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Ideological Coalitions and the International Promotion of Social Accountability: The Philippines and Cambodia Compared

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International aid agencies are increasingly placing social accountability at the heart of their governance reform programs, involving a range of social accountability mechanisms through which officials are rendered answerable to the public. Crucially, aid agencies are not just promoting these mechanisms in emerging democracies, but now also in authoritarian societies. What then are the likely political regime effects of these mechanisms? We approach this by examining who supports social accountability, why, and the implications for political authority. Focusing on the Philippines and Cambodian cases, it is argued that, to differing degrees, social accountability mechanisms have been subordinated to liberal and/or moral ideologies favoring existing power hierarchies. These ideologies often privilege nonconfrontational state-society partnerships, drawing activists into technical and administrative processes limiting reform possibilities by marginalizing, or substituting for, independent political action pivotal to the democratic political authority of citizens.

Since the mid-2000s, accountability has become a central element in governance reform advocated and supported by international aid agencies, with social accountability a major plank of this new agenda. Social accountability involves various forms of civil society activism intended to hold public officials answerable for their behavior—something that aid agencies are now promoting, not just in emerging democracies but also in authoritarian societies. This raises crucial questions. Do social accountability mechanisms represent an intrinsic opportunity for democratic forces and/or outcomes? If so, what factors facilitate or obstruct the realization of this potential? Alternatively, could the accountability agenda be used by elites to insulate policymaking from substantive contestation by substituting administrative mechanisms for democratic politics? We address these questions by examining who supports social accountability, why, and the implications for political authority.

While the potential for political cooperation through accountability is recognized (Ackerman 2005:20; Goetz and Jenkins 2005), hitherto there has been no sustained examination of different ideologies and interests attached to notions of accountability in general and social accountability in particular.

Yet this is essential for understanding when and why social accountability results in democratic or authoritarian outcomes. For, as we demonstrate, it is not just democratic forces that are attracted to—or are attempting to harness—ideas, institutions, and mechanisms of social accountability, but also forces for liberal and moral values compatible with authoritarianism.

We focus on the Philippines and Cambodia—both members of the World Bank-supported Asian Network for Social Accountability, which holds the Philippines as a model of social accountability for Cambodia. These cases offer an ideal opportunity to compare impacts on different political regimes of common techniques of political organization for accountability promoted by international aid agencies. Notwithstanding the presence of significant democratic forces in the Philippines and a comparative absence of such in Cambodia, there are striking parallels to these cases. To varying degrees, social accountability mechanisms have been subordinated to liberal and/or morally based ideas of accountability that help preserve existing power hierarchies and limit the scope for critical evaluation of prevailing reform agendas. Where these ideologies dominate accountability coalitions, they also often privilege nonconfrontational state-society partnerships, drawing activists into technical and administrative processes limiting political reform possibilities by marginalizing or replacing independent collective political action crucial to the democratic political authority of citizens. Indeed, part of social accountability's attraction for some actors is that it can be

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harnessed to new modes of authoritarian governance suited to the context of globalized market economies—often in the name of democracy.

The second argument is that the broader regime transformative potential of social accountability. Fox (2007:3-11) maintains that, through collective mechanisms for accountability and participation, social foundations for democratic transitions can be laid even before electoral institutions come into existence. This is followed by an examination of major social accountability initiatives in the case studies: the Global Campaign for Press Freedom in the Philippines and the Demand for Good Governance Program in Cambodia. We demonstrate the potential for change in the accountability ability of coalitions traversing a range of ideologies, actors, and political regime types—authoritarian and democratic.

Social Accountability and Political Regimes
Social accountability mechanisms range widely. They include monitoring and auditing functions—citizen report cards, social audits and society watchdogs on corruption, transparency, labor standards, and electoral institutions—that may generate media attention and political pressure to activate existing formal accountability mechanisms or generate direct pressure for the incorporation of social actors onto state-based or government-initiated bodies, such as truth commissions or other state-authorized monitoring bodies (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2005).

By drafting citizens onto state committees and involving nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the work of state inspectors, social accountability blurs the conceptual distinction between horizontal (intra-state) and vertical (state-centric) accountability (O'Donnell 1998). But what are the regional implications of various forms of social accountability?

Three key arguments about the political significance of accountability are discernible in the literature. The first is that, by complementing and supplementing existing accountability institutions between the public and private sectors, social accountability can become a significant push toward the scrutiny of power and political competition required for emerging democracies to consolidate. Complementarity with existing institutions and movements involved in mechanisms of accountability in Latin America in particular over the last decade has given rise to new democratic optimism (Mainwaring and Welna 2005; Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2006). While many such initiatives lack direct enforcement powers, they have emphasized their indirect effects in "turning on the alarm" and "material consequences" (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2005:8). We propose that the accountability strategy (World Bank 2004a:25) assert, "Social mechanisms constitute an alternative mechanism for imposing costs on political actors who sanction the operation of those institutional mechanisms that have mandatory sanctioning capacities." Theorists placing a premium on checks and balances against state power view such pressures from civil society as integral to the maturing of liberal democracy.

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We identify three ideological rationales for accountability—civic, liberal, and moral. Each differs over the appropriate role of social accountability in the relationship between state and civil society. We categorize them as entirely mutually exclusive, these categories delineate different ideas about which contexts and alliances over social accountability occur. The fundamental aim of democratic accountability is to assert them against state power. While this necessitates mechanisms to check and scrutinize the use of state power, democrats are not invariably opposed to extensive state powers. Differences exist over the degree to which that authority can be effectively asserted. Mulligan (2006:328) argues that the size of the state is not necessarily a function of the power of citizens. The role of the state in accountability and the nature of accountability that is possible under the state's control is the subject of this chapter. The key question is whether or not states are capable of meeting the demands of democratic accountability. If this is the case, and if individuals feel that the state is being adequately accountable, then the relationship between the state and citizens will be benign. If not, then the relationship will be characterized by conflict and tension. The state's capacity to respond to demands for accountability will determine whether or not citizens are able to effectively assert their rights. In conclusion, this chapter examines the role of the state in accountability and the nature of accountability that is possible under the state's control. The chapter argues that the state's capacity to respond to demands for accountability will determine whether or not citizens are able to effectively assert their rights.
democratic movements seek to challenge market values (Japa-1985).

A third ideational category of accountability shifts
the emphasis toward morality. This is a capacious
category incorporating a potentialistically- and
varietally-based range of variants and which base accountabil-
ity's rationale upon a received understanding of cor-
rect conduct. The moral approach is distinct from
the distinction shared private and public spheres of
conduct and subject both to a moral code based
upon an externally constituted authority. This may
take the protective form of a church, in religi-
ous variants; a paternalistic elite, as in monopolistic
or aristocratic variants; or the dead hand of custom or
the civilizational foundations, in nationalistic, cul-
tural, or republican variants.

Because the bases for moral ideologies of account-
able are so diverse, there may be considerable con-
testation within this category. For example, classical
republicanism, which relies on a notion of civic vir-
tus, has historically sought to curb religious moral-
ism, which holds secular power accountable to a set
of beliefs thought to embody divine authority. Differ-
ent forms of religious modernism also have varying
applications for political regimes, because of the
divergent interpretations within individual religious
of key sources of divine authority. Depending on
which position prevails, then, moral approaches to
accountability can either promote social conservatism
associated with established churches or radical is-
change among new philosophical move-
ments or ethical revolutions. Even the latter, though,
is likely lead ultimately to the emergence of a
new hierarchy, as a new set of moral guardians
emerges.

The political significance of moral rationales for
accountability is that these rationales are sufficiently
diverse and flexible that they can be harnessed to
support or oppose either liberal or democratic forms
of accountability. As we will show in the dis-
cussion of the Philippines and Cambodia, hybrid
rationalities have emerged which combine the liberal-
ization of key institutions and the morally based ideologues emerging from Catholicism, in the
case of the Philippines, and a complex mix of
Khmer nationalism and the morally based ideologies emerging from Buddhism, in the case of Cambo-
dia. In both cases, this has led to nondemocratic outcomes.

The broader point is that, since the constituents
for the three different ideological rationales for
accountability derive from one rationality, as well as
together, the prospects of attempts to pro-
 mote social accountability by international aid agen-
cies will invariably be influenced by the precise
complexities of the struggle of coalitions within and
between these ideological camps. Consequently, the
export of social accountability techniques, especially
philanthropy, aid, and financial support, is dependent
on the level of support provided by social
new constitutional and legislative guarantees. Yet in
the Philippines, "the progressive NGOs increasingly
confronted the challenge of winning the support of
the indigenous communities," and the Catholic Church
consequently remained a dominant force (Hillrots:2003:14). In
addition to substantial foreign aid, civil society
movements from one rationality, for example, or
between these ideological camps. Consequently, the
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The Social Accountability Context

In both Cambodia and the Philippines, historical and
structural fault lines are evident in the context of Cold War lega-
cies of fragmented or stunted civil societies—are
important to the form and prospects of social
movements. "Crisis of democracy" in a
military and authoritarian rule under Marcos
(1972-1986), civil society was decimated, with inde-
pendent colleagues to try to work across and
private citizens being particular targets of repression
(Hillrots:2003; Ablina and Amorsolo 2005). The
leadership of the Church, in an era of
corporatist governance, was central to the move-
mentistic leadership of the Church came to some accommoda-
tion with Marcos. Shared hostility toward commu-
nism and Marcos was evidence of a deep
egalitarianism of the Church that enabled it to
promote a more coherent collective democratic
forces including the labor movement (Franco
1981:201-207). In Cambodia, opposition party
efforts to build a support base within the nascent
trade union movement in the garment industry were
inhibited by international intervention from agencies
such as the International Labor Organization, which
sought to depoliticize Cambodian trade unions
(Hughes 2007). In rural areas, in both countries, the
power of oligarchs and tycoons helped ensure that
party politics represented principally a vehicle through
which economic interests were mediated (Silliman

Against these backgrounds, it is unsurprising
that the set of challenges facing the accountability
issue and not only the lack of constraints on power
in the Philippines in particular, has been such
that it continues to dominate political reform debates.
Concepts of democratic reform that could empower labor
and the poor struggle to gain a foothold amid a plethora
of liberal and morally based critiques. Since the late
1990s, ideas about democracy have in both countries
become intertwined with the desires of good governance
promoted by international aid agencies and interna-
tional business. These ideas have been harnessed by
elites attempting to use foreign aid interventions
to entrench existing power hierarchies.

The Church's role in the 2001 People Power II
movement that culminated in an extraordinary
coalition against the administration of
President Joseph Estrada in the Philippines was self-portrayed
as "an extension of the continuing relevance of the
Church's social justice teachingand the impassioned
Good Friday protests prompted the Catholic
Church to accept a United Nations peacekeeping
operation, which incorporated international support
and which was assisted by the MILF, the creation
of new civil society organizations.

In addition to substantial foreign aid, civil society
movements from one rationality, for example, or
between these ideological camps. Consequently, the
export of social accountability techniques, especially
philanthropy, aid, and financial support, is dependent
on the level of support provided by social

relations with the government. It is in this contexts that
social accountability movements have been
founded in the 2000s, with profound effects for both
their ideological framing and political regime
impacts.

Philippine Social Accountability: Anticorruption
and Procurement Reform

The extent of social accountability initiatives in
the Philippines has been substantial, especially in
India, as the Asia-Pacific regional leader in
social accountability (World Bank Institute 2005). Procurement
reforms have been under way in the Philippines
for a decade, as procurement reforms have been
exported under World Bank programs to coun-
countries such as Cambodia to spread information and
build capacity for social accountability.

The passing of the Government Procurement
Reform Act (GPA) in 2002 was a landmark for
social accountability achievements. Institutional-
izing national civil society-state partnerships
including incorporating societal actors onto the
Bids and Awards Committees (BACs) responsible for awarding
Procurement Reform Act (GPA) in 2002 was a landmark for
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izing national civil society-state partnerships
including incorporating societal actors onto the
Bids and Awards Committees (BACs) responsible for awarding
procurement contracts. Crucially, while democratic notions of accountability were significant within
technical and administrative tasks to
improve governance. While helping consolidate coalitions between domestic business and inter-
class politics, however, has led to an emergent
agenda for building stronger and more cohesive grassroots constituency representation as fundamental to
accountability.

The key coalition involved in social accountability initiatives associated with the GPA was the
Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN), formed in
November 2000. Comprising 40 organizations, TAN
included elements of the private sector, academia, and
associations and religious organizations who
shared a concern about the corruption and
the prevalence of corruption in the Estrada Administra-
tion. TAN's strategy to foster improved govern-
ance included elements from the transparency agenda,
support for which has come from several interna-
tional donors.

While TAN was involved in efforts resulting in the
passing of the GPA, another alliance of NGOs, the
Coalition Against Corruption (CAC), was formed in
2001.8 The CAC was a monitor compliance for their pro-
visions extend to the monitoring of textbook and medi-

cine procurement, internal revenue allotments for local
government assistance (Pork Barrel), and the lifestyle of public officials.
CAC membership is a Who’s Who of social accountability in the Philippines, overlapping with, but extending on, the TAN network by incorporating even stronger Church involvement.

Although CAC contains diverse ideologies and interests, members appear united in the view of its chairman Jose Cua (quoted in BIP 2008) that CAC’s thrust is to energize the Church, create a new social contract, build democracy and society today. From a liberal perspective, corruption in procurement contract awards, and the generally, obstructs markets, competition and distorts prices. However, depicting anticorruption governance reform as simultaneously the key to eradicating poverty has also been this coalition’s hallmark (see, for example, MAP 2008:5).

Important as severing corruption is to eradicating poverty, its portrayal as the primary solution has ideological effects, diverting attention from wider issues of wealth and power distribution resulting from market failures and from consideration of whether socioeconomically disadvantaged groups have adequate political representation. Furthermore, the use of social accountability to combat corruption has steered NGO energies away from coalition building among the poor toward technical work of monitoring compliance.

The initial driving force to enact the PRA comprised a coalition of state bureaucrats and internationals advocating at least in principle, this coalition embraced a standard contemporary liberal critique of corruption as rooted in state capture by narrow private interests exercising power by officials, the solution being better governance through more transparency and accountability within which competitive market forces are central. At another level, a concerted political strategy to champion and implement reforms was hatched that included engaging and building social and political forces (Campos and Syquia 2006). And coalition building did not stop with the passing of the PRA. Instead, the Church, which had never channelled its fight against corruption elsewhere, became heavily involved in implementing social accountability mechanisms for public procurement. Its various organizational networks have been crucial in the recruitment, training, and authority of the societal involvement in the BAC.

Broadly, stages in the conceptualization of support for, and implementation of the PRA corresponded with the respective primary influence at the time of liberal, democratic, and moral approaches with accountability

First moves toward public procurement reform can be traced to the efforts of a US-trained economist, now Wilson (quoted in Okano 1998) to head the Philippines Department of Budget and Management (DBM). His concerns about the budgeting system were to seek help from USAID, resulting initially in two US-based procurement experts working within DBM for six months to produce a draft of the legislative reforms. By 2008, an extensive USAID technical assistance program was funding workshops, short-term consultancies, and other activities linking DBM with support and advice from USAID and other donors as part of a Technical Agreement (TA) on improving the accountability of public officials and public monitoring of the procurement process, and the implementation of awarded contracts to ensure compliance with the terms of the contract. The composition and powers of the BAC are critical to accountability of officials and monitoring of the procurement process.

However, the Estrada imbroglio and imminent election concerns of senators resulted in the 11th Congress considering a maximum of any further progress (Campos and Syquia 2006:11).

At this point, members of the TWC, the BRTF, and the TA team also concluded that links with civil society needed to be knitted together the expertise and organizational ingredients for social accountability. Accordingly, in February 2001, the NGO Procurement Watch Inc. (PWI) was formed, funded by a grant from the World Bank managed by the DBM. PWI was to be active in procurement training and monitoring, but it soon became clear that its advocacy role would be critical. Estrada’s removal repositioned a historic corruption movement; the challenge now was to ensure President Arroyo, and other parliamentarians still saw the urgency of procurement reform (Campos and Syquia 2006:16–17; Thornton 2004).

PWI targeted TAN in attempting to galvanize civil society support. Before long, TAN had prepared a manifesto endorsing the PWI report to the Procurement Reform Bill (PRB) of the Office of the Ombudsman, copied to the GPPB, explaining how.

The technical expertise and organizational capacities of civil society groups are integral to the training and recruitment of observers on the BACs and the monitoring of compliance with the act. Accordingly, PWI’s task has been both enhanced and narrowed, as it plays a pivotal role in training other NGOs, state officials, and individual volunteers about the procurement process. Its role has thus changed from a confrontational, overtly political, and explicitly democratic campaign to be one that can get the act passed, to a mainly technical role. Accordingly, PWI’s Supervising Technical Officer, Caroline Belisario (2005:35–36), states that the nature of the movement: the assertion of civil society authority as the imperative for change.

In supporting the legislation, Senator Edgardo J. Angara asserted that, “The evil of corruption is robbing our people of essential services such as schooling, health, food, etc. (quoted in Philippine Star 2002). Once the PRA was passed, though, emphasis shifted from the rights of the poor to the technical concerns of monitoring compliance with the act. PWI became the most influential in promoting the political campaign for the PRA steered not from indifference to corruption. Rather, many in the Church and in government wondered if there is a strong moral and cultural one to be addressed accord-

ingly. Support of the urban poor for Estrada in particular shocked Church leaders (CEC 2003:iii). From May 2003, the Jesuit order’s Committee on the Evangelization of Culture conducts a mass campaign of moral education to arrest corruption and bolster accountability through the Ebele! Program (CEC 2003:xi). The emphasis was hardly on the need for a sense of civic and moral duty within public institutions and civil society. Whereas many other anticorruption measures concentrate on monitoring tender holders, it highlighted a need for the “more geared toward changing the mindset of ordinary people, who appear to have become rather indifferent or not that much supportive of corruption” (Araya 2005). Corruption was thus portrayed as part of humankind’s broader moral fallibility.

Speaking at the Bishop-Businessmen’s Conference General Assembly of July 8, 2004, President Arroyo requested the Church’s assistance to implement the PRA. By late 2004, not only was the Church involved in helping to train BAC observers, through the Council of the Laity of the Philippines (LAIKO) and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), but it had also become an important CAC member.

The desire to address the moral basis to accountability emphasized in Ebele! is at the fore in the CBCP approach to anticorruption education. For example, when requested by the Social Security System (SSS) to train its BAC and support staff, LAIKO’s Advocacy for Good Governance Committee designed a module that teaches about the roles and responsibilities of SSS, education. The result was a two-day Holy Retreat in October 2007 for members of the BAC and TWG of SSS, which included a presentation on “The Moral Responsibility of Public Servants” by Bishop Gabriel V. Reyes, LAIKO National Director, and a mass and homily citing a gospel parable to draw out the implications for those seeking to get rich through corruption (CBCP News 2007).

Meanwhile, throughout the work of Jesuit academics at the Ateneo University, Catholic activists were involved in a range of social accountability watchdogs, mechanisms and CAC criticisms of authoritarian justices over corruption. By 2008, much of the latter was targeted at Arroyo (Quimpo 2010:55–57). Significantly, while this includes both the legal and moral forces and ideologies, CBCP President and Archbishop of Jaro, Angel Lagdameo (2008) explained that it is derived from a deeply family and centered on the defecation of corruption.

It is through internal conversion into the maturity of Christ through communal and pastoral discernment and action that the roots of corruption are discovered and destroyed. And the street corner action, unconditional love and charity: this on its own can result in prophetic change, it is God’s way of bringing the good news to those who have not heard. But such communal action will perpetuate at the grassroots level the spirit of commitment to serving God within the context steered to the world at EDSA I. It is People Power with a difference. From the grassroots will come a new understanding of truth and integrity so we do seek and build.
In effect, citizens' political participation through social accountability mechanisms and institutions cannot combat corruption (the central political problem) without the right individual moral integrity and civic engagement. For example, according to Lazatin (2009), "you have to be a very technical person to reverse that engineering and see if it's okay." To be sure, the roles of BAC observers and recourse to the PTG have produced some significant instances of arresting corruption. In Macanangan, for example, KO acted on behalf of the Church-based NGO Diliab Foundation in a successful appeal to the PTG of the National Irrigation Office in Cebu, which was earlier disregarded.

However, the numbers of ensuring adequate numbers of observers sufficiently equipped to serve on the BACs, let alone lodge reports on concerns about the procurement process, are considerable. PTG estimates that of the 5,000 trained observers needed only about 800 existed by the end of 2009 (BEP 2009). Added to this is the logistical problem of matching requisite technical expertise among trained observers with the geographical location of BAC meetings. Meanwhile, local government institutions in particular that do not invite observers to BAC meetings cannot easily be disciplined since the GPPB is unable to satisfy all requests for trained observers. Preventing government institutions inviting observers from "friendly" organizations is difficult. Moreover, many serving as observers representing civil society or professional groups are retirees or on low incomes, whose lack of leverage and secretarial support can impede lodging reports about suspected corruption.

In short, while the PRA has opened up avenues for increasing accountability, the practical demands consume a disproportionate civil society effort in technical rather than political exercises. An even more pervasive aspect of this is the ideological framing of corruption as the principal political and moral problem confronting the Philippines. This is rectified through better governance institutions. Those institutions are intended, above all, to ensure the forces of market competition are not blunted by state intervention. With the problem of, and solution to, corruption defined in this way, alternative reform priorities are either subordinated or marginalized altogether. In particular, conceptions of corruption as symptomatic of structurally rooted social conflicts and consideration of the role of mechanisms for political accountability and representation do not resonate with the non-adversarial state-society civil society model ascending among the Philippine middle class. Consequently, although there is now an external check on the exercise of state power, that is being performed by technocrats and experts, rather than by citizens per se. The effect is to contain the political space for contestation and reform imagination.

Social Accountability in Cambodia: From Antifragility to Reconciliation
Within Cambodia, social accountability's preeminent influence is in government decentralization reforms. Significantly, despite the interests and influence of international development, Cambodia has not been able to achieve a social accountability focus, as in the Philippines. Unlike in the Philippines, where business interests played an important role, social accountability in Cambodia has been prison in the hands of donors. Business groups are unwilling to promote an anticorruption agenda, since they regard the predatory and patronage-oriented country as easy pickings for corruption (CPP) as key to political stability and a continued flow of lucrative state contracts. Consequently, efforts by local NGOs working with international agencies to promote moral, liberal, or democratic agendas with respect to corruption have been successfully repressed by the government.

As the Cold War wound down, privatization of land and other natural resources disadvantaged the subsistence sector of the economy in favor of well-connected investors. From near equality in 1989, the distribution of wealth in Cambodia has become one of the most unequal in Asia (Guimbert 2009). During the 2002-2008 economic boom, the CPP, under Prime Minister Hun Sen, awarded tracts of land and forest to Cambodian and foreign investors prepared to support the party's platforms. In return for preferential treatment, businessmen made large donations to CPP events and projects in the rural areas, across the national border, building schools, roads, and irrigation schemes. Spending on these projects oversized state development budgets and boosted support for the CPP, despite high levels of economic misericry and political contestation in both peripheral and urban areas.

This political model, combining predation with neo-patrimonialism, differs substantially from liberal prescriptions for good governance. Eliciting donations from businesses and spending these on politicized development projects requires maintenance, by political leaders, of absolute discretion over procurement contracts and budgets that bode ill for the emergence of authoritative regulatory routines. Consequently, corruption has not figured prominently in the social accountability agenda—quite the reverse. Indeed, the government has signaled displeasure over international support for civil society mobilization (NGOs) and cadres, especially in the police. In 2007, Prime Minister Hun Sen, finally passed an anticorruption law in early 2010 in response to international pressure, certain provisions in the law—such as speeding up millions' imprisonment for whistleblowers making accusations that "lead to fruitful investigations" (Robinson 2010)—have been widely used to chill the climate of accountability (my translation)—seem certain to render it ineffective.

In other issue areas, the political coalition dominating the CPP has been more accepting of international social accountability promotion. The World Bank in 2008 launched a US$29 million Demand for Good Governance (DFFG) program, with the collaboration of the Cambodian Ministry of Interior (MoI), aiming to strengthen government institutions through a national approach explicitly linked to anticorruption (see World Bank 2008a). However, World Bank officials from the Asia-Pacific region were quick to conclude that the program might have an impact on corruption. They suggested a cautious approach to lay the groundwork for more modest forms of accountabilty (Shinumoto 2009).

The DFFG emerged from the Bank's evaluations of the role of civil society in promoting good government and found that the global accountability techniques could harness civil society organizations more effectively to "demand-side" good governance initiatives (Burke and Vanna 2005; Malena and Chilim 2009). In making these assessments, the World Bank drew explicitly on its own "demand-side" agenda, seeking to shift civil society activism "from shouting to counting." This prompted the Bank to launch a Program for Enhancing Capacity for Social Accountability (PECSA) in Cambodia in 2008. PECSA incorporated four goals: training civil society organizations in social accountability techniques, adapting what were called "global accountability practices" to the Cambodian context, providing grants for experiments with social accountability techniques, empowering NGOs, and networking between social accountability groups. PECSA entailed a 3-week intensive "social accountability training" for 20 NGOs, including 10 from Aterno University's School of Governance. Students were taken to see social accountability in action in the Philippines and in India, reflecting the World Bank's view of social accountability as primarily a technical mechanism or set of capacities for promoting reform, rather than a contextually embedded political movement.

The DFFG built upon PECSA, offering US$4 million in grants to nongovernment actors to form partnerships with government institutions in social accountability projects. Selected state agencies, already experimenting with accountability practices, were able to establish a "demand-side" political support. DFFG was launched following extensive discussions with government officials, and is run through a partnership (BEP 2009).
the government to experiment with new ways of working. According to a Bank official who led the project in its inception phase:

We know there are certain things that are still line-in... The government will make sure that line is not crossed.... We are trying to close the gap between what the government wants to achieve and what is actually happening. Without pushing the frontier, we can do a lot that isn’t being done. (Bhargava 2009)

Second, the program provides an opportunity to redefine the relationship between the Cambodian government and civil society, fostering "a culture of constructive engagement that NGO [Non-State Actors] would carry over to other contexts" (World Bank 2008a).

Interviews with senior government officials suggest a different conceptualization of accountability, Secretary of State of the MoL, Ngy Champaal, who heads the DFGG Project Coordination Office, noted in an interview that (within governance), when translated into Khmer, the program was called the "Central Good Governance Project" rather than the "Demand for Good Governance Project, because:

There was some complaint about the title. The word demand means demanding, imposing forcefully. This is not the World Bank. What the World Bank brought this project we changed the title in Khmer to probably Central Good Governance Project. In Khmer we would not accept this kind of demand. (Ngy 2009)

The government's careful use of terminology is indicative of concern to impose a particular ideological framework. The decision to substitute "demand" with "good" in the program with government experimentation with decentralization. It is here that powerful political coalitions of support for a particular ideological approach to social accountability can be most directly discerned.

Decentralization of government is regarded in recent development orthodoxy as providing increasing accountability by bringing the costs to the poor of organizing to demand better service. The Cambodian government has declared a concern to promote what it terms "good democratic development" at local levels via decentralization of governance, and in this area appears to be genuinely embracing new forms of social accountability.

Underlying this embrace are two key concerns to the CPP’s political strategy. The CPP consistently campaigns on its ability to "get things done." The power to mobilize resources and deliver tangible local development goods is central to the party’s image and dominates television news broadcasts. The state-business relationship reflects this private sector view with one another to contribute donations to "good works" in return for honoring virtuous deeds such as the title of Okhna, bestowed when one has contributed US$100,000 to these development projects. The material benefits of such a title are significant, of 19 contracts to develop Special Economic Zones awarded to Cambodian businesses, for example, 15 were awarded to Okhna (Royal Government of Cambodia 2005). These businesses have also been identified by NGO Global Witness (2007:11) as recipients of lucrative logging concessions and large agronomic contracts announced by the government (Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2010). These contracts have also been appointed to parliament as CPP senators.

High-ranking government officials from Phnom Penh ministries maintain that, with which they are responsible for coordinating development projects paid for via the state budget, international aid projects, and private investors. This combines ideas of social mobilization for development with Buddhist conceptions of merit making and compassion.

There is a stark disjuncture between this approach and democratic accountability. Despite the rhetoric of public service and rituals of popular participation, this noble idea of political development thus substitutes mobilization of participation into predetermined agendas for a shift of political authority from elite to masses. It impels rigid hierarchies of benevolence and gratitude, while creating means for better information about mismanagement of resources to flow up through parts—state structures. This has improved the atmosphere within Cambodian villages, in comparison with the wider social media coverage in previous decades, but allows only the most limited of debates over government "effectiveness.

The DFGG’s approach Opportunities for citizens to monitor government activities, for example through audits and report cards, can be oriented toward improving accountability mechanisms supply higher levels of government with data they use to discipline and control local level officials. They can encourage citizens to join with government in ironing out our inefficiencies, rather than to develop autonomous citizens' movements that might challenge the government for control over decisions. For example...

Like the Philippines' PRA, then, the DFGG risks absorbing activities in technical and administrative questions, as well as building activities that can empower the poor. This implies limited ability to tackle issues, such as corruption, on which the government does not wish to implement reform. DFGG requires, as a condition of receiving grant funding, conformity to principles of "constructive engagement" between NGOs and government. This potentially reinforces a division already drawn by the Cambodian government, between NGOs doing "good" work in village development areas and NGOs contesting the government via advocacy initiatives in the heavily contested areas of access for the poor to land and natural resources. This potential engagement clause in the DFGG project document is played down by World Bank officials as merely a requirement for receiving money that offers little but "talk thereof—otherwise what is the point in doing it?" (Bhargava 2009). The clause has more significance.

The NGOs have to understand the reform agenda of the government. We will not provide funding to NGOs who want to bring the government down. We want to impose stricter delivery and build a partnership together.

Ngy went on to note that only a small number of NGOs work in areas of human rights and corruption, departed from this model and had an "attitude of unconstructive engagement." He commented that NGOs working in the area of corruption "are just from the program because "We can’t afford to have fighting with each other—democracy is not mature yet" (Ngy 2009)

The distinction drawn between "political" and "local development" NGOs is useful to the government. For the MoL, local development NGOs can help the central Ministry to monitor the practices of local government and make up for any shortfalls at a time of rapid change: "civil society from the monitor subnational councils, work with subnational councils at district and province level and bring more local knowledge" (Navon 2009). In a context where many of Cambodia's NGOs are highly dependent on external funding, the US$4 million available via DFGE might help the NGOs consolidate their relationship with "constructive" NGOs (Ngy 2009).

The involvement of NGOs in a government-framed vision of reform at the expense of accountability according to donors would necessarily entail use of social accountability mechanisms as "desolizers" of authoritarian move to dispossess the poor of the right to use and access Cambodia’s resource base. In Cambodia’s contemporary political economy, subsistence farmers can no longer access unused public forests and land. As a result, they must rely instead on gifts from government-aligned NGOs and benefactors for their survival. Their participation in "particular risks being portrayed, in part via social accountability mechanisms, to comments on the effectiveness with which these goods are distributed. Viewed from an accountability perspective, this would be a means for the government to perfect already powerful systems of grassroots
cooperation associated with the provision of small-scale development programs. Therefore, the level of threat surrounding NGO work has increased among Cambodia NGOs who participated in the PECSA and DFGG programs to push the boundaries of government tolerance and acceptable behavior. NGOs graduate from the PECSA program questioned whether entry into DFGG-style partnerships would allow more advanced levels of government on contentious issues like corruption:

What is the benefit for NGOs from this? There is no clear answer. There must be consultation first, to figure out whether they (the government) are willing or not. If the government decides, how they spend it, the relationship will be put into question. There must be clear points to say that if you do things in the good governance area and get some pressure from the police, or from the provincial government, you can come to us, there is a mechanism, or something like that (Heng 2009).

Another graduate who went on the India visit commented that democracy is a prerequisite for, rather than result of, social accountability: “The Indian government is very democratic because full democracy, the level of threat is almost zero. People can say what they want to say” (Sorung 2009).

In conclusion, this interviewee suggested, “the government is not happy to work with” politically assertive NGOs (Sorung 2009). Thus, from the perspective of NGOs, DFGG risks reinforcing, rather than eradicating, the divide between acceptable and unacceptable forms of criticism, and reasserting political resource-land and foreign governance—in particular a no-go area for assertive struggle on the part of civil society.

Conclusion

These cases indicate how democratic values form a highly contingent rather than a necessary aspect of social accountability movements. Both cases demonstrate the dangers of cooption, with activists being drawn into technical mechanisms of monitoring—often under the auspices of international aid agencies—at the expense of broad coalition building and mobilization of democratic forces. The cases show how liberal ideologies can intersect with socially conservative moral rhetoric to form the basis of non-democratic coalitions for social accountability. By thus rendering nondemocratic rules more efficient, social accountability can actually make political struggles over openly contested issues such as corruption less effective.

Historical and structural trajectories help mediate the political significance of NGO accountability mechanisms. In both cases, the legacy of Cold War authoritarian regimes has been deeply fragmented civil society that authorities do not naturally migrate to economically disadvantaged groups under social accountability mechanisms.


