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**The Perils of Parliamentarism:
Chasing the Flows of the Third Wave of Democratization in Asia**
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Abstract

What is the present state of democracy among the Asian countries that were (re)democratized during the third wave of democratization? What makes the differences? Why some specific factors play prominent role on the deepening of democracy among them? These are the primary questions of this study. The findings from ten young Asian democracies are as follows. First, all the Asian countries that (re)democratized during the third wave of democratization are practicing democratic system at present. Six of them experienced the breakdowns, while four remain as a continuous democracy. Second, out of eleven structural and institutional factors, examined in this research, only the presidential system has clearer positive impact and economic development has a partial effect on the deepening of democracy. Indirect dictatorship or dominancy of family politics in the parliamentary democracies is found as main reason for the perils of parliamentarism among young Asian democracies.

Keywords

Young Asian democracies, third wave, deepening of democracy, presidentialism, and parliamentarism

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Introduction

We live in an era of democratic recession. We are globally witnessing the failure of effectiveness of democratic government. Moreover, newly democratized nations are also facing challenges on institutionalization of the democracy. Asia is no exception. Pessimistic views and worries on the future of democracy in Asia prevailed and recently re-emphasized in the academic world and international media (Croissant, 2004; Case, 2009; Kurlantzick, 2013; Rodan & Jayasuriya 2009; Diamond et al., 2013). This study observes the state of democracy of ten countries which were (re) democratized in the third wave of democratization – Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippine, South Korea (hereafter Korea) and Thailand (Huntington, 1991; Lee 2002). Moreover, it examines the impact of eleven structural and institutional factors on the consolidation of democracy in these countries.

The degree of democracy at present state is measured considering two dimensions: survivability and quality. Whether or not a democracy continues without any break after the (re)democratization is examined to identify the survivability of a democracy. Three popular indexes, Freedom House, Polity IV and Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy (EIU index) are used to inquire their qualities. All young democracies are divided into four groups (in a two-by-two table) based on these two measurements. This study also presents the intra-regional variations in South Asia, Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia. Observation of the intra-regional variation is helpful to assess the specific pattern of the democratic development in Asia. Eleven factors, dividing into two groups, structural and institutional, are tested to answer "what makes the differences."

This is the first academic inquiry since Croissant's (2004) article that covers most young Asian democracies. Comparative academic works on Asian democracy are excessively limited in the sub-regional observation or specific variables, i.e., party system institutionalization (Hicken & Kuhonta, 2011; Croissant and Volkel, 2012) and electoral system (Reilly, 2007). This study not only links these two types of researches but also aims to open a new chapter on the comparative study of Asian democracy. The inquiry on both patterns of democracy and causes behind the differences can contribute academically to understand the politics of other non-democratic nations in Asia and their political future; though it is beyond the scope of this article.

The third wave and democracy in Asia

Democracy and Asia have a long but uncomfortable relationship. Though the democracy was introduced in the several states after the end of Second World War, only three of them – India, Japan and Sri Lanka – survived without a break. There were continuous questions on effectiveness of Indian democracy on pursuing the regime's "own professional goals" (Kohil, 1987:8). Modi's government is not free from the blame that it has severely undermined India's democracy. The push and pull between authoritarianism and democracy continued in Sri Lanka. Dominancy of the single party remains as the darkest part of the Japanese democracy; region's first consolidated democracy (Scheiner 2006).

There are two most striking phenomena among young Asian democracies. First, all the Asian countries that (re)democratized during the third wave of democratization are practicing democratic

system at present. Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Thailand have experienced the breakdowns of democracy after the (re)democratization in the third wave. Cambodian democracy faced a serious crisis during a coup in 1997. Authoritarian characteristics of the Malaysian regime strengthened in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. All these six countries categorized as non-continuous democracies in this article. The rest of four regimes – Indonesia, Mongolia, Korea, and the Philippines – are classified as continuous democracies. Second, the quality of democracy among them is varied markedly. As a global trend of using adjectives to explore the teetering democracy or regime in a specific country or group of countries (Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Bogaards, 2009), most of the young Asian democracies also have been named with several adjectives (explored below in intra-regional comparison).

Numerous definitions –i.e., a regime where party loses the election (Przeworski, 1991: 10, Huntington, 1991: 265-270) or only the game in town (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 5) – and various adjectives (Collier and Levitsky, 1997, Zakaria, 1997; Diamond, 2002; Rose and Shin 2001, Brumberg 2002) presented to identify whether a transformed regime established as a consolidated democracy or converted into other types of regimes (Linz & Stepan, 1996). If we apply rigorous definitions, very less Asian regimes can be classified as consolidated democracy. If the minimal definition or criteria applied, the majority of countries will be positioned in democratic zone. Most young Asian democracies will be in non-consolidated group in the former and democratic in the latter. The quality of democracy among them –in a group where the majority of countries locate – will still be highly varied (Altman & Pérez-Liñán, 2002, pp. 86-87).

This study overcomes this problem by introducing a two-by-two table, based on survivability and quality. It classifies young Asian democracies in four different categories: continuous and free, continuous and partly free, non-continuous and free, non-continuous and partly free. As mentioned above, whether a democracy continues, without any breakdowns, after the (re)democratization in the third wave or not is examined first. The quality of democracy surveyed from three popular democracy indexes: Freedom House, Polity IV and the EIU index (Durkiewicz, J., & Janowski, T. 2018). How the existing studies have identified these democracies also carefully considered while classifying them into four groups. These categories, based on four groups, are the basic unit of analysis in this research.

Table 1: Classification of Young Asian Democracies

Status	Continuous Democracies	Non-Continuous Democracies
Free	Mongolia, Korea [1]	No[2]
Partly Free	Indonesia, the Philippines [3]	Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand, Pakistan [4] Cambodia, Malaysia [5]

Three younger democracies – Indonesia, Mongolia, and Korea – secured their position in continuous and free democracy groups. Among three continuous and free democracies, Korea is only identified as a consolidated democracy in the academic world (Sin and Wells, 2005; Diamond, et al., 2013: x). Few serious concerns regarding the quality of governance in Indonesia and Mongolia have been continually raised (Dressel, 2011, Webber, 2006, Fritz, 2008). Observers have often expressed their suspicion on quality of democracy in Indonesia and the Philippine – two countries categorized as

continuous and partly free countries in this study. Recently, both have become the common example while discussing the populism (Mietzner, 2015, Heydarian, 2018). Half of the young democracies fall into the fourth and final category: non-continuous and partly free.

Table.2. Young Asian Democracies in Three Indexes

Classification	Continuous				Continuous and Partly Free					
	Free		Partly Free		BAN	NEP	THA	PAK	MAL	CAM
	MON	KOR	IND	PHI						
Freedom House	1.5	2.0	3	3.0	5.57	5.18	4.63	4.17	4	5.5
Polity IV	10	8	9	8	- 6	5.18	5.5	4.5	4	5.5
EUI	6.50	8	6.39	6.71	5.57	5.18	4.63	4.17	6.88	3.59

North-East Asia

Regionally, young Northeast Asian states achieved significant progress in the deepening of democracy. All two young democracies in this region – Mongolia and Korea – secured their position in continuous and free group. Rapid democratic consolidation, identically with their economic growth in Korea is often cited as a successful democratic story since early 2000s (Sin and Wells, 2005, Diamond, et al., 2013). Mongolian success is the most significant one. Few of the factors normally considered favorable for democratization were present in Mongolia at the onset of its regime change in 1990. Mongolia embarked on its transition with the lowest standard of living among the communist world, matched only by Albania (Fish, 1998: 127). Despite few governance problems (Fritz, 2008), today it is “the only post-communist country east of Baltics to earn the destination of democratic consolidation” (Diamond, et al., 2013: xi).

Southeast Asia

The success of Indonesia and “dramatic decrease in democratic quality in Thailand and the Philippines in recent years” (Mietzner, 2010:185) are the most striking phenomena in Southeast Asia. The quality of democracy among Southeast Asian states is markedly varied (Case, 2004). Despite the persistence of few negative elements (Sebastian, 2012: 465, Fukuoka, 2013; Freedman and Tiburzi, 2012), “the political landscape of Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim country, has been transformed almost beyond recognition” (Webber, 2006:296) since its transformation to a democratic country.

The majority of literatures on the Philippines and Thai democracy expressed the pessimistic view. The Philippines democracy continuously classified with the negative adjectives. Björn Dressel (2011) concludes that “oligarchic structures and dysfunctional institutions threaten the emergence of true democracy in the Philippines.” Elections in the country have been tainted by fraud, violence, and overspending (Tuazon, 2013: 113). Political crisis in Thailand started from overthrow of Thaksin Shinawatra’s government by Royal Thai Army on 19 September 2006 (Ockey, 2008, Pongsudhirak, 2008; Farrelly, 2013; Ferrara, 2011). It resumed from the demonstration in November 2013 against the continuous role of former prime minister in politics. It later turned into the clashes between anti

and pro-government groups (the popular clash between yellow and red t-shirts), state of emergency, death of numbers of protesters, resignation of 153 parliament members of the Democratic party and boycott of the general election 2014 by opposition parties. Finally, the Royal Thai Army launched a coup on 22 May, 2014, by removing the caretaker government. There have been at least 18, actual and attempted military takeovers since Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932. Parliamentary election was carried-out in March 24, 2019. It, however, could not bring significant change in quality of democracy (Mc Cargo, 2019). Malaysian democracy, which was identified as a competitive authoritarian system, “in which incumbents use finely honed tactics and institutional leverage to stay in office” (Welsh, 2013: 136) until recently is moving toward deepening of democracy after the first victory by an opposition coalition after 61 years of rule by the long-dominant National Front or Barisan Nasional led by the United Malays National Organization. Despite of the regular elections, democracy in Cambodia in the region found as most poor condition. Cambodian regime is classified as a competitive authoritarianism or hybrid regime (Kheang, 2005; Lilja, 2010, UN, 2005).

South Asia

None of the young democracies could achieve remarkable progress in this region. As de Souza et.al. Identify, “South Asia does not fully fit into the story of the global triumph of democracy. The countries in this region have not experienced a linear progression toward democracy; more often than not, theirs has been a story of forward movements followed by setbacks and regression” (de Souza et. al, 2008, p. 85). Military became major obstacles for democracy in Pakistan and Bangladesh. While, democratic practice in Nepal was “severely challenged at various points by two extreme forces: an ideologically motivated ultra-leftist force known as the Nepal Communist Party (NCP (Maoist)), who sought to establish a communist republic through a violent insurgency, and an ambitious ultra-rightist force represented by the King, who refused to accept the role of a constitutional monarch and imposed his direct rule by sidelining an elected government” (Parajulee, 2010, p. 87-88). All states have an elected government at present. Their democratic and governance indicators, however, are extremely poor not only comparing to other Asian nations but also with any states in the third world.

What makes the differences?

Structural and Institutional factors are most widely inquired in the comparative and empirical studies that examine the reasons behind the survival or consolidation of democracy (Gasiorowski & Power, 1998; Power & Gasiorowski, 1997, Barro, 1999, Przeworski et al. 1996). Former generally investigates the socioeconomic dimensions. While later emphasizes on the institutional design of a specific regime. Political culture, historical background and dependency or foreign involvement also frequently discussed while examining the quality and the level of democracy in the Third World. This research examines eleven factors, dividing in two groups, structural and institutional, that are most often studied in the former studies. Out of five structural factors inquired in this article, three are economic (level of economy, income inequality and financial crisis) and two are ethno-religious. Institutionally, the impact of regime type (presidential or parliamentary), government system (federal or unitary), electoral system and party system institutionalization are examined.

Though it is a regional comparative study, it does not examine any inherently regional or solely Asian factors. In early 1990s, there was a lively discussion on the political role of the Asian value. Kim Dae Jung, former president of South Korea and Lee Kuan Yew, former prime minister of Singapore, led the debate through their publications in an American Magazine, *Foreign Affairs*. Since then, the question, in most cases, excessively limited on the role of Confucian culture on politics (Park and Sin, 2006). No need to say that Confucian culture is popular only in East Asia and few specific zones in Southeast Asia. Few studies in South Asia emphasizes on the South Asian exceptionalism: the role of caste and ethnicity in politics. Nepal is a prime example (Hangen, 2010). The term Asian style of democracy in academic world (Neher, 1994), however, was often much closer to a hybrid regime (Hood, 1998) rather than some specific Asian phenomena.

This research does not conclude that the inherent values, culture or systems, i.e., caste system, have no impact on politics, especially in the establishment of democratic system. It only argues that there are very rare comparative studies on this topic. Emphasizing only the Confucian culture as Asian value is a reductionist approach. The debate needs more comprehensive model and methodology. Though the topic is a prominent academic question, this is not the scope of this article. This research rather focuses on most widely discussed universal variables. Despite rapid socioeconomic transformation and remarkable political change among young Asian democracies, these variables were not examined for a long. The findings of this research can be the foundation for further research on comparative Asian democracy.

Structural factors

Starting from Lipset (1959, 1960) or even from Aristotle and Plato, the impact of economic development, or modernization, on democracy remains one of the most widely discussed and contested questions. Both the economic determinants of democratization and democratic consolidation are extensively examined (Przeworski and Limongi 1997). Answers have been inconsistent. Regarding the deepening of democracy, the initial idea presented by Lipset in his seminal piece (1959: 75) – the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy – is broadly accepted (Przeworski and Limongi, 1997; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992, Gasiorowski and Power, 1998).

Among the young Asian democracies, contemporary level of GDP per capita income has positive effects on both survival and quality of democracy. The relationships, however, need to interpret with two careful cautions: huge intra group economic variation in continuous and free group and the exception of Malaysia and Thailand. With the exception of Malaysia and Thailand, countries in continuous and free group have the highest level of per capita income; country in continuous and partly free have a medium level of per capita income and countries in non-continuous and partly free have lowest level of per capita among young Asian democracies (table 3). Hence, this research concludes that the economic development have partial, but positive, effect on the deepening of democracy among young Asian democracies. The existing studies have claimed that the role of economic development on democratization in Asia had rare (Lee 2002; Webber 2006) or limited (Linder & Bachtiger, 2005) effects.

Table 3: GDP Per capita Income of Young Asia Democracies in 2018 (in \$)

Classification	Continuous				Continuous and Partly Free					
	Free		Partly Free							
Countries	MON	KOR	IND	PHI	BAN	NEP	THA	PAK	MAL	CAM
GDP	4,121	31,362	3,893	3,102	1,698	1,033	7,273	1,482	11,373	1,510

Source: GDP: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD> (Accessed on: 22 December, 2019)

Following economic development, the role of income inequality bearing on democracy – or vice versa – is often studied (Bollen and Jackman 1985, Muller, 1998). Two popular arguments “democratic consolidation has been systematically bolstered by high levels of income equality” (Boix, 2003, p. 10-11) and “inequality harms consolidation” (Houle, 2009, p.591) found to be invalid among young Asian democracies. Annual average income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, increased annually 0.8, 1.4, 0.4, 0.9, and 1.3 percent respectively in Bangladesh (1990-2010), Indonesia (1990-2011), Korea (1992-2010) and Sri Lanka (1990-2006). Indonesia and Korea experienced significant improvement in the establishment of democratic system. While, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka suffered from serious democratic regression. On the contrary to this, the annual average income inequality decreased by 0.1, 0.2, 0.8, 0.5, 0.6, 0.1, and 0.6 percent respectively in Cambodia (1994-2008), Malaysia (1992-2009), Mongolia (1995-2007) Nepal (1995-2010), the Philippines (1991-2009) and Thailand (1990-2009) (ADB, 2012). Here, only Mongolia achieved the remarkable progress in the deepening of democracy. The Philippines remains as continuous and partly free democratic state. Rest of the countries suffered serious democratic regression in different period (Chi and Kwon, 2012).

Similarly, any clearer effects of financial crisis on deepening of democracy couldn't observe among young Asian democracies. Mostly five countries – Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand – suffered from the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Unlike popular predication that financial crisis threatens the new democracies (Davies, 2010); Korea remains democratic state and the quality of its democracy improved after the financial crisis (Rodrik 1999). First peaceful transfer of power to the democratically elected opposition victor occurred in 1998. Indonesia underwent a successful transition to democracy in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. Whereas remarkable positive change toward the consolidation couldn't observe in the Philippines and Thailand. Thailand experienced the democratic regression. The undemocratic nature of Pseudo democracy strengthened even after the financial crisis in Malaysia (Case, 2001).

Neither the religious differences matters. Indonesia, world largest Muslim country, achieved tremendous success in democratic transformation; unlike the popular negative prediction regarding the democratic system in a Muslim country (Barro, 1999; Lakoff, 2004). While, the quality of democracy in three other non-Arab Muslim democracies (Stepan and Robertson, 2003, Nasr, 2005) – Bangladesh, Malaysia and Pakistan – still found poor. Buddhism also didn't have any significant effects. The majority of the population who profess religious affiliations in Mongolia and Korea are Buddhist. All made remarkable progress in democratic development. While Sri Lanka, Thailand and

Cambodia, three major Buddhist countries in the world are struggling on deepening. They, moreover, have faced democratic regression recently.

Final structural factor examined in this article is the ethnic composition. Two ethnically homogenous countries, Mongolia and Korea have experienced significant democratic development; whereas largely homogenous Bangladesh and Cambodia are continuously languishing in partly free zone. Ethnic identity did not have any political value and role in 1990s in multiethnic and multi linguistic Nepal. Suddenly, ethnicity becomes the prime political agenda since 2006. In both periods, its democratic system was far from an actual democracy. Indonesia is not only a regional but also a global exception in the relations between the deepening of democracy and ethno religious composition of a state. It is a heterogeneous state with around three hundred native and ethnic groups. Indonesia, fourth most populous country, has a larger Muslim population than any other country in the world. Unlike dominating pessimistic predictions, it, however, experienced a remarkable progress toward democratic consolidation in last two decades.

Institutional factors

Starting with Linz's works, though the question was raised a century ago by Walter Bagehot and Woodrow Wilson, institution related theoretical and empirical discussions on the successful consolidation of democracy are centered on relative merits of regime type (Elgie, 2005, Weaver and Rockman, 1993). Three major arguments can be summarized from existing explanations. First, comparing to presidential system, parliamentary system is more favorable for democratic consolidation (Linz, 1990a; Linz 1990b; Linz 1994; Linz & Valenzuela 1994; Stephen & Skach, 1993; Przeworski et al. 1996). Second, "(if) other things being equal, presidentialism tends to function better where presidencies have weak legislative powers, parties are at moderately disciplined, and party systems are not highly fragmented" (Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997:449). Third, "the choice of constitutional type is not significantly related to the likelihood of democratic survival in less developed countries" (Gasirowski and Power, 1997: 123).

The institutional merits on deepening of democracy, both survival and quality, found most significant than any other factors among young Asian democracies. All the presidential democracies survive without any break; whereas all the parliamentary democracies experienced breakdowns. Two countries in continuous and free group Mongolia and Korea have presidential system. Some studies classify some of them as semi-presidential democracies (Elgie 2008). Regardless of their purity (Stephen & Skach, 1993), the presidential system has better performance in both survivability and quality. Along with free and continuous democracies, Indonesia and the Philippines, continuous and partly free countries, also have presidential system. Six young Asian democracies have parliamentary democracy. All of them found as non-continuous and partly free. Pakistan had practiced a presidential system for the short period (in Musharraf era) even after the restoration of democracy in the third wave.

The discussion on the relationship between systems of government – federalism or unitary – and democracy among young Asian democracies has less academic meaning. Out of twelve states, only Malaysia, Nepal and Pakistan have federal systems. Proportional representation system continuously

remains unpopular in Asia. Majority of countries in the region adopted a “highly disproportional forms of mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) electoral systems, in which most seats are elected from local districts and a much smaller proportion from a party list” (Reilly, 2007: 1354). Similarly with the government system, the comparative discussion on electoral system and state of democracy among young Asian democracies does not provide any significant academic answers.

There is not a general agreement on whether or not an institutionalized party system leads to consolidated democracy (Hicken and Kuhontaz, 2011: 575). It, however, is widely acknowledged that “a fractionalized party system made it very difficult to process decisions, ultimately resulting in the decision paralysis that led to regime breakdown” (Mainwaring, 1990: 168).” The impact of party system among young Asian democracies found less significant. In most period, party system in Bangladesh, Mongolia, Nepal, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand were close to a bipolar party system. Only half of them got significant improvement in democratic development. Indonesia, however, achieved tremendous success despite high level of party fragmentation. Though the party systems in Pakistan and the Philippines have moderate level of fragmentation, the political development in two counties is highly different. Needless to emphasize again, Cambodia and Malaysia has a hegemonic party system. Party system can be studied along multiple dimensions; effective numbers of parties is only one of them (Hicken, 2009, p.2.). This study does not examine all these factors. Existing studies, however, already clearly demonstrate that there “is no clear and linear relationship between the state of party politics and the quality of democratic governance or the state of consolidation of democracy” in Asia (Croissant & Volkel, 2012, p. 258).

Regime types effect and perils of Parliamentarism

Latin American experience of the “failure of presidential democracy” (Linz and Valenzuela, 1994; Linz, 1990) did not repeat among young Asian democracies. Contrary to this, only the presidential democracies survived. While all parliamentary democracies experienced breakdowns. The discrepancies are much clear in the qualities of democracy. As emphasized above, only the presidential democracies are found as free. None of the parliamentary democracy could secure their position in the free and continuous group. Theoretical explanations, mostly based on Latin America, explore very little part of this Asian exception. This research does not provide alternative theoretical explanations or interpretation. It, however, presents few important comparative facts that are essential to understand the tragic failure of young Asian parliamentary democracies.

Academic debates on the relationship between presidential system and success or failure of democracy are centered on two major theses: the perils of presidentialism thesis and difficult combination thesis. Former focuses on the inherent structural problem of presidential system. It views a rigid term limit of executive, winner takes all politics and dual democratic legitimacy in the presidential system (Linz and Valenzuela, 1994) are particularly detrimental. They ultimately led to the regime break. While later argues that specific institutional conditions and characteristics – not necessarily related with regime type – determine the performance of presidential system. Excessive legislative power of the president, extreme ideological polarization and highly fractionalized party system are viewed as especially inimical to a well-performing presidential system (Mainwaring, 1990: 168; Shugart & Carey, 1992: 165; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997:449).

Power and Gasiorowski (1997) already conclude that these two thesis are invalid on exploring the relationship between the consolidation of democracy and choice of political institutions in the third world. This study's observations are also identical with their findings. Most young Asian presidential democracies were not free from the structural obstacles listed in the perils of presidentialism thesis (Fukuyama, et al., 2005). Constitution of all countries strictly limited the term of president. Four presidential democracies experienced the attempt of impeachment over the elected executive; major example of political crisis originates from dual legitimacy problem. The elected president of the Philippines was overthrown by impeachment in 2001.

Concentration of executive power in a single person, the president, continued in most countries even after the democratization (Baswedan, 2007: 323; Hara, 2001: 315, Asaba, 2013). The debate on modification of regime type, from presidential to parliamentary, continued in the Philippines and Korea. Excessive power of president is one of the central agenda of these debates (Rüland, 2003). As seen above the party system was highly fragmented in Indonesia and moderately fragmented in the Philippines. Though the Korean party system comparatively institutionalized, Korean parties lack longevity and strong organization (Croissant & Volkel, 2012, p. 258). Ideological polarization, often called as regionalism, becomes the regular part of Korean politics. These institutional constraints and practices, however, did not result in the break of presidential democracy among young Asian democracies.

On the other hand, the flexibility and adoptability of parliamentary system, presence of opposition leader in parliament, and indirect stability through the continuity of prime ministers and ministers in cabinet are assumed as the apparent "virtues of parliamentarism" (Linz and Valenzuela, 1994; Linz, 1990). None of these proximate causal effects, however, has clear implications among young Asian democracies. Nepal is the prime example. It had most conditions. The politics was highly flexible. One after another coalition governments formed since 1994. Even ideology did not matter on alliance formation. Two former prime ministers of past autocratic regimes became prime ministers of coalition governments in democratic era. Most of the ministers in democratic Nepal were the regular guests in the cabinet (Humagain & Seo, 2013). The Nepali democracy neither could improve its quality nor survived itself.

Four parliamentary democracies – Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Thailand – have a common characteristic. Their democratic system was generally stable for almost a decade since the (re)democratization in the third wave. Nepal and Pakistan faced serious threats in the late 1990s. Democracy in Bangladesh and Thailand suffered since the mid of the first decade of 2000s. Rise of traditional powers (military in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Thailand; monarchy in Nepal and Thailand) and new radical force (Moist in Nepal) ultimately resulted into the end of democratic practice.

Most young Asian parliamentary democracies severely suffered from indirect dictatorship or personal/family politics. Regardless of frequency of government change, only few people had dominant position in most countries in the democratic era. Hun Sen, incumbent prime minister of Cambodia, is currently the longest serving leader in Southeast Asia and is one of the longest serving prime ministers in the world, has been in power since 1985. Only three men got executive power in

Malaysia since 1982. All of them idolized with different names, i.e., father of modernization, father of human capital development or father of transformation. Excessive role of Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand, first prime minister of Thailand to complete a full term in office, since 2001 ultimately led to regime break and severe political crisis (Pongsudhirak, 2008).

G.P. Koirala became prime ministers for five times since 1990 in Nepal. “Koiralaization” was the buzzword and most disputed political issue in the early days of the restoration of democracy in Nepal (Bhattachan, 1994). Three out of four brothers of Koirala became prime minister of modern Nepal in different time period. Only two women, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, became prime minister since 1990 in Bangladesh. Former is the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father and first President of Bangladesh. Later is the widow of Ziaur Rahman, former president of Bangladesh. Pakistan experienced frequent change of prime minister in Musharraf era. It was a semi-presidential system.

Only Thailand has term limits – a maximum of two consecutive terms – for prime minister among young Asian parliamentary democracies. All presidential democracies have term limits of executive. Presidents in Korea and the Philippines are limited to single term of five and six years respectively. The constitutional provision in Indonesia, Mongolia and Taiwan limited the president terms to a maximum of two consecutive terms. Former fixed a term for five years; last two for four years. Naturally, the leadership changes in presidential democracy are frequent.

Regularity of leadership itself can't be the problem on deepening of democracy. *How limited people sustain in power for a long period matters.* As seen above, the Cambodian and Malaysian leadership came or sustain in power through the electoral authoritarianism. The government resources were highly abused during the election period (Ibrahim, 2013; UN, 2011). Thaksin Shinawatra, “a telecommunications billionaire and populist campaigner” (Farrelly, 2013, p. 287), era was full of paradox in Thai politics. Thai people experienced the most stable democratic system. Thaksin “became the first prime minister of Thailand to complete a full four-year term in office, the first to be reelected, and the first to preside over a government composed entirely of ministers from one party” (Pongsudhirak, 2008, p. 142). The democratically derived governments, however, “operated in an authoritarian fashion reminiscent of the long-entrenched, one-party-dominant regimes in countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. Thaksin ultimately monopolized the electoral system, manipulated the constitution, and exploited its inner workings to the point of usurpation” (Pongsudhirak, 2008).

The stories in South Asia are pretty different. Most major political parties are captured by few family members for decades. Pakistan People's Party in Pakistan, major parties – Bangladesh Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party – in Bangladesh and Nepali Congress in Nepal are the prime examples. All these parties have dynastic characteristics. In general, the political leadership in any political parties in South Asia changes hardly (Ahmed, 2003, Humagain & Seo, 2013; Suri, 2007).

Personalization of politics – contrary to popular assumption that “parliamentarism fosters a style of politics and policy making that is probably more institutionalized, centered as it is on political parties, whereas presidentialism fosters a more personalized and free-floating style of leadership centered on individual politicians and smaller, less established organizational entities (Gerring et al. 2009:330) –

ultimately resulted into the regression of democracy and its breakdown in all young Asian parliamentary democracies.

Conclusion

This study surveys the state of democracy in Asia focusing on the countries (re)democratized during the third wave of democracy. It finds that only two democracies – Korea and Mongolia – survived without breakdown can be classified as free democracies. Two more unbroken democracies – Indonesia and the Philippines – are partly free. Interestingly, all young parliamentary democracies are found only partly free. Two of them – Cambodia and Malaysia – are in South East Asia while four of them – Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – are in South Asia.

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