and therefore to the possibility of help for Indonesia's ravaged economy. As the capitalist bloc warmed to these overtures, Suharto and his technocrats promptly took steps to return Dutch and other nations' expropriated assets and to promulgate an attractive law on foreign investment. There followed a steady and generous flow of aid from abroad.

On other matters, especially domestic politics, Suharto moved slowly and with great care. He understood the enormous appeal of Sukarno's political language and persona and was careful to copy much of the former and back away from direct confrontation with the latter during the arcane constitutional maneuvers of 1966 to 1968. It was not until March 1968 that Suharto was elected president and not until June that he was able to appoint his own cabinet.⁵



BRAVE NEW ORDER

General Suharto's initial moves on succeeding Sukarno were to consolidate a base of political support in Java through political appointments and purging the military of leftist officers. An Operations Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (KOPKAMTIB) was established as a means of maintaining a close watch on domestic political developments and any potential breaches of national security. The vague state ideology begun by Sukarno called the *Pancasila* (Five Pillars), consisting of Belief in One God, National-

ism, International Cooperation, Democracy, and Social Justice, was retained. Over a period of years the government *de facto* political party, GOLKAR, forced various opposition groups, one Muslim and the other secular, to unite under two artificial parties. Both have been riven by factionalism that has prevented them from mounting a serious challenge to the regime.

Sukarno's close control of the press was similarly retained by Suharto, except that where Sukarno had banned right-wing publications Suharto banned those of the Left. Some limited amount of independence was granted to a daily newspaper and a weekly magazine, but press closures in the 1990s reflected an increasingly defensive posture by the regime in the face the visible corruption of Suharto's immediate family.

Another Sukarno legacy has been retained in the parliament: While GOLKAR clearly dominates the electoral process and the parliament, non-GOLKAR groups are permitted a voice through the Guided Democracy practice of *musyawarah* ("deliberation") and *mufakat* ("consensus"). This results in a potentially significant if somewhat invisible role for the opposition: If it refuses to give its consent to a bill during a process of discussion in committees, the legislation is likely to be shelved before it reaches the plenum. Nevertheless, the parliament remains a weak instrument in the eyes of most observers.

The demise of what was once briefly a parliamentary democracy in Indonesia has troubled scholars of democratic change because it seems to imply that there has not been popular support for full democratic reform. Javanese political culture, a dominant force in the Indonesian government, might be viewed in this sense as unsupportive of democratic values. In the Javanese cosmology, power is a neutral force bestowed on the sultan. Anyone acquiring it independently does so at the expense of the sultan, including opposition groups whose acquisition of power undermines the political "potency" of the state. On the other hand, some authorities including those in the army have proved capable of self-critical review in response to frank criticism. Army abusers of human rights in East Timor, following Indonesia's forceful takeover of the former Portuguese colony in 1975 (Chapter 11), were eventually disciplined, for example.

PROPAGANDA AND THE POWER OF THE PUPPETS

Every Sunday morning at 11:15 four popular clowns appear on Indonesian TV for fifteen minutes. They are Semar, a hideous pot-bellied dwarf; Petruk, a scrawny, long-nosed creature; Gareng, a deformed midget with sores; and Bagong, a bald and stupid froglike character. They sing, they cackle, they shriek. They are also related to gods; furthermore, they are immortal. Javanese viewers find them hilarious. But non-Javanese may find the program a little too didactic — for the clowns sing, cackle, and shriek about such matters as paying taxes on time, birth control, and agricultural development.

Javanese do not mind being lectured. It even appears they positively like being told how to behave, as long as the lecture has an aesthetic appeal. In fact, ethics and aesthetics in Java are often indistinguishable. To be Javanese literally means to be civilized, and to be civilized means to behave beautifully. The highest expression of Javanese manners is also the finest repository of Javanese aesthetics, namely *wayang*, and specifically *wayang kulit*, the shadow puppet theater. To Javanese *wayang* is something spiritual, ethical, and aesthetic, and it is to this theater that the four popular clowns belong, the ugly exceptions in a world of grace and beauty.

It is typical of the way Indonesia is governed these days that the clowns, whose traditional function is to be critical of their masters, are now used for government propaganda. Even the Dutch tolerated being made fun of by *wayang* clown characters played by actors. The Japanese, however, during their occupation of Indonesia, did not and several actors were executed. The present Indonesian Government does not go quite that far, but direct criticism is out. A few years ago a traditional Sundanese clown called Kabayan was banned from TV for being too satirical. Now, he, too, is used to disseminate government messages.

—Ian Buruma, *Far Eastern Economic Review* (August 9, 1984)

Islam is another factor that has been cited as a potential barrier to the development of democracy in Indonesia. In view of occasional outbreaks of violent Islamic extremism, concern has been expressed that Indonesia could one day be subject to an Islamic revolution of sorts. Such an outcome is unlikely, however, in view of the way in which Islam has developed in Indonesia. As in Malaysia, its influence has been moderated by Indonesian Malay traditions. Differences exist within the Indonesian Islamic movements as to their appropriate role in politics. Indonesian Muslims seem unlikely to rally under the universal banner of Islam, being subdivided historically into a variety of distinct regional identities.

Democracy remains an elusive goal for a determined minority in Indonesia. By the mid-1990s, in anticipation of parliamentary elections in 1997 and the Presidential election in 1998, that minority began to advocate more democratic processes. One of the most prominent voices was

that of Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of former President Sukarno. As the head of the Indonesian Democratic Party, or PDI, one of the approved political parties in Indonesia, her outspoken statements at potential attractiveness to a discontented public clearly unnerved Suharto. In 1996, the regime engineered her dismissal, sparking the most visible political demonstrations to be seen in Jakarta since Sukarno's demise. The arrest of numerous Megawati supporters confirmed the extent to which independent, organized opposition still arouses suspicion and anxiety in the Indonesian government. At the same time, new and more independent voices are being heard from a newly formed Indonesia human rights commission and retired ministers who are willing to criticize the government. Although constrained by Suharto's limited tolerance of dissent, the vanguard of a more openly critical generation continues to test the boundaries of authoritarian control.

THE PHILIPPINES: FROM INDEPENDENCE TO MARTIAL LAW, 1946-1972

Among the several Asian nations struggling to define for themselves the appropriate role of democratic institutions, perhaps none has weathered as long a succession of crises, almost as an ongoing phenomenon, as the Philippines. The historical and cultural forces affecting Philippine democracy have been especially volatile and contradictory, for beneath a broad Philippine commitment to democratic ideals lies an authoritarian heritage grounded in church, home, and community.

Amid the vast destruction left by the Japanese occupation, the Philippines at the end of World War II was poised to embark on a new era based on a strong sense of national identity that was increasingly an Asian identity as well, but its political fortunes have seen radical swings since then. The Philippines became the first colonized nation in Asia to achieve democracy and seemed destined for a bright future under the leadership of Ramon Magsaysay. His death in a plane crash in 1953 was a critical blow to the country, until at last another promising politician appeared on the scene whose rise is described here.



THE MARCOS ERA

—by David Joel Steinberg

Magsaysay's immediate successors lacked the vision and political power to maintain the momentum he had built. Carlos Garcia, Magsaysay's vice president, was elected in 1957, and Diosdado Macapagal in 1961. This era, subsequently known as the "Old Order," clearly revealed the structural contradiction of the postindependent, oligarchic society. It was a working democracy, in the sense that people out of office could through the electoral process win power. It was dominated, however, by a single elite, whose members jumped parties with dizzying speed. It was a period of private armies, growing lawlessness, and uneven economic development.

Land reform was much talked about but never implemented. The elite had no intention of abolishing the source of its wealth; and, even had it wanted to, it lacked the economic resources to fund the program. At the same time, it was also an era of substantial business growth. Multinational corporations entered the Philippines in large numbers as world prosperity, fueled by the American economy, sought new markets and opportunities. It was in this era that the modern sector of the society moved out to Makati, the new city built just outside Manila.

Under the entrepreneurial management of the Zobel family, highrise buildings, broad boulevards, shopping centers, and residential subdivisions all sprouted on land previously trampled by carabao. To misquote Marx, if the rich got richer and the poor got children, there was also a sense of optimism, prompting large numbers of youngsters to seek college education as the vehicle for upward mobility to the good life. The free press limited some of the excesses of the system by spotlighting them, and there was a growing sense of national pride, a growing awareness of the Asian-ness of the Philippines.

In 1963, an ambitious senator, Ferdinand Marcos, successfully challenged the prewar oligarch, Eulogio (Amang) Rodriguez, for the presidency of the Senate. Two years later, Marcos jumped parties, became a Nacionalista, and won a landslide presidential victory. In his 1965 inaugural address, he said, "The Filipino, it seems, has lost his soul, his dignity, and his courage. Our people have come to the point of despair. We have ceased to value order." Marcos continued by noting that the "government is gripping the iron hand of venality, its treasury is barren, its resources are wasted, its civil service is slothful and indifferent, its armed forces demoralized, and its councils sterile."

Marcos, the creature of the "Old Order," claimed to be the savior of the nation. In 1969, running on the slogan, "Rice and Roads," and liberally spending money from the public treasury, Marcos was reelected president, the first man ever to win a second full term. His claim to be a distinguished war hero enhanced his glamour, and his flamboyant, beautiful wife Imelda made them seem like Philippine versions of the Kennedys. This was an era of prosperity, fueled in large measure by the growing American presence in Indochina.



Figure 8.3 In August 1971, bombs exploded at an anti-Marcos rally being held at the Plaza Miranda Hotel in Manila. The attack killed nine persons and wounded a hundred others, including some of Marcos's leading opponents. A seminal event in modern Philippine history, the Plaza Miranda bombing triggered a chain of events that led to Marcos's 1972 declaration of martial law. Attributed initially to Marcos, the bombing was actually carried out by Maoist rebels of the Communist Party of the Philippines in an attempt to provoke government repression and push the country toward a people's revolution.

"Constitutional Authoritarianism"

What distinguished Marcos from his immediate predecessors was his interest in a new political ideology for the Philippines. Marcos saw democracy as not only wasteful but licentious, as not only corrupt but paralyzing. In his view, "constitutional authoritarianism" should supplant the "Old Order." The authoritarian instinct had been articulated by Apolinario Mabini at the Malolos Constitutional Convention in the 1890s. During World War II, Jose Laurel, Marcos's mentor, took the presidency in his belief that the Philippines needed a fundamental reorganization in keeping with a worldwide trend in which "totalitarianism [was] gradually supplanting democracy:"

Throughout his career, Ferdinand Marcos was obsessed with constitutions. To his last days in office, he clung to the notion that there had to be

a law to justify an action. This made his regime increasingly like that of the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*.

On September 21, 1972, Marcos proclaimed martial law. Claiming he was exercising his power "to protect the Republic of the Philippines and our democracy," Marcos moved rapidly to end all forms of dissent and opposition. Thousands of persons were arrested, habeas corpus was suspended, the media was drastically curtailed, the courts substantially weakened, and the army strengthened. Marcos justified this declaration by claiming there was a serious threat of a Communist takeover led by a new generation of radical Maoist students, many of whom were upper middle class by birth.

In fact, Marcos was motivated by a broader set of issues. He viewed the constitutional convention that was then debating the future of the government



Figure 8.4 President Lyndon Johnson met with Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda, in Manila in 1966.

structure as a threat to society. He was in his seventh year as president, constitutionally banned from running for a third term. Moreover, as his power began to slip away, he was being challenged by members of the oligarchy, including the powerful Lopez family, owners of the *Manila Chronicle*, television stations, and the Manila Electric Company. A young Senator Benigno Aquino was the likely next president. The last issue of the *Free Press*, the leading opinion magazine at the time, carried a prophetic cover bearing a picture of Aquino targeted through the crosswires of a rifle sight with the caption, "Senator Benigno S. Aquino: TARGET?"

Marcos's declaration of martial law won the strong support of the modern business community and of U.S. president Richard Nixon. In the first three years, tourism and government revenues tripled, and the economy grew at an average annual rate of 7 percent. The private armies of the oligarchies were disbanded and some 500,000 privately held weapons were confiscated. In those early years, Marcos often was compared to Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore. If he violated human rights with impunity, his was a less brutal dicta-

torship than some others. People indeed were arrested and tortured and murdered. The total story of brutality has yet to be told, and yet, many Filipinos saw these years as a time of progress and seemed willing to surrender liberty for economic development.

Marcos dramatically expanded the army's role in society, tripling its size. The officer corps was given opportunities to acquire great wealth, and the tradition of a nonpolitical military disappeared. Marcos issued a new constitution, replaced Supreme Court justices and changed the court system, created people's organizations at the mass and local level, and built a new political party, the KBL (Kilusang Bagong Lipunan). Manipulating patronage and the power of government effectively, and using referenda, constitutional amendments, and other techniques, Marcos built a dominant political organization which stifled dissent. In 1976, while amending the constitution, Marcos inserted Amendment 6, which gave him transcendent political power no matter what structure might subsequently be put into place.

By 1975, however, the ideological fervor dissipated and it became apparent that the new order

was a vehicle for Marcos's personal aggrandizement. Crony capitalism gave close friends of the First Family vast economic opportunity. Sugar and coconut areas were made exempt from the land reform which had begun with such fanfare in 1973. The obvious growing greed of the cronies and of Imelda Marcos substituted profit for ideology. This was the period known as the "Conjugal Dictatorship." With her jewels, her jet-set friends, and her many projects, Mrs. Marcos became the symbol of corruption. Known as Nuestra Señora de Metro Manila because, among many other posts, she was also governor of Metropolitan Manila and minister of human settlements, she chaired no fewer than twenty-three government councils, agencies, and corporations. She controlled hundreds of millions of dollars annually through their budgets, and it was during this period that she built eleven five-star hotels, the Manila Cultural Center, and the five thousand seat International Convention Center, a \$21 million Film Center, and a sprawling terminal at the airport. Increasingly, she became the most visible representative of the regime, and speculation centered on her succession to the presidency on her husband's illness or death. The aimless drift of the Marcos government was perfectly summarized during a press conference with Mrs. Marcos in 1982 when she said, "The Philippines is in a strategic position — it is both East and West, right and left, rich and poor." After a pause she went on to note, "We are neither here nor there."⁶



THE LEGACY OF "PORK BARREL DEMOCRACY"

The oil shocks of the 1970s were calamitous for the Philippine economy, particularly because they combined a drop in prices for key export commodities with the parasitic greed of Marcos and his close associates, the "crony capitalists." The ambitious plans laid by his technocrats to modernize the economy were overwhelmed by mounting oil bills, the necessity of massive foreign borrowing, and unproductive "glamour" investments by Marcos' wife, Imelda, who exercised considerable power alongside her husband.

PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY

The traditional clientelistic, opportunistic style of Philippine politics — which views public service as a means for private gain and pursues the struggle for power with violence, fraud, and procedural abandon — has clearly undermined democracy; and yet the widespread popular and elite commitment to democratic participation made it much more difficult to institutionalize an authoritarian regime in the Philippines than in Thailand or Indonesia.

— Larry Diamond, in *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*

Unaware of the far-reaching implications of the growing economic crisis, Marcos decreed an end to martial law in early 1981 and permitted free elections in which the only viable opposition candidate to Marcos, former senator Benigno Aquino, was prohibited from running. Following Marcos' victory in an election widely known to have been fraudulent, Vice-President George Bush visited Manila and, in a celebratory toast, announced to Marcos, "We love your adherence to democratic principles — and to the democratic processes."

The Marcos regime was moving steadily toward a political crisis that would be brought about in part by severe economic problems. However, the growing economic crisis alone did not precipitate the Marcos downfall any more or less than it did that of other regimes in East Asia. What it did impose in the case of Ferdinand Marcos was an even greater dependence on those who were most resistant to democratic solutions. On the one hand, the middle class and business elites of Manila were increasingly alienated from Marcos once his personal quest for wealth and political power began to overwhelm the economic interests of the nation. This was a critical loss of support from the core group that could sustain Marcos in power, forcing him to rely further on a handful of extremely powerful oligarchs, such as Eduardo

Cojuangco and Roberto Benedicto, to whom he had given national monopolies in coconut and sugar production, respectively.

Philippine foreign indebtedness provides a key indicator of how bad conditions had become by 1983. A debt that totals 20 percent of a nation's the gross national product (GNP) is considered heavy but sustainable. For the Philippines, in that year the figure was 60 percent — more than \$25 billion. Yet in spite of these difficulties Marcos refused to break the economy-sapping monopolies held by his powerful friends.

The final push that toppled the Marcos regime was not economic but political: the assassination of his chief political opponent, Senator Aquino. Effectively exiled to the United States following his release from prison in 1981, Aquino had chafed to reenter Philippine politics and challenge Marcos to a popular electoral showdown. Assuming that Marcos was gravely ill and might soon die, thus permitting his wife Imelda and the security chief General Ver to seize power, Aquino ignored explicit warnings from the Marcos regime and announced that he would return to Manila. On August 21, 1983, as he stepped from his plane at the Manila airport he was shot and killed by a gunman who was, in turn, conveniently killed on the spot by the airport security command.

The Aquino murder galvanized Philippine society and the international community. Many conservatives who had supported Marcos, particularly those in the mainstream Manila business community and the United States, openly declared their revulsion toward the regime and called for him to resign. Although a Commission of Inquiry defied Marcos and accused a military group including General Ver of conspiring in the

murder, a military tribunal declared that all the defendants were innocent.

By this time (the early 1980s) the flow of money and people leaving the Philippines for overseas locations was rising. Following the Aquino assassination, it became a full-scale hemorrhage. The peso plunged against the dollar and tens of thousands of people urgently searched for countries to which they could emigrate. Inflation soared and the international banking community fretted over the prospect that the bankrupt country might bring about a global financial crisis by defaulting on its \$27 billion debt. Marcos appeared in public less frequently and seemed to be growing seriously ill. In October 1985 Senator Paul Laxalt was sent by President Reagan to urge sternly that Marcos institute a broad range of reforms.

Meanwhile, opposition began to coalesce around Aquino's widow, Corazon, who had become an outspoken advocate of continued democratic competition against Marcos. When in late 1985 Marcos responded to American and public pressure by calling for a snap presidential election, "Cory" Aquino announced that she would run. On the assumption that he could buy and manipulate any election, Marcos allowed his opponents considerable freedom amid widespread international press coverage. Once the influential Chinese mestizo archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin, had persuaded Mrs. Aquino's chief rival, Salvador Laurel, to join her in a political alliance, the opposition was vastly strengthened and gained momentum in the weeks prior to the election.

By election day, February 7, 1986, the international press corps had descended on the Philippines. Their presence increased the pressure on

From Marcos to Ramos

Regimes' Principal Years	Foreign Money Coming In (\$billions)	Annual Average GDP(%)	Annual Average GNP(%)
Marcos I: 1971-80	12.2	5.8	6.1
Marcos II: 1981-85	11.1	-1.1	-1.7
Aquino: 1987-91	24.1	3.9	4.5
Ramos: 1992-96	74.7	3.4	4.1

Table 8.2



Marcos to observe fair elections. An independent poll-watching group called NAMFREL had been formed, supported by the United States, to try to ensure the fairness of the vote count. Yet, as the count proceeded, many "irregularities" occurred. These were noticed and amplified by the NAMFREL, the media, and the church to an extent that led them to, in fact, undercount the Marcos vote in areas such as northern Luzon. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that Aquino probably won by a slender margin. Marcos claimed victory by turning over the final count to a vote-certifying organization that was controlled by his party. Not surprisingly, Aquino and the opposition refused to recognize his claim.

The stalemate that followed seemed like the worst possible outcome. Both candidates planned inaugural ceremonies. The Philippines appeared to be teetering on the brink of chaos. At that point, two key military leaders, Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile and Lieutenant General Fidel Ramos, led a military revolt in support of Mrs. Aquino. Cardinal Sin urged people onto the streets to surround and protect the pro-Aquino troops on their military base. When the rest of the army refused to attack, "people power" had at last triumphed. Marcos was persuaded by the United States to leave the Philippines for Honolulu where he was to die in exile in 1990, but the underlying problems remained.

The same specters of malnutrition and unemployment that had confronted Marcos now faced the new Aquino administration. The bottom 20 percent of the nation received 5.5 percent of the national income — the top 2 percent received 53 percent. The standard of living for the average Filipino had plummeted under Marcos. The nation owed \$27 billion.

Mrs. Aquino held out the olive branch to all her real and potential opponents: the NPA, dissidents within the army, and Marcos loyalists. She rewarded the two powerful figures who had helped her at the critical moment, Enrile and General Ramos, with senior posts. Enrile's personal ambition intruded in future political maneuvering, however, and the reformists within the military became were soon disenchanted with the lack of progress toward fundamental change.

The "people power" movement that brought Aquino into office confirmed the Philippines'

long-standing popular commitment to democratic processes, but the old patterns of patronage and factionalism quickly reasserted themselves. Aquino proved to be indecisive at key moments and became surrounded by ineffective executives and posturing politicians who habitually blamed a legacy of American colonialism for the country's ills. In response, an embittered faction of young army officers made several coup attempts after 1986. One attempt in late 1989 very nearly succeeded in toppling the Aquino presidency while another in 1990 had to be suppressed with U.S. air support.

Aquino did not seek re-election and in 1992 was succeeded by retired general Fidel Ramos, leader of the military overthrow of Marcos. Ramos succeeded in bringing about changes in the Philippine economy and government that had eluded his predecessors. He supported new trade and investment liberalization measures which stimulated a surge of economic growth and negotiated a peace agreement with the Moros revolutionaries in Mindanao. As a result, the Philippines achieved a measure of stability and its GNP growth rate surged.

In spite of his economic successes, Ramos still had to contend with the political monopoly of a relatively few powerful families in the Philippines. Investigative journalist Eric Gutierrez revealed in his book, *The Ties that Bind*, that of the House of Representative's 199 members, 145 came from families long involved in politics; 64 were children of powerful *trapos* in the provinces that they represented and 30 were third- or fourth-generation politicians. These politicians often had conflicts of interest. In the face of Ramos' appeal to the Ninth Congress to make itself "the instrument to free and democratize our economy," several congressmen filed bills designed to directly benefit their own business interests. One presented a bill providing for tax rebates for tobacco traders; his wife ran a tobacco trading and hauling business. The Mindanao representatives, all landowners, called for a suspension of agrarian reform. Another Representative whose family owned coconut mills sponsored a bill ordering the soap and detergent industry to shift to 100 percent use of coconut-based chemicals. These examples illustrate the extent to which special interests continue to occupy a central place in Philippine politics.

DEMOCRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The above examples indicate how, in Southeast Asia, the adoption of new democratic institutions must be measured against the special religious, ethnic and historical circumstances of each society. In spite of this, a political transition of sorts is taking place in most countries. By 1991, Singapore had at last seen Lee Kuan Yew pass the premiership to a new generation, albeit under his watchful eye. A healthy, organized opposition had emerged in Malaysia. In Indonesia strong opposition was not permitted during the country's preparations for parliamentary elections, but the government had begun to allow a more outspoken, younger generation of parliamentarians to emerge. The population of the Philippines, struggling under the weight of immense demographic and economic burdens, became increasingly skeptical and cynical about the competence of its government but was no less committed to democratic processes. Thailand, although rocked by another coup, saw no viable future outside the framework of a civilian parliamentary government.

DEMOCRATIZATION IN SOUTH KOREA

South Korea: The Suppression of Democracy, 1948-1987

South Korea's initial experiment with democracy failed as Syngman Rhee (whose return to Korea at the end of World War II was described in chapter 4) assumed increasingly dictatorial powers. Industrial property taken over from the Japanese had been returned to a small handful of people with powerful political connections. Their abusive monopolization of this wealth led to increasing social unrest. At the same time, Rhee's policies rapidly alienated many members of the newly elected National Assembly who, under the constitution, were the ones who selected the president. In 1952, to foreclose the possibility of being turned out of office by the Assembly, Rhee declared martial law and forced the Assembly to change the constitution so as to have the president elected directly by the people. Two years later, he

once again bullied the Assembly into a constitutional change that removed the provision limiting presidents to two terms in office.

There followed a period of blatant, Rhee-inspired interference at the polls during elections. By the time of the elections in 1960, the regime's unpopularity had become so great that a political eruption seemed inevitable. Massive student demonstrations broke out and elicited widespread support (such actions by students are not only tolerated but often esteemed as a kind of societal conscience in most Confucian cultures). After a brief resistance, Rhee had no choice but to step down. The government that followed, led by the democratically elected Chang Myon, was indecisive and badly divided. It fell to a military coup in 1961 led by Major General Park Chung Hee.

For the next twenty-six years, South Korea was ruled by two authoritarian regimes. The first, under Park, ended when he was assassinated by his own chief of intelligence in 1979. By that time, the regime was facing rising public discontent over its intolerance of criticism. Yet an army general, Chun Doo Hwan, stepped in to fill Park's place and forcefully quell any opposition. His authoritarian rule was to last for an additional seven years until democratic forces took over as described later in this chapter. The transition toward democracy in Korea was therefore a slow and painful one, made especially difficult by the profound limitations Park's rule imposed on democratic political evolution. These debilitating circumstances can be summarized as follows:

- **Absence of a workable, legal framework.** Park's tailor-made constitution was unpopular and unsuited to the nation's needs.
- **Lack of viable political parties.** The activities of political parties — even Park's party — were so restricted that they were unable to serve as a means for deciding who his successor would be.
- **A radicalized political opposition.** Strict authoritarianism over a long period alienated much of society and fostered opposition leaders who sought sudden, radical, and, in some cases, violent change.
- **A politicized military leadership.** The Korean military helped place Park in