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## Paradigmatic Failures of Transformative Democratic Politics: Indonesia and Sri Lanka in Comparative Perspective

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### Introduction

In the introductory chapter, we defined and advocated transformative democratic politics as political agendas, strategies and alliances for introducing and utilizing democratic institutions that promote ordinary people's opportunities in order to enable them to pursue their interests and aspirations. In Chapter 2, we also observed that important examples of such transformative democratic politics may be found in Northern Europe, where popular demands from below through public institutions have produced a distinctive Scandinavian model of interest representation, economic growth and social welfare.

In the Global South, there are several examples of developmental states with models for economic growth and social welfare that display similarities with Scandinavian social democracy (Sandbrook *et al.* 2007). This does not necessarily mean that all transformative politics in the Global South are the products of the kind of democratic politics that we envisioned in Chapters 1 and 2 about the Scandinavian experience. Most post-colonial attempts at transformative politics in the Global South were initially non-democratic, as democracy was deemed premature due to limited modernization. Enlightened authoritarian shortcuts to progress were perceived as unavoidable, be they nationalist, communist or both. Nevertheless, this book focuses on those instances when significant actors identified and pursued opportunities for more democratic politics. The positive experiences of such

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transformative politics have already been summarized by Patrick Heller (Chapter 3), with additional insights from Latin America provided by Benedicte Bull (Chapter 4). But there are also cases where promising initial efforts at democratic transformative politics were replaced by authoritarianism, either in the form of fully fledged military rule or in a more hybrid form where authoritarianism coexists with formal liberal democracy (Ottoway 2003; Mietzner 2009; Levitsky and Way 2010). Such cases of flawed or aborted transformative democratic politics call for critical examination of the political dynamics behind their failures. This is the focus of the present chapter, where we discuss the still relevant historical experiences of two negative cases that stand out as paradigmatic – Sri Lanka and Indonesia. As outlined in Chapter 1, we will do this by analysing how the significant actors relate to the institutional means of democracy and their political capacity to use democratic institutions to promote improved popular representation, economic development and social welfare. The argument that we will develop is that the rapid descent into authoritarian rule in Indonesia and the gradual emergence of semi-authoritarianism in Sri Lanka are due to the failure of transformative democratic politics with regard to institutionalizing substantive popular representation in combination with viable models for economic growth and social welfare.

After independence, liberal democratic institutions were fundamental to radical and innovative transformative politics in both Sri Lanka and Indonesia, including Trotskyist and socialist popular mobilization in Sri Lanka and the burgeoning of the world's third largest communist party in Indonesia. Nevertheless, both countries turned into paradigmatic failures, in the sense that the chosen development models failed to create sustained economic growth and social welfare, while at the same time authoritarianism/semi-authoritarianism overtook democracy. These experiences call, in our view, for critical attention to the nature and shortcomings of transformative politics. We will focus on three turning points that remain crucial in both theoretical and comparative perspectives. First, the downgrading of the relative importance of democracy, especially in the context of Sri Lanka's ethnic politics and Indonesia's land reform and anti-imperialism. Second, the crisis in both contexts of the state-facilitated social pacts for welfare and national development between peasants, labour and the 'national bourgeoisie', and third, the contrasting roles of Sri Lanka's deteriorating and Indonesia's reborn, but shallow, democracy in the context of development and peace building.

**Promising but diverted experimentation with transformative democratic politics**

In Sri Lanka and Indonesia, the early post-colonial period was marked by promising initiatives towards popular mobilization for political and socio-economic transformation. In both cases, however, it can be observed that a promising start gave way to authoritarian tendencies, with uninterrupted military rule from 1965 to 1998 in Indonesia and a gradual growth of authoritarian tendencies within the context of formal democracy since the late 1960s in Sri Lanka. While the form, extent and trajectories of authoritarianism vary between the two cases, we will argue that both can be understood with reference to the insufficient attention given to substantive popular representation, paving the way for non-democratic institutions and practices.

**Indonesia: From anti-colonial democratization to the postponement of democracy**

As in many colonies, the first wave of democracy in Indonesia grew out of the struggle against imperialism, racism and indirect rule through local strongmen. Initially, the groups that had fought for independence were only represented by elitist negotiations in a liberal parliamentary system; there were periods of anti-communist repression; and many cosmopolitan minorities from Asia and Europe had to leave. But there were also democratic advances in the direction of somewhat equal citizenship, rule of law and justice, freedoms and rights, and widespread basic education with a unifying Indonesian language. Moreover, elections were in the pipeline. The main problems were extensive corruption, elitist party politics and predominantly clientelist political mobilization combined with socio-religious and ethnic networks. In fact, the only reasonably modern and democratic party with roots in interest and not just patronage-based popular movements was built by young communists who opted for a reformist agenda after 1951.

These advances came to a halt after the national elections in 1955 and the local elections in 1957. Ironically, there was little wrong with these elections. But the outcome was a failure for the western-oriented socialist party and there was a stalemate between nationalists, communists and traditional and modern-oriented Muslims. In addition, the western-oriented elite and the religious parties were afraid that the successful Communist Party (PKI) would be elected into power. Even the nationalist party began to lose followers as the PKI closed up behind radical nationalist President Sukarno and some of his local and military leaders.

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In this context, almost all came to agree that democracy was premature and that the right conditions had to be generated in advance (Bourchier and Legge 1994). On the one hand, liberals, socialists and modernist Muslims advocated market-led development, the rule of law and certain rights and freedoms, but not popular sovereignty. They engaged in an attempted coup and regional protests, and 'their' Vice-President Hatta even resigned. On the other hand, President Sukarno along with nationalists and communists as well as traditionally oriented Muslims and those officers who were in favour of a unitary state argued that the dissidents posed a threat to national unity and thereby developed a campaign for the 'liberation' of West New Guinea, the nationalization of all Dutch properties, plans for land reform and the introduction of 'Guided Democracy'. Parliament was dissolved and a new one appointed; elections were postponed and the main dissident parties were outlawed; the constitution was altered in favour of a strong presidency and emergency regulations granted decisive powers to the army.

The dissidents tried to respond by way of a western-supported rebellion from the 'outer islands', but they failed and their supporters in the west had to alter their policies. Their new approach was to attract the anti-communists among the officers that had supported Sukarno against the rebels. This was part of a new strategy, soon to be summarized in Samuel Huntington's idea that there was a need for rule of law, strong state institutions and 'politics of order' ahead of democracy (Huntington 1965). In addition to generous support to the military officers, the measures included western education of economists, administrators and the siblings of the officers in cooperation with American university-based area studies programmes and the Ford Foundation. Later on, this was to provide legitimacy for Suharto's mass killings, the coup against Sukarno and the subsequent three decades of authoritarian 'New Order' with little rule of law and much abuse of power.

In the early 1960s, however, the communists and the authoritarian but widely supported President Sukarno were still in command of what was probably the largest popular movement in the world. Yet this situation changed radically in the latter half of 1965 and within a year, first, the popular movement and, later, Sukarno were eliminated. Strikingly, despite being a mass movement for radical transformation, the PKI had since circa 1957 failed to uphold the cause of democratization. First, the communists had set aside freedoms and elections, opting instead for Sukarno's army-supported 'Guided Democracy', arguing that his land reform agenda and radical nationalism were a precondition to

genuine democracy. Second, the party could not return to an electoral strategy when many of the military officers behind the Guided Democracy, from 1960 in particular, turned against the communists and the popular movement (Törnquist 1984a). On the contrary, in 1965 a few leaders in the party and related movements engaged in the audacious so-called 30th September Movement (G30S) of dissident officers and political activists against the anti-communist military leadership. These actions became the pretext for army-led repression and mass killings across the country, supported by the west (Roosa 2006).

### **Sri Lanka: Growth and erosion of democratic socialism**

In Sri Lanka, the transition from British colonial rule was an elite affair with heated debates about the form of political representation, but relatively little popular mobilization for independence and democracy. The colonial accumulation regime had produced a multi-ethnic dominant class that was subordinated to British capital but also far removed from the popular masses. The joint project of this multi-ethnic comprador bourgeoisie was conservative modernization, which meant a continuation of the colonial accumulation regime combined with formal liberal democracy, both furthering class domination (Uyangoda 1992). Socialist parties and trade unions, led by western-educated radical intellectuals, contested this class project of the domestic bourgeoisie. Thus, the principal conflict at the time of Independence was between opposed classes and organized politically as a polarized contest between the conservative United National Party (UNP), on the one hand, and the Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party (CP), on the other (Jayawardena 2003). The social force that was numerically dominant but politically underrepresented was made up of the intermediate classes, namely the peasants, small traders, public sector employees and Buddhist monks. However, these intermediate classes came to political prominence from the mid-1950s, through elite-led incorporation into a programme of 'democratic socialism' and Sinhalese ethnonationalism that was initiated by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). This entailed a strong emphasis on state-led economic development within a relatively closed economy, comprehensive social welfare programmes and political discourses emphasizing socialism and Sinhalese Buddhist culture (Moore 1985; Manor 1989). Merging intermediate class interests and ethnic identities then became a highly successful strategy for different elites to gain political legitimacy, acquire state power and marginalize leftist parties. In fact this political strategy has remained hegemonic across political and ethnic divides since the mid-1950s.

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Sri Lanka has retained a liberal-oriented electoral democracy throughout the postcolonial period and this has been the institutional frame for popular mobilization. It is, however, a democracy that has been marred by problems of substantive representation, both in terms of class and ethnicity. The first constitution of Sri Lanka (1948) granted universal suffrage and introduced a 'first-past-the-post' electoral system in a Westminster model of centralized government, but without a bill of rights, a strong independent judiciary or other arrangements to ensure communal rights and representation or power-sharing with the minorities (Wriggins 1960; Coomaraswamy 2003). The assumption was that an individualistic liberal model would render ethnic identities politically irrelevant. However, this followed a period when British colonialism had already introduced discourses on identities as fixed and stable entities, institutionalized ethnic categories through diverse technologies of rule and linked ethnic identities to communal representation (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1994; Wickramasinghe 2006). In this situation, intra-elite competition for political power combined with radical popular mobilization by the LSSP and the CP led to top-down incorporation of people based on socialist and ethnonationalist populism, namely a set of material and symbolic concessions that granted certain social and political inclusion but under continued elite domination (Jayanntha 1992).

The hegemonic rise of socialist and ethnonationalist populism brought a degree of political inclusion to the intermediate classes and gave the Sri Lankan state a developmentalist character. It also meant, however, that the post-colonial Sri Lankan state gradually took on the character of an *ethnocracy* rather than a *democracy*, in other words a situation where 'the people' is constructed in ethnic terms and a dominant ethnic group gains political control and uses state power to 'ethnicise' the political system and state culture in order to further its control over the state, its resources and territory (Yiftachel 2006). This also had the effect of framing popular mobilization from below through ethnic identities, both within the Sinhalese majority and in the Tamil and Muslim minorities.

This elite-led programme of 'democratic socialism' and Sinhalese ethnonationalism has been challenged by persistent shortcomings when it comes to delivery on electoral campaign promises, producing protest votes and frequent regime changes through elections and mass mobilization. The two most prominent examples are found in the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a militant Maoist and ethnonationalist movement that mobilized the Sinhalese intermediate classes in the early 1970s and again in the late 1980s, and the growth and radicalization

of Tamil minority nationalism from the 1970s onwards (Obeyesekere 1974; Swamy 1994). Such class- and identity-based struggles from below were increasingly met by coercive measures, taking Sri Lanka in an increasingly semi-authoritarian direction. This meant that while liberal democracy facilitated popular inclusion and transformative politics in the early postcolonial period, the persistence of elite domination and top-down political incorporation produced increasingly authoritarian responses when social exclusion led to popular resistance. The lack of substantive representation can thus be said to have been the major hurdle for furthered transformative democratic politics.

### **Crises of state-facilitated social pacts for welfare and economic development**

Indonesia and Sri Lanka were both characterized by a combination of state-led development and social welfare from the 1960s onwards. This was a product of political pacts between the economic and political elite and representatives of more popular forces. The existence of such pacts did not, however, mean any substantive transformation of economic or political power, but rather constituted a series of limited concessions that furthered rather than transformed power hierarchies.

#### **Indonesia: The counterproductive social pact**

Indonesian transformative politics not only derailed because radical nationalists and communists deemed liberties and elections less important than land reform and anti-imperialism in the guise of Sukarno's Guided Democracy, leaving them without 'bourgeois democracy' as a defence when Sukarno's supporters within the military turned against them. It was also because the very social pact behind the land reform and anti-imperialism proved counterproductive by nourishing increasingly authoritarian accumulation of capital (Törnquist 1984a).

To trace the root causes of why this was not anticipated in mainstream radical analysis one needs to analyse the origin of the PKI's transformative politics. The idea was to mobilize as democratic as possible political support for national development and welfare by way of a state-supported pact between peasants, labour and the 'national bourgeoisie'. The 'national bourgeoisie' was, however, identified in a dubious way. First it was defined empirically (with Lenin) as the powerful actors who de facto oppose imperialism and feudalism and at times support 'bourgeois democracy' too. Thereafter the same actors were also assumed (with Stalin) to have 'objective' and thus ongoing interests

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in such policies. The latter position was based on the assumption that national business actors and professionals had no alternative, if they did not wish to become pro-imperialist collaborators and thus pave the way for massive political support for the communists who would then stand out as being the only consistent nationalists.

But in the Indonesian reality, the entrepreneurial-oriented actors were often close to the west and anti-communists, while the nationalists, who did talk of anti-imperialism and at times even of land reform and popular participation, were not very production-oriented and used instead their radical politics and administrative power to enrich themselves. In the mid- and late 1950s moreover, the PKI added progressive nationalist-politicians, bureaucrats and military officers in the state and politics to a coalition for what Moscow labelled 'non-capitalist development'. But these actors in particular came to use radical nationalization in order to monopolize control of state regulation, assets, credits, investments, prices and jobs as well as labour and trade unions for primitive accumulation of capital and appropriation of economic surplus.

The problems of anticipating these dynamics were related to Marx's British-based model of the rise of private capitalism, according to which primitive accumulation of capital only refers to the appropriation of land and other means of production from peasants and artisans by commercially oriented landlords and other private actors supported by the state. The basic means of production were thereby turned into capital (that could be invested) and labourers were turned into commodities (that could be exploited), which enabled capitalist exploitation and accumulation of capital. This was, however, an insufficient analytical framework for post-colonial contexts. Here dominant actors who had been held back by colonialism were too weak to act in a similarly forceful way, to dispossess most people of their land and other means of production. However, these strongmen were instead capable of using politics, the state and military coercion to gain indirect control of natural resources, land and small businesses (and thus also much of the surplus produced in these sectors) as well as to nationalize or take advantage of foreign-owned companies in addition to foreign aid.

With regard to class relations within agriculture, it is true that PKI-initiated research in the late 1950s and early 1960s identified more complicated forms of exploitation as compared to the European model, thus coining the concept of 'seven village devils'. And within other economic sectors the leaders picked up on the Chinese concept of 'bureaucratic capitalists' to characterize their new opponents. But the party never acknowledged that the prime base of their adversaries lay



in their control of politics, state and coercion rather than in their links to landlords and imperialists, which the PKI continued to regard as the main enemies and thus tried to weaken by way of supporting Sukarno's land reform agenda, the nationalization of foreign companies and generally radical nationalism.

The consequences were devastating. The 'national bourgeoisie' and the supposedly progressive state leaders who accepted Sukarno did not act as expected. There was little dynamic investment and growth, although the PKI was able to constrain militant labour activism in order to build a social pact with the 'national bourgeoisie' and the supposedly progressive leaders of the state and its business interests. The result was severe economic mismanagement and crisis. Protests against looting and corruption resulted in more repression, but the communists could not fight back, as doing so would have meant losing the support of Sukarno, leaving them unable to draw on 'bourgeois democracy'. People were mobilized for the nationalization of foreign companies and in support of anti-imperialist policies with the purpose of undermining the strength of the so-called bureaucratic capitalists because their power was supposed to be based on foreign capital and the west. But the military leaders continued to extend their control over both nationalized foreign companies and state resources in general.

Although the rural context was more complicated, there was little land that could be expropriated and distributed, and there were few big landlords to fight. When trying to identify and distribute 'surplus land' it was thus difficult to avoid infighting between small landholders, tenants and labourers. These were subject to more indirect means of exploitation by local strongmen who had succeeded in gaining political and administrative power and dominated production and trade, while also providing patronage to compete with the communist-led organizations in some instances.

In short, transformative politics was undermined not only because liberties and elections were set aside but more fundamentally because the social pact in favour of state-driven land reform and anti-imperialism was hijacked by nationalists and the military as a means towards political forms of primitive accumulation of capital which mass-based movements and political parties were unable to oppose as they had no democratic tools left to fight with.

Later on, as part of the elimination of the mass movements under Suharto's New Order, the extraction of surplus by political and administrative means became more brutalized and was also used for the expropriation of land. In the late 1970s and early 1980s therefore, the

main enemy of the rural poor was perceived as the state itself and those in command of it rather than the landlords and strongmen with a base in private market-oriented production (Törnquist 1984b).

### **Sri Lanka: Achievements and limits of state capitalism and social welfare**

In Sri Lanka, the early post-colonial period was characterized by transformative democratic politics in the sense that electoral democracy provided a space for popular mobilization that subsequently yielded state-led development and comprehensive social welfare programmes. The polarized class politics that dominated at the time of independence was replaced by the incorporation of intermediate classes under the SLFP's programme of Sinhalese ethnonationalism and 'democratic socialism' (state capitalism, social welfare and state protection for the Sinhala language and Buddhism). From the 1956 election to economic liberalization in 1977, the state took on an increasingly active role in industrial development, public sector expansion, rural livelihoods and social welfare, making the state instrumental for upward social mobility, especially for the Sinhalese intermediate classes (Shastri 1983; Moore 1985).

The electoral competition between the SLFP and the UNP in Sinhalese politics also provided some leverage for minority parties through political negotiations and government coalitions (Wilson 1994). Thus there was a degree of social and political inclusion across class and ethnic divides even amidst continued elite domination and growing ethnonationalist majoritarianism. This project contained within it, however, the seeds of its own demise, both economically and politically.

Sri Lanka's economic development and social welfare programmes relied on the performance of colonial plantation agriculture and import substitution industries within an increasingly closed economy. While this created economic prosperity at first, the late 1960s and early 1970s were marked by a growing economic crisis that originated in worsening terms of trade for export products, saturated domestic markets for import substitution industries and economic inefficiency of state-owned plantations and manufacturing industries, creating widespread unemployment particularly among educated youth from the rural intermediate classes. These youth groups had come to expect upward social mobility through vernacular language education and public sector employment, but had failed to make substantial material gains due to economic stagnation and lack of political networks and patronage (Obeyesekere 1974). Aggravated socio-political grievances formed the

basis for the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a revolutionary movement that made a failed attempt to capture state power through armed insurgency in 1971 and later brought the state close to collapse through guerrilla warfare in the late 1980s (Gunasekara 1998). The JVP employed a combination of Maoism and Sinhalese nationalism to mobilize socially and politically excluded youth, thus appropriating and radicalizing the government's own framework for popular mobilization. The socialist-ethnonationalist framing of popular politics thus went from being an instrument for elite-led incorporation to becoming a basis for mass mobilization and militant contestation in the context of social and political exclusion.

In the face of economic crisis and popular counter mobilization, the government furthered the state-led development model and made social welfare more targeted to specific client groups while also using state repression against counter hegemonic movements. These were concessions from above in the face of economic crisis and resistance from below rather than transformative politics of an effective social pact. They were also imposed without effective participation by Tamil representatives (Wilson 1994). Given the parliamentary strength of the government, the leverage of the minorities was significantly reduced. This produced a legitimization crisis for the Tamil political elite in the 1970s, especially among youth groups who questioned the aims and means of their communal leaders. The response from the Tamil elite was to radicalize the aims but not the means of Tamil nationalism, but this turned out to be ineffective vis-à-vis a government that was preoccupied with pursuing ethnonationalist 'democratic socialism' in order to maintain its political legitimacy. Consequently, Tamil separatism gained momentum while the Tamil elite were being challenged by radicalized youth, thus paving the way for militant separatism (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1994; Swamy 1994). These political dynamics of economic stagnation, social exclusion and popular resistance led to economic liberalization as well as growing authoritarianism from the late 1970s, challenging both the democratic and developmental substance of 'democratic socialism' (Stokke 1997). The class and communal alliances that had characterized transformative politics in the 1960s were thus replaced by ethnic majoritarianism, clientelism and authoritarianism from the 1970s.

### **Transformative democratic politics after transitions to peace and democracy**

Indonesia and Sri Lanka are both in the aftermath of crucial political changes. Whereas Indonesia underwent a transition from three decades

of authoritarian rule to liberal democracy in the late 1990s, Sri Lanka has recently ended almost three decades of civil war. This creates opportunities and raises critical questions about the prospects and dynamics of transformative democratic politics. While we see possibilities for such transformations, there are also major hurdles, not the least related to the manner in which the transitions took place. This is especially visible in Sri Lanka, which is marked by entrenched democracy deficits, but even Indonesia displays critical constraints on transformative democratic politics.

#### **Indonesia's constrained democratization and 'new politics'**

During the 33 years of authoritarian capitalism in Indonesia and even by the late 1990s, most analysts argued that democracy was premature, with a fourth argument added to those of insufficient modernization, weak institutions and dependency combined with landlordism: that the country was short of the kind of capitalist development and middle and working classes that had produced democracy in Europe and North America. Yet it was the counter-argument that proved more correct: that the contradictions of primitive accumulation by political monopolization of resources and subordination of labour would generate struggles for democracy against the Suharto regime. From the late 1980s, demands for democratic rights and liberties and the adjustment or dissolution of all political and state institutions that the rulers had abused became increasingly important items on the political agenda. This culminated in the overthrow of Suharto in 1998, and seven years later it even fostered peace and reconstruction in the rebellious, tsunami-affected province of Aceh.

There was, however, less democratization and adjustment of state and politics than individual freedom and privatization. Indonesia's democratization was successful, but combined with the quick adjustment to and domination of the new 'correct' institutions by the elite by way of renegotiating authority, legitimacy, contacts and access to resources (Nordholt and van Klinken 2007). Meanwhile, the democracy activists were unable to provide realistic alternatives and lost out (Törnquist 2000; Prasetyo *et al.* 2003).

After a few years, Indonesia was frequently identified as a successful case of the crafting of democracy (Aspinall 2010). The country had become the most liberal in South East Asia. Papua remained a problem, but East Timor had gained independence and the civil war in Aceh had been replaced by rudimentary local self-government and democracy. Corruption remains severe, but it is publicly criticized and the political role of the military is significantly reduced. The economy

has done well, thanks to the export of raw materials and middle-class consumption.

How was it possible to achieve these partial victories without altering structural conditions? It is tempting to conclude that Indonesian democracy is 'fake', that it is an oligarchy based on Suharto's old elite and that the main difference in comparison with the Suharto regime is that the elite is now governing through democratic elections in which they use their huge resources to win a majority of the votes (Robison and Hadiz 2004).

More detailed examinations (Priyono *et al.* 2007; Samadhi and Warouw 2009; van Klinken 2009) emphasize, however, that the constrained yet important democracy is due to the fact that centralized political governance of public affairs, including business opportunities, has been replaced by decentralization, privatization and delegation to non-governmental institutions. Elected executives, parliamentarians, private capitalists and NGO leaders have taken over from those who had in the past been appointed by the authorities. Although there have been no safe havens for the old oligarchs, they have also been given the best possible opportunities to build new alliances with former dissident politicians, business actors and social leaders. Both central and local government institutions as well as political parties have thus been de facto monopolized, not just by the elite that dominated under Suharto, but also by those powerful actors who gained a new lease of life after 1998, thanks to economic resources, networks and control of the media. Formal rules and the need to mobilize huge funds with which to bend them prevent ordinary people from participating in elections with their own parties or as independent candidates. Suharto's corporative system of top-down representation has not been altered. Democratic issue and interest-based representation continue to be overshadowed by pressure group politics, lobbying and media campaigns that require good contacts and access to substantial funds. In short, elitist democratization in Indonesia has been possible because public affairs have been depoliticized.

In turn, depoliticization was largely made possible by the lack of powerful alternative actors capable of mobilizing a broader stratum of popular forces on a democratic platform. So what are the weaknesses of the alternative actors based on?

The democracy movement was formed of three main strands (e.g. Törnquist 1997; Aspinall 2005; Lane 2008). One strand was made up of the liberal and socialist-oriented intellectuals and student groups that had been critical of Sukarno's authoritarianism and the PKI's radical

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nationalism. Some even supported the military in 1965 before they later realized that Suharto's coup involved mass killings and that the military, rather than the middle-class technocrats and intellectuals, would be at the helm. Another strand of the democracy movement came from the non-communist trade unions and civil society organizations that focused on the farmers and urban poor. A third strand belonged to a new generation of civil society groups concerned with 'alternative development', often focusing on the environment or human rights and corruption. All dissidents agreed, however, that the authoritarian state was a major obstacle and that 'civil society' was the basis for an alternative. Class differences were not at the forefront and the new groups were neither based on extensive membership nor countrywide organizations outside of the major cities, functioning rather as influential networks. The focus was on specific issues, rights and problems.

Later, leftist-oriented students tried to alter this cautious approach, arguing that substantive improvement required regime change. This called for political leadership and closer links between civil society groups, activists and ordinary people. The radical position was increasingly accepted but there was no agreement on how to move forwards. There were temporary coalitions, but most groups stuck to their own projects in opposing the regime and were suspicious of each other. Meanwhile, other activists tried to reach out to ordinary people by relating to socio-religious organizations.

In short, there was a 'democracy movement' in the sense that groups agreed on the need for political change and democratization. But there was no ideological unity or national level coordination, and almost no attempts at forming united fronts and parties. While important in undermining the legitimacy of the regime, the movement stood for no coherent alternative. A major claim was that 'civil society' and the people themselves should run the country. Yet the movement failed to develop an alternative transitional arrangement and snap elite-driven elections made activists lose momentum, only to become socially and politically marginalized (Törnquist 2000; Prasetyo *et al.* 2003).

The major reason behind the democracy groups' inability to form a genuine alternative and develop a transformative strategy is simple: there was no strong reason for any of the actors involved to do so (see Budiman and Törnquist 2001; Prasetyo *et al.* 2003; Priyono *et al.* 2007; Samadhi and Warouw 2009). Typically, the pro-democrats only related to sections of the population, rarely providing links between, for instance, activities in workplace, residential areas and communities. Activists were engaged in specific localities, paying little attention

to wider issues of governance, development and public welfare. There was much focus on the rule of law, human rights, corruption and civil control of the military, less on citizenship and almost nothing on representation and the capacity of governments to implement policies. Activists rarely tried to mobilize followers inside public administration and to engage in organized politics, nor were they present in public and private workplaces. Their main achievement was to collect and disseminate information, engaging in lobbying and pressure group activities and promoting self-management and self-help. Their authority and legitimacy were due to privileged knowledge and participation in the public discourse at the expense of organizing with a view of obtaining a public mandate or winning elections. In spite of some advances, the activists remained poorly connected to social movements and popular organizations (and vice versa). Collective action was mainly based on individual networking and alternative patronage as opposed to participation in broad and representative organizations. Parliaments and executive institutions were approached primarily through lobbying by NGOs and critique from the media. Given the issues that were prioritized, this was a more effective strategy, at least in the short run, than to engage in building mass politics, viable political parties or broad interest-based organizations.

This was a major achievement compared with the Suharto period when organized politics (except in the government party) was prohibited at grassroots level in order to turn ordinary people into what the regime called a 'floating mass'. After Suharto, however, the pro-democracy activists themselves were 'floating', having failed to develop a solid social constituency. They were unable to generate substantial improvements in terms of popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality. In many cases they even contributed to more privatization and polycentrism. It was not clear what people (*demos*) would control which public affairs. In addition, the groups were often marginalized or co-opted by more powerful local actors within politics, administration and business, as well as by international organizations and donors.

In face of these weaknesses, many activists have tried to develop new ways of engaging in organized politics (Törnquist *et al.* 2009b). Some have tried to foster democracy through customary (*adat*) groups, indigenous peoples and Muslim congregations on the basis of equal citizenship. Others have made efforts to bypass 'rotten politics' by developing 'direct politics' to foster public discussion, social auditing, struggle against corruption and participatory budgeting in favour of not

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very specified 'pro-poor' policies. Additional projects have included the facilitation of trade union or broader social movement-based politics and parties. The most popular strategy has been to negotiate political contracts of cooperation with strong political actors that need to broaden their alliances and support base beyond predominant clientelist arrangements (see Chapter 12).

All these strategies reflect existing priorities and organizational practices among the pro-democrats whose aims but not politics were modified. The main focus was still on issues of immediate concern for their own organization or movement rather than on interests of wider concern that would have called for broad alliances and mass politics. And when attempting to cooperate, the activists had problems of poor political representation, both within the groups and organizations themselves and in relation to political parties, parliaments and state institutions. And it was frequently not even made clear what people (*demos*) were supposed to be in control of what public affairs.

Other activists did attempt to build political fronts from within an already powerful party or movement, turning them into instruments of change. The main problems were the risk of being co-opted and the need to build sufficient strength to advance when it was impossible to build open factions inside a party or movement. And those who built a national ideology-driven party on their own to provide political guidance and coordination to the many democracy groups were better read in radical literature than capable of serving as the representatives of civil society organizations in general and the supposedly broad movements – that nevertheless hardly existed, in particular.

The only political project that at least initially made a crucial difference was that of fighting for the legalizing of local parties and independent candidates in elections in the autonomous war-torn and tsunami-affected province of Aceh. Remarkably, the leaders and activists involved even managed to turn this into the generally accepted foundation for the peace agreement in Helsinki and to then build an alliance and win the 2006 elections of local executives, in spite of resistance from semi-aristocratic leaders in exile of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and mainstream Indonesian politicians. Thus it was possible to envision the new institutions as a model for the country at large as well as for other conflict areas. These advances, however, were rapidly undermined. The international community were busy with the post-tsunami reconstruction work and made little effort to employ their enormous programmes to support attempts at better governance in Aceh. This helped the semi-aristocratic leaders and local strongmen with access to



the command structure of the rebel movement to become dominant, to develop power-sharing agreements with former enemies and to do away with the reformists. Moreover, the reformists themselves were not very successful in using the positions that they had gained in the elections to foster interest-based representation and initiate alternative development and welfare measures. Thus most actors (no matter reformist or not) turned instead to lobbying, clientelism and corruption in their efforts to retain their positions (Törnquist *et al.* 2011).

In conclusion, Indonesia had thus gone from the disassociation in the 1950s and early 1960s of interest-based mass politics with democratization to the acknowledgement in the late 1980s onwards that democratization is crucial and primary but constrained by polycentrism, individual freedoms and privatization as well as being disconnected from interest-based mass politics.

#### **Post-war Sri Lanka: Ethnocratic and clientelist authoritarianism**

Sri Lanka is in a post-war situation. This raises the question about whether the end of warfare means a return to democratic politics with opportunities for transformative democratic politics, or whether Sri Lanka's democracy is more formal than real and with little space for substantive political participation and representation. While Sri Lanka is a relatively old democracy, it is marked by entrenched democracy deficits both in institutional arrangements and political practices. These democracy deficits are both causes and effects of the ethnic conflict and have emerged gradually in tandem with the escalation of the conflict (Tambiah 1986; De Votta 2004; Stokke 2011). The military approach to ending the war in Sri Lanka has had a profound impact on the post-war political space for class and minority politics (Stokke and Uyangoda 2011). It has, first and foremost, allowed the regime of President Mahinda Rajapakse to define the terms of peace, reproducing rather than reforming undemocratic institutions and practices. The outcome is a political system that cannot effectively and substantively accommodate class interests and communal identities, but relies instead on ethnonationalist, clientelist and repressive strategies with which to contain opposition. This means that although Sri Lanka is in a post-war phase and is partially a liberal democracy, it is marked by illiberal tendencies towards ethnocratic and clientelist authoritarianism. This severely limits the possibilities for transformative democratic politics, at least in the short run.

The ethnocratic character of the Sri Lankan state has emerged gradually and been closely linked to the escalation and perpetuation of

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the ethnic conflict. Ethnocracy preceded and produced the war, but the protracted war and the way the conflict ended have also reinforced this character of the state. The political discourse of the current regime, for instance, refuses to acknowledge the existence of distinct and legitimate minority grievances, while implicitly or explicitly conflating 'Sri Lankan' with 'Sinhalese' identity and culture. In war-affected minority areas, reconstruction and development are utilized as investment opportunities for Sinhalese-owned businesses and political actors, land rights policies are experienced as Sinhalese colonization, heritage preservation is geared towards imbuing places and landscapes with Buddhist meaning and state administration is carried out with a key role for the armed forces and furthers the use of Sinhala as official language. While the manifestations are diverse and localized, many Tamils experience that the Sinhalese-dominated ethnocratic state is furthering its cultural and territorial control in minority areas, thus strengthening rather than transforming the ethnocratic state.

Turning to the question of authoritarianism, it has already been noted that while Sri Lanka has maintained some of the basic institutional requirements for democracy, there have also been growing tendencies towards authoritarianism and an erosion of the accountability relations between government and people. Political centralization and militarization of state-society relations are the two foremost expressions of authoritarianism that currently coexist with Sri Lanka's limited democracy (Coomaraswamy 2003; de Mel 2007). Political centralization has become especially prominent through the constitutionalization of a strong executive presidency and the lack of devolution of power. This severely limits accountability between the government and people and in particular curtails the political space for ethnic minorities and for conflict resolution based on power sharing. The last three decades, and especially the periods 1977-94 and since 2005, have also been characterized by multifaceted tendencies towards militarization (Uyangoda 2011). This has not happened through increased power of the military at the expense of political leaders, but rather through close relations between democratically elected leaders with centralized political power and military and paramilitary apparatus. Centralization and militarization have both emerged gradually in response to popular mass mobilization, especially the rise and radicalization of Tamil separatism. This has created a situation where the basic institutional requirement for liberal democracy: civil and political rights and free and fair multi-party elections have been maintained, but in

coexistence with authoritarian practices that severely limit the quality of democracy.

After the government of Sri Lanka's military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009, there have been no concrete initiatives to address the problems of centralization through political devolution. Political centralization thus remains a defining feature of the Sri Lankan political system that severely limits accountability between the government and people, and especially limits the political space for minorities. When it comes to militarization it can likewise be observed that the post-war period has been marked by continuity rather than radical transformations, especially in minority areas. While there has been a decline in military presence and control in Sinhalese majority areas, military rule continues with extensive powers in the North and East. While Emergency Rule has recently been lifted, its substance is in practice maintained through new provisions and continued military administration in minority areas. And although freedom of speech and assembly are formally upheld, there are numerous examples of repression and intimidation of minority politicians, journalists, community leaders and activists.

These authoritarian tendencies coexist with a persistent and growing importance of clientelist networks and practices. One key explanation for this is that access to the state and political power has become very important for private accumulation within the elite and for individual livelihoods and opportunities among ordinary people. This centrality of the state emerged with the development model that was pursued in the 1960s and 1970s and has remained despite a shift in macroeconomic policy towards economic liberalization in the late 1970s (Moore 1990; Venugopal 2011). A second factor behind growing clientelism is the continued need for welfare support among client groups amidst a crisis of universal welfare programmes, making welfare support more narrowly defined, based on ethnic identity, party loyalty and patron–client relations. Taken together, the centrality of state-centred accumulation and the persistent need for welfare support, means that access to political power has become very important for both elites and ordinary people and that such access is negotiated through networks within the elite and between political patrons and their clients.

This logic of rent seeking and clientelism has become even more pronounced since the end of the war. The post-war economy has been characterized by state and foreign investment in reconstruction and infrastructure development, funded not least through loans and grants from geopolitical stakeholders in the region. This creates

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new opportunities for private accumulation from state contracts and for maintaining clientelist networks. The present regime maintains its legitimacy through a combination of Sinhalese ethnonationalist populism and clientelist concessions within political networks. The latter is especially visible in instrumental alliances with smaller parties, factions and individuals, including from minority communities. This network logic of politics shapes the strategies within the political elite, but also the political space and strategies of minority parties and politicians. They face a fundamental dilemma; either to pursue principled and collective action that may render them relatively powerless and possibly make them targets for authoritarian repression, or to enter into clientelist relations that may offer short-term concessions but not structural transformations towards substantive peace and democracy.

These tendencies towards ethnocracy, authoritarianism and clientelism limit the prospects for democratic transformative politics in Sri Lanka. It has already been mentioned that popular forces face a harsh dilemma between loyalty and opposition, where both options entail very limited prospects for substantive political influence. At a more general level, it can be argued that the Sri Lankan state has become exceedingly reform resistant, both in regard to ethnic identity politics and class interests. Uyangoda (2011) argues that the combination of ethnocracy and pressing security concerns has produced a state that has been reform resistant in the context of civil war and remains reform resistant under conditions of post-civil war. The main reason for this is that the mass base of ethnocracy undermines pressure from below for substantive state reforms, while attempts to negotiate minority rights and power sharing at the elite level is typically undermined by instrumental ethnonationalist mobilization by the opposition. The outcome is a state that has very little ability for democratic self-renewal. In this situation, Uyangoda concludes that transformation of the reform resistant ethnocratic state requires a multi-ethnic and multi-class political coalition committed to demilitarization, devolution and democratization. This is, however, exceedingly difficult, given the deep political divisions at both popular and elite level, the lack of organizational capacity – especially within the minorities after the war, and the current regime's strategies of divisive clientelism and state repression of oppositional forces. Sri Lanka has thus gone from being a promising example of transformative democratic politics to a paradigmatic failure, with limited prospects for substantive transformations in the near future.

### Contemporary relevance

The starting point for this chapter was the observation that there are diverse cases of transformative politics in the Global South. While there are some states in which significant actors have successfully pursued transformation through democratic politics, most attempts at transformative politics in post-colonial societies have been non-democratic and prioritized modernization over democracy. The focus of this chapter has been on yet another type: cases where promising initial efforts at transformative democratic politics have been replaced by authoritarianism or semi-authoritarianism. Examining two such cases, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, we have emphasized the failure of state actors and popular movements to institutionalize substantive popular representation, and how this has produced top down models of limited political and social inclusion.

While our comparative analysis has been historical in orientation, we find that Indonesia and Sri Lanka provide important lessons that have continued relevance even today and in wider contexts. First and foremost, the descent into authoritarianism in Indonesia in the 1960s and the growth of semi-authoritarianism in Sri Lanka from the late 1970s testifies to the problems of incorporation rather than integration of people into politics, including on the part of several of the liberal and socialist left-oriented actors. This remains a key concern in many states that have undergone depoliticized and neoliberal transitions to liberal democracy in recent decades (Harriss *et al.* 2004; Törnquist *et al.* 2009a). Second, the historical experiences in Indonesia and the contemporary situation in Sri Lanka also point to the related problem, namely that many powerful actors gave, and still give priority to supposedly stable institutions of governance as a precursor to popular sovereignty. This position, which was influential in political and academic discourse in the 1960s, has returned to the forefront through discussion about the sequencing of institutional reforms for rule of law and popular democratic representation in transitions to democracy (Huntington 1965; Carothers 2007). Third, the Indonesian and Sri Lankan cases also demonstrate the unresolved problem of finding a viable alternative to the old social pacts that opened up neoliberal and authoritarian growth models by negating the importance of democratization to discipline the primitive accumulation of capital. Fourth, both cases also point to the continuous challenges of identity politics and integration, namely how to reconcile universalism and group belonging in institutions and practices of citizenship and democratic

representation. Here, the historical experiences of Scandinavian social democracies that we discussed in Chapter 2 provide few lessons. In fact, growing multiculturalism due to international migration has actualized the challenges of reconciling identity with well-established class and gender-based transformative politics in these societies. Fifth, Indonesia and Sri Lanka also demonstrate the unresolved problem of developing a social democratic alternative to liberal peace strategies. The remarkable advances made in Aceh in 2005 and 2006 were undermined by the shortage of supplementary forms of popular representation to the shallow freedoms and elections that former commanders and old patrons soon adapted to.

Finally, we want to highlight that the dilemmas facing activists in Indonesia today, briefly summarized as challenges of ambiguous democratic representation and of combining struggle for freedoms and rights with popular interests and mass-based politics, are similar to those of activist in local civil societies in many states who have undergone transitions to liberal democracy and neoliberal development (Harriss *et al.* 2004; Törnquist *et al.* 2009a). Even the most advanced new transformative projects such as in Brazil, Kerala, the Philippines and South Africa (see Chapters 3, 4, 9 and 10, this volume; Törnquist with Tharakan 1996; Tharakan 2004; Törnquist 2004; Törnquist *et al.* 2009b) continue to grapple with the theoretical as well as practical problems of combining conventional liberal-democratic representation, lobbying and civil society influence on the one hand, with additional channels of more democratic issue and interest representation as well as direct participation, on the other hand. The same applies to the development of strategies that do not separate but combine democratization with reforms for welfare-based economic development.

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