Southeast Asia in the 1990s

Authoritarianism, democracy and capitalism

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Political power in industrialising capitalist societies: Theoretical approaches

Richard Robison, Kevin Hewison, Garry Rodan

Following World War II decolonisation in Asia saw initial enthusiasm for Western parliamentary forms. The Philippines, newly independent, engaged in a vigorous electoral process, while in Thailand elections were again in the offing after years of military rule. While decolonisation was proving more difficult in Indochina, Malaya, Indonesia and Singapore, there were widely held hopes that 'democrats' would emerge within the independence movements.

Political theory at this time also suggested considerable scope for democracy in Asia and the rest of the developing world (e.g. Geertz 1963). It was not long before this enthusiasm for democratic forms was shaken, however. In Thailand the military returned to power; in Burma a one-party state was established; Communists were making gains in Indochina and on the Malay peninsula; and Indonesia was involved in a bloody war of independence. Indeed, the situation in much of the emerging post-colonial world seemed quite chaotic, and democratic government did not appear to hold a solution. Indeed, authoritarianism soon emerged as a common political arrangement.

These shifts caused some significant reassessments of theories positing a basic contradiction between political authoritarianism and the forward march of societies towards modernity. Conservative theorists like Huntington (1968) and pluralists like Riggs (1966), both greatly influenced by structural functionalism, argued that authoritarianism may be a necessary or inevitable stage on the road to modernity.

Later, and from a quite different theoretical perspective, radical dependency theorists, drawing on the Monopoly Capital school of American Marxism, also rejected any link between democracy and development in developing countries. In fact, they suggested that capitalism brought underdevelopment to the periphery, while the metropoles demanded strong authoritarian governments in order to
maintain the process of surplus extraction. For those writers, revolution and a transformation to socialism was the only solution to dependency and poverty (cf. Frank 1969; Amin 1974).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s military regimes appeared de rigueur throughout the Third World, and where civilian regimes emerged to replace authoritarianism, they did not persist. For example, in Chile, Salvadore Allende's left-wing government was crushed in 1973, while in Thailand, three years later, the military returned, with blood on its hands, to re-establish authoritarian rule. Meanwhile, Marcos established his own form of authoritarianism in the Philippines, and Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore evidenced increasing repressiveness.

For theorists of all bents, democracy ceased to be of great significance in their writings. Indeed there appeared to be considerable agreement that some form of authoritarianism was inevitable or perhaps even necessary to the processes of development (or under-development) taking place in the capitalist Third World. This view held sway for some time, and few theorists spent much time considering the prospects for parliamentary forms in the Third World.

By the mid-eighties, however, the political tide seemed to be turning. There had been a dramatic retreat from authoritarianism in the Third World and Southern Europe, and more dramatically, authoritarian state socialist regimes—too complex to discuss in this chapter—began to crumble. In Asia, parliamentary systems appeared to be gaining strength in Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan and even in Indonesia, even though the military remained important players in each country. In Laos, political controls were loosened, while most spectacularly, the people of the Philippines had ousted the corrupt Marcos clan.

These events brought a revival of theoretical interest in the relationships between political authoritarianism, democracy and capitalism. The often unacknowledged issue behind this renewed interest was the adoption of increasingly neo-classical approaches to economic reform and the relationship between this 'free market' environment and democratic forms (Almond 1991). Even the World Bank has become interested in how it might support good 'governance' and economic development (Brautigam 1991). However, the main political question which seems at the heart of the re-emerged debate is whether changing economic and social conditions, including shifts to high levels of capital accumulation and the development of a strong bourgeoisie, bring about structural tensions within authoritarian regimes which may lead to a democratic transition. A related question is whether these authoritarian structures, which have often involved hijacking of the state apparatus by its officials, are contradictory to the economic 'free market' and the political needs of increasingly complex social systems. In other words, the question is again raised as to whether parliamentary democracy is the 'natural' or best political shell for the capitalist system and the bourgeoisie as, for example, Anderson (1990) has recently suggested for Thailand. Across the theoretical spectrum the prevailing explanation for the rise and fall of authoritarianism is that this form of state power is specific to particular phases in social and economic development.

For those working out of the intellectual amalgam of structural functionalism and Weberianism which constitutes North American behavioural social science, authoritarian states are regarded as providing the integrative cement and organisational force in a period when 'rational' values and modes of behaviour are still in a process of formation. Within this perspective it is implicit that authoritarianism will evaporate as civil society is able to manage its own affairs, as rational modes of behaviour and thought are generalised throughout society and as powerful institutions emerge within civil society. For those working out of intellectual traditions that place more emphasis on systems of production and their social relations, authoritarianism is widely regarded as a form of state power endemic to capitalist societies prior to the emergence of a cohesive and hegemonic bourgeoisie.

These interpretations have been criticised from a number of perspectives. First, by conservatives who have recently challenged the assumed natural partnership of representative democracy and economic liberalism on the grounds that the former allows constraint of market forces by 'special interest groups'. The implication of this is that certain forms of authoritarianism may indeed be essential for the long-term survival of market capitalism. A second challenge is contained in the proposition that forms of state power, authoritarianism or democracy, are not related to stages of economic or social development but to an enduring cultural framework that transcends the material organisation of societies and economies. Hence, in specific cultural traditions, authoritarianism will be the natural political form as that society passes from feudalism to capitalism, and in turn to more advanced forms of capitalist industrialisation. Third, there is the proposition that the nature of political regimes is shaped by dynamics quite separate from those that operate in the spheres of society, economy or culture.

In this chapter we intend to review these issues in the light of the earlier debates and their re-emergence. In doing so we will concentrate on three basic theoretical lines—modernisation theory, dependency theory, and post-dependency empiricism—prior to suggesting elements of a wider ranging social structural explanation. This
requires a reassessment of the way in which previous theories have attempted to explain state power in the process of social and political transformation.

Modernisation, rationality and political order

Predicated on a blend of Parsonian structural functionalism and cultural behaviouralism, modernisation theorists of the fifties and sixties assumed an essentially linear process of social and political change as society became more complex and increasingly legal-rational in outlook and practice. In this context authoritarian regimes were regarded as traditional residues; patrimonial, despotic, particularist and corrupt practices were inevitably to be replaced as modernisation proceeded and liberal–democratic forms took root (cf. Almond & Coleman 1960; Higgott 1983 chs 2–3). Political struggle was essentially a question of the bearers of modern values (the middle class or bourgeoisie) overcoming traditional elites and their old values and replacing them in political power positions.

The difficulties with this approach soon became obvious, and have been outlined in a number of critical assessments, including Higgott (1983: chs 3–4) and Taylor (1979: ch. 3). However, only two of these difficulties will be examined here.

First, the assumption that Weber's category of legal–rational authority constitutes a democratic form is not warranted. Weber (cited in Haralambos 1980: 284) himself argued that while this kind of authority appeared superior to both the charismatic and traditional forms, he warned that only a strong parliamentary system could prevent society being overtaken by private and public bureaucratic (legal–rational) juggernauts. Second, the relationship between the middle class and democracy, while central to the analysis, is not adequately theorised. These analysts have tended to coalesce the bourgeoisie (entrepreneurs) and salaried and professional people who are brought together by their shared values, which are assumed to be rational and democratic. Clearly, though, this group can be no more than a coalition of groups or classes with quite different interests. Certainly, this middle class or elements of it, have supported a whole range of political arrangements including authoritarian regimes. As Burris (1986) and Goldthorpe and others (1969) have suggested, it is necessary to recognise fundamental contradictions between capital-owning and salaried classes.

These problems were brought into stark relief as democratic experiments collapsed throughout the Third World, even where the theorised conditions for democratic transition had appeared to be present. It was Huntington (1968) who found a path out of this dilemma. While accepting the basic values and behavioural assumptions of modernisation theory, Huntington argued that the tasks of managing integration, economic growth and political order could best be achieved by an authoritarian regime. In suggesting this, he broke the previous analytical nexus between authoritarianism and tradition, democracy and modernity.

For Huntington, a conservative, rapid social, political or economic change raised the spectre of revolution—societies out of balance presented opportunities for change outside of the normal bounds of organic growth within any society. If any society was to be saved from chaos and disorder, political power needed to be institutionalised. The military can play a leading role in this for it is the ‘advance guard’ of modern values, and it may hold power prior to the ‘middle class’ establishing its political hegemony.

In this context authoritarianism becomes a functional response to social disintegration and economic malaise. The political dynamics involved are systemic, with integration necessarily triumphing over disintegration, and authoritarian rule being the appropriate instrument of integration. It does this by developing institutions capable of integrating civil society into the political process without falling into revolution and by providing the conditions for investment and rapid industrialisation. In other words, authoritarianism creates the basis for capitalism and, in the long term, for democratic institutions. The authoritarian regime fulfils its historical mission by eventually integrating all social groups into the increasingly democratic process and relinquishing its role to a rational elite of the middle class.

A decade and a half later, however, Huntington (1984: 199) found himself explaining the persistence of authoritarian regimes even in situations where his earlier writings suggested that a transition to democratic forms would have been expected. Huntington maintains his earlier insistence that the ‘middle class’ is central to the transition, but argues that social determinism must be avoided. That is, even though the prerequisites might be present for a democratic transition, other political dynamics are at work also, so that authoritarianism may be maintained.

While Huntington still foresees situations where authoritarianism becomes dysfunctional for political order, his general approach is to reject his earlier view that authoritarian rule is transitional. This change was apparently in response to two issues. First, the persistence of authoritarian regimes in East Asia despite the emergence of strong middle classes and rapidly rising living standards. Second, within American Conservatism a thesis emerged suggesting that there was a basic contradiction between rapid economic growth and democratic forms of government (cf. Olson 1982). Huntington
(1987: 21) suggests that middle classes may be willing to sacrifice political interests for the benefits of high economic growth, arguing that there is often a choice between:

... a populist 'vicious circle' involving expanded political participation, more socio-economic equality, slower economic growth and intensifying class conflict leading to a military coup and a participation 'implosion' and ... a technocratic 'vicious circle' often starting with a military coup, and involving suppression of political participation, rapid economic growth, and increased socio-economic inequality, leading to a mounting popular discontent and a participation 'explosion' against the regime.

Of more interest in Huntington's revised thesis is his introduction of a decisive cultural factor to explain why countries with the prerequisites for a democratic transition will take different paths. He argues that the transition is only possible given an appropriate political history and within a values system and cultural environment that is conducive to democracy. For example, West European Protestantism allowed for compromise and equality and is conducive to democratic transformation, whereas Islam and Confucianism were more hierarchical and intolerant and so provide obstacles to transformation. Culture thus attains the status of a decisive and independent factor in the transition process, thereby overturning much of his earlier comparative and functional analysis. Authoritarianism is therefore explained in tautological fashion by pointing to the authoritarian nature of the culture of a particular country (Huntington 1984:216). This approach also tends to have little regard for history, seeing a culture as an unchanging factor in any social system.

The problems with cultural determinism have been discussed elsewhere for the cases of Thailand and Indonesia (cf. Hewison 1989a: ch. 3; Keesing 1991) but Cotton's (1989) paper on authoritarianism in Korea demonstrates that, even with an awareness of the range of factors at play, these factors are extremely difficult to effectively integrate when analytical primacy is given to culture. Cotton's (1989: 248–9) considers that there are two sets of factors at work in the transformation of Korean authoritarianism: a socio-economic set and a cultural set. The socio-economic factors, in the form of trade imbalances and technological maturity, are generating pressures for a move from state-led industrialisation to a more internationally responsive economy. This implies a state more concerned for the management of the conditions for capital accumulation within the framework set by international market forces. On the other hand, the cultural factors are represented as Confucian traditions of obedience and hierarchy which act to ensure that authoritarianism remains the dominant element of the political system.

While these factors are not necessarily irreconcilable as in Johnson's (1987) 'soft authoritarianism', they do provide quite different, even conflicting, interpretations. For example, the cultural perspective suggests that the contending forces, defined by values and behaviour, are traditional Confucian elites facing a more secular and rational middle class. In contrast, the socio-economic perspective produces a picture of a complex coalition of military bureaucrats, corporate capitalists and middle classes, driven by vested interests which cut swathes through the tradition–Confucian/modern-secular divide. Such contradictions are difficult to reconcile. However, Cotton does not openly confront this difficulty, instead placing emphasis on supposedly hostile cultural factors which make transition a doubtful proposition. This is only likely to be overcome through the humility, patience and statesmanship of political leaders willing to compromise and change social attitudes (Cotton 1989: 259).

The most serious flaw in the culturalist approach is the incapacity to explain tensions in authoritarian regimes, a failing that has its basis in structural functionalism. Within this perspective, the various classes become interest groups, with no theory of the state to explain the content of their interests or their mediation to differentiate between the classes, or to explain political action. In the end they are little more than categories with little to distinguish their political position and power. Ultimately, then, from this perspective it is only cultural factors that can plausibly explain the differences between societies even though as Huntington (1987: 22–3) himself notes,

Just exactly how culture is responsible for the political and economic differences one is attempting to explain is often left extraordinarily vague. Cultural explanations are thus often imprecise or tautological, or both, at the extreme coming down to a more sophisticated rendering of 'the French are like that!'

Yet this kind of explanation is the refuge of theorists who attempt to categorise societies as 'democratic' or 'authoritarian' without acknowledging either the wide variations within each cultural tradition or historical change within culture.

If Huntington's return has not taken him beyond culturalist tautologies, the re-emergence of modernisation theory in response to transitions in the Third World and Eastern Europe seems to complete a theoretical circle. Indeed, some of the same theorists who wrote in the 1950s and 1960s have reappeared in the recent debate (cf. Almond 1987; 1991; Pye 1990).

The latest reincarnation of modernisation theory tends to under-
play earlier cultural analyses in favour of a focus on the functional aspects of state–society relations and the growing strength of civil society vis-à-vis the state (Cheng 1990: 10–16). Pye’s recent article is especially interesting in that it claims specific contradictions between authoritarianism and modernisation:

All governments are put under pressure by the increasingly significant flows of international trade, finance and communications; by the effects of contemporary science and technology; and by all the other elements that make up what we imprecisely call modernisation. But the authoritarian regimes are the most vulnerable and are therefore being seriously undermined (Pye 1990: 6).

He argues that the emergence of a middle class and a technically educated population create new centres of power that cannot easily be accommodated within the centralised structures of authoritarian regimes. This harks back to the theme of developing legal–rational authority, suggesting that democratic forms will emerge as a stage in the development process. It also contrasts with Huntington’s recent culturalist position.

Interestingly this recent modernisation position is perhaps closer in its themes to more radical theorists of state and class than to Huntington’s and other cultural determinist approaches. There are two such themes: first, the idea that the emergence of complex class systems and technically advanced capitalist industrialisation requires the integration of major social groups within the political system, together with means for mediation, conciliation and accountability; and second, that this will only be possible in situations of high social cohesion and order. However, the problem for modernisation theory is that it maintains an essentially ahistorical dichotomy of tradition–modernity, and is thus unable to explain transitions from one stage of development to another. The more radical theories attempt to do this.

State, capitalism and forms of state power

Modernisation and political order theorists operate within a world of systems, functions, structures and values, examining the conditions for order and chaos through institutionalisation and cultural transformation. However, these factors are not considered as products of any specific set of economic organisation or state structure within any specific historical situation.

Contrasted with this is a set of approaches that are concerned with relationships between various forms of state organisation and arrangements of the social and economic system, in particular historical circumstances. From this perspective, politics is seen as being about policy and concerned with specific decisions which directly and indirectly influence the distribution of wealth, power and the structure of social relationships. Unlike the modernisation approaches, policy formation is not seen to be value-neutral, but is rather seen to take place within the context of specific relations of social and political domination, a system in which the state takes a critical, partisan role.

Theories that conceive of the state in this manner derive from a range of Marxist and Weberian perspectives. These theories variously conceive the state as an instrument of the ruling class, as constrained by the structures of capitalist society and especially the processes of capital accumulation, or as influenced by an identifiable corps of state managers. Examples of these conceptualisations applied to Southeast Asia may be seen in the earlier work of Robison (1978) on Indonesia and in Elliott’s (1978a, b) work on Thailand. Another perspective takes a more voluntarist position on the state, developing a state-centred approach which sees the state and/or its higher level officials as autonomous with identifiable interests which may override those of the dominant class (Skocpol 1985; Block 1977; Trimberger 1977). Useful examples of this kind of approach in the Southeast Asian context may be seen in the work of Hans-Dieter Evers (1973) and his colleagues (e.g. Korff 1989).

Both Marx and Weber indicated an Orientalist view that associated authoritarianism with pre-capitalist society and democracy with capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie (Turner 1978). For example, Marx’s concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production represented the dominance of bureaucrats in situations where the state was the economic and political power, and where private property was relatively unimportant (Miliband 1989: 94). This association of capitalism, the overthrow of Absolutism, and the rise of liberal democracy does little more than reflect the general course of Western European history.

Nevertheless Marx did, in his approach to the Bonapartist state, indicate how an authoritarian regime could come to dominate within a capitalist society. In a time of political and economic crisis, Marx (1969: 373) showed how the bourgeoisie would surrender state power (in the form of a parliament) in the interest of preserving ‘... its social power intact’, which meant that ‘... to save its purse it must forfeit its crown’. However, this was seen as a short-term measure, and he assumed that the bourgeoisie would naturally retake the political high ground.

The value of this analysis is that it provides a picture of the dynamics of class-regime relationships. A bourgeoisie is attracted to democratic forms of state power only when these do not threaten
the social order in which its dominance is embedded. In situations where socialist or working-class movements threaten to play the determining role in democracies, the bourgeoisie may shift its allegiance to conservative military or single-party regimes. Where the bourgeoisie cannot guarantee its own dominance through its control of society, economy and ideology, it will require the use of the coercive powers of the state. A particular regime, therefore, cannot be understood separately from the structure of social power and conflict and specific class interests. In this view, forms of state power are not functional imperatives of complex forms of society but the political consequence of patterns of social conflict or coalition. However, it is assumed that bourgeois capitalism and liberal democracy will ultimately triumph. This unilinear evolutionism does not satisfactorily explain the variety of forms of state power in capitalist societies. Why has the political role of the bourgeoisie and middle classes been so different in Britain and Japan or even Germany? How do we explain the prevalence of oligarchic or populist forms of state power and fragile democracy in many parts of the Third World? How is it that the Asian NICs exhibit authoritarianism in the presence of strong bourgeois and middle classes? How can the great variations in the organisation of state apparatuses be explained?

A first explanation of these questions identifies the specific location of individual societies within the international economy as being a major influence upon the nature of political regimes. A second approach rejects social and economic determinism in suggesting a 'by chance' explanation. Yet a third perspective emphasises the specific configuration of social power that emerges with the development of capitalism and the social and political context of industrialisation. We will examine each of these in turn.

**The world economy and forms of state power**

As noted above, dependency theorists considered authoritarianism as virtually an essential element of capitalist underdevelopment. Liberal democracy was only for Western Europe in its particular historical circumstances when capitalism was competitive. Capital went to the peripheries, but not Western European liberal, democratic political institutions (cf. Boron 1981: 52–4).

Dependency theorists considered that the comprador status of the local bourgeoisie meant that it was never able to destroy the old landed oligarchy and dominate the political system. In Thailand, a number of theorists have shown that the major economic elements (Sino-Thai business groups, foreign capital, and the old aristocracy) were unable to organise a satisfactory political alliance, allowing the military to take the leading role (e.g. Elliott 1978b). Like the situation of military alliances in Latin America, this situation was reminiscent of Bonapartism except that dependency theorists tended to see it as a permanent situation of bureaucratic authoritarianism (Schmitter 1973: 187–90). These theorists suggested that bureaucratic authoritarian regimes, as well as maintaining order and the social and economic interests of the dominant classes, enabled structural change in the economy. It is considered that these changes would not have been likely in conditions of competition between the various elements of the dominant classes.

These theoretical approaches were confronted with serious problems as a process from authoritarian to civilian rule and the establishment of democratic processes took place in Southern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. While a number of dependency theorists had given some attention to the emerging economic and political power of the bourgeoisie (e.g. Evans 1979), most were confronted by the sight of the domestic bourgeoisie, which they had understood as a residual, non-determining category, taking a leading role in democratic transformations. Categories such as ‘dependent’, ‘peripheral’, ‘comprador’ were thrown into question, and a shift to a more ‘real’ analysis took place. This resulted in a less deterministic approach to political change and the position of the state, and a move away from the dependency cul-de-sac.

At the same time, a broad range of Marxist-oriented theories emerged to demolish dependency theory. Led by Laclau (1971), Brenner (1977) and Warren (1973), one strand of this critique produced a complete rejection of the thesis that capitalist industrialisation was not likely in the Third World. Indeed, Warren (1980) argued that rather than impeding capitalist development, imperialism cut a swathe through pre-capitalist social and economic relations to establish capitalism. Following this, a series of influential studies in Africa, beginning with Kenya, clearly demonstrated that a bourgeoisie could develop locally and become vigorous, aided and abetted by the state (Leys 1978; Swainson 1978). While these theorists did not develop a concept of the state appropriate to an understanding of this process, their intervention showed a path out of the dependency straightjacket. Drawing on these studies, Robison (1986) and Hewison (1989b) have demonstrated a similar experience in Indonesia and Thailand. Despite effective demonstrations of the contrary, studies continue to suggest that capitalism is dependent in Southeast Asia (Yoshihara 1988).

As Becker (1984) has noted, the acknowledgment of Third World capitalism allows for the consideration of a ‘post-imperialist’ phase of ‘progressive’ capitalism, albeit wasteful, degrading, exploitive
and ruthless. Becker suggests three 'post-imperialist' propositions. First, that transnational capital is not always antagonistic to democracy or necessarily supportive of authoritarianism. This has been well demonstrated in Thailand where 'investment strikes' have usually coincided with economic and social disorder rather than having followed the ups and downs of military coups and civilian rule. Second, the presence of transnational capital can be supportive of domestic capital in that it advances investment, technology and skills necessary for industrial deepening (Becker 1984: 426). Here the state plays a crucial role in establishing the conditions for investment and for the expansion of domestic capital. Third, Becker (1984: 428) argues that democratisation is encouraged in this 'post-imperialist' situation because industrial development establishes an industrial proletariat which is technically skilled and industrially disciplined. Hence, the bourgeoisie is less concerned that populist calls to insurrection will be successful. This advanced working class is more likely to see its interests as lying within a representative system. These conditions mean that the bourgeoisie is freer to express its preference for pluralism where, as Therborn (cited in Becker 1984: 428) puts it, each capitalist faction is assured that '... its rivals within the class will not capture the ear of the state authorities and, with them, ride roughshod over its particular interests'.

It might also be noted that dependency approaches are unable to cope with situations where imperialist nations are calling for human rights, labour reform and democratic reform in, for example, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and China. One revised explanation is to argue that the United States' interests now lie in removing mercantilist authoritarianisms that have depressed wages and demand and allowing, for example, the Asian NICs to out-compete the US (Cumings 1989).

However, both this revised dependency (even conspiracy) approach and its critics’ more materialist approach are rejected by a group of writers who have come to a position that finds all suggestions of strategies or levels of organisation as unacceptable.

There is no plan: Empiricist interventions

In the 1980s a series of publications emerged with the specific objective of explaining the large number of transitions from authoritarianism in Southern Europe and Latin America. The Transitions volumes address themselves both to questions of political strategy in ending authoritarian rule and the theoretical aspects of the process.

Following a series of case studies in Europe and Latin America, the Transitions group concluded that authoritarian regimes were most successfully transformed through processes of compromise and negotiation whereby constitutional and institutional rights and safeguards are exchanged for the political immunity of former leaders and officials. More significantly, however, revolutionary strategies are rejected in favour of reformist goals (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986) which means an acceptance of the existing class structure.

The idea that a democratic transformation occurs through negotiation is a clear rejection of any general theory of social or economic determination of political outcomes. This is based on the observation that strong bourgeoisies and middle classes are associated with a range of political regimes. These empirical observations are in marked contrast to earlier post-dependency works by, for example, Stepan (1985) and O’Donnell (1979), where both argued for explanations that specified contradictions between the nature of authoritarian rule and bourgeois class power.

The revised approach argues that social structural factors are not of themselves sufficient to explain or predict the nature of political transitions. Emphasised instead are readily observable factors such as strategies, tactics, ideas, leaders, and even accidents and coincidences. As O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 5) explain it:

This is not to deny that macro-structural factors are not there: world system, class etc. Short-term political calculations are only loosely influenced by such factors and cannot be deduced from or imputed to such structures. Instead, unexpected events, insufficient information, hurried and audacious choices, confusion about motives and interests, indefinintion of political identities, talents of specific individuals are all decisive in determining outcomes.

Ironically, this new position reflects some of the very criticisms of O'Donnell's earlier attempts to build an integrated model of state, regime type and economy, particularly his functionalist claims of a relationship between bureaucratic authoritarianism and the stage of industrial deepening. In his critique of the earlier O’Donnell thesis as it applied to the Philippines, Adriano (1984) argued that O'Donnell confused state and regime and demonstrated that the imposition of martial law and the rise of Marcos were not related either functionally to a transition from import substitution industrialisation to industrial deepening, or instrumentally to the political needs of the Philippine bourgeoisie.

This position is taken up most strongly by Przeworski (1986), who argues that an identification of class or group interests has no predictive value in any particular historical circumstances. While Przeworski's thesis appears to support the pluralist and modernisa-
forms, it might be asked why it is that negotiation does not appear
at any time, or are there specific preconditions which make it unlikely for a number of reasons. It seems that the process is very largely voluntarist. This seems to be the factors to explain transitions to democratic authoritarianism of Marcos. Petras (1989: 28-32) calls for attention to be redirected to state and class. Second, if negotiation, compromise and a civilian regime is facilely assumed to be democratic. The Philippines might be considered an example of a ‘democratic’ regime where an authoritarian state is maintained despite industrialisation and a strong middle class. Second, the recognition that officials are important actors with their own interests, is also an important observation.

Despite these useful points, we believe the Transitions approach to be flawed for two important reasons. First, as Petras (1989: 27) notes, there is confusion between the concepts of state and regime, and the implications of differences between them for regime change. In addition, Petras questions whether subordinate classes gain from a negotiation and compromise process, especially in situations where a civilian regime is facilitated to organise and reorganise itself for the exercise of power. Hence the regime’s capacity to organise and reorganise itself for the exercise of power is an important factor in explaining a democratic transition, or lack of it. This appears a useful explanation of the Singapore case, where an authoritarian state is maintained despite industrialisation and a strong middle class. Second, the recognition that officials are important actors with their own interests, a perspective often lost in earlier approaches, is also an important observation.

In the first place, we suggest that the socio-economic environment is critical. Negotiated democratic transition is clearly facilitated when an authoritarian regime deals with a reformist bourgeoisie which does not aim to fundamentally alter the social and political order. In other situations, where social or political conflict remains bitter, transition appears considerably more difficult. A good example is Thailand where, when the Communist Party remained active, the development of democratic forms was stalled. However, as the Party collapsed, participatory institutions blossomed. In short, a democratic transition would appear to be contingent on certain social structural preconditions, most notably a conviction that such a transition was not likely to overturn the existing order.

Second, it appears that there are patterns, regionally and over time, in regime type and in transition experience. For example, patterns of authoritarianism exist in Latin America, Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, even if there appears to be regional variation. Similarly, the patterns of democratic regime in North America, Australia and Britain appear to be resilient and have much in common. In other words, we are suggesting that the coincidence between regimes and social and economic formations appears too consistent to sustain the Transitions thesis of chance, strategy, leadership and organisation. It appears that there are a series of structural constraints, imperatives, contradictions and preconditions which influence both forms of state power and the nature of the state itself.

Third, in rejecting arguments that political outcomes result from structural factors, Przeworski (1986: 55) focuses instead on political disintegration and on political factors as decisive. However, he goes on to argue that the social structural level merely sends ‘signals’ to actors telling them whether to ‘shift’ or ‘remain’. But this appears a rather ambiguous way of introducing social structural factors without actually acknowledging them.

To illustrate this point let us take the example of the fall of Marcos. At one level it may be argued that the collapse of the Marcos regime was due to the internal disintegration of the regime and the desertion of the military leaders Ramos and Enrile to the side of Aquino. After all, weeks of demonstrations by the middle classes had failed to dislodge the Marcos government and bring any real changes in the regime. Limited to expressing their opposition by street demonstrations, they could not move to the next necessary step: the physical overthrow of Marcos. It is also true that Ramos and Enrile were prompted to defect by news of their impending arrest at the hands of their rival, General Ver. However, there was an important ‘signal’ which came from powerful forces in society. Marcos’ policies had led the social coalitions which underpinned the Marcos state, as well as the United States, to conclude that Marcos’ rule contradicted and threatened their long-term interests.
For these coalitions, including the most powerful of the land-owning and capital-owning families, the regime had to be changed if the state and the social order it embodied was to survive.

The 'signal', therefore, was that a military revolt in support of a transition to an oligarchic democracy would be supported by the Philippine ruling class and the US; that their financial and ideological resources would be available to a new government and therefore the chances of success would be high. The Philippine case also illustrated what may happen to military moves when no such 'signals' emerge. The lack of success of the Right wing military radicals in the post-Marcos era must surely be considered in the context of the desire of the principal families to reconstitute their democracy, not military authoritarianism (cf. Anderson 1988).

The Transitions thesis which rejects any notion of structuring, determination or even of conditioning is, as Cumings (1989: 15) notes, a rejection of any explanation that offers a comparative perspective transcending incidents, instances, or coincidences. We are left with no more than a series of empirical events. Building socio-structural factors into explanations of regime formation and democratic transition is a complex task, but some theorists have suggested approaches that do this. One fruitful course has been to examine the ways in which industrial capitalism has interacted with the development of the state and the balance of social forces and their political power.

Forms of state power and historical courses

That an analysis of the historical development of particular social formations and related forms of state power is considered important should be obvious from our previous comments. The need for such an analysis is seen in the different kinds of tensions and challenges facing authoritarian regimes in countries where capitalism emerged under the tutelage of a strong state and well-developed state apparatus as, for example, in East Asia, and those in Latin America where a national bourgeoisie, strong middle class, and landed oligarchies played leading roles. The different historical paths would suggest different approaches to democratic transition.

There has recently been a resurgence of interest in the work of earlier theorists who examined relationships between forms of state power and the historical conjunctures which marked the processes of capitalist development. Barrington Moore's (1966) path-breaking study of the varieties of political outcomes of capitalist development has been influential. He proposed that democracy resulted where there was a strong bourgeoisie, whereas authoritarianism emerged where a bourgeoisie was weak and unable to play a leading role. Later theorists found Latin America difficult to fit into his categories and developed a new paradigm in which the export of Iberian feudalism resulted in a vacuum of power where neither bourgeoisie, traditional oligarchy nor radical forces were able to attain and consolidate social or political hegemony, leaving the way open to military rule. Such an analysis was not necessarily framed in dependency terms (Nun 1968).

Another important approach was that of iconoclast modernisation theorist Gerschenkron (1962) who explored relationships between social structural factors, phases and timing of industrialisation, and the emergence of democratic and authoritarian regimes. He proposed that 'early' industrialisation, following a long incubation period, allowed the bourgeoisie to slowly build industrial capitalism. At the same time this class could eliminate feudalism and its entrenched classes. 'Late' industrialisation, requiring rapid and high investment, left the bourgeoisie behind, together with its free markets and liberal political institutions. In such situations the state and its officials achieved political dominance. Kurth (1979: 330–5) has recently taken up this theme, showing that the consumer goods manufacturers of eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain wanted free markets and had no need for the protection or resources of the state. They found in the institutions of universal suffrage and parliamentary representation a political format that allowed them to undermine both political conservatism and economic protectionism. There was a conjuncture between economic and political liberalism, in contrast to Prussia where the champions of free trade were the conservative landed forces. Thus Kurth argues that in Britain economic liberalism worked to reinforce a political liberalism, whereas in Prussia economic liberalism actually worked to frustrate political liberalism.

Reinforcing these conjunctures of class formation and political power were elective affinities between regime types and phases of industrialisation. Whereas early industrialisation dealt in modest amounts of capital and incremental advances in technology, allowing investment to be mobilised by family firms without resort to major finance banks or the state, late industrialisation was characterised by rapid and large-scale investment in capital goods industries, the establishment of industrial cartels and the active intervention of the state and industrial banks.

The question of authoritarian transformations has been most recently addressed in this context by Cumings. His is a thesis of capitalist maturation, incorporating historical advances within a global context, and attempting to explain political outcomes while
retaining social structural factors at the centre of his analysis. He argues that the political outcomes of European transitions were the result of collisions of cultural, economic and political amalgams at specific points in world history which cannot be repeated in these forms elsewhere. In North America, for example, migrations from Europe left the peasantry and aristocracy behind, resulting in the transplantation of liberalism into a political vacuum, without the feudal and socialist elements of the European amalgam. By contrast, the Iberian migrations to Latin America were mainly clerical, rural and military, bringing together—but never realising—the Southern European amalgam. Hence, the political history of these places takes different courses, directed by their divergent amalgams of culture, economics and politics.

These are important observations. If we apply the notion of collisions of historical amalgams to the Asian situation, the various forces involved in the different timing of their collisions help explain why Asian outcomes, with the notable exception of the Philippines, differ so markedly from the Latin American experience. Generally missing in the Asian experience is the hacienda feudalism and the political power of the church which were important ingredients in the emergence of caudillo politics. Instead, the tradition of a strong state and powerful officials is entrenched, descending from the traditional agrarian bureaucracies and the authoritarian colonial commodity-exporting states. In the post-colonial shake-up, the authoritarianism of industrial mercantilism or 'command capitalism' was to predominate. It is the collision of this state-dominated capitalist amalgam with an international, market-based capitalism that constitutes the present set of political tensions. In Asia, the importance, cohesion and autonomy of an estate of politico-bureaucrats is generally of a different order to the Latin American experience and is closer to the sorts of dynamics to be found in Moore’s path to capitalism via ‘revolution from above’ which includes the German and Japanese cases. Hence, attempts to represent the Latin American experience as general theory, as has been the case of dependency theory and later works of O’Donnell and his associates, must be recognised for what they are.

Cumings (1989: 23) also adds the important point that these aspects must be considered not only in the context of individual states, but within a context of sovereign states belonging to a world system of capitalist commodity production and exchange. It should be added that class relations also operate within an international division of labour (Jenkins 1984).

One of the few theorists in this area who raises the question of culture, explicit in the categories of ‘feudal’, ‘bourgeoisie’ and ‘liberal’ that he uses, Cumings’ concept of culture is drawn from the works of Raymond Williams, E. P. Thompson and Perry Anderson rather than from the school that owes much to Talcott Parsons. For Cumings, culture is integral to the political and material levels of society, so that a bourgeois epoch develops a bourgeois culture. This is in contrast with, for example, Huntington’s perspective, where culture has no history, it just is. For Huntington and Cotton, Korean authoritarianism will persist because Korea has an authoritarian culture. For Cumings, however, authoritarianism remains strong because the bourgeois democratic culture is poorly developed in the early, raw, industrial capitalism which exists.

The value of an analysis that examines the historical paths of capitalist development is that it identifies sets of options and constraints for political action that influence the prospects for transition from authoritarianism. In so-called late industrialising societies, capitalist classes are nurtured within the protective framework of authoritarian, neo-mercantilist regimes and thereby constitute its political allies as long as they remain dependent upon the resources and protection of the state. The critical point in the political histories of such societies comes when the development of industrial capitalism and the interests of a bourgeoisie become contradictory to the continued existence of authoritarian forms of state power; when the regime constrains the social order.

**Regime vs capitalist development**

At what point, if any, do authoritarian regimes collide with the processes of capitalist development and the interests of emerging social forces? Exactly what are the points of contradiction? A first type of contradiction comes when mercantilist and/or patronymical regimes come into conflict with a capitalist class whose business activities are increasingly focused around regularised processes and market mechanisms. Weber (1964: 357) emphasised this aspect:

\[\ldots\text{under the dominance of a patrimonial regime only certain types of capitalism are able to develop. It leaves room for a certain amount of capitalist mercantile trade}\ldots\]

This is not, however, true of the type of profit-making enterprise with heavy investments in fixed capital and a rational organisation of free labour which is oriented to the market purchases of private consumers. This is altogether too sensitive to all sorts of irrationalities in the administration of justice in other forms of administrative practice and in taxation. For these upset the basis of calculability.

While Weber concentrated on the contradiction between ‘rational’ capital and patrimonial regime, later theorists, including O’Donnell (1979: 297–8), were to focus upon the nationalism of military
regimes and the internationalism of the high bourgeoisie. Harris extends this functionalist analysis to include the whole range of constraints that state capitalism imposes upon an emerging capital class. It is an analysis of political transformation which focuses upon the conflicts between regime and capital in the sphere of investment and production, rather than, as Cumings does, in the sphere of international trade. Harris (1988) argues that the development of national capitalism usually needs a phase of state-led development whether this is called economic nationalism or socialism. Import substitution, monopoly accumulators and a system of unequal exchange are all part of this phase. Eventually, however, this state and its system of state-led accumulation come to contradict and constrain critical elements of the emerging capitalist classes:

However, when the state establishes a system for forced accumulation, this is not simply a set of arrangements that can be changed at will. It constitutes a social order, with a weight of inertia constituted by vested interests, the immediate beneficiaries, that inhibits the creation of any other order. What was set up to speed development becomes an inhibition to growth as capital develops, as output diversifies, as businessmen are increasingly drawn to participate in the world economy, and as the need for the psychological participation of a skilled labour force supersedes the dependence upon masses of unskilled labour: capitalism 'matures'. The old state must be reformed or overthrown, to establish the common conditions for all capital: a rule of law, accountability of public officials and expenditure, a competitive labour market and, above all, measures to ensure the common interests of capital can shape the important policies of the State. Thus, the enemy of capitalism is not feudalism but the State, whether this is the corrupt, particularist State, State capitalism, or, as is more often the case, a combination of these (Harris 1988: 247).

In this view the maturation of capitalism establishes a set of conditions which require changes to state policy and in the nature of the relationship with social forces. Two aspects are of further interest here. First, the state gradually withdraws from direct ownership of capital and from market-place intervention. This occurs as the capacity of private capital to compete locally and internationally and to exploit market opportunities increases. Second, the relationship between state and capital changes as capital becomes a more coherent class. The state is increasingly called upon to manage both society and economy in the interests of capital-in-general rather than for specific client groups.

However, it is clear that this relationship between capitalist maturation and political systems refers to a functional contradiction with implications for the state's managerial role. But there is no necessity of a link between increased rationalisation and democratisation or the institutionalisation of accountability. Rationalisation of these state managerial activities might just as easily be achieved under a highly organised authoritarian regime—as Harris (1988: 248) explains, 'there is no mechanical or inevitable process at work here'. Indeed, whatever the particular political outcome, it will reflect the balance of social forces and the nature of political struggle.

There is, however, a key factor in the political outcomes—the bourgeoisie. Where it develops its corporate strength and its capital base to the stage where accumulation is facilitated more by competition in a market than by state patronage, there are inevitable pressures for the state to become less interventionist. For the larger corporations a state that provides mercantilist systems of monopolies becomes less useful than one which provides common and predictable rules which guarantee the existence of all capital. Where capital growth is vigorous and where the national economy becomes increasingly integrated with the world economy, these pressures become more difficult for regimes to resist. This suggests, then, that there are significant contradictions between authoritarianism and market capitalism. Here we can suggest three. First, the resolution of conflict between competing elements of capital requires mechanisms of mediation which authoritarian regimes find difficult to provide. Second, the new relationship between market capitalism and the state requires mechanisms of accountability inimical to most authoritarian regimes, with Singapore a notable exception. Third, the dismantling of mercantilist state powers seriously weakens the power base of the officials who normally exercise authority within such regimes.

The reorganisation of the regime by capital must, however, be seen in the context of broader sets of social relations. Attempts to resolve contradictions in capitalist development by making regimes more accountable may be restrained if capital fears that accountability will threaten the social order: that it does not have the social and economic power to resist. This suggests, then, that there are significant contradictions between authoritarianism and market capitalism. Here we can suggest three. First, the resolution of conflict between competing elements of capital requires mechanisms of mediation which authoritarian regimes find difficult to provide. Second, the new relationship between market capitalism and the state requires mechanisms of accountability inimical to most authoritarian regimes, with Singapore a notable exception. Third, the dismantling of mercantilist state powers seriously weakens the power base of the officials who normally exercise authority within such regimes.

The triumph of capital over state and the question of regimes

How is it, then, that regimes are transformed? We have recounted and criticised the Transitions position above as one of negotiation, and the importance of 'developmental elites' for theorists like Huntington and Johnson has similarly been rejected. The problem confronting state theorists here is not only to avoid the pitfalls of these approaches, but to avoid the crude reductionism common to all
instrumentalist approaches where the state is seen to be a reflection of its social base.

One approach which partly avoided this is found in the works of 1970s radical dependency theorists. They argued that there was no prospect of a transition to accountable regimes. For example, Schmitter (1973: 188), in explaining the persistence of military regimes in Brazil, argued that the Bonapartist model, where ‘... the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation’, was the most appropriate model. In this analysis state officials and the state are relatively autonomous of civil society because of the destruction of the local bourgeoisie under conditions of dependency.

Similarly, Alavi viewed state autonomy in post-colonial Bangladesh and Pakistan as arising from a fragmentation of class power and the ‘over-developed’ nature of the bureaucratic apparatus. Both situations were said to arise as a legacy of colonialism:

... the state in the post-colonial society is not the instrument of a single class. It is relatively autonomous and it mediates between the competing interests of the three propertied classes, namely the metropolitan bourgeoisies, the indigenous bourgeoisie and the landed classes, while at the same time acting on behalf of them all to preserve the social order in which their interests are embedded, namely the institution of private property and the capitalist mode as the dominant mode of production (Alavi 1979: 41-2).

The notion that a ‘state class’ or ‘state bourgeoisie’ had emerged as one fragment of a petty bourgeoisie under a deformed capitalism was common. For example, Stauffer (1985) has applied this perspective to the Philippines under Marcos, while Robison (1986) and Feith (1980) writing on Indonesia have reflected on this also. However, none of these approaches presents a theory of state and society that adequately explains transition from authoritarianism.

A group of neo-Weberian state-centred theorists including Skocpol, Block and Trimberger have placed great emphasis on the institutional interests of state officials, and consider that the state may be able to override the interests of capital. While Block suggests that capital retains a veto power over the actions of state officials, state-centred theorists tend to exclude the possibility of structural limitations on state autonomy (cf. Cammack 1989).

Miliband’s concept of a ‘partnership’ between state and class has important advantages for examining state-society-regime relationships. In Miliband’s (1983: 64) view, the

... relationship between the dominant class in advanced capitalist societies and the state is one of partnership between two different, separate forces, linked to each other by many threads, yet each having its own separate sphere of concerns. The terms of that partnership are not fixed but constantly shifting.

It is a concept which, in Miliband’s (1983: 65) words,

seeks to give due importance to the independent and ‘self regarding’ role of the state and to make full allowance for what might be called the Machiavellian dimension of state action, which Marxism’s ‘class reductionist’ tendencies have obscured.

Miliband argues that the two main impulses generated by executive action within the state are the self-interest of power-holders and officials and a conception of the ‘national interest’. The latter, he argues, has largely been defined in capitalist society in terms of the well-being of capitalist enterprise, mainly because this is the system that generates production and wealth in society for which there is no conceivable alternative arrangement. This does not mean that the state cannot work against the short- or medium-term interest of individual capitalists or fractions of capital, or that policy decisions cannot turn out to be wrong-headed and to everyone’s disadvantage. Clearly there are tensions between state and capital, particularly over taxation reform and regulation. What it does mean, however, is that the state operates under structural constraints when dealing with the perceived general and long-term interests of capital. It is also difficult for leftist governments to mount an attack on the fundamental interests of a hegemonic capitalist class, not only for fear of capital flight but because ‘... capital also knew that it was only a small part of the state that was now in alien hands; the top reaches of the civil service, the police, the military, the judiciary remained more or less intact and vigilantly concerned to limit the damage which the government might do’ (Miliband 1983: 66).

Most important, this analysis avoids the huge waste of time consumed in attempting to develop general theoretical propositions about whether state-society relations are instrumental, structural or state-centred. It enables explanations of state action to be made in terms of all three dynamics—instrumental, structural and state-centred—according to the specific historical factors that prevail.

One critical facet of the Miliband thesis is the link it develops between the existence of a hegemonic class and the prospects for the development of an ‘accountable’ regime with constitutional checks and balances. Miliband (1983: 61) argues that:

The degree of autonomy which the state enjoys for the most purposes in relation to social forces in capitalist society depends above all on the extent to which class struggle and pressure from below challenge the hegemony of the class which is dominant in
such a society. Where a dominant class is truly hegemonic in economic, social, political and cultural terms, and therefore free from any major and effective challenge from below, the chances are that the state itself will also be subject to its hegemony, and that it will be greatly constrained by the various forms of class power which the dominant class has at its disposal. Where, on the other hand, the hegemony of a dominant class is persistently and strongly challenged, the autonomy of the state is likely to be substantial, to the point where, in conditions of intense class struggle and political instability, it may assume ‘Bonapartist’ and authoritarian forms, and emancipate itself from constraining constitutional checks and controls.

Clearly, like most theorists who have concentrated on the history of capitalism in Europe, Miliband associates authoritarianism with the sort of autonomy that derives from an absence of an hegemonic class. Interesting for its further exploration of this theme is Fatton’s (1988) analysis of class and state in Africa, which supports the main thrust of Miliband’s argument. However he cautions against any assumption that the autonomous, Bonapartist state is the only explanation of authoritarianism in emerging capitalist societies. The authoritarian state, he argues, may be the product, not of autonomy from but of subordination to a dominant class dependent upon state power to ensure its social, economic or cultural means to sustain its dominance within the sphere of society; it does not dominate the institutions or ideologies of society (Fatton 1988).

In Fatton’s African examples, the officials of the state are not autonomous and the nature of the struggle is not one between state and the bourgeoisie, or between state and civil society. The struggle is between classes, one of which imposes its dominance via a narrow instrumental control over the state and uses the state’s coercive powers in its own interests. It follows that the shift to a more accountable state may come only when the increasing hegemony of the dominant class makes coercion less essential, that is, when the class’s interests and ideologies are embedded in the legal, religious, educational, industrial and media institutions of society. Fatton’s thesis is that any understanding of the state requires an initial deciphering of class power and the processes of class formation. While Miliband might disagree with Fatton’s instrumentalism, he would support this idea of analysing class power in order to determine how it comes to be transformed into political power.

The authoritarian states of Africa, so apparently autonomous in their violent and coercive relations with much of society, are, Fatton argues, a very narrow form of class rule in a situation where the ruling class has not yet attained social and ideological hegemony, and where class power is totally dependent upon control of the state and the use of state power for narrow corporate interests. This proposition leads Fatton (1988: 254) to a general thesis about the relationship between the maturation of class hegemony and the transformation of narrow, class-based dictatorships to more democratic and autonomous institutions:

The non-hegemonic status of the African ruling classes deprives the state of the relative autonomy that makes reform possible, despotism unnecessary, and liberal democracy viable. The state is almost exclusively an authoritarian structure of dominance; expressing the narrow corporate interests of the ruling class, it has failed to become integral. The integral state is the state of a hegemonic ruling class and as such is capable of ‘expansion’. It is capable of integrating and coopting into its own institutions potential allies and even antagonistic elements. The integral state is thus relatively autonomous since it can extract certain sacrifices from the ruling class and make certain concessions to the popular classes. The integral state, however, is not above society; it is integral precisely because the ruling class has achieved hegemony. In other words, the integral state can only emerge when the ruling class has consolidated its rule to the point where its material, intellectual and moral leadership is unquestioned or at least consensually accepted by the subordinate classes.

Miliband and Fatton do, however, make a common point: that the accountable or integral state is possible only in societies where the ruling class is not only dominant but hegemonic, and that authoritarian forms are more likely where no class enjoys hegemony.

This is a critical point. It was important, for example, that significant sections of the British ruling class supported political reforms in the nineteenth century because they were assured that the extension of the franchise would not threaten the existing social order. Liberals like Bentham and Mill justified their arguments in favour of reform in precisely these terms, assuring the conservatives that the newly enfranchised masses would be ‘responsible’ (Macpherson 1977: 37, 42). The importance of hegemony has also been recognised in one way or another by most of the theorists dealt with in this chapter. Although expressing the concept of hegemony in terms of the notion of political order, Huntington recognised that political reform was unlikely where deep and bitter social divisions existed and were manifest in political conflict. It is central to Stepan’s explanation of why the bourgeoisie in Uruguay, for example, was more ready to abandon the military junta in that country than their class counterparts in Chile who remained in fear of the strong working-class and revolutionary movements.

Within the advanced industrial economies, ruling-class hegemony in the social sphere is considered by many theorists to have become...
so all-encompassing that politics has receded in importance. With the incorporation of the proletariat into the capitalist project, we might add, political parties, both conservative and reformist, find themselves competing largely on the basis of their capacity to effectively manage the capitalist process of economic growth—reduced in ideological terms to Tweedledum and Tweedledum. Cumings (1989: 21) notes that, in the United States today, the capitalist order is so thoroughly secured at the social and economic level that '... hardly anyone believes that we can solve our problems through the architecture of politics. That is why we derive the President-as-curiosity...

Concluding comments

Any resolution of this debate or progress towards definitive sets of propositions must come from comparative analysis of dynamics underlying the resilience or reorganisation of regimes in industrialising capitalist societies. Clearly, different situations present different problems for theory. How do we explain Indian democracy in a context of what appears to be a relatively chaotic configuration of social power? Why does an authoritarian form of state power persist in the advanced capitalism of Singapore? Does the Singaporean case reinforce the emphasis upon organisation, strategy, leadership and political voluntarism of the Transitions thesis? Do the democratic transitions in Korea or Taiwan indicate the decreasing relevance of the state to the process of capitalist accumulation or to the political dominance of the bourgeoisie? Are there specific problems of transformation or resistance in ‘late-industrialising’ economies? Is democratisation in this economy a process of re-organisation of regime to save the state carried out by the dominant coalitions of social power? To what extent do popular forces play any decisive role?

Through this collection of Southeast Asian case studies we hope to advance the basis for comparative analysis in addressing the above, and other, questions. Although the different authors do not adopt identical frameworks in the respective chapters, they are nevertheless guided by certain common questions which logically derive from the above critical survey. In particular, the question of political change is viewed as inseparable from socio-economic and historical considerations. At its broadest level, this involves recognition that the general context of political power here is capitalism—and an emerging capitalism that is rapidly taking an industrial form.

This is not to suggest that the form and nature of power is totally shaped by such a context, but the options and constraints facing exponents of power in such societies cannot be understood without specification of the dynamics of capitalism. These dynamics are central to the ability or otherwise of existing regimes to reproduce themselves. However, as will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters, these dynamics do not manifest themselves in the same fashion from one society to another. Rather, different class structures, variations in the relationships between classes and states, as well as related contrasts in economic structures, all serve to complicate, though not necessarily diminish, the significance of capitalist development for the exercise of power. The impact of capitalist development on political regimes is thus a thematic consideration in this collection, even if that impact may be far from uniform. Indeed, the purpose of the collection is to explore the potential and limits of capitalism in its current phase for political and social change in Southeast Asia.

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