The Fate of Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Developing Countries
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Meneer de Rector Magnifcus
Zeer gewaardeerde toehoorders

The title of this oration is the "Fate of Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Developing Countries". In this oration I question the uncritical transfer of Western democratic value systems to the newly democratising societies. Within this perspective, I also reflect briefly on the commonalties between the ethos influencing democratic and development intervention.

My starting point is factual and is intended to provide a contextual background to the tenets of what would follow.

By the end of the Second World War, Western countries were preoccupied with various programmes to promote democracy in the developing countries and the remaining colonies. These early democratisation efforts were part of a Western foreign policy premised in the democratic peace doctrine. The common aim was to leave behind democratic regimes similar to those of Western countries, therefore deterring the expansion of communism.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, and at the height of the Cold War, democratic support programmes were continued as part of anti-communism strategy also part of the democratic peace doctrine. Democratic and none democratic means were used to realise this endeavour, including, among other things, funding of political parties, propaganda support, counter-espionage and "dirty wars". It did not take long before programmes to export democracy began to come to terms with their dismal failure.

Instead of democratising state and civil society, military coups, one-party states and military socialism were in evidence in large parts of the developing world. As a result of these early democratisation setbacks, political order rather than democratic consolidation dominated the debate. In fact, many western intellectuals and policy institutions were even inclined to lend support to what was then considered "enlightened dictatorships". Many authoritarian regimes from Mobutu of Zaire to Pinochet of Chile were considered enlightened dictators.

However, despite this anticlimax, the democratic support programmes were not abandoned but continued in a lesser ambitious fashion. The Western powers continued to extend democratic assistance in two dialectical fields: electoral reform and the administration of justice.

By the 1990s the end of the Cold War has created a new global reality, with a renewed concern with democratic and civil society support programmes. This time, the debate has turned full circle to embody a revived political development under the guise of modernisation revisionism. The current period is characterised by a worldwide acceptance of the primacy of the triple heritage of democracy, human rights and good governance.

With this background in mind, I do not intend to explain the internal factors

that have hindered democratic consolidation in the developing countries. These concerns are well researched, are still being debated and will be debated in the academic and policy circles for decades to come.

My intention here is to trace Western concerns with democratic intervention to the domain of European values in international relations. I try to respond to the question what is the antecedence of the core values of Western political thought that made intervention to promote democracy in the developing countries permissible.

In dealing with this question I trace democratic intervention to the continued presence of the historic notion of liberal internationalism and two allied concepts: domestic analogy and public sphere.

I argue these concepts, although originally not intended to explain democratic transition in the developing countries, provide a very useful framework for understanding the core values behind democratic intervention.

However, to do so, these concepts should acquire new meanings driven from the fact that all Western democracies whether liberal, social democratic or conservative, have subscribed to the ethos of liberal internationalism. The advance of these concepts has also been driven in part by the desirability of liberal attitudes over authoritarian and totalising regimes.

Liberal internationalism, domestic analogy and public sphere should be seen in relation to the ethos of enlightenment and modernity. Of particular reference here is the relationship between the domestic analogy and progress and the idea that a deliberate secularisation of culture and social life would contribute to the spread of universal values, such as democracy and development. The ultimate goal of progress therefore is the encapsulation of non-western traditions into western value systems. On the other hand, perhaps a liberal internationalism perspective could explain the promise and peril of the democratisation project under way. It could even defy a powerful tradition, which presumes that concepts developed in the West are not amenable to explaining the peculiarity of the politics of developing countries.

WHAT IS THEN THE PROMISE OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM?

In this respect, the relationship between spreading the ethos of liberal internationalism is found in the fact that both have deployed the domestic analogy. This also could explain why programmes to democratise developing countries were implemented by agencies with long experience in development support. In fact democracy is often treated as an institutional mechanism for better development intervention. Being so much concerned with technical democratic support, development agencies often unwittingly pursue policy objectives that are indifferent to the complexities of the politics of developing countries.

In general, no matter how development aid agencies try to justify intervention to promote democracy in the developing countries, one of the main neglected aspects is the continued presence of liberal internationalism.

At a larger synthesis, democracy support programmes are clear indication that the Western powers have not given up on an historical mission centred on progress. This mission is also intended to expand a universal perspective on democracy centred on the importance of defending individual liberty within the context of a national or international community guided by the rule of law (Long 1996, p. 183).

This perspective in my view is a function of the interplay between liberal internationalism, the domestic analogy and a particularly desired public sphere, a Western-style public sphere.

The basic rationalist assumption, I dare to say, here is that the spread of the ethos of liberal internationalism would result in fostering attitudes such as [1]

- The centrality of the individual, hence individualism;
- Liberty;
- The possibility of rendering the state responsible to the governed;
- Positive attitude towards the market; and
- Progress and enlightenment or development

However, conventionally and in much of the debate, the fate of democracy in the developing world has often been explained with respect to the following factors:

a) Abject poverty and inequality;
b) Elite hegemony;
c) Distorted governance institutions;
d) Weak civil society; and
e) External pressures to replicate western-style democracies.

The perspective on positive liberal attitudes and values and that on the fate of democracy are dialectical opposites. One explains the absence democracy as a product of conditions internal to the developing countries. The other explains the absence of democracy as a product of the developing countries inability to develop the socio-economic conditions favourable for the diffusion of western-style democracy.[2]

Liberal internationalism is an optimistic project in which no state is absolutely independent in restricting the liberty of its own individual citizens, nor the individual citizens of other states. Three of the core values of liberal internationalism are instructive:

1. Expanding individual liberty would ultimately expand the rights of sovereign individuals within and across states. Hence liberal internationalism is justified in envisaging liberty as a universal value.

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1 For more on this see Festenstein 1998, Rawls 1993, Miller 1991, Mills 1991.

2 Mohamed Salih 2001

2. As a doctrine against despotism and authoritarianism, liberal internationalism also contends that only governments based upon the consent of the governed are legitimate, and that such governments exist for the sole purpose of protecting rights (Pennock 1950, p. 12);
3. Liberal internationalists are not off the mark in arguing that the prevalence of democratic states the world-over, would foster the democratic peace.

However, behind the optimism of liberal internationalism there is the contention that the values extended are perceived as superior to those replaced. This contention raises a number of questions, not least about whether it is possible, or indeed desirable, to mould the world into political arrangements similar to those of the West. Let us also contemplate the compelling evidence that so far Western democratic principles, with all their promise are "neither self-evident nor universally accepted" (Weale 1999, p. 3). This does not mean that these values are fundamentally wrong or have not worked well for Western societies.

Nevertheless, in my view, the fate of democracy in the developing countries lies in liberal internationalism's deliberate efforts to uncritically replicate the ethos of the Western democratic nation-state at a global scale. Obviously, attempts to replicate a universal blueprint of democratic institutes in every country, every society and every political culture have proven difficult if not impossible.

Obviously the domestic analogy has failed because there are no analogous domestic public spheres. Could we then conclude that the domestic analogy has no potential for advancing the cause of democracy in the developing countries? Before answering this question, let me establish a few parameters that may assist us in exploring this question further.

DOMESTIC ANALOGY: THE TOOL KIT

Western democratic nations aspire to export democracy and good governance to the developing countries. There is even contemplation in some Western circles and democracy lobby groups to advance their particular version of democracy to the developing world. In this sense, the reconstruction of the domestic analogy takes two perspectives:

- One is concerned with exporting consensus, presidential, parliamentary and other forms of democratic governments.
- The other with advancing the ethos of liberal internationalism on which there is a convergence of interests among all Western democracies.

In both perspectives, the domestic analogy hinges on the assumption that the political and legal principles that have sustained the Western democratic state are transferable as principles for the maintenance of a democratic peace in the developing countries.

Here, the domestic analogy is developed into a presumptive reasoning, which holds that there are certain similarities between domestic and international phenomena.

In particular, it argues, the conditions of order within states, argues liberal internationalism, are similar to those necessary for order between them; and that therefore the institutions, which sustain order and secure competitive and inclusive political participation domestically, should also be reproduced at the global level".[3]

Ironically, many intellectuals from the developing countries join Western critics of the domestic analogy, although for different reasons. They fear that only the domestic institutions of Western societies would be selected for replication at the global level and those of the developing countries will be relegated to oblivion.

In this perspective, liberal internationalism assumes that democracy provides appropriate institutional mechanisms for political engagement. These institutional mechanisms were considered sufficient ethical and moral reasoning for curbing the state's ability to abuse the human and civil rights of its sovereign citizens.[4] However, in the circles of the elite of developing countries, a question is often whispered as to whether the long-term objective of liberal internationalism is to create a global government under Western dominance.[5]

Evidently, it is legitimate and even desirable to intervene to protect human and civil rights in totalitarian and authoritarian states or persuade others in order to expand the democratic peace. Here again many intellectuals from the developing countries would join the international pacifists' perception of intervention as an expansion of liberal imperialism by other means.

In retrospect, let us not forget that there is an equally strong common perception in many developing countries that, the triumph of liberal internationalism over liberal imperialism has probably produced more tangible results than the triumph of liberal internationalism over socialism. Obviously, the regimes of truth on which such arguments and counter-arguments are based are difficult to verify.

Let me conclude this point by introducing the main differences between the public sphere in the Western and developing countries.

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3 Suganami 1989 p. 1.

4 If the state is authoritarian and not accountable to its citizens then, the best guarantee of democratic peace between nations is "a super-state or world state as holder of legal monopoly of international force" (Zolo 1997, p.29). Because democracies do not go to war against each other, so argue liberal internationalists, the domestic analogy is applicable only amongst democracies (Beitz 1979, 1983, Doyle 1986, 1995). It is here that we observe a positive association between democracy and peace in limiting the monopoly of coercive force of the state

5 Weale 1999, pp. 16-7. See also Rawls's argument that "political arrangements in any democratic system that respect competing and incompatible conceptions of the good nevertheless appeal to the common political purpose of achieving peace" (Rawls 1993, p.14).

The incompatibility of the domestic analogy and Western misconception of the nature of the public sphere in the developing countries are amongst the main factors behind the fate of democracy. Unfortunately after decades of intervention using these concepts implicitly or explicitly, the democratisation projects were able to replicate only the form and not the content of Western democracies.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE: ANALOGOUS OR INCOMPATIBLE

The democratisation process currently underway in the developing countries operates within a very narrowly defined public sphere. The so-called 'modern forces' of private business, non-state institutions, trade unions, religious organisations, social movements, pressure groups etc dominate this public sphere. Because most of states in the developing countries do not consider "traditional political organisations" part of civil society, groups organised on ethnic basis are agonisingly absent from this public sphere, even though they constitute the political parties both in government and opposition.

Most developing states ban ethnically based political parties, accusing them of being backward, divisive, relics of the past and a potential source of national disintegration. Nonetheless, the educated political elite across the developing world uses ethnicity as an instrument of political mobilisation, a function of elite competition and control of state power and resources. Considering the complexities political culture poses, liberal internationalists preferred to close their eyes to non-democratic practises, including the exclusion of "traditional" political institutions and groups organised with the aim of agitating for the recognition of collective rights.

However, judged against the harsh realities of the developing countries, the public sphere, an arena where civil society creates space for resistance, makes demands and protects rights, is often absorbed by the state. Unfortunately, in most cases, the state remains the main political force in the vocal modern sector, yet it is these powerful minority interests which dominate the public sphere.

In other words, in most of the developing countries, civil society is too small to have a felt effect in the public sphere; and is too weak to be politically effective beyond protesting decisions that affects it negatively. Although every civil society is divided, with all major actors compete to represent and protect their interests, in the developing countries it is severely divided.

Just as the public sphere in Western societies is heterogeneous, so too is the public sphere in developing countries divided into factions. Unlike the developing countries, most of which were under colonial rule for centuries, Western societies have developed the basic infrastructure for the co-existence of multiple public spheres capable of creating demands and counter demands on the state.[6]

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6 Habermas 1989.

In the West, the public sphere is created in and out of civil society; it is not absorbed into the state, but addresses the state and the public concerns on which state-sponsored public policies might impact. It is based on the concept that public goods are distinct from private interests and on forms of private life that prepare individuals to act as autonomous or sovereign citizen. Above all, a responsibly functioning civil society depends on social institutions that empower the individual to participate in the public sphere independent of cleavage, power or patronage (Calhoun 1996, p. 459).

Conversely, I would argue that, in the developing countries, the functioning of these public spheres and their emancipatory potential has in many instances been hampered by individualism - one of the core liberal attitudes. The creeping effect of individualism cannot be ignored and its political consequences cannot be overlooked. This is particularly true if the emancipatory potential of individualism has unwittingly allowed to retard the social potential embedded in community and collective action - the main organising principles in most developing countries.

The consequences of misconceiving the domestic analogy as a vehicle for spreading democracy is that the donor driven democratisation project has, in some instances, produced unwanted results culminating in ethnic and religious conflicts such as those experienced by over 38 democratising developing countries during the last two decades.

In the same vein and with reference to comparative democracy, I am positively perplexed by a conceptualisation offered by my colleague Professor Rudy Andeweg, who argues in a recent paper on *Consociational Democracy* that while democracy is potentially unstable some democracies are paradoxically stable. The Paradox of stable democracy, according to Professor Andeweg (2000: 506) stems from the possibility that the destabilising factors in divided societies are neutralised at the elite level by embracing non-majoritarian mechanisms of conflict resolution. Obviously, non-majoritarian mechanisms raise issue with democracies based on first-past-the-post, although embraces the tradition of consociational democracy.

In pursuing this argument very closely, paradoxically in the developing countries, the puzzle of unstable democracy stems from the reverse. In primordial severely divided societies, civil society is narrowly defined and the elite is too concerned with patronage and rent seeking to cement consensus. The situation is even graver when majoritarian tyranny is superimposed by a liberal internationalism adamant in its believe that the domestic analogy is deliverable. Because the public sphere in developing countries is severely divided, the responsibilities of government are in most cases misconstrued for private gains, the rule of law is hardly upheld and the determination of public policy by consent is far fetched.

In revisiting the paradox of the stable democracy, it is obvious that the factors that have heralded democratic stability in the West are, in my view, the very ones that have determined the fate of the unstable democracy in the developing world.

In severely divided societies in the developing countries, ethnic, religious,

regional, linguistic and other attributes of political culture are so strong that it is impossible to confront "community" and collective action by individualism. This is because, developing countries, societies are organised according to collective interests, some of which is often detrimental to individual interests in the Western sense. In such circumstances, the public sphere is quite different from the domestic analogy envisaged by liberal internationalism.[7]

In Western countries, the public sphere constitutes the space that informs overlapping political entities and diffuses them into private interests. Because differentiation is one of the main factors determining inclusiveness as well as quality of participation in the public sphere, there must be some cultural peculiarity attached to the liberal tradition.[8] And so too there is also embeddedness of the political culture prevalent in the developing countries. I hasten to add that not all aspects of this political culture are detrimental to democratic acceptance or have nothing to offer in the democratic process.

FAILING THE TEST OF REALITY

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Let me introduce a brief case from which I would like to draw some conclusions as to why despite the obvious differences that exist between Western and developing countries public spheres, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations still believe that the domestic analogy is possible.

Here I draw on the case of Africa with particular reference to the democratisation and good governance policy framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). One of ECA and UNDP main policy guidelines for fostering democracy and good governance in then African continent reads as follows:

> "There is the need that the African states revisit African traditions and culture in the effort to reduce the perverse effects of an alien culture in post-colonial Africa".

In its face value, this policy guideline illustrates that these two multilateral institutions are aware of the role political culture can play in advancing the democratisation and good governance agenda. In fact, it seems as if ECA and UNDP have rediscovered that there is an African political culture, with some positive attributes from which the democratisation efforts could tap.

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7   See Adorno (1973, p. 222), who argues that, in societies where socialised individuals are sustained only through group identity, the emancipatory potential of individualism as embedded in liberal thought could hardly be realised.

8   Refer to Parekh (1993) Cultural Peculiarity of Liberal Democracy".

In reality, neither ECA nor UNDP has devoted any effort to explore how African traditions and culture could become vehicles for a democratisation initiative different from that advanced by liberal internationalism.

In fact, ECA's and UNDP's hastened to align themselves with the powerful discourse of liberal internationalism. Policy guideline nine of the African Good Governance Forum states that:

> "African governments must sign on to international conventions on democracy and good governance as in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and (OECD) and Development Assistance Countries (DAC)."

This, in my view, gives little comfort to Africans who wish to own the democratic process. ECA and UNDP have, out of their free will, invited liberal internationalism's conception of the domestic analogy. They used OECD and DAC experiences as a blueprint and by doing so made the democratisation process subservient to the very alien culture that they have earlier rebuked. The call for replicating OECD and DAC democratic models have surely stifled Africans' ability to explore whether African's political culture has some democratic elements that could be creatively adapted to Western liberal values.

The results of the democratisation process are impressive if we judge them from the pure notion of democratic transition. During the last two decades, the African continent has witnessed 26 democratic transitions from one party states, military and military socialist regimes to multi-party democratic states.

However, during the same period, Africa has endured 14 military coups, 8 of them succeed in overthrowing the democratically elected governments. Out of these 14 military coups 7 military leaders changed their military uniforms into civilian clothes in engineered elections that have reinvented them as new borne democrats. In the process of these transitions 12 state parties such as ZANU-PF, KANU and other that had dominated political life during authoritarian regimes retained power through questionable electoral processes. The citizens of countries such as Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Kenya, among others have by and large been confronted with democracies without democrats.

Apparently, the political leadership of these countries that presumed themselves democratic has cashed into the global democratic tied by satisfying the minimalist requirements demanded by liberal internationalism.

Generally, the quality of these democracies is questionable. As we have seen in recent history some newly democratising states have continued to be a source of fear vis-à-vis the human rights of their citizens.[9] Such conditions prevail in countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Angola, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Gambia, Nigeria,

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9 Buzan 1992, Salih 1999.

among others. In these, and many other countries, democracy is largely used as an instrument of oppression, whereby minorities and the disfranchised sectors of the population continued to be excluded and the satisfaction of their basic material needs neglected. Human rights reports on 29 of the democratising countries have shown that virtual democracies have failed to bring about the democratic dividend that many Africans have anticipated.

Superimposing, what ECA and UNDP call the ethos of an alien political culture on African polity has in turn reinforced public scepticism and hence distorted the process of democratic consolidation. Probably, had they sought of applying the principle of creative adaptation these multilateral institutions, like other bilateral agencies might have produced better results rather than insisting on applying what ECA and UNDP have described as an alien culture.

Liberal internationalism's insistence on the domestic analogy, at times without questioning its efficacy has muted the emergence of globally diverse and pluralistic democratic models shaped by the histories and realities of the developing countries. Obviously, due to different levels of economic and technological development, the public sphere differs qualitatively among developing countries, and probably among most Western societies as well- let alone between developed and developing societies.

LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM AND THE SEARCH FOR THE ORDINARY

Before, concluding this oration let me explore the connections between the core values that inform development and democratic intervention. An allied question is what does the domestic analogy have to do with development in general and politics of development in particular.

First, both democracy and development are part of the optimism inherent in liberal internationalism and its believe in the domestic analogy. The tenets of this argument found their antecedence in enlightenment and modernity. They usher in the conviction that if enlightenment and progress were possible in one society, they must be possible and duly transferable to other societies.

Second, both democracy and development are premised on the idea of growth: one privileges political, social and moral growth, the other ushers in the importance of economic growth.

Third, democracy and development are culturally embedded and therefore they operate well within institutions that have integrated the core values consistent with both.

Forth, because of the apparent complexity involved in creating an analogy between Western and developing countries public spheres, both development and democratic intervention never questioned whether other peoples too have their versions of democracy and perceptions of development.

Is it not obvious that liberal internationalism has been searching for what it has misconceived as an ordinary driven from Western political cultures and not those of the developing countries?

This reminds me of the writings of my South African colleague Professor Njabulo Ndebele on "South Africa and the Rediscovery of the Ordinary" (Ndebele 1985). In his work Professor Ndebele laments, it took the people of South Africa, with all their shades and colours, more than a century to discover the ordinary. Rediscovering the ordinary in Professor Ndebele's view is about rediscovering human worth and democracy's capacity to redeem politics of it lethal consequences.

Is it not ironic that the ordinary is yet to be discovered, let alone rediscovered. Despite the common assumption that the ordinary is known and does not require much pondering, most of the questions that have engaged human thought and creativity belong to the realm of the ordinary.

In no area of human ingenuity has the search for the ordinary been more daunting than in the contested domains of democracy and the possibilities it could offer for individual freedom and collective well-being. It is in this perspective that liberal internationalism, with all its optimism and promise has failed to see democracy as an embedded and desirable human value as well as a constellation of diverse ordinaries.

There must be some twists and turns that we could have contemplated in the search for the ordinary. Concepts such as liberal internationalism, the domestic analogy and public sphere could be redefined and enlarged in order to explain new, complex and diverse realities. The alternative is to render the democratic process hostage to a hopelessly narrow conception incapable of capturing the evolving realities, messages and meanings that we espouse to understand.

Ladies and gentlemen before I leave this august podium, I have some words of thanks to make. My thanks are due to you Meneer Rector Magnificus, the Dean of the Social Sciences, the Chair of the Department of Political Science and my colleagues at the Department of Political Science. Thanks also to my friend and colleague Professor Hans Opschoor, the Rector of the Institute of Social Studies and my colleagues and students from the Institute of Social Studies.

Collaborative teaching and promotion of PhD students between Department of Political Science and the Institute of Social Studies has already begun, with three PhD promotions underway. Two Leiden colleagues will take part in teaching at the Institute of Social Studies, while I will also start teaching a course on *NGOs, State and Civil Society in the Developing Countries* here in Leiden early next year.

Ladies and gentlemen
There are many family, friends and colleagues who came from abroad to attend this ceremony. I would like to thank and acknowledge the presence of Professor Holger Bernt Hansen, the Director of the Centre of African Studies, Copenhagen University in Denmark and the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Danish Authority for International Development (Danida), our equivalent of DGIS.

Thanks and much gratitude to Professor Rene Devisch of the Centre of Development Studies at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium; Professor Abdel Ghaffar Mohamed Ahmed, the Executive Secretary of the Organisation for

Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa, Ethiopia.

I have also recognise colleagues and students from the University of Amsterdam, the Free University of Amsterdam, Utrecht, Njimegen, Rotterdam and other Dutch Universities for whom I'm most grateful.

From the family side, I extend many thanks and much gratitude to my parents-in-law Heinrich and Gertrude Brons, and all members of the German delegation.

I cannot possibly mention everybody by name during the time available to this oration. All what I can say is thanks to all of you for taking this afternoon to be here with us and for your friendship, collegiality and unfailing support.

I reserve many special thanks and much gratitude to my wife, Maria Brons and our two daughters Norika and Johanna for allowing me much liberty, not only to work hard, but also to travel far and wide. Like most liberties, mine too has to be constrained so that I take up my household choirs.

Ik heb gezegd

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