Introducing the Power, Conflict and Democracy Programme

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with
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The state of democracy in the Global South is marked by a striking paradox: while liberal democracy has attained an ideologically hegemonic position through two so-called waves of democracy, the qualities of such democracies is increasingly called into question. The "old" democracies in the global South like Sri Lanka are weakened. Democracy deficits have emerged within constitutional and institutional arrangements as well as in political practices. Further, the "third wave of democracy" is over. "New" democracies like Indonesia have fostered freedoms, privatisation and decentralisation but continue to suffer from poor governance, representation and participation. Hence there are general signs of decline. Vulnerable people are frustrated with lack of actual influence and sustained elitism. Politicians winning elections often need to foster ethnic and religious loyalties, clientelism and the abuse of public resources. Powerful groups and middle classes with poor ability to win elections tend to opt for privatisation and return partially to authoritarian governance.

Critical questions are therefore asked about the feasibility of democracy in developing country contexts. Some observers say it is only a problem of better crafting of institutions. Others contend that "full" democratisation was premature in the first place and that necessary preconditions need to be created beforehand. This article argues that both positions are based on a narrow and static understanding of democracy. While the core elements of democracy are universal, real world democracies develop (or decline) over time and through contextual dynamics; in processes and contexts of actors, institutions and relations of power. Therefore,

the crucial task is to analyse the problems and options of expanding the historically "early" freedoms and deficient elements of democracy that fortunately exist in spite of poor socio-economic and political conditions in countries such as Sri Lanka and Indonesia rather than giving up on these freedoms until the other conditions have somehow improved. This is to advance towards the universally accepted aim of democracy in terms of popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality; and to be able to use democracy to handle conflicts and alter unequal and unsustainable development.

With this in mind, researchers at the Universities of Oslo (Norway), Gadjah Mada (Indonesia) and Colombo (Sri Lanka) have come together in a collective research- and post-graduate programme. The idea is to pool their research projects and results, and to promote doctoral as well as master studies by way of, first, a joint framework for analysing power, conflict and democracy and, second, a basic electronic peer reviewed journal and report series (published by *PCD-Press*) to the benefit of students, scholars and priorities in the region. Basic resources - in addition to the participants own voluntary work and projects - are provided by their respective universities and the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU).

This initiative is very much open for similarly oriented scholars and institutions that wish to share resources, capacities and aspirations within the field.[1] In fact, the main aim of this first issue of the *PCD Journal* is to present our points of departure and ongoing research in order to stimulate contact, co-operation and wider discussion. Inquiries to the participating researchers and submissions to forthcoming issues of this electronic *PCD Journal* are most welcome. Prospective contributors are invited to contact the editors for further information and dialog about potential contributions.

Having detailed the points of departure, this article is followed by a presentation by Olle Törnquist of our analytical framework and a series of articles on the major priorities of the research. Two articles summarise what we know and what remains to find out about the over-all standard and dynamics of democracy in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In the first case Willy Samadhi and Nicolaas Warouw draw on *Demos'* national expert surveys in 2003-04 and 2007 (Priyono et.al. 2007; Demos 2008). In the second case, Jayadeva Uyangoda consults relevant parts of the report on the state of democracy in South Asia, co-ordinated by the Delhi based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (2007), and adds insights from local surveys and case studies. Within these general contexts, project leaders discuss then the state of knowledge and present the key themes and specific problems that are being addressed within the programme. In the context of Indonesia, Aris Mundayat and Budi Irawanto discuss democratic Governmentality; Pratikno and Nanang Indra Kurniawan focus on the problem of democratic representation; Mohtar Mas'oed and Pitra Narendra focus on political financing; and Muhadi Sugiono and Fransiskus A Jalong discuss Indonesian conflict resolution.   In the Sri Lankan framework,

a comprehensive review by Jayadeva Uyangoda of relevant research is followed by presentations of a number of major problems that call for further studies. Laksiri Fernando discusses relations between capital and labour and new trade union politics; Janaki Jayawardena focuses on women in electoral politics; Premakumara de Silva addresses the issue of religion and grounded democracy; and Nirmal Ranjith Devasiro discusses radical politics, economic liberalisation and ethnic conflicts. Finally, Kristian Stokke (with Olle Törnquist and Gyda Sindre) discusses crucial issues and emerging results about conflict resolution in the aftermath on the 2004 tsunami in Aceh (Indonesia) and Sri Lanka. Additional research within the programme, including a number of PhD projects, will be presented in forthcoming issues of the PCD Journal.

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It is important to underline once again, that the outlines of our analytical framework and thematic research are put forward for open discussion and to hopefully attract wider co-operation.

Problematic paths towards democracy

Historically, there are two paths towards democracy in the South.[2] The *first* path (which dominated until the mid-1960s and which was part of the so-called second world wide wave of democracy) is associated with the struggle for state sovereignty and citizenship against colonialism and feudal-like subordination of people. The basic argument was about the need for social, economic and political modernisation. This called for structural change through, some said, the expansion of market-based capitalism, or, others said, state directed markets or even socialism. One debate was about what classes and groups that would be interested and able to propel what strategies and reforms such as redistribution of land. Another debate was whether and how democracy was a realistic political project given the deficit of structural preconditions. While Latin America provided early examples of transitions to independence and democracy, Asia and Africa came after World War II. In Asia, the main focus of our programme, only a few countries managed to sustain basic elements of the first path to democracy, primarily India and Sri Lanka (the similar dynamics in South Korea and Taiwan was later). Most other countries deteriorated into authoritarian or dictatorial rule, including the Philippines under Marcos and Indonesia under "guided democracy" towards the end of Sukarno's reign and later during Suharto's "new order". Leaders like Marcos and Suharto thus joined the counterparts in for instance Singapore, Vietnam and China who still say that the conditions are not yet ripe for whatever democracy they claim to be in favour of.

The *second* path to democracy in the global South is associated with the countries and peoples that did not make it in the first round or backslided into authoritarian or even dictatorial rule, including Suharto's Indonesia. This second path differs sharply from the first. In Asia, the first route was mainly during the Cold War and focused on nation building, modernisation, structural preconditions and social forces (such as the

"national bourgeoisie", anti-feudal peasants, and the growing middle- and working classes) and on political and military leaders drawing on them. By contrast, the second path was rather towards the end of the Cold War and after. In the world at large it was associated with the so-called third wave of democracy. Initially (by the early 1980s) this wave spread to the global South via Portugal and Spain to Latin America. Later on it also affected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Soviet bloc. In the Middle East, however, the dynamics was stalled; and further to the East the processes were late and mainly limited to the Philippines, Thailand, and, finally, Indonesia.

In the Global South, the second path (or third wave) was usually based on the crisis of authoritarian regimes, the generally felt need among dissidents to foster basic human rights, the rare inability of popularly rooted forces to present a strong alternative (with the major exception of South Africa), and the strong interest among international actors in promoting global liberalisation, including by way of agreements among sympathetic "moderate" sections of the local elites. The transitions were thus more about elitist designing of minimum democratic institutions than additional institutions, popular capacities and policies to promote the structural conditions and relations of power that had hitherto been deemed crucial for genuine democratic development. Typically, the incumbents among these elites gave up authoritarianism as long as they could privatise and legalise decades of accumulation of capital through political monopolies and coercive instruments of power, so-called primitive accumulation of capital. In return, the dissidents agreed to constrain popular participation and radical change, as long as there were agreement (at least on paper) on basic liberties, human rights and certain elements of democracy. The common scholarly and political argument was that once the right institutions were in place with regard to justice, basic rights, elections, "good governance", freedom of media and civic participation, democracy would flourish. It would also prevent and help resolving social, ethnic and regional conflicts.

Explaining the crisis of democratisation[3]

There is now an emerging consensus on the state of political development in the global South. The third wave of democracy has come to an end and the second path is undermined. Fortunately, several civil and political rights (including technically free and fair elections, dynamic media and associational life) have remained important in a few "old" democracies such as India and Sri Lanka, and have gained vital ground in a number of the new ones. Yet, these freedoms have not been accompanied by efficient reforms to improve social and economic rights and the institutional mechanisms to pursue equity in access to justice, the rule of law, and 'good governance'.[4] In-spite of positive statements it is rather the old ideas of the primacy of "strong institutions" and "firm guidance" that are currently returning to the forefront (e.g. Abrahamsen 2000; Grugel 2002;

Ottaway 2003; Carothers 2004; Carothers et.al 2007; CSDS 2007; Priyono et.al. 2007).

The *first* suggestion is that it is not a failure of the model of democratisation as such but of its implementation (e.g. World Bank 1997 and UNDP 2002). For example, inadequate resources have been applied to get the procedures of electoral politics up and running. Currently there is a special interest in better crafting of party systems so that they become "functional" in accordance with classical top-down parliamentary principles. Meanwhile popular political representation based on ideology and interests is deemed idealistic (e.g. IDEA 2007).

The *second* and radically different explanation is that the problem is less about design than insufficient conditions for liberal democracies, narrowly defined in terms of freedoms and fair elections. Currently one core argument is that the freedoms and elections tend to be "abused". This may even generate more corruption and violent conflicts (World Bank 1997, Paris 2004, Mansfield and Snyder 2005). Hence it is argued that democracy needs to be "sequenced". Popular control should be held back until unspecified elites have created the necessary conditions (Carothers 2007a and 2007b). Such conditions include a liberal state based on the rule of law, "good governance" and civil societies. While leftist theses about the need for revolutions have largely faded away, the classical argument among modernisation theorists about the need for economic growth to gain more public resources and middle classes - as in the idealised view of European history - is also added. The only alternative in this respect seems to be the experiences from the authoritarian developmental states and China, or more generally (with Khan 2005) to somehow foster progressive growth coalitions. In many ways this cluster of arguments resembles Samuel Huntington's (1965) old thesis from the cold war about the need for "politics of order" to enforce and institutionalise middle class rule as an alternative to statist rule – a thesis that paved the way for decades of authoritarianism.

The *third* explanation and the major point of departure for this research programme is based on the argument that the development of democracy has been depoliticised (Harriss et.al. 2004). Democratic development has been limited to the dominant economic and political groups, their experts and associated leaders of religious and ethnic communities. The common view is that only a limited number of resources and matters should be subjected to any degree of popular control. The growth of democracy is rooted primarily in pact-making amongst the dominant groups and a process of similarly elitist institution building, both with substantial international support. The views and interests of the majority of the population are thereby excluded from the formal political arena. Meanwhile there are growing inequalities, privatisation of essential public resources to the market as well as to civic, ethnic and religious organisations. The public sphere is being hollowed out and the remnants

of state and politics are being dominated by the existing political and bureaucratic elites. Typically, these elites draw on identity- and money politics to retain their positions, while those excluded by basic social and economic cleavages are poorly represented by movements, organisations, political parties and civic organisations (Harriss et al. 2004, Priyono, et.al. 2007, Harriss-White 2003 and Nordholt and van Klinken 2007). Civil society in terms of associational life among rights bearing citizens is often confined to middle class activism and self-management (Harriss 2006, Lavalle et.al. 2005, Houtzager et. al. 2007, Törnquist 2008).

In view of this third explanation, both the previous arguments are insufficient. Better elitist design (as suggested by the proponents of the first argument) is not enough to foster the development of movements and parties which are needed to bring crucial popular issues and interests on the agenda. There are few indications that even the "new local politics" based on crafting civil society and inter-personal trust (social capital) have developed more comprehensive democracy. Rather, democratic development with civil society participation such as in Porto Alegre seems to have pended with political facilitation by successful movements, parties, politicians and governments (Harriss et.al. 2004).

Further according to the third explanation, the "sequencing of democracy" thesis is both empirically and theoretically mistaken. *Empirically*, there are no attractive blueprints for the "sequencing of democracy". In Europe it took hundreds of years of violent conflicts to create the "right" preconditions (Berman 2007, Fukuyama 2007) and in the new industrialising states such as South Korea and China the pre-democracy sequence is marked by harsh repression. Further, most parts of the post-colonial world are short of the social, economic and political dynamics and actors that resemble those that finally generated the various brands of the liberal European *rechtsstaat* and thus economic development ahead of democracy. The relative absence of these dynamics seems to call instead for even more repression and authoritarian "solutions" than in Europe and East Asia (Törnquist 2004).[5]

Theoretically, moreover, all proper institutions should ideally of course be in place when people gain control of public matters. However, if necessary elements of democracy are not included in the definition of democratic process but deemed external preconditions, there are by definition nothing but undemocratic ways to generate them.

This calls for an alternative. While most scholars may agree with Beetham (1999) that the aim of democracy is popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality, one must also analyse the various means to this end. As elaborated in the second article in this issue of the PCD Journal, these means do not need to be advanced enough to, for instance, include social and economic justice, but there must be sufficient institutional provisions as well as popular capacities to struggle for political equality. With such an approach it is possible to analyse the qualities of the essential dimensions and processes at work. This is in contrast to the

previous explanations that view democracy as a fixed organisation and focus on imperfect design or unfavourable so-called external conditions.

The primacy of representation

The brief discussion above shifts the attention from elitist crafting of liberal democratic institutions only to the wider dynamics of political representation. The answer to the crisis of democratisation is, in our view, to counter the depoliticisation of democracy by way of more, not less, popular influence to alter the structure of power and open up for alternative processes and agents of democratic change. In general terms, we observe that the relatively autonomous *political* relations between state and people have deteriorated (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The challenges of democratic popular control of public affairs
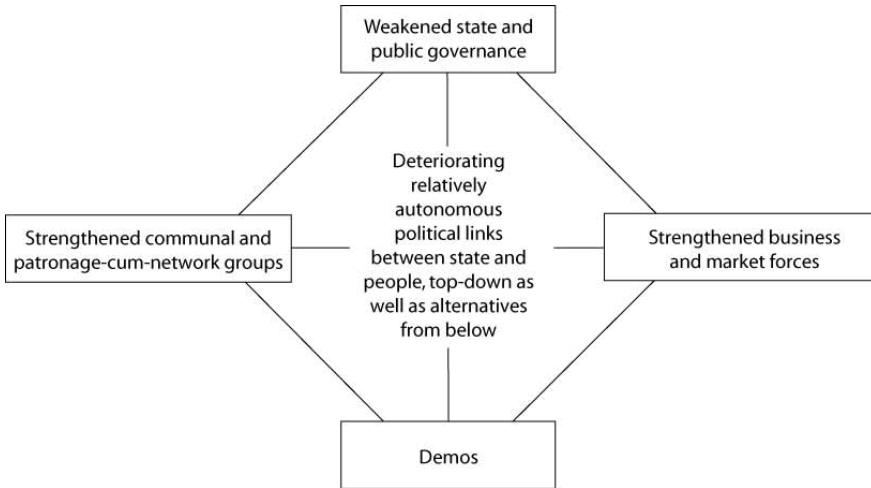
In the absence of effective popular control over public affairs, economic and political power in countries such as Sri Lanka and Indonesia rests primarily with actors related to the state and private businesses. The leverage of these dominant actors has increased with the hollowing out of the public resources and capacity that were vested with the state. In this context, relations between state and people are increasingly mediated on the one hand by communal-, patronage- and network based groups and on the other by market institutions, neither of which are subject to democratic control. The reduction of the public space in favour of, for example, religious and ethnic communities is not incompatible with neo-liberal perspectives. Rather the communal perspectives are quite in line with the privatisation of public resources. The reduction of public social security and education, for instance, generate both more communitarian charity and schools for the poor and profitable private hospitals and schools for the rich. A

basic argument is therefore that the roots of the democratic deficit is not the new and positive civil and political freedoms, but rather that defunct instruments and popular capacities to exercise control over public matters has made it difficult to use the freedoms to alter the relations of power and thus improve law, policies and governance.

If this calls for analyses of the connections between power, conflict and democracy (and in particular the politics of representation), the remaining question is how to best go about it.

First, the problems of democratic political representation are universal. It is true that large groups of people abandon politics both in the global North and South. But there is an ocean between the remaining public resources in the North as compared to the poverty of state capacity in the South. Similarly, there is also a major difference between the political exit of strong citizens in the North and the marginalisation and subordination of vulnerable majorities in the South. Given the particular features of the crisis in the South, however, there are remaining lessons to be learnt from on the historical development in especially Scandinavia of the roots and dynamics of rights based (or social democratic) development, the primacy of politics and the linkages between politics and civil society. Moreover, there are crucial new experiences in for instance Brazil and South Africa from fighting similar problems of democracy and popular representation as in South and Southeast Asia.

Second, the contexts of Sri Lanka and Indonesia open up for interesting comparisons and insights by contrasting representatives of the first and second paths to democracy – representative cases which anyway share many similar problems. The fundamental dilemma in this regard is that the availability of sources and the state of knowledge about democracy is uneven. While some new surveys have been carried out, such as that by the *Demos* groups in Indonesia and the CSDS reviews in South Asia including Sri Lanka, the new data have not been well related to either parallel or supplementary data and surveys or to the wide body of scattered but often existing case studies. This is a major task for the PCD programme. Further, there is a need to identify what factors and dynamics that call for supplementary or quite new research – and to facilitate broad enough interest and capacity to move ahead.

In these regards we try to learn from the general approach of the comprehensive Scandinavian projects on power and democracy, especially the most recent one in Norway.[6] While these projects had huge funds at their disposal, some of their general approaches remain valid. The major strategy was to provide chances for interested sections of the relevant research community at large to contribute and to combine three tasks: one, to review and summarise existing knowledge; two, to carry out a number of baseline surveys; three, to add a series of strategic research projects on thus identified crucial problems. In addition it was crucial to carry out as much as possible of the work and the concluding reports within a joint analytical framework. The PCD Programme has added a special effort

to promote master and PhD education, both to gain as much input as possible from the candidates and to increase the long term capacity. This makes it even more important to navigate within a common frame. While the details of the programme are in Box 1, the next article in this issue of the PCD Journal will address the conceptual challenges at some length.

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Endnotes

[1] Early additional partners include the Sri Lankan Social Scientists Association and *Demos,* the Indonesian Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies.

[2] For a broader review and references, see e.g. Törnquist (1999 and 2004).

[3] This section draws on parts of Törnquist's first chapter in the forthcoming anthology Törnquist (2009) – which in turn has benefitted extensively from several of the leading projects in the PCD Programme.

[4] The term 'governance' is usually inclusive of wider forms of government of a society than those which refer to the hierarchically organised systems of government. Hence 'good governance' does not presume democracy by way of a constitutional chain of popular command but is open for other systems of 'public management' and rather focus on problems of corruption, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.

[5] Meanwhile the attempts by Muslims, Hindus and others to promote supposedly less repressive and commercial communal values tend to undermine civil and political equality and to sustain clientelism (Törnquist 2007b). Besides, the unfavourable religious and ethnic identities or cultures of political patronage and clientelism, which the proponents of long processes of reform ahead of democracy use to emphasise, are rarely as deeply rooted and stable as is generally assumed. These practices are often rather contemporary political reinterpretations of former cultural and social systems, as exemplified by the case of Hindu fundamentalism in India (Corbridge and Harriss 2000, Blom-Hansen 1999) or the idea of 'Asian values' which crumbled with regimes such as that of Suharto (Priyono et.al. 2007).

[6] For a summary of the major conclusions, see Østerud (2005)

Box. 1 Details of the PCD Programme

Power, Conflict and Democracy in Indonesia and Sri Lanka (PCD)

	INDONESIA	NORWAY	SRI LANKA
Collaborating institutions	Center for Southeast Asian Social Studies Center for Local Politics and Regional Autonomy Universitas Gadjah Mada (Indonesia)	Department of Political Science University of Oslo (Norway)	Department of Political Science and Public Policy Colombo University (Sri Lanka)
Partners	Demos (The Center for Democracy and Human Rights)		Social Scientists' Association
Additional partners	Participation by additional researchers and projects are welcomed		
Steering committee	Dr. Aris Arif Mundayat Professor Mohtar Masoed Dr. Nicolaas Warouw	Professor Olle Törnquist Professor Kristian Stokke Silje S. Vevatne	Professor Jayadeva Uyangoda Professor Laksiri Fernando Thilina Madiwala
Educational Programmes	Master of Arts in Political Science and Government Studies (Human Rights and Democracy in Southeast Asia Studies)		Master of Arts in Political Science ("Democracy, Conflict and Governance Studies")
	PhD programme in Power Conflict and Democracy		
Main research projects	*Struggle to gain representation in democratizing Indonesia* (Pratikno and Nanang Indra Kurniawan) *Financing democratic politics: The case of Indonesia* (Mohtar Mas'ud and Pitra Narendra) *People's viewing the state: Questioning democratic governmentality* (Aris Arif Mundayat and Budi Irawanto)	*Conflict resolution and democratisation in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami: A comparative study of Aceh and Sri Lanka* (Kristian Stokke and Olle Törnquist)	*Changing capital-labour relations and the new forms of trade union politics* (Laksiri Fernando) *Citizenship and the re-working of the private and the public* (Nira Wickramasinghe) *Women in local politics: The question of democracy and participation* (Janaki Jayawardena) *Religion and the working of democracy on the ground* (Premakumara de Silva) *Radical politics after economic liberalisation and the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka* (Nirmal Ranjith Devasiri)
PhD projects	*Political financing in Indonesian politics* (Anak Agung Ary Dwipayana) *Understanding of democratic failure in local context of Indonesian politics* (Cornelis Ley) *Women in politics after political reform in Indonesia* (Ratnawati M.A.) *The use of ethnicity to mobilise support for political reforms* (Haryanto) *How state officials use state authority to control their competitors through media* (Gusti Ngurah Putra)	*Conflict resolution and democratization: The political transformation of armed insurgency movements in the context of war to peace transitions* (Gyda Marås Sindre)	*Democratisation and political transformation: A study of rural and urban contexts in Sri Lanka* (Dhamma Dissanayake) *Disaster management, democratic governance and gender: The case of Sri Lanka* (Dharshini Silva) *Trends and dynamics in Muslim politics in the Eastern Province in the context of ethnic conflict, peace process and post-tsunami recovery, 2001-2007* (Minna Taheer) *Sri Lanka Freedom Party and minority politics: A study of changing dynamics of party politics in Sri Lanka* (Keerthi Ariyadasa) *New wine, old jars? Exploring the social bases of the two main political parties in Sri Lanka* (Pradeep Peiris)
Master degree projects	*First batch of fellowship students:* *Criminalization over minority belief in Indonesia* (Hasrul Halili) *Politics of welfare and local democracy in decentralised Indonesia* (Hasrul Hanif) *Politics of identity in representation logic* (Paramita Iswari) *(De)-linking patronage politics to popular political representation* (Fransiskus A. Jalong) *The politics of representing women* (Debbie Prabawati) *The role of intermediary channel in understanding and giving solution to West Papua's problems in post-Soeharto era* (Yudi Fajar M. Wahyu)		*First batch of fellowship students:* *State reform, power sharing and the Muslim community in Sri Lanka* (Mohomed Fawas) *Discourse of democracy in local politics in Sri Lanka* (Sumith Chaaminda Leelarathne) *Role of non state actors in building social peace within the framework of conflict resolution in Sri Lanka* (Magadhee Prathapasinghe) *The question of regional minorities in an ethnic conflict resolution process* (Athambawa Sarjoon) *Conflict and peace processes in Nepal and Sri Lanka* (MeeNilankco Theiventhran)
Dissemination	First hand dissemination through the PCD-Press (in co-operation with UGM), including an electronic peer reviewed PCD-Journal and Report Series in addition to Working Paper Series. Hard back copies in co-operation with external publishers.		

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