LBRT: Dictatorship is the best form of government

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The World's Worst Dictators

1. Hideki Tojo
   - Japan
   - 1941-1944
   - 5-6 million

2. Adolf Hitler
   - Germany
   - 1933-1945
   - 18-24 million

3. Mao Tse Tung
   - China
   - 1949-1976
   - 35-70 million

4. Joseph Stalin
   - Russia
   - 1924-1953
   - 10-20 million

5. Leopold II of Belgium
   - Congo Free State
   - 1885-1908
   - 5-10 million

6. Pol Pot
   - Cambodia
   - 1975-1979
   - 1.2-2 million

7. Ismail Enver Pasha
   - Turkey
   - 1913-1919
   - 1.5-2.5 million

8. Yakubu Gowon
   - Nigeria
   - 1966-1975
   - 1.1 million

9. Mengistu Haile Mariam
   - Ethiopia
   - 1974-1991
   - 1.5-2 million

10. Kim II-sung
    - North Korea
    - 1948-1994
    - 900,000-1.6 million

The Congo Free State was privately owned by King Leopold II, from 1865 to 1908, where he ran a colonial regime extracting natural resources. People who did not meet the production quotas faced mutilation and even execution.

The Great Leap Forward resulted in the biggest famine in history. Estimates of the dead range from 18-45 million. This is in conjunction with estimates of the dead from political repression.

The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) began as Igbo nationalists attempted to secede and form the independent state of Biafra.

The Kim regime presided over civil war, famine and terror campaigns against opponents. This included the suppression of the Etnian independence movement.

The Khmer Rouge came to power amidst US bombing and set about evacuating the cities, subjecting people to forced labour, famine and mass killings.

Dictatorship, form of government in which one person or a small group possesses absolute power without effective constitutional limitations. The term dictatorship comes from the Latin title dictator, which in the Roman Republic designated a temporary magistrate who was granted extraordinary powers in order to deal with state crises. Modern dictators, however, resemble ancient tyrants rather than ancient dictators. Ancient philosophers’ descriptions of the tyrannies of Greece and Sicily go far toward characterizing modern dictatorships. Dictators usually resort to force or fraud to gain despotic political power, which they maintain through the use of intimidation, terror, and the suppression of basic civil liberties. They may also employ techniques of mass propaganda in order to sustain their public support.

With the decline and disappearance in the 19th and 20th centuries of monarchies based on hereditary descent, dictatorship became one of the two chief forms of government in use by nations throughout the world, the other being constitutional democracy. Rule by dictators has taken several different forms. In Latin America in the 19th century, various dictators arose after effective central authority had collapsed in the new nations recently freed from Spanish colonial rule. These caudillos, or self-proclaimed leaders, usually led a private army and tried to establish control over a territory before marching upon a weak national government. Antonio López de Santa Anna in Mexico and Juan Manuel de Rosas in Argentina are examples of such leaders. (See personalismo.) Later 20th-century dictators in Latin America were different. They were national rather than provincial leaders and often were put in their position of power by nationalistic military officers. They usually allied themselves with a particular social class, and attempted either to maintain the interests of wealthy and privileged elites or to institute far-reaching left-wing social reforms.

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In the new states of Africa and Asia after World War II, dictators quickly established themselves on the ruins of constitutional arrangements inherited from the Western colonial powers that had proved unworkable in the absence of a strong middle class and in the face of local traditions of autocratic rule. In some such countries, elected presidents and prime ministers captured personal power by establishing one-party rule and suppressing the opposition, while in others the army seized power and established military dictatorships.

The communist and fascist dictatorships that arose in various technologically advanced countries in the first half of the 20th century were distinctively different from the authoritarian regimes of Latin America or the postcolonial dictatorships of Africa and Asia. Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler and the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin were the leading examples of such modern totalitarian dictatorships. The crucial elements of both were the identification
of the state with a single mass party and of the party with its charismatic leader, the use of an official ideology to legitimize and maintain the regime, the use of terror and propaganda to suppress dissent and stifle opposition, and the use of modern science and technology to control the economy and individual behaviour. Soviet-type communist dictatorships arose in central and eastern Europe, China, and other countries in the wake of World War II, though most of them (as well as the Soviet Union itself) had collapsed by the last decade of the 20th century.

During times of domestic or foreign crisis, even most constitutional governments have conferred emergency powers on the chief executive, and in some notable cases this provided the opportunity for duly elected leaders to overthrow democracy and rule dictatorially thereafter. The proclamation of emergency rule, for example, was the beginning of the dictatorships of Hitler in Germany, Benito Mussolini in Italy, Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, Józef Piłsudski in Poland, and António de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal. In other democracies, however, constitutional arrangements have survived quite lengthy periods of crisis, as in Great Britain and the United States during World War II, in which the use of extraordinary powers by the executive came to a halt with the end of the wartime emergency.

PRO & CON ARGUMENTS

PRO: Dictatorship is good for the economy

Countries run by dictators are able to implement policies more efficiently that are critical to their economic growth than democratic countries. During the reign of Hitler in Germany, unemployment rate declined and industrial production doubled.

PRO: Dictatorship establishes a strong government

Since there is no opposition and criticisms, all energies are directed in implementing laws and creating a platform that is pro-people and pro-government bringing prosperity and abundance to the country. Without elections, funds may be spent on more important services to the masses like healthcare and education.

PRO: Dictatorship lessens crime rate

Nations under the regime of a dictator has more severe penalties against criminals and have the power to impose martial law and curfew resulting to fear of being subjected to harsh punishment. Dictators have a tight rein on strict policies, enforcing discipline and order in society, restoring order in the streets by repressing political offenders and professional criminals.

CON: Dictatorship leads to abuse of power

Having total control over their sovereign makes dictators greedy and self-serving, some even amass great wealth at the expense of their citizens. Surrounding themselves with tight security personnel to ensure that they can do anything they please.
CON: Dictatorship leads to mass killings and torture

With one leader and a small group having total control, it is possible that people will go against the government resulting in mass killings of innocent people. With strict laws and no one allowed to contradict their actions, it is easier to kill and punish those they consider as enemies. As a result, people live in constant fear because they might be falsely accused of rebellion.

CON: Dictatorship does not guarantee continuing development

Development is not possible when there is no succession in the government. Since dictatorship relies heavily on one leader, there is no guarantee of stability and safety after the death of the ruler.
ARTICLE 1 – DEMOCRACY AND ASIAN DEVELOPMENT

17 September 2015

The Chinese authoritarian juggernaut is now wobbling forward, sideways and backwards. Could in the end democracy be the best political system for fostering Asian development, asks John West

The economic success of authoritarian regimes, like Singapore and China, and Korea and Taiwan before democratization, has led many observers to argue that authoritarian capitalism may be the most efficient system for fostering Asian development and modernization. The contrast with chaotic democracies like India or the Philippines, or even deeply polarized America, has naive appeal.

But more recently the Chinese behemoth has been stumbling, while incredible and democratic India has rediscovered some dynamism, and is now growing faster than China. And looking back, the spectacular rise of Japan from the ashes of World War 2 shows that democracy (albeit imperfect) and successful development can go hand-in-hand.

Let’s examine some of the many issues involved.

Good and bad dictators

It is true that some authoritarian regimes like Singapore and China have had “good dictators” who have been able to rush their countries up the development ladder by enlightened leadership and effectively investing in human and physical capital. But a key element of their leadership has also been expanding economic freedom, for trade, investment, entrepreneurship and tourism. They are less authoritarian than they are often portrayed.

It is equally true that Asia and other regions have had just as many, if not
more, “bad dictators” like North Korea's Kim family or the Philippines' former President Marcos. Bad dictators can inflict immense damage on their economies and societies. It is also usually very difficult to get rid of them. While the “People Power” revolution of the Philippines brought down the Marcos regime, our North Korean friends have been suffering for over six decades from the Kim family dictatorship.

For its part, China has not always had good dictators. Mao Zedong did make important achievements, like reestablishing the territorial integrity of China, land reform and some liberation for women. But as the Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward testify, Mao was most certainly a very bad dictator who inflicted massive suffering on the Chinese people.

It is not yet clear whether President Xi Jinping, as he centralizes power more than any president since Mao, will ultimately be a good or bad dictator. China’s militarization and assertive behavior under Xi’s leadership may lead to unfortunate consequences for the Chinese people if it results in conflict with their neighbors. And it is also not clear that he will be brave enough to implement the widespread market-oriented reforms that the Chinese economy so desperately needs.

Social contracts

In Singapore and China, the authorities now attempt to govern on the basis of a “social contract”, rather than pure authoritarianism. The deal has been that they can retain their virtual one-party systems thanks to their competence in delivering economic growth and their ability to respond to the concerns of the citizens (“performance legitimacy”).

But even a mutually-beneficial social contract does not always seem to be enough. Despite their mythological attachment to Confucianism, educated and middle class Asians seem to want freedom. This can be seen in the growing migration of middle class Asians to countries like the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, along with their massive investment in real estate in these same countries. Countries like China and Malaysia are suffering from massive illicit financial outflows -- more than $1 trillion over the past decade for China -- a sure sign of lack of confidence in their regimes. And as we write,
capital is flooding out of China.

As one justification for a social contract fades, like the recent weakening in the Chinese economy, authoritarian regimes look for other justifications, like nationalism. Authoritarian regimes must convince their populations to support them. So the Chinese government has been ramping up its nationalist rhetoric and propaganda, and asserting itself in its relations with its neighbors.

In a democratic system with freedom of the press and a well-developed civil society, citizens can openly debate the pros and cons of tricks like hyper-nationalism. Governing parties can be replaced in elections, in the same way that the Republicans were ejected from the White House after the failure of George W. Bush. But this is not possible in authoritarian systems. Social and political dissent, of which there is much in China, only leads to more repression.

Singapore case

The good, and relatively soft, dictatorship of Singapore has Asia's leading economy in terms of GDP per capita, and has a remarkably strong and effective state. It has the world's second best infrastructure, and third best institutions, according to the World Economic Forum. It also ranks 9th in the world for rule of law, according to the World Justice Project.

Indeed, Singapore may be the world's most successful example of authoritarian capitalism. Its GDP per capita of over $80,000 is among the highest in the world, and is more than 50% higher than the US. Its youth are among the world's very best educated, according to the OECD.

In short, Singapore's citizens should have every reason to be happy with their lot. The social contract of the city-state should be ironclad!

Nevertheless, Singapore's government must still go to great lengths to retain its grip on power. Extreme malapportionment and gerrymandering are employed to ensure the dominance of the ruling People's Action Party (a creation of Lee Kuan Yew). As Freedom House has also observed, campaigns and activities of opposition political parties "are constrained by a ban on
political films and television programs, the threat of defamation suits, strict regulations on political associations, and the PAP’s influence on the media and the courts”.

More generally, political and civil rights are limited, especially freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association. Television programs, music, books and magazines can be censored. Nearly all media outlets, Internet service providers and cable television services are owned or controlled by the state.

Not surprisingly, Singapore’s elections have always been won by the PAP. But to its great displeasure, the PAP's share of the national vote fell from over 75% in 2001 to barely 60% in 2011. Singapore's brilliant technocrats, who had engineered the Singaporean miracle, began to stumble and seemed aloof and out of touch with their “client population”. Public concerns included the dramatic increase in immigration, a straining infrastructure, housing shortages, yawning inequality, and rising poverty.

In a sign that the “House of Singapore” was nervous, the government called a snap election in September 2015, one year ahead of schedule, and with only nine days for campaigning. It was clearly seeking to exploit the wave of patriotism evident in the mourning of the passing of Lee Kwan Yew six months earlier (“the LKY effect”), and the extravagant celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Singapore’s independence just one month before.

The government was also seeking to “cash-in” on its policies to respond to popular concerns, like restricting migration and increasing social benefits. It may also have be trying to preempt a loss of public support from the prospective slowing in the Chinese and global economy, on which Singapore is highly dependent.

The government’s strategy was very successful, as the PAP won a resounding victory, with some 70% of the popular vote. Very few Singaporeans believe that the main opposition party, the Workers’ Party, is capable of effectively governing. One key part of the PAP's success has been to stunt local political development.

Despite the PAP’s impressive comeback, the next phase in Singapore’s
political development could be problematic. The PAP’s current leader, Lee Hsien Loong, the son of Lee Kuan Yew, who has led the country since 2004, and will retire in the coming years, and there is no obvious replacement. The government’s rising star, and Deputy Prime Minister is Tharman Shanmugaratnam. But he does not come from dominant Chinese ethnic group, he is of Sri Lankan Tamil ancestry.

It is thus easy to see a scenario with democratization pressures building up in the coming years. The moment may be arriving for a democratic breakthrough. History, like that of Spain under Franco, shows that the passing of heroic leaders can be the moment for a decisive move towards democracy. No-one can replace people like Franco or Lee Kwan Yew.

This could be a testing time for Singapore’s political elites. They would be wise to open up their repressive system, and allow a real democracy to flourish, as Korea and Taiwan did. They would likely continue to win elections, at least for many years. Resisting democratization can be messy and very costly. The unravelling of the once-successful Malaysia is an example to be avoided.

**Dysfunctional democracies**

Many commentators who support authoritarian regimes point to the relative failure of democracies like India, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Indonesia. But a binary distinction between democracy and dictatorship is too simplistic.

In the same way that there can be good and bad dictators, there can also be good and dysfunctional democracies. And these four cases, and many others are very dysfunctional democracies. They may conduct elections. But traditional elites dominate politics, capture the state, and engage in vote-buying, intimidation and even assassination. They are also weak states which are riddled with corruption, poor rule of law, and ineffectual bureaucracies.

Moreover, they have deep social divisions between rich elites and poor people, with minimal middle classes. And beyond their elites, the level of education is very low. It is very difficult to have a well-functioning democracy without a well-educated middle class which can exert pressure to improve the
quality of governance. Human capital is the bedrock for lasting democracy, as Harvard’s Edward Glaeser has argued. History shows that such dysfunctional democracies can easily revert to authoritarian regimes, as the Philippines did under President Marcos, when elites take control of the state.

But Asia’s dysfunctional democracies are not static. They are also very capable of improving governance. For example, in the early 1990s, India undertook substantial reforms to improve its governance, which led to a period of very strong growth. And there is hope that India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will initiate reforms that will ignite the national economy, as he did so successfully in the state of Gujarat. More recently, under President Benigno Aquino, the Philippines has made major efforts to improve its governance, with very positive results for economic growth. Over time dysfunctional democracies have the potential to become good democracies.

Why democracy matters

There are many reasons why democracy matters for Asian development, despite the success of authoritarian regimes like China and Singapore.

Continued economic development over time requires a process of creative destruction whereby new firms with new ideas and technologies can take a leading role in the economy, as firms that were successful in the past, but are no longer competitive, fade in importance or go bankrupt, as Daron Acemoglu from Massachusetts Institute of Technology has argued. But creative destruction can be inhibited in authoritarian systems where there are close links between established business and political powers, such as in China where state-owned enterprises and banks still play an important role in the economy. Open democratic societies are less likely to practice debilitating cronyism than authoritarian systems. In short, a level playing field is necessary to foster creative destruction, this is much more likely under an open democratic system.

In a similar vein, open democratic societies are more conducive to creativity and innovation, which are the principal drivers of all mature economies. As Michael Schuman has argued, “In order to be innovative, you need full access to information, a confidence to speak your mind and a willingness to take
risks. Fear caused by political control doesn’t foster an atmosphere conducive to free thinking.” Democratization in Korea has played a key role in enabling it to become a more innovative nation.

People like Lady Gaga, Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs would find life difficult in China, as does Chinese artist Ai Weiwei who has spent long period of time under house arrest for his politically inspired art. For China to realize its development potential, and avoid the middle income trap, it will be essential to move to an open democratic system. In the case of Singapore, the government is now trying actively to promote creativity and innovation -- when a more appropriate approach would be to allow greater freedom, dissent and diversity. Creativity cannot be politically manufactured.

Maintaining authoritarian regimes is also very, very costly. For example, social repression is very widespread in China, with typical targets being ethnic minorities like the Uighurs and Tibetans, journalists, academics and artists. The upshot is that China spends more money on internal security than its military. Despite its friendly veneer, Singapore also invests vast resources controlling its society. Another wasteful cost is that of media and Internet censorship which is widespread in Asia, along with government-owned and/or controlled media.

Non-democratic political systems are also prone to unstable leadership and regime transitions, which can be very destabilizing. In the past, this was a great problem in China. The country may have partly solved this issue by limiting presidents to two five year terms. But even today, it is still a problem in China, where President Xi Jinping feels the need to eliminate his opposition figures in order to “consolidate power” -- a process which has been underway for two years, with no immediate end in sight. This suggests that authoritarian regimes like China are fundamentally more fragile than they might appear. In contrast, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a very smooth transition to power in India thanks to the country’s democratic institutions.

Perhaps the most important reason why democracy matters is that given a choice, most Asians will go for democracy, especially the younger generation. That’s what Asians want, it becomes part of the intangible aspirations of normal citizens. As economic development enables people’s basic needs to be satisfied, they want other things in life, like the freedom to choose one’s
government, high quality governance, freedom of expression and assembly, and access to information. They are less likely to tolerate the abuses to property rights and human rights that are part and parcel of the forceful and efficient decision making of authoritarian regimes.

The many naysayers, like members of Asia’s elite, are wrong when they argue that Asians, and especially Chinese, do not aspire to democracy. They need only look at today’s cases of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Thailand to see how much Asians want democracy. They are willing to protest and fight for democracy. Other cases in point are China’s Tiananmen Square incident, the Philippines People’s Power movements, Korea’s trade union and student protesters, and even Japan’s mothers’ movement against nuclear power. And a simple conversation with a poor person in the street in India, will reveal how proud Indians feel about their democracy, especially when compared with the case of China.

The punch-line

The punch-line is that good governance, based on effective leadership, a strong state, rule of law and citizen participation, is the key to economic success. But history shows that neither democratic nor authoritarian regimes are automatic guarantors of good governance.

Authoritarian regimes like Singapore and China can implement good governance, as can democracies like Japan. Both authoritarian regimes and dysfunctional democracies can produce poor governance. But as India and the Philippines have shown, dysfunctional democracies are also capable of improving their governance, even if they are coming late to the party.

But as economies climb the development ladder, and innovation and creative destruction become key drivers of development, open democratic societies are essential — as Singapore and China are finding out now.

By: John West
Source: http://asiancenturyinstitute.com/politics/957-democracy-and-asian-development
ARTICLE 2 – How Singapore married dictatorship with a market economy

16 July 2015

It has been half a century since Singapore achieved full independence. In that time, a strong model of economic development has transformed the fortunes of the republic and its people.

In an emotional televised press conference in August 1965, Lee Kuan Yew explained to the Singapore public that their voluntary union with Malaysia had come to end. The leader of the new, tiny city-state, had assembled journalists and television crews in order to inform the citizens of the new Singaporean republic that they would be on their own, no longer part of a political union with their much larger neighbour to the north. “For me it is a moment of anguish because all my life... you see, the whole of my adult life... I have believed in [the] merger and the unity of these two territories”, said Lee, trying to hold back his tears. “You know that we, as a people, are connected by geography, economics, by ties of kinship.”

Lee was devastated by the end of the short-lived union. During his time studying in both London and Cambridge, and living in Singapore under Japanese occupation during the Second World War, he became convinced of the need for self-governance in Southeast Asia. After the war came to a close, he hoped to end British rule, creating a political union between Malaysia and his native Singapore.

The fledging British Empire finally gave way and granted Singapore self-governance in 1959. The People’s Action Party (PAP) was voted to power and Lee, the party’s leader, became prime minister of the island. After a referendum in 1962, and so many years, Lee’s vision came true: in 1963 it was agreed that Singapore would be admitted to a recently independent
Malaysian Federation ruled by Tunku Abdul Rahman. Yet only two short years later, Lee’s lifework was it tatters. After race riots broke out in 1964 between the island’s two minority groups, Malays and ethnic Chinese, relations with Malaysia soured. Malaysia’s Government felt that the crisis was not worth the effort, and accused Singapore’s government of disloyalty, declaring that all ties would be cut between the two nations. Singapore was expelled from the union. The tiny, impoverished city-state, racked by racial strife, was now alone, no longer under the tutelage of an empire or a member of a union. Singapore was to become its own fully independent nation-state.

Despite the divorce being received with such devastation by Lee and other like-minded Singaporeans, the separation was a blessing in disguise. Although no one could have imagined it at the time, the small poverty-stricken nation would go on to be one of the most prosperous in the world – or from swamps to skyscrapers, as it is sometimes said. In 1960, an economist investigating the island’s economic viability referred to it as a poor little market in a dark corner of Asia. At the time of independence Singapore’s GDP per capita stood at just $512. Now it has the eight largest GDP per capita in the world (see Fig. 1), and is consistently ranked among the top echelon of countries with the highest density of millionaires relative to population (see Fig. 2).
Lee, the man who presided over this transformation, would also quietly go on to be one of the most influential leaders of the 20th century, with many seeing his legacy reaching far into the 21st. In his tenure, he had forged a state that combined both an authoritarian state and free market. “To whom will monuments be built a century from now?” writes Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek in *The Financial Times*. “Among them, perhaps, will be Lee Kuan Yew. He will be remembered not only as the first prime minister of Singapore, but also as the creator of authoritarian capitalism, an ideology set to shape the next century much as democracy shaped the last.”

**Capitalism and democracy**

After the Second World War many American thinkers argued that economic development engendered democratic and liberal political values known as ‘modernisation theory’. Sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, in his influential
1959 paper *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy*, argued that as countries pursued economic development, becoming richer, they tended towards democracy: “All the various aspects of economic development – industrialisation, urbanisation, wealth and education – are so closely interrelated as to form one major factor which has the political correlate of democracy.”

These optimistic theories were anchored to a general hope that as countries emerging from colonialism advanced in the economic sphere, they too would mirror the democratic states of the Western world in the political sphere.

The 1970s saw the global spread of communism and numerous military coups across the world. Yet the decade also saw the beginning of what Samuel P Huntington termed the third-wave of democratisation. Among other reasons, Huntington argued in *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century* that the fruits of economic modernisation – education, urbanisation, the growth of a middle class – saw a wave of democracy spread across the world.

Portugal’s Carnation Revolution ended decades of dictatorship in 1974, which as soon followed by the fall of the fascist dictatorship in Spain after Francisco Franco’s death and then the end of the Regime of the Colonels in Greece. The 1980s saw Latin America’s infamous military dictatorships eventually cede power to popular rule.

Towards the end of the 1980s Taiwan, South Korea and the Philippines, in the face of popular protests, dumped theirs. Also across Africa, throughout the 1990s democracy slowly began to reappear across a continent once dominated by military regimes and Communist dictatorships. Likewise, Eastern Europe rid itself of its corrupt Communist regimes in 1989, adopting both capitalism and democracy as if the two were one and the same.
For many, this was evidence of not only the superiority and desirability of both democracy and capitalism, but its inevitability. Within this spread of democracy and capitalism Francis Fukuyama saw the end of history. In his book *The End of History and the Last Man* he argued that history – if understood as a constant struggle by humans to find the best system under which to live – was over, as any way of economic and political life other than democratic capitalism was no longer conceivable. Democracy and capitalism had proven to be the most suited way for humans to live together in peace and prosperity. As Fukuyama wrote in the early 1990s, “There is now no ideology with pretensions to universality that is in a position to challenge liberal democracy, no universal principle of legitimacy other than the sovereignty of the people.”

Yet quietly in the background, the small island state of Singapore failed to budge. Under the rule of Lee, it refused to cede any ground to democracy while its fellow Asian Tiger economies were democratising. Singapore had modernised, developed economically, yet its authoritarian rule went unchallenged. As Milton Friedman observed in the 1990s, as much of the world succumbed to democratic rule, Singapore demonstrated that, “it is possible to combine a free private market economic system with a dictatorial political system”. Singapore stood in opposition to the wave of democratisation.

**Working against the odds**
Faced with few natural resources, internal ethnic strife, widespread poverty, a small domestic market (after the break with Malaysia), no meaningful armed forces and an irredentist Indonesia to its south, the prospect of the newly independent Singapore surviving in 1965 seemed slim. Survival depended upon economic development: “We had to create a new kind of economy, try new methods and schemes never tried before anywhere else in the world, because there was no other country like Singapore”, wrote Lee in his book *From Third World to First*. 
In the 1960s, many countries were emerging from colonial rule. Under the influence of ‘dependence theory’ economics, many leaders in these countries saw economic investment from the West as a form of neo-colonialism that would result in perpetual state of underdevelopment. The new leaders of Singapore saw things differently. They believed that economic development would require collaboration with their former colonisers and the Western world in general. The island realised that its best route to economic development was to attract investment from Japanese, American and European manufacturers.
This attempt to turn Singapore’s economy into an export-orientated manufacturing base for international capital came at the right time. Professor Garry Rodan of Murdoch University tells World Finance that this strategy “was at a time when new international divisions of labour were being developed by multinational corporations to take advantage of different labour and production costs in manufacturing”.

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<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<td>Oman</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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Source: The Boston Consulting Group

Notes: Data from 2013
In 1968 Singapore’s Economic Development Board announced that it had successfully secured investment from Texas Instruments to open a manufacturing base in the country. Soon a whole host of other Western firms were flocking to the area: National Semiconductors, Hewlett-Packard, General Electric and Philips. By the 1980s Singapore had established itself as a major exporter of electronic goods.

**Huge investment**

According to Rodan, Singapore’s success in attracting investment relied upon: “Huge investments in specialised physical infrastructure, generous tax incentives to attract capital, politically docile labour, and efficient bureaucratic and administrative regimes combined to make this strategy hugely successful in generating economic growth and employment.”

Investment from multinationals and an accommodating geography to maintain the city-state as a trading post required investment in infrastructure. The government accessed the funds to this infrastructure, not through international borrowing or printing money, but through using government imposed savings. The state set up the Central Provident Fund (CPF). Citizens were expected to pay money into the CPF as a form of social security. However, contrary to schemes such as National Insurance in the UK or Social Security in the US, the CPF payouts upon retirement were proportional to what was paid in.

This incentivised Singaporeans to save. According to WG Huff in his essay *What is the Singapore Model of Economic Development?*, in 1960 Singapore had a savings ratio of 10 percent. This rose to 29 percent in 1970, to a further 40 percent in the 1980s. This gave the state a large reserve of savings to draw upon to fund public infrastructure projects conducive to attracting international investment. This method of raising funds allowed Singapore to avoid the crowding out phenomena through borrowing, according to Huff. These funds were also used in raising the skill of its workers.
and teaching them English, further attracting foreign investment, and to create Singapore’s world-renowned education system, which still receives strong government investment (see Fig. 3). The savings ratio also remains at a high level today (see Fig. 4).

While the basic principles of a free market economy were adhered to, the state never shied away from state planning or ownership where it deemed it important. State enterprises played a large role in the economy until privatisations in the 1980s. Economic planning was pursued, although often in line with and taking into account world economic trends rather than being rigid production plans such as in the Soviet and Soviet-inspired economies.
This new model was one in which the state was active, yet the philosophy of the welfare state was spurned. International investment was encouraged and private property respected, while the labour force was disciplined and political dissent punished. Red tape and business regulation was relaxed, while the population was regimented through micromanaging laws.
**An iron fist in a velvet glove**

The economic ends of these policies were achieved through much less appealing political means. The smooth running of Singapore’s economic policies relied upon a high degree of state and economic cooperation, achieved through the curtailment of Singaporean democratic life and civil society.

While the PAP had ascended to power democratically, it used its newfound powers to reduce any political opposition. Beginning in 1963 political rivals of the Socialist Front – a left wing split from the PAP – began to be arrested through the use of the Internal Security Act. Likewise, the Societies Act, a law left by the previous British authorities was strengthened and amended in 1967 to ban any organisation that was not registered as a political group to engage in political activities.

“This was in response to a spate of student activism and represented a killer blow for what was left of civil society. It enforced a very narrow avenue for political expression – electoral politics – where an array of administrative and legislative obstacles curtailed open competition with the PAP anyway”, says Rodan.

Through political repression, Lee was able to create a climate of political stability. Independent trade unions were emasculated, preventing strikes and work stoppages. By the 1970s strikes were almost unheard of. Wages were also kept low through the use of state-sponsored trade unions and the National Wages Council. This helped to foster a friendly climate for business.

With no opposition the PAP was able to integrate itself with the state apparatus. According to Rodan, through a “virtual merger between the PAP and the state through strategic appointments in public bureaucracies” the PAP was able to perpetuate its rule. The PAP was able to block the use of any independent electoral commission, allowing it to engage in electoral gerrymandering as well as using the states administration to discriminate
against any PAP critics. With party and state integrated, Singapore was able to seamlessly put into action their economic development plans.

**Model for growth**
Emerging from years of self and internationally imposed isolation, China’s new leader Deng Xiaoping made a regional tour in 1978, visiting Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. According to Lee, what Deng witnessed changed China’s economic future. Talking to Spiegel in 2005 Lee recalled, “I think that visit shocked him because he expected three backward cities. Instead he saw three modern cities and he knew that communism – the politics of the iron rice bowl – did not work. So, at the end of December, he announced his open door policy. He started free trade zones and from there, they extended it and extended it.” The model crafted by Singapore is now widely seen as offering inspiration for China’s Market-Leninism – a mixture of a market economy with state intervention alongside a political dictatorship.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the ideals of state planning and socialism were discredited, even among Western Europe’s democratic socialist parties. Now, with the world – for the most part – accepting capitalism, some see the major global political rivalry of the 21st century being over how best to manage capitalism, with the contenders on one side following Singapore’s authoritarian political model pitted against liberal democracies.
In an interview with the *New Statesman* Zizek said: “Something genuinely new is emerging today in the guise of what are ridiculously called ‘Asian values’, authoritarian capitalism. A capitalism which, we can see now, is doing better in the crisis than the West. A capitalism that is more dynamic and efficient than our Western, liberal capitalism, but precisely as such functions perfectly with an authoritarian state. My pessimism is that this is the future.” Similarly Azar Gat, Professor Azar Gat of Tel Aviv University talks of countries around the world following the authoritarian market models of China and Russia, in an essay entitled *The Return of the Authoritarian Powers*.

Singapore was able to create a prosperous society for its citizens. But this road to economic development came at a price. The ruling party of Singapore allowed little room for political dissent and civil society, challenging the
optimistic assumption that prosperity and democracy are self-reinforcing. Lee defended this trade off of democratic rights for riches until the end of his life, insisting that the former would have precluded the latter. This is the international legacy of Singapore: the creation of a viable model that weds dictatorship with a market economy.

By: Tom Bailey
1) People are afraid of autocratic governments because in many cases it subdues the will of the majority. Can dictatorships be a better solution in some cases than seeking a western democratic solution?

Before anything else, we need to clarify what is meant by “dictatorship.” The ancient model of dictatorship involved assigning extraordinary powers to a leader during a crisis: the powers were derived from, for example, a republic, and were intended to be used to restore order. This was the model familiar to the Founders in the U.S., when they granted George Washington extraordinary powers during the crisis of the Revolutionary War.

A second model is the one that Washington himself resisted: a dictator, usually from the military, who holds on to his powers after a crisis—perhaps invoking a permanent crisis as justification.

To these two kinds of dictatorships should be added a third: a dictatorship that emerges out of a revolution, when existing institutions are not yet in place. Revolutionary dictatorships may also be temporary—or permanent. Europe has known all of these kinds of dictatorship over the past hundred years.

The questions that follow assume that “dictatorship” and “democracy” are clearly distinguished; that is possible only if we ignore the transitional dictatorships.
2) Do some countries need dictatorships to run more efficiently or should all be run via democratically?

We need to be clear: both democracies and dictatorships can be singularly inefficient—and either can function well over a long period of time (depending on how “well” is defined). The argument of those calling for some form of dictatorship, usually on the right at present, is directed against the inefficiencies of democracy. And indeed, democracies in countries with severe disagreements can be not just inefficient, but dysfunctional. Where was the ground for compromise in Germany before 1933? Where in Spain before 1936? Italy, too, was divided before Mussolini came to power.

But to bemoan division—”pluralism” in the terms of mid-century authoritarian thought—is one thing, to conceive of a dictatorship as the solution to pluralism another. Dictatorship does not solve the real divisions that lead to civil strife, it suppresses them. But the divisions remain—and interests continue to express themselves, but in complicated and opaque ways. Powerful interests seek the back channels to power, without having to fear exposure. The Marxist-Leninist claim that the Party could stand above mere interests and rule in the interest of some general will doesn’t accord with the ferocious infighting for influence, or the willingness to provide subventions for one project over another. Dictatorship does not solve pluralism.

Nor does it necessarily provide for peace. The less opinions can be expressed, the less real experience there is in democracy—and the worse the threat to peace over the long run. This is one important strand of the tragic story of the Arab Spring. In China, one wonders: on the one hand, the Party seems to have handled a transition to a more dynamic economy and a more open society with care and without any explosions: but will the result be a greater explosion down the line?

Now, let’s step back for a moment and think about the transitional forms of dictatorship. 1918-1919 in Germany: the old regime crumbles, the Social
Democrats are thrust into power, and they know that they are essentially operating via dictatorship.

Their aims are three:

a) to end the war,

b) to maintain domestic peace,

c) to enact a handful of basic social changes,

d) to hold elections of a new national assembly that can draft a democratic constitution.

There are many historians who would disagree with me on this, but I consider their project a reasonable one—they could have gone farther with their dictatorial powers, but they instead bet on democratic representation. Why? In part on principle, in part to avoid an all out civil war.

Here is a second example, with which I do not agree, coming from the late historian Henry A. Turner: in 1932, Germany was falling apart at the seams, and the Nazis were threatening to come to power. Under these conditions a military dictatorship made sense. Turner is relying in part on hindsight to make his argument: what could have been worse than Nazism? He is also possibly putting too much faith in the military leadership, which was hardly a peace-loving group. Under such extraordinary conditions, when a democracy is self-destructing, of course, his argument has some merit. Even here, though, I wonder whether the solution would be a real solution.

But by “dictatorship” I think that you mean a specific form of government: lasting military rule by an individual or junta. Setting democracy and dictatorship up against each other ignored the fact that 150 years ago, democratic republics were a rarity (and not always so “democratic” in our sense). Other alternatives were possible, from constitutional governments
based on unequal representation to monarchies to empires with special representative bodies for different groups. It would be interesting to reexamine these 19th century solutions again, instead of staying trapped within a crude model of dictatorship vs. democracy.

3) Dictatorships are regarded as somehow negative for most people. What is the biggest public misconception regarding dictatorships?

The biggest misconception is that dictatorship as an institution is alien to our own system: see, again, George Washington. There are different kinds of dictatorships over history—and in some cases, e.g. the US South during Jim Crow, local democracy could take on quite dictatorial forms.

4) Democracy allows all voters from different social classes and backgrounds to elect leaders. If the majority of the voters has no idea about national or international policies, and yet have the rights to cast votes, isn’t that equally harmful for a nation than an autocratic run state?

Democracies can work in many ways. Direct democracy, for example, might well be associated with dictatorial actions: the people vote to affirm the extraordinary powers of Napoleon, for example, on the basis of limited information.

Representative democracy is different: voters do not vote with full knowledge of policies and situations, but vote for a person who articulates these for the people—and has to prove his or her ability to understand the policies and situations in practice. Results matter: a disaster in foreign policy may be the kiss of death for a President, a new social policy that has unintended consequences may lead to the decline of a political party.
Once we are clear that at issue is not full knowledge of policies and situations, but a kind of supervisory, control function over those who exercise power in our name, ignorance becomes less of an issue.

And let’s turn back to the model of lasting authoritarian rule: in that case, a single person or group makes major decisions affecting foreign policy, political organization, social policy, culture, environment, etc., etc. Why should we assume that said individual or group has any better insight into policies and situations—especially in the complex world that we live in today? The problem of ignorance is not simply one that pertains to democracies.

Some who support authoritarian rule think that dictators will seek out the best advisers. That is also an odd assumption: a decision on who is the best adviser is a decision that itself requires extensive knowledge of what the adviser is advising about—where does the dictator gain this knowledge? Where does the dictator gain a sense of which issues are more important for the country?

But back to the original question. The voice of the People is not infallible, especially if “It” is given a yes/no vote in a referendum. Neither is the voice of the Leader. Where power originates may not be the most important question. How power originates, how discussion takes place, how interests clash, in other words the form of politics, is much more important than the question of “origins,” of “sovereignty.”

5) Just because a country is run by a pseudo-dictator, or a dictator is that almost always mean it’s a totalitarian state?

I have already mentioned several examples—George Washington, the Social Democrats in Germany—that show that dictatorships need not aim at total, lasting control.
But if we define dictatorship as a lasting form, then I have a different answer. The clear distinction between dictatorship and totalitarianism is not clear to me, and “totalitarianism” as a term has come under a lot of fire for concealing more than it reveals. In fact, modern dictatorships, with the broad range of techniques for rule at their fingertips, tend to extend their control over society and culture; they tend to be, in this sense, “totalitarian.”

Furthermore, the dictator is at the whim of special interests and personal advisers, who will call for specific kinds of interventions. The tendency of dictatorships in the modern world is toward more “total” in the sense of all-encompassing forms.

6) In your opinion what has been the most catastrophic dictatorship to rule Europe? And what has been the most successful?

German National Socialism clearly had the most awful effect on Europe, with tens of millions killed, economies destroyed, political life wrecked, in some cases for generations. The dictatorship of the four powers occupying Germany in 1945 dismantled that dictatorship and created the foundations for a peaceful central Europe for the next seventy years. That’s clearly a success story, though the means for reaching that success differed in East and West.

7) Dictatorships tend to rely on the military to achieve a successful putsch when its feels threatened by the government. It seems as if the military has a separate agenda than the ruling government and the people. Why do dictatorships depend so heavily on the military? Most democratic forms of government fear giving the military any power relating official verdicts and rely exclusively on parliament (legislature), the executive and judicial branch to make decisions, in your opinion could that backfire at one point in time?
Napoleon Bonaparte represents, in a way, the first modern dictator: operating with a popular base, rejecting a return to the old regime. And most important, he used his connection to the army as a way to claim to represent the nation as a whole. This is exactly what has happened time and time again: the army claims to be a direct representation of the people, united against an external enemy.

That’s an assertion with an extraordinarily strong symbolic value: the army is not a part of the nation, it is the nation. And it’s armed. There is no question that such an argument can be mustered against a democracy that is divided into parties; there is no question, however, that rule by the military means rule by an institution based on hierarchy rather than democracy, decision-making from above rather than responsibility through representatives and public opinion below. That is also why the U.S. Founders were so concerned about keeping the military under civilian control, as were the great theorists of (inegalitarian) liberalism in Europe like Benjamin Constant.

It is worth noting, however, that neither Hitler nor Mussolini, neither Lenin nor Stalin nor most of their successors in Eastern Europe (Tito excluded), were from the military. In all of these cases, the dictatorship made use of the military, but resolutely kept the military under civilian—albeit dictatorial—control. Among these dictators, as among democrats, there was a well founded fear of the potential political power of the military.

8) Spain represents an interesting political paradox. Spain using democracy voted for the Popular Front party to combat CEDA (Spanish conservative movement), right before the civil war which consisted of an alliance of UGT, the socialist party) the CNT-FAI Anarcho-Syndicate, the POUM a Marxist Party and the Communist party that swept during elections. The Spanish Generals overseeing the problematic results rebelled against the new system in what turned out to be a brutal civil war. Given the political
circumstances, General Francisco Franco won the war and executed all his enemies. The dilemma is that Spain during Franco’s reign made Spain financially one of the most prosperous countries in the world, a growth never to be replicated again in that country. If Franco would have not intervened in the Civil War, would Spain ended like the Soviet Stalin or in total anarchy? Is it safe to conclude, Franco’s dictatorship was justified to oppose democracy by preventing a greater evil?

I take issue with your account of Spanish economic history. Spain was in terrible shape for two decades after the end of the Civil War, and only began to recover in the early 1960s, when Franco’s government began to accept the loss of power associated with joining international economic organizations (OECD, IMF, World Bank), the limits on violence associated with developing international tourism, and the importance of expert advice.

Yes, the growth rates in the decade up to 1974 were high, but that reflects a pretty low starting point, related not only to the damage of the Civil War, but also—maybe primarily—to an autarkic economic policy, a bloated and inefficient government, and monopoly.

After the oil crisis (not the fault of democracy!) and the messy transition to democracy, of course, the economy was hardly strong. Only in the 1980s did a government develop—within a democracy, with broad, open discussion—a concerted plan for economic development.

And it paid off. Even after the recent years of turmoil, Spain’s economy is at a qualitatively different level than it was under Franco, with a far more careful and systematic set of economic policies. So I don’t buy the economic argument.
For those who want to pursue it further, a better example might be Fascist Italy or more recently South Korea. In both cases, the arguments about a “developmental dictatorship” are, however, anything but uncontested.

There is no question that Spain was a mess in 1939. But Franco was part of that mess. Any bloody victor in a civil war can point to the relative peace that follows as a success. The National Catholic ideology made a point of playing up anti-Communism, of pointing out all that went wrong in the Soviet Union, but what would have happened had the left won, with all of its different factions, is not clear to me.

– Unlike Franco, Adolf Hitler used democracy as a tool for his sweeping election. Hitler resembled the attributes of a dictator. Germany was recovering from WW1, and the previous government had poorly managed Germany. Unlike the former councilor, Hitler ended unemployment right away. Despite Hitler’s delusional expansionist dogmas, his national policies succeeded with incredible effectiveness. He even made Germany a safer place. Was Germany an example of how democracy and dictatorship type leaders can work together for a greater national good?

Absolutely not. Let’s take the different parts of the questions separately.

First, Hitler did not win the election. His party was the biggest, but it took machinations among the old elite leading the country to bring him in—then he took over in a series of moves. This is an important moment, an example of how a populist politician uninterested in democracy can use democratic forms to destroy the institution, but one should not cast Hitler as a democratically elected leader.

Second, the Weimar era governments actually did a reasonably good job in recovering from the huge losses of the war. What they couldn’t recover from
was the impact of the burst bubble in the United States, which broke the flow of capital and the economic connections upon which the Weimar Republic's economy rested. The crisis after 1930 was a difficult one: not every crisis, however, is the fault of a regime, whether dictatorship or democracy (see the oil crisis in Franco’s last years!!!).

Third, Hitler didn’t end unemployment. His party had little in the way of actual economic policy. He was able to find a bunch of plans already developed and put them in place—and to profit from an upswing that had already begun. The myth that Hitler somehow saved the German economy needs to die. There is much more on this issue in Adam Tooze’s book, The Wages of Destruction.

But most important: how can one say that Hitler made Germany a safer place? For whom? For leftists or other political enemies? For defenders of free speech and basic rights? For Jews or Gypsies? For gays or the mentally disabled? Immediately after he took power, concentration camps developed across the country, camps where prisoners were not protected by the law, where they could be beaten to death with impunity. The story of the Nazi regime is the story of increasing rather than decreasing legal insecurity, and increasing rather than decreasing arbitrary violence against regime enemies. Unless one is willing to agree with Hitler that all the groups he hated were not part of the nation, there is no way to say that his regime contributed to the “greater national good.”

9) The United States is tried to set western standards in Iraq, removed Saddam Hussein who wheeled a tight authoritarian grip over Kurds, Sabians, Shias, Sunnies, Yaziris, Christians, and other ethnic and religious tribes. After the removal of Saddam Hussein, the country emerged into total sectarian and tribal chaos, proving a complete disaster for democracies sake, leading to what is now the Islamic State. Do you believe Saddam’s tyrannical reign proved more effective than western democracy?
The story here is also more complicated. Many of these groups had suffered tremendously under Saddam’s tyranny; it is no surprise that violence broke out afterward Saddam’s fall. Democracy is not at fault in this case; abstract forms like democracy and dictatorship cannot describe well the specific, concrete events that lead to chaos and bloodshed.

Deeper, though: in what sense was Saddam more “effective”? In maintaining order? Maybe. But we should not forget how incredibly destructive his dictatorship was at the same time, during both the Iran-Iraq War and the First Gulf War. In both cases, he took actions that led directly to horrific consequences. The entire region has been suffering from tyranny and bloodletting for decades now, and no end seems to be in sight—no matter what regime form one would like to see in place.

10) The Arab Spring, originally praised by most western governments became a wider turmoil after the overthrow of most dictatorships. Why did Democracy fail, and should have the dictatorships of Gaddafi, Ben Ali, Mubarak, Assad… and others remained?

I don’t know whether they could have remained. The revolutions of the Arab Spring were indeed revolutions, and revolutions are primarily a reaction to repressive governments. Whatever the EU or US forces did, for example, Gaddafi’s regime was against the wall; the same holds for Assad. It’s furthermore notable in the latter case that Assad’s regime itself is engaged in mass killing. It HAS remained (partially) in power, and is actively contributing to the ongoing turmoil.

Dictatorships are not stable systems over the long run. There is no direct path from dictatorship to democracy, either. But betting that they will provide order and keep chaos at bay—a bet that underlies many of the questions that you have posed—doesn’t seem to me supportable by historical events.
Especially the dictatorships founded on sectarian difference, slaughter, and ongoing violence are not stable over the long run.

11) **Socialism seems to have worked better under the right dictatorships than with any other political system. Do you agree with this?**

Just like democracy, socialism is a term that describes a lot of different phenomena, from calls for workers' rights and social democracy to experiments with communes to state-socialist dictatorship.

Social Democracy has been very successful in raising the standard of living of the working class and also preserving representative democracy and civil rights in western Europe. Many of their specific policies, from equal educational opportunities to social insurance to union rights, were part and parcel of socialist movements in the 19th century. In terms of long term effect on the actual lives of the lower classes, I’d say that they have been remarkably successful within a democratic framework, even as they have shed policies that could not find a majority, such as nationalization of basic industries.

State socialism in Eastern Europe, meanwhile, presumed from the start a party dictatorship. Their systems of state planning developed as part and parcel of the dictatorships: it would be hard to distinguish economic from political system in these cases. To say, then, that Marxist-Leninist state socialism functioned best under dictatorship is a little bit circular, since it presumed dictatorship as a condition of functioning.

12) **Will Europe one day go back to the old days of dictatorial states given the present rising of economic upheavals? What would it take for the US to ever encounter an autocratic run state?**
I have no idea. We can only hope not. But if people are given the sense that they have no input into policy decisions, if they are suffering economically, and if populist leaders, left or right, suggest dictatorship as a magic weapon to solve their problems, then dictatorship—as a relatively lasting political form rather than as a transitional form—is always a possibility.

By: Peter C. Caldwell, interview conducted by Jaime Ortega
Source: http://thedailyjournalist.com/the-expert/democracy-versus-dictatorships-what-works-better/
ARTICLE 4 – Economic development promotes democracy, but there’s a catch

29 December 2014

Does economic development cause countries to become more democratic? A vast literature says yes. Except for a few petrostates, mostly in the Persian Gulf, almost all the richest countries have responsive and accountable governments.

Yet whenever consensus on this seems about to emerge, objections surface. Influential dissenters point out exceptions and propose alternative theories. Perhaps other factors predispose certain countries both to advance economically and forge democratic institutions, without one causing the other. And what to make of the countries that grow rapidly for years without any hint of political liberalization? What about Spain under Generalisimo Franco, Indonesia under President Suharto, Russia under Vladimir Putin?

In a recent article I suggest a reason why this debate refuses to die. Economic development does lead to greater democracy but not in a smooth, incremental way. At certain times, a country’s income matters a lot for its political evolution; in other periods, income’s influence is muted. What opens such windows is leadership succession. As authoritarian states become richer, they do tend to become more democratic—but the impact of development is concentrated in the early years of new authoritarian leaders.

Take Spain. Under Franco, who seized power in 1939, the country metamorphosed from a rural backwater into the world’s eleventh largest industrial economy. By the time Franco died of old age in 1975, GDP per capita had quadrupled and the number of telephones had increased by more
than 250 times. But the political regime remained a brutal and arbitrary despotism.

Yet, within a few years, Spain had shot to the top of the democracy ratings. Historians see a clear link between the country’s multifaceted economic and social modernization in the 1960s and its political transformation in the late 1970s. Economic development set the stage for democracy. But its impact was felt only after the generalísimo left the scene.

This graph—which tells Spain’s story—shows why we may miss the impact of development if we look for only short-run relationships. It plots Spain’s Polity score—a rating which ranges from -10 (“pure dictatorship”) to +10 (“pure democracy”)—along with the country’s GDP per capita (in 1990 dollars). Do the two appear to be related? Looking only at annual changes we would not see much link. In fact, the two lines only move in the same direction for a few years after 1975. Most of the time the Polity score remains flat, seemingly unresponsive to the country’s steadily rising income.
Within the tenure of a given dictator such as Franco, increases in income do not prompt democratization. However, in periods in which the leader changed, the link between income and political liberalization is strong. Since leaders always change if you wait long enough, the income-democracy relationship emerges more strongly in statistical analysis in the medium run—periods of 10-20 years—than if one looks at annual or even five-year blocks of time.

Franco is not the only dictator to have held back the tide for a while. The following table lists all 21 leaders of non-democracies between 1875 and 2004 under whom GDP per capita topped $6,000 (at 1990 prices). These dictators were no fans of free government: on average, political institutions became slightly less democratic under them. Yet the pressures they bottled up
exploded after they departed. In three quarters of the cases, the decade after
the dictator left office saw political liberalization – and often a dramatic
breakthrough. On average, these countries’ Polity scores jumped over that
decade by more than eight points on the 21-point scale.

What is it about long-lasting dictators that breaks the link between
development and democracy? Do dictators change over time, becoming more
reactionary the longer they survive in office? Or is it only (initially) reactionary
dictators that survive—a mechanism of selection. I found evidence for both,
but stronger support for the selection effect. Authoritarian leaders are more
likely to liberalize early in their terms than later on. But those that survive for a long time show a lower than average propensity to liberalize even in their early years. Such “survivors” are more likely to have no higher education, to have come of age before their country modernized, and to head monarchies, one-party states, or personalistic dictatorships, rather than military juntas.

If economic development makes it harder for a dictator to pass on his regime intact to a son or associate, why do dictators allow their countries to develop economically? (Of course, some don’t—but many do.) They might consider an advanced economy necessary for military defense, but that is probably not the only reason.

I provide evidence for another. Paradoxically, high economic growth and the high national income it—ultimately—causes have counterposed effects: the first entrenches the dictator, while the second undermines the dictatorship. Vigorous growth—which boosts household incomes and government revenues—enhances the incumbent’s survival odds. Thus, dictators have a personal interest in growth. But over time that same growth changes society and the ruling elite in ways that make it more likely the regime will collapse after the dictator is gone. What’s good for the dictator is not so good for his dynasty.

Franco presided over dramatic economic development. But after he died, the Francoist regime fell apart. Indonesia’s “New Order” did not outlast Suharto. In Russia, Putin’s period of dominance has coincided with an increase in per capita income (at PPP, in 2011 dollars) from about $12,000 to almost $24,000, according to the World Bank. Will his country fit the pattern?

We will have to wait to see what happens after Putin leaves the Kremlin. Of course, turnover in economically developed autocracies does not always lead to political liberalization: it did not in Singapore, where Lee Kuan Yew handed over to Goh Chok Tong in 1990, when GDP per capita was already about
$14,000. Clearly, some dictators in richer countries have managed to select successors who were as reactionary, skillful, or lucky as they were.

Despite its remarkable growth record, China has only recently entered the income range at which continued authoritarianism is surprising. The country’s so-far smooth transition to the leadership of Xi Jinping might indicate that the Chinese Communist Party has crafted a succession mechanism that is more effective at picking regime-preserving leaders. But, as the former top Chinese official Zhou Enlai said in a different context, it is too early to say.

By: Daniel Treisman
ARTICLE 5 – Why China can grow without democracy

01 April 2014

As China’s socioeconomic modernization and cultural globalization deepens, spill-over effects into the political arena are increasingly anticipated.

Authoritarian-led development elsewhere in East Asia has typically lasted two to three decades, before the supposedly inevitable transition towards democracy, as per capita incomes reach a certain level (Ohno, 2013). Is China headed in the same direction?

Commentators emphasize an increasingly assertive middle class, political decay associated with rampant corruption and systemic risks in the form of rising inequality and environmental degradation as irreversibly derailing the steely authoritarian Chinese locomotive (Pei, 2007). Yet, every rule has its exception, and China may well be able to continue growing without democratizing, for the strict Western dichotomy of authoritarianism versus democracy does not apply to East Asia.

**China considers itself democratic**

A 2002 East Asia Barometer survey confirmed that Chinese development and growth has been accompanied by increasing public support for the general notion of democracy and for many of the same democratic values that underpin other East Asian democracies (Shi, 2008). The Chinese, however, see no apparent contradiction between these values and the current Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership, with more than 80% of respondents judging the present regime to already be democratic.

Moreover, Chinese citizens were found to trust domestic political institutions, particularly at the national level, more than their democratic neighbors (Shi, 2008). While this paradox may be partly explained by successful CCP propaganda and media control, the master key seems to lie in a fundamentally different conception of democracy.

The survey demonstrated a Chinese notion of democracy closely associated with populism, reflecting the country’s socialist credentials but also a belief in
the idea of benevolent dictatorship, which can be traced back to imperial times (Shi, 2008). China's Confucian heritage is similarly reflected in the high levels of institutional trust, which rest on traditional values of hierarchy and collectivism.

The key democratic pillar of accountability, moreover, is also manifested in Chinese society - albeit in a different form than the strictly procedural definition associated with free elections. In the East Asian context, accountability is more appropriately defined in terms of what Francis Fukuyama (2012) calls "substantive outcomes", and on this premise the CCP leadership has certainly delivered, raising substantially the living standard of millions. Indeed, in accordance with this East Asian accountability definition, the majority of citizens in China and its neighboring democracies were found to prioritize economic development over democracy (Shi, 2008).

**Economic democratization**

That economic growth takes priority over democracy has been the hallmark of East Asian development. Indeed, all successful East Asian economies, with the rule-proving exception of Hong Kong, were led to high growth by competent authoritarian developmental states (Ohno, 2013).

The difficult reconciliation of democracy and development is often ascribed to the need for massive and rapid resource mobilization to foster economic growth. A task for which the democratic toolkit of accommodation and compromise is inherently ill-suited (Leftwich, 2005). The institutional choice between fast growth or democracy is nowhere more apparent than in the breakneck investment speed and intensity of autocratic China compared to the slow infrastructural development and low investment rates of democratic India (Pei, 2006).

Yet, while economic growth undoubtedly conferred significant legitimacy on autocratic East Asian states, the same development eventually brought them to their knees, as new middle classes asserted their demands for influence.

The circumstances in China, however, may prove different, as the Chinese regime is taking marked steps to advance economic democratization so as to head off unrest motivated by increasing inequalities. Starting with the 11th
Five-Year Plan [2006-2010] the CCP leadership has adopted a significant shift in policy towards more inclusive and socially responsible growth (Naughton, 2011). Moreover, while the trend trailing the global financial crisis has been one of scaled-back government elsewhere in the world, China has intensified its commitment to direct state intervention in the economy. State-owned enterprises have been consolidated; even strengthened, and social policies boosted (Naughton, 2011).

**China will remain exceptional**

The legitimacy of CCP leadership rests on several supportive pillars, making it less vulnerable than many commentators make it seem. While the until now most significant legitimizing factor, the regime’s exceptional economic performance, is likely to diminish in importance, as growth rates inevitably level off, other elements play a more fundamental and therefore durable role.

Firstly, China’s populace appears to appreciate a level of democracy under the current set of circumstances which is far more advanced than a Western definitional standard would concede. Chinese citizens already consider their society democratic in ways that matter to them, thus greatly reducing calls for regime change.

Moreover, trust in political institutions is higher than in China’s democratic neighbors, underpinned by ancient ideals of hierarchy and collectivism.

And finally, while performance legitimacy may stand to decline, the regime seems well on the way to building a new economic pillar on which future CCP governance can comfortably rest. Chinese economic development is moving in a markedly democratizing direction, broadening the base of beneficiaries, and the success of this process may ultimately allow China to remain exceptional in solving the conundrum of sustained economic growth under authoritarian leadership.

By: Lisbeth Moeller
How development experts have empowered dictators and helped to trap millions and millions of people in poverty.

On the morning of Sunday, Feb. 28, 2010, the villagers of Mubende District, Uganda were in church when they heard the sound of gunfire. They came out to find men torching their homes and crops. The soldiers held them off at gunpoint from rescuing their homes; one 8-year-old child was trapped and died in the fire. The soldiers then marched off the 20,000 farmers from the land that had been in their families for generations.

The reason for the violence was that a forestry project financed by the World Bank wanted the land.

The only thing that distinguishes this episode from the many human rights violations that happen in the name of development is that it got unusual publicity. The New York Times ran a front-page story on it on Sept. 21, 2011. The World Bank the next day promised an investigation.

What is most revealing of all about this episode is what happened next: nothing. The World Bank never investigated its own actions in financing this project. Now, just after the fourth anniversary of the Mubende tragedy, it has been forgotten by nearly everyone except its victims.

The sad neglect of the rights of the poor in Mubende follows from the ideas behind the global war on poverty. Those who work in development prefer to focus on technical solutions to the poor’s problems, such as forestry projects, clean water supplies, or nutritional supplements. Development experts advise
leaders they perceive to be benevolent autocrats to implement these technical solutions. The international professionals perpetrate an illusion that poverty is purely a technical problem, distracting attention away from the real cause: the unchecked power of the state against poor people without rights. The dictators whom experts are advising are not the solution — they are the problem.

The individual economic and political rights crucial to development include all those we take for granted at home, such as the right to your own property, the right to trade with whomever you wish, the right to protest bad government actions (don’t burn down our houses!), and the right to vote for politicians who do beneficial actions (clean our water!). Technical experts in development sometimes concede some rights and deny others, which disrespects rights for what they are: unalienable. The Uganda story shows the Mubende farmers’ lack of both economic rights (rights to their own property) and political rights (prevented at gunpoint from protesting).

The tyranny of experts that neglects rights is first of all a moral tragedy. It reflects a double standard in which we respect rights for the world’s rich — is it conceivable that we would forget these farmers if the story had happened in Ohio? — but not for the poor.

The technocratic approach of dictators advised by experts is also a pragmatic tragedy, because it does not actually work to end poverty. New research by economists on history and modern experience suggest that free individuals with political and economic rights make up remarkably successful problem-solving systems. Such systems based on rights reward a decentralized array of people: Economic entrepreneurs with property rights get to keep the rewards of solving the problems of their consumers. Political entrepreneurs at many government levels and in many departments get rewarded with a longer tenure in office if they solve the citizens’ problems, and they are driven out of office if they don’t.
In contrast, Uganda’s dictator Yoweri Museveni (a longtime favorite of development experts) can use repression and patronage — financed, for example, by the sales of the Mubende farms — to stay in office despite harming his own subjects.

Focusing on rights yields two perspectives on how development success happens. First, societies that have already attained individual freedom are likely to have already escaped poverty. Economists have gone back deep into our own history to confirm this widely-accepted story for how we in the West escaped our own poverty, but we seem unwilling to consider that the same story could play out in the rest of the world. Second, societies in which there is a positive change in freedom will likely see a positive change in prosperity (ergo, rapid economic growth and fall in poverty). Despite the indifference or even hostility of development experts, freedom is spreading anyway to some places outside the West.

The lifetime of a Korean peasant born in 1915, Chung Ju-yung, illustrates what can happen with growing freedom. Chung was born into a society that had only recently abolished a rigid class system that included slaves and "out-castes," in which he would have had little future. A 1919 Korean declaration of independence said "by protecting our individual rights to freedom our joy shall be full." The Japanese colonial regime then occupying Korea was less enthusiastic about individual rights, killing 7,500 people demonstrating for independence and jailing 46,000 more. In Cheamni village near Suwon, the Japanese herded villagers into the local church, locked the doors, and burned it down.

Chung and other Koreans would get more freedom after liberation from Japan in 1945. At first, however, South Korea’s post-independence rulers imposed extensive controls on Koreans’ economic rights, such as restricting trade with foreigners and seizing most of the rewards. But then Chung saw Korean rulers cede more and more economic freedom beginning in the 1960s. Chung also lived to see the triumph of political rights, after student protesters and other activists forced autocrats to allow democracy, which South Korea
has now enjoyed for a quarter century. (South Korea is often mischaracterized as an autocratic growth miracle, which fails to understand the theory that would match changes in prosperity to changes in freedom. The correctly predicted match in South Korea is between a miracle of rapidly rising prosperity associated with the falling power and then disappearance of autocracy.)

Chung Ju-yung took advantage of these expanding freedoms to leave the infertile land of his home village and to found an auto repair shop in Seoul, rehabilitating vehicles discarded by American occupation forces. By the time Ford arrived in South Korea in the 1960s, looking for a Korean manufacturer to provide cheap labor for Ford cars, Chung was ready for them. Ford indulged Chung when he wanted to move from assembly of Ford designs to actually doing Korean models, fearing little from a man and a country that had barely seen a car before World War II. Ford woke up too late to the competitive threat of Chung’s company that he had given the Korean name for “modern”: Hyundai. South Koreans at home chose Chung’s cheap small cars to solve their personal transportation problems. Eventually, consumers in the rest of the world got equally enthusiastic about Hyundai cars, creating rising incomes for South Korean workers. Today, the Hyundai Sonata wins quality awards in the U.S. market, Hyundai is the world’s fourth-largest auto company, and Chung is only one of the many spontaneous problem-solvers — individual entrepreneurs, traders, technology imitators, and political activists — that ended poverty in South Korea.

So what should we do about rights for the poor? Possible starting places for Western policy changes are to not fund dictators, to not support projects that torch farms, to not break promises to investigate rights abuses, and to not let us forget such abuses and missing investigations.

But obsessing too much on the “what should we do?” question should not hand the agenda back to the same technical experts who have showed so little interest in the rights of the poor in the first place.
The danger of such a tyranny of experts is illustrated by a long history of politicians using technical poverty debates as an excuse to avoid debating rights for the poor.

The concentration on expert development has proven remarkably useful to evade the rights of the poor for nearly a century. In 1919, at the Treaty of Versailles talks after World War I, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson justified the transfer of former German African colonies to Britain as part of a "trust" for the "helpless parts of the world," which would be "administered for the benefit of their inhabitants...during the period of their development." The whole effort would be guided by expert knowledge, what the former Princeton professor grandly called "the counsels of mankind." The idea of expert development was a welcome distraction from the political reality of continuing colonial despotism in Africa in the interests of the colonizers.

In 1925, tensions flared in the British colony of Kenya between white settlers and indigenous Africans whose lands the settlers were taking. Inspired by the technical approach to development set out at Versailles, colonial officials' response to these tensions was to suggest doing a report on British Africa that would be a "dispassionate study of the facts" — evading the real issue of the white settlers violating the rights of indigenous Africans.

The eventual "dispassionate study" was not completed until 13 years later. A colonial official named Lord Hailey had called upon an array of technical experts in many fields to produce a 1,837 page report, published in 1938 as "An African Survey." These experts made many precise technical recommendations. A surprising number of these recommendations — for example, "nitrogen-fixing legumes" for soil fertility — are identical to those made by United Nations and Gates Foundation experts on Africa today.
The same colonial official, Lord Hailey, took a further step to use technical development to evade the rights debate in the British Empire during World War II. Lord Hailey rebutted those — including some American commentators — who wanted to end the empire after the war, justifying its continuation as an agent for “the betterment of the backward peoples of the world.” He conveniently assumed that Africans would view “political liberties” as “meaningless unless they can be built up on a better foundation of … economic progress.” Yet again, technical development done by a state with unchecked power was an excuse to postpone indefinitely consideration of human rights.

Ironically, these development ideas outlasted the British Empire they had justified. The empire collapsed sooner than expected, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Yet the same technocratic neglect of rights appealed to the indigenous African autocrats who took over after colonial rulers left. The same development economists who used to advise the Colonial Office now advised the new autocrats (for example, later-Nobel-Prize-winning economist Sir Arthur Lewis did both, working with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana after it became independent in 1957). Where autocrats used to appeal to the divine right of kings, autocrats could use the experts to articulate the development right of dictators.

Neglecting the rights of African citizens also appealed to American foreign-policy experts who sought those same autocrats as allies in the Cold War, cemented by loans from the new post-World War II organization staffed by technocratic experts: the World Bank. Decades of economic stagnation in Africa followed.

Today, there is yet again a U.S. technocratic embrace of autocratic allies in Africa and elsewhere, this time for the “war on terror,” still fueled by World Bank loans. The U.S. military’s “Africa Command” views Uganda’s Museveni as a “key U.S. strategic partner,” providing troops to chase terrorists in Somalia, for example. The technocratic vision made it possible for Hillary Clinton, while secretary of state, to declare that “defense” (of the United States) and
“development” (of the rest of the world) were "mutually reinforcing," thus enabling a grand alliance for development between humanitarian and national security interests.

Unfortunately, it is this same political alignment that lets the World Bank get away with its own violations of rights in Mubende, Uganda without even an investigation. The same politics also helps explain the failure of the development establishment to protest the World Bank’s violations and its missing investigation of its own violations.

Because of this long history, the debate between authoritarian and free development never really happened. So the choice that development made a long time ago to prefer the tyranny of experts over the rights of the poor sadly continues today.

There still remain many compassionate people in the West who have all the right motives to ask “What should we do?”

And the answer is to have the authoritarian versus free development debate that never happened.

It is time at last for the tyranny of experts to end. It is time at last for the silence on unequal rights for the world’s poor and the world’s rich to end. It is time at last for all men and women to be equally free.

This article is an excerpt from the book The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor, published in March 2014.
Correction (March 20, 2014): An earlier version of this article, which highlights a World Bank-financed project, carried a photo of the International Monetary Fund. The photo has been corrected to one of the World Bank.

By: William Easterly
Source: http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/10/the-new-tyranny/
I was in Cairo in November, and a friend, Hasan, was kind enough to invite us to his house for dinner. Hasan is not a member of the super elite, but he’s not among the poorest in Egypt either. (His daughter has a new Samsung smartphone.) Yet as we turned onto the streets around his apartment block, I was dumbfounded by what I saw – mounds of garbage lining the roads. Not scattered litter tossed out of car windows, but bags of household trash stacked up by local residents, waiting to be collected. Apparently, that doesn’t happen very often. The garbage buried the curbside like drifts of plowed snow.

This is how people live in Cairo. Is it any surprise the average Egyptian is so angry? If you’re going to be a dictator, at least collect the garbage. In other words, if you’re going to deprive your people of civil liberties, you’d better deliver economic development – jobs, rising incomes, new opportunities. Perhaps the ultimate failure of the tottering regime of Hosni Mubarak is that he allowed his country to fall behind much of the rest of the emerging world.

When Mubarak became president in 1981, GDP per capita in Egypt was $514. In 2009, that had grown to $2,270, so it more than quadrupled. That’s not so terrible. Egypt’s performance was roughly similar to Indonesia’s (though the latter had to contend with a much larger population). But Mubarak’s record isn’t good enough, either. China was much, much poorer than Egypt in 1981, with GDP per capita of only $195. But in 2009, China’s had jumped 19 times, to $3,744. Thailand’s more than quintupled during that same time period to $3,893.

Mubarak’s problem is that he never managed to attain those huge growth spurts experienced by the rapidly expanding economies of Asia – those 7% to
10% rates year after year. Egypt has been performing somewhat better in recent years, after reforms liberalized trade, cut corporate taxes and restructured the financial sector. Egypt’s GDP grew a more Asia-like 7% a year between 2006 and 2008, with only a slight dip to 4.7% in 2009. That’s up from the 3% to 4% of previous years.

But Egypt still remains relatively disconnected from the world economy. Exports as a percentage of GDP fell from 33% in 1981 to only 25% in 2009. Nor has that mini-growth spurt done enough to improve the everyday lives of ordinary folk. Unemployment remained stubbornly high, at 8% to 11% during those same years. The World Bank estimates some 18% of the population still subsists below the poverty line (with that rate jumping to 40% in certain rural areas) while 20% of the people flip-flop in and out of poverty, a sign of a high degree of economic uncertainty. Egypt also trails in some important social indicators. China and Thailand have literacy rates above 90%; Egypt’s is around 70%.

The failings of Mubarak are symbolic of those throughout the Arab world. While East Asia and increasingly Latin America leap from strength to strength, becoming more and more important to the world economy, the Middle East has tended to remain on the outside of the globalization story, with its impact on the world economy generally limited to the oil sector. The result is a region that has in certain respects been frozen in time. Compare poverty alleviation efforts, for example. Though 40% of the people of emerging East Asia lived on less than $2 a day in 2005, that share had plummeted from 93% in 1981, according to the World Bank. In the Middle East and North Africa, fewer people live below that line - only 19%, in fact - but there has hardly been any progress in the past 30 years. In 1981, 29% lived on less than $2 a day in the region. That’s why citizens of the Middle East are marching against their governments from Tunisia to Yemen. They’ve been left out of the growth story enjoyed by large swaths of the rest of the planet.

And even when the people of Egypt work hard, hustle, and manage to earn a bit of money, it can get sucked away by corruption. During my visit to Egypt
in November, my wife and I hired a taxi to drive us from Luxor to Aswan for 450 Egyptian pounds (about $80). Every 20 or 30 minutes, we’d pass through a police checkpoint, and the officers would tell the driver they wanted to get some tea. That is a not-so-subtle request for a bribe. The driver passed one bill after the next out the window. Then he was flagged down by a policeman who claimed he was speeding (he wasn’t) and extracted 150 pounds from him on the spot with a falsified ticket. By the end of the trip, only a fraction of the money we paid the driver actually remained in his pocket. I felt so bad that I gave him extra to compensate for the money he lost through corruption.

The genius of China’s great economic reformer Deng Xiaoping is that he realized the link between dictatorships and development. In the late 1970s, when China’s market-oriented reforms began, Deng and the other elders of the Communist Party were concerned they would face an uprising from a population that was trapped in desperate destitution after 30 years of misguided economic policies. Deng hitched the party’s future to delivering jobs and better livelihoods for the average Chinese. In other words, Deng struck a grand bargain with the Chinese people: You submit to our rule and we make you rich. Mubarak’s version was something like: You submit to my rule and I don’t do anything for you in return. So far, the Chinese have accepted Deng’s offer. As we can see now, the Egyptians don’t much care for Mubarak’s.

I’m not saying the Mubarak could have survived even if he had implemented the kind of policies that brought the average Egyptian new jobs, cars and homes. Authoritarian regimes in places like South Korea and Indonesia were eventually ushered off the scene by angry protests as well, despite their success in bringing development to the nation. But if Mubarak and the other leaders of the Arab world cared more about people’s wallets (other than their own), I think it’s fair to say that the political process in the region would likely have been playing out differently today.

By: Michael Schuman
Additional Articles/Sources:

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Time to avoid the dictatorship v democracy debate in Africa

The Economic Effects of Democracy and Dictatorship
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