5. Democracy: Universal or Western?

By Claudio Foliti
Introduction

- Exporting / importing democracy: three strategies (Grilli di Cortona, 2009)
- International relations and democratic enlargement
- Three perspectives: realism, liberalism, idealism (Walt, 1998)
Emulation, promotion, imposition (Grilli di Cortona, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent of international actors</th>
<th>Consensus of the recipient state</th>
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<td>Emulation</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imposition</td>
<td>YES</td>
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Emulation

- No intentional exportation
- Democratic testimony, good example
- Intentionality of internal actors (regime, government, elite)
- Democracy as a panacea
- Snowballing effect
- Essential pre-condition: dissemination/provision of information awareness of public opinion / elites dissatisfaction regarding the authoritarian regime
- Desire for change “absolute dissatisfaction” (objective condition) vs. “relative dissatisfaction” (product of a comparison)
- Desire for change: power of fascination wielded by democratic regimes + repulsion by / dispensability of authoritarian rule
Promotion

- Intentional actions by external actors

- Negative actions
  - sanctions (e.g. Belarus, 2005; Venezuela before 2002; Iraq before 2003)

- Strategy: punishing to trigger an internal split (liberalization)

- Positive actions
  - Conditionalities, e.g. economic aid as a result of certain decisions: recognition of political rights, respect for minorities, adoption of a democratic constitution, fight against corruption
  - international aid in favor of parties, leader, economic groups in order to activate the authoritarian crisis and the democratization process
Imposition (military intervention)

• Most blatant cases: Italy, Germany, Austria, Japan (after the Second World War)

• Goals
  1. Creating a democratic regime
  2. Resettling a democratic regime after an authoritarian regime had overthrown a previous democratic regime (Haiti, 1994)
  3. Eliminating a rogue regime (Afghanistan, 2001)
  4. Interrupting a large-scale ethnic cleansing campaign and / or a war that could jeopardize regional balances (Serbia, 1999; Libia, 2011)
  5. Neutralizing a state that could impede the democratization process in another state (Grenada, 1983)
  6. Limited and specific objectives: passive (peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance) or active (military defeat of an internal enemy)

• How
  - Invitation
  - External initiative (unilateral action or international resolution)
Stephen Walt (1998): International Relations, three rival theories
Realism

- A struggle for power among self-interested states
- Pessimistic about the prospects of eliminating conflict and war
- Innate desire of domination (megalothymia)
- Classical realism (Hans Morgenthau, 1904-1980): multipolar system is better than bipolar system
- Neorealism (Kenneth Waltz, 1924-2013):
  - an anarchic system (there is no central authority to protect states from one another)
  - each state has to survive on its own
  - Weaker states tend to balance against more powerful rivals
  - Bipolarity is more stable than multipolarity
- Offensive-defensive approach (Robert Jervis, George Quester, Stephen Van Evera)
  - Offensive attitude is more likely if a state can conquer another one easily.
  - When defense is easier than offense, security and cooperation can blossom.
Huntington: The Uni-Multipolar World (1999)

- Post-Cold War era: from bipolarism to civilizational and cultural struggle
- United States: lonely superpower
- Not a unipolar world, no more a bipolar world, not yet a multipolar world
- Uni-multipolar system: one superpower and several major regional powers
- First level: the superpower (global primacy)
- Second level: major regional powers (preeminent in areas of the world without being able to extend their interests and capabilities as globally as the U.S.)
  - German-French condominium in Europe, Russia in Eurasia, China and potentially Japan in East Asia, India in South Asia, Iran in Southwest Asia, Brazil in Latin America, South Africa and Nigeria in Africa
- Third level: secondary regional powers whose interests can conflict with the more powerful regional states
  - Britain in relation to the German-French combination, Ukraine in relation to Russia, Japan in relation to China, South Korea in relation to Japan, Pakistan in relation to India, Saudi Arabia in relation to Iran, Argentina in relation to Brazil
Dynamics of the unipolar and multipolar system

• The superpower or hegemon in a unipolar system, lacking any major powers challenging it, is normally able to maintain its dominance over minor states for a long time until it is weakened by internal decay or by forces from outside the system.

• In a multipolar system, each state might prefer a unipolar system with itself as the single dominant power but the other major states will act to prevent that from happening.
Dynamics of the bipolar system

• In the Cold War, each superpower quite explicitly preferred a unipolar system under its hegemony. However, the dynamics of the competition and their early awareness that an effort to create a unipolar system by armed force would be disastrous for both enabled bipolarity to endure for four decades until one state no longer could sustain the rivalry.

• In each of these systems, the most powerful actors had an interest in maintaining the system.
Dynamics of the uni-multipolar system

- In a uni-multipolar system, this is less true. The United States would clearly prefer a unipolar system in which it would be the hegemon and often acts as if such a system existed.

- The major powers, on the other hand, would prefer a multipolar system in which they could pursue their interests, unilaterally and collectively, without being subject to constraints, coercion, and pressure by the stronger superpower. They feel threatened by what they see as the American pursuit of global hegemony. American officials feel frustrated by their failure to achieve that hegemony.

- None of the principal power-wielders in world affairs is happy with the status quo.

- The superpowers efforts to create a unipolar system stimulate greater effort by the major powers to move toward a multipolar one.

- Virtually all major regional powers are increasingly asserting themselves to promote their own distinct interests, which often conflict with those of the United States.
Perspectives

1. From resentment to opposition and counteraction (but not immediately)
   - While countries may resent U.S. power and wealth, they also want to benefit from them
   - U.S. rewards countries that follow its leadership

2. As U.S. power declines, the benefits to be gained by cooperating with the U.S. will also decline, as will the costs of opposing it
   - An antihegemonic coalition could emerge in the future.

3. Global politics is now multicivilizational.
   - Cultural differences, jealousies, and rivalries may thwart the major powers from coalescing against the superpower.

4. The principal source of contention between the superpower and the major regional powers is the former’s intervention to limit, counter, or shape the actions of the latter. For the secondary regional powers, on the other hand, superpower intervention is a resource that they potentially can mobilize against their region’s major power.
   - The superpower and the secondary regional powers will thus often, although not always, share converging interests against major regional powers, and secondary regional powers will have little incentive to join in a coalition against the superpower.
Liberalism

1. Economic interdependence discourages states from using force against each other because warfare could threaten each side’s prosperity

2. The spread of democracy is the key to world peace (democratic states are inherently more peaceful than authoritarian states)

3. International institutions help to overcome selfish states behavior, mainly by encouraging states to forgo immediate gains for the greater benefits of enduring cooperation
Clinton Doctrine: Democratic Enlargement

1. To strengthen the community of market democracies
2. To foster and consolidate new democracies and market economies where possible
3. To counter the aggression and support the liberalization of states
4. To help democracy and market economies take root in regions of greatest humanitarian concern

• **Ideals vs. interests**
  - Expensive view: U.S. is duty-bound to promote constitutional democracy and human rights everywhere
  - Political viable concept: enlargement is aimed at primary U.S. strategic and economic interests (e.g. U.S. chief concern in Asia: free market access)

• **Pragmatic realism first, idealism always a close second**
Constructivism

- Orthodox Marxist theory (against capitalism: central cause of international conflict)
- Neomarxist Dependency theory (Raul Prebisch-Hans Singer Theory): advanced capitalist countries vs. less developed countries
- Ideas and discourse in shaping social outcomes
### COMPETING PARADIGMS

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<th>REALISM</th>
<th>LIBERALISM</th>
<th>CONSTRUCTIVISM</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main Theoretical Proposition</strong></td>
<td>Self-interested states compete constantly for power or security</td>
<td>Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values)</td>
<td>State behavior shaped by elite beliefs, collective beliefs, and social identities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main Units of Analysis</strong></td>
<td>States</td>
<td>States</td>
<td>Individuals (especially elites)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Instruments</strong></td>
<td>Economic and especially military power</td>
<td>Varies (international institutions, economic exchange, promotion of democracy)</td>
<td>Ideas and discourse</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Modern Theorists</strong></td>
<td>Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz</td>
<td>Michael Doyle, Robert Keohane</td>
<td>Alexander Wendt, John Ruggie</td>
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<td><strong>Post-Cold War Prediction</strong></td>
<td>Resurgence of overt great power competition</td>
<td>Increased cooperation as liberal values, free markets, and international institutions spread</td>
<td>Agnostic because it cannot predict the content of ideas</td>
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<td><strong>Main Limitation</strong></td>
<td>Does not account for international change</td>
<td>Tends to ignore the role of power</td>
<td>Better at describing the past than anticipating the future</td>
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**Summary**
A NEOREALIST THEORY
HUNTINGTON AND THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS
(1993-1996)
The hypothesis

- It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic.
- The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.
- Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations.
- The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.
The post-Cold War Era

- With the end of the Cold War, international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its centerpiece becomes the interaction between
  1. the West and non-Western civilizations
  2. and among non-Western civilizations.
- In the politics of civilizations, the peoples and governments of non-Western civilizations no longer remain the objects of history as targets of Western colonialism but join the West as movers and shapers of history.
What are civilizations?

• The civilization to which [a person] belongs is the broadest level of identification with which he intensely identifies.
• People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and boundaries of civilizations change.
• Civilizations involve a large number of people, nation-states.
• Civilizations include subcivilizations
• Civilizations are real
• Civilizations are dynamic (rise and fall, divide and merge)
Civilizations will clash: why?

• The conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines of civilizations

1. Western,
2. Confucian,
3. Japanese,
4. Islamic,
5. Hindu,
6. Slavic-Orthodox,
7. Latin American
8. African
HUNTINGTON'S CIVILIZATIONAL DIVIDES

Samuel Huntington categorized the world into nine civilizations, arguing that the fault lines between them would shape international relations and serve as the driving force of conflict in the post-Cold War world.

Source: The Clash of Civilizations

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1. Differences are real and basic

- Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion.

- The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.

- These differences are the product of centuries. They will not soon disappear. They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes.

- Differences do not necessarily mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence.

- Over the centuries, however, differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts.
2. The world: a smaller place

- Second, the world is becoming a smaller place. The interactions between peoples of different civilizations are increasing;
- These increasing interactions intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations.
3. Globalization and “La revanche de Dieu”

- Third, the processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from longstanding local identities.
- They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity.
- In much of the world religion has moved in to fill this gap
- Gilles Kepel: La revanche de Dieu
- George Weigel: The unsecularization of the world
4. De-Westernization and indigenization

- Fourth, the growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West.
- On the one hand, the West is at a peak of power (unipolar world).
- At the same time, however, and perhaps as a result, a return to the roots phenomenon is occurring among non-Western civilizations (multipolar world).
- A de-Westernization and indigenization of elites is occurring in many non-Western countries
- at the same time that Western, usually American, cultures, styles and habits become more popular among the mass of the people.
5. Which side are you on? vs. What are you?

- Fifth, cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones.
6. Increasing economic regionalism

- The importance of regional economic blocs is likely to continue to increase in the future.
- On the one hand, successful economic regionalism will reinforce civilization-consciousness.
- On the other hand, economic regionalism may succeed only when it is rooted in a common civilization.
Us vs. them

- As people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an "us" versus "them" relation existing between themselves and people of different ethnicity or religion.
- The end of ideologically defined states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union permits traditional ethnic identities and animosities to come to the fore.
- Differences in culture and religion create differences over policy issues, ranging from human rights to immigration to trade and commerce to the environment.
- Geographical propinquity gives rise to conflicting territorial claims.
Against the West

• Most important, the efforts of the West to promote its values of democracy and liberalism as universal values, to maintain its military predominance and to advance its economic interests engender countering responses from other civilizations.

• Decreasingly able to mobilize support and form coalitions on the basis of ideology, governments and groups will increasingly attempt to mobilize support by appealing to common religion and civilization identity.
Two levels of the clash

• At the micro-level, adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilizations struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other.

• At the macro-level, states from different civilizations compete for relative military and economic power, struggle over the control of international institutions and third parties, and competitively promote their particular political and religious values.
Kin-country syndrome

- Groups or states belonging to one civilization that become involved in war with people from a different civilization *naturally* try to rally support from other members of their own civilization.

- As the post-Cold War world evolves, civilization commonality, what Greenway has termed the "kin-country" syndrome, is replacing political ideology and traditional balance of power considerations as the principal basis for cooperation and coalitions.
Examples

• The Gulf War: West vs. Islam
• Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict
• War in the former Yugoslavia: Croatia and Slovenia (Catholic) supported by Europeans; Serbia (Orthodox) supported by Russia; Bosnia-Herzegovina (Islamic) supported by Islamic countries
Torn countries

- Turkey
- Mexico
- Russia
Confucian-Islamic connection

- Military power
- Economic power
The West vs. The Rest

- Extraordinary peak of power
- The very phrase "the world community" has become the euphemistic collective noun (replacing "the Free World") to give global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other Western powers.
- The West in effect is using international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in ways that will maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values.
- That at least is the way in which non-Westerners see the new world, and there is a significant element of truth in their view.
Problematic differences

• Differences in power and struggles for military, economic and institutional power are thus one source of conflict between the West and other civilizations.

• Differences in culture, that is basic values and beliefs, are a second source of conflict.
Are the Western ideas universal?

- Naipaul has argued that Western civilization is the "universal civilization" that "fits all men."
- At a superficial level much of Western culture has indeed permeated the rest of the world.
- At a more basic level, however, Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations.
- Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in other cultures.
- Western efforts to propagate such ideas produce instead a reaction against "human rights imperialism" and a reaffirmation of indigenous values, as can be seen in the support for religious fundamentalism by the younger generation in non-Western cultures.
Universalism impossible

- The very notion that there could be a "universal civilization" is a Western idea
- Modern democratic government originated in the West. When it has developed in non-Western societies it has usually been the product of Western colonialism or imposition
- The West can not sustain anymore the imperialism
- *The West and The Rest* (Kishore Mahbubani) Reactions of non-Western civilization to the West:
  - Isolation
  - Band-wagoning
  - Modernizing (developing economic and military power) but not westernize (cooperation against the West)
Modernization vs. Westernization

• 1. Coca-colonization theory. The argument that the spread of pop culture and consumer goods around the world represents the triumph of Western civilization depreciates the strength of other cultures while trivializing Western culture by identifying it with fatty foods, faded pants, and fizzy drinks. The essence of Western culture is the Magna Charta, not the Magna Mac.

• 2. Modernization theory. Modernization involves industrialization; urbanization; increasing levels of literacy, education, wealth, and social mobilization; and more complex and diverse occupational structures. As other societies take on similar patterns of education, work, wealth, and class structure, the modernization argument runs, this Western culture will become the universal culture of the world.
Against the modernization argument

• Modern societies have much in common, but they do not necessarily merge into homogeneity.

• The argument that they do rests on the assumption that modern society must approximate a single type, the Western type; that modern civilization is Western civilization, and Western civilization is modern civilization.

• This, however, is a false identification. Virtually all scholars of civilization agree that Western civilization emerged in the eighth and ninth centuries and developed its distinctive characteristics in the centuries that followed. It did not begin to modernize until the eighteenth century.

• The West, in short, was Western long before it was modern.
What makes the West Western?

1. Classical legacy
2. Western Christianity
3. European Languages (Latin, French, English)
4. Separation of spiritual and temporal authority (only in Hindu civilization were religion and politics as clearly separated. In Islam, God is Caesar; in China and Japan, Caesar is God; in Orthodoxy, God is Caesar’s junior partner). > Freedom
5. Rule of law (the human power is subordinated to some external restraint, namely, the law). The tradition of the rule of law laid the basis for constitutionalism and the protection of human rights, including property rights, against the arbitrary exercise of power
6. Social pluralism and civil society
7. Representative bodies
8. Individualism
The Western model

- For several centuries they, along with other non-Western peoples, envied the economic prosperity, technological sophistication, military power, and political cohesion of Western societies.
- They sought the secret of this success in Western practices and customs, and when they identified what they thought might be the key, they attempted to apply it in their own societies.
Modern, not Western

• Today East Asians attribute their dramatic economic development not to their import of Western culture but to their adherence to their more modern own culture.

• They have succeeded, they argue, not because they became like the West, but because they have remained different from the West.

• In somewhat similar fashion, when non-Western societies felt weak in relation to the West, many of their leaders invoked Western values of self-determination, liberalism, democracy, and freedom to justify their opposition to Western global domination.

• Now that they are no longer weak but instead increasingly powerful, they denounce as "human rights imperialism" the same values they previously invoked to promote their interests.
The democracy paradox

- Ronald Dore: The Second Generation Indigenization Phenomenon
- Indigenization is furthered by the democracy paradox: when non-Western societies adopt Western-style elections, democracy encourages and often brings to power nativist and anti-Western political movements.
- Democracy tends to make a society more parochial, not more cosmopolitan. Politicians in non-Western societies do not win elections by demonstrating how Western they are.
- Electoral competition stimulates them to fashion what they believe will be the most popular appeals, and those are usually ethnic, nationalist, and religious in character. The result is popular mobilization against Western oriented elites and the West in general.
Fukuyama: The End of History

- Triumph of the Western liberal democracy, victory of the economic and political liberalism
- Triumph of the West, of the Western idea
- The exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism
- Spread of consumerist culture
- The end of history: the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government
- Victory in the realm of ideas
- Victory in the real or material world in the long run
Kojéve and the battle of Jena

• Hegel’s historicism
• Misfortune: Marx’s precursor
• Re-interpretation by Alexandre Kojéve
• Hegel proclaimed history to be at an end in 1806. For as early as this Hegel saw in Napoleon’s defeat of the Prussian monarchy at the Battle of Jena the victory of the ideals of the French Revolution, and the imminent universalization of the state incorporating the principles of liberty and equality.

• The Battle of Jena marked the end of history because it was at that point that the vanguard of humanity actualized the principles of the French Revolution.

• The Twentieth century expanded those principles spatially
The universal homogenous state

• The state that emerges at the end of history is liberal insofar as it recognize and protects through a system of law man’s universal right to freedom, and democratic insofar as it exists only with the consent of the governed.

• For Kojève, this so-called "universal homogenous state" found real-life embodiment in the countries of postwar Western Europe.
Contradictions and struggle

• For human history and the conflict that characterized it was based on the existence of "contradictions":
  - primitive man's quest for mutual recognition,
  - the dialectic between master and slave,
  - the transformation and mastery of nature,
  - the struggle for the universal recognition of rights,
  - and the dichotomy between proletarian and capitalist.

• But in the universal homogenous state, all prior contradictions are resolved and all human needs are satisfied.

• There is no struggle or conflict over "large" issues, and consequently no need for generals or statesmen; what remains is primarily economic activity
The power of ideas

• For Hegel, the contradictions that drive history exist first of all in the realm of human consciousness, i.e. on the level of ideas.

• Ideology in this sense is not restricted to the secular and explicit political doctrines we usually associate with the term, but can include religion, culture, and the complex of moral values underlying any society as well.

• For Hegel, all human behavior in the material world, and hence all human history, is rooted in a prior state of consciousness.
An ideal victory

• This consciousness may not be explicit and self-aware, as are modern political doctrines, but may rather take the form of religion or simple cultural or moral habits. And yet this realm of consciousness in the long run necessarily becomes manifest in the material world, indeed creates the material world in its own image.

• At the end of history it is not necessary that all societies become successful liberal societies, merely that they end their ideological pretensions of representing different and higher forms of human society.
The future victory

• We must understand the realm of ideas to explain the material realm.

• To say that history ended in 1806 meant that mankind’s ideological evolution ended in the ideals of the French or American Revolutions: while particular regimes in the real world might not implement these ideals fully, their theoretical truth is absolute and could not be improved upon.

• Hence it did not matter to Kojève that the consciousness of the postwar generation of Europeans had not been universalized throughout the world; if ideological development had in fact ended, the homogenous state would eventually become victorious throughout the material world.
Historical and post-historical world

• The end of history does not imply the end of international conflict per se. For the world at that point would be divided between a part that was historical and a part that was post-historical.

• Conflict between states still is in history, and between those states and those at the end of history, would still be possible. There would still be a high and perhaps rising level of ethnic and nationalist violence, since those are impulses incompletely played out, even in parts of the post-historical world.
Will the history start again?

- The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands.

- In the post historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual care taking of the museum of human history. I can feel in myself, and see in others around me, a powerful nostalgia for the time when history existed. Such nostalgia, in fact, will continue to fuel competition and conflict even in the post historical world for some time to come.

- Even though I recognize its inevitability, I have the most ambivalent feelings for the civilization that has been created in Europe since 1945, with its North Atlantic and Asian offshoots. Perhaps this very prospect of centuries of boredom at the end of history will serve to get history started once again.
AN IDEALIST THEORY
AMARTYA SEN AND DEMOCRACY AS A UNIVERSAL VALUE (1992)
Sen: democracy as a universal value

1. Magna Charta Libertatum (“The Great Charter of the Liberties”, 1215) – Local commitment
   1. King John of England and a league of rebel barons
   2. After the defeat of Bouvines (1214)
   • It granted:
     - protection of church rights,
     - protection for the barons from illegal imprisonment,
     - access to swift justice,
     - and limitations on feudal payments to the Crown

2. French and American Revolutions – Democracy as a general system

3. Nineteenth century: Does a country fit for democracy?

4. Twentieth century: Does a country fit through democracy?
Democracy and economic development

- The Lee Kuan Yew hypothesis: disciplinarian states and the faster rates of economic growth
  - Founder and father of Singapore as a city-state
  - Theorist of the Asian values (reaffirmed by Asian ministers at the World Conference on Human Rights > Bangkok Declaration, 1993)

- There is, in fact, no convincing general evidence that authoritarian governance and the suppression of political and civil rights are really beneficial to economic development. Indeed, the general statistical picture does not permit any such induction.

- Since democracy and political liberty have importance in themselves, the case for them therefore remains untarnished.
Causal processes: helpful policies

✓ Openness to competition,
✓ the use of international markets,
✓ public provision of incentives for investment and export,
✓ a high level of literacy and schooling,
✓ successful land reforms,
✓ and other social opportunities that widen participation in the process of economic expansion.
• There is no reason at all to assume that any of these policies is inconsistent with greater democracy and had to be forcibly sustained by the elements of authoritarianism that happened to be present in South Korea or Singapore or China.

• Indeed, there is overwhelming evidence to show that what is needed for generating faster economic growth is a friendlier economic climate rather than a harsher political system.
Beyond the economic growth: the need for security

- There is a connection between political and civil rights, on the one hand, and the prevention of major economic disasters, on the other.
- Political and civil rights give people the opportunity to draw attention forcefully to general needs and to demand appropriate public action.
- The response of a government to the acute suffering of its people often depends on the pressure that is put on it.
- The exercise of political rights (such as voting, criticizing, protesting, and the like) can make a real difference to the political incentives that operate on a government.
Famines

- Famines: Soviet Union (1930’s), China (1958-1961), North Korea, Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia.

- Famines are often associated with what look like natural disasters,
  - floods in China during the failed Great Leap Forward,
  - the droughts in Ethiopia,
  - or crop failures in North Korea.

- Nevertheless, many countries with similar natural problems, or even worse ones, manage perfectly well, because a responsive government intervenes to help alleviate hunger.

- Even the poorest democratic countries that have faced terrible droughts or floods or other natural disasters (such as India in 1973, or Zimbabwe and Botswana in the early 1980s) have been able to feed their people without experiencing a famine.
Famines are easy to prevent if there is a serious effort to do so, and a democratic government, facing elections and criticisms from opposition parties and independent newspapers, cannot help but make such an effort.

Not surprisingly, while India continued to have famines under British rule right up to independence (the last famine, which I witnessed as a child, was in 1943, four years before independence), they disappeared suddenly with the establishment of a multiparty democracy and a free press.
What is democracy?

• We must not identify democracy with *majority rule*.

• Democracy has *complex demands*, which certainly include voting and respect for election results, but it also requires the protection of liberties and freedoms, respect for legal entitlements, and the guaranteeing of free discussion and uncensored distribution of news and fair comment.

• Even elections can be deeply defective if they occur without the different sides getting an adequate opportunity to present their respective cases, or without the electorate enjoying the freedom to obtain news and to consider the views of the competing protagonists.

• Democracy is a *demanding system*, and not just a mechanical condition (like majority rule) taken in isolation.
Functions of democracy

1. The intrinsic importance of political participation and freedom in human life;
2. The instrumental importance of political incentives in keeping governments responsible and accountable;
3. The constructive importance of democracy in the formation of values, including the understanding of need, rights, and duties.
Intrinsic value

• First, political freedom is a part of human freedom in general, and exercising civil and political rights is a crucial part of good lives of individuals as social beings. Political and social participation has intrinsic value for human life and well-being. To be prevented from participation in the political life of the community is a major deprivation.
Instrumental value

- Second, as I have just discussed (in disputing the claim that democracy is in tension with economic development), democracy has an important instrumental value in enhancing the hearing that people get in expressing and supporting their claims to political attention (including claims of economic needs).
Constructive importance

- Third, practice of democracy gives citizens an opportunity to learn from one another, and helps society to form its values and priorities.
- Even the idea of "needs," including the understanding of "economic needs," requires public discussion and exchange of information, views, and analyses. The conceptualization—even comprehension—of what are to count as "needs," including "economic needs," may itself require the exercise of political and civil rights.
- In this sense, democracy has constructive importance, in addition to its intrinsic value for the lives of the citizens and its instrumental importance in political decisions.
- Example: public discussion has an important role to play in reducing the high rates of fertility that characterize many developing countries (e.g. in India, Kerala State)
The meaning of “universal”

• The lack of unanimity is seen by some as sufficient evidence that democracy is not a universal value.

• I would argue that universal consent is not required for something to be a universal value. Rather, the claim of a universal value is that people anywhere may have reason to see it as valuable.
Democracy is not universal. Why?

First excuse: poverty

- Some who dispute the status of democracy as a universal value base their argument not on the absence of unanimity, but on the presence of regional contrasts. These alleged contrasts are sometimes related to the poverty of some nations.

- According to this argument, poor people are interested, and have reason to be interested, in bread, not in democracy. This often repeated argument is fallacious at two different levels.

- First, as discussed above, the protective role of democracy may be particularly important for the poor. People in economic need also need a political voice. Democracy is not a luxury that can await the arrival of general prosperity.

- Second, there is very little evidence that poor people, given the choice, prefer to reject democracy.
Democracy is not universal. Why?
Second excuse: cultural obstacles

- Asian values
- What is Asia?
- Due to the experience of contemporary political battles, especially in the Middle East, Islam is often portrayed as fundamentally intolerant of and hostile to individual freedom.
- But the presence of diversity and variety within a tradition applies very much to Islam as well. In India, Akbar and most of the other Moghul emperors (with the notable exception of Aurangzeb) provide good examples of both the theory and practice of political and religious tolerance. The Turkish emperors were often more tolerant than their European contemporaries.
A criticism against the theory of civilizations

- Diversity is a feature of most cultures in the world. Western civilization is no exception. The practice of democracy that has won out in the modern West is largely a result of a consensus that has emerged since the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, and particularly in the last century or so. To read in this a historical commitment of the West --over the millennia-- to democracy, and then to contrast it with non-Western traditions (treating each as monolithic) would be a great mistake.
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