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Democracy and Decentralization

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Abstract

Democracy is a contested concept and needs to be understood contextually if one is to understand the democratization process and avoid misinterpretation and malpractices. One of the arguments of why democracy is stagnant or even in retreat is the decay of state institutions. This paper discusses the conception of democracy by examining its root causes and ways to deepen democracy. A number of scholarly literatures related to democracy, democratization and decentralization are reviewed and discussed in order to assess the argument that political decentralization is crucial to deepening democracy.

Keywords: Democracy; Democratization; Decentralization

I. Introduction

It is acknowledged that there are many possible paths to democracy and not all authoritarian regimes have transitioned to democracy. Democracy connotes different meanings to different societies, yet it is claimed as a "universal value" that nearly everyone shares together (Sen, 1999). However, the concept of democracy is very perplexing to Cambodians in a number of ways. For example, the term democracy is associated with holding elections and yet not all elections are democratic as referenced by elections that took place over the summer of 1946. More importantly, the rhetorical use of the term democracy has been used by repressive regimes to mask their true intentions. Democratic Kampuchea, more commonly referred to as the Khmer Rouge, which committed genocide in the 1970s is a good example of the false rhetorical use of the word and contributes to the difficulty of the Cambodian people to fully understand the concept of democracy. Democracy is generally associated with freedom and human rights, which was introduced to Cambodia by the west in the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement and later reaffirmed in Cambodia's constitution. Many regimes, including peace centered and repressive ones alike, rhetorically use

the same term – democracy. This conflicting use of the word concept has been explored by Mona Lilja (Lilja, 2010) whose research findings suggest that democracy has been understood differently among politicians, non-governmental organizations, and local citizens who seem reluctant to positively perceive the western view of democracy due to its misuse in the past. Her interviews provide significant insights on what democracy means to Cambodians:

> Pol Pot killed all educated people in Cambodia. No one has education now. People are not educated. At that time the leaders called themselves democrats too. Even the country was named a democracy. Therefore, people lose their faith in democracy. Before they did not know what democracy was. Do they know that now?
> (Lilja, 2010, p. 298, Interview, Politician, Phnom Penh, 19 April 2007)

> There is no history of education and democracy in Cambodia. There is no strong culture and education, that is, education to understand the elections ... We must also fight the picture that democracy is a Western idea, which is created by the Asian value debate.
> (Lilja, 2010, p. 298, Interview, Executive Director of a local NGO, Phnom Penh, 3 July 2007)

> It took time to understand democracy due to the fact that Khmer Rouge used the word democracy. The language is not that clear. What means democracy? People understood a few points, but not the nuances of democracy. They understood elections, but not how they are exercised. Now we must understand the nuances. What is, for example, equality?
> (Lilja, 2010, p. 299, Interview, Executive Director of a local NGO, Phnom Penh, 3 July 2007)

The United Nations introduced the concept of "liberal democracy" in the 1990s to Cambodia, yet the concept was not clearly communicated among the citizens, politicians, and the larger civil society. Mikael Baaz and Mona Lilja argue in their 2014 publication that the intended meaning of liberal democracy – the politics of ideas, is understood differently in the context of Cambodia because citizens see it as the politics of presence, in which personal identification is more important than party ideologies. They also warn that democracy in Cambodia has been hybridized and needs to be

understood clearly in the local context so that the democratization of the nation can be successfully consolidated.

Generated from various scholarly literatures, this article aims to first conceptualize democracy by discussing its root cause and the development of its conception. Then, it explores ways to deepen democracy under the proposition that deepening democracy is possible through decentralization. The purpose is twofold. First, this inductive approach will enhance the understanding of democracy under the argument that without fully disseminating its meaning and form to the public, the term democracy can be used to label undemocratic regimes and can lead to malpractices and abuses. Lastly, it provokes further discussion and debates about the possibility of deepening democracy through decentralization.

II. The Root Cause of Democracy

Liberalization is different from democratization since the former focuses on "the process of redefining and extending rights" and the later on "the processes whereby rules and procedures of citizenship are either applied to political institutions ... or expanded to include persons not previously enjoying such rights and obligations" (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pp. 7-8). The dominated analysis of what spurred the development of democracy over the past few decades has focused on Barrington Moore's work, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Moore asserts that the path to democracy lies with the rise of the middle class, and the struggle with the ruling elites to develop a balance of power in the political and economic spheres (1969). Using historical comparatives and analysis of case studies in England, France, the United States, Japan, India, China, and Russia, Moore (1969, p. 418) claims, "No bourgeois, no democracy."

However, the capitalism that endangers parliamentary democracy does not satisfy Robert Dahl. Arguing based on insufficient cases and long historical analysis, Dahl, in his historical sequences condition, postulates that there are three possible paths for a regime to become a polyarchy – an alternative term for democracy which will be discussed later in this section (1971). The first path he alludes to begins as a closed hegemonic regime that opens up to public competition, which is then followed by public participation. The second path, in contrast to the first, is when a regime opens for public participation first, and is subsequently followed by public competition. Finally, in an accelerated way, a regime is "abruptly transformed into a

polyarchy by a sudden grant of universal suffrage and rights of public contestation" (Dahl, 1971, p. 34). Dahl's other conditions determine whether or not a regime follows one of the paths. Those additional conditions are "the degree of concentration in the socioeconomic order, level of socioeconomic development, inequality, subcultural cleavages, foreign control, and the beliefs of political activists" (Dahl, 1971, p. 32). Dahl warns the first path is the "safest"; however, this option is no longer available to most countries as most are operating in the competitive open market already (p. 39). "Evolutionary processes" used by old regimes and revolutionary practices taken by new regimes are the main causes to force countries to widen their political competition (Dahl, 1971, pp. 40-41). The elites in the ruling party and the opposition party are still seen the main actors in causing evolution and revolution.

The work of Dankwart Rustow suggests a different approach. Rustow (1970) argues that the structural theory developed, for example, by Seymour Martin Lipset in which a high level of economic growth and social development are seen as a precursor to democracy cannot be interpreted as "preconditions" or causation to democracy (p. 342). Lipset is "careful to speak of 'some social requisites,' not prerequisites, 'of democracy,' and thus acknowledges the difference between correlation and cause," Rustow reiterated (p. 342). Alternatively, Rustow theorizes that when political elites are struggling over conflicts but try to refrain from polarizing the nation, they will adopt a compromised strategy, which is conducive to democracy, regardless of whether democracy is the end goal or not. He asserts that, "a country is likely to attain democracy not by copying the constitutional laws or parliamentary practices of some pervious democracy, but rather by honestly facing up to its particular conflicts and by devising or adapting effective procedures for their accommodation" (Rustow, 1970, p. 354). Thus, democracy is a result of the strategies employed by political elites trying to resolve political, social or economic conflicts when they agree to follow certain rules. However, Rustow does not suggest what causes conflict; instead he opens his argument for more possibilities. The strategic interaction used by political elites to deal with conflict among the "hard-liners" and "soft-liners" can also cause democracy to form (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986).

What actually causes a country to liberalize is ambiguous, as there are many possible variables. Rather than focusing on what causes a single regime to move towards democracy, Samuel Huntington categories the move from

non-democratic forms of governance to democracy into three waves of democratization (Huntington, 1993). "A wave usually involves liberalization or partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic," according to Huntington (1993, p. 15). Arguing that not all non-democratic regimes transition to a democratic regime, Huntington places more emphasis on the democratization process, which involves three stages: the fall of authoritarian rule, the establishment of democratic institutions, and the consolidation of those institutions (p. 35). The first wave of democracy occurred in both the American and French revolutions from the 1820s-1920s. There are many root causes to this first wave of democratization, including economic and social developments and the triumph of the western allies in the First World War. The second wave began in 1943 and continued until 1962. This wave is largely in response to the democracy and interventions imposed by the western allies after the Second World War. The third wave begins with the Portugal revolution in 1974 and continued until the 1990s. Huntington (1993) provides reasons for citing the causes and times mentioned above as follows:

1. The deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian systems in a world where democratic values are widely accepted, the dependence of those regimes on performance legitimacy, and the undermining of that legitimacy by military defeats, economic failures, and the oil shocks of 1973-74 and 1978-79;

2. The unprecedented global economic growth of the 1960s, which raised living standards, increased education, and greatly expanded the urban middle class in many countries;

3. The striking changes in the doctrine and activities of the Catholic Church manifested in the Second Vatican Council from 1963-65 and the transformation of national churches from defenders of the status quo to opponents of authoritarianism and proponents of social, economic, and political reform;

4. Changes in the policies of external actors, including in the late 1960s the new attitude of the European Community toward expanding its membership, the major shift in U.S. policies beginning in 1974 toward the promotion of human rights and democracy in other countries, and Gorbachev's dramatic change in the late 1980s in Soviet policy toward maintaining the Soviet

empire; and

5. "Snowballing" or demonstration effects, enhanced by new means of international communication, of the first transitions to democracy in the third wave in stimulating and providing models for subsequent efforts at regime change in other countries. (pp. 45-46)

Unfortunately, not all countries in the third wave have developed democracy. Some countries have ended up with one party systems, military regimes, and personal dictatorships (Huntington, 1993, p. 110). Observing the breakthrough of the dictatorships in post-communist countries in Europe and the former Soviet Union, Michael McFaul (2002) argues that those countries should have not been grouped in the third wave as it is "more accidental than causal" and he proposes to name it the Forth Wave of regime changes (p. 213).[1] These countries did not experience "stalemate, compromise and pacts" that led to democracies or autocracies, but rather, the powerful groups who were inclined to possess either the former or later determined the future of the regime. The power imbalance produces a prolongation of uncertainty, "yielding unconsolidated, unstable partial democracies and autocracies" (McFaul, 2002, pp. 213-214).

Examining the cases in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, McFaul (2005) further elaborates on seven conditions that could sway those countries to democracy. First is the growing support for opposition to semi-autocratic regimes. Since the elections are rigged, opposition parties gain more support due to the unpopularity of the incumbent parties, which is the second condition in the breakthrough. The third condition is the ability of the opposition groups to unite as political partners and challenge the incumbent together. The capacity of the opposition to conduct mass protests is the fourth condition. The roles of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also important in mobilizing the people. NGOs can also help monitor the election process and provide independent, fast and reliable election reports, which can reveal election fraud and cause the incumbent parties difficulties in continuing to manipulate, or gain trust from, the citizens – this marks the fifth condition. The sixth condition is the advent of technology and the

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[1] This separated wave was also known as the second wave of postcommunist transition, which is also in part of the global "third wave" coined by Huntington (1993).

growing number of independent media outlets that facilitate communication and mobilize mass support. The last important condition is the split between authority forces. Armed forces are reluctant to obey orders to bloodily crush mass protests, which are being conducted nonviolently. These conditions strengthen the claim, which previous theories emphasize, that "the level of economic development," "the split between hard-liners and soft liners," and "the relationship between the incumbent and the west" are important to democracies formation, but they are not the only causes (McFaul, 2005, pp. 15-18).

So far we have seen that it is impossible to find a single root cause of democracy, this is because democracy evolves from interrelated causes. The role of the middle classes in supporting democracy as suggested by Moore may not be applied to all cases as it revealed that the middle classes are generally supportive of "early liberal reform," but often reject the "call for full parliamentary government" (Moore, 1969). It should also be noted that the middle classes in Latin America have often supported military coups (Rueschemeyer et al., 1992, p. 271). The modernization theories that suggest economic growth, urbanization and raised education levels are main factors in developing democracy have also been proven to negatively affect the development of democracy (Teorell, 2010). Scholarship focusing on building democracy and democratization after the third wave seems to place more importance in finding ways to deepen democracy rather than focusing the root causes of democracy because most countries have already been liberated.

III. Democracy: The Conception and Stagnation

The term democracy has its roots in Athens. Under Cleisthenes' reforms, the first democratic system emerged. The word itself doesn't ascribe any conception or description that could transcend time, much as Anthony Birch argues, "the Greeks gave us the word, but did not provide us with a model" (Birch, 2001, p. 71). Birch claims that the term itself is not perplexing, but there is confusion because of "the vagueness of the terms commonly used to define a democratic political system, the difficulty of clarifying these terms in a value-free way, and the array of partially incompatible justifications for democracy advanced by democratic theorists" (p. 73). However, David Held asserts that the conception and principles of Athenian democracy have shaped, guided and influenced various thinkers over time and still today (Held, 2006). Held's *Models of Democracy* traces the developmental

conception of democracy and its characteristics from Athens to the contemporary world. Held's (2006) models democratic governance into ten categories, namely Ancient Athens, the Republican (Protective and Developmental), Liberal (Protective and Developmental), Marxist Direct, Competitive Elites, Pluralism, Legal, Participatory, Deliberative, and Autonomous/Cosmopolitan Democracy. The principles and characteristics of each model have certain weaknesses, strengths, and overlapping areas. Each group tends to fill in gaps presented by other models over time and space. The last model, "Autonomous Democracy," Held defines a democratic state in the following way:

> Persons should enjoy equal rights and, accordingly, equal obligations in the specification of the political framework which generates and limits the opportunities available to them; that is, they should be free and equal in the processes of deliberation about the conditions of their own lives and in the determination of these conditions, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others. (p. 282)

This model stresses the important role of state and civil society, which are accountable to, and operate under, the rule of law. Meaningful participation of citizens across social classes in the realms of political, social, and economic development is crucial. Held's model is considered as one of the many "thick versions" of democratic conceptions (Coppedge, 2012; Sørensen, 2007).

Democracy has also been conceptualized according to four main dimensions, which are constitutional, substantive, procedural, and process-oriented (Tilly, 2007). Constitutional types focus on the "constitution," substantive on the "condition of life and politics," the procedural on the "elections," and process-oriented on the "minimum set of processes". This understanding of democracy is mainly derived from Robert Dahl's Polyarchy (Tilly, 2007, pp. 7-9). Arguing that Dahl's conception cannot be examined, Tilly proposes that a democratic country should be identified according to "the degree that political relations between the state and its citizens feature broad, equal, protected and mutually binding consultation" (p. 10). From this we note that relationship between the state and its citizens in all countries has been moving back and forth between the four dimensions (breadth, equality, protection and mutually binding consultation). This, however, does not suggest any precise way to deepen the relationship.

Robert Dahl describes types of regimes that are "relatively democratized nation-states (countries)" as Polyarchies (Dahl, 1982, p. 4). The conception of Polyarchy refers to political institutions that characterize a democratic regime that meets the following criteria:

1. Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.
2. Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.
3. Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.
4. Practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government, though age limits may be higher for holding office than for the suffrage.
5. Citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order, and the prevailing ideology.
6. Citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. Moreover, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by law
7. To achieve their various rights, including those listed above, citizens also have a right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups (Dahl, 1982, pp. 10-11).

According to Dahl (1971), "democracy" is a governing system in which the government "responds to citizen preferences" by opening up for political competition and inclusion (pp. 1-2). To him, democratization is the change of regimes from "hegemonies and competitive oligarchies into near-polyarchies", from "near-polyarchies into full polyarchies", and from "full polyarchies to further polyarchies" (ibid., p. 10). He affirms that "no large system in the real world is fully democratized," but rather "...are closest to the ... polyarchies" (ibid., p. 8). Dahl's conception of democracy lies within the dimension of the citizens' rights to contestation and participation in politics under free and fair regulations. The first four requirements suggest the minimal aspect that "elections are inclusive, fair, and competitive," and the last two are "necessary not only during but also between elections" so that they can be "fair and competitive" (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 35). This "minimal procedural" requirement is not enough to describe "modern

political democracy" (Schmitter & Karl, 1991, p. 81).

In addition to the seven requirements of Dahl's Polyarchy, Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lunn Karl in their 1991 publication, claim that there are conditions, which are necessary for democracy – they are an elected government that is able to govern without interference from internal forces, for example, by the military or an external political system. This, of course, has to be practiced under certain rules or norms that require cooperation between the ruled and the ruler, including free and fair competitions, and the ability of civil society to influence to public decisions (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). Schmitter and Karl define modern political democracy as "a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives" (p. 76). This definition is elaborated on further by the following quotation, "and in which citizens comply voluntarily with their rulers' decisions—even when they have not explicitly approved these decisions—because they regard them as having been taken legitimately" (Schmitter, 2015, p. 36).

Dahl's conception is usually labeled as a "liberal democracy" (Schedler, 1998, p. 92). Andreas Schedler indicates that the two opposite directions of regimes can be classified, on the negative end, as an authoritarian regime, and an electoral, liberal, and advanced democracy on the other, positive end. Schedler (1998) claims no democratic regime has ever been ever completely consolidated but generally moves back and forth over the four categories. These clear dimensions show us that countries are democratizing as they move away from authoritarian regimes towards advanced democracies.

However, the assumption that countries are democratizing themselves simply because they are liberating or reforming its economic and political governance is a flawed argument. The belief that countries are transitioning toward democracy fails to account for what Thomas Carothers describes as the "gray zone", in which regimes have certain democratic institutions but are less accommodating to political opposition and civil society participation (Carothers, 2002). The political gray zone is a space where countries are "neither dictatorial nor clearly headed toward democracy" (p. 9). This gray zone produces subtypes of politics in which either the competitive political parties are not serious enough to democratize ("feckless pluralism"), or the dominating ruling parties are controlling the state to ensure that they always win the election ("dominant-power politics"), asserted Carothers in his 2002

work. Citizens living in the context of a gray zone do not meaningfully participate in the polity asides from voting, and the political parties are entertaining each other without making any serious reform toward a deeper democracy. Similar to the gray zone context, in 2002, Schedler introduced the term "foggy zone" where two types of regimes, electoral democracy and electoral authoritarian, are trapped in between a closed authoritarian government and attaining liberal democracy. To him, elections are needed to create a democratic country but it has to go beyond the election with liberalism where "rule of law, political accountability, bureaucratic integrity, and public deliberation" are institutionalized (Schedler, 2002, p. 37). What distinguishes an electoral democracy from electoral authoritarianism is that there are certain rules in which people have equal rights to contest and participate in a free and fair election in the former, while those rights are absent or rarely implemented in later.

Democracy is such a contested concept that has been continuously defined and redefined according to the forms of the governing regimes that emerge. Democracy can be described as a "principle or doctrine of government," "set of institutional arrangements or constitutional devices," and a "type of behavior" (Crick, 2002, p. 5). While electoral democratic regimes connotes the minimalist concept of democracy, which abides by rules and norms to ensure that there is inclusive, free and fair elections, liberal democracy is substantial since it goes beyond elections to include the social and economic equality, regime accountability, and rule of law. Advanced democracy is usually attached to the concept of democratic consolidation where democratic rules and norms have become "the only game in town" (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 15).

As democracy has been declared a "universal value" (Sen, 1999) and liberal democracy has won great victories over any other type of government (Fukuyamar, 1999, 2000), regimes have transformed their governance from closed authoritarian values into a blurred zone where it is difficult to distinguish between a democratic regime and non-democratic regime. However, what vary between the types of regimes are the quality dimensions of their democratic institutions. Diamond and Morlino (2004) have precisely laid out those qualities in dimensions that one can evaluate and seek ways to improve. They outline eight quality dimensions with their definitions followed by conditions necessary to enhance those qualities as well as the means to improve them. The table on the next page briefly describes those aspects of democratic quality dimensions.

Table 1. *Aspects of democratic quality*

Quality Dimensions	Definitions	Conditions	Means
1. Rule of law	Laws are equality fairly, and consistently applied to all people	Democratic values among elites; strong, effective, impartial bureaucratic system	Build up independence, capacity, and authority of law courts; mobilize and raise awareness by civil society
2. Participation	The rights to fully participation in politics and civil society organization must be granted not only to vote but also to any decision making process	Citizen with basic and civic education; knowledge of government and political affairs	Tolerate to different cultural and political beliefs
3. Competition	Recurring free and fair election	Legal and constitutional guarantee of fair funding and access to media	Set up accountable and independent electoral commission
4. Vertical Accountability	Elected political leaders are to communicate their decision with their constituencies	Lively participation and competition; fair power distribution	Enhance process of evaluation and assessment through relevant stakeholders – civil society, media, and think tank.
5. Horizontal Accountability	Officeholders are to check each other for appropriate and lawful conducts	Legal system enforcing checks and balances	Build capacity; train leaders; encourage responsibility

6. Freedom	Freedom of political, civil, social and economic activities	Fair, vertical and horizontal accountable, and independent institutions; inclusiveness; competitions;	Mobilize citizen through civil society to help check and defend the freedom
7. Equality	Equal rights to access legal protection	Political, social, and economic equalities; political will; strong horizontal accountability	Increase political space; develop autonomous groups;
8. Responsive-ness	Answer to what citizens need and demand	Strong vertical accountability with robust civil society; functional party system	Increase public resources; shape public interest

Source: Diamond & Morlino (2004)

So far, a number of democratic conceptions have been raised. Democracy is conceptualized around the relationship between state and its citizens, institutions, and quality governance. The relationship between state and citizens has to be constitutionally guaranteed, and citizens must have the right and freedom to elect their representatives, and to hold their representatives accountable. In addition, citizens must have the right to organize groups so that they can mobilize and advocate for certain issues. This can be either in the form of a political party or a civil society. State institutions must be able to facilitate and strengthen the dual relationship in a way so that government can effectively and efficiently respond to citizens' demands by either informing, persuading, rejecting or proposing policies to create a better society. The state must also make sure they govern using democratic principles, in which both leaders and citizens are mutually responsible to each other under the rule of law. Democratization is the process of enhancing the three dimensions mentioned above, which make the relationship between citizen and state closer and create effective institutions that respond with quality public services. Theories of democratization explain some different approaches and conditions that cause democracy either to prevail or be derailed. However, it is not helpful to understand its

evolution process alone. It is necessary to look at ways to deepen the democratic dimensions as well.

IV. Deepening Democracy

Fukuyama published a paper in the *Journal of Democracy* in 2015 posing a question why democracy is not improving so well. With the diminishing quality of freedom as pointed out by Larry Diamond, the influence of big authoritarian states such as Russia and China, and the instability of states caused by the Arab Spring, Fukuyama is not sure about the future of democracy in the world. However, one thing he that is hindering democracy, is the "failure of institutionalization" (Fukuyama, 2015, p. 12). To him, state institutions must be able to secure legitimate power, under the rule of law, to provide better public services. To have a modern government and successful democracy while "the initial mobilization against tyranny gets institutionalized and converted into durable practices," Fukuyama urges further steps by, first, transforming "social movements into political parties that can contest elections" and, last, using "legitimate authority and providing basic services to the population" (p. 19). With the two-stage suggestion, he sees the role of civil society organizations and grassroots efforts as less important by claiming, "the motive of creating modern governments was not grassroots pressure from informed and mobilized citizens but rather elite pressure" and "civil society organizations usually focus on narrow issues and are not set up to mobilize voters" (pp. 16-19). He also affirms that, "the legitimacy of many democracies around the world depends less on the deepening of their democratic institutions than on their ability to provide high-quality governance" (p. 15). Elsewhere he also connects government legitimacy to public governance by asserting "the government actually had to deliver better results if it was to be regarded as legitimate, and needed to be more flexible and responsive to changing public demand" (Fukuyama, 2017, p. 111). A regimes' failure to modify its governance or justify its legitimacy to rule often leads to political decay. While his claims and arguments may be valid in certain circumstances, they are perplexing in a number of ways.

It seems that there is a dichotomy between deepening democratic institutions and high-quality governance. It can be questioned whether or not a state can build its legitimacy without deepening its democratic institutions to provide better quality services to its citizens. How can public demands be heard and responded to by weak democratic institutions or authoritarian governments?

Thus, the term political decay should not be used to describe the state of authoritarian governments, as they do not possess legitimate power or strong state institutions to respond to public demands.

From Latin America, Eastern Europe, to Asia, deepening democracy is necessary for democratic survival and to prevent democratic derailing (Diamond et al., 1997; Goldfrank, 2011; Huber, Rueschemeyer, & Stephans, 1997). It is argued that political decentralization "can deepen democracy without compromising state strength" (Faguet, Fox & Pöschl, 2015, p. 61). The concept of deepening democracy underlies the "maximization of popular control by expanding opportunities for direct citizen input, oversight, and participation in the policymaking process and by enhancing the accountability of elected representatives to their constituents" (Roberts, 1999, p. 26). The definition is also in line with Dahl's level of inclusiveness and contestation and Diamond and Mornilo's aspect of democratic qualities. Deepening democracy also refers to the extent that citizens participate in governing and demand more responsive government policies (Goldfrank, 2011). Decentralization is supposed to fulfill that obligation and it will be discussed below.

V. On Decentralization

Decentralization has become one of the governing policies of developing countries over recent decades. It is believed that decentralization can solve certain issues caused by centralized administrative deficits. Governments are encouraged to decentralize because this will reduce poverty and ensure that citizens benefit equally from national growth (Rondinelli, 1981). By transferring "authority, responsibility, and resources," decentralization is seen as a kind of de-concentration, delegation, or privatization (Rondinelli et al., 1984). The evolution of this conception has been divided into two waves. From the 1970s to 1980s it has focused on "de-concentrating hierarchical government structures and bureaucracies," and from the mid of 1980s it extends to "include political power sharing, democratization, and market liberalization, expanding the scope of private sector decision-making" (Cheema & Roninelli, 2007, p. 2). With the pressure from globalization, decentralization is not only referred to the "transfer of power, authority, and responsibility within government, but also the sharing of authority and resources for shaping public policy within society" (ibid, p. 6). The theory of decentralization provides promising results to democratize state institutions as it shortens the gap between citizens and authorities. This section discusses

political decentralization, as I believe it is crucial to democratization. According to Cheema and Roninelli (2007), political decentralization can be defined as:

> Political decentralization includes organizations and procedures for increasing citizen participation in selecting political representatives and in making public policy; changes in the structure of the government through devolution of powers and authority to local units of government; power-sharing institutions within the state through federalism, constitutional federations, or autonomous regions; and institutions and procedures allowing freedom of association and participation of civil society organizations in public decision making, in providing socially beneficial services, and in mobilizing social and financial resources to influence political decision making. (p. 7)

The definition reiterates the important role of civil society and the participatory process in developing public policies. This is to clarify that deepening democratic institutions need to be both maneuvered by government and strengthened by other related stakeholders.

Participatory approaches to decision-making that involve local citizens are believed to have positive outcomes when decentralizing the state and increasing citizen participation. This, however, could lead to "new tyranny" (Cooke & Kothari, 2001, p. 4). The authors (pp. 7-8) identified possible oppressive climates: 1) where the political facilitators exert their influence to undermine the "legitimate decision-making processes", 2) the existing powerful groups dominate the decisions made, or 3) the "participatory methods" used are not inclusive enough. This relies mostly on the role of political facilitators in effectively organizing the participatory decision-making process. Ineffective facilitation in participatory approaches fails to reach inclusive decision-making. However, inclusiveness can also be a threat to democracy. In 2007, Zakaria Fareed warned of ineffective decision-making when unspecialized citizens who are not experts in the field of the policies being made participate in creating policies. For Zakaria, "what we need in politics today is not more democracy but less" (p. 206). Although he does not prefer dictatorship, he intends to make sure that state institutions function properly without the interference of mass participation.

Similarly, Huntington (1975) warned the American government about the consequences of the "excess of democracy" in the 1960s (p. 113). He further

asserted, "*The vitality of democracy in the United States in the 1960s produced a substantial increase in governmental activity and a substantial decrease in governmental authority* [original emphasis]" (p. 64). He hypothesizes that:

1. Increased political participation leads to increased policy polarization within society;
2. Increased policy polarization leads to increasing distrust and a sense of decreasing political efficacy among individuals;
3. A sense of decreasing political efficacy leads to decreased political participation. (p. 84)

According to Huntington, political participation decreases once citizens lose trust in the authority, which results from biased and/or polarized policies. There have been those who oppose the idea of decentralization and participation seen since the ancient time of Plato to Mosca and Schumpeter, who averred that "too much participation leads to inefficiency, ungovernability, and citizen frustration, and that a centrally organized government is a better locus of decision making" (Goldfrank, 2011, pp. 19-20). From the adversary's perspective, decentralization is not inclusive when facilitators dominate the decision-making process. Also, if those who influence the decision are not experts, the policies responding to citizens' needs will not be effective. In addition, if policies are inclined to serve one particular group and are prejudice against another group, polarization is likely to occur, thus, discourage participation.

Advocates for decentralization and participation, on the other hand, argue that firmly fixed democracy needs a certain level of participation to ensure that the democracy is working well (Pateman, 1970). This needs "some degree of congruency between the structure of authority of government and non-governmental authority structures close to it, then stability can be maintained" (p. 14). Analyzing Rousseau's participatory system, Pateman claimed that by participating in the decision-making process citizens would learn how to be responsible for their actions and their surroundings. The participatory approach enhances individuals to become "(and remain) [their] own master", "dependent on each other and equally subject to the law", and have a sense of "community" (pp. 26-27). John Stuart Mill's political theories also reinforce Rousseau's claims (Pateman, 1970).

The concept of Tocqueville's independent townships is also crucial to decentralization (Goldfrank, 2011), which creates "active and public-spirited citizens, while centralization diminishes 'civic spirit'" (p. 17). Observing what happened in Latin America decades ago, Campbell (2003) describes the decentralization process as a "quiet revolution" in which both national and international agents' roles are taken into account (p. 3). Lessons suggest that "political power sharing" has pushed Latin America to "decentralize decision making and spending" and "the consolidation of political power at the local level was the most important factor in the long-term financial sustainability of decentralized governance" (pp. 6-7). However, there is also an attempt to limit reforms at the local level by national and international policy making because there is a concern about "fiscal instability". Thus, there are some difficulties that hinder the success of the decentralization process. The difficulties tend to be focused on "poor leadership, distorted incentives, and unclear rules of the game" (Campbell, 2003, p. 11).

Successes and failures of the participatory approach to deepen democracy can be seen in a comparative study of three cities – Porto Alegre, Montevideo, and Caracas in Latin America. The study conducted by Goldfrank (2011) confirms that deepening democracy through decentralization is possible at the local level when there is enough support from the central level. The party structure must also allow genuine participation from citizens with transparent and responsive leadership (Goldfrank, 2011). The institutional design also plays a significant role in determining the success or failure of democracy deepening efforts. Participatory programs that are open for wider participation, more informal in their settings, and face less institutionalized political parties tend to encourage more participation from citizens (ibid).

This idea is supported by what happened in Indonesia. Even though decentralization reallocates power and resources to the local level, it is not enough to make local government accountable; there has to be a system to ensure that citizens can fully participate in "governing their own communities by monitoring the government, holding it accountable and limiting state power" and there also has to be "affirmative political action in order to give voice to the needs of the poor and thus actively promote social justice, i.e. to usher in more progressive and social justice politics" (Antlöv, 2005, p. 248).

VI. Conclusion

So far, the article discussed a number of theories related to democracy, democratization and decentralization. If something could be drawn from this discussion, it is that decentralizing by transferring power and resources to local authority are ways to improve good governance and deepen democracy as long as people participate and local authorities are responsive and accountable in delivering public services. This article describes the concept of the democracy and assess if it is deepened through political decentralization.

The apolitical agenda of decentralization that aims to strengthen good governance actually is embedded with the democratization concept. The closed hegemonic country, China, also gives power to local people by allowing them to select their township/village leaders. And administratively, China is decentralizing as can be seen, for example, in the formulation of the Copyright Law in 1990 to secure her trade agreement with the US. All of these activities ultimately grant power to lower levels of authority to enforce the law (Pang, 2014). Decentralizing by transferring power and resources to local authorities has been seen as a way to improve good governance and it does deepen democracy as long as people participate and local authorities are responsive and accountable to deliver public services. Politically, decentralization grants certain rights to citizens to participate, advocate and demand an accountable and responsive government; however, other parts of decentralization such as deconcentration shall be implemented along the way.

The conceptual confusion among Cambodian citizens toward democracy as highlighted in the introduction has probably resulted from the absence of enforcing democratic values inherited along with democratic institutions. If political decentralization is a way to deepen democracy, it is necessary to push these efforts further ahead with the commitments from all relevant actors.

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