

THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESSES. THE CASE STUDIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, I examine the role of collective identities in democratization processes in Europe, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. This study contributes to the latest academic “neorealist-neoliberal debate” and constructivist theories by emphasizing a crucial acknowledgement. With the bright exception of the European Union, which boasts the only peaceful democratization process in the post-war era, there is strong evidence that East Asia and Southeast Asia are going to experience the “orthodoxy” of democratization processes, namely time-consuming and rather violent democratization periods. This means that in this geographically vast area of Asia, the democratization processes will be long-lasting social constructions mixed with strong ethnic consciousness, and rather violent processes.

Keywords: “Liminal situation”, Transition, Collective identities, ‘Total social fact’, Social movements, Rebellious societies, Multiple identities, “Electoral” democracy, Inclusive democracy, Consolidating democracy, Ethnic consciousness, Multi-ethnic identities

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INTRODUCTION

In this essay, I conceive the concept of identity as a social and cultural phenomenon of cultural and social construction. In particular, I see identity as a dynamic reality, as a process of *becoming*; it is the shared faith that constructs identity and a sense of belonging. Therefore, I understand the existence of different types of identity as they have developed in most of the modern world within historical and contemporary perspectives, and consequently, the existence of different types and aspects of collective identities in modernity. In this vein, collective identities, either cultural, religious, linguistic, social or political, subject to change from time to time, from place to place, and from society to society. In the same sense, democratization may refer to a country, national or international institution; and, although it may follow some pattern, every democratic implementation is unique. In this essay, “democratization” will be defined as each

transition from an autocratic, authoritarian, despotic, dictatorial, tyrannical, totalitarian, absolutist, traditional, monarchic, oligarchic, plutocratic, aristocratic, and sultanistic regime into a democracy, in accordance with Schmitter and Karl’s (1991, 1996) definition.

Because of numerous changes that happened in the last quarter of the twentieth century there has been a global surge towards democratic regimes, widely known as the “third wave” of democratization, especially thanks to Samuel Huntington (1993a). The changes included: (a) the fall of right-wing authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s, (b) the replacement of military dictatorships by elected civilian governments across Latin America from the late 1970s through the late 1980s, (c) the decline of authoritarian rule in parts of East and South Asia starting in the mid-1980s, (d) the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, (e) the breakup of the Soviet Union and the establishment of 15 post-Soviet republics in 1991, (f) the decline of one-

party regimes in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa in the first half of the 1990s, and (g) a weak but recognizable liberalizing trend in some Middle Eastern countries in the 1990's.

Because collective identities can be found in imperial, authoritarian, and quasi-democratic regimes, as well as democratic regimes, more democratization processes can eventually exist than a person can actually count. In this essay, I will mainly focus on the role of collective identities in the democratization processes from an anthropological point of view and particularly with reference to the third wave of democratization. Although there have been numerous assertions of the current experience of the fourth wave of democratization, which the writer also believes to be taking place nowadays and to which I will refer later to, the main body of this essay will be based on empirical evidence from analyzing the third wave of democratization processes (through the two case studies of democratization in the European Union, as well as in East and Southeast Asia) with reference to the role of the collective identities in these democratization processes.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESSES

Drawing from Claude Lefort's (1986) anthropological interpretation of the transition to democracy during the French Revolution, there is a real moment when the place of power is empty, which constitutes apart from a power vacuum, a 'total social fact' as well. According to Lefort, a dual incident is taking place almost simultaneously; in one part, there happens the abdication of the rules and, in another part, there begins the construction of collective myths and cultures. This dual process, 'the dissolution of markers of uncertainty' in Lefort's words (p. 31), or what Wydra (2009) calls 'liminal situation' (pp. 94-95), vividly delineates the moment of transition from an unwanted regime to the materialization of the new collective, more democratic aspirations. During this liminal period no affiliation or identity exists.

It is the moment when the present meets with the common past and aspires to forge the common future to come. This is the time of transition, which is not imposed by exogenous factors, but is rather inspired by the endogenous collective needs and interests. This is the new

meaning formation that the collective identities bring. It is the constructed "we", the new collective emotional bonds, based undoubtedly on collective imaginaries—according to Ortega y Gasset's (1994) saying "imagination is the liberating power possessed by man" (p. 155)—rituals and myths, that constitutes the collective drivers and agents of transformation. It is the political community, which Whitehead (2002) considers as receptive both to democratic aspirations and to change been implemented, which focuses on political participation after the transition (p. 65). And while there is always the need for a symbolic representation and the formation of a new democratic meaning towards the people as the master (Wydra 2010, p. 497), there is evidence in history that new democracies usually emerge from the peaceful past through violent eruptions, either in the form of revolutions or wars. From the assembly democracy of the ancient Greeks, to the representative democracy of modern Europe, to the participatory democracy of the 20th century world, up to monitory or 'deliberative democracy' of today (Appudurai 2007, p. 32; Kean 2009, p. 877), democracy has never occurred naturally or been distributed by God universally. It has always had to be conquered through collective action each time. Typical historical cases of the usually slow, violent and marked by revulsions democratic transitions based on the construction of collective identities are: (a) In England, the English Civil War (1642–1651) fought between the King and an oligarchic but elected Parliament, followed by the Glorious Revolution (1688), which established a strong Parliament, and, finally, the Representation of the People Act (1884), with which a majority of the males obtained the voting right. (b) In France, the path to democracy passed through the twenty-year experience of the French Revolution (1789) and the Napoleonic Wars. It followed the backlashes of the more oligarchic French Directory, the First French Empire and the Bourbon Restoration with more autocratic rule. The Second French Republic experienced universal male suffrage, but was followed by the Second French Empire. The Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), finally, resulted in the French Third Republic. (c) In the American continent, the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) created the United States establishing a relatively true republic, which never experienced a single dictator, instead experienced slavery that was only abolished with the American Civil

War (1861–1865), while Civil Rights were given to African-Americans only in the 1960s and after a lot of collective action.

According to Whitehead (2002), democracy is “a long-term, complex, and partially open-ended process” (p. 65), or as Kean (2009) has put it, “an unending exercise in humbling the arrogant” (p. 879). Consequently, the collective identities lie on **democracy in action stirring up people’s sense** of the historical contingency of power relations, a sense which constitutes a dynamic perspective of constructing a better present and future.

In most recent modern emerging democracies, the collective action is channeled into the ritual of Elections, where the new collectivity asks for a representative democracy, in which all and not only a part of the population will participate. This is an inclusive democracy, and although a minimum democratic consensus is essential, collective action may be intensified in order for such a democracy to be achieved. Schumpeter (1942) has talked about ‘electoral democracy’, while Dahl (1971) defines this as ‘polyarchy’. At the same time, there can be other performances of various collectivities, in the form of social movements, rebellious societies, with protests and contestations over public goods and, even, civil disobedience. There is not a unique, easy **path to democracy, a ‘one-democracy-fits-all’** model; on the contrary, each people has to find its own road to democracy, new meanings, new norms and new practices to suit its own unique democratic aspirations. These new creations, together maybe with new symbols, will reflect **each people’s unique historical background**, cultural heritage, perhaps its religious beliefs, as well as its economic-societal dynamics. As Kopecky and Mudde (2000) have observed, the democratization literature often considers the political parties and the large interest groups as the main player and tends to ignore the various civil society movements and associations, even if their relative importance in a new democracy is important.

This new emerging democracy out of collective identities is treated as sacred, as a new reality to be respected by everyone being a constituent part of it. Just as those sacrificed in the name of democracy are held sacred, the new, sacred democracy needs to be consolidated. This will be the third and last phase of democratization process. According to Huntington (1993a), democratization involves: (1) the end of an authoritarian regime, (2) the installation of a

democratic regime, and (3) the consolidation of the democratic regime. A new Constitution may arise based on new declarations and aspirations, as an assurance that the old mistakes will be avoided in the future and new commitments are to be taken towards a promising societal welfare in present and near future. As Schedler (1998) has put it, **‘democratic consolidation is not about regime stability. It is about expectations of regime stability’** (cited in Kopecky and Mudde 2000, p. 534). Then follows what Carothers (2007a) calls **“the Sequencing Fallacy”,** namely the establishment of the rule of law, strong political institutions, and accountability. Although the consolidation of the new democracy is the most difficult part of the democratization process, nevertheless it has to be achieved in order for the transition to succeed completely. As Huntington has argued, disillusionment with democracy is necessary to consolidating democracy (Huntington 1993a; Berman 2007).

In Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, the collective identities were channeled into nation-states formation to such intensity, that collective identities became synonymous to national or ethnic identities. Out from the French Revolution there emerged the French state, from fear of the expansion of the French nation-state to greater territories, the German and Italian unifications brought about the German and Italian nation-states correspondingly. During the twentieth century, after the First World War with the dissolution of the great multinational empires (the German, the Austro-Hungarian, the Russian, and the Ottoman) numerous new states emerged into existence. After the Second World War and the decolonization wave, new countries emerged around the world, especially in Asia and Africa. After the Cold War, owing to the failure of the communism and the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia new countries emerged in the Central and Eastern Europe from the former Eastern bloc. Most of these transitions to democracy, as well as the successful non-European late-twentieth-century transitions of Chile, South Korea, and Brazil, were either bloody and long-lasting revolutions or civil wars, following on either case a mostly difficult process of breaking down the infrastructure and culture of the ancient regime. For the history, the first wave of democratization started in the early 1800's, the second occurred after World War II, and the third began in 1974 and included the

countries liberated by the end of communism in the late 1980's. Huntington (1993a) supports that transitions during the third wave were less violent than those of the previous waves, as there has always been a *compromise* and a middle ground bourgeoisie that contributed to a more peaceful democratization process.

Collective (including national) identities should not exaggerate themselves in their democratization process. Ortega y Gasset correctly diagnosed in the 1930s the rise of expectations that results from democratization of politics, improvement in quality of life and involvement of the masses, as the reason why societies push themselves toward tyrannical systems. Of course, 'collective identities' is a broader concept than national identities. As the frenzy of the two world wars of the twentieth century that left Europe in tatters and its civilization shattered was attributed to exaggerating action of national identities, collective identities consequently became a 'loaded' term, as they were associated with malign nationalism (the Nazism and Fascism), civil wars and coup-d'états (in Spain and Greece).

FIRST CASE STUDY: THE EUROPEAN UNION DEMOCRATIZATION AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

The European Community (today European Union) project tried to avoid the term of 'collective identities', although these exist, either in cultural, religious or other form. Meanwhile, democratizing the already democratized European Union may seem as a paradoxical phenomenon, since all member-states of the Union must have a consolidated democratic regime before joining it, with the only exception of some of its latest member-states, some ex-soviet states. Or more than paradoxical, it can be regarded as a post-modern endeavor, unique in political history up to now. The European Union (E.U.), a *sui generis* political entity, although is trying to build a common European conscience on the basis of prior multi-national histories and diverse past memories of its member-states, does not focus as much on old national symbols, as it focuses on new types of democratic institutions and practices. Calhoun (2007) suggests that, as we lack realistic alternatives, nations provide for structures of belonging. Therefore, national integration, identity and democracy are interwoven in the state-building, as national identity

(like all collective identity) is inherently political, created in speech, action, and recognition. Also, nationalism and social institutions, as well as cultures and structures of social relations, which are constitutive of democracy, subject to change through democratic action and social struggles (Calhoun, 2007, pp. 152-153, 173). Although a flag and an anthem had to be invented to express the new European collectivity and represent it in the United Nations-which is built on the existence of sovereign states-, the E.U. is promoting its new non-national but collective and democratic concept through its motto 'united in diversity'. For the first time in history, a new political entity gives emphasis on its respect for diversity, written on its preamble of its founding Treaty and in the first articles of its current Treaty (the Lisbon Treaty), after the latest enlargements of 2004 and 2013 to encompass all its 28 member-states in its civic society. According to the Lisbon Treaty (article 2), the E.U. is defined as "a Union/community of democratic values, which is based upon the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, as well as upon the respect for human rights, including minority rights. These values are common in the state-members societies, who are defined by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women". It is the first time that the *values* upon which the E.U. is based are imprinted in detail in a Treaty context.

The E.U. institutions, although have at times been accused of suffering from democratic deficit, thus they take their legitimacy from complicated checks and balances among them (narrow mandates, fiscal limits, super-majoritarian and concurrent voting requirements, and separation of powers), from a unique type of governance based on solidarity and respect for differences. The discourse on the E.U. democratic deficit might be considered as an open one, as long as the Eurobarometer provides relevant evidence of the public opinion. For instance, the Eurobarometer on the European Parliament and the expectations of the European citizens, namely the 2014 Parlemeter (2014), highlights that 47% of the Europeans placed the values of democracy and freedom above all, when asked on the elements of the European identity. Actually, the discourse on the E.U. democratic deficit dates back to the 1950s and is thought to have reached its peak during the 1990s. Academics, still today, seem divided

between those asserting that there is indeed a democratic deficit (Featherstone 1994; Follesdal & Hix 2006), and those asserting that there is not one (Majone 1998; Moravcsik 2002; Eriksen & Fossum 2008).

Moravcsik (2010) attributes the sense of democratic deficit to the underlying nationalism in the public issues (p. 14). Therefore, as I argue, the citizens of the E.U. are not trying to form a new collective identity, acknowledging their respect for *multiple identities*, which characterize them better. Through the dual citizenship, of the member-state and of the European Union correspondingly, citizens who were enemies more than half a century ago are now trying to come together with a common peaceful understanding of their political, economic and societal solidarity. Offe and Preuss (2006) underline that solidarity does not presuppose either the fusion of the many into one body, a *demos*, or the coercive homogeneity of the rulers and the ruled in order to legitimize the necessity of obedience (p. 31). On the contrary, solidarity is founded on the mutual recognition of 'otherness'. So the E.U. has chosen a more inclusive democratization process. They also call the Union citizenship "the dissociation of nationality and citizenship", "an embryonic form of non-nation citizenship", which, in my view, suggests an innovative construction of the 'we', a brand new political identity.

The Lisbon Treaty, the more democratic Treaty so far, promotes the democratic character of the E.U. through the empowerment of both the National Parliaments and the European Parliament, the only directly elected institution, by enforcing democratic control over the other institutions. The Treaty also marginally improves the context of the Final Provisions for the 'European citizenship' by reinforcing the Provisions for non-discriminations and by creating a new legal base for the institutional arrangements to be made for the reassurance of the diplomatic protection of the citizens. Mechanisms, like *the Citizens' Initiative*, enhance citizens' participation in everyday European politics, as well.

Manuel Castells (2000) suggests building a common European identity in what he calls the 'European Identity Project'. In my view, while the dual citizenship in the E.U. is an enacted prerogative, the lack of a common European identity is not necessarily to blame for the sense of democratic deficit. Not the lack of a common

European *demos* would lead to eliminating this feeling. The Europeanization project should, therefore, mainly mean the respect for values and human, especially civil and political rights, such as democracy, equality, solidarity and rule of law, as well as the respect for human diversity on a socio-political basis, as long as the European unity and entity is peacefully achieved.

Although the philosophical and ethical question of 'how democratic the E.U. is' could eternally remain open, to my mind the EU has been *as democratic as it could be*. The human rights have long been rooted in the consciousness of the Europeans and whether or not the Europeans see themselves as members of a community, a strong and unique political European identity *is not* a functional precondition for legitimate democratic governance in the E.U., as far as every day politics is concerned. Even the danger from the rise of political Islam and the overall identity crises in Europe could be dealt on the democratic basis of the respect for human rights.

The Europeans have always been democratic in their *diversity*. In a nutshell, they have proved that they can be united by keeping their *multiple identities*, far from any kind of discriminations and boundaries in geographical and socio-political aspects. Thus, these incidents should not trigger further Euroscepticism, as long as the institutional mechanisms for the European balance, welfare and stability are effectively functioning. After all, as Hans-Jorg Trenz and Pieter de Wilde have put it (2009), Euroscepticism is part of a reactive identity formation. I strongly believe that any sporadic appearance of xenophobic or racist incidents whether in big or in small member states of the EU are being instantly condemned by the public opinion and the European citizens. For example, the majority of the European citizens, as well as the governments of all member-states of the E.U. have almost unanimously condemned the recent xenophobic attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* newspaper's headquarters in France. As Angela Merkel underlines at the Preface of Piris's (2010) book, the Lisbon Treaty makes the European Union stronger and more independent in foreign policy but internally more democratic, which means it is better equipped to face the new challenges of an increasingly globalized world. Feeling primarily a European citizen instead of a German, French or Greek one, for instance, has not only to do with immigrants from other

continents after all; it has to do with everyday European coordinated policies and politics, with the possibility of creating strong and viable collective (mainly cultural) identities but not cultural homogenization, a great challenge in a globalized world, indeed.

CHALLENGING CONCEPTIONS OF IDENTITIES

In the field of International Relations, there has always been a tension between rationalists and constructivists with reference to the role of the ethnic identities in the international politics. In an excellent and most intriguing review article, Fearon and Laitin (2000) examining the connection between violence and social construction of ethnic identity from the perspective of individuals –either the elites or the masses- and from supra-individual discourses of ethnicity, conclude that both rationalist and culturalist constructivists share the same challenges. Because, as they argue, if individualists are considered as the agents who construct ethnic identities, then constructivist “**explanations for ethnic violence tend to merge with rationalist, strategic analyses. And if ‘discursive formations’ or cultural systems are seen as the agents that construct ethnic identities, then constructivist explanations for ethnic violence tend to merge with culturalist accounts**” (Fearon & Laitin, 2000, p. 846). Consequently, they support that the overall methodological division between culturalist and rationalist accounts can be bridged.

The neorealist-neoliberal debate about the possibilities for collective action in international relations has been based on a shared commitment to Mancur Olson's rationalist definition of the problem as one of getting exogenously given egoists to cooperate. Treating this assumption as a *de facto* hypothesis about world politics, the constructivist Alexander Wendt (1994) articulates that interaction at the systemic level changes state identities and interests. The causes of state egoism do not justify always treating it as given. Insights from critical international relations and integration theories suggest how collective identity among states could emerge endogenously at the systemic level. Such a process would generate cooperation that neither neorealists nor neoliberals expect and help transform systemic anarchy into an “international state”--a transnational structure of political authority that might undermine territorial democracy. Wendt

(1994) has long shown how broadening systemic theory beyond rationalist concerns can help it to explain structural change in world politics.

SECOND CASE STUDY: COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESSES IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

The main source about this case study has been the collective work *Democratization and Identity: Regimes and Ethnicity in East and Southeast Asia*, edited by Susan J. Henders (2004), which deals with the interactions of ethnic consciousness and identity in the processes of democratization in various Asian states. In this work, political regimes and ethnic identities are viewed as co-constitutive: authoritarianism, democratization, and democracy are interconnected processes of (re)production of collective (including ethnic) identities and political power, under the influence of entrenched and evolving sociopolitical relations (especially shaped by patrimonial processes) and forms of economic production (Henders, 2004, p. 18).

Daniel Bell (2004) asserts that East and Southeast Asia offer strong evidence that **nondemocratic or ‘less-than-democratic’ states like Singapore, Indonesia under Suharto’s *Pancasila*, Malaysia, and China** have some advantages over democratizing and democratic ones in dealing with ethnic differences that avert from ethnic conflicts and have some success protecting the legitimate interests of minority ethnic groups. These countries, according to Bell, in the absence of electorate competition, are less likely to resort to nation-building around the nationalist symbols, institutions, and discourses of a majority ethnic group. Others (Bertrand, 2004; Brown, 2004; Nagata, 2004; Rankin & Goonewardena, 2004) questioning Bell (2004), assert that, despite their freedom from electoral pressures, **the governments of China, Suharto’s Indonesia, the Philippines under Marcos, Malaysia and Taiwan under authoritarian Kuomintang rule**, have engaged in ethnic majority nation-building at the expense of vulnerable ethnic groups and with potentially negative long-term consequences for ethnically inclusive, nonhierarchical democratization.

David Brown (2004), Rankin and Goonewardena (2004), Judith Nagata (2004), and Bertrand (2004), also questioning Bell, suggest that, even where authoritarian governments do

foster pan- or multiethnic identities, the needs of vulnerable minority communities are not always protected. Stressing that those who benefit from the techniques of (re)production of pan- and multiethnic identities in less-than-democratic governments are the elites, they underline that in **Suharto's Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia**, corporatist or patrimonial institutions, based on co-opted ethnic elites and a centrally enforced **unitary identity, hold together the government's** multiethnic vision of the nation. The elites therefore exclude alternative visions of group identity and multiethnicity more compatible with democratic values. On the other hand, Dru Gladney (2004), consistent with Bell, grants **limited success to China's multiethnic policies**, especially in the post-Mao period, painting a paradoxical picture of the potential and limits of **the Chinese government's attempts to** consolidate an ethnically inclusive nation and protect vulnerable minorities (Henders 2004, pp. 3-4).

More specifically, the constitution of ethnic identities by authoritarian political processes significantly influences how they will be understood during democratization, though democratizing regimes also raise their own characteristics challenged for the creation and maintenance of ethnically inclusive and nonhierarchical political communities. Moreover, the politics of ethnic and other collective identities are not peripheral or incidental to democratization, but rather integral to it, just as they are central to the creation and maintenance of authoritarian or democratic rule. And, although the risk of ethnic conflict, exclusion, or hierarchy during democratization largely depends on the nature of the ethnic identities and relations constituted during authoritarian rule, although the concept of ethnic and national identities have been challenged by constructivist and poststructuralist perspectives, there are prospects for ethnically inclusive, nonhierarchical democratization across East and Southeast Asia and beyond.

THE END OF TRANSITION PARADIGM?

In the 21st-century democratization literature there are some serious voices of the necessity of the end of the transition paradigm. Thomas Carothers (2002) suggests that the democracy-promotion community discard the transition paradigm. His argument is based on the empirical evidence that the five core assumptions for

democratization are no longer appropriate for many countries that democracy activists have **been labeling 'transitional countries'**. In other words, it is no longer appropriate to assume: (a) that most of these countries are actually in a transition to democracy; (b) that countries moving away from authoritarianism tend to follow a three-part process of democratization consisting of *opening, breakthrough, and consolidation*; (c) that the establishment of regular, genuine elections will not only give new governments democratic legitimacy but foster a longer term deepening of democratic participation and accountability; (d) that a **country's chances for successfully democratizing** depend primarily on the political intentions and actions of its political elites without significant influence from underlying economic, social, and institutional conditions and legacies; (e) that state-building is a secondary challenge to democracy-building and largely compatible with it.

According to Carothers, since what is often thought of as an uneasy, precarious middle ground between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship is actually the most common political condition today of countries in the developing world and the post-communist world, democracy promoters need to focus in on the key political patterns of each country in which they intervene. Its distinct history and culture should be seriously taken into consideration. Significant attention should also be given to the challenge of helping to encourage the growth of alternative centers of power. Political party development must be a top agenda item. Democracy aid must proceed from a penetrating analysis of the particular core syndrome that defines the political life of the country in question, and how aid interventions can change that syndrome.

While the conception of democratization is perceived as a predictable, sequential process of incremental steps, as it is vividly exemplified in USAID's **'managing for results' assessment** system (USAID, 1998), some political scientists argue whether the concept of democratic **consolidation have teleological qualities** (O'Donnell, 1996) or not (Gunther et al., 1996). In either case, moving beyond the transition paradigm would mainly mean bridging the long-lasting divide between aid programs directed at democracy-building and those focused on social and economic development. As these programs

have major implications for how power is distributed in a society, how ruling political forces can entrench themselves, and how the public participates in policy decisions, democracy-aid providers should develop a broader conception of democracy to show that they have major contributions on the main stage of the development-assistance world (Carothers 2002, pp. 19-20).

In other words, Carothers move the focus from the usual procedures of democratization processes to the aims that such processes should fulfill and to the ways of bringing these aims into being. For Nobelist Amartya Sen (1999), successful democratization is synonymous to development in the broader sense including human freedoms, social and economic arrangements (i.e. facilities for education and health care), political and civil rights. Apart from democratic institutions, values and priorities such as social justice, opportunities of articulation and participation in public debates, discussions and organized opposition groups are also important for both well-established and newer democracies.

THE END OF THE THIRD WAVE OF DEMOCRATIZATION OR JUST DEMOCRACY UNDER THE BANYAN TREE?

As new dynamic incidents in world politics have been taking place lately, incidents such as the Arab Spring, the recent riots in Russia concerning democracy and various mass movements organized rapidly through electronic innovations and instantly around the globe asking for more individual participation in democratic processes, many theoreticians wonder whether the third wave of democratization is over and a fourth one is under way (Diamond, 1997; Carothers, 2007b). This wary thought has been triggered by the fact that democracy promotion is experiencing serious questions about its very legitimacy, evident in both the backlash from a number of nondemocratic governments resisting democracy assistance in new ways, and also in a heightened questioning by people in many parts of the world of the value and legitimacy of democracy promotion itself. This turning point occurred after the USA war in Iraq (2003-2010) and, especially, after the announcement of the War on Terror in 2001 by the President G.W. Bush, events that in the public opinion were conceived as an American manipulation of the democratic

processes towards serving American foreign policy interests around the world. And this might be one of the many paradoxes of democracy, the third wave of democratization been announced by the American President Ronald Reagan in the mid-1980s as the “worldwide democratic revolution” (Carothers, 2002, p. 6), to be denounced by the policy of another American president, G.W. Bush, in the first decade of the twenty first century.

Apart from this legitimacy crisis of the democratization processes in general, there is the real challenge to democracy from the remaining authoritarian or totalitarian governments, the survivors of the third wave of democratization, the adaptable ones, namely the economically successful governments. China, for instance, would fall in this domain, challenging the democratic world superpower of the USA. But to me, it seems like much ado about nothing. It is well-known that democracy is developing through time, through regimes and societies. Democracy has been depicted as a robust Banyan tree, meaning that every people, taking power by its unique historical and cultural roots can grow new branches of democratic practices compatible to their distinct democratic aspirations. The Banyan tree is sacred to Hindus and Buddhists and symbolizes the unity that comes from diversity. Just as post-colonial India in the 1950s developed a much different type of democracy from its Westminster prototype one, a ‘post-Westminster type of democracy’ based on its inner diversity and multi-nationalism and with the lack of a homogenous demos and a common culture (Keane, 2009: 586, 629), China might not be too soon to admit that is on the verge of developing its unique democratic model, so different from its American prototype (Fukuyama, 2011). For the last three decades, China seems to have been developing its unique developmental model. But the seeds of democratic aspirations were also first sown in the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement and are growing plants thanks to human rights and democratization activists, who are constantly asking for a more participatory and democratic regime, with tangible respect for human beings, **with dignity in tolerance of “otherness” and in coexistence with minority groups.**

CONCLUSION

Just as my analysis of the role of the collective identities in the democratization processes

within the context of the third wave of democratization, which constitutes the orthodoxy in democratization studies, as well as my depiction of some current debates concerning the end of the transition paradigm and the current or imminent fourth wave of democratization suggest, there has always been a moment in the collective memory that new democratic aspirations spring out and these form the leitmotiv of the new democratic practices to be. When the void of power is fraught with these new collective aspirations, it is only a matter of time and a happy coincidence of political concurrences that these aspirations will bring about new, fruitful democratic realities, which are always as unique, as were the historical and cultural roots that gave shape to the democratic aspirations in the first place.

As both our case studies showed, the social construction of collective identities can be achieved either through top-down processes (from the elites) or from bottom-up processes (from the masses). As it makes more sense both ethically and politically to consider democratization as an internal rather than external process, what is definitely certain is that the role of collective (including ethnic) identities is crucial in the constitution of political, including economic, regimes and in the democratization processes. For the E.U. with its expansion with new member-states, there has been a continuous, peaceful democratic process so far, whereas for the East and Southeast Asia with solid states of different political, cultural, and religious systems, there might be more democratization processes and more violent ones.

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