

## BOOK REVIEWS

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***Indonesia and the “Third Wave of Democratization”: The Indonesian Pro-Democracy Movement in a Changing World.* By Anders Uhlin. Surrey: Curzon, 1997. 293 pp.**

This book is the first of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies series on “Democracy in Asia”. As the title suggests, Anders Uhlin’s book accepts the general notion that democracy is a rising tide that will eventually overwhelm all remaining authoritarian political structures. The author is not concerned with why democracy is in the ascendant or whether it is a desirable outcome, although his inclinations are obvious. However, neither a Marxist nor a Weberian analysis would have any difficulty in explaining the inexorable march of global capitalism in the wake of its victory over the Communist (State Capitalist) Bloc.

In simple terms, for Marxists, democracy is the handmaiden of the global capitalist juggernaut and is essential for the efficient control and distribution of the factors of production, including people. The conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its recent bailout of faltering East Asian states and the efforts of the “good governance” school help to undermine authoritarian structures and push these societies towards democracy.

Alternatively, the march of democracy is portrayed as the inevitable outcome of “development” with its attendant growth of civil society and its demands for representation, equality of opportunity, and respect for civil and human rights. The demands of capital for transparency, efficient facilitation of business, and legal certainty only add to the demands of society. Whatever one’s ideological bent, the

outcome is not much different, at least in the short-term. There is no obvious alternative if states are to be internationally competitive.

Anders' book, adapted from his Ph.D. thesis, is timely in this context because it describes and analyses the nature of the pro-democracy movement in Indonesia since the collapse of communism in the late 1980s. The book is in two parts. In part one, he outlines the evolution of Indonesia's political structures and the pro-democracy organizations opposing the government. He examines the various ideas which have motivated pro-democracy groups, how those ideas have evolved, how opposition groups have organized, and how the government has neutralized them. In part two, he examines the origin and means of transmission of external ideas; whether they are accepted, adapted or rejected; and how they are diffused.

Few of his conclusions are surprising but the strength of the book is in the research and analysis he has undertaken to reach those conclusions. He correctly identifies one of the fundamental weaknesses of the opposition groups. They are concerned primarily with strategies and tactics to break down the authoritarian structures. Ideas and programmes on what should replace them have barely been considered beyond the espousal of universal principles. In part, this is inevitable because of the different interests and ideological perspectives of the multitude of opposition groups he examines. Indonesia has no Mandela or major opposition party and, with minor exceptions, the pro-democracy groups have been unable to unite. Those opposition leaders who may have been able to call for mass action have shied away from it for fear of inciting violence and the repression it would invoke.

Many opposition groups carry the baggage of history in the form of residual adherence to religious, Marxist, socialist, and communal ideals which motivated the struggle for independence. Liberalism and capitalism have generally been rejected, at least rhetorically, by most sections of society until recent times, and Indonesia's recent economic troubles will probably prolong the potency of those views. Many of the groups examined are seeking alternatives, or at least adaptations, to liberal democracy.

Islam has long been seen as an obstacle to democratization by nominal Muslims and other groups in society. Anders acknowledges the potential for Islam, like other religions, to be a motivational tool for authoritarian leaders but he traces the outlines of three streams of Islamic thought which seem to support the emergence of democracy: Modernism, Neo-Modernism, and Transformism.

Modernists are said to be greatly influenced by "Western" ideas (despite the anti-Western inclinations of some), and use Islamic teachings and interpretations of Islamic teachings to support the push for

democracy. For them, Islamic organizations should play an active role in politics. Amien Rais, leader of Muhammadiyah, one of Indonesia's two largest Muslim organizations, is of this persuasion. Amien Rais' candidature for the presidency, even if done in jest or for other reasons, reflects the direct political aspirations of this stream.

The neo-Modernist position is encapsulated in the phrase attributed to Nurcholish Madjid, "Islam, Yes, Islamic Party, No". This stream also supports the push for democracy based on Islamic teachings and is associated with the other major Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), led by Abdurrahman Wahid. This stream does not seek to persuade members to vote for particular parties but to exert a moral influence over the political sphere to advance the interests of its members.

As the term implies, Transformists advocate radical change of socio-economic structures to address concrete problems, like poverty. Their position is summarized in the words of one of Anders' respondents: Islamic theology must be changed so that it "sides with the interests of the majority of the people. In other words, theology must liberate and defend the majority of common people from structural oppression". Obviously, as Anders acknowledges, many of these ideas originate from Western ideologies but have been dressed in Islamic garb for marketing reasons. The commitment of this stream to democracy can only be viewed as ambivalent or instrumental. On balance, Anders concludes that "[f]ar from being a threat against democracy, Islam may be a strong factor in its favour".

The accommodation of Islam and democracy is fundamental to Indonesia's future. The fathers of independence struggled with the question and came up with the compromise of a secular but God-fearing state, one of the founding principles (Pancasila) of the 1945 Constitution. The constituent struggled with the same question in trying to draft a new constitution but failed to do so before martial law was declared in March 1957, and Indonesia descended into authoritarian rule. The question has also been the motive force for insurgencies and rebellions, most recently in Aceh in the early 1990s.

How this question is resolved will also greatly influence the long-term future of Indonesia's internal cohesion and its borders. Although the Christian minority is less than 10 per cent of the population, it is geographically concentrated so that any solution which marginalizes non-Muslim minorities has the potential to be divisive. The absence of concrete proposals for an Indonesian democracy which minimizes destructive political forces is one of the major handicaps in gaining middle-class and military support for democracy.

Anders also examines the full spectrum of other ideas, from Marx-

ism to conservatism, which motivates pro-democracy groups. According to Anders, the Marxist end of the spectrum has thrown its support behind the pro-democracy movement in recognition of its own weakness and as a means of propagating its own ideas in preparation for the time when the contradictions of capitalism appear. That time might not be far away as developed nations grapple with the reality that modern means of production need less and less labour.

This is an old question which has yet to be adequately addressed on either the intellectual or political plane. How do you structure a society in which a large percentage of the population is not needed for production without undermining the vigour, inventiveness and creativity of capitalism? Indonesia, with its burgeoning population, despite a relatively effective family planning campaign, cannot hope to meet the aspirations of many of its people, even if an effective and efficient democratic government was installed tomorrow. Hence, the socialist inclinations which still have a deep resonance in Indonesia may well be reinvigorated by the growing disquiet in the West about unemployment and the inability of governments to address the underlying structural problems involved.

Anders did not see democracy, in whatever form it might take, emerging in the immediate future. He could not identify any soft-liners in the regime or any evidence of the retreat of repression. Rather, he concluded that Indonesia was in a pre-transition phase in which class differentiation is still developing, and ideas, organization and community support were being marshalled. Anders took it as given that basic democratic values are universal and that the pro-democracy movement in Indonesia was home-grown. Nevertheless, he found that it had been encouraged by overseas developments in Eastern Europe, the Philippines and Korea which showed that change was possible. Non-violence was an accepted norm but most groups did not think the time for mass movements, usually associated with such changes, had arrived. Many pro-democracy advocates are afraid or at least ambivalent about mass movements because of the violence usually attending them, especially with the mass killings of the mid-1960s. This fear is also exploited by the regime and is used to justify repression of the pro-democracy movement. More recent events might force liberalization, if not democracy, on the regime.

One might quibble with some of Anders' conceptual constructs but they are a minor part of the book. Overall, he has provided a sound beginning for a useful series.

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