Available Online at ESci Journals
Journal of South Asian Studies
ISSN: 2307-4000 (Online), 2308-7846 (Print)
http://www.escijournals.net/JSAS

POLITICS OF DIFFUSION IN SOUTH ASIA

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A B S T R A C T

Diffusion is clearly one of the central themes of contemporary international relations debates, whether it is Huntington's third wave of democracy, the theory of falling dominos or more recently the Arab Spring. Debates on diffusion have become critical to understanding politics, especially in the wake of a globalizing international economy. Agreeably, interdependence drives diffusion in the domain of international relations although its definition, mechanisms and consequences need to be further examined and researched. This paper will look at the process of diffusion in the context of South Asia within the IR discipline. Inadequate empirical and theoretical research on diffusion of democracy, particularly in the South Asia region remains glaringly unnoticed. This lacuna has to be addressed as the salience of South Asia is increasing in the emerging global order. What explains the differential rate and patterns of diffusion for example, democracy in South Asia? If diffusion leads to temporal/spatial clustering why has democracy not diffused uniformly in the South Asian region as for example in Pakistan, Bangladesh or Maldives? What lessons can be drawn for international relations theory from this, particularly from the non-western perspectives?

Keywords: Democracy, Democratization, Diffusion, Snowballing, Spatial, Temporal.

INTRODUCTION

The dissemination of democracy in all its forms proceeds, quite noticeably, both temporally and spatially. Not only democracy has become a global phenomenon but recently, the Arab Spring and the new impetus of Europe's integration process have catapulted the "democratic question" to the core of contemporary debates in international relations. According to the theory that Samuel Huntington sketched out in 1991(Huntington,1991)the process of diffusion of democracy ensues by geographical area: firstly, North America and Western Europe; then Southern Europe, Latin America, and select countries in Asia; and ultimately, Central and Eastern Europe. Solidarity's electoral triumph in 1989 eclipsed the Stalinist-totalitarian system(Garton Ash, 1990:11)ushering in the first non-communist government to Eastern Europe in forty years soon trailed by the first formal closure of a ruling East European communist party in Hungary. This "tear in the iron curtain" soon permitted a large number of East Germans to go to West Germany and once these events were set in motion, political developments in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia rapidly led to elections and new governments. Within two years of the Solidarity triumph in the 1989 Polish elections, the shortest but the most intense period of democratization steered regime change from the German Democratic Republic to Tajikistan. This democratic surge was part of a greater global trend that began about 15 years earlier in Southern Europe and spread to Latin America in the 1980s. The ripple effects of regime change had altered dramatically the character of several world regions and in turn, affected the character of the international system. A potential "fourth wave", began in 2008, incorporating not only the Middle East and North Africa but could also potentially swirl out into several of the former Soviet republics that were only marginally affected in the wake of the USSR's dissolution (Tabirta, 2011).However the moot question is-can the contagion factor or 'snowballing' account for the proliferation of democracy in South Asia? If, on the other hand, democracy spreads in waves, why did it spread?

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Paper presented at the joint CISS/UNU-CRIS conference in Bruges, Belgium on June 19-21, 2013.

selectively in South Asia? This paper will seek to address some of these gaps in the literature on diffusion theory and suggest alternative paradigms for future research, observing the cases of India and Nepal.

ENDOGENOUS AND EXOGENOUS FACTORS, REGIME CHANGE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

Democracy and democratization have been a much researched/investigated turf of political scientists, both in the field of international relations and comparative politics. The vast literature provides only a narrow – and rather a misleading interpretation of the international processes of democratization. Social scientists, have traditionally explained political liberalization as the result of choices that can be analyzed in a relatively closed and limited context. Thus, crusaders of the endogenous theses and development democratization explained regime change largely based on domestic factors, for example, economic development, social cleavages, national institutions and the institutional design (Linz, 1990), the openness of political culture (Diamond, Linz & Lipset, 1989), elite behavior (Higley & Burton, 1989) and elite interactions, as important causal variables. It was not realized that even endogenous factors can be influence from the outside. These studies have either overlooked the significance of international factors or have simply denied any possibility of their influence on domestic change (Schraeder, 2002). This narrow and exclusive approach of comparative politics resulted in disagreement from various scholars who considered international factors to play a significant role in the process of regime change and subsequent democratization (Pridham, Herring & Sandford, 1994). At the beginning of the 1990s, scholars of democratization supposed that external governments and institutions may have a determinative impact on democratization of a given country (Huntington, 1991). Others argued that in the coming decades the significance of international institutions might prove pivotal for domestic political change (Vachudova, 2005). In a revisit of his seminal “requisites of democracy” article, Lipset concluded that domestic conditions “do shape the probabilities for democracy, but they do not determine their outcomes” (Diamond, Linz, & Lipset, 1994). Democracy is an “international cause” and democracy promotion has become the link between the international and domestic dimensions of democratization (Babayan, 2012).

This paper will study the global spread of democracy by examining the literature on diffusion theory and whether it has any utility in explaining political liberalization in South Asia. The literature on democracy and democratization abound in explanations from the domestic angle but are perceived to be inadequate to explain the patterns of liberalization both economic and political- because national choices are reflected to be interdependent in important respects. There is also a growing interest in explaining the influence of external factors in the growth of global spread of democracy in IR scholarship. The paper attempts to analyze the difficulties in theorizing on diffusion theory and its implications for the spread of democracy in South Asia.

DEFINING DEMOCRACY- AN ELUSIVE GOAL

There are several difficulties in theorizing on democracy in the domain of International Relations. The foremost problem in engaging with the literature on democracy is methodological. The definition of democracy is deeply contested. The second relates to its ethnocentricity. Not only is the literature profoundly Eurocentric or western centric but it is also assumed that the spread of democracy is linear and the western ideal is the archetypal model to be emulated. In a sense, the ambiguities of the major hypothesis in the literature on democracy and democratization are understandable as there is no consensus on what exactly constitutes the precise nature and definition of the term.

Defining democracy and its various dimensions is elusive - like a mirage. Most studies develop a set of criteria that are assumed to be the essential components of democracy, and, once agreed upon, a country is measured against these criteria to determine its regime type. Although this seems a rational and systematic process, the problem lies in the fact that each author’s study relies upon a slightly different set of criteria. For instance, Lipset’s famous study of this subject defined democracy as “a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials” (Diamond, Linz, & Lipset, 1994). Moreover, some definitions are broad, such as those used by Jaggers and Gurr (1995) who state that "democracy is a system in which no one can choose himself, no one can invest himself with the power to rule, and therefore, no one can abrogate to himself unconditional and unlimited power." Others are highly specific, such as the definition of Gasiorowski (1998) “Democracy is a political regime, (i) Has meaningful and extensive competition for positions of government, at regular intervals and

excluding the use of force; (ii) Highly inclusive level of political participation exists in the selection of leaders and policies; (iii) Sufficient level of civil and political liberties exists.

Generally, most theoretical definitions agree on the inclusion of certain dimensions such as political rights, institutionalized competition, and human rights or civil liberties. By democracy is generally meant the legal competition for political power by diverse groups and individuals through popular elections which are generally considered to be legitimate. Democratization is a process by which political power is reallocated to be more egalitarian and is a process that establishes and/or reinforces both democratic norms and institutions. A litmus test for the presence of stable democracy is the two-turnover rule, involving a second free and fair election in a state after a transition from an authoritarian regime (Huntington, 1991). A transition to or from a democratic form of government is part of a bigger set of possible regime transitions (Gurr, 1974; Eckstein & Gurr, 1975; Gurr, Jaggers & Moore, 1990). Then there are those who argue that there are diverse forms of democracy (Held, 2006). Democracy is also defined by a set of norms or expectations, rather than as a simple set of rules. In a normative sense, democracy is considered a moral value, a universalistic world value, aspirational, a 'winning' model to be emulated by the whole international system. A "minimalist'' definition of democracy is grounded on fair procedures and a maximalist'' one based on social justice outcomes (Shin, 1994). However the importance of rules and institutions in democracies is definitive as it are rules that serve as operational indicators in the democratization literature. For example, Diamond (1988) states that a democracy is denoted by extensive and meaningful competition for political power, inclusive political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, and a high level of protection of civil and political rights. The Freedom House ratings of political rights and civil liberties provide an example of a principally rights based measure of political democracy. The inclusion of health care and voter turnout as a measure of democracy also complicates the picture by its all-inclusive approach making the concept of democracy highly vacuous. The confusion is further confounded by the categorization of democracy as a continuous or a dichotomous process.

Many studies distinguish between the various stages in the process of democratic transition - initiation, breakthrough, consolidation and sustenance of democracy. Further there are various quantitative studies measuring the levels of democracies. Whether democracies are consensual, consociational, majoritarian or transitional further obfuscates the matter. Attempts by analysts to quantify, code and scale democracy further complicates research on democracy because of the vagueness established in its definition and its multidimensionality. Further, in terms of the environment, actors, issues and democracy promotion, the field is getting extremely crowded. While the US and the EU were the initial engines of human rights and democracy agenda, they are not the only ones and the field is becoming increasingly crowded with new actors on the scene. Now there is a whole new range of lexicon associated with democratic activities-Democracy promotion, democratic assistance, democratic fund and democratic aid besides others. Democracy promoters include organizations as the Organization for Security and C-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, besides NGOs and advocacy networks. The central players in the terrain remain the EU and the US although their approaches towards democracy promotion remain diverse. Whereas the US approach is political the EU approach is developmental with a focus on socio-economic measures. Democracy promotion has been on the American and European foreign policy agendas for two decades, but a "one size fits all" approach (Börzel & Risse, 2009) and fixed "toolboxes" (Carothers, 2004) have not resulted in an all-time successful recipe. The differences in the conceptualization of democracy translate into the practice it analyses as well. For, a purpose of simplification, this paper uses the terms democracy and democratization synonymously.

WHAT IS DIFFUSION?

Diffusion theory states that a country's policy choices are affected by the prior choices of political actors outside the country either by other countries or by international organizations, possibly mediated by private actors or entities, (Brinks & Coppedge, 2001). It is to these effects that analysts refer to as international diffusion. The mechanisms of diffusion layout the causative processes that explain any pattern of consecutive adoptions of a policy innovation across countries.

Several analysts have pointed to internal social and economic forces as the motivating force for democracy.

Economic development and the spread of political power have also carried much weight in this debate. Seymour (1994) is an example of this restricted view. Such an approach ignores relations among states, the influence of major external forces like the ideology promoted by a great power, regional snow-balling effects, and structural global forces such as the nature of great power relations and their connections to the state under review. An alternative conceptualization is that global forces have been prime movers behind the democratic change. In particular, occupation (colonialism) by pro-democratic nations and influence (clientism) by pro-democratic nations are seen as primary explanations. Domestic conditions are however, it is widely felt, not adequate to explain patterns of policy adoption in many cases although they may play a crucial role in the translation of external stimuli into national policy or institutional innovations. On the other hand, policy reversals– the turn to economic closure and authoritarianism – can also diffuse, as was the case in the 1930s.

THE MECHANISMS OF DIFFUSION

In the literature on diffusion theory, there are at least six ways in which external factors or interconnections among countries, economies, or governing elites could influence the process of institutional and regime change at the national level. The following segment sketches those processes.

The Coercive outside Factor, External Constraints and Authority Structures: Powerful countries or international institutions (or the former working through the latter) may be progenitors of change in other countries because of their structural positions in the international system. One might claim, for example, that the preferences of the U.S. government, the IMF and the World Bank influence national policies and institutions more than those of countries and international actors because many countries depend heavily on them for trade, foreign direct investment, aid, grants and loans - or for security.

The coercive factor may be a more prominent factor in influencing democratization in the case, for example, of the force of attraction exercised on the non-democratic countries of southern Europe by the integration process in Western Europe. At the end of the 1980s, the same dynamic was even more obvious in Central and Eastern Europe. In other cases, the constraint acts in an explicit manner as a series of "democratic rules," such as those imposed on the candidates wishing to enter the common European house, and in particular, on those candidates (Turkey, Serbia, Croatia, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro) that, are apparently being groomed for entry. Typically, the coercive factor is exerted in regions of close geographic proximity, where the influence of the dominant power is stronger.

Economic competition: Economic competition among countries might lead to interdependencies with respect to policy change. Similarly protectionist policies might be sustainable in countries A and B if they compete in the same third country markets. But if country A liberalizes (for whatever reasons), country B might now be forced to follow suit - creating a new equilibrium. There is also evidence that access to international financial markets increases following financial liberalization. Another way in which economic and political liberalization might diffuse is through the idea of network externalities. The gold standard advocated by classical economics, for example, gradually gained adherents after 1870 among countries that traded intensively with one another.

Rational learning: A second potential mechanism of democracy's spread between geographic neighbors is through the diffusion of prodemocracy ideas which Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett call "learning" (2007). Neighboring countries can observe the activities of the countries around them and import successful ideas at a lower cost than if they had to look further abroad to find them. Among the elements that induce a democratic transition, Huntington cites the "snowball effect", the establishment of democracy in one country acts as a regional detonator that galvanizes states that are either adjacent and/or historically and culturally contingent to follow the lead of their newly democratic counterparts. Indeed, the "demonstration effect" helps to explain the democratization of Portugal, Greece and Spain in mid-1970s, what occurred in Latin America approximately ten years later, the transitions witnessed in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, or what is currently transpiring in the Middle East and North Africa. Governments might view developments in other countries as natural experiments, and update their beliefs about policy effects in Bayesian fashion in response to the results of these experiments

Emulation: Sociological institutionalisms have another take on why trailing countries mimic leading countries. Nation-states, like individuals and like corporations,

perceive their alternatives in any given situation to consist of the actual strategies that their various peers have pursued. When policymakers choose policies, they look to their successful peers for ideas. Countries are rarely able to identify what it is about successful peers that make them successful, and so they copy anything that might plausibly be part of the equation. When sufficient countries imitate a single model, that model comes to be taken for granted – socially constructed – as the best way to continue.

World System Theory: World systems theory supports this external thinking as well. These scholars divide the globe into two realms, in which states are either in the periphery or the core. Periphery states support the elevated position of the core states with the fruits of their labor and at the cost of their own prosperity. Many of these scholars argue that trade adversely effects global democratization, as its consequence for states in the periphery are often damaging. As such, world systems theory advocates "home-grown" democratization with an emphasis on development (Wallerstein, 1974).

Norms Localization: In a seminal rendition of studies by Amitav Acharya norms are disseminated through the international system from the global to the local and from region to region. In the process of localization, norms are reformulated and modified and components of a chosen global norm will be combined with the local socio cultural background in order to be suitable to the local context. Amitav Acharya's framework of localization of norms (2004) provides a way of explaining the hybridization of norms at the local level through a process of selective filtration rather than blanket importation.

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

There is a burgeoning literature on the empirical and theoretical examination of the concept of 'democratic diffusion'. Starr (1991) was the first analyst to study the regional or neighborhood effect of political regime transitions between 1974 and 1987. This was followed by works by Jaggers and Gurr (1995), and others considered global trends in democratization with a particular focus on the forces propelling what Huntington has described as the third wave of democracy in his seminal study of the global spread of democracy. O'Loughlin and colleagues' insightful work markan important new approach to empirically addressing democratic diffusion based on what the authors called a "spatial-diffusion framework" (O'Loughlin, 1998). The authors have used this framework to examine the temporal and spatial features of democratic diffusion in the post-WWII period by "map [ping] and graph [in] changes in the number and nature of political regimes" in Latin America and Africa. India has been largely ignored and placed in the reversals to autocracy in-between 1972-1994.

Similarly, Gleditsch and Ward (2000) consider the spatial dynamics of democracy to investigate the question of whether democracies are more or less prone to war. Gleditsch and Ward (2006) and Franzese and Hays (2008) have highlighted the importance of recognizing and explicitly modeling spatial dependence in empirical analyses concerned with investigating the spread of democracy. Further, there are a few who have studied the effects of diffusion, if at all it occurs and at what rate of change does it occur. Studies have not included research on the percentage of change in democracy caught by the neighbor country. Gustav Lidenusing spatial econometrics and panel data that cover over 130 countries between 1850 and 2000 empirically investigates the democratic domino theory and discovers that democratic dominoes do in fact fall as the theory contends (Liden, 2011). However, these dominoes fall significantly "lighter than the importance of this model suggests". Countries "catch" only about 11% of the increases or decreases in their average geographic neighbors' increases or decreases in democracy. This conclusion has potentially important foreign policy repercussions (liden, 2011). The "lightness" with which democratic dominoes fall suggests that even if foreign military intervention aimed at promoting democracy in undemocratic countries succeeds in democratizing these nations, intervention is likely to have only a small effect on democracy in their wider regions. This leaves us with empirical evidence about the dearth of effect from diffusion when explaining level of democracy (Lidén, 2011).

HUNTINGTON'S THIRD WAVE

Samuel Huntington in his seminal piece on the spread of global democracy attempts to explain the process of democratization in contemporary world politics as occurring in three different 'waves' beginning in the early nineteenth century and continuing into the present day. Simply put, 'a wave of democratization is a cluster of transformations from non-democratic regimes to democratic regimes that occur within a definite period of

time that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction' (Huntington, 1993). In order to set the process of democratization in an identifiable context, a dichotomous approach is used drawing heavily on Schumpeter's 'Democratic Method' which emphasizes democracy as merely 'institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples vote' (Schumpeter, 1947). Huntington's research is based on an empirical study into the procedural nature of democracy which reduces the classification of regimes as democratic or otherwise through applying clinical bench marks?

In his statistical analyses Huntington points out that in 1973, 32% of the world's population lived in 'free countries'; and in 1990 when the third wave was at its peak after the fall of the Berlin Wall, this figure rose to 39%. A later study in 1994 adds weight to Huntington's thesis proclaiming that 58% of the world was democratic (Shin, 1994). It was heralded that authoritarian regimes had outgrown their populations as education and politicization expanded and that modern liberal democracy was the only conceivable future (Fukuyama, 1992). However, a different interpretation of the evidence can also bring forward skepticism. The number of countries in the world had increased from 64 in 1922, to 130 in 1990; but almost exactly the same number of states as a ratio was democratic in 1990 as were in 1922 – 45%.

An effort to explain why no real increase in the ratio of democratic countries has occurred leads Huntington to uncovering an important fact. 23 of the 29 countries that became democratized during the third wave had previous experience with democracy. This 'diverse lot' had little in common other than this factor. Further, 'Most of the countries with authoritarian systems in 1974 that did not democratize by 1990 had no previous experience with democracy' (Huntington, 1993). Perhaps what we are seeing, contrary to Fukuyama's early forecasts of the triumph of liberal democracy in 1989, is rather the consolidation of democracy in the areas of the world in which it is already familiar. India may be considered a case in point.

Politics differ from and contradict the premises of democratic politics'. Pakistan and Lebanon, given as examples, have been unable to uphold their democracies. Turkey remains the only exception. A half century of western intervention in the Middle East has evidently also created a hostile response as any democratization there 'seems likely to produce new Islamist governments that would be much less willing to cooperate with the United States than are the current authoritarian rulers' (Gause, 2005). Iran is an example. Free elections are held in Iran, meets the measures of procedural democracy, but there is definitely scarce liberalization or civil rights as evinced in the West.

Huntington's ethnocentrism leads him to assume that the democratization process should chart the American route as other countries want 'to emulate the winning model', 'failures of the United States would predictably be perceived as the failure of democracy' (Huntington 1993). Another viewpoint decrees that the United States' prosperity is based on a model of deficit spending which can be perilous for economic health'. Any endeavor to promote this model, as Huntington does, should be attended with a statutory warning. In view of the breakdown of the western financial system in recent years is all the more concerning for Huntington's thesis. By following a model that seeming cannot set a perfect example, nor hinge on the capitalism that underlines it, the world's probable democracies are certainly in trouble.

Apart from the snags of the 'established' democracies in Huntington's study, major problems proliferate when viewing the black and white classification of whether or not a country is democratic. Tagging many unstable countries in Latin America and others such as Thailand and Gambia as democratic is simplistic and does not convey the whole story. Many of these third wave transitions have retained durable elements of authoritarianism and better fit the classification of 'semi' or 'new' democracies. Huntington establishes the bench mark of the 'two turnover test' in which if a new democracy survives two turnovers of power, then it has consolidated satisfactorily (Huntington, 1993). India has been slotted in the third wave of democratization by Samuel Huntington. He places India in the third wave of democratization beginning in the late 1970's. Although recently a lot of interest has been generated in the nature, success and resilience of Indian democracy earlier scholars scholarship has hesitated in including India in their research and statistical generalizations and many even characterize India as a semi-authoritarian state. If Huntington's benchmark of two turnovers tests in which if a new democracy survives two turnovers of power then it has consolidated satisfactorily, by this

logic, India would be not only a democracy but a well consolidated one prior to the late 70s, the timeframe within which Huntington places India. By extension, Iraq and Afghanistan should also by now be consolidated democracies if the 'two turnover test is to have any validity' (Huntington, 1993). However, these conclusions are at variance with the objective realities on the ground.

Huntington's elitist notion of democracy and the democratization of the world are somewhat idealistic. Depending so greatly on Schumpeter's work, Huntington could do with remembering Schumpeter's own words 'democracy thrives in social patterns that display certain characteristics and it might well be doubted whether there is any sense in asking how it would fare in others that lack those characteristics' (Schumpeter 1947). The non-democratic world of today is not attributed with so much of the optimism of the post-Cold War years. The ability of America, with which Huntington entrusts the survival of democracy, to promote the process of democratization and western liberal culture is waning as Islamic fundamentalism and global hostility to the imposition of western values grows and offers a substitute. The democratic method may adequately describe the workings of a clinical process, but it pigeon-holes a vast diversity of forms of governance under the term 'democracy' and yet falls far short of capturing the quintessence of the word and its significance. With so little of the global population living in consolidated democratized societies perhaps it is time to admit that democracy is not a unitary phenomenon, nor is it as successful as is commonly perceived.

THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH ASIA

South Asia has experienced a wave of democratization at the turn of the Millennium. Bhutan began its transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy in 2004 and completed the process by electing a legislature and a representative government in 2008. Nepal's 'peoples' movement' (Jan Andolan-II) succeeded in 2006, ending the Maoist insurgency, abolishing the monarchy and establishing a republic. An elected Constituent Assembly and a representative government took office in Nepal in August 2008. In Pakistan, general elections were held for a National Assembly and the military regime was forced to withdraw. In September 2008, General Musharraf was replaced as president by Asif Ali Zardari of the Pakistan Peoples' Party. In the Maldives, a multiparty system was introduced in 2005 and in November 2008 a popularly elected president, toppled the former president, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who had been in office successively for 30 years. In Bangladesh, after two years of an interim administration, a popular government led by the Awami League came to power to January 2009. Thus, five of the seven South Asian countries have observed a democratic transition in a period of less than three years. The other two South Asian countries, India and Sri Lanka, are established democracies and Afghanistan became a democracy in 2004. These developments however have to be considered with a note of caution because some of the South Asian countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal have seen intermittent reversals and setbacks putting the notion of a linear progression towards democracy as postulated by the diffusion theory subject to further debate. Besides an elitist notion of democracy the theory does not address the issue of fragility of the newly transitioned regimes and their democratization and sustainability. The democratic credibility of the Karzai regime in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka's Rajapaksa regime has been seriously eroded and both countries are caught in internal conflicts. Tibet and Myanmar may not be considered part of South Asia but they are very much central to the overall South Asian political context, particularly since the admission of both China and Myanmar as observers in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In Myanmar and Tibet, protests, led by the Monks, in favor of freedom and democracy were crumpled in 2007 and 2008, respectively. In sum, all the South Asian countries now have a democratic system. Almost 1.3 billion South Asian people, constituting about one-fifth of the world's population have chosen democratic governance – but this transition to democracy is still delicate and vulnerable (Muni, 2009).

At the international level, India joined global efforts to promote democracy, first, by joining the Community of Democracies (CD), established in 2000, and then by joining the UN Democracy Fund in 2005 as a founding member (Muni, 2009).

DIFFUSION, DEMOCRACY AND SOUTH ASIA

In terms of the external influences, the colonial relationships and the impact of authority structure offer, to some extent, an explanation Indian democracy. In any case, the previously dominating power always leaves behind a political heritage impacting a country's future political development (Bollen & Jackman, 1985). The

Indian case of democratization has proved to be an academic paradox. The enigma of Indian democracy is reinforced as the explanations of its transition and consolidation defy the claims of mainstream theoretical and empirical literature on democracy. Democracy in India preceded nation and state formation. Nationalism in India began with the idea that the Indians should overcome weaknesses within Indian society, such as in the organizations of religion and education. This had to be accomplished before any serious opposition movement against the colonial government could be undertaken. The focus was internal rather than external. During the early phases of Indian nationalism, there was a consensus that the intervention of a democratic state was crucial for the development of industry, agriculture, and education. This served as a basis for democratic economic planning in the country.

Modernization theory argues that rapid economic growth and the expansion of social resources are vital elements to the sustainability of democracy (Lipset, 1959). However, the case of India shows that democracy can be sustained despite a lack of economic growth. There have been gains in the industrial sector but the Indian economic performance has moved slower than the average rate for developing countries and for the world as a whole. India transitioned into democracy despite the odds of poverty and illiteracy and a neighborhood surrounded by non-democratic, authoritarian regimes like Pakistan, Burma, Bhutan, absolute Nepal and China. Scholars have therefore referred to India as a deviant democracy. Alarmingly, India has been virtually excluded in the work not only of some historical sociologists, but also of some statistical generalizes. The exclusion in studies of over a billion people living in a democracy can hardly have much validity.

INDIAN DEMOCRACY

The Colonial Legacy: In fact, the success of Indian democratization lay in its ability to acclimatize the structure of British colonial rule to the new demands of electoral politics generated in the post-independence era. The crucial role of the Indian National Congress due to the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru as well as the party's organizational and mobilization strength and its inclusive ideology for Indian nationalism was instrumental in the process of democratization in India. The Congress proved flexible enough to accommodate a range of interests and sectional demands, but from a position of electoral strength, gained through its nationalist mandate and the mechanisms of the majoritarian electoral system. The violent and painful partition saw Congress surfaces a strong promoter of representative democracy, able to put in place a constitution and establish the new boundaries and role of a unified state.

The Post-Independence Era: After independence, the Indian National Congress (INC) dominated the Constitutional Assembly, and the constitution which emerged was based essentially on the majoritarian Westminster model. As a consequence, the former colonial power of the British rulers still had a big impact on Indian democracy. As well as setting up a limited form of electoral politics, and using a variety of electoral systems, the reforms introduced under colonial rule, (Minto-Morley, Government of India act of 1935) established a mode of formal political interaction and electoral practices. In their 1985 text on political democracy in the 1960's, Kenneth Bolin and Robert Jackman assert that Great Britain's former colonies were, upon achieving sovereignty, consistently better positioned to establish democratic institutions than were the former colonies of the other European colonial powers.

India held elections, based on universal franchise, in 1951-1952 widely perceived as being free and fair. Contrary to expectations, India has, since 1947, largely conformed to Robert Dahl's prescription for the institutional requirements for democratic process. Democratic politics in India has seen open and competitive elections, in which participation is widespread and alternations of power between government and the opposition are orderly and peaceful. The early years of democratic consolidation were controlled through a centralized state apparatus, which aimed to limit political appeals to segmented group interests. It pursued a programme of centralized economic development in conjunction with an acceptance of local power structures and political patronage. This developed into a competitive mode of party politics, with multiple parties competing for ethnic group support, with the promise of government resources in return. Democratic politics infused Indian socio-economic hierarchies with new dynamic, providing new opportunities for mobilization and contestation. A society divided by numerous social cleavages – including language, religion, caste, tribe,

region, and class – proved resistant to stable majority control. While blurring the lines of accountability and responsiveness, the political system provided most minority groups with some chance of democratic participation, and presented politicians incentives to seek broad social coalitions. Political competition became fragmented along regional lines, reflecting and reinforcing the federal structure of the Indian state, but without seriously undermining a basic acceptance of national institutions and legitimacy. Whereas the size and heterogeneity of India could be seen as undermining its democratic potential, these attributes are considered to have helped the system sustain. The nature of patronage democracy has provided an incentive for widespread participation across social groups, although it can also be seen to undermine effective implementation of government programme and the neutrality of the administration. Yet, despite the maladies of governmental performance, the Indian democratic system as a whole remains robust. The Indian case is a quintessential example of the linkage between external as well as internal variables as a methodology of explanation the diffusion processes.

Nepal: The case of Nepal, to some extent corroborates Huntington's, 'snowballing' or diffusion through contagion. In the case of Nepal a favorable internal and external environment encouraged the forces of prodemocracy to bring about a regime change. The existence of the aspiration for democracy, internally offered opportunities to the opposition forces to launch a resilient prodemocracy movement and presented constrictions on the ruling elite to negotiate and introduce democratic transition. Consequently, the ruling elite lifted the ban on the party system followed by a pro-democracy movement, and subsequent adoption of democratic constitution and holding of elections at the central and local levels. The presence of a democratic wave internally also provided an opportunity to the external forces who were willing to support the democratic forces to accelerate the transition process. In the case of Nepal both these cases where present.

Democratic trends at the global level during the late 1980's in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the South Africa also provided the stimulus for regime change in Nepal. Diffusion of democratic ideas propelled by the advent of modern means of communication and Nepal's growing engagement with the outside world together with the changing policies of external forces influenced the transition process. Organizations like the Amnesty International and the international media kept reporting on the incidents of human rights violations in Nepal which helped cultivate a favorable world public opinion towards the prodemocracy movement in Nepal, making it difficult for the ruling elites to defend their repressive policies before the international community (Parajulee, 2000).

Nepal's unique geographic location and proximity to India, the larger and dominant regional neighbor and its heavy economic dependence on India, also amounted to considerable Indian influence in the process of regime change in Nepal. A non-democratic regimes economic dependence on donor countries and the role of non-governmental agencies, the international media, and human rights organizations can make the non-democratic regime susceptible to external pressures. If a non-democratic regime is dependent economically on a donor country and has been successful in creating a positive image among the international community than it becomes difficult for the non-democratic regime to ignore the pressures of the international community generated by the negative publicity created by the international media and the non-governmental agencies due to their constant reporting of violations of human rights. The pressures of the donor nations and aid agencies cannot be ignored for fear of alienating them.

DEMOCRACY IN OTHER REGIONS OF THE WORLD

Does democracy spread in waves in other parts of the worlds? In the1990s, a wave of democratization spread in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Africa, Asia and Latin America. If the international system was evolving towards the homogenization of democracy why did clustering of democracy not take place in South Asia? Is diffusion theory able to explain reversals or setbacks as experienced, for example, in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Maldives? Can there be a linear progression towards democracy as has been mulled over by recent scholarship? (Huntington, Fukuyama). How then can regime fragility or failure be addressed for example the eroding credibility of Rajapaksa or Karjai? The main challenge of the new wave democracies in South Asia is its consolidation and stability. These may vary from country to country. Diffusion theory does not address these concerns.

CONCLUSION

Although current research abounds in literature on Democracy admittedly, it lacks focus on both theoretical and empirical research on South Asia. Democracy may

not be as assumed by the literature a linear progression towards a winning model? Literature on diffusion politics needs to address non-linearity, reversals and setbacks as has been typical in South Asia. Developments in Africa and Asia show moreover the dependence of democratic progress on social economic and political factors, the fragility and non-linearity of democratic progress. Although the literature abounds in quantitative research and case studies but comparative studies examining regularities of democratization are rare particularly from the point of view of South Asia Additionally many of these studies ignore causality while failing to reflect on the nature and impact of these transitions. Most Studies have ignored research on South Asia. American democracy aid community embraced a model for the smooth democratic transition based on political intentions and the actions of its political elites (Carothers, 1999 & 2002) Official thinking of western governments and organizations, democracy is seen as a component to be inserted into any society at any point in its development and it will work on a sustained basis (Leftwich, 1996).

The evolving transition model was based on a few core assumptions: that process of democratization consisting of opening, breakthrough and consolidation and a country's chances of success depends on the political intentions and actions of its political elites (Carothers, 2002). In view of the failed democratic transitions process in the 1990s, however, this seems to be a lofty assumption. Cultural factors such as cultural heterogeneity and linguistic pluralism and familism better account for the difficulties in the democratic transition in South Asia. Cultural heritages of developing countries must be taken into account into any account of democratic process, promotion or reversals. Some studies reveal that variables like power sharing and culture have a greater significance rather than economy and education the key assumptions in the fostering of democracy in mainstream theories.

The challenge to democracy in South Asia comes from primeval values and identities such as caste, religion and region. Democratictransition in South Asia could not have succeeded without the support of the international community and the rise of the people's power. The international community supported transition to democracy in Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Bhutan (Muni, 2009). Election Observation (EO) is a vital component of EU activities to promote democracy, human rights and rule of law worldwide. Election observation has been one of the major tools to strengthen democratic institutions and build public confidence in electoral processes and deter fraud intimidation and violence (European Commission 2008 (a) preface and 5). The European commission has been active in most parts of South Asia apart from India which is itself a major factor in election observation and has provided experts and observers for elections to other countries in co-operation with the UN and the commonwealth secretariat since the turn of the millennium. Observers have been sent to Bangladesh (2008), Pakistan (2002 and 2008) Bhutan (2008) Nepal (2008) Sri Lanka (2000, 2001, 2004, and 2005). At the second India –EU summit (2001), the two sides resolved to set up efforts to promote democracy and human rights issues at the international and bilateral levels (European Union 2001). India also supports democracy promotion at the UN by supporting the UN Democracy fund in September 2005. India provided democracy assistance to Afghanistan.

Suggestions for further research: Some suggestions are as follows;

- A more eclectic approach using insights from both international relations theory including rational choice as well as constructivism combined with comparative political studies will bring about a more useful and surreal analyses of the global spread of democracy for e.g. cultural studies and social anthropology may better explain how, why and when countries tend to embrace democracy.
- Methodologically, a dual combination of empirical as well as theoretical approach will bring about a more fruitful analysis of the issue.
- Surveys and interviews in terms of the technique will also go a long way in bringing about a more authentic understanding of individual and across sections of society analysis.

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