

An Essay on A New Theory of Democracy in the Non-Western Countries

Hasegawa H*

Department of Political Science, Emeritus, Nihon University, Tokyo, Japan

*Corresponding author: Hasegawa H, Professor, Department of Political Science, Emeritus, Nihon University, Tokyo, Japan, Tel: 09879522627; E-mail: hasegawa4654@tbz.t-com.ne.jp

Received date: February 20, 2018; Accepted date: March 13, 2018; Published date: March 22, 2018

Copyright: © 2018 Hasegawa H. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

Democratization in non-Western societies (NWS) has historically resulted in the introduction or imitation of the modern West European democracy model (supply factor). Success of democratization in NWS largely depends on the level of concerted determination on the part of the government and their people, as well as the societies' traditional values and people's tolerance level for the new system (demand factors). Democratization can only be attained through equilibrium of these demand and supply factors, as it introduces the "Supply and Demand Theory of Democracy".

Keywords: Receptive demand factors; Demand and supply balance; Causes of decline; Collapse of democracy

Introduction

In Japan and other non-Western societies (NWS), it is customary to imitate or accept modern elements created by West European societies (WES) when striving for the development of economy and politics. Modernization in NWS diffused from WES to NWS over a long time and with many obstacles. However, the process took less time in countries that shared homogeneity or similarities with WES, especially fellow the other European countries. Thus, in order for NWS to approach West European civilization, with its technological and scientific basis, the approach inevitably requires formal imitation and acceptance, naturally requiring a game of catch-up within the science/technology-based model created by West European Civilization. Considering these relationships, for the sake of convenience, WES and NWS are thus distinguished in this paper.

NWS accept these modern elements and attempt to transplant them into the traditional society, with one major element being democracy, in all its various stages and forms. While each society chooses the most suitable form to adopt for its own society, if the model is incompatible the enforceability of the format will be reduced. Another problem is the fact that democracy will not take root and become established on autopilot once it is introduced in a new society. Its stability and development are determined by the traditional society's capabilities to accept and stabilize it. This is a huge issue for NWS, but is generally not a problem in WES. The following is an attempt to figure out why this happens.

Democratization and Theories of Democracy

Preceding studies on democratization and democracy

While the reader may wish to refer to the past literature on conventional theories of democracy, this paper seems to be the first to analyze democratization and the subsequent process from the perspectives mentioned above. Although political science is the most directly related field in the discussion of democratization theory

research, it cannot handle all the factors involved in democratization process, i.e., politics, economics, society, culture, psychology, etc. In particular, it is inadequate to discuss democracy in NWS focusing only on democratization, because these societies are basically in pre-modern states. Here lies the reason for discrepancies in theories of democracy in WES and NWS.

Since the 1970s, political science has been paying attention to democratization, which was brought about around the globe by the Third Wave, through which many countries began to move toward democratization. Numerous arguments on democratization have come out of these phenomena, but in recent years, some of the theories have been merging [1]. Though inadequate, Actor-Centered Approach (ACA) is currently the most dominant, and it is employed to analyze the process of democratization of many non-Western emerging countries with certain effectiveness. However, the theory is effective in so far as explaining the transition process to democratization, and not afterwards. It is therefore necessary to build a theoretical hypothesis around the entire series of events surrounding democracy such as the establishment, stability and development of a democracy, as well as how to avoid its regression and collapse.

ACA argues that the transition from the authoritarian regime to the democratization process has nothing to do with economy, history, culture, etc., and the determinant is ultimately a political matter. It presupposes a strategy game between the four parties among governing actor and the opposition actor, combinations of which render several transition types. According to this theory, it is unclear as to how the new democracy will be able to thrive, or whether regression and collapse can be avoided.

In short, we still seem short of a single framework in political science that would explain the reasons why some countries democratize better than others, as well as why some fail to maintain the democratic process while others succeed [2].

Stabilization and establishment of democracy

In the past several decades since the Third Wave, there have been countries that successfully transformed into democracies and those that did not. What set them apart?

In WES, the process of initiating a democratic regime can be regarded as the same process as the subsequent establishment and stabilization process, while NWS may be a totally different story. Politically speaking, there are two stages of democratization. The first starts with the collapse of the authoritarian regime and ends with the establishment of a democracy. The second process involves the stabilization and sustenance of the newly established democracy after eliminating the remaining authoritarian factors. However, the author sees these two as one process, both having a lot to do with each other. The democracy won by revolution and its subsequent establishment may seem to be separate issues, but they are indeed a series of inseparable and intertwined processes.

Historically, democracy in the West was born out of the modernization process closely related to political, social and cultural elements, and was not a mere political phenomenon. On the other hand, democratization in Asia is often a switch from a dictatorship system that suppresses democratization, and as a result, democratization does not always end up taking root permanently. In the diverse and copious democratic studies conducted over a long period of time in political science, several respects seem to be based on premises that are different from the author's. One of them is the lack of distinction between WES, especially France, which produced modern democracy, and NWS which only formally accepts it. The other is the difference in how to look at the societies that are forced to accept democracy.

Statistics also support the fact that the democratic systems of NWS are difficult to realize. The degrees of democratization are lower compared with Western society, and the newly-born democracies are much more vulnerable and prone to collapse. In other words, if a democratic regime in WES is established, there is a high possibility that it will survive and become stabilized, but the same cannot be expected of the majority of NWS. The question is why is this?

The Differences in Democracy between Western and Non-Western Societies

Democracy in the west and its characteristics

WES realized the modernization of society as a whole. Some of them are countries and regions that have produced modern democracy. Throughout WES, the environment for democracy had already been in place, and there were no major obstacles to realizing modern democracy. The conditions for maintaining and developing democracy had been ready to some extent even before modernization. This shows that the capabilities to produce democracy matched the potentiality to nurture it.

Another important thing is that these societies held within them the conditions to give birth to democracy as well as the capabilities to improve and cultivate it as necessary. However, among the same European countries, those with low social and cultural homogeneity with West European countries tend to show delays in and limited advancement of democratization.

EIU announced Democracy Indices for 167 nations in 2014, which evaluated the degrees of democracy in four categories: "Full Democracies, FUD" (24 nations), "Flawed Democracies, FLD" (52 nations), "Hybrid Regimes, HYR" (39 nations) and "Authoritarian Regimes, AUR" (52 nations). According to the data, all nations in WES except Belgium are classified as FUD, and in the rest of the world other than Western Europe, only 8 countries, including Australia, New

Zealand, Japan and South Korea are classified as FUD. All other Asian countries are "Flawed Democracies", HYR or AUR. The Democracy Indices of most countries in West European society are within the top 20, and the top countries have not changed greatly in ranking or scores for a long time.

The biggest reason for the difference between WES and NWS lies in whether modernization and modern democracy is a product of their own initiative. Therefore, the important question is how ready each non-Western nation is in accepting, introducing and making democracy work within its traditional society.

Democracy in the non-western countries and its characteristics

Since modern democracy is essentially a West European concept, it is an objective necessity, like industrialization, that all NWS must accept, imitate, and sustain. In order to join the ranks of WES, NWS must be willing able and ready to modify the existing systems including laws. This means that democracy is a supply factor that needs to be accommodated in one way or another; a model to follow.

Under authoritarian regimes or dictatorships in NWS, democratization is typically first politicized by anti-establishment/government political actors such as the opposition party or workers and students (opposition elites). In rare cases, however, democratization may be demanded or enforced by the United States or international organizations. Therefore, when discussing democratization, it is crucial to determine the propelling force and its capability behind the scene, which is the supply factor in this case. Of course, the anti-democratic government will take every measure to suppress such moves and their actors, before they even materialize.

The most important thing is that democracy is first considered as an option; then it is getting people on board, and finally implementing democracy in the existing traditional society. Success in maintaining the new democratic system will depend heavily on surrounding conditions, whether positive or negative.

These are supply factors, while both supporting and inhibiting factors involved in the reception process are all demand factors. These demand factors determine the ease of realizing, maintaining and promoting democratization directly or indirectly. In NWS, the concept of modern democracy itself is a supply factor, while its reception and stabilization are determined by demand factors. This creates a constant discrepancy between the supply and demand. On the contrary, modern democracy in WES, especially in France, is a natural-born or created product. There is no need to accept it, and supply and demand are consistent at all times. The critical difference between WES and NWS, therefore, is whether the supply and demand matches at the onset.

Democracy and demand factors

Demand factors play a key role in sustaining and developing a newly born democracy. They could either turn an authoritarian regime into a hybrid regime and eventually a full democracy, or kill the entire process. Figure 1 shows 4 types of democracy as an Idealtypus based on both the positive and negative demand factors of democracy.

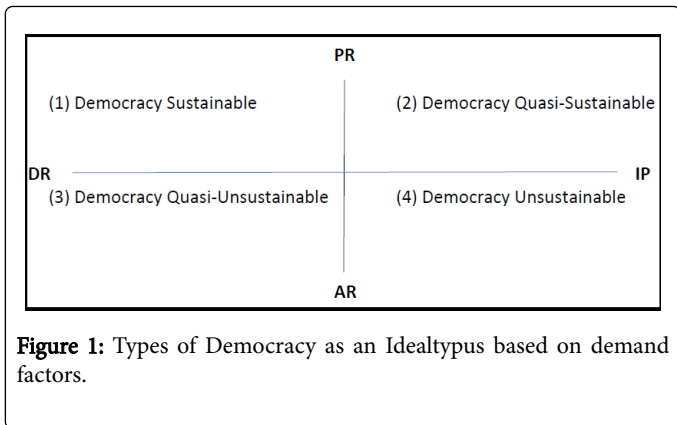


Figure 1: Types of Democracy as an Idealtypus based on demand factors.

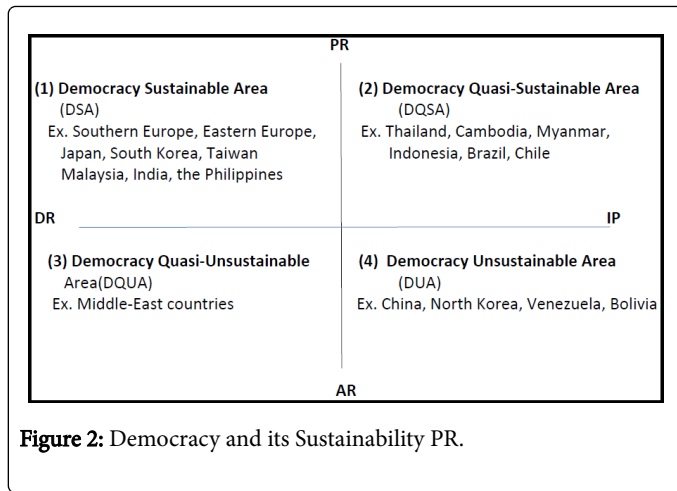


Figure 2: Democracy and its Sustainability PR.

While democracy can take many forms, what is most important for our discussion is how it is received where it is executed. The above diagram illustrates the four types of democracy as an Idealtypus in Max Weber's concept, based on the demand factors. Going upward on the vertical axis are the positive receptive factors (PR), with the anti-receptive factors (AR) on the opposite downward direction. Toward the left side of the horizontal axis are the direct receptive factors (DR), and on the right are the indirect preventive factors (IP). The following are a few examples of what each of these dimensions represents (Figure 2).

- PR include the following; a strong reform-minded government (governance elite), its citizens in support of the reform, opposition parties and labor unions (opposition elites) with their strong demands, intense anti-government activities demanding democratization, pressure from abroad, and highly educated populations. The most significant is the role of the government, which involves the following four factors: the restoration and improvement of the equilibrium of state power; the improvement of the awareness and capabilities of the government; the establishment of a just mechanism for accommodating the interests of its members, and; the improvement of the capacity of citizens, which are considered to be governance issues [3].
- Contrary to PR, AR indicates demand-side factors that prevent or impede the advancement of modern democracy. These include anti-West contemporary religions and ideologies, political intervention by military, military dictatorships, extreme rebel factions, etc. [4].
- DR include the following: economic development and per capita high income, advanced informatization; existence of civil society, NGOs and traditional values that appreciate the sense of community and order; the effects of pro-democracy demonstrations, and; demands and support without pressure from abroad such as the United States and intra-regional member countries, etc.
- IR includes poverty, high inequality of income, populism, racial conflict, fraud, corruption, soft state, populations and tribal societies indifferent to democracy, etc.

The above diagram represents the four Idealtypus; (1) democracy-sustainable area (DSA), (2) democracy quasi-sustainable area (DQSA), (3) democracy quasi-unsustainable area (DQUA), and (4) democracy unsustainable area (DUA). The countries and regions mentioned are examples, and are subject to changes as time goes by.

(1) A democracy sustainable area is possible where the government seeks reform, the popular mass supports it, and opposition parties demand dialogue (PR factors). At the same time, these PR factors are backed by middle income classes, civil society, as well as the absence of DR factors that would undermine them [5].

(2) In a democracy quasi-sustainable area, PR factors are compromised by the weak or the lack of IR factors, or by anti-democratization conditions. Democracy and its sustainability may be possible if PR is stronger than the anti-forces.

(3) In a democracy quasi-unsustainable area, even if the DR factors were strong, it is difficult to create a democratization process because of the IP factors. Also, the sustaining power would be too weak or not high enough to maintain the new democracy. In the long run, the DR factors may be sufficient to retain the democratization process. However, if the IP factors are too powerful, the emerging democracy may be short-lived.

(4) In a democracy-unsustainable area, there is very limited possibility of any democratization emerging or staying, but it may happen through revolution, for example. However, even if democratization were to happen with force, it would remain temporary with extremely low probability of lasting.

These four areas are only to explore the realization of democracy and the sustainability of the democratic system. In order for non-democratic countries to approximate European and American standards, they would have to go from formal to qualitative catch-up with Western Europe, because non-Western traditional societies in general simply lack the elements such as rationalism or scientific spirit and individual responsibilities that became the basis of the modernization of WES.

Democracy in Asia and the Demand and Supply Theory of Democracy

What is the demand and supply theory of democracy?

So far, we focused on the demand factors necessary for accepting modern democracy. Post-democratization, however, we need to shift our focus to the relationship between the demand and supply factors necessary for maintaining and furthering the new democratic regime. Only after these two are in equilibrium will true democracy be possible, maintained, and consolidated. In order to achieve these goals, the government needs to create supply-demand balance points, maintain them, and increase them. This process involves diverse demand factors, factors that are vital as to whether democracy can thrive instead of falling completely apart [6].

Since various elements and methods affect the democratization process as well as the stability and development of democracy, multiple players need to be involved. First of all, leaders and the government must make necessary adjustments as they go, actively create equilibrium points of supply and demand, and maintain and increase them dynamically and sustainably. Simultaneously, the maintenance and development of the democratic regime are influenced greatly by the presence of traditional values and other socio-cultural elements suited to democracy. Any anti-democratic movement or thought may shake the base of the democratic regime.

The stabilization and establishment of the democratic regime will be possible by maintaining the supply-demand equilibrium points for the long term and further turning them into a line. On the contrary, democracy will face regression or collapse given the loss or dissociation of the equilibrium points of supply and demand if any demand factor has negative effects.

The author's "Demand and Supply Theory of Democracy: the DS Theory" is the theorization of these viewpoints. According to the DS Theory, democratization and its subsequent process are an act of creating supply-demand balance points. It explains the entire process of democratic stability and consolidation by examining the degrees of equilibrium and connections between the democratization (supply factor) and the receptor (demand factor). According to this theory, democratization in WES is a result of finding its own supply-demand equilibrium. Moreover, their democracy is stable and unlikely to regress because, basically speaking, the supply and demand have matched consistently and steadily [7]. This is a direct result of their unwavering effort to seek equilibrium points between demands for better democracy (supply factor) and capabilities of the society (demand factor) to match it.

To elaborate, these "demand factors" in NWS differ greatly from those in WES. In NWS, the society is equipped with these "receptive" demand factors, or societal abilities, exploit democracy, while in WES, they are "dispatching" or "creating" demand factors that give birth to civilization, e.g. democracy, or the societal abilities to improve it.

The democratic process of many NWS was modeled after the completed modern democracy (supply factor). They executed and advanced democratization by maintaining a balance between the supply factor and their own receptive demand factors or social capabilities economists have adopted. The DS Theory dictates that the fewer and/or fewer the equilibrium points between supply and demand factors (or if there are other inhibiting factors), the weaker and more unstable the democracy. On the contrary, the greater in number the

equilibrium points between supply and demand factors, the higher the possibility of successful democratization. In NWS, demand factors indicating receptive social capability are decisive in the determination of the form of democracy as well as the degrees of tolerance and stability of democracy.

On the other hand, the democratic regimes of WES owe their successes to the many equilibrium points of supply and demand including not only political but socio-cultural dimensions as well. Also, supply and demand factors are almost always in agreement, and there are almost no factors that diverge equilibrium points. In that sense, democratization process may be described as the creation and establishment of one or more equilibrium points of supply and demand factors. The stabilization and consolidation of democracy, in essence, is the long-term maintenance and development process of supply-demand equilibrium [8]. Therefore, the loss of the equilibrium will inevitably mean the failure of, and if weakened, the retreat of democracy. In this case, however, the decline and break down of democracy does not mean those of democracy itself, but rather the recession or divergence of demand factors.

Democracy of non-western societies from the perspective of the "demand and supply theory of democracy"

After the mid-1970s, many southern European countries became democratized. The same movement spread through Latin America and Asia by the 1980s, and to former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and to Africa in the 1990s. However, in 2010, Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) published a report titled "Democracy in Retreat", and the subtitle of the 2012 report was "Democracy at a Standstill", calling attention to the global trend of democratic recession or instability.

Today, the state of democracy in some NWS can be considered solid, but some are unstable or deteriorated. While the status of democracy in WES is rated "extremely stable" by the Democracy Index by EIU, and "Freedom in the World" by Freedom House (FH), with no foreseeable possibility of regression, in NWS, the Democracy Index of Spain, Greece, Taiwan, Thailand and China has lowered, and the ratings in political freedom have worsened in Greece, Korea, India, Taiwan and Thailand. In other words, democracy in NWS seems vulnerable and is somehow capable of deteriorating in a relatively short period of time. Unlike WES, as these indicators suggest, the levels of democratization in NWS are not uniform. This is, according to the author's DS Theory, explainable in terms of the differences in the numbers of supply and demand equilibrium points, the strength of the connections, or the degrees of homogeneity with WES.

Why Democracy in Thailand Regressed: A Case Study

Thaksin and the military coup d'état

According to the Democracy Index and the Freedom in the World of 2014, most NWS experienced retreat in democracy. One of the most typical cases in recent Asia that show remarkable retreat is Thailand. Based on the Democracy index, Thailand is a HYR. In terms of political freedom, Thailand fell by one rank from "Partly Free" in 2006, to "Not Free" in 2015. Democracy in Thailand is known as Thai-Style Democracy (TSD), which is based on the absolute value of the monarchy. The TSD fluctuates greatly because the national politics is built on a unique system. The Constitution of 1997 was enacted to improve the politics of Thailand, which was in a perpetual state of coup

d'états, and to end the vicious circle of politics being involved in factional conflicts within the military.

However, unlike constitutionalism which stands upon checks and balances, the core of modern democracy, the Constitutional Court (CC) holds authority over the three powers of administration, legislation, and judicature, along with some independent institutions and the king, above all powers. The 1997 Constitution granted the CC and the independent institutions extraordinary power. For example, the CC can issue dissolving orders to political parties. The independent authorities such as the Election Administration Committee (EAC), the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) and the Office of the Ombudsman were also given many privileges. For example, the EAC is authorized to call re-elections and deprive people of voting rights. The NACC has the right to investigate the asset-and-liability reports issued by political figures. Parliamentary Ombudsman accepts complaints from citizens and file complaints with the CC and the Administrative Court on their behalf.

In Thailand, the freedom of speech is not guaranteed, because the CC reserves the right to deem any bill, its enforcement and any government policy as unconstitutional, which would be up to the public in a truly democratic nation. In the election of 2006, the victory of Thaksin was invalidated, which is one illustration of how flawed the 1997 Constitution is.

The pro-Thaksin supporters (PTS, also known as the Red Shirts, RS) were endorsed by a large number of Thai citizens because of its policies that benefited greatly the majority of the people, namely, farmers and low-income groups. On the other hand, the anti-Thaksin supporters (ATS, or the Yellow Shirts, YS) have only been supported by minority urban middle classes. Because of the vast differences in the interests and opinions of these two supportive groups, conflict was inevitable and unavoidable.

However, after the PTS came into power with massive support, arrogance set in. Thaksin positioned himself as the “CEO of the state”. With the slogan “New Politics, New Actions”, Thaksin implemented policies to expand domestic demand called “Thaksinomics”. His populist policies centered on low-income populations, which gained him great popularity. On the other hand, he and his family have played hard-ball politics, and have been given allegations of corruption, all of which enraged urban middle classes [9].

Even after the enactment of the Constitution of 2007, Thaksin's corruption was never revealed, and the PTS won again in the first election under the new framework. During the election, ATS went into the streets in protest, and during the turmoil that escalated to the closure of the airport, the CC ordered the People's Power Party (PPP) to dissolve. PPP in turn changed its name to the Pheu Thai Party (PTP) and sought to stay in power. However, during the ministerial selection, some members of the elected officials turned over to ATS, and the Democratic Party gave birth to the Abhisit Administration. The PTS claimed that this administration was backed by the military, and fiercely protested against the government. As a result, the military carried out a coup on May 22, 2014.

The cause of the failure in Thai democracy

Thus, democracy in Thailand has moved backward significantly. The current political picture has the army wedging between the conflicting PTS and ATS. Both PTS and ATS appear civil with each other on the surface. Support for MJ exceeds 80%, and it seems that the current situation is stable. However, any regime established by a coup

should not be a long-term arrangement. The objective of the MJ is to protect the “principles of the nation, religion, the king and democracy”, which are the basic principles of the Kingdom of Thailand as indicated in the Constitution.

The fundamental cause for the political conflict in Thailand stems from the fact that the rule of parliamentary democracy is not observed, as seen in the CC and the independent institutions having huge authority over the three powers of administration, legislation, and judicature. In light of the DS Theory, this means that the Thai democratization process hinges upon the inadequate number of supply-demand equilibrium points, and that these connections are weak. Thailand is in need of more extensive modernization across the society.

Modernization is a historical product of Western society, which consists of economy, politics, society, culture and psychology. Modernization in each of these fields has organic relations with one another in society. However, in non-Western societies, modernization means focusing mainly on economical catch-up, and minimum regard is given to the modernization of the other aspects. However, the truth of the matter is the modernization of economy and politics requires modernization of society and culture at the same time. That necessitates lateral modernization of mutually organic and causal relationships.

According to a prominent Thai researcher, behind the conflict and struggle between the UDD and PAD are the changes in Thailand's socio-economic structure [4]. In other words, Thai society has seen: (a) the emergence of the middle class in rural areas in the past 20 to 30 years; (b) the rural middle class occupies majority in society as a whole, and; (c) as a result, the political power of the urban middle class has declined and become equal to that of the rural residents. Thus, when the new electoral system and the more democratic 1997 Constitution were introduced, people in rural areas had developed an increased level of interest in politics and social issues. However, the outcome of the first election held under that constitution was not honored. The majority of the RS belong to the lower middle class. More specifically, they are rural middle class, who is becoming increasingly more educated and thereby becoming a more prominent productive power in the market. That in turn has made them more sensitive to the policies of the government. On the other hand, the leaders of the RS movement opposing the YS typically have experience participating in communist movement and democratization struggle as students in the 1970s and won support with the power of speech [5].

The modernization of Thailand depended on top-down mandates and fundamentally only focused on economic development, while the modernization of the other related elements in society is greatly delayed, with scattered equilibrium points. If any of these equilibrium points were to diverge, democracy in Thailand is sure to retreat or collapse unless it also realizes the modernization of society and culture in general necessary for the augmentation of the supply and demand equilibrium points.

Concluding Remarks

It seems as though Asian societies need a qualitative improvement in the way they try to catch up with WES so they can solidify democracy, as seen in the analysis of the process of democratization, its development and subsequent fall in Asia, based on the author's DS Theory. However, this process cannot be carried out in the short term. For that reason, the governments of NWS must take positive initiative

to expand and deepen the supply-demand equilibrium points. From this perspective, the process of the reversal of democratization in Thailand in the recent years based on the DS Theory is in order to investigate the cause of democracy's decline.

We have analyzed the democratization process of Thailand based on the DS Theory.

The main argument is that the outlook on the democracy in many NWS is bleak because of the few and frail equilibrium points of supply and demand factors, as seen in Asian countries where democracy has moved backwards such as Thailand and the Philippines. The same could also happen in WES and the USA, if people fail to make constant effort to maintain the equilibrium dynamically and develop it. Another observation is that, as in the case of Thailand, in order to stabilize the democratic process and to avoid its regression, it is imperative to overcome social imbalances, reform social and cultural environments, meaning to reform and modernize constantly society as a whole.

References

1. Larry D, Platter MF (2015) Democracy in Decline? Johns Hopkins University Press.
2. Hasegawa H (2015) Chiang Ching-kuo and Democratization of Taiwan.
3. (2016) Lee Teng-Hui and the democratization of Taiwan and pissing off of China in the 1990s.
4. Hasegawa H (2018) The Long-term Stagnation of the Japanese Economy and its lessons for the Asian countries.
5. Igarashi S (2014) East Asia and Democratization Theories in East Asia, Chiba University.
6. Törnquist O (2006) Assessing democracy from below: A framework and Indonesian pilot study. Journal of Democratization 13: 227-255.
7. (2016) A framework of Democratization.
8. Tamada Yoshihumi, Yellows and Reds in Thai Political History: Who, what and Where?
10. <http://asia.kanagawa-u.ac.jp/pdf/asia-review/vol02/paper1.pdf>