

DEMOCRACY AND THE CURRENT GLOBAL TRENDS

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Abstrak

Ditengah kekhawatiran di kalangan pemimpin negara-negara Eropa dan Amerika Serikat terkait perkembangan ekonomi global yang negatif dan tuntutan masa untuk mereformasi sistem ekonomi kapitalis, revolusi masa menentang rejime diktator dan otoriter di kawasan Timur dan Afrika terus berlangsung. Kondisi yang nampak kontradiktif ini memancing kalangan akademis untuk mengkaji makna di balik itu dan kaitannya dengan prospek demokrasi sebagai sebuah sistem pemerintahan. Atas dasar itu, kajian ini akan membahas tentang prospek demokrasi dengan merujuk kepada tren global akhir-akhir ini. Data-data yang digunakan dalam kajian ini bersifat sekunder yang bersumber dari jurnal, buku, dan media onlien (internet). Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa tren global yang terjadi satu dekade terakhir justru mengindikasikan arah prositif dari prospek demokrasi. Artinya demokrasi merupakan sebuah pilihan sistem pemerintahan yang lebih baik untuk diadopsi baik di negara berkembang maupun negara maju.

Kata Kunci: *Demokrasi, Tren Global, Revolusi Arab, Ekonomi Global*

I. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the escalating fear and uncertainty among the Western-European leaders concerning the critical fate of capitalist economic model, the masses revolts continue washing across the most part of totalitarian's region, starting from Tunisia in Africa and Syria in Middle East to the East region of Russia. These two trends are apparently contradicting notwithstanding, yet both shed light on the possible massive triumph of democracy as a worldwide system in the years ahead.

The above illustration on the ongoing global phenomena suggest us an important discussion among academic communities about the prospect of democratization following these global trends. Meaning, it requires us to understand the corresponding relation between the the prospect of democracy and what have been going on around the globe in the last dacade or so. The article is thus set to study about the democratisation prospect with reference to the current global trends. In order to graps that phenomena well, it is of immense importance to understand first of all, the basics about democracy. Hence some of its important concept such as origin, meaning and form will be briefly elaborated in the beginning of the article.

The sources of data in this article are mainly secondary such as books, journals, published documents of institutions and online information (internet). Those sources are studied thoroughly as a basis and guidance for understanding of the phenomena. Based on reading the data and understanding the

phenomena in its context, the conclusion are drawn or taken.

II. UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY; ORIGIN, DEFINITION AND FORM (A REVIEW)

2.1. ORIGIN OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy in its origin is derived from Greek. It is composed of two words; *demos* and *kratos*. Since, *demos* can be translated as "people" and *kratos* as "power", then, democracy has a root meaning as "power of the people.

Historically, some believe, it can be traced back to thousands of year of Indian (sub-continent) civilization as early as Vedic period. Chanakya's *Arthasastra* and Shukracharya's *Nitisastra*, it is further said to have talked about the existent of some governmental institutions which were regarded as an embryo of current democratic one (Kapur, 2005: 377). While conventionally the historians stated that democracy dates back to about 2.500 years ago in some of city-states of ancient-Greece.

There were about 1.500 city-states in Greece at that time. But as far as democracy is concerned, Athens was the most famous one as many scholar paid more heed to it. There is no any agreeable opinion among historians when exactly democracy first established in Athens was. Many scholars opine that Cleisthenes' reforms of 508-507 BCE to be definitive, but some insist that Athenian democracy was established much later with the reform of Ephialtes and Pericles in the period 460-452 BCE (Jha, 2010:15). Different opinions among scholar upon the precise time of the establishment of democracy

notwithstanding, still they have common view that it was by origin from Greece.

2.2. DEFINING DEMOCRACY

As we stated before, democracy lexically means “power or rule of the people”. Thus, from lexical standpoint it is simply said as government by many, as Plato referred to as *the rule of mob*. It is now understood as a form of government in which the people are involved either directly or indirectly, by their representatives. Like many other theories in political science, it is defined by many scholars with their different perspectives and approaches both in content and application, either in favor or against it. Aristotle, to name some of them, is at the same track with his mentor, Plato, seeing democracy as a perverted form of government which matters are weighed on quantity rather than on that of quality. It is pertinent to mention here that both Plato and Aristotle’s disfavor for democracy must not be taken for granted. For their opinion must be put in its historical context. Aristotle’s *polity*, for instance, is in fact democracy in its essence.

Modern democracy is not understood in merely numerical consideration. But rather in the emphasis on rights of all people, who is fit, to have a say in smooth running of the state matters. Prof. Seeley, for instance, defines it as a form of government in which every citizen participates in governmental affairs (in Sarwar, 2010:147). Having the same opinion, Bryce defines it as the form of government in which the ruling power is largely vested in members of community as a whole. In this regard, democracy is viewed in the sense of will of the people. In other word, it is the people’s government.

But democracy is not merely defined by the consent of the people. Since the other forms such as oligarchy, monarchy, aristocracy, so on and so forth, also belong to the people. But more than that, the people must be the center point of the issue. Their consent and participation must be real. In the word of Abraham Lincoln democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

2.3. FORM OF DEMOCRACY

Basically democracy is well known of its two forms; direct and indirect. But by the passage of time, democracy underwent

evolutional processes which result in emergence of its new forms. Some of them are as follow (Hague & Harrop, 2013: 89):

i. Direct democracy.

It is defined in the sense that the citizens themselves assemble to debate and reach the decision on matters of common interest. It was famously run in some city-states of ancient Greece as aforementioned. In Athens there were many democratic institutions. At the forefront was *ekklesia* in which Athenian citizen, who was over 20 years male, have a rights and duties to attend.

In modern era it is hardly to find such kind of democracy. Since it is only suitable for small seize state. With the exception to Switzerland, in which some mechanisms of direct democracy is still operated.

ii. Indirect democracy (representative).

Representative democracy is simply that citizens elect their political representative to make a smooth running of the state affairs on their behalf. It is a prevailing form since the modern era in most parts of the globe, as we are observing and doing nowadays.

iii. Deliberate democracy.

It is a perspective on democracy which emphasizes public discussion among free, equal and rational citizens in giving legitimacy to decision and enhancing their quality. So, it seems rather an approach to develop the concept of indirect democracy.

iv. Liberal democracy.

It is a version of democracy in which the scope of democracy is limited by the constitutional protection of individual rights. It is usually characterized by free, fair and regular election which is based on near universal suffrage.

v. Illiberal democracy.

It is apposite of liberal one in which the elected rulers are having unlimited authority because of the absence of constitutional protection of individual rights. It is rampant in developing countries wherein

dictators usually use the blanket of democracy to legitimate their action.

III. DISCUSSION

3.1. DEMOCRACY AS A PREVAILING SYSTEM

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 90s, democracy, liberal democracy precisely, which is the backbone of American empire, has been standing firmly as the durable prevailing system of the world politics till today. Hence, Fukuyama's most reputable article, *The End of History*, which was published in the international affairs journal in 1989 and later on expanded into a book, is pertinent to be recalled here. His main idea that liberal democracy would be the eventual system of the world which in his word is *the last man* seems to be true, with the reference to the current global affairs. For today the only democracy is a globalized form of government. Most countries of the world today are adopting democracy, despite of divergent degrees and characters.

The recent *Democracy Index* which was issued by the *Economist Intelligence Unit* (2011) shows us the following data; 25 countries are adopting full democracy which is equal to 15% of the total of the world countries; 53 are adopting flawed democracy which is equal to 31, 7%; 37 are adopting hybrid regime which is equal to 22, 2%; and 51 are adopting authoritarian regime which is equal to 31, 1%.

The above statistics indicates that currently most of the countries in the world are adopting democracy although not in full sort. By percentage it is about 68.9% of the world countries are in the fold of democracy. It will be more interesting if we look at further information. That is almost the entire 31, 1% of those authoritarian regime countries are located in Africa and Middle-East region wherein the uprisings and reforms are going on today. It gives us a signal that the number of countries which adopt democracy will increase by the flourishing democratic reforms in that region. It will be elaborated further.

Apart from the aforementioned facts and data, what make many observers more concerned is that instead of bringing a real positive change, yet democracy seems to fail operating in third world, especially Muslim countries which is in turn translated into the disillusioned government and frustrated people.

Larry Diamond, in his book *The Spirit of Democracy* (2008) gives us a proper answer to that issue. According to Diamond the problem in almost the undemocratic or neo democratic states that is bad government is not an illness to be cured. It is like the default position on a machine (Diamond, 2008: 296). It is a natural state. In short, he opines that greedy nature of incumbent regimes causes to monopoly policy and a "limited access order" in a vast poor citizens (society). What need to be done first, he further says, is to establish an "open access order".

The only ground and circumstance for the open access order is a corresponding cultural and social structure, what the social scientist call it as *civic community* or *civil society*. Here is the matter. What happens to most of the third world countries is that the incumbent regimes, in order to justify their power and respond to the mounting outside pressure and inside demand, harshly adopts democracy merely as a machine without any full consideration to the economic and social condition of their citizens, specifically to education index. Hence, "money democracy", some used to call it, emerges as a logical ramification. Confused citizens, corrupt rulers, complex bureaucracy, money politics, and so many other social decays are the characteristics of money democracy. This is exactly what is going on in Pakistan, to name a few, Indonesia, India, Thailand and so many others. Thus, the first step to be taken is to reformulate and reestablish social and political structure from a "vertical-relationship structure" to the "horizontal" one. On this basis, the idea to enliven the democratic values in order to build a civil society which is a very important pre-requisite for democracy to flourish, finds its logic.

IV. DEMOCRATISATION PROSPECT AND CURRENT GLOBAL TRENDS

In social sciences, predicting the future is not an exact calculation as it is in natural sciences. Since many unpredicted upheavals and surprising events took place in the world political history. Look at America's firm decision to take a lead of the global politics following the Second World War didn't quite coincide with her previous *self-isolated* policy. But it doesn't mean that upcoming social events in general and political one in particular cannot be forecast. For the

hypothesis of any social issues are developed on the basis of their prior premises.

Talking about the prospect of democracy, the writer is personally of the view that it is likely to prevail as a reliable system for the years ahead. Thus, the notion that democracy will perish very soon is not in consonance with the ground of reality, at least for the short-term. We are convinced to take this stance on the basis of some following grounds. Firstly, America as the most of proponent countries of democracy is still firmly committed to take a lead in the global scenario. Many critics opine that America's era in the world politics is almost over, following the economic recession and financial crisis that hit its economy backbone recently which its cleavage according to *the Occupy Wall Street activist* is very blatant (<http://occupywallst.org/>). Well, it sounds logical if the consideration is merely focused on American side. But if we look at broader horizon with a more balanced consideration, will find it vice versa, as we are going to point out this later on.

Secondly, lack of willingness, if not capability, of the emerging powers to take the burden of world leadership. Many analysts are of the view that the emergence of new powers such as China, India, Brazil and EU is shaking the existing unipolar system with America being a sole real sovereign. In fact it is too early to say so, especially with reference to security and political issues. In spite of rapid economic growth of China and India with the current GDP (PPP) 11.174 and 4.448 trillion of International dollars respectively, their commitment and capabilities to bear the world economic and political burden remain questionable (www.gfmag.com). For China always keeps low profile stance in term of global political scenario and focuses more on her expansionist economic policies. While India, is still struggling to overcome the issue of poor infrastructure, growing unemployment and relatively high poverty rate. In these circumstances it is quite illogical to expect those new comers to lead.

Thirdly, if the notion that American is on the verge of collapse and about to be shoved by emerging powers such as the so called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India and China) + EU really come true, it will not matter a lot on the progress of democratization. That's because of two

reasons; first is those states like Brazil, India and EU are already in the fold of democracy, and their commitment to democracy as a system and to its concomitant pluralist political culture is reasonably convincing. Second, it just makes no sense to think that China and Russia (many other post-communist countries) will everlastingly stick to the existing totalitarian system. Since the state's eagerness to establish hegemony over the whole public spheres is currently undercut by the growing masses awareness and participation. They will consequently take initial democratic reforms at short run and eventually become democratic in long one. What we must bear in mind is that to take a major role in global arena, a state has to ensure her internal political stability, sustainable economic growth and cohesive social order along with a sound foreign policy. To get there a state, according to Fukuyama (2005), must establish three pre-requisite political institutions which are the main elements of modern democratic state; 1) State herself; 2) Rule of law; 3) Accountability. Thus it is only a matter of the substitution of actors in the global political stage, whilst democracy as its grand theme is still intact.

Fourthly, the current political upheavals (reforms) in the Middle-East which is well known as a home to authoritarian-tyrant regimes for decades strengthen the evidence of expanding democratization processes. To discuss this point in more plain, it is worth mentioning here Larry Diamond's book, *Developing Democracy; toward Consolidating*, which touches the same topic. And then we examine it as to what extent the validity of Diamond's hypothesis is.

Diamond (1999) proposed the prediction of the future of democratization processes which he called *the fourth wave*. The term actually dates back to the well-known Huntington's description of the three waves of democratization in his brilliant book *The Third Wave; Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Coming back to the issue, Diamond opined that sooner or later democracy will rule the globe. Democratization will occur from most part of the undemocratic region which always having one, at least, of three characteristics; Muslim majority population and often Islamic fundamentalist; deep ethnic division; Neo-

communist or post-communist regimes (Ibid: 261).

As far as Middle-East is concerned, he predicted that democracy seems at least plausible in the long run. Culturally and historically, it has been the most difficult terrain for political freedom and democracy. But Islamists (fundamentalist) are divided, he said, and democratic pluralist currents are emerging. Most importantly is that the growing group of Islamic reformers.

What Diamond said ten years ago by and large we see it happening today. The ongoing reforms movement in Egypt after the massive success of toppling Mubarak regime, and then followed by tragic demise of Gaddafi in Libya, while Syria, Yamane and other Arab countries are waiting for their turn, are its true evidence.

The outcomes of the unfinished Arab spring remain uncertain notwithstanding, yet the current political landscape there is promising for the democratization prospect. The massive electoral victory of moderate Islamic parties in the post-authoritarian regimes gives us a ray of hope that democracy is apparently to expand. Moreover, the unwillingness, if not disfavor, of Muslim Masses to adopt or support the Taliban- Qaeda types is also an undeniable signal. The masses in those Arab countries seem to be aware enough of the cost they paid during the previous dictatorial-tyrant regimes. Thus, instead of responding to the call of fundamentalist and extremist for establishing

the so called “*khilafah* model of government”, the moderate democratic Islamist (reformers) model such as Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and AK party of Turkey are likely what they will follow.

V. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, we could conclude some important points. First, the assumption that based on the negative economic trends in United States and some EU countries that democratic governments will not survive the challenges of 21st century is not supported by the facts in the ground/field. Second, the phenomena of Arab Spring indeed strongly indicate that the undemocratic governments, be it dictatorship or authoritarian, started to be left and challenged by the people. In turn, there will be two kinds of way out; initiating democratic reforms or/and changing the old regime with the new one which is democratic. Thus, the myth of the just-tyrant and pious-dictator will likely be gone as the masses reforms begin. Third, the newly emerging powers which are considered by many as the coming major powers replacing US and EU are in fact democratic governments or at least in the democratization processes. Hence, based on these facts and understanding, we could safely conclude that the fourth wave of democratization will take place in post-reforms scenario. Even it is going on today as we watch it as an eye witness.

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