

Introductory Papers

- ▶ Democratization and State Capacity
in East and Southeast Asia

IAN MARSH

- ▶ The Role of the Chinese Government
in Building a Harmonious Society

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Democratization and State Capacity in East and Southeast Asia

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The theme of this conference is the role of public administration in building a harmonious society. I want to approach this by discussing recent developments in seven states: Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taipei, China, and Thailand. All have at least nominally democratic political structures and, save for Malaysia and Singapore, have achieved this political transition in the last decade or so. They have also all experienced rapid economic development, although the outcomes, of course, still vary widely. But save for Japan, these are the first non-Western states to achieve these kinds of economic and political development.

The adoption of democratic forms is a particularly significant step. This involves a new approach to the task of building a harmonious society. Indeed, it entails a wholly different notion of who determines what harmonious means. Whereas other political orders use property or some other limitation to restrict the number of citizens, or invoke some other, usually transcendental, source of legitimacy, democracy, nominally at least, recognizes all the people—individuals are the ultimate units of politics. Ideally, citizens come to the task of participating in governance with equal standing.

Of course, views about the practical limits of democracy vary widely. For example, in a classic study, Schumpeter suggested that citizen participation needed to be limited to periodic selection between rival elite teams. In this conception, free and fair elections become the touchstone institution. Other visions of democracy envisage enhanced self-realization, and expanded life choices, as democracy's fundamental promise. Here citizen engagement is the touchstone. How these possibilities unfold in the distinctive cultural environments presented by these seven states will, it is hoped, stir the imagination of a future Asian Tocqueville or Mill or even Polanyi.

My present purpose is to identify some effects of democracy, even in these initial stages, on key dimensions of governance. This political change is

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of very great significance for the practice of public administration. Public administration must always be “placed” in a wider structure of governance. Public administrators need to understand how their roles depend on the effective working of other arms of the political and policy-making system. They need to recognize how these institutions condition and limit their own role—and the steps they can take to improve their operations and surmount obstacles. In building understanding of these issues, the idea of state capacity provides an appropriate template. This concept has a distinguished provenance and covers governance in all its aspects (e.g., Wade 1990, Painter and Pierre 2005).

State capacity is divided into three primary components, namely, political, policy, and administrative capacity. Political capacity covers the formal and informal institutions that mediate citizen engagement, create legitimacy, and underwrite executive authority and decisiveness. Policy capacity refers to the concepts, strategies, and institutions that inform and shape policy deliberations, and administrative capacity to the ability of bureaucracies to implement agreed strategies.

In this paper, I review in detail key elements of the three components of state capacity. Political capacity covers three aspects: political culture, political parties, and the formation of executives. Policy capacity covers two elements: executive-legislative relations and the assimilation of new policy strategies. Administrative capacity covers bureaucratic politicization and interest aggregation. These add up to seven elements in total. These seven elements are, of course, interdependent, and state capacity can be variously composed depending on the condition of the individual elements and the significance of each element in the broader system of governance. There are also other important aspects of governance, such as the media and the judicial system, which we are not considering (e.g., Rich and Williams 2000).

In the remarks that follow, I want to focus particularly on political capacity, since this is perhaps the most complex and multifaceted of our three components. Here three features are discussed: the social base of individual political systems, the nature and role of political parties, and the formation of political elites.

Citizen Attitudes and Orientations

The starting point for evaluating the likely character of the challenges associated with the adoption of democracy concerns citizen attitudes. While clearly not decisive, citizen attitudes inevitably attain a new standing in this pattern of politics. Through a survey undertaken at the end of 2000, Richard

Sinnott has examined aspects of the political cultures in the seven states.² He considered 16 variables in six categories: political efficacy and knowledge, ideology, identity, confidence in the system, satisfaction with the system, and political participation.³

The results for individual states are summarized in the appendix. These results show the remarkable differences between the individual states. The ideal types used to characterize citizen orientations in Western assessments involve a taxonomy that broadly distinguishes between so-called subjects, participants, and critical citizens—terms that are somewhat elastic and that cover relatively quiescent citizens, who are inclined to defer to governing elites, as well as a more skeptical citizenry, who are more likely to challenge the governing elites.

As far as our seven countries are concerned, the data suggest that the citizens of Singapore clearly tend toward the subject pole of this spectrum and the citizens of the Republic of Korea, the skeptical or critical one. The other states tend toward one or the other pole but with important variations and qualifications. Singaporeans are relatively politically quiescent, with a relatively weak national identity and a high level of pride in the outputs of the political process, a high level of satisfaction with politics, high confidence in the national parliament and in the civil service, and, finally, a low propensity to political action, defined in terms of contact with elected representatives, involvement in party and electoral politics, and partisan or campaigning activity.

Indonesian and Malaysian citizens also display political attitudes and perceptions that tend to place them on the more quiescent side of this spectrum. But neither country is unambiguously located there. Indonesia's deviant rankings are related to that country's higher level of political knowledge and somewhat higher level of political efficacy and lower level of political deference. Malaysian deviance results from a high level of party involvement and a relatively strong sense of national identity.

² This paper draws on data on political cultures and globalization collected through the Asia-Europe (ASES) survey conducted in 2000, a project led by Professor Takashi Inoguchi (University of Tokyo) and sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Tokyo (Project Number 11102000). The European countries surveyed were: France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom. The Asian countries were: People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taipei, China, and Thailand. The survey sample in each country numbered 1,000. For details of the methodology used in the collection of the samples, send an e-mail to: imarsh@coombs.anu.edu.au.

³ Chapter 2: Political Culture and Democratic Consolidation in East and Southeast Asia.

On the other side of the spectrum, the Republic of Korea stands out as the country with the most politically active, opinionated, and perhaps volatile citizens. Its citizens have a high sense of political efficacy and low confidence in their government. They have strong regional loyalties and relatively high levels of participation. This was reflected in the campaigns of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) on behalf of liberal and Left candidates in 2000 and 2004 culminating in the election of the first liberal government in 2004 (Shin 2003, Cha 2005). For their part, Taipei, China's citizens show less political efficacy, more deference, and weaker national identity than unambiguous placement on the skeptical side of the spectrum would require. Taipei, China's ambiguous international status may, of course, be a factor in this result. Finally, the Philippines has less political efficacy, decidedly less political knowledge, and more pride in the country's welfare system (such as it is) than would be the case in a typical "participant" country.

The foregoing placement of countries leaves one country, Thailand, in the middle. This is not because it is consistently in the middle of the spectrum; in fact, it appears in the middle on only four variables. Its placement is due rather to the conflicting characteristics it exhibits. Thus, it is highly placed in terms of identity variables but low on deference and on aspects of institutional confidence. However, despite having quite a high sense of political efficacy, it is extremely low on the political action variables (except for potential involvement in local community efforts to solve local problems). This lack of political mobilization is crucial in the decision to treat Thailand as a middle case.

In sum, one could argue that these seven countries can be divided into two groups of three—with Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore on the more quiescent side, and Republic of Korea, Philippines, and Taipei, China on the more skeptical or activist side—and Thailand in the middle. Which of these sets of orientations will lead more rapidly and more securely to a consolidated and stable democratic system is, of course, unclear. A variety of intermediary institutions contribute critically and variably to this outcome. But these data provide some pointers to the democratic challenges that arise at this primary level.

Political Parties

Political parties can perform critical roles in mobilizing individual citizens into relatively stable political engagements. They are the primary intermediary institutions. In the Western experience, mass political parties were the agents not only of democratic representation but also of democratic socialization.⁴

The causal sequence may have varied, but democracy was everywhere the fruit of a bottom-up agitation based partly on the emergence of an industrial working class, partly on the development of trade unions, and partly on ideologies of laborism, socialism, or communism. Mass political parties progressively emerged to spearhead political advocacy. Coalitions with bourgeois, agrarian, or religious interests were variously formed. By such means, and also as a result of war and civil war, more or less authoritarian political systems were progressively displaced by liberal democratic regimes.

What form are political parties taking in regional states? Save for Malaysia and Taipei, China, the cleavages—ideological, center-periphery, religious—that differentiated identities and were the essential foundation for party development in Europe either do not exist or do not have political salience.

Nor are the organizational forms that would provide a durable foundation for party development in evidence. Save for United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in Malaysia, the major parties in Taipei, China, and perhaps *Partai Golongan Karya* or Party of Functional Groups (Golkar), *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* or Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P), and *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* or Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia and the Democratic Party in Thailand, parties in the states covered have no or very limited branch structures, no mass memberships, no internal policy development mechanisms, and virtually no or very limited durable organizations. Where a durable organization exists, its focus is the leadership

⁴ In the literature on political development, the role of mass parties was critical. These bodies not only represented citizen views, they also contributed to the formation of citizens. They politicized identity. For example, the following describes the socializing and mobilizing contribution of the German Social Democratic party in its first years:

There emerged in the years leading up to World War I a socialist counter-culture and interlocking institutions. Aside from the party organisation, with over one million members by 1914, there was the massive union organisation with 2.5 million members. Then there was the party press—90 daily papers with a circulation of 1.5 million copies, a humorous weekly with a circulation of 380,000, a multitude of other publications (e.g., *Der Arbeiter-Radfahrer*—The Worker Cyclist—circulation 168,000), printing houses and more. Isolated from mainstream society by choice or imposition, often banned from or unwelcome at the non-socialist societies, the socialist sub-culture created their own societies. There were socialist sporting organisations—cycling, football, athletics (with a multitude of sub-societies, e.g., boxing), swimming, hiking, rowing, sailing; socialist educational institutions (including 1,100 libraries, 800,000 volumes, 365 librarians with their own journal); socialist cultural organisations like choral societies, theatres and much more. The SPD laid siege to mainstream society with an entire parallel social structure. (Norman 2001, page 48).

group rather than the membership base. Nor are parties largely a legal artifact, partly dependent on the rules of party competition, as in the United States (Katz 1994). Parties do not conform to “electoral-professional” or “catch-all” or “cartel” patterns, to follow the descriptions current in recent Western party literature (Mair 1997). Rather, as Jean Blondel points out, they are primarily based on leaders with established national standing.⁵ These individuals can take a preexisting organization and reshape it in their own image (Kim Dae Jung, Roh Moo-hyun) or they can build a new organization (Thaksin). In either case, power flows outward and downward from the leader, not upward from a mass membership. Prime Minister Berlusconi provides a Western analogue for this particular pattern.

Emerging patterns of representation and, perhaps even more importantly, patterns of political socialization in East and Southeast Asia will take a very different form from those made familiar in Western experience. Top-down democratization has produced a superficially familiar formal structure, but the task of citizen development remains. If political parties are not to be the immediate medium for these processes, are there alternatives?

Indeed, in the absence of basic democratic socialization, disappointment with political outcomes may focus not primarily on current officeholders but rather on the overall system—because attachment to the basic process has remained stillborn. There is a hint of this possibility in the waxing and waning of public support for democracy in the Republic of Korea (Shin 2003) and in public attitudes to the political system in Taipei, China (Chu, Diamond, and Shin 2001). This is, of course, wholly speculative. What is clear is that, in the absence of intermediary organizations, particularly mass parties, the processes by which citizens will be mobilized into political engagement, and socialized into democratic norms, deserve much closer attention.

The Development of Political Elites⁶

Democratic consolidation could be expected to be marked by new patterns of elite formation. Ministers would increasingly be drawn from representative organizations and activities. This is because of their twin but divergent roles at the apex of the political and policy-making system: on the one hand, they need to gain popular and interest-group consent for executive decisions; on the other, they are also formally responsible for managerial and policy effectiveness. These twin responsibilities also make these elites

⁵ Chapter 3: Parties and Party Systems in East and Southeast Asia by Jean Blondel.

⁶ Chapter 4: National Executives in East and Southeast Asia by Jean Blondel.

particularly significant in the formation of state capacity. There is no clear metric for measuring either of these outcomes. But the undeveloped character of political parties is the biggest obstacle impeding democratic consolidation at the level of executive composition. In general, and with the exception of Malaysia, ministerial careers mostly remain as extensions of public service activities.

Patterns of leadership and executive formation vary markedly in individual countries. One cause is the political structure. The stylized notion that presidential systems create hierarchical relationships, and parliamentary systems collegial ones, does not square with practice. A wider range of mainly informal factors shapes outcomes. In relation to the selection of leaders, those states with presidential or semi-presidential systems (Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Philippines, and Taipei, China) have all adapted first past the post-electoral systems. Presidents have been elected on less than a plurality of votes, with an average of around 40% and the lowest that of Ramos in the Philippines, who gained office in 1992 with 25% of the popular vote. Among these states, only Indonesia has adopted a runoff system.

Leaders can be dominating or they can share power. Dual leadership has occurred in the semi-presidential systems: in the Republic of Korea for 18 months in the Kim Dae Jung–Kim Jong Pil alliance, and in Taipei, China with the 9-month appointment of Tang Fei as prime minister by President Chen. The tenure of leaders has been considerable in the semi-pluralist states, with Lee Kuan Yew in office for 25 years, Goh for 10 years, Mahathir for 20 years. The incumbency of presidents in the presidential and semi-presidential states is limited to one term in the Republic of Korea and the Philippines and two terms in Indonesia and Taipei, China. On the other hand, the Republic of Korea had 18 prime ministers between 1980 and 2000, seven for only a few months, and none much more than 2 years. In Taipei, China, there were four prime ministers between 1988 and 2000, all for 2 years except for Lien Chen, who served 4 years and then was beaten for the presidency by Chen Shui Bian.

The military was the source of leaders for Indonesia up to 1999 and then again in 2004, Republic of Korea up to 1992, Taipei, China up to 1988, and Thailand up to 1991. As already noted, the more recent crop of civilian leaders has been made up of national rather than party figures. Blondel concludes that history and circumstances, not formal governance structures, are the primary determinants of leadership styles and approaches:

Political leadership in East and Southeast Asia is...diverse in its role, its origins, its duration, its composition and its mode of appointment. What appears to be a universal problem—that of ensuring the economy

NAPSIPAG

progresses—and a widespread if not yet universal concern—that of rendering political life more pluralistic—has been handled in a different manner in [each of these seven states] (pages 120–121).

As far as executives are concerned, Blondel notes they have primarily been administrative in character. Only in Malaysia and Singapore and perhaps Indonesia are ministers part of a recognized political elite. The duration of ministers in office averaged 3.8 years in the 1990s. But there were wide variances, with Singapore recording an average of 6.6 years (the top pole) and the Republic of Korea, 1.4 years (the bottom pole). The causes for variations in tenure are country-specific and have nothing to do with the form of the regime.

The administrative character of executives is reflected in the background of ministers.

The type of profile that characterizes the governments of Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Taipei, China, and with reservations, Thailand, indicates that the ministerial career in these countries is more in the nature of an appendage to a public service career to which, especially in Indonesia and Thailand, as well as, to an extent, Republic of Korea, the military is regarded as belonging.

The development of “political” executives would seem to depend on the further development of durable political parties.

Finally, one distinctive pattern in executive formation concerns the circulation of Members of Parliament (MPs) after elections as individuals regroup around the winner. This is a particular feature of Indonesia, Republic of Korea, and Philippines. But it is unclear if this indicates the formation of an ad hoc coalition or rather a government of the president. An explicit coalition government is present only in Malaysia.

Policy and Administrative Capacity

The other components of state capacity present other, no less substantial, challenges. For example, *executive-legislative relations* have been a particular issue in the four presidential and semi-presidential systems—Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Philippines, and Taipei, China. The Republic of Korea and Taipei, China have had particularly turbulent experiences with divided government. The Taiwan Assembly continues to block legislation that the executive has labeled critical, particularly covering arms purchases from the United States. By contrast, the 2004 Assembly election in the Republic of Korea introduced the first liberal or Left-inclined regime. For the first time,

the party that controlled the presidency also enjoyed a majority in the National Assembly. The Philippine Congress enjoys substantial powers, including impeachment, which it exercised against former president Estrada in 2000. Congress has thwarted important elements of President Arroyo's program. Finally, the Indonesian case presents the most ambiguous example of unresolved executive-legislative relations. The relationship between the president and the legislature (DPR) remains unresolved. Huntington has identified metrics (adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence) by which legislative consolidation could be assessed (cited in Park 2000). Procedural norms are insufficiently developed for even rudimentary application.

The ability to identify and define new policy strategies is a second area of policy capacity. Two important areas that are potentially affected by democratization are social and economic policy. Social policy could be expected to rise in salience as a result of popular pressure and economic policy may have to be framed with greater regard to public attitudes. Ramesh (2004) has recently surveyed developments in the important area of social policy, which is clearly emerging as a much more significant domain (also Gough 2000). Economic governance has traditionally been a critical domain. Notably in the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Taipei, China, it has hitherto taken a distinctive, state-led form. The requirements of economic governance have progressively become much more demanding, with the very complex notion of managing whole systems (crossing a variety of public and private organizations and interests) attaining greater prominence (e.g., Lipsey, Carlaw and Becker 2006; Porter 2003). This has resulted from the increased interdependencies associated variously with both multinational corporation (MNC) engagement and entry to science-based sectors. During the late 1980s, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Taipei, China moved progressively into advanced technology sectors in electronics. From the mid-1990s, their ambitions extended to science-based sectors like biotechnology, nanotechnology, and new materials. They have also sought to establish a strong position in services (such as software and, in Singapore's case, health and education).

These same challenges are apparent, if in a different form, in the other states. The Malaysian Government has been the most ambitious of the second-tier newly industrialized countries (NICs). From the early 1990s, the Mahathir government introduced an industry strategy, which sought to accelerate development in the manufacturing sector, particularly electronics. While the strategic framework for industry development has been put in place, sectoral

capabilities have been found to be inadequate.⁷ In July 2005, a new industrial development strategy was announced that encouraged participation by local small and medium enterprises in MNC supply chains, as well as programs to upgrade both individual skills and business capabilities. Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand all face similar challenges. For example, according to Doner and Ramsay (2003), the present imperative for Thailand is to shift from a strategy based on low-cost manufacturing to one based on upgrading. This requires governance capabilities at systemic and sectoral levels. It requires institutions that can mediate human resource development, supplier linkages, technology development, and the introduction of advanced infrastructure. Doner and Ramsay illustrate particular patterns through analyses of electronics, textiles, and automobiles—all sectors in which Thailand has built a reasonably strong position. Evidence that weaknesses are being tackled is sparse.

Turning from policy capacity, we look at administrative capacity, which basically involves the ability to implement agreed plans and programs. An *effective bureaucracy* is the key. Martin Painter has explored the “quality” of bureaucracy in the seven states against such key norms as “neutral competence” and capacity for administrative reform.⁸ Save for two exceptions, his account is of systems under considerable stress. This is the result of internal failings, uncertainties arising from the political context, or some combination of these factors. The two exceptions are Malaysia and Singapore. In these states, semi-pluralist political systems have produced governments with relatively unambiguous authority. Meantime their background as British colonies produced civil services with strong internal norms of neutral competence, traditions that have not been upset since independence. These bureaucracies have developed “a culture of administrative self improvement that operates within limited boundaries defined in part by regime goals.”

⁷ In an evaluation of electronics developments, Matthews and Cho question implementation capacities: “The direction towards upgrading is there but its execution has been slow—although much more advanced than in neighbouring countries like Thailand and the Philippines” (page 276). Jomo and Felker (1999) suggest bureaucratic capacities for sectoral analysis and for monitoring implementation are inadequate. They suggest that state-led strategies approaches have not been backed by adequate analysis and oversight: “It is precisely the sparseness of...capacity for detailed, continuous sector-specific assessment of market and industry trends which is the greatest constraint on effective industry implementation” (page 25; see also Dodgson, in Kim and Nelson, pages 258–260). Doner and Ramsay (2003, pages 203–205, 213–214, 220–222) reached a similar conclusion in their comparative assessment of the development of the hard-disk-drive industry in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. While Malaysia showed more strategic capacity than Thailand (but, of course, much less than Singapore), there was little evidence of ability to implement policy at the sectoral level—save for the Penang Development Corporation, which was the model for the broader strategy.

⁸ Chapter 5: Bureaucratic Performance, Policy Capacity and Administrative Reform.

A final element of administrative capacity involves *interest aggregation*. The absence of comparative studies of interest formation and interest intermediation in regional states is a major gap. The only exception concerns relations between business interests and the state. Business-government relations were central to one approach that argued that regional patterns sustained dysfunctional rent seeking and cronyism (Lingle 1998). This relationship also became increasingly central in the evolution of the developmental state ideal (Evans 1995, Weiss and Hobson 1995, Woo-Cumings 1999, Weiss 2003). But the pattern of business-government relations has varied widely under the pressure of new economic governance challenges, as well as new patterns of interest formation. There have been limited experiments with corporatist-type structures in the Republic of Korea and Taipei, China. Following his election in 1997, President Kim established a Tripartite Commission. The trade unions withdrew from this body in 1998 but rejoined in 1999. President Lee set up a National Affairs Conference in 1990 and a National Development Conference in 1996. No other states have sought to develop corporatist forms.

If business interests are well established and organized in most states, the same could not be said for trade unions. The Republic of Korea has the most-developed trade union movement, but representation is split between two rival federations. But both federations (the 600,000-strong Korean Confederation of Trade Unions [KCTU] and the 900,000-member Federation of Korean Trade Unions [FKTU]) joined other NGOs in a progressive alliance based on the Democratic Labour Party, which contested the 2002 election and won six Assembly seats in the 2004 election. Trade unions are relatively weak in, Malaysia, Taipei, China, and Thailand, and have been controlled in Singapore. Democratization changes the context of interest formation and intermediation. But patterns have not been systematically traced and compared, and this remains a major gap in the comparative literature.

Conclusion

In five of the seven states reviewed here, the political framework has been transfigured in recent years. The framework within which public administrators seek to contribute to the construction of a harmonious society is naturally also transformed, as a result. Public administrators need to understand how this changes the context in which they are working if they are to realistically assess the challenges that they face, the limits that other actors impose on their own capacity to shape events, and ways in which such obstacles might be transcended.

The change to a democratic structure potentially transforms the nature of political authority. Ideally, it advances self-realization, expands life choices,

NAPSIPAG

and endows public opinion with a much greater salience in political determination. Indeed, people power has already clearly shown its strength and potential. But the institutions and processes through which its otherwise sporadic expression might be transformed into routine political pressure mostly remain underdeveloped. Save for Malaysia and Taipei, China and perhaps Indonesia, the states surveyed here have not developed broad-based political parties, and the cleavages that might be the foundation for such developments are not immediately obvious. Yet bottom-up political parties were critical to democratic consolidation in Western states.

Democratic institutions also multiply the number of veto points in the political structure, make these interventions much more transparent, and can multiply incentives for opposition parties to exploit these opportunities. In pathologies of democracy, ambitious aspirants use these opportunities to distort or paralyze decision making.

How has the need to develop broad-based political parties been avoided, and how have these states escaped paralyzing rivalries and conflicts? There would seem to be a single broad answer to both these issues, albeit one that comes with very significant local variations. Arguably, stable government has mostly been preserved because the elite consensus that was forged in the pre-democratic period has carried forward into the new political environment. Elite consensus, at least about economic goals, remains the primary foundation of political authority. Meantime political rivalry has focused on personality or populist issues and has been expressed through leader-based political parties. There are stirrings at the level of civil society but (save for the Republic of Korea) these are mostly confined to urban regions and involve relatively small numbers. In the Republic of Korea and Singapore, an accomplished bureaucracy buttresses state capacity, supported, in the latter case, by a variety of rules that inhibit political dissent. In the case of the Republic of Korea, a single-term presidency and turbulence in executive-legislative relations have produced that country's first consolidated Left-liberal administration. The issue of sovereignty has created a real cleavage and a more problematic political dynamic in Taipei, China. Meantime, in two of the remaining states, Malaysia and Thailand, strong leaders have been the immediate sheet anchor of state capacity. In Malaysia's case, this is buttressed by well-developed institutional arrangements, which Prime Minister Thaksin seems to be seeking to emulate in Thailand. Indonesia and the Philippines are more problematic cases.

In sum, in these seven states, democratic forms are in their infancy. The capacity of ordinary people to play a larger role in defining the meaning of a harmonious society has potentially been considerably expanded, but the ideologies and institutions through which this potential can be converted to

NAPSIPAG

actuality are only slowly emerging. Indeed, in several cases such possibilities have been deliberately stanchd. For the moment, democratic regimes mostly constitute a kind of varnish, beneath which older patterns of power and authority have been reconstituted.

Despite this, democratization has meant that public administrators in five of these seven states face more complex institutional environments. If they are to contribute to building a more harmonious society they too must develop new skills—skills of advocacy and persuasion, new policy or technical skills, and new skills in institutional design. Skills in advocacy, brokerage, and persuasion all attain a new standing as authority moves, however slowly, from hierarchy to consent. New policy or technical skills are needed as new issues come forward on the political agenda, as older issues are redefined in new contexts, or as more values and perspectives need to be accommodated in finding solutions to any of these matters. Finally, new skills in institutional design may be required as whole policy systems become the focus of state action and as a wider variety of stakeholders need to be accommodated in decision making. In these and other ways, “new modes and orders” create high challenges for both the theory and the practice of public administration.

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Appendix: Summary of Individual Country Outcomes on Sixteen Political Culture Variables

1	Low impact of government	Rep. of Korea	Thailand	Taipei,China	Malaysia	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	High impact of government
2	High political efficacy	Rep. of Korea	Thailand	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Taipei,China	Singapore	Low political efficacy
3	Low political deference	Rep. of Korea	Thailand	Indonesia	Philippines	Taipei,China	Singapore	Malaysia	High political deference
4	High political knowledge	Indonesia	Rep. of Korea	Taipei,China	Thailand	Singapore	Malaysia	Philippines	Low political knowledge
5	Left-Right important	Philippines	Rep. of Korea	Thailand	Malaysia	Taipei,China	Indonesia	Singapore	Left-Right not important
6	National identity strong	Philippines	Thailand	Malaysia	Rep. of Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Taipei,China	National identity weak
7	Identity not respected	Rep. of Korea	Taipei,China	Philippines	Thailand	Indonesia	Singapore	Malaysia	Identity respected
8	High supranational identity	Philippines	Thailand	Taipei,China	Rep. of Korea	Malaysia	Indonesia	Singapore	Low supranational identity
9	High subnational identification	Rep. of Korea	Thailand	Philippines	Indonesia	Malaysia	Singapore	Taipei,China	Low subnational identification
10	Low pride in welfare system	Rep. of Korea	Indonesia	Taipei,China	Thailand	Philippines	Malaysia	Singapore	High pride in welfare system
11	Low satisfaction with politics	Rep. of Korea	Philippines	Taipei,China	Thailand	Indonesia	Malaysia	Singapore	High satisfaction with politics
12	Low confidence in parliament	Rep. of Korea	Taipei,China	Thailand	Philippines	Indonesia	Malaysia	Singapore	High confidence in parliament
13	Low confidence in civil service	Rep. of Korea	Thailand	Philippines	Taipei,China	Malaysia	Indonesia	Singapore	High confidence in civil service
14	High representational contact	Philippines	Taipei,China	Rep. of Korea	Malaysia	Singapore	Thailand	Indonesia	Low representational contact
15	High party involvement	Philippines	Malaysia	Taipei,China	Rep. of Korea	Indonesia	Thailand	Singapore	Low party involvement
16	High citizen mobilization	Rep. of Korea	Philippines	Taipei,China	Malaysia	Singapore	Indonesia	Thailand	Low citizen mobilization

The Role of the Chinese Government in Building a Harmonious Society

Bo Guili¹

Introduction

In this new century, the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has set the strategic goal of building a harmonious socialist society in the course of modernization. Governments at various levels have a unique part in meeting this goal.

Building a Harmonious Society: Historical Background and Significance

International experience shows that when a country has a per capita gross development product (GDP) in the range of \$1,000–\$3,000, it will experience the most serious bottlenecks in population, resources, and the environment, and face the risk of economic and social disorder and psychological imbalance. It is also in a critical period of social adjustment and reconstruction. The PRC's per capita GDP hit \$1,000 in 2003 and is striving to reach \$3,000. In other words, the country has reached a critical period in its modernization. As it marches steadily forward, the PRC faces an upsurge of conflicts as well as strategic opportunities for development. To properly deal with the conflicts, take full advantage of the opportunities, and create a stable and harmonious social environment for modernization, the Government has put forward the strategic goal of building a harmonious socialist society.

What is a harmonious society? What kind of harmonious society are we trying to build? President Hu Jintao gave us a good answer:

The harmonious socialist society that we are trying to build features democracy, rule of law, fairness, justice, honesty, fraternity, dynamism, stability, orderliness and harmony between man and nature. Democracy and rule of law means that socialist democracy is brought into full play, the basic policy of rule of law is implemented, and the positive elements of various sides are fully mobilized. Fairness and justice means that the interests of various social sectors are appropriately coordinated, civil conflicts and

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other social conflicts are correctly handled, and social fairness and justice is defended and realized. Honesty and fraternity means that everyone helps one another, honesty prevails in the society, and the people live next to each other in harmony with equality and fraternity. Dynamism means that every creative wish that is conducive to social development will be respected, creative activities will be supported, creative talents will be given free rein, and creative accomplishments will be acknowledged. Stability and orderliness means sound social organization mechanism, social management, and social order; people live and work in peace and contentment; social stability and unity are maintained. Harmony between man and nature means economic development, wealthy life, and balanced ecology.

These major features of a harmonious society constitute a unified whole, essential to realizing the strategic goal.

Building a harmonious socialist society has great significance and profound influence. First of all, it represents the fundamental interests and wishes of the people, who need a stable, orderly, united, and harmonious society.

Second, achieving the goal has a direct bearing on the country's modernization. The PRC is a developing country. We have a long way to go to modernize. Without social harmony, the modernization drive may be cut short and the achievements wasted.

Third, building a harmonious society has a direct bearing on our political stability and lasting peace and order. For any country in any era, social harmony and stability are the basis of political stability. A society where there are many conflicts, some of which intensify into clashes, will inevitably fall into political crisis, with very serious impact on peace and development in the international community.

The Role of Government in Building a Harmonious Society

A harmonious society does not come about automatically. Government must build such a society.

First, it must safeguard citizens' lawful rights. A harmonious society is not an ultra-stable society under authoritarian control, but a democratic society that adheres to the rule of law. The Constitution of the PRC guarantees basic rights to all citizens—equality before the law; the right to vote and stand for election; freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, demonstration, and religious belief; personal freedom; personal dignity and inviolability of abode; the right to work, to rest, and to receive an education; the right of those who are old, ill, or disabled to receive material assistance from the state and society;

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the freedom to engage in scientific research, literary and artistic creation, and other cultural pursuits. Government belongs to the people. Hence, its primary responsibility is to safeguard citizens' basic rights and to create conditions and provide the necessary guarantees for those rights to be realized. If their basic rights are safeguarded and guaranteed, the citizens can be encouraged to participate more fully in state and social management. Failure to safeguard citizens' rights will lead to conflicts and clashes, which will seriously challenge social stability and harmony. In recent years, some local governments have not done well in this aspect and mishandled such issues as the takeover of land from farmers, urban renewal, and the reemployment of laid-off workers. The lawful rights of the disadvantaged groups were not properly safeguarded, so that citizens clamored for help from the authorities.

Second, economic and social development must be systematic. Systematic economic development and ever-improving productivity are the economic foundation of a harmonious society, and a sound social structure and social order are its social basis. In the past, the Government was unaware of economic and social development theories, and could not give systematic guidance to economic and social development. Today it can, with the help of advances in the social sciences (e.g., economics and sociology). Governments at various levels must therefore study economic and social development theories to guide economic and social development. In this way, detours can be avoided, development costs can go down, waste can be reduced, and economy and society, and man and nature, can benevolently interact.

From the late 1950s through the 1970s, the Government made huge mistakes in guiding economic and social development, leading to the chaos of the "Cultural Revolution." Since 1978, the Government has boldly restored order and set the right policy of "focusing on economic construction, upholding the four cardinal principles, and sticking to reform and opening up." The country has marched down the road to modernization. In the new century, the Government has transformed the development concept and adopted a more systematic perspective, embraced the principle of human-centeredness, innovated development models, enhanced development quality, implemented the "five balanced aspects" (urban and rural development, balanced development of the regions, economic and social development, development of man and nature, and domestic development and wider opening to the outside world), and gradually brought economic and social development onto the track of coordinated and sustainable development, thus clearly showing the way to a harmonious socialist society.

Third, the Government must provide public goods and public services for economic and social development. As living standards improve, the demand

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for public goods and public services also grows. The people want better education, a more secure and effective public health system, more convenient transportation and communication facilities, a safer social environment, a better natural environment, cleaner air and drinking water. Satisfying the people's growing need for public goods and services is safeguarding their lawful rights, which is the primary function of government in building a harmonious society. If it earnestly performs this function, the Government can create a favorable environment for socioeconomic development, rally the enthusiasm of the social sectors, enhance creativity, and energize the society. But if the Government does not perform this function satisfactorily, people's reasonable needs will not be met, there will be popular resentment, and our drive to build a harmonious society will be seriously undermined.

Fourth, the Government must systematically and reasonably regulate and control social and economic development. Building a harmonious society calls for coordinated and sustainable social and economic development. But market mechanisms do not help in realizing this goal because market regulation is mainly post-regulation. Players try to maximize their own interests instead of the public interest. Without macro control by government, the economic structure cannot be rationalized and the macroeconomic environment stabilized; neither can coordinated and sustainable economic and social development be realized and a harmonious society built. In recent years, the Government has taken macro control measures to deal with such issues as overinvestment, overdevelopment, slow growth in farmers' income, and underemployment. These measures have had some effect, but they have not succeeded in rooting out the problems and conflicts. These will be a constant headache in our drive for coordinated and sustainable social and economic development and a harmonious society. The central Government must therefore strengthen its macro control.

The Government must exert not only macroeconomic control but also macro social control and regulation, i.e., keep a mutually beneficial relationship between social classes and ensure the openness of and equal access to social classes. Mutual benefits between classes reflect the principle of fairness, i.e., higher social classes shall not benefit at the expense of lower social classes. On the contrary, as the interests of the higher social classes are better served, the welfare of the lower social classes should also improve. Moreover, all citizens enjoy equal rights. While their status may vary because of political, economic, cultural, and social differences, class and status are not fixed, and no groups should be excluded. Government will formulate and implement a fair social policy to break down the barriers between social classes. There will be openness between and equal access to social classes, and upward and sideways mobility.

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Only in this way will the society be resilient, fairer, more dynamic and creative, and harmonious.

Fifth, government should effectively supervise the society. A harmonious society is stable and orderly. In the process of modernization, social order and harmony do not happen without human intervention. A social supervision system must be established and improved to effectively supervise, manage, and control the society, and to ensure social order and humane dealings. Government makes laws and regulations to steer social and economic activities and to safeguard social order.

To build a harmonious society and strengthen social supervision, management, and control, a public crisis management system must be established with government at the center. We must clearly define the responsibilities and authority of governments in the lawful handling of unforeseen public crises, strengthen the public crisis management system, and formulate and constantly improve a plan for dealing with unforeseen public emergencies. The aim is to minimize harm and loss from unforeseen events and prevent them from causing social unrest.

The Need for Functional Transformation in Government and Better Capability to Build a Harmonious Society

We have made important progress after more than 20 years of administrative reform. But some deep-rooted problems remain, and reform is still a painstaking task.

At present, the major problems in the administrative system of the PRC are:

- Governments are still in charge of many things that they should have no hand in, that they are unable to manage, or that they are unable to manage well. Many things still need administrative approval.
- Some local governments still make decisions for companies, attract investment away from companies, or interfere in the production and business affairs of companies.
- The social management and public service functions of government must be strengthened.
- The government structure needs to be rationalized. Functions overlap and responsibilities are not clearly defined, responsibility is often divorced from authority, management is unenlightened, and there is much inefficiency.
- Performance assessment is not methodical.

These problems not only hinder economic and social development but also the capability of the Government to build a harmonious society. To improve this capability, the Government needs to deepen administrative reform and speed up functional transformation.

First, we shall clearly define the jurisdiction of governments at various levels, and require governments to take good care of the things within their jurisdiction and to leave to others whatever is outside their jurisdiction. Governments shall further strengthen their public management and public service function, direct public resources (such as human, material, and financial resources) to public service and public management, focus their leadership on social undertakings and the task of building a harmonious society, further improve the handling of public emergencies, and enhance government capability to safeguard public safety and deal with unforeseen events.

Second, governments shall reform their social management system according to the principle of separation of governmental and nongovernmental functions, and of the functions of government from those of the enterprise. Governments shall standardize the status, functions, and activities of grassroots organizations; safeguard their lawful rights; apply the principle of respect for labor, knowledge, talent, and creativity; break down the structural barriers to social development and progress; and strengthen creativity and dynamism to make our society not only orderly and harmonious, but also full of life and vigor.

Third, we shall further streamline and optimize the government structure according to the principles of simplicity, consistency, efficiency, and the rule of law. We shall reduce administrative levels; clarify jurisdictions; and establish a system of public administration with clear jurisdictions, a rational structure, and orderly operation, and constantly improve the system so that governments can accurately and swiftly implement the public will, effectively administer public affairs, and become better able to build a harmonious society.

Fourth, we shall establish a rational system for assessing government performance, institute greater openness in government, speed up the development of a government of service and the rule of law, standardize government authority and actions according to law, improve democratic and rational decision making, establish efficient and smooth execution, and make the government truly fair, incorruptible, efficient, and concerned about the people's welfare.