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### ASIA'S DEMOCRATIC LANDSCAPE: THE SHIFTING SANDS OF PROGRESSIVE POLITICS



Asia's Democratic Landscape:

# THE SHIFTING SANDS OF PROGRESSIVE POLITICS

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Without a question, Asia is a diverse lot. In fact, right until the modern times, people in the region, who constitute much of the world's population, didn't identify themselves as part of the same spatial community or *episteme*. Beginning with the Greeks, who divided the world between the 'civilized' Hellenistic world and the 'Barbarian' rest, including the towering Persian Empire, there emerged in the Western imagination an Orient, embodied by a distinct Asiatic world.

After centuries of humiliation under the yoke of Western colonial powers, Asia has gradually reconstituted itself, emerging as the world's most dynamic and promising region. Yet, despite decades of almost uninterrupted economic expansion and political consolidation, the region is still struggling to establish mature, inclusive democracies.

On one hand are the Philippines and India, among the two oldest non-Western democracies. They have stood as a strong testament against suspect 'Asian values' argument, which erroneously contends that 'liberal democracy' is a Western construct, thus alien to the supposed fundamental, ahistorical values of the Orient.

D.K. Giri, *the Secretary General of Association of Democratic Socialism (ADS)*, underscored how India's 'most outstanding achievement' is its ability to preserve a 'parliamentary democracy, followed uninterruptedly since 1947 within the constitutional framework.' Clearly, though India, as in other developing democracies in Asia, is still grappling with humongous developmental challenges, which threaten to undermine the fabric of its democratic institutions. 'Indian Democracy has failed to liberate a vast

number of people in its rural areas from object poverty, destitution, hunger, oppression and exploitation,' D.K. Giri laments.

Yet the situation beckons progressives and social democrats, who have 'greater ideological appeal, [and] enjoy popularity' to leave a larger footprint in the Indian democratic landscape, though that means that, in light of their lack of optimal self-organization, they may have to 'rely on the Congress and Communists, but ideologically they would lead, as only their platform can counter' that of the ruling right-wing party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which controls majority seats, 312 out of 545, in the Lok Sabha (the Lower House).

In the Philippines, where six years of reformist politics under the Benigno Aquino administration has brought about

a semblance of stability and prosperity, there are still major concerns vis-à-vis the absence of inclusive development and the tenuous foundations of the country's democracy. The rise of strongmen like Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who is currently running for the vice-presidency, and Rodrigo Duterte, the firebrand mayor of Davao City, who is eying the presidency, underscores the rising tide of 'autocratic nostalgia' and 'democratic despair' in the Southeast Asian country.

As Francis Isaac, a researchee based at De La Salle University (Manila), argues, “supposed economic benefits were hardly felt by the poor, since vital resources remain concentrated among the more affluent segments of Philippine society”. Wealth concentration is also reflected in the country's 'elite democracy', where, as Isaac writes, “in the last 2013 elections, six major political parties competed with one another, while 124 minor parties vied for 58 reserved party-list seats in the House of Representatives.”

Nonetheless, the gains of recent years, particularly good governance initiatives such as the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) and the Performance Challenge Fund (PCF), along with grassroots mobilizations such as Movement Against Dynasties (MAD) and the rise of progressive politicians such as Leni Robredo, who is a strong contender for vice-presidency, provide ample opportunity for necessary political reforms to deepen Philippine democracy.

Meanwhile, Japan, Asia's first industrialized country and among its most mature democracies, has witnessed the emergence of a powerful coalition of conservatives, led by the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has vowed to overcome the country's “postwar regime”. As Sven Saaler, resident representative of FES in Tokyo argues, “Abe's slogan implicitly negates also the democratic principles of postwar Japan and turns against the American influence in contemporary Japanese society.”

Under its 'Abenomics' reforms, the government has also pushed neo-liberal measures such as the revised Worker Dispatch Law, which, as Saaler argues, ‘mak[es] it now possible to employ



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temporary/agency workers indefinitely as “irregularly employed”.<sup>1</sup> Growing discontent over the government's failure to turn around a flailing economy, however, has provided an impetus for new political alliances, with 'factions of the Japan Innovation Party (previously Japan Restoration Party) decid[ing] in late 2015 to align themselves with the liberal-progressive Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), Japan's largest opposition party', providing some room for progressive to make political inroads.

There are, of course, some encouraging bright spots in Asia. Today, Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country, stands as among the only two liberal democracies in Southeast Asia. Indonesia is also a strong rebuke to misguided arguments vis-à-vis the supposed incompatibility between democracy and Islam. The rise of charismatic president Joko Widodo, affectionately known as “Jokowi”, portends a more grassroots-based, populist form of progressive politics, which holds the promise of overhauling the country's oligarchic order.

But a precipitous slowdown in global economy, particularly in demand for basic commodities, which constitute the bulk

of Indonesia's exports, has prompted the Jokowi administration to come up with a series of measures to counter anemic economic growth. But much of the government's counter-cyclical measures have been based on private-sector-driven investment and infrastructure development, which, according to Muhammad Ridha of University of Indonesia, strengthens the national oligarchy and threatens the indigent communities, best reflected in a disturbing spike in coercive eviction and land dispute.

In 2015, Ridha writes, “there were 252 cases of social conflict over land”, with about 28% of them related to infrastructural development projects. He expects that this year “conflict over land will not subside but potentially increase.” Yet, there are signs that the Jokowi administration is willing to more robustly engage with and involve the grassroots movements that propelled it to power in high-level decision-making. Thus, Ridha argues, this year “we might find interesting maneuver, and experimentation, among social movement to strengthen their political organization as part of struggling vis-a-vis the ruling class.”

In Nepal, meanwhile, a natural calamity, exacerbated by a brutal months-long Indian blockade, has spurred much-needed political reforms. As Rajju Malla Dhakal, Executive Director of SACEPS Nepal, argues, the major earthquake in the country “provided impetus to the political parties to speed up the constitutional process to pave way to a stable politics that can spearhead the rehabilitation and reconstruction and pick the threads of long stalled development processes.”

And there are signs that the progressive Left has increasing room for maneuver, especially with the “emergence of CPNUML as an alternative democratic force, [which] has helped balance the democratic [balance of] power in Nepal,” as the country moves towards a more inclusive and effective form of federalism, which takes into account the legitimate demands of the Madhes people.

Not far away, in the troubled Pakistan, where a flailing economy, proliferation of extremism, and sectarian tensions have collectively placed tremendous pressure on the country's democratic institutions, “*The political landscape of Pakistan has greatly changed in the last few months and it may even change faster in the coming years*”, Kishwar Naheed of International Islamic University (Islamabad) argues. Amid such political indeterminacy, the country may soon reach a critical juncture, where the political elite will face a choice between effective governance and democratic deepening, on one hand, or a failed state and breakdown of order, on the other.

This edition of *Socdem Asia Quarterly* brings together diverse views from leading activists and scholars across Asia, shedding light on the challenges of and opportunities for democratization and inclusive development.

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# Indian Politics Today: SETTING A NEW DISCOURSE

*Dr. D. K. Giri*

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India just celebrated its Sixty Seventh Republic Day. This day, the 26<sup>th</sup> January, India gave up its dominion status and became a Republic. Indian constitution also came into force. It is therefore, pertinent to look back at its achievements, failures and challenges from a progressive standpoint.

In the last 66 years, India has no doubt, taken substantial strides in many areas. Its progress is reflected not only in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, but its scientific technological performance manifest in its nuclear capability as well and the Information Technology (IT). Its most outstanding achievement, however, has been the reinforcement of its parliamentary democracy, followed uninterruptedly since 1947 within the constitutional framework. In fact, India's parliamentary governance stands out in the so-called Third World consisting of

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*There has been a big dichotomy between democracy and development: to be more precise, democracy has lacked progressive politics and discourse.*

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developing countries in which emerged out of the colonial system. But this is half the story. Indian Democracy has failed to liberate a vast number of people in its rural areas from object poverty, destitution, hunger, oppression and exploitation. In this sense, there has been a big dichotomy between democracy and development: to be more precise, democracy has lacked progressive politics and discourse. So, the challenge is to create a new discourse that will deliver development, good governance and a healthy society.

In recent years, the nature of politics, mainly the party politics changed

dramatically. The Congress Party which ruled most of the post-independence period lost its hegemony in Indian politics. In fact, since 1989, India has been witnessing politics of coalition with no party having majority in the Lok Sabha (the Lower House) that forms the government. Only in the last general elections in 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gained majority seats, 312 out of 545, although it led a coalition of parties. However, coalition politics has not yet become a norm: it is seen as a politics of convenience to secure the magic number of majority. Some leaders call it “coalition compulsion”, where one

has to compromise. That is how the last government led by Congress got steeped in corruption, and the Prime Minister then felt helpless with their coalition partners.

In order to fight the menace of corruption, a social movement sprang up in the country, led by an octogenarian social worker, Anna Hazare, who formed a body called “India against Corruption”. The movement caught the imagination of the youth and students in the country and snowballed into a huge national protest, like that of the Arab Spring. Out of this movement, a new political party, called AAP – Aam Aadmi Party (Common Men's Party) came up and captured power in the national capital of Delhi. The party promised “new politics”, but it does not have a particular ideology, although some progressives were part of it.

Ironically, after the party came into power, they left the party. With this dramatic development, the emergent constellation of political actors looks new and a bit more refreshing. The Congress is in decline, the BJP, the right wing party is in power at the centre setting its own agenda, Congress is in a reactive mode, for the first time, the progressives are being heard and have a space, thanks to the new party.

The progressive Left, in popular perception comprises several ideological strands in India. The Left consists of communists, ultra-radicals known as Maoists, or Naxalites, and the social democrats are called the progressive. The communists are organised in two or three small states but lack appeal for their ideology. The social democrats have greater ideological appeal, enjoy popularity but are not optimally organised. They rule two politically important North-Indian states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and are in power in other states as individual leaders in other parties.

It is to be noted that the progressives have influenced the politics last year substantially in terms of bringing common people into leadership. This was done in the past by a party of former untouchables called *Bahujan Samaj Party*,



Image: zeeneews.india.com

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*It is to be noted that the progressives have influenced the politics last year substantially in terms of bringing common people into leadership.*

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but now the common men and women are mobilized into leadership on an ideological basis that can be termed as 'new politics', that is to say: neither based on caste, nor religion, dynasty, feudalism etc. Instead, it is focused mobilization and on policies like “Right to Information”, Right to Food, Education etc. progressives had a role.

In another area, through judicial intervention by using an instrument called public interest litigation (PIL) progressives have intervened for fairness, equity and good governance. Following the aforesaid trend, this year may see a significant shift towards ideological polarisation among the centre-right “and the centre-left”, while the extreme left and right will be further marginalised. As BJP stays in power for another 3 years they will try to consolidate their base, and opposition to their tactics and the progressive forces will have to unite. Congress may be a part of it, a major part if they give up their “old politics”. The communists will also rally behind. So

organisationally the progressives may rely on the Congress and Communists, but ideologically they would lead, as only their platform can counter BJP's.

The main areas of contention would be economic growth with fairer distribution, battle against crony capitalism, redefinition of secularism, a new version of nationalism based on diversity or majoritarianism, corruption, dynastic politics, more centralisation or federalisation, closer integration of states like Jammu and Kashmir and those in the North-East, creation of smaller states etc. There will be consensus on economic growth in whatever form, defence preparedness, foreign policy building strong ties with Asian countries with which India has historical relations, climate change, terrorism and so on. New coalitions will come up on political reforms like state financing of elections, proportional representation, internal democratisation of political parties, greater role of voters like “right to recall” and voters allowance.

No big breakdown in politics is anticipated as India is a big country and it is flexible in its response to crises. Its size and diversity means that crisis in one place are offset by another. However, politics is expected to be more turbulent ideologically as BJP pushes its boundaries. For the first time in Indian political history, BJP has got a majority at the centre to form the Union Government, so they will leave no stone unturned to stay on. Congress remains weak; it will grow weaker as it is old and exhausted: so the prospects are bright for new and progressive forces.

To conclude, however, what is needed is systematic discourse generation on all the above issues of conciliation or contention because a democracy is a political system in making; it is an ever evolving process. It needs renewal and continual reinvigoration with new ideas, policies and direction which we call a discourse. Any democracy without such vibrant discourses stales, stagnates and suffers from lack of growth in different areas.

So a discourse in democracy is indispensable to its growth, dynamism and vibration. But who creates these

discourses? In most democracies, especially in developing countries, policy discourse is initiated by a handful of departmental bureaucrats that is fed into legislatures to be churn out as policies of the country. Such a process is narrow, exclusive and oftentimes divorced from realities on the ground.

In India, we had a progressive, vibrant discourse during the anti-colonial freedom movement under the aegis of Indian National Congress. The second time in Indian history such a discourse was conducted was during the anti-emergency movement in mid 1970s. The third time, one may call it a new discourse engagement, was during the Anna Hazare movement; but that was limited to a the single issue of corruption. Such discourses have sprung up on the back of social and political movements vis-à-vis a particular issue; colonialism, authoritarianism and corruption respectively in the above mentioned periods. And these have been characteristic of social movement, not necessarily discourse setting.

What we are suggesting is discourse development in “peace time” or in normal

political situation. We should involve multiple stakeholders drawn from all the three sectors in any democracy – State, Market, and Civil Society – and deliberate upon multiple issues – social, economic, political, cultural, and spiritual – which would contribute to policy making, norms and agenda setting for state and non-state actors. The primacy given in Indian discourse is to its democratic politics, as development takes a lesser priority. Hence, the innovation has to be on revitalising democracy which should be conducive to development and progress. Thus the progressives face a challenge. When the focus is on making capital, deepening democracy may not attract great attention, like we witness in the Chinese model of development. Progressives cannot but focus on democracy before economic growth. It will be better to strike a balance and simultaneously progress on both democratic and economic fronts.

*Dr. D.K. Giri is the Secretary General of Association of Democratic Socialism (ADS), India.*

Image: www.dawn.com



# WHERE'S THE PARTY?

*Francis Isaac*

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**D**espite his several misses, Benigno Aquino III is still arguably one of the most popular presidents the Philippines has ever had.

Just five months away from the end of his term, the Chief Executive continues to enjoy a net satisfaction rating of +32. This is significantly higher than any other post-Marcos president—even his own mother Corazon Aquino who left office with a +7 net satisfaction rating. Though the latest figure is slightly lower compared to his +41 last September, the President's overall satisfaction rating remain one of the highest in history.

Administration officials attribute the Aquino's favorable numbers to the various reform initiatives that have been introduced in the past five years. Some of these measures include the **Seal of**

**Good Local Governance (SGLG)** which tracks the performance of local governments, and the **Performance Challenge Fund (PCF)** which is designed to incentivize cities and municipalities that promote transparency, participation and accountability.

With Aquino's positive satisfaction rating, one would expect the administration's presidential bet, Mar Roxas, to perform well in the polls. However, the recent survey result of the Social Weather Stations (SWS) for January 2016 show the former Interior Secretary in third place with 21%—lagging behind Vice President Jejomar Binay who has 31% and Senator Grace Poe with 24%.

But how did this situation come about? If the public is satisfied with the President's performance and with the reforms that are now in place, then why is it that Roxas' poll numbers are not improving

## **Social Exclusion**

One major reason is the failure of the reform efforts to address the lingering social and economic inequality in the Philippines. While the administration made government more open and conducive for public scrutiny, it nonetheless failed to significantly reduce the number of poor people and lower income disparities. In fact, a year before the Aquino administration came to power in 2010, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had already released a report noting the slow and uneven decline of poverty in the past four decades (2009: 7). Titled *Poverty in the Philippines: Causes, Constraints, and Opportunities*, the document revealed that in 2003, the country had a poverty incidence<sup>1</sup> of 24.4%. This eventually increased to 26.9% three years later in 2006 (Ibid.: 14).



Image: [www.compassionexplorers.org](http://www.compassionexplorers.org)

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*Supposed economic benefits were hardly felt by the poor, since vital resources remain concentrated among the more affluent segments of Philippine society.*

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More recently, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) released a statement indicating a 26.3% poverty incidence in 2009. This fell slightly to 25.2% in 2012, and declined even further to 24.9% during the first semester of 2013. Yet, in spite of these modest gains, the PSA admitted that the actual number of poor families has grown in recent years, from 3.8 million in 2006 to 4.2 million to 2012. And while poverty incidence may have been relatively low during the early part of 2013, this provides little comfort to the approximately 22.9 million Filipinos living below the poverty threshold of Php5,590 per month.

ADB attributes this problem to “high and persistent levels of inequality” which has plagued the Philippines since the mid-1960s (2009: 46). This was apparent in 2006 when 53% of the country's total family income went to the top 20% (which roughly corresponds to 3.5 million families), “while the poorest 80% (13.9 million) had to share the remaining 47%” (Ibid.: 46).

The state of inequality was in fact so severe that “the income of the richest 10% of Filipino households was equivalent to 19 times that of the poorest 10%.” This means that while the country has shown positive growth performance in recent years, its supposed economic benefits were hardly felt by the poor, since vital resources remain concentrated among the more affluent segments of Philippine society (Ibid.: 46).

### **Inclusive Institutions**

But how can a middle-income country like the Philippines still end up with a quarter of its population still mired in poverty?

For a growing number of scholars, the country's social condition is due to the failure of the nation's leadership to create the necessary institutions for enforcing investment rules, promoting inclusive growth and ensuring equal economic opportunities. This is the position, for instance, of Filomeno Sta. Ana who argue

that the country's weak institutions “have become a binding constraint on growth and investments” (Sta. Ana 2010: 2).

Michael Alba of De La Salle University also shares the same analysis, as he traces the “poor long-term performance of the Philippines... on the stranglehold of oligarchic families on the formal political institutions” (Alba 2010: 23). Known in the academic literature as “bureaucratic capture,” Alba asserts that elite control over the country's regulatory bodies has lead to “poor property-rights enforcement” which hampers “total factor productivity” (Alba 2010: 23).

While the separate studies of Alba and Sta. Ana focus on the poor social condition of the Philippines, they both share the same assumption that institutions affect long-term economic performance (Sta. Ana 2010: 2), and that these are supposed to “enforce (well-formulated and clearly specified) property rights for a broad segment of the population” (Alba 2010: 12).

Institutions can best be understood as “humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction” (North 1991: 97). While they may limit the range of acceptable human action, institutions also have positive social value since they are able to “create order and reduce uncertainty in exchange” (Ibid.: 97).

In an essay written for the United Nations, Douglass North stated that institutions enable us to predict “our dealings with each other every day in all kinds of forms and shapes” thereby creating patterns of social order and stability (2003: 1). Thus, for North, institutions not only “reduce uncertainty in the world” but they also “allow us to get on with everyday business and solve problems effectively” (Ibid.: 1).

This can be felt in the realm of production and exchange where institutions provide “the incentive structure of an economy” (North 1991: 97). They are able to do so by determining production and transaction costs which then allows potential investors to ascertain the profitability of specific economic activities (Ibid.: 97).

The concept of institutions was later used by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson to explain the wide income gap between the rich countries of the North and the poor nations of the South. In their widely acclaimed book *Why Nations Fail*, the authors maintain that, “economic institutions shape economic incentives” (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012: 42) and that a country’s prosperity is dependent on the strength of its institutions.

They further argue that developed nations all have “inclusive economic institutions” which encourage people to engage in economic activities by securing property rights and ensuring a level playing field. On the other hand, countries with “extractive economic institutions” are likely to remain poor since the resources that are obtained from the population benefit only a narrow few (Ibid.: 73-79).

Acemoglu and Robinson also noticed a “strong synergy between economic and political institutions” (Ibid.: 81). Simply put, political institutions are “the rules that govern the incentives in politics” which also “determine who has power in society and to what ends that power can be used” (Ibid: 79-80).

By establishing the link between the two, the authors were able to show that inclusive economic institutions are often accompanied by inclusive political institutions that distribute power in a pluralistic manner. Likewise, extractive economic institutions often go hand-in-hand with extractive political institutions which “concentrate power in the hands of a narrow elite and place few constraints on the exercise of this power” (Ibid.: 81).

This explains why prosperous societies are often democratic—because they were able to build institutions that allow their citizens to have a larger share of political power.

### Feeble Parties

Apart from elections, parties are also common institutional features of contemporary democratic politics. In fact, according to German academic Thomas Meyer parties are “the main organizational forms of modern

democracy” (2007: 8), since they act as intermediaries that bring grassroots issues and concerns to the attention of the state. Parties, therefore, do not only compete for power, but they also aggregate and articulate various societal demands into coherent policy proposals. By performing all these functions, parties are able to: (1) offer the public with competing visions of government; and (2) facilitate democratic representation by fielding candidates for elections.

Parties are also very active in the Philippines, most of which were organized after the restoration of democracy in 1986. In fact, in the last 2013 elections, six major political parties competed with one another, while 124 minor parties vied for 58 reserved party-list seats in the House of Representatives.

Because of their sheer number, one gets the impression that our political parties are fully functioning, and that party politics is well and alive in the Philippines. But as Filipino sociologist Randy David points out, “these parties bear little resemblance to those of the Western democracies” since “they have no

real members to speak of” and “no party funds to collect or to account for” (1997: 141).

This was pointed out by Julio Teehankee, who discovered that 33.5% of all Lower House members had changed party affiliations since 1987. He further stated that 60.2% of all of these turncoats later joined the party of the incumbent Chief Executive in order to gain access to presidential patronage (Teehankee 2012: 186-187).

Because “party membership in the Philippines is transient, fleeting, and momentary” (Teehankee 2012b: 196), most parties are financially ill-equipped with almost no capacity to generate their own resources. As a result, political allegiance is usually rendered to local elite families that are capable of providing the funds and machinery needed to run costly election campaigns.

This is the reason why parties in the Philippines are often “built around dominant local political clans and warlords” since they are the ones who can supply “clientelistic, parochial, and

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*In fact, in the last 2013 elections, six major political parties competed with one another, while 124 minor parties vied for 58 reserved party-list seats in the House of Representatives.*

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Image: en.wikipedia.org



personal inducements” that candidates desperately need (Teehankee 2012: 208).

### Burden of History

This apparent weakness of our political parties can be attributed to the unique history of the Philippine electoral system, which was first introduced during the American colonial period. Seeking the cooperation of the *principalia* class or native elites, the colonial administrators organized the country's first national elections on July 30, 1907 to choose the delegates to the 80-member Philippine Assembly.

Though the elections were supposed, “to teach Filipinos the virtues of democracy” (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003: 263), the colonial authorities actually limited the voting franchise to a select few by imposing strict gender and property qualifications. The restrictions were, in fact, so constraining that only adult males who could read and write in either Spanish or English, and with a net worth of Php500 were allowed to vote.

As a result, there were only 104,966 registered voters in 1907 out of a population of more than two million people. And the number of those who actually voted were even smaller, with 98,251 ballots cast on election day.

Hence, from its initial design, the electoral system was meant to favor a few elite families. Hutchcroft and Rocamora see this as no surprise, since American officials believed that, “the masses (were) ignorant, credulous and childlike,” and had to be guided by their social superiors (2004: 263).

### Dynasties, Not Parties

By excluding the vast majority of Filipinos from the country's first national elections, the elites had little difficulty consolidating their power base, and developing political ties and alliances at the provincial and national levels. This decision of the American colonial government proved to be a major historical turning-point, for it paved the way for the emergence of political dynasties and their subsequent domination of Philippine electoral politics.

The extent of dynastic power can be seen in the composition of the Philippine Congress which has been dominated by some 160 families since 1907. In fact, according to Teehankee, dynasties “account for nearly 20 percent or 424 of the 2,407 men and women who have been elected to the national legislature since 1907” (2012: 188). *Voters, therefore, encounter a pattern of repeating surnames, as the same political families vie for the same position every election time.*

Dynasties, however, are not content with simply maintaining the posts that they now hold. Rather, they also seek to expand their base and further solidify their power by fielding other clan members for more and more elective positions (Mendoza et al. 2014: 3). A typical clan, in other words, tries “to reproduce itself by running for as many elective positions as its members can, and bequeathing these posts to clan members upon reaching their term limits” (Teehankee 2012: 207). In the 16th Congress (2013-present) for example, there are at last five (5) political dynasties that have two (2) of their members in the Lower House—one elected as district representative, while the other through the party-list system (de Santos 2013).

Additional data further reveal that after the 2010 elections, 64 families had two or more of their relatives elected into office. The biggest winner was the Ampatuan clan which, despite the public outcry over the Maguindanao Massacre, still won a total of 15 seats (Tiongson-Mayrina 2010). By the following elections, the same clan fielded 34 family members, eight (8) of who were official candidates of the ruling Liberal Party (de Santos 2013).

Because of their hold on power in Muslim Mindanao, six Ampatuans had been elected 13 times in total. They are also related, either by blood or by affinity, to other political families in the area, such as the Mangudadatus, the Midtimbangs, the Sinsuats, the Dilangalens, the Datumanongs, the Hatamans and the Semas, thus cementing their influence (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism 2014).

### Groping Out of the Dark

Despite their dominance, there is now a growing clamor to ban political dynasties. On January 28, 2013 for instance, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) issued a pastoral statement denouncing “the continued existence of family political dynasties.” The document further asserted that, “political dynasties breed corruption and ineptitude” for they “limit the entry that can bring in new ideas and offer better services” (CBCP 2013).

A month later, a group calling itself as the **Movement Against Dynasties (MAD)** launched a campaign to outlaw political dynasties through a people's initiative. Hoping to gather 5.2 million signatures, the group seeks to pass a law that would mark “the beginning of the end of political dynasties in the Philippines” (Bitog 2013).

But with less than a year away from elections, it is highly unlikely that such efforts will come to fruition. In all probability, the 2016 polls will still be dominated by familiar family names who would sing, dance and cheat their way to power.

All hope is not lost, however, since there are existing efforts to challenge these dynasties and build a truly functioning party system. One outstanding example is the **AKBAYAN Party**—a Leftwing political party that has managed to combine programmatic commitment with real electoral gains.

By all indications, the struggle will be hard and long. But with the looks of it, the party is just starting.

*Francis Isaac is a researcher based in De La Salle University, Manila.*

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<sup>1</sup> Poverty incidence refers to the proportion of population whose annual per capita income falls below the per annual per capita poverty threshold to the total number of population.

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# JAPAN'S EVOLVING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Sven Saaler  
(FES Tokyo)

After the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was able to secure a comfortable victory in the Lower House (House of Representatives) elections in December 2014, Shinzo Abe's government has enjoyed a stable majority in the Japanese Diet. The government's agenda is officially focused on a revitalization of the economy by means of a package of measures dubbed (modesty aside) *Abenomics*.

In reality, Abe's priorities and those of his ultra-conservative supporters lie in other areas of policy and have been summarized by Abe himself under the slogan "overcoming the postwar regime". "Postwar regime" is understood here to be, first of all, the Japanese constitution, which was adopted in 1947 during the Allied occupation, as well as pacifism, which is deeply ingrained in Japanese

*Abe's slogan implicitly negates also the democratic principles of postwar Japan and turns against the American influence in contemporary Japanese society.*

society, having developed from historical experience in WWII and established institutionally in Article 9 of the constitution, in which "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation." Abe's slogan implicitly negates also the democratic principles of postwar Japan and turns against the American influence in contemporary Japanese society.

In 2015, Abe took further steps to invalidate (or “re-interpret”) Article 9 of the constitution. The cabinet had already announced in 2014 that Japan's participation in collective security systems could from now on be recognized as conforming to the constitution. Following the announcement of this declaration, the government applied itself in 2015 to putting this new interpretation in the statutes. The cabinet presented to the Diet a bill that would make it easier for the government to deploy the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) worldwide, within different scenarios.

The new Security Law was passed in July and September in the Lower and Upper Houses despite fierce demonstrations against the plans of the government, which were seen as a “departure from pacifism” and an overriding of Article 9 of the constitution. At times, more than 100,000 people demonstrated in front of the Diet building in Tokyo. The government remained unmoved by these rallies, however, with LDP MOP (Lower House) Shigeru Ishiba describing the at times very loud protests as constituting an “act of terrorism.” (*Japan Times*, 1.12.2013)

Abe aims at a comprehensive revision of the constitution in the coming years. The 1947 constitution has never been revised, mostly because of the polarization regarding the handling of Article 9: One camp calls for the deletion or the extensive revision of Article 9 in order to allow the government to send Japanese military forces into regions of conflict; the other camp calls for the preservation of the Article despite the inconsistencies that arise from the general acceptance of the existence of the SDF as well as the military alliance with the USA. However, Abe's objectives and those of his supporters go far beyond the revision of Article 9. In a draft constitution published in 2012 by the LDP, Japan is referred to as “a state with a long history and a unique culture” and a strong national unity with the Emperor (Tennō) as a symbol of this unity. Whereas in the current constitution human rights are given prominence, a future constitution based on the LDP draft would attach less importance to rights and more to duties. In particular, the validity of rights would be subject to “the common good”, which of course

would be defined by the government or political elite.

The background for the importance Abe attaches to “overcoming the postwar regime” is growing social inequality. The growing divide between rich and poor is the result of two decades of neoliberal reforms, which have been (and continue to be) accelerated by the Abe government. The intention appears to be the reinforcement of social cohesion with a simultaneous reduction of social benefits (under the guise of reform<sup>2</sup>) through the restoration of “national honor” and independence, the strengthening of the national sense of solidarity, and the consolidation of the bond between the people and the state.

Cutbacks in social benefits have become necessary because the Abe government has slashed corporate tax dramatically and has increased the military budget. Lowering corporate tax was one of the promises with which the Abe government secured the support of Japan's industry. Further, in September 2015 the government passed a revised Worker Dispatch Law, making it now possible to employ temporary/agency workers indefinitely as “irregularly employed”.

This helps companies to keep their personnel costs down. The number of permanent employees has been sinking for a long time (although there was a small increase in 2015) while the number of non-permanent workers (including agency workers) has increased steadily, reaching a peak of 40% of the total number of employees in the fall of 2015. Gratitude came quickly from Japanese industry, with little restraint or fear of criticism of too close ties with the LDP: The influential *Keidanren* (Japan Business Federation) announced in October 2015 that, in recognition of the “growth-stimulating measures” taken by the Abe cabinet, its 1300 members would be urged to provide the LDP with party donations for the Upper House (House of Councillors) elections in 2016.

In September 2015, the second stage of Abenomics was announced. The “contents” of Abenomics 2.0 show that the government's economic policies have degenerated into an accumulation of empty catchphrases. The new goals of Abenomics have been defined as: “Creating a strong economy that opens up a brighter future”; “providing a child care support that fosters family dreams”; “establishing a social security system that

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*At times, more than 100,000 people demonstrated in front of the Diet building in Tokyo.*

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Image: www.zerohedge.com



leads to a stronger sense of reassurance.” These new measures sound flowery, but they are associated with specific objectives, e.g. achieving economic growth of 20% by 2020. However, in light of recent growth figures, this goal appears utterly unrealistic, since it would require an average economic growth rate of 3% annually – something Japan has not seen in decades. The second pillar of Abenomics 2.0 has also been substantiated with unrealistic figures: The birth rate is to grow from a current 1.4 children to 1.8. It remains unclear how this goal is to be achieved, particular since ever sinking incomes are discouraging people to marry, let alone have children.

Progressive and social-democratic powers currently benefit little from the anti-government mood in society, which manifested itself in the mass demonstrations in 2015, although factions of the Japan Innovation Party (previously Japan Restoration Party) decided in late 2015 to align themselves with the liberal-progressive Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), Japan's largest opposition party. Polls have shown, however, that a potential gain in votes for the opposition parties is minimal and, even if elections were to be held for the Lower House in 2016, a change in power would be unlikely. The Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDJP) is represented by 5 seats in the Upper and Lower House – the minimum required in the Japanese Diet for legal status as a political party. Two candidates are up for reelection in the Upper House partial election set for summer 2016. The election thus will decide the future, and indeed the very existence, of the party.

The outcome of the Upper House elections in summer 2016 will ultimately be decisive for Shinzo Abe's agenda, too. If the opposition parties fail to defend their seats and the LDP succeeds in securing a two-thirds majority in the Upper House, Abe will without doubt attempt by hook and crook to implement his “life goal” (Abe) – the revision of the Japanese constitution – and with this the *overcoming of the postwar regime*.

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.jimin.jp/policy/policy\\_topics/pdf/seisaku-109.pdf](https://www.jimin.jp/policy/policy_topics/pdf/seisaku-109.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See the FES study, “Die Wirtschaftspolitik der Regierung Abe (Abenomics)”, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/12150.pdf>.

## 2016 Indonesia's Outlook: YEAR OF DECISIVE BATTLE ON DEMOCRACY

*Muhammad Ridha*

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The major event that would impact political dynamics in Indonesia is the threat of the crisis of capitalism. One doesn't need to be rocket scientist to see that current global economics is in dire needs of recovery. Nevertheless up until now, the global economy is yet to fully recover. Although there are several improvements in developed countries, their level of growth is still considered weak. This weakness is accompanied by the potential burst of China's economy due to the decline in global demand for its manufacturing output (Roberts 2016). This threat of crisis has been exacerbated with the increasing level of inequality. New research conducted by Oxfam has found that 62 wealthiest person in the world own as much as half of total population.

Therefore, the economic slowdown of global capitalism becomes the main

concern for the Indonesia's ruling class for preparing their political agenda over the state. In the Financial Notes of Indonesia's Budget Plan for 2016, the Indonesian Government decided that their development plan should be adjusted to weakening trend of global economic as forecasted by the International Monetary Fund. Facing this situation, Jokowi's administration has proposed ten main policies to prevent the potential impact of the crisis: (1) increasing public spending on infrastructure to strengthen national connectivity; (2) improving the efficiency of public spending; (3) accelerating bureaucratic reform; (4) supporting political stability through strengthening defense and security sector; (5) eliminating spatial and gap inequality; (6) supporting and improving the service quality of current universal social security; (7) improving health

infrastructure; (8) improving the mechanism for fiscal decentralization; (9) developing 1 million public housing for low income population; and (10) anticipating uncertainty in the global economy through optimizing national reserve.

In the appearance, all off these policies seem adequate to face the crisis. However, if we scrutinize on how all of these can be implemented, we will found contradictory process that might worsen the life of Indonesia's population and thus accelerate the crisis itself. For instance, the government's decision to quicken the infrastructural development requires massive on available land. This would facilitate rampant “primitive accumulation” through large-scale eviction residents in certain areas, especially the poor, from their land and social space.

Other policies such as bureaucratic reforms has similar problem. The reform hasn't been developed as an attempt to improve social services of the government towards their people, but instead as an effort to provide an efficient and effective bureaucratic mechanism to support the flow and interest of the capital.

Government initiative to provide public housing and health infrastructure also will be trapped into in a similar vein. Most of these development projects will use public private partnership (PPP) scheme, which strengthen the power of private sector. This process will potentially undermine the quality of these necessary service since in the long-run taxpayers need to shoulder the debt burden.

### **2016: Consolidation of The Ruling Class**

Overall, what will happen in 2016 for the ruling class is the same old story of imposing more capital power as an attempt to face the threat of crisis. This means that Jokowi's administration will aggressively promote capital interest as part to accelerate economic growth. However, this process will not easily accepted by some segment of population. Capital-led development will be challenged through people's resistance. It can be argued that in 2016, Indonesia will



Image: islaminiindonesia.com

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*The consolidation through accommodation might occur through the inclusion of some segment of the leadership in social movement.*

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experience intensification of social conflict.

There is nothing new from this process. For instance, land eviction due to the development of infrastructure has facilitated agrarian conflict. According to Consortium for Agrarian Reform (*Konsorsium untuk Pembaruan Agraria*, KPA), in 2015 there were 252 cases of social conflict over land. 28% of the conflict was related to infrastructural development (KPA 2015). It is valid to say that in 2016 conflict over land will not subside but potentially increase.

The intensification of conflict might impact the attitude of the ruling class as a social alliance of the political elite, when dealing with the people. In this case, consolidation of power within the ruling class is important. Dispute of interest among elite needs to be overcome. This can be seen in how Jokowi's administration tries to include several parties from the opposition as to strengthen its political base. It will be enacted through accommodation by providing several political position for the

oppositional elite. This method has been enacted in 2015 by Jokowi through reshuffling his own cabinet. For 2016, this tendency seems to be maintained.

Interestingly, the consolidation through accommodation might occur through the inclusion of some segment of the leadership in social movement. Bear in mind that Jokowi's victory has to do with his populist rhetoric that appeal to some segment of social movement. Recall the category of “*relawan*” (volunteer) that famously appeared during the campaign, it was basically derived from some element of social movement that participate actively to support Jokowi. Instead of seeing this as “treason”, there were some logical argument from these element of the social movement on the need to support Jokowi as to promote welfare policy and change overall policy orientation in the government. However, within this juncture, the closeness of these elements towards Jokowi becomes the modes of accommodation which aim to moderate current people's resistance.

## Struggle over Democracy and Opportunities Progressive Forces

One could argue, the reason behind this accommodation was to create sufficient political base to change current terrain of Indonesia' democracy. For the ruling class, the existing democratic space seems uncontrollable. Current form of Indonesia's democracy provide opportunity for the marginalized and oppressed people to express their discontent towards the ruling class. Due to democracy, the government cannot arbitrarily use coercive force against its people. If this condition is not addressed immediately, it can be significant barrier for the effectiveness of the capital-led development. Therefore, it is imperative for the government to limit current democratic space.

The most recent maneuver from the government to limit current democratic space is through the revision of Anti-Terrorist Act. Recent terrorist attack in Jakarta justify the government initiative to revise Anti-Terrorist Act which will give more power for the state apparatus to conduct aggressive measure towards

any potential act of terrorism. The revision even gives authority for the intelligence forces to arrest people who are considered as terrorist. There is some chance for abuse of power from this given authority since there is no measurable definition of terrorism.

In the formal democratic space, another potentiality for limiting the democratic space comes from the new initiative for codifying Law on Election. This codification would strengthen current position of dominant political parties, making any political change in the parliament harder. It also empowered the oligarchic forces that use to rule within all political parties that makes impossible for the occurrence of internal democracy. Indeed, there might be slight chances that 2016 will be signified by some setback in its democratic governance.

Interestingly, despite of the ruling class assault, the people's resistance does not necessarily submit. Among organized elements of the social movement, especially labor movement, there is some important development in which

they propagate the needs for popular classes to build their own political movement and political party.

This people's political party is needed to challenge current power relation that dominate and control the structure of state power. They see that conquering state power through election become inevitable to realize this project. To realize this project, some element of social movement are even ready to be involved in the local election through encouraging candidate from the movement as part of the trial for them to contest in political arena. Here, one could argue that in 2016 we might find interesting maneuver, and experimentation, among social movement to strengthen their political organization as part of struggling vis a vis the ruling class. Therefore, 2016 would be an important year of decisive battle that defines the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

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Image: time.com



## Political Landscape of Nepal:

# THE 2016 OUTLOOK

*Rajju Malla Dhakal*

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Nepal has witnessed significant political transition in the last 25 years, including the change of guard from monarchy to constitutional monarchy and to a federal republic in 2006. The present political development is the function of decade long conflict that ended with a comprehensive peace accord (CPA) which envisaged an “inclusive” Constitution written through a broad based constituent assembly (CA).

The drafting of the constitution (a key milestone of the CPA) proved rockier than envisaged. The first CA led by the ultra-left UCPN Maoist<sup>1</sup> could not deliver the constitution even after time extensions and four government changes in five years. The constitution process was stalled with the dissolution of CA in 2012 leading to a constitutional crisis and political uncertainty. Although the high level political committee (HLPC), a

transitional mechanism to find the way-out, was able to end the political uncertainty with the decision to elect a second CA to bring the stalled constitution-writing back-on-tract, it ushered an undemocratic culture. Notwithstanding the spirit of inclusion in the CPA the absence of women and the traditionally excluded groups in the HLPC questioned the broader ownership of its far-reaching decisions the very issue the constitution is expected to resolve.

The second CA in 2013 witnessed the reemergence of Nepali Congress<sup>2</sup> as the largest party. The second CA was mandated to complete the unfinished new constitution by resolving the issues of contention. Although people's pressure tried to leave no room for complacency the second CA dragged the contentious constitutional issues for almost two years mirroring the deadlock of the erstwhile CA.

The devastating earthquake (April 2015) came at a time when the CA was struggling to find political consensus on the issues. The disaster that caused unprecedented destruction of lives and property suddenly provided impetus to the political parties to speed up the constitutional process to pave way to a stable politics that can spearhead the rehabilitation and reconstruction and pick the threads of long stalled development processes. Ultimately the CA decided to resolve the issues through voting. However the few Madhesi parties represented in the CA boycotted the voting accusing the dominant political parties of using the opportunity to push their own interests.

Nepal faced political paradox after the promulgation of new Constitution in September 2015. Although the new Constitution (passed by an overwhelming



Image: recordnepal.com

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*The subsequent Madhes uprising and the supply blockade from India that followed continue (now in its fifth month) to hurt the earthquake devastated landlocked country socially, economically and politically.*

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majority) was hailed for its inclusiveness, it failed to satisfy the Madhesi parties. The subsequent Madhes uprising and the supply blockade from India that followed continue (now in its fifth month) to hurt the earthquake devastated landlocked country socially, economically and politically.

It is difficult to satisfy all groups in a country characterized as ethnic mosaic. However it cannot be denied that possibility existed to avert the misinterpretation of the new Constitution (and possibly the agitation) through timely communication on the rationale for speeding up the process through voting. Nonetheless, the cumulative impact of natural and human induced disasters has dashed hopes of people who expected the new Constitution to end the woes of two wasted decades. It looms as the biggest setback for the country's fledgling democracy.

The “two Madhes provinces” in the new Constitution as opposed to the Madhesi parties' demand for a single province in the southern plains is the main bone of contention. The contention must be resolved at the earliest through dialogue among key stakeholders with consideration for other implications to prevent the country “jumping from frying pan to the fire”. The southern plains stretch for almost 800 kilometers from east to west, along the Indo-Nepal border.

Madhes issue did not suddenly emerge in September 2015. A long history of a sense of discrimination is at the root of Madhes struggle. Hence the current uprising should also be looked upon as struggle against “discriminatory” practices and for recognition of rights, political, cultural and economic, as well as a struggle for equal representation and opportunity. Political pundits are of the view that the

“process” was perceived to be discriminatory rather than the content of the Constitution.

There are over 150 registered political parties in Nepal, however only a handful of parties are the key actors. They are Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal United Marxist Leninist, United Communist Party of Nepal Maoist, Rastriya Prajatantrik Party and United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) a coalition of Madhesi parties [Federal Socialist Forum-Nepal, Tarai Madhes Democratic Party, Nepal Sadbhawana Party and Tarai Madhes Sadbhawana Party]. Except for NSP all parties in UDMF were formed after the 2006 people's movement.

The Nepali Congress, a centrist right party founded in 1947, is the oldest party that played key roles to establish multiparty democracy in Nepal. Recently

NC led the promulgation of the new Constitution through the second CA and was supported by the progressive left CPNUML and the ultra-left UCPNM the second and third largest parties respectively. NC was also supported by RPP, a party of former royalists.

The political left has always been part of the burgeoning democracy in Nepal. The CPN Marxist, founded in 1949, split into many factions in 1962 due to the internal rifts. However a coalition of left parties, the United Left Front colluded with the NC in the prodemocracy movement in 1989. The CPNUML, formed in the immediate aftermath by merging the two factions Marxist and the Marxist-Leninist, became the second largest party in 1991. It also headed a minority government for nine months during 1994/95.

The CPNUML emerged as a democratic progressive left force after the 2006 political transition. Although it was only a third largest party in the first CA it mostly stayed in power as the coalition partner in the UCPNM government and

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*The political left has always been part of the burgeoning democracy in Nepal.*

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Image: www.frontline.in



later headed the coalition after the fall of UCPNM government. The second CA in 2013 brought the CPNUML in power again as coalition partner of NC. The CPNUML is heading the current government after the NC led coalition was dissolved after promulgation of the new Constitution.

The emergence of CPNUML as an alternative democratic force has helped balance the democratic power in Nepal. Despite many splits and mergers the party has maintained national attention. The country's poverty and deprivation continues to offer a fertile ground for communist ideals. However, the appeal for the UML is seemingly diminishing with the advent of more vocal UCPNM. Federalism is a political cry for many ethnic groups particularly the Madhes. The UML's position change on federalism from the first CA to the second is seen as the party abandoning the ethnic politics. As long as social cleavages like caste and ethnicity exist (not just class as seen by Marx) there will be a role for a progressive left. More importantly its absence from ethnic politics may allow radical ethnic claims to exist and continue.

A significant shift in the political landscape in the next few years is expected. With the promulgation of the new Constitution establishment of a federal system is imminent. This will shift significant power from the center to the province which is likely to have far reaching impact on the overall political dynamics including politics of negation. However the success of this change rests on leaders' ability to resolve the core issue of Madhes and their will to implement the Constitution.

The promulgation of new Constitution offers many prospects for reform. The Constitution guarantees many legal and systemic provisions to address the discriminatory practices and the root causes of social exclusion while recognizing the rights of people, political, cultural and economic. The Constitution ensures equal representation and opportunity and has binding affirmative action provisions for the traditionally excluded group including women.

Moreover, the effective implementation of federalism is envisaged to change the overall political dynamics in the country. Nevertheless systemic change is not easy and political culture evolved through decades die hard.

Nepal witnessed a decade of unexpected political alliances (and break ups) between the most unlikely partners, right, left, center and extreme left. Progressive and regressive forces forming government together irrespective of their radically different history and diagonally opposite ideology became common. The lure for power and resources seem to motivate such alliances. While alliance demonstrates compromise, driven by the lack of trust and history of betrayal, parties try to push their own agendas often creating deadlocks. However there are also instances of political alliance that averted grave political crisis in the country which offer a gleam of hope. Political leaders are aware that people are increasingly expressing skepticism over frequent political deadlock and questioning their ability and will to deliver political and socio-economic stability. It is believed that the example of 2013 election which showed people can and will respond decisively to punish extremism that undermines their broader collective interest will keep leaders on their toes.

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<sup>1</sup>The UCPNM, an ultra-left force, was formed by merging many splinter factions of original CPN which went underground in 1996 to struggle against the establishment. The struggle called people's war lasted for a decade and ended with signing a peace accord in 2006. The group was elected as the largest party in the first CA (many think under dubious circumstances). Recently a significant group defected from UCPNM to form a new political force.

<sup>2</sup>The Nepali Congress, founded in 1947, is the oldest party that struggled to establish and institutionalize multiparty democracy in Nepal for over six decades. It also played key role in restoring multiparty democracy in 1990.

Mapping Pakistan's Political Landscape:

# THE 2016 OUTLOOK

*Dr. Kishwar Naheed*

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Pakistan adopted the Government of India Act 1935 as interim constitution after the independence with some necessary amendments. In its early years, the Pakistani state was based on two organs, the army and bureaucracy and the foundation of parliamentary system was based on bureaucracy, the major power of assemblies were transferred to some top bureaucrats and army men. Not only policy-making was done by the bureaucrats but government also was run by the bureaucrats.

The role of army was also very important because the bureaucrats use them for the removal and change of the state heads. After the independence Muslim league was not prepared for the new challenge of nation building, thus failed to transform into an effective government. The most important element in the post

independent era was to frame a constitution and then elected the houses for reflection of democracy of the country. The ongoing issues of governability and traumatic political history of Pakistan is due the experience of the military rule which intersperse in shorter elected interregna and resulted in constant of imbalances in power structure of Pakistan.

In the absence of enduring constitutionalism, consensual politics and proper mechanism of electoral transmission of power is reflected in the Pakistan's cyclic phases of instability. These irregular practices raise multiplied issues and crises in Pakistan like the rising clout of religious fundamentalism, jihadism, terrorism, ethno-regional polarization violent sectarianism coupled with the Kalashnikov & heroin culture, economic downturn and bigotry are

rising burning issues/ questions about the survival of Pakistan as a state.

Pakistan is still developing its political institutions and in the absence of these institutions it is very difficult to assess political development itself. What I mean by developments of its institution is that each institution (Judiciary, executive, legislative and media) should jealously guard its value system. For political development in Pakistan these institutions should be in harmony and never overlap each other. It is the very essence of our constitution as well as a necessary condition to keep federalism intact.

The present political development in Pakistan depends upon the relationship between Armed forces and the Government, by and large a political phenomenon prevalent in Third world countries. The armed forces are the most

disciplined and organized institution this country has inherited from British Raj. It took advantage of the fragile political setup soon after independence and came to the forefront and all and sundry succumb to its might. Some political analyst on the left cite it the main reason as to why the political institutions failed to evolve. Even at the time of independence those institutions which were well established like Judiciary Railways etc lost its inherited values. Politicians were handpicked among Feudal or maverick political families and martial law was imposed for most of the time.

After Pervaiz Musharf era the political parties again started to prevail and tried to keep the armed forces under civilian Government. In some instances the parliament has shown maturity and thwarted the plan of the establishment to install their hand picked civilians as during the term of Imran khan. However this tug of war is still going on and establishment is still controlling most of the avenues of political field like foreign relations and controlling the extra State actors.

However, everything is not lost and political parties have adopted 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, developed consensus on NFC award and carried out local bodies elections though judiciary has major claim in this regard. Presently in each province AJK and Gilgit Baldistan a different political party is in Government and not a major crisis has developed. This is a leapfrog from the political era of 80s and 90s and this mean that politics is evolving but slowly.

The problem of development of Gwadar port and development of smaller provinces is also being handled by political forces. One of the major problem Baluchistan is facing that with the development of Gwadar the Baluch Majority which is already very thin may be converted into minority and this will not augur well for the fragile federalism as Baluch people are already considering themselves a subjugated nation, a problem about which the Baluch people are very sensitive and have carried out 6 insurgencies against the centre. Political



Image: pakarmedforces.com

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*The armed forces are the most disciplined and organized institution this country has inherited from British Raj.*

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development of Pakistan is also dependent upon the development of Baluchistan, which has a coast line of 750 KMs but has one major port and UAE with much less coast line has many major ports. We need to get out of these crises and as early as possible otherwise a meaningful democracy which should be subservient to the marginalized segment of society will not be able to function.

Another crisis is the crisis of major corruption and lack of Governance. This can only be addressed through the development of Judiciary and media as being controlled in Europe albeit to a certain extend.

For the first time in the history of Pakistan, political trends are challenged and the political drama in Pakistan has been heating up at a time when the sizzling summer heat has been subsiding. It is become difficult for all the major political actors and for their parties. The guy on horseback is charitable restless nights to some of them as others are suffer due to their fatten ego. The MQM

has already been cut down to size by the Rangers' action. Its fondness for aggression has been neutralized and the big lips of its Fuhrer have been zip up. Its capability to take the economic hub of the Pakistan to rust, often at the drop of a cap, has been noticeably reduced and even not absolutely eliminate. The trick of resignations almost not improved its bargain situation in comparison with the armed forces establishment. The furious and roaring of its supermom has futile to weather conditions the outfitted storm.

The conciliatory loom of the PPP in the consequences of the disgraceful thunder of its co-chairman beside the security forces provided a few intervals but that seem to be too brief. One time again, the Federal Investigative and Security Agencies contain upped the ante not in favor of the close confidantes of the ex-president, Asif Ali Zardari. The almost cadres of the party are already in the doldrums. They can neither shout effectively nor cause any risk of biting its own. The re-organization of party in the time-span of the Pakistan will trial the

determination of its young leader, more than ever in Punjab where the PTI has emerged as an substitute choice. The fresh leader of the PPP has hereditary too many of the close buddies of his father but has hardly innate the magnetism and power of his grandfather and mother. But he failed to formulate any significant impact on the slippery political landscape of Pakistan.

Imran Khan has regained some of his missing position with the three successive decisions of the election tribunals in his favor. On the other hand, the PML-N's choice of contest the verdicts of the tribunals in the electoral ground instead of high courts have put it in an uncomfortable situation. PTI lose the by-election, especially in the two constituencies of Lahore, it have far reaching ramification for the party. Its prediction for the 2018 general elections will be greatly compromised. On the other hand, the PML-N loses and it disgruntled parties of Sindh the MQM and PPP may also join the PTI in the chorus for next-election. This must-winning situation of both political parties will keep the political barometer of the country high for the coming year.

The Operation 'Zarb-e-Azab' basically launched against militancy of some groups, have morphed into a crusade against corruption. on there, the political parties of Sindh are feeling the temperature but sooner or later the crusaders will hammer at the door of the ruling PML-N as well also. The file of super scams has already been on hand in the Supreme Court (SC) by the 'National Accountability Bureau' (NAB). The terms of the sound famous "Martin Niemöller the outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler, aptly express the quandary of the ruling PML-N about armed forces activism in recent months:

*"First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me."*

To confer this war against the corruption-cum-militancy still a appearance of neutrality, it will be soon absolute to the largest province and then Centre as well also on the hit point. While right now the PML-N is busy in singing hymns in favor of the 'Rangers' operation but soon deep down in their hearts the stalwarts are sentiments of the arrival of the storm.

Now in present 'Rangers Operation' enjoyed and remain the guiding principle of some major political parties and their actors. On the other hand, this motto of 'Pope Leo X' is not obtainable to work to any further extent for our political class. The political landscape of Pakistan has greatly changed in the last few months and it may even change faster in the coming years. The political parties are finding it tough to patch up with the newly up-and-coming realities. More the years, politics in Pakistan have been criminalized.

This nexus between politics and crimes has divided the masses from the political structure. on the other hand, this time

approximately, the script on the wall is clear: de-criminalize politics or face the melody. The original mechanisms of liability are approximately fictional in more or less all political parties. As a result, outer forces have to get involved for cleansing the disorder. This refinement of the political stables has strike a harmony with the masses and as a result it cannot be simply resisted by the political class. It is a favorable time for the political leadership to make sure apology instead of resist the trendy flood against corruption. The final may outlay the political parties and the fragile political system exceedingly. Political Parties promote the trend of political endurance or tolerance for the stability of democracy and balance between the organs of the state which are pushing & pulling each other like the step brother.

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