

Is democracy a prerequisite for development--a comparison between China and India

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Abstract: *Democracy provides many different benefits for development not only on political but also on economic. Many countries achieve a great develop after they establish a democratic government, for example India, Portugal and Japan. However, some undemocratic countries such as China and Saudi Arabia also have a rapid development even they are undemocratic under the western version. The relation between democracy and development is quite vague especially how to define and measure them. But the samples like China at least illustrate democracy is not the prerequisite for development. This essay aims to explain the reason about why democracy is not the precondition for development and its main analysis consist of the explanation about China's development and the comparison between India and China. This comparison can provide a direct view about the affect of so-called democratic with the real development of the society due to both China and India have a huge number of population. This article only emphasis on the comparison of economic system and the specific governance of the administration. The discussion also just focusing on particular statistics of particular fields. The judgement about the advantages of western democratic and non-western democratic will not be arranged under this research version.*

Keywords: *democratic transition; sustainable development; social development; domestic governance*

1. Introduction

Democracy, a popular concept of regime accomplish with the trend of modernization and independence wave has be seen as the most important thing in twentieth century (Sen,1999). The idea of democracy originated in ancient Greece, more than two millennia ago. And through the long period of its development during the history, it has been completed by British (the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215), French and American Revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Its gradual—and ultimately triumphant—emergence as a working system of governance was bolstered by many developments. Therefore, in the twentieth century, the idea of democracy became established as the “normal” form of government to which any nation is entitled—whether in Europe, America, Asia, or Africa (Sen,1999).^[1] Democracy provides many different benefits for development not only on political but also on economic. Many countries achieve a great develop after they establish a democratic government, for example India, Portugal and Japan. However, some undemocratic countries such as China and Saudi Arabia also have a rapid development even they are undemocratic under the western version. The relation between democracy and development is quite vague especially how to define and measure them. But the samples like China at least illustrate democracy is not the prerequisite for development. This essay aims to explain the reason about why democracy is not the precondition for development and its main analysis consist of the explanation about China's development and the comparison between India (the most population democratic country) and China's (the most population non-western style democratic country) development patterns.

2. Analysis

The process of this research divided into three different parts:

What is ‘democracy’ and ‘development’ under this article’s context

How nondemocratic country like China make development

How democracy become hindrance of development in India

It is vital to limit the range of democracy and development which will be analyzed in this topic

because the definition and meaning for both of them are vague and wide. Hence, pose this question narrowly during the research is necessary because a controllable range of them can increase the accuracy rate for the discourse of democracy and development.

2.1. What is ‘democracy’ and ‘development’ under this article’s context

Generally, as a political norm which celebrate the active participation of the people in government (Ersson and Lane, 1996), democracy still is one of the most ambiguous and contested concepts in the Political Science literature. People are not just focus on a particular type of democracy such as electoral democracy; liberal democracy; guided democracy and semi-democracy while they are talking about it, they emphasis on specific conditions like free and fair election, freedom of speech and association etc. Hence, the discourse about ‘democracy’ in this article will not focus on specific type of it. It will be analyzed as a concept to measure some particular behavior or policy during the governance process. Specifically, the case study of India and China will be consisted of the analyze of some particular situations, for example restriction of some human rights in China and freedom of speech in India.

As Nagle (2005) gives a definition in his book development, the term ‘development’ is difficult to defined in a short sentence. It connects to an improvement in a number of characteristics such as demographic condition, economic growth and social improvement etc. Therefore, in this article, the concept of development will concentrate on economic growth and social improvement to analyze the achievement for both India and China.

India, had an untried government, an undigested partition, and unclear political alignments, combined with widespread communal violence and social disorder before it became independent in 1947, however, half a century later, scholars find a democracy that has, democracy survives and functions remarkably well as a political unit with a democratic system in there (Sen, 1999).^[1] However, even India became established a democratic system, the annual average percentage rates of growth in real GDP of it just fluctuate around 5% during the past three decades, another one of the most population and undemocratic country--China shows a rocket increasing rate of it after running the ‘reform and open up policy’ since the end of 1970s, the index of China increased averaging over 10% during past three decades (Knight and Ding, 2012).

It is often claimed that nondemocratic systems are better at bringing about economic development. This belief sometimes goes by the name of “the Lee hypothesis,” due to its advocacy by Lee Kuan Yew, the leader and former president of Singapore (Sen, 1999).^[1] The enormous difference between India and China is a powerful evidence to support that democracy is not the precondition for development. The following analysis will explain why Lee Kuan Yew’s argument can be supported by some strength evidence and how does this kind of situation (high speed economic development in nondemocratic states) happened.

2.2. How China make development under Chinese style democracy

The full text of the article must be typeset in single column. The ‘reform and opening up policy’ is an unavoidable event when people do research on China’s development, especially on its economic field. This famous policy has been passed since the end of 1970s, aftermath the culture revolution. Communist party aims to build a modernization society and improve both people’s living standard and national economic power through this reform because as a part of contents in the modernization theory—economic growth at least is good for domestic political steady (Knight and Ding, 2012).^[4] As Chen (2013) points out, this successful economic reform in China change the social structure and industrial system even the pattern of product and eventually create an enormous group of Chinese middle class, which give support to the extending of their political administration.

Specifically, the communist party government sets up four steps to make economic development: change economy mode from planned to market, allow the existing of private company, provide more education opportunity for labor force and restrict population growth (Knight and Ding, 2012).^[4] The first two steps arouse the economic development because China, as a communism state, the purpose of produce just aim to satisfy the need before the reform, all product activities and plan managed by government apartment, that is to say there is no surplus value can be shared and circulated in the market. However, the situation has been changed after the economic reform, the motivation of produce has no longer to satisfy the need, it has to satisfy the demand of market. The increasing production rate improve people’s material life and also establish the essential market circulation in China (Brandt, Loren; et al. 2008).

As the most population country in the world, the emergence of this kind of market economy also attract many foreign investments, especially on processing and manufacture industry. Accomplish with this stimulate on economic development, many Chinese get job in private factories and get higher income than before, the trade (both export and import) also improved under this economic reform. As indexes show, the average annual increasing rate of GDP in China since 1979-2009 keep over 9% and the real income per capita also increased over 6% since 1978 until now (Knight and Ding, 2012).^[4] Nevertheless, the critique about the increasing social inequality also mentioned by some scholars, they appeal government resolve this issue as they achieved a remarkable economic growth and help quarter population in China get rid of poverty during the 'reform and opening up policy' (Bransetter, Lee; et al, 2008). To sum up, 'reform and opening up policy' bring up a great economic growth in China and also rescue communist party's regime.

The steps of provide education and restrict population growth also protect the sustainability of economic growth. As Barro and Lee (2010) research, the coverage years of schooling in the population aged over 15 (1980-2009), in China, the statistic is 6.9 years, even this index is much lower than western rich countries (9.6 years) but it higher than another large population developing region—South Asia (4.2 years). The longer education cultivates create more labor force for market to keep production, and the 'one child family policy' ensure the benefit from development will not be attenuated by enormous populations because the policy slowing down the rate of population growth and release the pressure on the land and other scarce resources (Knight and Ding 2012).^[4] These human capitals raise the individual productivity of workers and improve the adaptability, allocative efficiency, technical level of economy also share the maximum reform bonus for citizens.

Undoubtedly, the economic development in China is successful and remarkable but it also proves that democracy is not the precondition for development, at least for economic development. From this angle, the relationship between democracy and development seems like the structure and agency dilemma. Generally, as modernization theory advocate, economic development can be seen as precondition for democracy because economic development tends to bring about certain changes in a country's social structure and in people's values and beliefs that are conducive to the emergence of democracy (Huntington 1993; Inglehart and Welzel 2009, 2010). But the situation in China shows another result again, the economic development did not arouse the awareness of democratization for the public, most of ordinary people especially middle class support recent government because they get real benefits from CCP's reform and economic growth rather than create a democratic transition which might lead a unpredictable future.

This bit of good governance in China gives strong convincing evidence to contradict some scholar's research such as Bhagwati (2002), Carbone (2014) and Rivera-Batiz (2002). They believe, as the relevance of accountability, democracies (because of the logic of accountability) provide for a better quality of governance (less incompetence, inefficiency and corruption) than dictatorships which, in turn, enhances development prospects either the democratic leaders are accountable to their citizens and can be voted out of office if they do not perform as "they are supposed to", this arguably creates incentives for them to pursue prudent, economic growth- and human development-enhancing policies. The sample like China shows an non-western style democratic regime can also provide both economic and human development to citizens and buy off their support to protect the legality of the regime as the selectory theory demonstrated.

2.3. How democracy become hindrance of development in India

As the most powerful country in south Asia, India always been compared with China in development index. Under classic western scholar's view, a kind of democratic country like India should have a more successful developing process rather than the fact—64 average life expectance, ranked 150 in the world (WHO, 2013), 5.7K GDP per capita, ranked 121 in the world (OEC, 2015) and 4.2 years for higher education, lower than other vital developing regions e.g. China and sub-Saharan (Barro and Lee, 2010).

No one can deny India make development and democracy after they become independence since 1947, some people even worry they cannot get a well self-management (Sen, 1999).^[1] Democracy gives India people many basic human rights and release them from the repression traditional thinking at least to a certain degree. However, if search following the idea about democracy as a hindrance to development, it can be found that some traditional thinking still locking people's thinking and communication between different social classes. Eventually, as academic theory analysis, democracy lost its functions like government responsiveness and accountability, free and fair election to make a sustainable development happened in India.

Specifically, as Kaviraj (1996) concludes in his article dilemmas of democratic development in India, stubborn traditional thinking (caste), multi-religions and large poor population restrict the speed of India's economic growth. Firstly, the caste divided people into a closed social class system, the lower class people's interests always be ignored by the public and politicians eventually lead a tremendous expenditure on social welfare for government. Secondly, as a multi-religion state, the difference in opinions also extend the process of policy making or bill passing, these kind democratic governance decrease the efficiency of development. Thirdly, the dilemma between support rate and policy making also perplexing politicians, they have to resolve the conflict between electoral cycles and distribution resources unless they do not want to keep working for their country.

This occasion force government focus on many short- term programs rather than use budget to fix these fundamental constructions. And the overmuch subsidize or expenditure on poor people reduce development's effects. Developing democratic countries always get this kind of vote and deficit dilemma as India, that is why sometimes development hindered by democracy. Therefore, we can see the advantages that China has on its development process is not just a simple difference between democracy and autocracy. The longer life expectancy and education years, higher economic growth rate prove that a nondemocratic country can also provide some kinds of good governance to promote people's life. Meanwhile, this kind of regime even shows some advance on alleviating social inequality and balancing the macro and micro scale issues during the development.

3. Conclusions

During the research about what is the relationship between democracy and development, it is interesting to find that sometimes democracy is not a precondition for development even will hinder it. Two representative samples--China and India demonstrate this complicated relationship between democracy and development. In China, communist regime can set policy directly, the process of discuss and negotiate even vote has been simplified, any policies and decisions can be carried out in short time, the efficiency of administration has been improved either.

At beginning of reform, decisive decision making can make change happened as soon as possible, that is why China's economic reform can make a great achievement just in three decades. However, this decisive style also accomplished with environment damage, inequality of distribution and corruption because the development not ruled by a regulated law system and supervised, and some of local officers do not have enough awareness of the importance about sustainable development.

India, another sample which shows democracy become hindrance for development because its complicated and stubborn traditional culture (multi-religion and cast). The wider gap between different social communities lead a downside of government responsiveness, accountability even elections. Work efficiency in parliament also decreased by undying controversy. The poor people cannot find some powerful political organization to represent their self-interests, they continue struggling with poverty and low level living standard. The overmuch population also attenuated the bonus and slowing down the speed of development (Przeworski and Limongi 1993). Ultimately, the scarce of education resource, infrastructure construction and health care which caused by limited government budget and numerous population, especially the poor people hinder a more successful development in democratic India.

To sum up, development is irrelevant with the type of regime, it more depends on the governance from regime. The above statistics and analysis give a strong support to this point of view. As the most representative example, China and India, top two biggest developing country in the world, use different way to try to develop themselves. According to the facts, more successful economic growth and social development (education and life expectance) in China but slower developing speed in India proved democracy is not prerequisite for development, even sometimes will become a hindrance for it.

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