

"STATE", "SOCIETY", "DEVELOPMENT" AND "GOVERNANCE" IN ASIA

Manfred Mols

It was a hundred years ago that a serious discussion began in the USA about future power shifts in world politics. The U.S. President Theodor Roosevelt voiced the vision: "The Atlantic era is now at the height of its development and must soon exhaust the resources at its command. The Pacific era, destined to be the greatest of all, is just at its dawn."¹ Roosevelt and his advisors demonstrated remarkable insight back then, which was not evident either in Europe or elsewhere. Today, however, this view is widespread: "The Pacific Era will be led by China – and no one else."² This might seem premature, particularly as there appears to be a power struggle going on in Beijing not least from the German perspective.³ Analysts are questioning the model of success and harmony of the People's Republic that has been promoted in the past. They point out that China is growing more and more into an imperial world power which is gaining ground (e.g. in Africa and Latin America), increasingly has to contend with all kinds of problems of pollution and raw material shortages and, due to its traditionally inward-looking mindset, neither has a sufficient degree of civilising "soft power" as defined by Joseph Nye nor is able to generate the combination of "hard" and "soft power" that Nye has been advocating of late as constituting "smart power".⁴



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1 | Quoted acc. to Parag Khanna, *Der Kampf um die Zweite Welt, Imperien und Einfluss in der neuen Weltordnung*, Berlin, 2008, 383.

2 | Ibid.

3 | Cf. Wieland Wagner, "Schlacht der Kader", *Der Spiegel*, 13/2012, 26 Mar 2012, 92, <http://spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-84519383.html> (accessed 31 May 2012).

4 | Cf. Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Future of Power*, New York, 2011.

“The rise of East Asia with China as the driving force is the megatrend of our times,” writes the diplomat Heinrich Kreft.⁵ Such statements reflect a certain fundamental respect for the Asian East that exists particularly in Germany. The decisive Western orientation that emerged in the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War – for many years not necessarily shared by the entire population, which was then still living in three separate zones – became an international trademark of the new German state and ultimately represented the end phase of a “Long Road West” (Winkler). National sovereignty based primarily on legal foundations was replaced by multi-level politics of governmental, transnational and even supranational integration (e.g. EC Europe) and, last but not least, by sub-governmental national initiatives and interrelationships.

THE RISE OF ASIA

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China has never been a world power in spite of the fact that the “Middle Kingdom” had considered itself the virtual centre of the world for centuries and was probably the “worldwide largest economic power” until the beginning of the 19th century.⁶ If you include the India of that time, the combined economic volume of Asia greatly exceeded that of the West (Europe and the two Americas). This drastically changed only through the colonising activities of Europe and the equally industrious USA in the 19th century. It was Japan that became China’s true Asian rival in many regards for years, a country which underwent a unique pro-Western modernisation surge with the Meiji Restoration (from 1868) without negating its Asian roots. Japan was not the only country in East Asia that started to modernise in line with the Western model. One could also mention what was then called Siam, Korea, or India, which was still a colony in those days. But Japan pursued modernisation systematically in virtually all areas of modernity of that era: in the sectors of science and technology, in its efforts to create a constitutional monarchy, and in the development of a powerful

5 | Fan Gang, Michael Garrett and Jean-Pierre Lehmann, “Die Asiaten sind im Kommen”, *Die Welt*, 7 Jan 2005, 9, <http://welt.de/print-welt/article362468> (accessed 31 May 2012).

6 | Cf. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, “China. Alter Glanz und neue Macht”, *Zeit Geschichte*, 1/2012, 16-19, here: 18.

navy and army which was not to be underestimated. In the 1890s, these developments led to an armed conflict with China, from which Japan emerged the winner, as well as to a war with Russia in 1904, in which Japan was also victorious (culminating in the naval Battle of Tushima). The fact that an Asian power had defeated a European one for the first time in modern history gave a considerable boost to Japan's self-confidence. It simultaneously moved Japan into a previously unknown role in the Pacific, which it would never quite lose in subsequent decades in spite of its massive defeat at the hands of the USA at the end of the Second World War. Initially, China remained the immediate opponent, particularly as Japan, unlike Germany, did not pursue an active policy of reconciliation after the war with the neighbours whom they had massively oppressed. Japan was then at the height of its economic power, which particularly the USA observed with mistrust.

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Until the first oil crisis of 1973, Japan was on its way to becoming an economic superpower. There was a long period of economic growth, which then, however, segued into a crisis of deflation, the "bubble economy", and an era of uncertainty that lasted for over a decade and which the country did not manage to begin overcoming until the end of the last millennium. Japan's achievements were mainly due to the fact that it combined the approaches of a planned economy with an integrated society perspective. Thanks to the country's high productivity and substantial domestic savings, and in part also to product piracy, combined with a relatively low level of unemployment compared to other countries, Japan established a highly competitive industrial economy. In 2011, Japan had 14 of the 60 best universities in Asia⁷ and its expenditure on research and development has been far above the European average for years. The knowledge of having been the first Asian country to succeed in making the jump into a modernity comparable in many aspects to that of the West, including a democracy that had been achieved under pressure from the USA after 1945, has greatly contributed to a level of self-confidence that is not commonplace in Asia. But this self-confidence could never be separated entirely from a harking back to

7 | Cf. QS World University Rankings 2011, <http://topuniversities.com/university-rankings/asian-university-rankings/2011> (accessed 20 Jul 2012).

a modernity that had supposedly always been there in constructing the country's self-image. Claudia Derichs⁸ points out that people in Asia are fond of making references to Asian traditions, which generally, when examined in the cold light of day, come across as discursive claims of intercultural equality with the political, social, economic and academic standards of the West. They are therefore usually "discourses of self-assertion", construction rather than reconstruction for the purpose of legitimising a type of modernity that was not their own.

Do these discourses of self-assertion represent self-deception? On the one hand, one needs to pay attention to nuances of Asian protest, such as those currently voiced by Asian Islamist parties, for instance. "Since most secondary literature is of Western origin, human culture is rendered one-sided," writes Hassan Hanafi.⁹ On the other hand, there are currently no alternatives to Western ideas and paradigms going beyond individual cultures and one attempts to apply corrections to cultural interpretation, which must, however, therefore not veer too far from the disparaged "colonial knowledge" because intercultural/international communication would otherwise break down.

THE CHINESE OR ASIAN-PACIFIC CENTURY

"The Asians are coming"¹⁰ – headlines such as this topped numerous articles that have appeared in the media in recent years. China, whose economic growth rate increased by almost 700 per cent from 1975 to 2004¹¹ and is still above average today,¹² actually took over the starring role from

8 | Claudia Derichs, "Geschichte von gestern – Geschichte von heute: Asiatische Perspektiven", in: Peter Birle et al. (eds.), *Globalisierung und Regionalismus. Herausforderungen für Staat und Demokratie in Asien und Lateinamerika*, commemorative publication for Manfred Mols, Opladen, 2002, 19-36.

9 | "Western Democracy and Islamic Democracy", in: Hussin Mutalib (ed.), *Islam and Democracy. The South East Asian Experience*, Singapore, 2004, 1-9.

10 | Fan Gang et al., *Die Welt*, 7 Jan 2005, 9.

11 | More accurately: 687 per cent. Cf. *Die Zeit*, 27 Jan 2005, 21. But you must bear in mind that China started from a far lower level than the comparable values in other regions (China: 552 U.S. dollars; Latin America at the time 5,053 U.S. dollars).

12 | Cf. Karl Pilny, *Das asiatische Jahrhundert. China und Japan auf dem Weg zu einer neuen Weltmacht*, Frankfurt am Main/New York, 2005.

Japan in this respect. Other countries that are following this trend are India, joined by a part of Southeast Asia and, of course, South Korea. The Asians are said to be coming "as markets, as states, as consumers, as financiers ... as scientists and technologists and as corporations".¹³ The indicators confirm this on the whole.¹⁴ However: are the Asians really also coming as "states"? Or perhaps as "societies"? Even as "democracies"? Even if you were to allude to Asia's conduct on the international stage (which journalists generally keep quiet about), to their capability of engaging in regional collaboration,¹⁵ to the contributions they make towards international peacekeeping in part secured by this,¹⁶ or to their presence in international organisations, in short to their active entry into world politics, which has obviously been taking place for over 30 years,¹⁷ the question is: do the Asian states exert a type of political "soft power" in their relationships with each other and beyond that over other regions as well – in other words, do the states and their political regimes and societies act as models for others?¹⁸ Therefore, it is impossible to refrain from examining the three aspects of the quality of the state, the openness of a society, and democracy if one wishes to discuss the substance of political order in Asia. Incidentally, the question of the model function ("soft power") is also related to the immediate regional and/or sub-regional neighbours as well. Political self-isolation such as that practiced by Myanmar (which actually appears to be softening somewhat at the moment) and to a higher degree by North Korea is increasingly becoming the exception in present-day Asia.

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13 | Cf. e.g. Manuel I. Hartung, "Fernöstliche Lehren", *Die Zeit*, 5 Jan 2005, 72.

14 | The specialist statistics in the areas of the economy and finance give a clear picture. Cf. e.g. "Economic and financial indicators", *The Economist*, current issues.

15 | Cf. „Towards an East Asian Community“, *East Asian Vision Group Report*, 2001.

16 | Cf. Manfred Mols, "Regionale Ordnungsstrukturen als ethische Chancen", in: Hans Küng and Dieter Senghaas (eds.), *Friedenspolitik. Ethische Grundlagen internationaler Beziehungen*, Munich/Zurich, 2003, 203-253.

17 | Cf. Michael K. Connors, Rémy Davison and Jörn Dosch, *The New Global Politics of the Asia-Pacific*, London/New York, 2004.

18 | Cf. Manfred Mols, "Ostasiens Grenzen in der Globalisierung", *KAS-Auslandsinformationen*, 3/2004, 4-25, <http://kas.de/wf/de/33.4547> (accessed 30 May 2012).

The old fear of Japan, which was voiced as late as in the 1990s in connection with the implosion of the former main opponent of the United States, the Soviet Union, in a tome by George Friedman and Meredith LeBard, which attracted a great deal of attention at the time,¹⁹ has made way for

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a new debate about the future role played by China. In Germany, a book with the sensationalist title *The Typhoon: Japan and the Future of German Industry* appeared.²⁰ In the USA, a more wide-ranging discussion started about a Chinese or Asian-Pacific century, which is still going on today.²¹ Of course there have always been dissenting voices in the U.S.²² They have been and still are clinging to U.S.-inspired Western values, to trade and economic figures and to the continuing existence of the American military power despite considerable military rearmament activities in Asia. They also point to the leading positions of U.S. top universities and research institutions in the international ranking. However, some doubt about the validity of these ideas is justified.

Already a number of years ago the renowned Singaporean diplomat Kishore Mahbubani asked the following question in a sensational speech and subsequent written work: "Can Asians Think?";²³ which he ultimately answered with an emphatic Yes, particularly in his remarkable book "The New Asian Hemisphere. The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East".²⁴ This applies very clearly to the global economy, where Asian growth rates are considerably better than those of Europe and the USA. "State", "society"

19 | George Friedman and Meredith LeBard, *The Coming War With Japan*, New York, 1991.

20 | Folker Streib and Meinolf Ellers, *Der Taifun. Japan und die Zukunft der deutschen Industrie*, Hoffmann und Campe, Hamburg, 1994.

21 | Vgl. Eberhard Sandschneider, "Gestaltungsmacht China. Mit Kooperation und Konfrontation zur Ko-Evolution", *Internationale Politik*, 2/66, 44-51; Robert D. Kaplan, "Das pazifische Jahrhundert" is something like a code word, *ibid.*, 52-61. For details about the discussion cf. Manfred Mols, "Vom Amerikanischen zu einem Asiatisch-Pazifischen Jahrhundert", *KAS International Reports*, 9/2009, 7-44.

22 | E.g. Alfredo G.A. Valadao, *The twenty-first century will be American*, London/New York, 1996.

23 | Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think?*, Times Books Int., Singapore, 1998.

24 | Idem, *The New Asian Hemisphere. The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, New York, 2001.

and “development” in their modern manifestations, on the other hand, are Western categories,²⁵ as modern “governance” incidentally is as well.

DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL ORDER

So is it possible to define socio-political Asia with Western historical and sociological terms or should this approach be questioned? The basic issue that needs to be discussed here is that large parts of Asia are in a clear process of modernisation, which also increasingly includes politics.

Is this modernising Asia ultimately on the path to adopting democratic systems? Concrete questions will be more definite and reflective than will be their answers, as this only involves a partial assessment of the current situation (which is for the most part uncontroversial). This is because speculative elements also play a role, such as the question as to whether Asia – starting from the currently achieved levels of “state”, “society”, “development” and “governance” – will go on to gradually develop a sustainable democracy and a genuinely modern system of politics and governance. Because, however one may define democracy specifically,²⁶ and whatever the handbooks on politics or state theory may say on the topics of state and democracy:²⁷ “It is the *conditio humana* that forms (the) basis.”²⁸ Could this suggest a bridge to the Asian way of thinking?

One fundamental difficulty should be mentioned here from the start. If we state here that even the very selection of the topic reflects a Western perspective, which itself needs to be examined, then we will also have to admit that there is not exactly a wealth of genuine Asian answers to draw

25 | Cf. “Staat und Souveränität”, in: Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhard Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe – Historisches Lexikon der politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Vol. 6, Stuttgart, 1990, 1-154.

26 | Cf. “Demokratie”, in: Brunner, Conze and Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Vol. 1, 4th ed., 1992, 821-899.

27 | Josef Isensee, Paul Mikat, Martin Honecker and Ernst Chr. Suttner, “Staat”, in: *Staatslexikon der Görres – Gesellschaft*, Vol. 5, 7th ed., Freiburg/Basel/Vienna, 1989, 133-170; Giovanni Sartori, *Democratic Theory*, New York, 1962.

28 | Ottfried Höffe, *Demokratie im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*, Munich, 1999, 21.

from. Current thinking about theories of state and society from Asia are conveyed to the West mainly via the large cultural spheres of religions and in philosophical approaches²⁹ and much less via modern social sciences, which are virtually entirely derived from Western scientific development.³⁰ In cases where there have been successful Asian contributions to the development of Asian states, societies and democracies – and the same applies by analogy to the dual phenomenon of regionalisation and regionalism pursued particularly in East and Southeast Asia – there has

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been a reliance on analytical tools learnt in the USA, unified Europe, the UK or Australia and partly also in Germany.³¹ The influence exerted by the West and Asia on each other in the area of theoretical thinking related to state and society has been asymmetrical to the detriment of the Asians, who generally also have to resort to English when they deal with each other in order to make themselves understood. And, to be fair, we should add that the asymmetry is also persisting custom for now because the majority of the Western political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, etc. hardly make an effort to look beyond the horizon of their own categories, terms and theories and rarely, if ever, even acknowledge anything that is conceptually foreign to them. Social sciences in the West on both sides of the Atlantic (in the Americas and in Europe) are self-centred to a degree that allows them at most to acknowledge the unfamiliar in the form of “area studies”, without essentially progressing beyond Western frameworks of evaluation and categorisation.³²

29 | Cf. e.g. Swami Vivekananda, *Speeches and Writings*, Jaipur, 1988, 2 tomes.

30 | One of the few exceptions here is India. Cf. Zoya Hassan, S.N. Jaha and Rasheeduddin Kahn (eds.), *The State, Political Processes and Identity. Reflections on Modern India*, New Delhi, 1989; Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*, New Delhi, 1989.

31 | South Korea is worth a particular reference here.

32 | This already showed in the early ideas of the schools of modernisation theory (of Gabriel Almond for instance) and was to be repeated some years afterwards from a slightly different perspective in the theories of dependence. This Western tendency of forming concepts and presenting arguments is coming out particularly clearly in the current literature on globalisation. Cf. Manfred Mols, “Asia-Pacific: Why Theory and what Type of it. A View from Political Science”, in: Jörn Dosch and Manfred Mols (eds.), *International Relations in the Asia-Pacific. New Patterns of Power, Interest and Cooperation*, New York, 2000, 7-38.

The following must be stated with regard to the underlying understanding of democracy in this context: For one thing, it draws on a fundamental understanding of the modern constitutional state prevailing in the West as well as some other parts of the world (e.g. Japan), which encompasses free elections, the division of powers, predictable institutionalisation, a minimum of human and civil rights that are considered unalienable, periodic changes of government, the separation of political power and religion, constitutional rights for all citizens without marginalising discrimination by gender etc. There are a number of further elements to be considered. It makes little sense to deliberate over the concept of democracy if one doesn't also envisage a supportive and facilitating social culture, which provides a noticeable degree of openness, tolerance, and structural plurality, and which also includes a noticeable tolerance to secular conduct. Democracy cannot work without the basic concept of competition (decision-making, the exercising of power, regulatory alternatives). Democracy remains a draft that has been put forward and needs to be realised afresh, time and again. It is not something that can be achieved once and for all. Democracy also comprises a substantial element of lived and experienced sovereignty. If this is substantially impeded or even denied through external forces, any relative political autonomy, i.e. the concept of self-determination that is essential to democracies, is lost.³³

It makes little sense to deliberate about democracy if one doesn't also envisage a supportive and facilitating social culture, which provides a noticeable degree of openness, tolerance, and structural plurality.

Whatever one thinks of the capabilities, the respective bases of legitimacy, or the integration potential of individual Asian states, a closer inspection will reveal substantial differences, sometimes even within the same country. If one wishes to discuss the substance of political order in Asia, one must consider the three-fold question of the quality of the state, openness of society, and democracy. Incidentally, the question of the model function ("soft power") is initially restricted to the immediate regional and/or sub-regional neighbours of East Asia. Political self-isolation is becoming increasingly rare in present-day Asia as well.

33 | Cf. on such conceptual details: Manfred Mols, *Demokratie in Lateinamerika*, Stuttgart, 1985.

Any order is and also remains linked to culture if – as is the case in China, for instance,³⁴ – it possesses experience gained over many centuries through acculturation processes. In this context, culture should be understood as the definition of identity in the current of history, which is nonetheless subject to a civilising process through exchanges with “the other” that looks and goes beyond “borders”.³⁵ Europe itself is a good example of acculturation processes, which have been active for over two thousand years and still partly are today. It might even be true from today’s perspective that cultural integration through acculturation is potentially more stabilising for the respective political and social systems and, according to prevailing criteria, also more development-friendly and efficient than any strict cultural seclusion, not only in Asia and in the West. But it does not in itself guarantee modernisation that is safeguarded for an entire era. This was apparent for a number of years in the “developmental states” modelled on Japan, namely South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Undoubtedly, this “developmental state” proved to be very

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transition-oriented, as has been illustrated clearly by Jürgen Rüländ,³⁶ by the Duisburg group of researchers around Claudia Derichs and Thomas Heberer,³⁷ by Aurel Croissant³⁸ and other authors.³⁹ These days, international researchers as well as practicing politicians realise that the “developmental state” had reached its limit the moment that firstly, a significant degree of unprecedented social diversification and civil society maturity has been

34 | Cf. Patricia Buckley Ebry, *China. Eine illustrierte Geschichte*, Frankfurt am Main, 1996.

35 | Cf. Alfred Weber, *Kulturgeschichte als Kultursoziologie*, ed. by Eberhard Demm, Alfred Weber-Gesamtausgabe, vol. 1, Marburg, 1997; on the correlations of searching for and finding identity subject to respective historic social conditions see also Manuel Castells, *Das Informationszeitalter 2*, Opladen, 2002.

36 | Cf. Jürgen Rüländ, *Politische Systeme in Südostasien. Eine Einführung*, Landsberg am Lech, 1998.

37 | Claudia Derichs and Thomas Heberer (eds.), *Einführung in die politischen Systeme Ostasiens*, Opladen, 2003.

38 | Aurel Croissant, *Von Transition zur defekten Demokratie: Demokratische Entwicklung in den Philippinen, Südkorea und Thailand*, Wiesbaden, 2002.

39 | Cf. on the above target and performance profiles amongst others Kusuma Snitwongse and Sukhumbhand Paribatra (eds.), *Durable Stability in Southeast Asia*, Singapur, 1987. For more recent discussions Cf. Michael C. Davies, “East Asia After the Crisis. Human Rights, Constitutionalism and State Reform”, *Human Rights Quarterly* 26, 1/2004, 126-151.

reached and, secondly, when the respective country has become subject to the pressures of economic and political globalisation that challenge the political and economic regimes, which they could not resist if they wanted to keep up with the West in many central spheres of action. The "Asian economic crisis was the best thing that could have happened to Asia," wrote the long-time Asia correspondent of *The New York Times* Nicholas D. Kristof.⁴⁰

Major changes, including political ones, were on the agenda in many states. One does not need to be a follower of Daniel Lerner or, Francis Fukuyama, or other authors putting forward similar arguments if one asserts that political modernity of the state or its initiation process of "political modernisation" have turned into a phenomenon that can be seen all around the world. There are political structuring processes happening at a global level that do not replace the individual state, but rather complement it and demand corrections to be made.⁴¹ This political globalisation is taking place in front of a global public, but it is unlikely to lead to uniform solutions as envisaged by Fukuyama's "End of History". The initial objective is to achieve a level of political normality in line with the times, "governance" in the sense of functionality, with performance requirements that can no longer be fulfilled by conventional structures. Whether "governance" will eventually develop into "good governance" on the way to democracy⁴² is initially a guessing game involving prognoses, which may or may not be invalidated by the contingency of historic developments. Variables based on chance may play a role here, unexpected international influencing factors, technical and technological innovations revolutionising human social interaction, the impact of shortages, (such as the increasing water shortages around the world⁴³) and – last but not least – cultural influences, which cannot simply be negated through top-down democratisation decisions or through the prevailing economism of our times.

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40 | Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl W. Dunn, *Ferner Donner: Der neue Aufstieg Asiens*, Berlin, 2002, 21.

41 | Vgl. Höffe, n. 28, 13.

42 | Cf. Jon Pierre (ed.), *Debating Governance, Authority, Steering and Democracy*, New York, 2000.

43 | Which will particularly affect China and large parts of Africa.

The topical question, which has therefore been asked for quite some time now, as to whether democracy is now making progress in Asia in spite of some setbacks that were subsequently corrected or appear to have been corrected over time,⁴⁴ presumes an evolutionary concept of history. It is clear that the so-called transition research in Germany⁴⁵ mainly follows the lead of Samuel Huntington's "Third Wave",⁴⁶ i.e. subscribes to a prognosis of virtually worldwide democracy, which has always been based on ideological dogma going back to the modernisation theories of the 1960s and 1970s.

To be more specific, are we not caught up in a cultural self-centredness concerned with concepts, which proclaims its own historical experience as universal truths?

Is this a realistic assumption? To pick up on a criticism voiced by Wilhelm Dilthey, are we not caught up in the "spider's web" of "dogmatic thinking"?⁴⁷ To be more specific, are we not caught up in a cultural self-centredness concerned with concepts, which proclaims its own historical experience as universal truths of political development?⁴⁸ Basing one's thinking on the Western way of life and projecting it into the future is no more than an ideological assumption. Interestingly, there have actually been some doubts in a democratic 21st century voiced in the U.S. lately under the somewhat sarcastic headline "Democracy's Sobering State".⁴⁹ The doubters believe that the USA can no longer be considered a role model for democracy today. And in the course of modernisation based on the model of the market economy, issues arise in many areas with respect to an acceptable form of social balance to accompany modernisation for the benefit of the masses of the affected

44 | Cf. as representative of many Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder/London, 1989.

45 | One representative of German transition research Cf. Wolfgang Merkel, *Systemtransformation. Eine Einführung in die Theorie und Empirie der Transitionsforschung*, Opladen, 1999.

46 | Cf. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London 1991.

47 | Cf. Wilhelm Dilthey, "Die Erkenntnis des universalhistorischen Zusammenhanges", In: Idem, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 7, Stuttgart/Göttingen, 1958, 291.

48 | Typically the book by Wolfgang Zapf (Hrsg.), *Theorien sozialen Wandels*, Köln/Berlin, 1969. Including amongst others Talcott Parsons, "Evolutionäre Universalien der Gesellschaft", 55-74.

49 | Thomas Carothers, "Democracy's Sobering State", *Current History*, 12/2004, 412-416.

populations. But Europe has also lost out in terms of its credibility to the outside world because of the pressures it experiences to curb the excesses of the welfare state, which have become unsustainable. Thus the traditional ability of the old continent to project its values globally is failing also at a political and economic level. But the doubts regarding a guaranteed democratic future of mankind in line with universal Western concepts go further.

“STATE” IN ASIA

When considering all possible future pro-democratic scenarios for Asia, one cannot avoid the question as to whether there have ever been states or at least political constructs in Asia that have provided the historic conditions for a contemporary or future sustainable democracy. Positive responses to that question have appeared in

the debate on values that has been somewhat neglected of late, for instance very explicitly in work by Kim Dae Jung⁵⁰ and by the Korean group around Hahm Chaibong.⁵¹

But such arguments aren't entirely convincing. The prevailing templates for democracy are derived from a Western civilisation, which was not replicated in Asia and whose promises were not directly realised in Asia either⁵² – even if this situation might change for future generations. What people regularly forget when considering claims to historic equality and the compatibility of system-based political theories is that the West is familiar with converging or complementing traditions of political philosophy. The West can therefore build their discussions about state and democracy on an existing foundation, which, in spite of substantial differences in detail, provides shared principles that influence all parties,⁵³ such as securing peace and freedom rights, restricting and separating powers, a binding legal system for all, equality of gender and of the

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50 | Evidence in Manfred Mols and Claudia Derichs, “Das Ende der Geschichte oder ein Zusammenstoß der Zivilisationen?”, *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 42, 3/1995, 226-249.

51 | Hahm Chaibong, Hahm Chaihang and David L. Hall (eds.), *Confucian Democracy – Why & How*, Seoul, 2000.

52 | This is an unequivocal finding by the research group headed by Jaguaribe in the UNESCO project „A Critical Study of History“, Rio de Janeiro, 2000.

53 | Cf. Paul Kirchhoff, *Der Staat – eine Erneuerungsaufgabe*, Freiburg, 2005.

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citizens' political status, provision of social services and private initiative. One can perhaps point to Georg Jellinek's *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (General Theory of the State)⁵⁴ as a compendium of the convergence of this European thinking on political theory. As far as we know there is no comparable Asian work in existence. Confucian schools of thought and writings did not and do not play an influential role in the Malay cultural sphere. What has been written about the formulae and rules of human coexistence by Buddhist authors has not reached the Philippines, where people are predominantly Roman-Catholic, and the rich Indian thinking about mankind, which informed the mainland of Southeast Asia and large parts of what is now Indonesia for centuries, has essentially been restricted to a world of its own in terms of its social implementation in the modern era.

Historically, democracy presupposes a type of cooperative beginning, whether we are looking at the Magna Charta, the Mayflower, the early stages of the French Revolution or the various democratic ventures in the Latin America of the early 19th century and their continuation in the last few decades.⁵⁵ Such cooperative beginnings have rarely developed beyond village level in Asia. Present-day surges of civil society development, such as those we have seen in South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and which we now see in Indonesia, Malaysia, India and lately even from parts of China, might represent developments of a cooperative nature. But they have not grown and matured over time, creating sufficient "learning depth" to guarantee the sustainability of new political arrangements – at least not yet, although one cannot deny that in some individual cases there are distinct, even relatively far-reaching effects apparent at the macro-political level (for instance in Indonesia, the Philippines and probably also in Thailand).

54 | Cf. Georg Jellinek, *Allgemeine Staatslehre*, 3rd ed., 7th reprint, Darmstadt, 1960.

55 | The frequently discussed references to Athens or Rome are not convincing as the number of slaves far exceeded the number of full citizens. But democracy is not compatible with radical marginalisation.

No one will want to deny that China and India, Thailand and Malaysia, the Philippines and the modern city state of Singapore, Indonesia and Japan have different traditions and current structures and developmental trends. Beyond the strategic considerations, however, there are a number of common characteristics or at least significant similarities that distinguish Asia from the West – either radically or as a clear tendency, depending on the country. The above-mentioned Duisburg group⁵⁶ has examined this in excellent comparative studies. In any case, not everything we here in the West consider to be defining elements of “state” and “society”, and particularly of their correlation under the title of “democracy”, is present in the everyday reality of state or society, nor is there necessarily a consistent principle established for determining these criterion. It is not only for this reason that we are interested in considerations based on an “Asianisation of Asia”, which might already be underway.⁵⁷

“Meaning systems” derived from the actual or putative power of Asian traditions and the need to assert one’s own identity, in the course of globalisation that is gradually replacing former Western imperialism, overlap here. Deliberations about Asianisation therefore regularly pick up on debates about regionalisation, Asian values and a moral renewal as well as discussions about “non-Westernness”.⁵⁸ Discussions frequently coalesce with Western thinking.⁵⁹ However: Do indications of this kind allow the conclusion that such deliberations are sufficiently mature to point towards relatively symmetrical inter-cultural hermeneutics in the future? This remains doubtful for the time being.

56 | Cf. Derichs and Heberer, Fn. 37.

57 | Cf. Manfred Mols, “Is there an Asianisation of Asia? The New Millennium in Asia and the Identity Debate”, *Panorama*, Jan 2004, Jul 2004, 57-64, <http://kas.de/politikdialog-asien/de/publications/5185> (accessed 30 May 2012); Toru Oga, “Debating Asianisation: Exploring a Triangular Relation among Globalisation, Regionalism and Regionalisation”, in: Amitaqa Acharya and Lee Lai To (eds.), *Asia in the New Millenium*, APISA First Congress Proceedings 27-30 November 2003, Singapore, 2004, 429-451.

58 | Cf. David Birch, Tony Shirato and Samjay Srivastava, *Asia: Cultural Politics in the Global Age*, Crows Nest (Australien), 2001.

59 | Cf. Muthiah Alagappa, *Political Legitimacy in South East Asia. The Quest for Moral Authority*, Stanford, 1995.

The “state” that exhibits Jellinek’s familiar trilogy of state territory, state population and state authority is a European form of political order, which started in the late Renaissance. In the case of Asia, it is better to speak of relationships of authority or of rulership for that period, for the centuries beforehand and for subsequent periods,⁶⁰ and in a few concrete cases also of empires (such as China and Japan and for a period Korea). But up to the 19th and often even into the 20th century, it would make little sense to work

The present-day structure of Malaysia with its alliance of Sultans is strongly reminiscent of this tradition of pre-state power relationships.

with a concept of distinct national borders, reasonably centrally organised (or alliance-based) power and a reasonably corresponding homogeneous body of population. This still applies to some parts of present-day Southeast Asia,⁶¹ but also to the former India, which was not divided into actual states,⁶² and even to China. Where relationships existed between the ruling powers and the outside world, these were usually cliency relationships within the wider sphere of influence of the dominant ruling alliance. The present-day structure of Malaysia with its alliance of Sultans is strongly reminiscent of this tradition of pre-state power relationships. If one looks at Myanmar, for instance, one realises that Jellinek’s definition would never have applied there, and it still doesn’t today, not even formally.

Ultimately, “democracy” is, as previously stressed, a European and subsequently a European-American classification of political authority and of what is generally called society, defined as the sum of its individuals and the diversity of its collective cohesive elements. No matter how we wish to approach the topic of state and democracy in present-day Asia, – optimistically, sceptically, achievement-oriented, in line with Huntington’s “third world” philosophy or picking up on those limiting attributes that appear in transition research in the conviction that the democracy that is often still “defective” now will also prevail in Asia one day and then be able to do without qualifying predicates – we must realise that we are working with cognitive constructs,

60 | Cf. Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics*, Cambridge/London, 1965. See also Donald G. McCloud, *Southeast Asia. Tradition and Modernity in the Contemporary World*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1995.

61 | Cf. David Josef Steinberg (ed.), *In Search of Southeast Asia. A Modern History*, Sidney/Wellington, 1987.

62 | Cf. Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *Geschichte Indiens*, Stuttgart, 1982.

which the Malaysian colleague A.B. Shamsul⁶³ and other researchers⁶⁴ have called “colonial knowledge”, a perspective, which had already been anticipated by Edward W. Said⁶⁵ in several of his works.

TRANSITION TOWARDS PARTICIPATION?

When Malaysia’s former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who was influential for a long period of time, defines democracy primarily as strong political leadership, elections and development dynamics,⁶⁶ it is aspects of stability and not of participation that are at the forefront. Lee Kuan Yew gave his memoirs, which were published in 2000, the proud title “From Third World to First”.⁶⁷ He stated that Singapore had undeniably achieved great success in its development, and that was in large part thanks to the efforts of the long-serving Prime Minister. However, the First World also requires a political system of openness, of competition and of pluralism. This was never part of political reality in the Singapore of Lee Kuan Yew and can, at best, be hoped for very tentatively in the future. India, often referred to as the largest democracy in the world, has had to live for decades with the contradiction of a commitment to democracy and the radical reality of the inequality practiced in the religion-based caste system. During the long years of economic development before the Asian crisis, the large state of Indonesia was anything but a democracy. The situation was even worse in Brunei. Thailand and the Philippines are only democratic to a degree, and subject to clear regressive tendencies. After a long period of war and civil war, Cambodia is at the beginning

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63 | A. B. Shamsul, “The European-American-Asian Knowledge Complex. A Critical Commentary”, in: K.S. Nathan (ed.), *The European Union, United States and ASEAN. Challenges and Prospects for Cooperative Engagement in the 21st Century*, London, 2002, 139-155.

64 | Cf. Claudia Derichs, “Geschichte von gestern – Geschichte von heute: Asiatische Perspektiven”, in: Peter Birle et al. (eds.), *Globalisierung und Regionalismus. Herausforderungen für Staat und Demokratie in Asien und Lateinamerika*, Opladen, 2002, 19-36.

65 | Particularly in Edward W. Said, *Kultur und Imperialismus*, Frankfurt am Main, 1974; idem, *Orientalism*, London, 2003 (originally 1978).

66 | Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on Asia*, Subang Jaya, 2002.

67 | Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First. The Singapore Story: 1965-2000*, Harper Collins, New York, 2000.

of a transition, which is aimed at normal statehood rather than democracy straightaway. The four remaining communist states, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Laos and North Korea, are displaying different transition efforts, none of which would, however, confirm the verdict of a trend towards democracy.⁶⁸ At most, one

Only Taiwan and South Korea remain as political entities that are currently displaying democratic stability.

could confirm some transition elements (for instance in China or Vietnam), which have more to do with the consequences of socio-economic changes than with a new "grand strategy" of domestic policy. These countries do not even represent "defective" democracies, this qualification being dubious at any rate. In the end, only Taiwan and South Korea remain as political entities that are currently displaying democratic stability.

Constitutionalism, which is tentatively emerging in various places, is no doubt providing some transparency and a certain degree of predictability, qualities that are traditionally absent in most of the region's countries. The democratisation endeavours that were evident in the 1990s time and again fell victim to an "authoritarian developmentalism". "Unique patterns" can best be interpreted as the countries' own cultural heritage, the concrete religious and ethnic situation, but also specific vulnerabilities due to geographic location. Northern Burma lies in the field of tension between China and India; Singapore has to stand its ground in the middle of a purely Malay environment, etc.

Beyond existing or non-existing traditions of state and society, there have, of course, been some concepts or elements of the state evident since the 20th century, which Asia shares with other parts of the world and with us as well. The willingness to think in terms of "governance" or modernisation categories clearly exists. The technocratic bent of Asian politics is definitely increasing. In spite of widespread cronyism and similarly widespread corruption, this is producing an increasing professionalism that furthers a more effective governing capability than that which was present in earlier times. One cannot fail to recognise the performance capability of these modernising political systems.

68 | Cf. among others Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (ed.), *The New Asians. Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia & Laos*, Canberra, 1997.

Stirrings of civil society, or, even more, substantial civil society potentials have been evident in many places for years. The emergence of new interest groups in particular has a lot to do with the capacity of economic modernisation to effect changes and an opening up. This can eventually produce an effect on education policy and possibly even assume a political quality informed by socioeconomics, which will then exert a momentum towards greater participation. In most of the countries of Southeast Asia, elections have become an essential element of the legitimisation process; there is also the establishment of constitutional courts in some countries and emerging parliamentarism, which one cannot simply ignore.⁶⁹ This definitely applies to India. One could cite further such positive examples. They undoubtedly point towards clear political modernisation efforts and emerging pro-democratic tendencies, although one could not attest to the existence of fully-formed, Western-style democracies, nor forecast the end points of these political developments within Asia as perceived by Huntington or Fukuyama.

The shift from the highly personalised and autocratic structures to what was then a far more rational “developmental state” was one important step in escaping a tradition, the retention of which would have meant stagnation. Dissolving the “developmental state” in the course of its own achievements was a second step; turning towards concepts of participation supported by civil society was a third. These steps don’t apply to all countries, but where they did happen and entailed a corresponding performance and recognisable development “policy outcomes”

there has been a certain political bandwagon effect, the logic behind which Huntington described well in the second chapter of *The Third Wave*. In his view there are parallel developments taking place which are to be continued for the simple reason that Asian countries are not only competing with the West but also with each other in their progress and are therefore under pressure to catch up. Particularly in a world of globalisation, “snow-balling” is a further argument for keeping an eye on one another. However sceptical, ambivalent, or even hostile individual

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69 | Cf. Jürgen Rüland et al., *Parliaments and Political Change in Asia*, Singapore, 2005.

countries or societies, or at least significant social strata, might be towards globalisation, most Asians in positions of responsibility have realised that one cannot escape it, and they also understand that it is better to belong to the club of the “rule makers” than to that of the “rule takers”.

Another element mentioned by Huntington is the “prevailing nostrum”, which is linked to current deliberations on Asianisation, as well as with a *Zeitgeist* that accepts similar responses to comparable challenges as plausible. The most comparable challenge in present-day Asia is actually the fear of Americanisation, which appears

The most comparable challenge in Asia is actually the fear of Americanisation, which appears to be monopolising the globalisation process.

to be monopolising the globalisation process – and not only in the opinion prevailing there. The other one is the *Zeitgeist*, but it also has a lot to do with the intraregional, trans-governmental and transnational correlations of modern politics. Though, these are not yet as pronounced in Asia as they are in Europe or in Latin America because elements such as religions and Asian party and parliamentary organisations don’t yet exert a defining influence on the systems. It is also because, unlike the political philosophies in present-day Europe or in the Organization of American States (OAS), the regional integration and cooperation bodies (ASEAN, ASEAN+, SAARC) don’t exert democratisation pressures on its members. The other reason is that sovereignty still remains a virtually taboo subject in spite of various discussions regarding the issue and attempts at relativisation.⁷⁰ And this, in turn, depends on several things. Disregarding Japan, education and independence have only become established in most Asian countries in the last two generations. This means that the political elites viewed, and frequently still view, the above-mentioned interrelationships and integrative correlations with considerable reluctance if they seem to be aiming towards an “externally induced” overthrow of the status quo. A number of other factors which effectively slow down progress towards full modern democratic statehood, derive from traditional elements that have by no means been abandoned, such as the “prevalence of political dynasties”,⁷¹ patronage,

70 | On the latest status in this area see Jörn Dosch, *Southeast Asia in World Politics*, London, 2005.

71 | Here and on the following text see the final chapter of Derichs and Heberer, n. 37.

which paralyses plurality, including the associated cronyism, concentration on the calming political stability of an ultimate authoritarian guarantee, etc. Given all this, one cannot ignore the fact that external actors involved in development cooperation (implementation organisations for development aid, political foundations, “epistemic communities” that focus on “governance”) manage to exert a certain, frequently noticeable pressure towards democratisation. The end result of all these developments may be a type of Asian democracy that is not modelled on European or U.S. standards, as Mahathir Mohammad stressed time and again – an idea that prevails right across most Asian countries in one form or another.

The type of democracy that is conceivable and even desirable is one which might, in spite of all the ambivalence, contradictions and, chronological discontinuity of these various achievements, emerge from a “merging of cultural idiosyncrasies with Western-liberal idea”.⁷² Roughly in line with this thinking, Clark D. Neher summarises his long years of experience with Southeast Asia as follows: “Every individual nation [...] is involved in managing the change in ways that create difficult problems and alternatives. The options should not be measured by Western standards but by each nation’s own history. To summarise: Southeast Asia deserves to be judged by its own criteria.”⁷³ He maintains that Asia is adapting rather than adopting politically. This is where one closes the circle by returning to the phenomenon of acculturation. Kishore Mahbubani gave a more forceful assessment: The future of both Asia and of the planet lies in the “fusion of civilisations”.⁷⁴ However, welcoming this in principle, i.e. watching the “rise of the rest”⁷⁵ and considering it necessary, cannot mean relativising essential Western values because the alternative compromises are unknown.

72 | Rüländ, n. 36, 274.

73 | Robert Dayley and Clark D. Neher, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, Westview Press, Boulder/Oxford, 4th ed., 2002, 285.

74 | Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think?*, Times Books Int., Singapore, 1998.

75 | Cf. Fareed Zakaria, *Der Aufstieg der Anderen. Das postamerikanische Zeitalter*, Siedler, Munich, 2008.