CHAPTER 1

The Challenge of Dissident Democratic Leadership

John Kane and Haig Patapan

It is more common these days to bemoan the parlous state of the democratic experiment in so many parts of the world than to celebrate its promise. Certainly, the problems and fragilities are all too real, and democracy still has serious enemies whose motives range from the religious, to the traditionalist, to the plainly self-serving. Yet democracy may prove a hardier flower than it sometimes appears. Its seeds once planted may show a surprising resistance to uprooting and a persistent tendency to grow as soon as environmental conditions allow. In Asia, at any rate, some countries have given reason for optimism – South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and Japan – while others have provided renewed cause for concern – for example, Thailand. Still others provide fascinating examples of attempts to resist the forces of democracy even while promoting development – China, Singapore, Vietnam, even Burma. Others lie somewhere between, having democratic forms that are seriously compromised by various political institutions and practices – Malaysia, Cambodia, the Philippines.

In this book we have collected studies of dissident democrats in a number of these countries in order to assess the crucial function of leadership in the fraught process of democratization. The work assumes that the role, character and actions of leaders are of central importance both in the phase of dissident opposition, and if
successful, in the consolidation of democracy once established. From the perspective of these leaders, the problems of democratic transition anatomized in so much of the existing literature – of under- or uneven development; of the institutionalization of democracy; of social, religious and ethnic division; of cultural change and adaptation; of the establishment of a genuinely civil society; above all of the toleration and accommodation of dissent – are all problems that they must strenuously confront and manage, or to which they must, alternatively, succumb. These studies therefore provide an opportunity for comparative analysis and critical reflection on the tasks of such dissident leaders.

Dissident democratic leaders are exceptional individuals who risk much in trying to advance the cause of democracy in their own countries. Though the conditions under which they struggle vary greatly from place to place, a cursory look at the greatest of them reveals an important fact – that they look to each other for inspiration, moral sustenance and, importantly, strategic counsel. This mutual regard and subtle dialogue implies that, whatever the variation in local conditions, there is something far-reaching and profound to be learned about dissident democratic leadership. It is an insight that provides an important starting point for the larger ambition of this book, which has both practical and theoretical components. Practically speaking, enlarging our understanding of dissident leadership and the challenges, opportunities and obstacles it confronts is important, not just for dissidents themselves, but also for anyone who seeks to foster and help sustain emergent democracies around the world. At a more theoretical level, the study of dissident democratic leaders can provide, by a process of critical reflection, important insights into the conceptual and institutional bases of modern democratic governance more generally.
There is, of course, an extensive literature that attempts to understand what conditions must exist, first, for a transition to democracy to occur and, second, for a new democracy to consolidate itself with some degree of permanency. Since the 1960s research has focused on the role of development in democratic transition and consolidation. Subsequent scholarship has explored structural conditions, especially those that emphasize political culture, civil society and political economy. At the same time, scholars have attempted to examine the place of ‘agency’ and especially the role of ‘elites’ in democratization. All these positions have their critics and defenders, and there is much in all of them (particularly the literature on elite interaction) that is pertinent to the present study. We take our principal cue, however, from an influential 1970 article by D. A. Rustow where he argued that although successful transition required a mix of economic and cultural predispositions, as time went on contingent factors and individual choices became increasingly important. This, he said, made leadership one of the essential variables in a period of dynamic adjustment and institutionalization. Despite his words, specific focus on leadership since then has been blurred at best. The present book takes Rustow’s observation seriously and argues that there is value in the close study of individual leaders in the Asian context. Yet it also insists on the importance of examining the tensions these leaders experience in their attempts to practice and institute a specifically democratic form of leadership. The important question they confront is, what does it take to make a good democratic leader? The scholarship on leadership generally has been largely silent on this question, precisely because of the ambiguous place that leaders occupy in a regime whose ruling principle is the sovereignty of the people. This is another reason why it is important to consider the issue in the context of attempted democratization.
In this introductory essay we begin by exploring the twin challenges that dissident democratic leaders typically confront: first, how to appear as credible leaders in a political and cultural context that fosters respect for traditional models of non-democratic leadership; and second, how to manage the unique challenges posed by a specifically democratic form of leadership. We then employ reflections on these matters to explore the centrality of dissent in democratic government, and the way that dissent necessarily becomes dissidence in authoritarian regimes. Finally, we will investigate the significance of the character and actions of dissident leaders in the process of democratic consolidation.

The Twin Challenges of Dissident Democratic Leadership

Local institutions, social and political customs, party systems, and constitutional histories provide the framework within which dissident leaders must exercise leadership in order to effect the transformation of their nations toward democracy. They must often champion democracy against apparently incompatible but prevailing cultural, historical and political norms. To do this they must first define and defend their own understandings and interpretations of democracy, a task less easy than appears since even in the West no universally agreed definition has been reached. No one denies that democracy implies the sovereignty or rule of the people, but its practical meaning in terms of institutions and practices remains ambiguous.

Most in the West, however, would assent to the sort of broad, institutional characterization provided by Robert Dahl (1995). According to Dahl, democracy requires a constellation of effective political institutions that include ‘the selection of top officials in free and fair elections, extensive freedom of expression, wide access to alternative and independent sources of information, rights to form relatively independent associations and organizations, including political parties entitled to
compete in elections, and an inclusive electorate’ (1995, 3). To this list most would add the institution of the rule of law which, among other things, makes democratic governors equally subject to laws they themselves make and administer, and the separation of at least judicial and executive powers to make the rule of law effective. If one were to add, too, that government must be ministerial and subject to individual rights, we would come very close to what is generally called a ‘liberal democracy.’

It has been argued that liberal democracy should not be regarded as a universal form, and dissident leaders influenced by local cultures or religions may indeed wish to posit variations on these themes (see Kinnvall and Jonsson 2002). As a matter of fact, however, most of the dissident democrats studied in this book explicitly ascribe (whether sincerely or not) to the central values implied in this constellation of institutions – as perhaps they must if their fundamental challenge to the legitimacy of authoritarian or oligarchic regimes is to have some principled basis. Democracy thus understood implies a distinctive style of leadership quite opposed to that practiced by authoritarians, and its peculiarities must be appreciated and managed by the would-be democratic leader.

And here we come to the second difficulty facing dissident democrats, related to the inherently problematic nature of democratic leadership itself. To express the matter succinctly: democracies need and want good leaders yet are perennially suspicious of them. Let us explain briefly why.

The set of institutions listed above defines a representative as well as a liberal form of democracy, one in which citizens elect representatives to govern them rather than directly governing themselves. Efficient as this form may be, it embodies a conundrum that creates a permanent tension between governors and governed: democracy is supposed to be rule by the people, yet most people find themselves
largely excluded from the business of ruling. Democrats typically regard their representatives as either ‘servants,’ ‘mirror representatives,’ or ‘trustees,’ yet find themselves being ruled by them in ways they do not always like. The resulting dissonance is perfectly captured in the oft-expressed view that politicians are mere employees. When the employee asserts imperious rule over the employer something is clearly amiss. The question arises of who, finally, is boss.

Democratic leaders, if they are to lead effectively, must play the boss and make positive decisions on behalf of all the people; yet at the same time they must remember that those people retain a boss’s right to dismiss them at the next election for unsatisfactory service, upon which occasion the servant-leader has no option but to stand down. Negotiating this duality requires that democratic leaders, in their every word and action, carefully balance authority with submission, command with obedience, power with deference. This is a skill not easily acquired or practiced by leaders in long-established democratic regimes, much less by those accustomed to more authoritarian forms of rule.

Let us now look more closely at each of these two challenges confronting dissident democrats, beginning with the political-cultural context.

**Leadership in Context**

Many of the countries under consideration in this book have undergone considerable political change, some moving from military to civilian rule and back again, others transiting from authoritarian to democratic rule. The often wrenching and dramatic nature of these events reveals the magnitude of the challenge that dissident leaders face as they seek to transform their countries.

Such leaders must necessarily shape their strategies according to their understanding of the existing political context, including local institutions, traditions,
religion and culture, as well as the larger international sphere. Elements within this context, depending on how they are interpreted and manipulated, may play a role either in facilitating or impeding democratic change. Dissident leaders, to be effective, must tap into what they perceive to be the prevailing hopes and aspirations of their followers or potential followers. They will need to judge how far their own aspirations to transform society find a receptive echo in the hearts of people, and how much educative effect their own words and example can have if they are to lead in directions they wish to go. They are likely to find themselves caught between radical allies on the one hand, who wish to proceed more peremptorily and perhaps more violently, and conservative ones on the other, who must be coaxed and persuaded to the benefits of democratic change. They must try, if they can, to tame the radicals while agitating the conservatives. To have a chance of success they will need a prudent combination of boldness and caution, because the task they have chosen is very great and often very dangerous. They will need to be alert to how their actions and speeches are interpreted by an international community, which includes foreign governments and independent organizations who may be important allies and sources of assistance. They must be equally attentive to the possibly damaging effects of international interventions and attentions on domestic constituents, for their opponents will not scruple to use chauvinistic arguments against them. They must, in other words, be thoroughly familiar with their country, its peoples, its problems and its possibilities.

Perhaps the best known recent case regarding the problem of political context is the so-called Asian values debate – whether Asian political culture generally is at all compatible with liberal democracy. The controversy has involved claims that Asian cultural values are not only distinct and unique, but as good as, if not superior to,
Western values. In one particular and notorious instance, for example, it was claimed that the doctrine of human rights is a cultural product of the West and irreconcilable with Asian cultural traditions.

Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore has been called ‘the undisputed architect’ of the Asian values argument, but the arguments he articulated were subsequently appropriated and adapted by other Asian leaders for their own domestic purposes. Lee first made the case in the 1960s to affirm traditional values against what he perceived as the individualistic and decadent popular culture of the West. The ‘60s were of course associated with permissiveness, protest, free love, drugs, and rock music, but Lee focused subsequently on what he saw as the crass individualism and vulgar materialism of Western culture. Against such pernicious influences he asserted traditional values of hard work, thrift, discipline, as well as strong family ties and respect for the extended family. In the course of the debate, he also spoke more frequently of the so-called core values of Confucianism, namely the norms of behavior informing the relationship between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, brothers, and friends, in that order of priority. He was, in other words, defending the hierarchical and paternalistic order of traditional societies.

The obvious objection was immediately raised, of course, that there was no such thing as a distinctive or homogeneous Asian culture. Asia is a vast geographical area encompassing many diverse cultures and traditions. Even within countries in which one ethnic or cultural group dominates, there remain great cultural and linguistic differences reflecting both the historical diversity of Asia and the arbitrariness of the borders drawn around its modern states. Nevertheless, it is true that dissidents democrats in Asia, in attempting to accommodate their strategies to the existing political context, often confront forms of social and political life that are undemocratic
in character. Institutionally, these forms have given rise to various patterns of patron-client relationship or to interlocking networks of personal or family relations that shape the conduct of economic as well as political affairs. Asian societies in general continue to value or endorse systems of governance that are hierarchical and patriarchal in nature.

This is to say that they have retained the features characteristic of traditional ‘communities’: communality and group-orientation; direct social discipline; strong personal relationships; strong family ties and loyalties; and relatively simple social institutions. In sociology, these communities are commonly contrasted with ‘civil societies’ characterized by: individualism; voluntary associations held together by the self-interest of members and impersonal rules; a more elaborate division of labor; and weaker attachment to communal goals. This kind of civil society is, of course, the outcome of centuries of complex economic, social and political change in Western societies that were once as communal as any in Asia, a developmental process that was labeled ‘modernization.’ Asia, by contrast, has attempted to achieve modern economic development while maintaining social forms adapted to earlier, communal ways of life. Paternalistic government, indeed, has been defended not only by political elites but by large segments of socially conservative populations for its positive contributions to nation-building and economic development.

If Lee Kwan Yew is to be believed, the great religious and philosophical currents of Asia have served to strengthen and maintain these communal structures of Asia. By contrast, the religious forces of Medieval Europe, even if they did not actually assist Western transformation, plainly did nothing ultimately to prevent it. Historically the major religious influences that altered but did not eradicate indigenous traditions of leadership and society in Asia have been Hinduism,
Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. More often than not, the imported ideas were blended with indigenous ones to produce hybrids that retain much of the structure of local traditions.

Most importantly for the issue of political culture, the imported beliefs and ideas provided more refined and elaborate justifications for enlightened and virtuous leadership. The Confucian tradition, for example, appeals to the mythical authority of the sage kings, who in turn serve as models of correct government by scholar-officials (see generally Analects 1997; Pye and Pye 1985; Fukuyama 1995). The Buddhists have the historical precedent of Asoka (268-239 B.C.E.), who renounced violent conflict and administered his empire according to Buddhist moral principles (Truong 2000; Barr 2002). The Muslims, for their part, have recourse to the example of the Prophet as well as the first caliphate as the models of righteous leadership (Pye and Pye 1985; Akbarzadeh and Saeed 2003; Halldorsson 2000). Contrary to the spirit of modern liberalism, however, each of these ancient traditions retains a comprehensive conception of the good for the individual and society. By the same token each also serves to reinforce the notion of strong and effective government as the means to realize the ethical order of society.

Nevertheless, traditions as compendious as these can be interpreted in various ways to suit different needs and changing times, as the complex adaptation of so many indigenous Asian cultures over the centuries has shown. Prudent dissident democrats can surely make a case for liberal democratic norms implicit within their great traditions without giving offence to cultural sensibilities. A democratic leader like Kim Dae Jung of South Korea (a determined opponent of Lee Kwan Yew’s Asian-values justification for authoritarianism) has located a democratic tradition in the works of the Chinese sage Meng-tsu more than two millennia ago. Aung San Suu Kyi
finds it in the long tradition of self-government and independence at village level in Burma and in democratic interpretations of Buddhist scripture. Gus Dur of Indonesia and Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia have sought to reveal the liberal dimensions of Islam.

Dissidents may argue, furthermore, that community relationships, for all their remarkable resilience and utility tend, when writ large upon a modern developing economy, to perpetuate interlocking client-patron networks that inefficiently distribute favors and rewards to some, while excluding the rest. The resulting pattern is one that Western bankers like to describe as ‘corrupt.’ Moreover, these types of relationships were originally geared to relatively small, ethnically homogeneous communities that now find themselves enfolded, in all their variety, within arbitrarily-drawn state borders, mostly excluded from the privileged networks of the contingently dominant culture. The need for a strong hand to maintain the unity of such artificial states that are in no sense nations is, indeed, the common alternative justification that authoritarian regimes in Asia give to rationalize and legitimate their existence. It should be noted, however, that this justification stands in direct contradiction to the Asian values argument. The latter posits, against the idea of a decadent but externally threatening West, an Asian moral and cultural unity that must be preserved through strong government. The ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity argument, however, posits an internal pluralism that is a constant source of actual or potential conflict.

There are two ways in which this dangerous pluralism has traditionally been managed: with an iron fist (for example, the Burmese junta’s repeated violent crackdowns on minority peoples); or with a politics of accommodation, consensus and co-optation (typical of many ruling regimes in Asia). In the latter strategy, opposition figures are co-opted into the ruling coalition to prevent their open challenge to the
regime; disagreements and compromises are settled behind closed doors. This lack of transparency is argued to be necessary to ensure that there is no public display of disagreement and conflict, thus justifying the distaste for open competitive politics that expose the latent divisions within each state. Democratic opposition in these circumstances is cast as a villain, whose practice, even if not its intention, threatens to destabilize the state.

We will return to the habits of secrecy of authoritarian regimes in the section on dissent and dissidence. Here we are content to make a couple of observations. First, the danger of applying democracy to a severely divided society is undoubtedly real, for it can empower a majority that may act vengefully toward a minority. One can see this today in Iraq, where majority Shi’ite Muslims welcomed elections as a means of gaining power over minority Sunnis who had savagely oppressed them for over a century. The same result was common in post-colonial states of Africa marked by tribal cleavage and a winner-takes-all mentality. But this is democracy as naked majority rule and thus a form of tyranny, usually encouraged rather than ameliorated by flawed electoral designs and processes.

This is precisely the condition that specifically liberal democracy was designed to prevent. Its purpose is to create a constitutional and institutional framework that balances popular participation and judicially protected rights, thereby safely allowing and containing dissent and conflict within a broader girdle of agreement and unity (which is therefore not necessarily amity). The spirit of liberal democracy is, and must ultimately be, one of public conciliation and compromise. There is, then, no reason why it may not reach the necessary compromises and agreements that a pluralist society requires at least as well as patriarchal regimes, and better, since the disagreements and resultant compromises are openly aired and settled, thus giving
smaller opportunity for partial, corrupt bargains. The acceptance and accommodation of pluralism, rather than the implicit authoritarian denial of its validity, is indeed one of liberal democracy’s strengths.

By these and similar arguments, dissident democrats may be able to moderate and even refute the charges of the cultural specificity of democracy that authoritarian regimes deploy. This has been a debate within Asia as much, or more than, one between Asia and the West. As Suu Kyi argued, if democracy is a good thing then it is a good thing everywhere and should be welcomed – must every nation reinvent the wheel, or television? Kim Dae-Jung agreed. To arguments like those posed by the government of the People’s Republic of China, that development must precede democracy, Kim responded that if you attempt to separate economic modernization and democratization you will take the path of Germany and Japan in the early twentieth century, with disastrous results.

The institutional, traditional and cultural challenges facing the dissident democratic leader undoubtedly require skilful compromise, accommodation and resistance, as well as considerable courage and personal sacrifice. But in addition to negotiating the tests presented by their particular political contexts, democratic leaders also confront a problem within democracy itself – that of being a democratic leader.

(rename)

There is a core ambiguity, if not a paradox, in the idea of democratic leadership. Simply put, democratic leaders are at once the strongest and weakest of leaders. They are the strongest because democracy is founded upon consent and not on fear – in a democracy, it is said, leaders fear the people, not the other way round. In the absence of compulsion consent must be earned, but once it is, democratic leaders are allowed extraordinary discretion and are able to exercise far-reaching authority. Yet this
authority remains constantly under challenge from the central animating principle of
democracy, namely the sovereignty that resides in the people. If the people are
sovereign then the people should rule. But it is impractical for the people to rule
directly in large democracies, save on exceptional occasions, such as foundings, or
plebiscites and referenda. They must therefore rule through representatives who, if
popular sovereignty is to be respected, must regard themselves always as the people’s
servants, not their masters.

Moreover, democratic leaders are kept intentionally weak by constraining rules,
laws and other means meant to ensure they do not exceed their authority. As servants
who may be dismissed, they must always be attentive to the often ambiguous or even
contradictory commands of the people. They must never seem disobedient to, or
dismissive of, the expressed wishes of the people. As servant-leaders they will suffer
opprobrium if they seem arrogant and fail to display proper deference to the sovereign
on all occasions (an encouragement to hypocrisy, perhaps, but a necessary
hypocrisy).¹³

Some scholars, confronted with this tension and uneasy with its ambiguity, have
sought to resolve it by concluding that the sovereignty of the people is simply a sham.
Democracy, they say, has always been the rule of the hidden few, and the best we may
hope for is a mediated democracy in which public contest between elites is
adjudicated by the people.¹⁴ Others, unhappy with the denial of the idea of popular
sovereignty yet unable to refute the ‘elite’ thesis, have simply chosen to ignore the
problem of democratic leadership and sought to retrieve the idea of the ‘people’ as a
source of countervailing authority and leadership. Thus ‘participatory’ democrats,
‘deliberative’ democrats and ‘associational’ democrats claim that, if only conditions
can be properly and fairly arranged, the people may lead themselves – though how
this leadership will be exercised in practice, and how it might deny elite authority, are never clearly explained.15

We suggest that resisting the temptation to resolve this ambiguity between the democratic leader and sovereignty of the people can yield fruitful insights into the constantly challenging nature of democratic leadership. Consider, for example, the immediate and practical ways that a permanent problem of legitimacy shapes the authority of the democratic leader. The democratic leader is granted extraordinary authority, yet this authority is called into question each time it is exercised. The problem lies in the fact that democrats commingle three different meanings of representation, each of which assumes different and mutually contradictory bases of legitimacy. Democrats typically regard their representatives either as ‘servants’, ‘mirror models’, or ‘trustees’. The servant is given strict orders and expected not to deviate from them; the mirror representative is chosen because of a likeness to oneself (rich, poor, male, female, of a certain sexual orientation, of a particular religion or ethnicity, an example of ‘the common man,’ and so on) on the assumption that someone of a shared identity will naturally act in one’s best interest; the trustee, by contrast, represents us not as we are but as the best we can be, exercising prudence and judgment on our behalf, even sometimes seeming to contradict our own wishes but only for our sake.16 These forms of representation provide three different ways of reconciling democratic leadership and popular sovereignty. The problem is that democrats usually demand all three at once: for example, the leader must pay attention to polls that express people’s opinions but must, contrarily, be a ‘conviction’ politician who does what is right irrespective of polls; the leader must look and act like you and me and refrain from exalted attitudes, yet must behave as the best we can be, with appropriate dignity and authority that will not shame us.
The legitimacy of any exercise of judgment and authority by a leader is constantly threatened by such contradictory demands. They must constantly attempt to shore up this legitimacy, which is worn away daily by people who assail their good motives, their manner of proceeding, even their reputation, on the simple grounds that they are not being sufficiently ‘democratic.’ The democratic leader is often more vulnerable to the charge of being undemocratic than to that of being imprudent or unwise. Indeed, the decisions of democratic leaders are often challenged less on their merits than on the legitimacy of the process by which they were reached, with special emphasis on such things as consultation, transparency and inclusiveness.

Within democratic systems, of course, opponents for office become equally adept at deploying this politics of legitimacy. Any particular leader may be vulnerable to it, but will also deploy it against opponents, accusing them of pursuing personal ambition, of disregarding proper processes, of catering to ‘special interests,’ and so on – in other words, of behaving undemocratically. These tactics can be safely indulged within functioning democracies because democratic leaders are, despite the constant problem of legitimacy, institutionally secure. This is not generally true of dissident leaders who must learn to behave like good democratic leaders, maintaining their essential legitimacy among followers, while facing the full weight of a regime that regards them as wholly illegitimate. To a large extent they must anchor their legitimacy in the democratic cause itself and their own strenuous and often dangerous labors on its behalf, building a reservoir of respect from sympathizers and followers which may sustain them through long opposition. (Though even the fame they achieve as dissident heroes can be, as we shall see, a double-edged sword for a democratic leader.)
Yet dissidents in their struggles also draw on the chief strength of democratic leadership noted above, namely that it is based on consent and not on compulsion. The very insecurity of the democratic leader’s position, growing from the constant need to shore up legitimacy, has its source in the need to gain and keep the consent of followers. The dissident democrat thus pits the force of popular consent against the forces of fear, intimidation, bribery and co-optation. If this often seems, given the frequent brutality of power, to be a very uneven contest, such appearances may be deceiving. To say that the democratic leader must struggle interminably to secure consent is another way of saying that dissent is a natural feature of democracy; but dissent is just what authoritarians fear most. Authoritarians, relying on compulsion or cooptation, are unable to distinguish public consent from fearful acquiescence or selfish expediency, and this uncertainty makes any display of dissent alarming to them. For the authoritarian leader, public dissent automatically becomes an act of dangerous dissidence. It is to this centrally important topic of dissent that we must now turn if we are to understand the full dimensions of the dissident democratic struggle.

 بصورة

Dissent and Democracy

Because stability, unity and cohesion are considered essential prerequisites for any political community, the defense of dissent as a political virtue sounds a discordant note for some. Yet modern democracies pride themselves on allowing as much room as possible for dissenting opinions, including opinions on the political-legal foundations of the state itself, its economic arrangements and its current incumbent officers. Indeed, this permissiveness is seen as one of the cornerstones of liberal democratic stability, the paradoxical provision of security through the maintenance of opposition and challenge.
The defense of dissent has two bases. The first is an acknowledgment of the unavoidability of dissenting views and opinions, and thus the need to accommodate them and diffuse their force by giving them as much free rein as possible. This approach seeks to preserve authority by allowing what cannot practically be forbidden. The second, more positive, defense argues that dissent is not only unavoidable but welcome, because it encourages a diversity of views, promotes debate, discussion and deliberation, and thus encourages progress, innovation and dynamism. From this perspective dissent is essential for healthy civic life.

These positions, combined, secure the place of dissent in modern democracies and provide a theoretical justification for such pre-eminently liberal democratic institutions as parliament, political parties, checks and balances, the separation of powers and constitutionalism. Democratic institutions not only provide negotiated spaces in which dissent may be aired, but also entrench the principle of dissent in their very design by establishing a system of permanently countervailing powers. Constitutional laws, meanwhile, protect freedom of belief, speech, movement and assembly, and permit the flourishing of free media which, however much their harping voices may irritate people in power, cannot be arbitrarily silenced. Even when free media are held to be irresponsible, trivial or biased, it is generally assumed that permitting their folly, even their offensiveness, is preferable to silencing them as independent organs of dissent. Imperfect as the whole system may be in practice, the aim is to mitigate the worst excesses of dissent while encouraging its creative potential.

Though there has been debate on the matter, the phenomenon of the loyal opposition must also be regarded as part of the effective accommodation of dissent in democracies. Oppositional parties are not merely tolerated but publicly supported.
They are given definite, very vocal roles in parliamentary institutions, to the discomfort of incumbent governments obliged to defend themselves against constant critique. Oppositions challenge a government’s policies and practices without challenging its authority, and thus do not endanger the regime. As well as calling governments permanently to account, they act as potential future governments, working toward the day when their dissenting views may gain sufficient support to win electoral victory. In this resides the secret of the peaceful transfer of power that is also regarded as one of the supreme virtues of democracies.

There are, of course, limits to the kinds of dissent that even the most liberal of democratic states will tolerate. Depending on the state’s estimate of the danger to itself presented by questionable or improper dissent, it may respond in ways ranging from disregard, to soft-intimidation in the form of monitoring, to declarations of illegality and the imprisonment of offenders. Despite such limits, the modern democrat can be said to expect and indeed welcome dissent. As a consequence, the treatment of dissent within a polity is taken to be an essential indicator of democratic health.

For illiberal authoritarian regimes, however, this democratic faith appears at best naïve, at worst contrived and dangerous. In such regimes open dissent is regarded as politically pathological. To permit it is to display weakness, because a powerful regime in full command of its resources would not, by definition, do so. The very logic of authoritarianism requires that any visible sign of dissent must imply a direct challenge to the authority of the regime. Moreover, prolonged persistence of open dissent may indicate regime instability, a perception liable to be exploited by enemies, further undermining authority. Therefore it matters not whether dissent represents the first stirrings of mild political malaise or evidence of a full-scale assault; it must be
regarded by the regime as a most serious political problem demanding immediate, urgent resolution.

Authoritarian regimes therefore have reason to fear public dissent and can generally be categorized as fearful regimes. The regime manages its own fear by asserting strict control over citizen behavior, information, media, education, public expression and by instituting strict penalties for deviance or disobedience. Fear of the dissenting propensity of the populace is, in other words, transfigured into popular fear of the authorities. Lee Kwan Yew, as quoted in an essay in this book, put it quite plainly: ‘If nobody is afraid of me, I’m meaningless. When I say something, to make it easier for me to govern, I have to be taken very seriously’. The maintenance of internal fear is often justified, too, by exploiting fears of external enemies, real or imagined, who threaten the state. Of course, fear of authority and of legal penalty plays a necessary role in democratic order too, but the balance of fear to freedom is quite different. Authoritarian regimes tend to be watchful, suspicious, enclosed, their habitual guardedness revealing the essential fragility that their projected image of implacable strength serves to cloak. The more severely they crack down on dissenters, the more enemies they make and the more fearful they become of the vengeful forces that any lifting of suppression might unleash. They hold tight for fear of flying asunder, and the tighter their hold the more likely they are to fly apart if ever their grip is momentarily relaxed.

It is for this reason that liberalization from authoritarian rule seldom occurs by initiation from above. The rare exceptions include Taiwan, where the Kuomintang party responded to the expansion of civil society in an economically dynamic environment by democratizing, Japan where the rebel Koizumi came from within the ruling party itself, and perhaps Mexico where a similar combination of middle class...
pressure and elite action ended the dominance of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Karnatnycky 2002). More usually, releasing the forces of democratic dissent is seen as akin to opening a Pandora’s Box, as the Burmese military junta discovered when it miscalculated and held elections in 1990 that handed victory to Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy. The junta’s immediate response was to deny the results and crack down more heavily on the democratic dissenters who had now undeniably robbed it of popular legitimacy. Better far, most authoritarians would hold, never to loose one’s grip on power for even a moment, nor to allow the slightest expression of destabilizing dissent.

And yet it is the public display of dissent that poses the gravest challenge to non-democratic leaders rather than dissent as such, which must inevitably occur in any regime. An essential aspect of non-democratic politics is the resolution of dissenting views away from public scrutiny in institutions that are the obverse of parliamentary systems. These institutions are designed to conceal debate, hide doubt, cover-over disputes and control opposition in order to present an outward show of impregnable unity. This same principle is in fact admitted in parliamentary forms of government, but only within the ranks of the governing party itself, supported by traditions of cabinet secrecy and collective ministerial responsibility for policy. The purpose of giving in thus far to suppression and concealment is so that the democracy can gain the benefits of strong, unified and effective government amidst the general clamor and tumult of public and parliamentary contestation. If intra-party differences and conflicts cause cabinet secrecy to be breached, revealing disunity, the government will certainly be in crisis and the opposition will gain advantage. Yet the robustness of the overall system means that a particular government’s crisis will not be transferred
to the regime itself. In fact this is all just part of the normal functioning of the
democratic system.

In authoritarian regimes, by contrast, governors and the institutions through
which they operate are not so clearly distinguishable. The public emergence of dissent
means that the institutions meant to contain it – politburo, Congress, military court,
people’s plenum – have failed. But since these have been designed to maintain the
authority of a single party, group or even individual, their failure reveals that the
regime itself is weak, unstable or in crisis. Thus we see again why open dissent must
be regarded as pathological in non-democratic regimes, and why it must always
imply, not just disagreement with government policies and actions, but a dissident
attitude toward the authority of the state. Public dissent is necessarily dissidence in the
authoritarian context as it is not in the democratic (save within the confines of the
disciplined party). This marks the dissenter out as a troublemaker and potential
revolutionary.

Benigno Aquino of the Philippines had reservations about applying the term
‘dissident’ to himself because that label was used to describe communist rebels who
had taken up arms against the Marcos government. Because Aquino had willed non-
violent means in his own challenge to President Marcos, it did not follow that his aims
were any less subversive of the existing regime. All dissident democrats are accused
by authoritarian governments of being subversives who seek not to improve the
regime as might be claimed, but ultimately to overthrow and replace it. They are not
mistaken in this. From the very logic of democratic dissidence, the dissenting leader
must aim not at mere change of government (which would represent nothing more
than an old-fashioned palace coup), but at change of regime. He or she strikes at the
very heart of the authority and legitimacy of the existing structure of power.
These reflections reveal the scale of the challenge facing dissident democratic leaders. It is natural and not altogether fallacious for the authoritarian regime to castigate them as traitors and subversives who plan the destruction of the state and the ruin of the nation. Far from being regarded as misguided idealists, they are branded as dangerous criminals acting in defiance of existing authority. Such charges may have considerable purchase among conservative sections of the populace, especially in traditionalist societies where the belief that authority must be respected is deeply ingrained. The balance of public dissatisfaction with the regime must be heavily weighted for the dissident to overcome this natural disadvantage. As will be seen in the essays that follow, economic decline, corruption scandals, and failures of order are often prominent among the factors that undermine regime authority and give the dissident democrats their chance, though even then their paths are difficult and often dangerous.

As the essays in this volume testify, the dissident role often extracts an enormously high personal cost from democratic leaders. They can frequently expect to face persecution, imprisonment and worse at the hands of authoritarian governments and their henchmen. Their willingness to sacrifice personal well-being for the democratic cause marks them out as exceptional. The attitude of Zimbabwean dissident, Morgan Tsvangirai, after being savagely beaten by police loyal to Robert Mugabe’s dictatorial regime, provides a contemporary example: ‘Far from killing my spirit, the scars they brutally inflicted on me have re-energized me,’ he wrote. ‘I seek no martyrdom. I only seek a new dispensation in my country in which citizens live freely in prosperity and not in fear of their rulers’ (Tsvangirai 2007). Great courage, strength, stamina and dedication – in other words genuine moral heroism – is demanded of them by the cause they have adopted and by the times in which they
live. Of course the followers of democratic dissidents often show similar courage and dedication, though their deeds of sacrifice may remain largely unsung. But it is the leader’s role to incarnate and publicly exhibit these essential qualities, and thus to become a beacon of hope for ultimate victory.

Opposition groups and parties positively need such singular heroes to emerge if they are to take advantage of political opportunities presented by conditions of social and economic malaise, public scandal, violent protest, or divisions within the regime itself. In turbulent times, disparate revolutionary forces are unleashed whose only common ground may be opposition to the existing regime, and multiple voices are raised offering different strategies aimed at incompatible ends. Someone is needed who can centralize and bring coherence to these forces, someone who can command respect and loyalty across a wide spectrum of interests and who can focus in their own person the energies released. In the Philippines Cory Aquino was courted and assumed this role after the assassination of her husband Ninoy Aquino. The failure of such a unifying figure to emerge – for example, among present-day Palestinians, or for a long time among the anti-Milosevic parties in Yugoslavia – allows the enemy to exploit deepening divisions to its own advantage.

It is notable that dissident democrats such as Vaclav Havel, Nelson Mandela and Suu Kyi often express discomfort with their heroic elevation even as they admit its necessity. This points us toward a less obvious difficulty faced by dissident democratic leaders: they must be heroic, but the more heroic they appear, the less democratic they look. The danger is that they may in time come to resemble the non-democratic leaders they seek to oust. Certainly the regime will have no hesitation in accusing them of being self-promoting, egoistic glory-seekers who use ‘democracy’ to disguise what is basically a traditional power-struggle. Authoritarians will typically
portray democratic politics as fundamentally divisive, with leaders using popularity among particular constituencies as a vehicle to personal power, caring not whether they destroy the essential unity of the nation in the process. Sam Rainsy of Cambodia, for example, has often been on the receiving end of such charges – and certainly it is true that he has not scrupled, in his mobilization of anti-Vietnamese sentiments of ordinary Cambodians, to stoop to the lowest common denominator populist politics that are the dark side of democracy.

But charges of illegitimacy do not necessarily come only from political opponents. Given the problematic nature of democratic leadership, they may as easily originate among the rank-and-file of the dissident movement itself. As an example, Nelson Mandela’s remarkable elevation in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, though immensely useful to his African National Congress party, brought him into serious conflict with many of its members, who were upset by leadership initiatives he took without adequate (or any) consultation. Mandela also found himself criticized for his autocratic leadership style by the loose-knit, highly democratic federation known as the United Democratic Front, which had been in the vanguard of protest during his years of imprisonment. Many in the party and movement were reluctant to allow Mandela’s transcendent symbolic power to be transformed into actual authority over them. He found it necessary to appease egalitarian prejudices over and over again before he could finally and definitely establish any positive leadership. The general lesson is that dissident democratic leaders are liable, by the nature of things, to become heroes, but nevertheless need to conduct themselves with considerable care and discretion if they are to avoid charges of illegitimacy within the movements they lead. However high they rise, they must strive to appear properly democratic – a practice that does not come easily to all.
This problem may be compounded by the means that leaders feel constrained to employ in their efforts to transform the regime. Given that their resources, other than moral ones, are usually extremely limited compared to those of their opponents, dissident democrats may be tempted to exploit any available opportunity to gain a foothold. Koizumi, for example, created outrage domestically and abroad each time he visited the Yasukuni Shrine, where fourteen ‘A class’ war criminals are buried, because his action seemed to reveal nostalgia for Japan’s militarist-authoritarian past. In fact the visits were the necessary price paid for the support of ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party power-brokers who had helped him attain the Prime Ministership, the essential platform for his democratic tilt at the oligarchs. The trouble is that democratic leaders, in addition to the need to seem suitably humble in their general conduct, must be seen to act democratically. Problems arise if they show themselves too politically ruthless, or form unholy alliances, or take actions that appear at odds with democratic norms.

Dissident democratic leaders thus face complex and often contradictory demands which, combined with the dangers of confronting an oppressive regime, make their task exceedingly difficult. Nevertheless some do succeed, and in their success face perhaps the greatest challenge of them all: establishing the foundations of the new democracy, creating accountable institutions, and embedding dissent as a permanent feature of political rule.

Leadership and Democratic Consolidation

Robert Dahl claimed that democratic struggles usually divide into three periods: a Time of Hope; a Time of Triumph; and a Time of Troubles (Dahl 1995). The euphoria that attends the Time of Triumph, when dissident democrats have succeeded in ousting an authoritarian regime, is typically very short-lived. It marks the end of the
long struggle to install democracy, but also ushers in a new struggle to achieve
democratic consolidation. This involves not just strengthening the democratic
elements of the new regime, but identifying and removing the authoritarian elements
of the old (Casper and Taylor 1996, viii).

There are numerous reasons why the period of attempted consolidation should
so frequently be a Time of Troubles. These include large ethnic and linguistic
divisions within a country, acute economic problems, and the persistence of violence
and disorder (which either prevents authority being established or invites a military
takeover). Dahl argued that five background conditions must be in place for
democracy to succeed: an already existing democratic culture; firm civilian control of
the army and police; relative social homogeneity; some aspects of modernity such as
pluralism, markets, rising living standards and good education; and security from
external anti-democratic enemies (Dahl 1995). It is little wonder that many new
democracies fail, as they did, for example, in Nigeria in 1983, in the Sudan in 1989, in
Haiti and Russia in the 1990s, in Iraq after 2004, and in Thailand (once again) in
2006.

Missing from Dahl’s list, however, is a factor that may, even in very adverse
circumstances, make a considerable difference to the fate of a new democracy. This is
the nature or character of the leader who has moved from a position of dissidence to
one of authority and responsibility. It is worth remembering that even the first great
popular republic of the modern world, the United States, feared that its new
presidency would rapidly descend into monarchical rule (regarded as ‘tyranny’) unless
the first incumbent could be trusted not to seize power permanently. This was the
prime significance of George Washington, who set a virtuous precedent by observing
constitutional propriety throughout his tenure and departing office at the appointed
time. Nelson Mandela in South Africa emulated Washington and greatly increased his moral capital among citizens by vowing, upon his assumption of the presidency, to step down voluntarily at the end of his elected term – a rare event among black African leaders. Indeed, it is worth considering what would have happened in post-apartheid South Africa (where a white bloodbath was widely feared) if Mandela had renounced his commitment to the multiracial, democratic principles of his party’s Freedom Charter and, like Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, stirred ethnic hatreds to gain and hold political power. The decisions of Kim Dae-Jung, Lee Teng-Hui, Koizumi and Cory Aquino, all dissident democrats who gained office and chose to step down, mark them clearly from others who were tempted, like Mugabe in Zimbabwe, to retain power at any cost.

The evident importance of the character of dissident leaders raises the question of why they cast themselves as democrats in the first place, especially considering the intrinsic difficulties of the democratic form of leadership. The essays in this volume suggest that motivations are varied and often mixed. It must be expected, of course, that personal motives of ambition or entitlement will be combined in complex fashion with moral and political impulses. Some leaders, such as Gus Dur, Kim Dae-Jung, and Suu Kyi, have deeply engaged with democratic theory, accepted its anti-authoritarian virtues as genuine, and wanted to realize them in their own societies (which may mean assimilating them to local mores and traditions that are not particularly democratic). For others, the resort to democracy may be less a matter of fundamental moral conviction and more one of finding an alternative source of legitimacy and political force to tackle a regime that has lost credibility and become an obstacle to social and economic development. In a country like Thailand that has suffered more than one military coup, the democrat may appeal to a genuine democratic tradition
now lost or temporarily in abeyance. In Japan, by contrast, where formal democratic structures imposed by America after World War II have served merely to mask one-party, bureaucratic rule, the task is to turn formality into political reality. In countries like Cambodia (that knew nothing of democratic government till it was externally imposed in 1993) the would-be reformer must start virtually from scratch. Yet in all cases the question remains, why democracy?

The answer to this may seem so obvious to a Western reader as to be hardly worth asking, yet it must be remembered that there are anti-democrats in the world whose views cannot simply be dismissed as either fanatical or self-serving. In this volume, the reader will encounter Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore who roundly condemns the ills of democracy and makes a vigorous case for the necessity of ‘rational’ authoritarian government (and, as we have seen, for allegedly ‘Asian’ values). No doubt the present leadership of the People’s Republic of China takes some comfort from Singapore’s example of capitalist economic development combined with a resolute anti-democratic, or merely pseudo-democratic, politics. China, like many other authoritarian regimes, holds that Western-style liberal democracy, with its divisive cacophony of dissenting voices, is a luxury that poor or developing countries with profound regional, ethnic and linguistic cleavages simply cannot afford. Order is the first requirement of effective government, and where order is fragile it must be imposed by a stern authoritarian hand.

Such considerations, as well as numerous examples of ‘failed’ democracies, have given pause to those who once assumed that the steady increase in the number of democratic countries after 1950 proved that democracy was inexorably on the march (Dahl 1995, 1-2; Karnatnycky 2002, 50). The famous ‘developmental theories’ of democracy of the 1960s have gone out of fashion, and we are now in the post-third
wave era of the 1990s (Huntington 1991a; 1991b). It has become harder to believe that there is something inevitable or irreversible about democratic progress. Yet for all that, liberal democracy retains its appeal as a rival source of legitimacy, and still provides a natural rallying cry for dissidents opposed to authoritarian regimes. (The only real rivals are radical Islamism and that only for a minority of Muslims in the world, and revived Leftism, tenuously begun and as yet localized in Latin America.)

The reason for liberal democracy’s appeal is not hard to find. Despite reversals, it remains firmly associated with successful modernization, industrialization and human progress (its twentieth century rivals – fascism, Nazism, communism – having been thoroughly routed). This victory, rather than being inevitable, is itself a matter of historical contingency. In the eighteenth century, hopes for human progress were vested in the benign despotism of absolute but enlightened monarchs; in the nineteenth century in a combination of nationalism and industrialization. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the richest and most powerful nations on earth are liberal democratic. They are able to provide prestigious exemplars for dissidents and can also, by virtue of their material and political might, exert overt or implicit pressure on undemocratic regimes. The existence of such natural and powerful allies in the wider world provides dissidents with very significant resources of publicity and sympathy, as well as of material and moral aid.23

This ready availability of important external sources of pressure and support means that seeming democratic, if not actually being democratic, is important. Consequently the democratic credentials of any particular dissident will have to be appraised for simple opportunism. It is inevitable that in examining the actions of dissident leaders we become suspicious of their motives and ask questions concerning their democratic sincerity. Where democratic rhetoric is combined with an imperious
or autocratic character (eg Sam Rainsy of Cambodia), or with ambivalence over the acceptability of liberal democratic values (eg Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia), or with continuing subservience to entrenched oligarchic elites (eg Musharraf in Pakistan), one may well question whether democracy is more a matter of political convenience than of deep idealistic conviction.

The issue of character and motivation is important when considering the likely fate of democratic reform should a dissident leader succeed in gaining office. Even in long-settled liberal democracies, it takes considerable strength of mind to push through reform against the resistance of politically opposed forces. How much more will character be tested in the very precarious and often dangerous circumstances attending the founding of new democratic regimes? Leaders often find that behaving democratically in an actual democracy is extremely difficult, especially given that they may be ousted in the next election. Some will be tempted to impose stricter limits, and to afford less scope for dissent, for the sake of maintaining order and asserting effective authority. Having been heroized, even idolized, during the democratic struggle, they may start to believe their own publicity, or at least to cynically use it to build a cult of personality, insisting that they are personally indispensable for preserving the hard-won victory of the people. The sacrifices of the Time of Hope may seem to deserve recompense in the form of continued power, either through prolonged tenure or by keeping a secret hand on the rudder long after ostensible retirement. Thus may democracy be destroyed in the name of democracy, and autocratic rule be reinstated.

Resisting these temptations may require heroism different in kind from that of the long-suffering dissident. Yet the power of the example of a democratic leader behaving democratically, even in the most trying of circumstances, must not be
underestimated. Abraham Lincoln regarded this issue as central to the American Civil War, fought at a time when the United States itself was a developing country riven by sectional conflict, and when many argued that the situation demanded a Napoleonic dictatorship. Lincoln framed the question thus: could a democratic nation under the severest internal challenge maintain its unity while preserving its democratic values and practices? Doing so demanded a difficult balancing of security and liberty, for example, frequently suspending the writ of habeas corpus to permit imprisonment of secessionist rabble-rousers while leaving the press largely free to criticize president and administration – which it did mercilessly for the whole course of the war. Most importantly, congressional and presidential elections were held as usual, despite Lincoln’s fear that if he lost the cause of Union would be lost too. For his trouble and endurance he was eventually shot by a disgruntled Southern sympathizer who cried, after the deed, ‘Thus die all tyrants’. Yet no single person had done as much to advance and entrench the modern conception of democracy as ‘the last best hope of earth’, and he had done so by using the combined power of word and example.

Related to this example but distinguishable from it is the matter of precedent. The setting of political precedents is an important, and perhaps underestimated, force in the establishment of democratic government. But positive precedents may be just as important, even when dissident leaders fail in their goals. Precedent differs from example in that its effect may be quite independent of the motives and intentions of the people involved. Basically it involves a break with tradition which may mark, in time, the founding of a new tradition that establishes different cultural expectations and provides a base on which a future democracy might be built. The Burmese junta did not mean to hand legitimacy to the National League for Democracy when it chose to hold free and fair elections; it believed it had succeeded in dividing the opposition
so thoroughly that its own military candidates would win. Though it prevented the NLD from assuming power afterwards and clamped down savagely on dissidents, it could not wipe from the collective memory the precedent set nor reclaim the popular legitimacy it had forfeited. Similarly, the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) experience with the mechanisms of electoral democracy has not led to genuine democratic politics, but it has moderated its use of violent intimidation and opened space for oppositional politics led by the Sam Rainsy Party. Though the immediate prospects for the Party are hardly promising, the precedent it has set may yet have an effect as Cambodia adapts to a changing world and a new generation of educated youth with differently formed expectations comes to maturity.

It is no doubt true that the existence of a properly democratic culture is crucial to the survival of democracy, but in the West this culture took several centuries and much conflict to fully emerge (Stromberg 1996). It is possible that the necessary time may be foreshortened in a world where exemplars already exist, but the experience of dozens of countries in different parts of the world demonstrates that establishing a democratic culture is far from easy. Any positive precedent is therefore a welcome one, which may in the long term prove to have a cumulative effect.

**Dissident Democrats in Asia**

In this book we undertake a detailed examination of dissident democrats in Asia. Our focus is on the extraordinary lives and political careers of these dissident democrats and the vital role they play, or might yet play, in transforming their countries. We turn to Asia because it is increasingly undergoing democratic transformation (for reasons ranging from the political to the social and economic) and because in the very breadth and variety of nations comprehended under the term ‘Asia’ we are able to engage with the variety of conditions and circumstances that test the limits of democratic
leadership and dissent. Our choice of leaders is intended to allow us to see the relationship between dissident leaders and unique institutions, as well as to discern how cultural, religious and ethnic differences may influence their leadership. Finally, we anticipate that insights from Asia will yield lessons that may have implications for dissident democrats and emerging democracies in other parts of the world, from Eastern Europe, to Africa, to South America. Let us, then, outline why we have chosen to study the particular leaders portrayed in this book.

At first glance Lee Kuan Yew does not look like a dissident democrat at all. Singapore, though stable and prosperous, is not generally considered a democracy. Yet Lee did indeed act as a dissident democrat in the course of founding Singapore. After its independence from Britain, he became an articulate defender of a type of politics that had the appearance, if not the substance, of democracy. He is a dissident democrat who succeeded but who, in success, abandoned democracy and then offered a general critique of democracy as applied to Asia. He thus stands as both a useful example of the utility of democratic rhetoric and a formidable opponent that dissidents of more profound democratic instinct must combat. More ambiguous is the story of Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand, who employed democratic measures to gain office and continued to use them in the course of challenging the traditional sources of power in Thailand, especially the monarchy. His legacy as a dissident and successful leader remains unclear, however, because of the particular nature of his democratic rule, and the fact that it provoked a military coup which ousted him from office in 2006.

Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia resembles Thaksin in his use of democratic initiatives and rhetoric in his bid for power. Anwar’s attempt to reconcile democracy with Islam in Malaysia is also of interest, though it raises some doubts about the depth
of his democratic commitment. His legacy as a dissident democrat remains ambiguous because of his unsuccessful challenge of Mohamad Mahatir, which led to his removal from office and imprisonment. Sam Rainsy, unlike Thaksin and Anwar, continues his struggle as a dissident democrat in Cambodia but, like them, his credentials as a democrat are subject to doubt. This is due mainly to his recourse to unilateral decision-making and his appeal to anti-Vietnamese sentiments in Cambodia.

Junichiro Koizumi might seem by definition a democrat because Japan is officially a democracy, though in fact it was under single-party rule for four decades. Koizumi can be seen to be a genuine dissident when we realize that, as Prime Minister of Japan, he used specifically democratic means to transform his party and effectively re-found modern Japan as an authentic democracy rather than a concealed oligarchy. His actions demonstrate the nature of dissident democratic leadership in an advanced and stable modern society, and show how dissidence can be exercised from above – that is, from a position of authority within the system itself. Lee Teng-hui of Taiwan provides another fascinating example of the same phenomenon and of the need, if the transition to democracy is to succeed, for adept political maneuvering to effectively dismantle the structures of the existing authoritarian regime. In his flirtation with Taiwanese nationalism, however, Lee also demonstrates, like Sam Rainsy, the darker democratic temptation to pursue power through dangerously divisive means.

Cory Aquino of the Philippines, Gus Dur of Indonesia, and Kim Dae-Jung of South Korea are all dissident democrats who gained office and remained democrats, albeit not always with great success. In the case of Cory Aquino, who inherited the mantle of dissident leadership from her murdered husband, Ninoy, we see the supreme price that dissidence may sometimes exact. Yet we also see how that sacrifice was transformed in the Philippines into a democratic ‘People Power’
movement that became a model for dissident democrats around the world. Gus Dur’s dissidence in Indonesia employed a learned Islamic scholarship that opened Indonesia to international influences and reconciled it to democratic and liberal mores. His puzzling failure in office did not negate the success of this particular form of dissent, whose legacy can be seen in the continuation of democracy in Indonesia. Kim Dae-Jung’s success as a dissident democrat in South Korea seemed to be marred by accusations of an imperial attitude that was insufficiently democratic. Yet Kim, like Cory and Gus Dur, showed himself an exemplary democrat in resisting the temptation to abandon democracy when in office, thus helping to establish a tradition of peaceful democratic transfer of authority.

Aung San Suu Kyi, perhaps the most famous dissident democrat of all, remains under house arrest in Burma, still defying the military junta after two decades, still unsure of her future. Praised by many as the ‘Goddess of Democracy,’ criticized by some as a stubborn obstacle to democratic transition, Suu Kyi reveals the extraordinary stakes and profound difficulty that attach to the choice of democratic dissidence.

It is tempting to classify the leaders we have selected along a continuum – from dissidents who used democracy opportunistically to secure authority, to those whose record is more ambiguous, to genuinely dissident democrats. An alternative classification would distinguish between dissident democrats in terms of their political contexts, whether it be the stability of their countries or the nature of the challenges they face. Equally valid is the distinction between dissident democrats who failed, who are struggling, and those who achieved success (albeit with varying consequences for democracy). Indeed, it may be possible to group dissidents
according to their ideas and philosophies regarding, for example, their views on the priority of democracy to development.

Though each such arrangement might yield insights, there is in fact no single one that suggests itself as inevitable or superior. We have resisted the temptation, therefore, to impose an artificial order on the enclosed materials and chosen rather a succession of readings that seems intuitively satisfying in providing a fluent transition from case to case. We trust that the different stories told by the distinguished and specialist authors assembled here will prove useful to the reader; we explore some of the major themes and their practical and theoretical implications in our concluding chapter. It is our hope that these explorations and discussions will provide material for others, stimulating further investigations of these and other leaders and providing greater insight into the phenomenon of dissident democratic leadership and its vital contribution to democratic transition.

Edward Gibbon, in declining to pursue a particular sequence of events in his famous history of Rome, would comment that there was ‘neither amusement nor instruction’ to be found in that direction. We believe that both amusement and instruction, in the best sense of those words, will be found in the pages that follow. The individuals we read about in this book are exceptional – in their ability, their courage and their achievements. It is hard not to be captivated by their stories. It is fascinating to discern in their endeavors not only necessary personal ambition, but also the overwhelming presence of a grand cause directing their course and actions. It is against this great backdrop of spectacle and drama – of dissidence, democracy and leadership – that we invite the reader to enter into these extraordinary lives.
NOTES

1 For an overview of the scholarship, especially the 1970s and 1980s separation of democratic transition and consolidation, the emphasis on process, and subsequent shift from structural to cultural and political economy concerns see Grugel (2002). More generally, see O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986); Huntington (1991a; 1991b); Diamond (1999).

2 For the early emphasis on development see Lipset and Smelser (1966); Rostow (1960). For more recent scholarship see Przeworski (1991); Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens (1992).

3 For an emphasis on political culture see Almond and Verba (1963); Pye and Verba (1965); Pye (1966); Inkeles and Smith (1974) and, more recently, Eckstein (1988) and Diamond (1993). On the importance of international factors see Huntington (1991). For an exploration of the idea of ‘freedom’ see Kelly and Reid (1998).

4 See generally Rustow (1970); Linz and Stepan (1978); O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986); Case (2002).

5 For commentary on Rustow see Anderson (1999). See also Jeffrey (2000), who argues that more attention needs to be paid to actors and strategies in addition to institutions.

6 See, for example, the definitional debates in Stromberg (1996, chapter 1); Lipset and Lakin (2004, chapter 1).

8 On the rhetorical nature of Lee Kuan Yew’s Asian values arguments see McCarthy (2006, 78-104).

9 This distinction between community and civil society was defined by the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in terms of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. See Tönnies (2001).

10 Though his thesis has been cumulatively discounted over the years, Max Weber (1976) famously pointed to the Protestant Reformation as one significant stimulus to change.


12 For the scholarship on political leadership see especially Burns (1978; 2003). For an overview of the scholarship on democratic leadership see Mughan and Patterson (1992); Kellerman (1986); Edinger (1976); Elcock (2001); Ruscio (2004); Miroff (2000).

13 On the problem of hypocrisy generally see Grant (1997).

14 See generally the scholarship on ‘elites’: Pareto (1935); Mosca (1939); Michels (1962). For some government *by* the people became government *approved by* the people: Lasswell (1950); Schumpeter (1961). For others, democracy could only survive with the leadership of the ‘superior few’ (Sartori 1962). On the importance of elites in democratic transitions see O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986); Karl and Schmitter (1991). For attempts to combine both structural and agency perspectives see Diamond (1993); Linder and Bächiger (2005).

15 For an analysis of this scholarship see Kane (2003), and more generally, the literature on direct democracy (Pateman 1970; Barber 1984; Held 1996); associative democracy (Hain 1983; Hirst 1994; Cohen and Rogers 1995; Giddens 1998);

16 On the extensive literature on these themes see, for instance, Pitkin (1967); Manin (1997).

17 It finds its origins in an attempt to protect philosophical thought from the strictures of pious orthodoxy. Consider Spinoza’s defence of liberalism in his Theologico-Politico Treatise and Locke’s Letter Concerning Toleration.

18 For its earliest formulation see Socrates’ defence of his actions as a noble ‘gad-fly’ challenging citizens to practice virtue in Plato’s Apology of Socrates. For perhaps its most famous modern formulation see Mill’s On Liberty.

19 There is a distinction in the scholarship between dissent (eg Franks 1989; Bleiker 2000; Carter 1999; D’Arcus 2006; Sunstein 2003), civil disobedience (eg Bedau 1969; Singer 1973) and opposition (eg Dahl 1966; Barker 1971; Ionescu and de Madariaga 1972).

20 Quoted in Han Fook Kwang, Fernandez and Tan (1998, 229).

21 On these aspects of both Suu Kyi and Mandela, see Kane (2001, chapters 5 & 6).

22 Eleanor Sisulu, niece of Mandela’s fellow leader Walter Sisulu, insisted on the significance of this promise among South Africans, black and white (personal communication).

23 It was Samuel Huntington in The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century (1991) who identified global factors as the principal cause of the contemporary process of democratisation. Others have argued that there are three

REFERENCES


Comparative Politics, April, 2(2): 337-63.


