COUNTER REVOLUTION

THE GLOBAL RISE OF THE FAR RIGHT

Agrarian Change & Peasant Studies

WALDEN BELLO

COUNTERREVOLUTION

Advance Praise for *Counterrevolution*

Walden Bello brings his vast political experience and his life-long studies of reactionary regimes to bear on the current global dispensation — the fallout of neoliberalism. Counterrevolution *ranges across countries where right-wing organizations have either targeted socialist movements, often based in rural areas, or attacked liberal democracy for its betrayal of egalitarian promises. A tour de force, required reading for all concerned about our political fate wherever we may be.*

—Michael Burawoy, Professor of Sociology,
University of California at Berkeley, and former president
of the American Sociological Association

With this study of counterrevolution in the Global South, Walden Bello gives us a knowledgeable and illuminating analysis in parts of the world that usually do not command our attention in the US. He highlights the role of the volatile middle classes in supporting reaction and, even more important, the failures of democratic reformers. You need to read this book to fully grasp the challenges to democracy in the current political moment.

—Frances Fox Piven, Distinguished Professor of Sociology
at the City University of New York,
author of *Regulating the Poor* and *Poor People's Movements*,
and former president of the American Sociological Association

It is hard to think of a more timely book than this one. Written by one of the most brilliant sociologists of the Global South and an internationally acclaimed scholar of globalization, Walden Bello's book offers an extremely sharp analysis of the global (re)emergence of the extreme right. Counterrevolution *is a must-read for all the democrats of the world.*

—Boaventura de Sousa Santos, author of *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of the Epistemologies of the South*

Using his decades of experience in researching and analyzing the global political economy, Bello gives us a lucid dissection of the current rise of reactionary, authoritarian populist regimes. His comparative-historical analysis brilliantly brings to bear a set of cases that range from classic early-twentieth-century

Italian fascism to Duterte's recent explosive rise in the Philippines. The result is an essential resource for everyone trying to make sense of contemporary political distress.

—Peter Evans, Senior Research Fellow, Watson Institute for International Studies and Public Affairs, Brown University; author of *Embedded Autonomy, States and Industrial Transformation*

Counterrevolution *is a riveting, no-nonsense account of the rise of the far right in seven different contexts. It highlights the ways in which the dynamics of authoritarian populism in the Global South have migrated to the North, deploying the author's formidable mastery of comparative sociology and bristling with political insights. Bello's is such an important voice, sophisticated and lucid, and this book could not be more timely.*

—Ruth Milkman, Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the City University of New York and former president of the American Sociological Association

Walden Bello reminds us of how the rise of reactionary regimes is an outcome of struggles in the countryside and the reactionary predisposition of rural and urban middle classes. The book's depth lies in its comparative breadth, with case studies across Europe and the United States (under Trump), South Asia (India under Modi), Southeast Asia (Indonesia under Suharto and the Philippines under Duterte), and Latin America (Chile under Pinochet and contemporary Brazil). Bello likewise puts all these regimes in a comparative historical context, using Fascist Italy as the foundational case. At last, we have a left-wing perspective on counterrevolution in its populist forms across Europe, South and Southeast Asia, and Latin America. This book is a great read.

—Patricio N. Abinales, Professor of Asian Studies, University of Hawaii-Manoa

The illuminating comparison of counterrevolutionary episodes in this stimulating book shows the distinctive features of current political developments in contexts as diverse as those of Europe, India, and the Philippines, where the countermovement is directed against liberal democracy. As Bello argues, progressives must address the shortcomings of liberal democratic regimes.

—John Harriss, Professor of International Studies and Director of the School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University

This is a book of extraordinary importance, addressing as it does with rare intelligence and insight a fundamental dynamic of our time: the emergence of a counterrevolution that seeks to halt and reverse all of the advances made in a progressive direction since the end of the Second World War, when the idea of development as a project of improving the social condition of the world population was invented. No other book on the market warrants the attention and wide readership that this book commands. The stakes of not addressing the concerns and alarm bells rung by Bello are too high to ignore.

—Henry Veltmeyer, Professor of International Development Studies, Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas

An imaginative exploration of the complexities of counterrevolution, which has become a crucial feature of contemporary politics that needs to be understood better. Bello's comparative study of counterrevolution is at once fascinating, conceptually illuminating, analytically convincing, and lucidly written. It deserves to be read for many reasons, including as a warning about the global political tide producing a series of lethal national regimes that pose dire threats to a humane future.

—Richard Falk, Professor Emeritus of International Law, Princeton University

In these perilous times, Walden Bello's Counterrevolution *is a timely, deeply informed work designed for partisans of democracy, human rights, and rule of law. Bello reveals the dangerous forces and dynamics at work in the extreme right's ascendancy and the counterrevolutionary process, while persuasively arguing for the importance of a convincing narrative of affirmative solidarity — appealing to common fundamental values — that might brake the counterrevolution in motion.*

—Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor and publisher of *The Nation*

Bello's masterfully synthetic Counterrevolution *sheds new light on the remarkable global wave of far-right authoritarian nationalism, persuasively bridging diverse historical and contemporary cases from around the world.*

—Jonathan Fox, Professor, School of International Service, and Director, Accountability Research Center, American University

Decisive for counterrevolutionary political movements to emerge in key Southern countries (unlike for most in the North) has been repression of rural class conflicts. This claim is both original and compelling, making Bello's remarkable comparative study a must-read.

—Achin Vanaik, retired professor of international relations and global politics, University of Delhi, and author of *The Rise of Hindu Authoritarianism: Secular Claims, Communal Realities*

"Chilling" is the first word that came to mind after reading Walden Bello's absolutely excellent book, because it is based on cold, sober facts and a comprehensive analysis of counterrevolutions in countries across the world. The book provides rare insight into and understanding of the ingredients that make for these counterrevolutions. Insightful, precise, a must-read in these times.

—Seema Mustafa, founder-editor of *The Citizen*

Bello puts the growing number of right-wing "populists" in their rightful place: within a pantheon of leaders from Mussolini to Pinochet countering a perceived threat from the left. He revives Arno Mayer's prescient take on such regimes as defined less by nostalgia or ideology than by their fear of imminent revolution. Anyone interested in populism and our present political moment should read Counterrevolution.

—Leslie Gates, Professor of Sociology,
State University of New York at Binghamton

Wielding his analytical scalpel with characteristic skill, Bello dissects the rise of authoritarian counterrevolutionary movements in several contemporary semiperipheral states and compares them to the rise of fascism in interwar Italy to draw parallels with the rise of authoritarian, anti-immigrant movements in Europe and North America today in the context of globalization and growing income inequalities.

—Ravi Palat, Professor of Sociology,
State University of New York at Binghamton

In his latest book, renowned sociologist and activist Walden Bello offers a much-needed map to the rise of contemporary counterrevolution. In seven case studies of the Global North and the Global South, Bello points out the key importance of rural and middle-class forces. It is precisely their volatile and contingent reactions to the pace of rapid change, widening inequalities, and the failings of liberal-democratic regimes that can either push or forestall

counterrevolutionary movements. Insightful and incisive, Bello's analysis offers a broad-based understanding of the social and political forces that undergird the historical unfolding of counterrevolution today. In doing so, he leads us to consider critical strategies for resisting its global spread.

—Vicente L. Rafael, Professor of History,
University of Washington, Seattle

At this dangerous moment when democracy is in retreat worldwide, Walden Bello has drawn upon his decades as a global citizen to offer an informed and informative explanation for this recent resurgence of reactionary political forces. Probing beneath the headlines, he conducts an original, in-depth analysis spanning four continents to identify the contending social forces driving this surprising political change. Through mass violence and violent rhetoric, so-called populists are leading counterrevolutions against economic globalization, liberal democracy, and the rule of reason, seeking instead to subordinate their societies to empowered autocrats. For its global sweep and analytical depth, this thought-provoking book should be required reading for any who wish to understand the deeper political dynamics changing our world.

—Al McCoy, Professor of History, University of Wisconsin at
Madison, and author of *In the Shadows of the American Century*

Walden Bello's book is indispensable reading to understand not only Latin America but all the anti-neoliberal and emancipatory struggles throughout the last century and this one. As the conservative reaction, counterrevolutions are part of revolutionary processes, and Bello's analysis enables us to discern the new challenges of the great popular struggles in the new century.

—Emir Sader, Emeritus Professor of Political Science,
University of São Paulo

In this compelling account of counterrevolutionary movements and regimes over the past century, Walden Bello offers a clear-eyed analysis of one of the most pressing political challenges of our times — and invaluable insights into how that challenge can be met. Impassioned, historically informed, and analytically rich, it is a must-read for anyone who cares about the past and future of revolution and counterrevolution.

—Geoffrey Robinson, Professor of History, UCLA,
and author of *The Killing Season*

Bello is a master in teasing out the essential factors for our understanding of counterrevolutions by drawing on various pivotal historical experiences. Class struggle is always at the centre of Bello's nuanced analysis, but it is mediated by factors such as religion, ethnicity, cast, and regionalism. This book is a very timely, forceful, and enlightening contribution to our understanding of counterrevolutions in these troubled times.

—Cristobal Kay, Emeritus Professor,
International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague

This book, the product of Walden Bello's longstanding interest in the dynamics of counterrevolutions, is important reading for all those engaged in the promotion of a more emancipatory rural politics. The comparison of six national experiences of counterrevolution spanning almost a century reveals the key role of the countryside in most counterrevolutionary movements; the same deep rural inequalities, persistent poverty, fractured identities, and loss of esteem can be the social base for involvement in both regressive and progressive mass politics, in a dialectic of emancipation and reaction. By understanding better how and why counterrevolutions, in certain times and places, manage to get the upper hand, we learn the importance of stronger narratives and campaigns of positive solidarity to resist and overcome them.

—Ben White, Emeritus Professor,
Rural Sociology, International Institute of Social Studies

The recent rise of authoritarian regimes is one of the main challenges for the left and for social movements across the world. Walden Bello, a key actor and thinker of the anti-globalization movement, and one of the most interesting left scholars, gives us a key analysis of these regimes and the reactionary movements that bring then to power. This is the book we needed.

Christophe Aguiton, author of *The Left of the 21st Century*
and founding member of ATTAC

Walden Bello's comparative sociology of the rise of popular authoritarian — what he categorizes as "counterrevolutionary" — movements is timely, poised as they are to overwhelm liberal democracies across the globe.

Drawing on work by Barrington Moore, Nicos Poulantzas, Arno Mayer, and Theda Skocpol, Bello highlights the shifting roles of the agrarian and middle classes in the emergence of authoritarian regimes in Italy, Indonesia, Chile, Thailand, India, the Philippines, Europe, the US, and Brazil. Each is a country in which Bello has deep personal academic or political engagements.

Prioritizing internal tensions over global intervention, Bello explores the complex synergy of state, class, religion, ideology, emotion, and violence that underlie counterrevolutionary movements. Revealing the daunting political challenges confronting efforts to counter these counterrevolutionary forces, Bello is issuing a nuanced warning regarding the global future of popular democracy.

—Katherine Bowie, Professor of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, and President, Asian Studies Association

Walden Bello provides an indispensable comparative look at the global sweep of illiberal movements, how they channel national anxieties, attract popular support, and exploit the international failures of liberal governance. An urgently needed analysis.

—John Feffer, author of *Aftershock: A Journey into Eastern Europe's Broken Dreams* and director of Foreign Policy in Focus

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The Global Rise of the Far Right

Walden Bello

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To my late beloved wife,

Suranuch Thongsila (1963–2018)

Gone but not Forgotten

Series Editors' Foreword

Counterrevolution is the ninth volume in the Agrarian Change and Peasant Studies Series from ICAS (Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies). The first volume is Henry Bernstein's *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*, followed by Jan Douwe van der Ploeg's *Peasants and the Art of Farming*, Philip McMichael's *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*, Ian Scoones's *Sustainable Livelihoods and Rural Development*, Marc Edelman and Saturnino M. Borras Jr.'s *Politics of Transnational Agrarian Movements*, Henry Veltmeyer and Raul Delgado Wise's *Agrarian Change, Migration and Development*, Peter Rosset and Miguel Altieri's *Agroecology: Science and Politics*, and Jennifer Clapp and Ryan Isakson's *Speculative Harvests: Financialization, Food and Agriculture*. *Counterrevolution* by Walden Bello is the ninth volume in the series. Together, these nine books reaffirm the strategic importance and relevance of applying agrarian political economy analytical lenses in agrarian studies today. They suggest that succeeding volumes in the series will be just as politically relevant and scientifically rigorous.

A brief explanation of the series will help put the current volume by Bello into perspective in relation to the ICAS intellectual and political project. Today, global poverty remains a significantly rural phenomenon, with rural populations comprising three-quarters of the world's poor. Thus, the problem of global poverty and the multidimensional (economic, political, social, cultural, gender, environmental, and so on) challenge of ending it are closely linked to rural working people's resistance to the system that continues to generate and reproduce the conditions of rural poverty and their struggles for sustainable livelihoods. A focus on rural development thus remains critical to development thinking. However, this focus does not mean delinking rural from urban issues. The challenge is to better understand the linkages between them, partly because the pathways out of rural poverty paved by neoliberal policies and the

war on global poverty engaged in and led by mainstream international financial and development institutions to a large extent simply replace rural with urban forms of poverty.

Mainstream approaches in agrarian studies are generously financed and thus have been able to dominate the production and publication of research and studies on agrarian issues. Many of the institutions (such as the World Bank) that promote this thinking have also been able to acquire skills in producing and propagating highly accessible and policy-oriented publications that are widely disseminated worldwide. Critical thinkers in leading academic institutions are able to challenge this mainstream approach, but they are generally confined to academic circles with limited popular reach and impact.

There remains a significant gap in meeting the needs of academics (teachers, scholars, and students), social movement activists, and development practitioners in the Global South and the North for scientifically rigorous yet accessible, politically relevant, policy-oriented, and affordable books in critical agrarian studies. In response to this need, ICAS has launched this series. The idea is to publish state-of-the-art small books that will explain a specific development issue based on key questions: What are the current issues and debates in this particular topic and who are the key scholars/thinkers and actual policy practitioners? How have such positions developed over time? What are the possible future trajectories? What are the key reference materials? And why and how is it important for NGO professionals, social movement activists, official development aid circle and nongovernmental donor agencies, students, academics, researchers, and policy experts to critically engage with the key points explained in the book? Each book combines theoretical and policy-oriented discussion with empirical examples from different national and local settings.

The series is available in multiple languages in addition to English — namely, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Indonesian, Thai, Japanese, Korean, Italian, and Russian. The Chinese edition is in partnership with the College of Humanities and Development of the China Agricultural University in Beijing, coordinated by Jingzhong Ye; the Spanish edition with the PhD Programme in Development Studies at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas in Mexico, coordinated

by Raúl Delgado Wise, and Fundacion Tierra in Bolivia coordinated by Gonzalo Colque; the Portuguese edition with the Universidade Estadual Paulista, Presidente Prudente (UNESP) in Brazil, coordinated by Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, and the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Brazil, coordinated by Sergio Schneider; the Indonesian edition with University of Gadjah Mada in Indonesia, coordinated by Laksmi Savitri; the Thai edition with RCSD of University of Chiang Mai, coordinated by Chayan Vaddhanaphuti; the Italian edition with the University of Calabria, coordinated by Alessandra Corrado; the Japanese edition with Kyoto University, coordinated by Shuji Hisano of Kyoto University, Koichi Ikegami of Kinki University, and Sayaka-Funada-Classen; the Korean edition with Research Institute of Agriculture and Peasant Policy in South Korea coordinated by Wongkyu Song; and the Russian edition with The Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), coordinated by Teodor Shanin and Alexander Nikulin.

Given the objectives of the Agrarian Change and Peasant Studies Series, one can easily understand why we are delighted to have as Book 9 the work by Walden Bello. The first nine volumes fit together well in terms of themes, accessibility, relevance, and rigour. We are excited about the bright future of this important series!

Finally, Book 9 is being released in partnership and colloboration with the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiatives (ERPI) <www.iss.nl/erpi> and the College of Humanities and Development Studies (COHD) of China Agricultural University, Beijing.

Saturnino M. Borras Jr., Ruth Hall, Max Spoor,
Henry Veltmeyer, and Jingzhong Ye
ICAS Book Series Editors
January 2019

Preface

I have always had this contradiction of being intellectually fascinated by right-wing movements while being politically hostile to them. My PhD dissertation was on the rise and dynamics of the counter-revolution against the revolutionary transformation of Chile in the period 1970–73, and I researched and wrote it at the same time that I was engaged in political work to isolate both the Pinochet regime that sprang from it as well as the Marcos dictatorship that ushered in a dark period in my homeland, the Philippines.

In 2013–14, I watched with great interest as the Bangkok middle class mobilized against the government of Yingluck Shinawatra even as I deeply and vocally disapproved of their barely concealed intention of ousting a government elected by the majority of the people of Thailand. In 2016 and 2017, I watched with horror and denounced the extrajudicial killings of suspected drug users by the newly elected Duterte administration in the Philippines, at the same time that as a sociologist, I felt vindicated by the confirmation of my propositions about the behaviour of threatened middle classes by the way the Philippine lower middle and middle strata aggressively lined up behind the man who promised to "fatten" the fish in Manila Bay with his victims' bodies.

Researching and writing this book has provided me with the opportunity to bring together my observations and thoughts on the role of the middle class in times of great flux and on many other aspects of the counterrevolutionary process. But this is more than an academic endeavour. It is also intended to help partisans of democracy, human rights, and due process understand the dangerous forces and dynamics of the counterrevolutionary process. Perhaps my stance can best be compared to that of the virologist who is engrossed in the study of an exotic but deadly virus for scientific reasons and to make a contribution to the development of a vaccine against it.

I am grateful to my academic base, the sociology department of

the State University of New York at Binghamton, and Focus on the Global South, a program of the Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, for providing a supportive research environment. I would like to acknowledge, in particular, the generosity of Shalmali Guttal, executive director of Focus; Soontaree Nakaviroj, administrative officer at Focus; Josh Price, current chair, and Michael West, former chair, of the SUNY Binghamton's sociology department; and Denise Spadine, administrative coordinator of the department.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Niabdulghafar Tohming for his assistance in fieldwork in Thailand and Cecilia Lero, whom I had the good fortune to work with in Brazil.

Thanks are also due to Errol Sharpe, Stacey Davies, and Clare Tawney, who were instrumental in the process of transforming the manuscript into a book.

This work was improved greatly by the constructive criticism of Jun Borras, Ruth Hall, and the anonymous referees, who devoted their valuable time to assessing the manuscript for publication. Their comments led me to address aspects of the counterrevolutionary phenomenon that I had not touched on, paid inadequate attention to, or misconstrued. The result of this collegial process is, in my view, a more satisfactory product, one that, hopefully, will make a difference, both theoretically and politically.

I am especially grateful to Jun Borras, editor of the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, for urging me to expand the original essay I wrote for JPS into a book. In this and other endeavours, Jun has provided unstinting and invaluable support.

While their assistance and support have been invaluable, these colleagues and friends are not responsible for the shortcomings of this book. For these I take full responsibility.

This book is dedicated to my late wife, Suranuch Thongsila, who was always there for me in every way and who left much too soon, to my great sorrow.

Walden Bello
Bangkok
March 27, 2019

1

Understanding Counterrevolution

Whether one calls them fascist, authoritarian populist, or counterrevolutionary, there is no doubt that angry movements contemptuous of liberal democratic ideals and practices and espousing the use of force to resolve deep-seated social conflicts are on the rise globally. While in the North the sudden prominence of these forces and personalities evinces surprise if not shock, they are familiar and recurrent phenomena for people in the South.

Origins and Evolution of this Book

This book is an expansion of an article that I originally wrote in response to a request from the *Journal of Peasant Studies* to contribute a piece on the impact of authoritarian movements on rural societies in the Global South. This invitation evoked great interest since I have had a longstanding interest in the origins and dynamics of counterrevolutions, which was initially triggered by the middle-class-based movement that overthrew the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende in Chile in the early seventies. As I delved into the topic, I realized that I could get a deeper understanding of the dynamics of authoritarian or counterrevolutionary movements via a comparative approach, drawing from the experiences of a select number of societies that I had some familiarity or acquaintance with, owing to either academic or political engagement or both. I also realized that, with globalization, one could not erect a Chinese wall between the experience of authoritarianism and globalization in the Global South and that in the Global North.

Eventually, this mix of considerations led me to an in-depth exploration of six national experiences of successful counterrevolution — that is, where forces from the extreme right had seized power or achieved hegemony. The one case from the North among these six experiences is that of Fascist Italy, and it is included for two reasons. First, it provides an interesting case study of one of the

major concerns of this study: the relationship between class conflict in the countryside and the broader national struggle. Second, the period of Italian history covered in this study, the first two decades of the twentieth century, saw the country undergoing many of the same crises brought about by capitalist transformation that were later experienced by societies in the Global South in the post-World War II period.

The core of the study are the experiences of Indonesia, Chile, Thailand, India, and the Philippines. These national experiences provide, in my view, among the most fertile grounds for the analysis of different facets of counterrevolution in the South. Though its most recent counterrevolutionary project is still very fresh, the Philippines has been included owing to President Rodrigo Duterte being widely seen as emblematic of the new authoritarianism. But the Philippines, along with India, is important for another reason: Both exemplify the phenomenon of a counterrevolution that is directed not at an insurgent challenge from below but at a liberal democratic order that is perceived as having failed as a system for the promotion and defence of the interests and values of the classes and groups mobilized by the counterrevolution. In this sense, the Indian and Philippine experiences bear a resemblance to the dynamic animating the counterrevolutionary movements in the North today, and they serve as a bridge to the broad-brush analysis of a number of extreme right-wing movements on the march in Europe and the United States that rounds out the book.[1]

Influence of the Classics

An indispensable starting point for any study of counterrevolution is Karl Marx. His analysis of the class politics of mid-nineteenth-century France, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, is a classic of political sociology, with its effort to analytically unravel the threads of a dynamic but complex process of conflict involving many class actors that brought to power a figure that exhibited a number of features that would later be associated with "populist" or counterrevolutionary personalities in the twentieth century (Marx 1995).

It is not surprising that in developing the theoretical and meth-

odological tools for this study, I had recourse as well to the scholarship on fascism, the last great counterrevolutionary movement to have successfully seized power in Europe. Some of the most insightful work has emerged in the comparative analysis of different fascist national experiences. Here, three authors deserve special mention: Barrington Moore Jr., Nicos Poulantzas, and Arno Mayer.

Barrington Moore is associated with the idea of fascist movements being byproducts of a "revolution from above" undertaken by land-based elites seeking to retain their hegemony in a society being transformed by capitalism. Such a high-wire and ultimately doomed act by premodern elites trying to modernize without changing their social structures gave birth to this wayward offspring, the mission of which was to "make reaction popular" (Moore 1966: 442).

Nicos Poulantzas provided a sophisticated, if controversial, structuralist version of the Communist Third International's thesis that fascism was the "open terroristic rule of monopoly capital." The structural imperatives of reproducing the capitalist mode of production that was in crisis necessitated, he asserted, the intervention of a force from outside the usual ruling circle. In pursuing its own survival from the perceived threats of the working class, this political formation, which was largely made up of people of petit bourgeois or middle-class origins, ended up saving a system that it rhetorically inveighed against. But the state that emerged from this complex political struggle was a "state of exception" that enjoyed the highest degree of relative autonomy from monopoly capitalist interests (Poulantzas 1974).

Arno Mayer gave us a dynamic portrayal of political change in Europe that was driven by the dialectic of revolution and counterrevolution, producing ever-escalating violence and terror on both sides. There can be no revolution without counterrevolution because "both civil society and polity are wired for preservation, not sudden death, and their agents will give battle for their survival" (Mayer 2000: 47). In the face of the common enemy, "the old elites tend to mend their fences even if they fail to agree on a common strategy to restabilize the situation in their favor" (2000: 47). Thus emerges the counterrevolutionary coalition, wherein different political projects coexist uneasily but cooperate grudgingly: those of reactionaries,

conservatives, and counterrevolutionaries. "Pessimistic about both the present and future," says Mayer (2000: 50), "reactionaries are daunted by change and long for a return to a world of a mythical and romanticized past." Conservatives, like reactionaries, have a pessimistic view of human nature and are deeply suspicious of ideas like equality and progress. However, they do not make a fetish of the past, and whatever the makeup of civil and political society, their "core value and objective is the preservation of the established order" (2000: 51).

Counterrevolutionaries are more interesting theoretically and more dangerous politically. They may have, like the reactionaries, illusions about a past golden age, and they share reactionaries' and conservatives' "appreciation, not to say celebration, of order, tradition, hierarchy, authority, discipline, and loyalty" (Mayer 2000: 52). But in a world in rapid flux, where demands for emancipation and equality emerge from new politicized actors, counterrevolutionaries embrace mass politics to promote their objectives, appealing "to the lower orders of city and country, inflaming and manipulating their resentment of those above them, their fear of those below them, and their estrangement from the real world about them" (2000: 52)

Mayer also stresses that just as revolutionaries are animated not just by a passion for justice but by a whole set of ideas deriving from the "revolution of Reason" during the Enlightenment, the counterrevolutionary coalition has been inspired by the "Counter-Enlightenment," with its vengeful critique of rational analysis as having dissolved the organic relations of hierarchy and replaced them with abstract and artificial relations among individuals mediated by contract and choice. Thus, counterrevolution is often a total enterprise, whereby opposition to revolutionary initiatives from the lower classes such as socialism extends to a rejection of reason and its most dangerous product: democracy. Perhaps emblematic of the comprehensiveness of the counterrevolutionary enterprise was Goebbels's iconic declaration that the goal of the Nazi movement was to "erase 1789 from history."

Moore, Mayer, and Poulantzas differ in some of their propositions and conclusions, but central to their theoretical approaches is the dialectic of revolution and counterrevolution in societies

undergoing rapid capitalist transformation. It is for this reason that in looking at the experiences of counterrevolution in the South in the last few decades, their theories and methodologies retain a freshness and relevance that other approaches lack. As Mayer (2000: 4) notes, a liberal perspective that prioritizes and favours peaceful, evolutionary change and sidelines, theoretically and politically, the revolution-counterrevolution dialectic

> is open to question in the still heavily peasant societies of the developing countries, with their runaway, overcrowded, and uneasy urban centers. The costs of this unjust and oppressive social order over the long run, are "at least as atrocious as those of revolution, perhaps a great deal more." Indeed, historical inertia exacts a chronic price, intermittently heightened by famine and epidemic, war and civil war. Among the reasons "for the absence of revolt in [this] context of exploitation and misery" figure, above all, the deadly risks" that governing and ruling classes "can impose on would be rebels" with their enormous coercive and daunting force and violence, both physical and symbolic.

Counterrevolution in the Global South

There is no dearth of studies of political change in societies in the Global South. However, many of them do not place the dialectic of revolution and counterrevolution at the centre of their analysis. The most common paradigms have been those underpinned by modernization theory or political development theory. There are, of course, notable exceptions, such as the works of Max Lane (2008), Geoffrey Robinson (2018), and others that served as indispensable guides in the writing of this book.

Moreover, there has been little comparative work on counterrevolutions. One of the few exceptions is Naomi Klein's (2007) magisterial analysis of the imposition of the neoliberal project in different societies. However, Klein's case studies mostly begin after the dialectic of revolution and counterrevolution has been politically resolved in favour of the latter. My interest is the analysis of the prior

period, to see how and why the counterrevolution manages to get the upper hand and crushes the left politically.

Theoretical Considerations

At the theoretical core of this study is the dialectic of revolution and counterrevolution. Its overriding aim is to discover how this dialectic unfolded in six societies where counterrevolutionaries successfully gained political hegemony. It seeks to illuminate the movement of different classes in periods of great political fluidity. It explores the dynamic relationship between conflict in the countryside and the overarching conflict of classes or sociocultural formations and their political representatives at the national level. It delves into the complex synergy of class, culture, religion, and ideology that produces, among other things, extreme violence and terror. Finally, it probes the intimate relationship between domestic counterrevolution and global geopolitics, for external elites are always apprehensive and fearful that the domestic resolution of the conflict can be destabilizing to the global status quo.

Several related theoretical considerations are important to surface at the outset. First, though they have different nuances in meaning, there are obviously affinities between the concepts of extreme right, authoritarian right, fascist, and counterrevolutionary. Rather than lay out the affinities and differences in an abstract fashion at the outset, however, I elaborate on these as the empirical material unfolds. What is important to flag here is that movements of the extreme right, authoritarian right, and fascism are variants of counterrevolution.

Second, counterrevolution is not a simple phenomenon. In the concrete, the class, political, and ideological aspects may have different mixes — that is, the dominant and subordinate aspects may vary. As suggested earlier, the case studies yield two types of political movement that merit the term *counterrevolutionary.* The first is the classical class-based counterrevolution that responds to an insurgent underclass that is engaged in a revolutionary or reformist effort to fundamentally change a social system against the elites and allied forces that benefit from the structure of domination under challenge.

The other is a more comprehensive phenomenon, where what is being rejected by the counterrevolutionary coalition is not just a class-based movement but a whole political and ideological paradigm that is seen as either having disrupted a "natural" social order or failed to fulfill the aspirations of those who initially had faith in it. It could be said provisionally that the dynamics of post–World War I Italy and post–World War II Indonesia, Chile, and Thailand fall into the first category of counterrevolution, while those of India, the Philippines, and contemporary Europe and the United States fall into the second.

Third, my overall theoretical approach is careful to avoid being class reductionist or class determinist. It takes into account the indeterminacy introduced by the complex dynamics of concrete political struggles, which are unfolding with great fluidity, on the contradictions and complementarities among classes or fractions of classes. In this regard, I must acknowledge my debt to Theda Skocpol (1979), who stressed the ability or inability of the state to maintain its cohesion, under pressure from domestic struggles and foreign actors, as a key factor determining the success of social movements, although her main preoccupation was with revolutionary movements. My approach also tries to be sensitive to the intricate interaction or synergy of class with ideology, culture, and religion. Among other things, this entails appreciation of two realities: one, that ideological and cultural factors can intensify aspects of the class struggle, like the role of violence and terror, and two, that in some cases or at certain junctures, class interest can play second fiddle to culture and ideology in driving a counterrevolutionary process. To repeat what has already been flagged above, this is apparently the case in the Philippines, India, and contemporary Europe and the United States, where it is anger, resentment, and disgust with the flaws of the liberal democratic political-ideological complex that is the fuel of the counterrevolution.

Methodological Considerations

In terms of methodology, the study has adopted a comparative sociological and historical approach, and here I must acknowledge my debt to Poulantzas, Moore, Mayer, Klein, and Skocpol. Comparative

analysis in the study of counterrevolution is especially valuable for the following reasons. First, it surfaces dimensions of counterrevolution that might not strike the analyst as significant in a study devoted to just one national experience. Second, it reveals new aspects of a dimension of a national counterrevolutionary experience that might go unnoticed in a single country case study. For instance, the problem posed to the success of the Duterte fascist project of the failure to develop a counterrevolutionary mass party in the Philippines is highlighted by the critical role played in India by the Hindu right's disciplined mass organizations. Third, comparative analysis, by providing empirical grounding for theoretical propositions derived from a variety of national contexts, allows more confidence in a theory of counterrevolution that can deployed in the study of other counterrevolutionary experiences. It must be pointed out, however, that the aim of the current study is not to come out with that general theory but to generate some of the propositions that could be further tested, refined, and incorporated into such a theory.

Finally, in terms of empirical material, I did first-hand research and fieldwork in Chile, Thailand, and the Philippines. I relied on a wealth of published research for the analysis of counterrevolutions and right-wing movements in Italy, Indonesia, and India, and I have closely followed and written about recent developments in Europe and the United States. In the interest of full disclosure, it must be added that I have also been engaged as an actor in the political scene in the Philippines as a critic of the Duterte government, a fact that readers must take into consideration in judging this work.

Note

1. The book went into production before the victory of Jair Bolsonaro in the presidential elections in Brazil on October 28, 2018. However, a previously published essay on the crisis of Brazil and the Workers' Party written by myself and a colleague is included as a postscript.

   This survey carries no studies on Africa and the Middle East. The reasons for this are varied. In my judgment, there are no contemporary experiences in Africa exhibiting the counterrevolutionary dynamics elucidated in this work. The most likely candidate from the Middle East, Turkey, was not included owing to two factors: One, I am not convinced of the usefulness of the prism of a political moderate turning right-wing

dictator through which President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is often viewed and two, complexity is added to the Turkish situation by the influential Gülenist movement, which was said to be behind the coup attempt of 2016 that provided the excuse for the president's recent moves toward full-blown authoritarianism. The apparently central relationship to Erdogan of the Gülenists remains very murky to non-Turkey specialists (and many Turkey specialists). Obviously, a cursory examination of Gülenism based on very limited available data was not an option.

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2

Fascism in Italy: The Decisive Role of the Countryside

As noted in the previous chapter, there are two reasons why the counterrevolutionary experience of Italy is included in a study that is mainly focused on societies in the Global South. First, it provides an interesting case study of one of the major concerns of this study: the relationship between rural class conflict and the broader national social and political struggle. Second, the period of Italian history covered here, the first two decades of the twentieth century, saw the country going through many of the same crises brought about by rapid capitalist transformation that were later experienced by societies in the Global South in the post-Second World War period.

In class analyses of fascism in Italy, what is most often emphasized is the phenomenon of Mussolini's shock troops from the middle class serving the interests of big capital by crushing the working-class movement in the cities. On the road to power, the fascists certainly received financial support from the big bourgeoisie, and while in power they created the conditions for the stable reproduction of monopoly capital. What is less well known is the role of landed interests in promoting fascism. Fascism, Mussolini famously thought, would never succeed in the countryside. Yet it was the countryside that provided the momentum that eventually ended in the momentous March on Rome in October 1922. Indeed, one academic authority on Italian fascism claims that "it was the sudden expansion of rural-based fascism that in the winter of 1920–21 saved [Mussolini's] urban *fasci* from extinction" (Cardoza 1982: 3).

Fascism's Mass Base

Class conflict in the countryside was one of the key ingredients of fascist success. Another was the middle class. In an Italy that shouldered tremendous costs from its participation in the First World

War, there was a volatile combination of deep economic crisis, widespread worker unrest bursting out in general strikes and factory occupations, and anger and resentment among returning veterans from an unpopular war. Mussolini, who had been expelled by the Socialist Party, saw an opportunity here and moved to exploit workers' discontent in competition with the socialists, stir up nationalist fervour in competition with the nationalists, and make overtures to big capital, whose resources he coveted to expand his movement. The foot soldiers of his fledgling movement were mainly from the déclassé middle class. Mussolini, writes Angelo Tasca (1938: 32) in his classic *The Rise of Italian Fascism*, "appealed to the inherent anarchy of the Italian people and of the middle class in particular: disgruntled ex-officers, students fidgeting in University lecture rooms, shopkeepers struggling against taxation, declasses of every sort who wanted something new, helped to give to growing fascism its invaluable halo of lawlessness and heresy."[1]

With old beliefs and ideas having been discredited by the war, fascism's emphasis on action struck a chord among these unstable, rootless, and resentful elements, especially the young. The psychology of fascism was subjected to insightful dissection by Tasca (1938: 36):

> Emphasis was laid on "action" rather than ideas. This attracted many of the young advancing "toward life," impatient of contradictions and eager to have a good time, to sacrifice themselves, to acquire self-confidence. Fascism drove them along the easiest way. Everything was simplified, for thoughts had no time to form themselves, connect, or conflict before they evaporated in action, exalting and melodramatic. The inner life reduced itself to the simplest reflexes, shifting from the centre of feeling and becoming externalized. Doubts and uncertainties ceased to exist. The youthful fascist in a world full of contradictions joyfully affirmed. "I must not think; therefore I am."

One of Mussolini's chief assets was his ability to satisfy "both the vague passions of the mob and the more precise interests of the capitalist class" (Tasca 1938: 33). This convergence of passion and

interest emerged dramatically in key areas of rural Italy, where the network of labour organizations had managed to impose strong collective discipline among agricultural workers, enabling them to control the supply of labour and push up wages. Accompanying this control over the supply of labour by the peasant leagues were the control over prices by production cooperatives in the towns and the Socialist Party's dominant position in many local governments and parliamentary politics. These institutions were created by pressure from below within a weak bourgeois state that served as the framework of a country that had been unified politically barely fifty years before. It was these products of reform socialism that the rural elites were most in dread of.

> "The man we fear most," as a great landowner of the province of Ravenna said, "is not the communist Bombacci but Nullo Baldini who, with his Cooperative Federation, is cutting us out everywhere." For this reason also, fascist violence was directed at such institutions set up by reformist socialism. These institutions were spreading, and little by little were monopolizing the entire economic and political life of the district. The landed ruling classes felt they were being swept away to make room for the new social structure. (Tasca 1938: 95)

Apropos of this violent response to essentially peaceful reform, Marx had, in fact, also observed how in his time, threatened classes raised the "war cry of the violent counterrevolution against an evolution that is, in fact, pacific" (quoted in Mayer 2000: 48).

The shift in the balance of economic power was accompanied by a loss of status, and this triggered an "accumulation of hatred" in the classes that felt they were being displaced. Unable to use the institutions of a weak state to break the power of the unions, the landlords and agricultural capitalists found in the fascist bands the instruments that they so badly needed to restore the status quo ante. Fascism's first recruits in the countryside came from the groups that, like the landed elites, felt disadvantaged by the peasant leagues' growing power, production cooperatives' control of the prices of goods, and the Socialist Party's control of local governments and parliamentary

politics. These were the youth of the landowning classes, university students, tradespeople, and demobilized soldiers. But there were also, Barrington Moore (2004: 268) reminds us, "peasants who had climbed into the ranks of landowners, and even tenants who hated the monopolistic practices of the union."

Capital in Search of Muscle

The deadly meeting of landowners needing muscle and middle-class youth seeking mindless action took place in one of the country's breadbaskets, the Po Valley, and in the province of Bologna, in 1920 and 1921. These were the most dynamic areas of Italian agriculture, mainly because of the spread of capital-intensive capitalist agriculture. Rapid economic transformation in the first decades of the twentieth century had also provided an opportunity for organizing rural labour and poor farmers by the peasant leagues. While the more traditional landowners continued to deal with their workers and tenants with paternalistic methods, the younger commercial farmers favoured "disciplined corporate organization" (Cardoza 1982: 9). Recurrent recession and worker unrest, writes Anthony Cardoza (1982: 9–10),

> led these growers to adopt a strategy of intransigent resistance to the socialist leagues, and drew them toward coercive solutions to the problems of production, labor contracts, and interest representation on the eve of World War I. At the same time, employer militancy resulted in serious friction between agrarian interest groups and Italy's liberal political class. Mounting frustration with the difficulties of expressing their economic interests or hostility to the advance of the left within the fragmented Italian parliamentary system predisposed commercial farms in Bologna and the Po Valley toward more authoritarian movements: nationalism before 1914, fascism after the war.

In the Po Valley and Bologna, the struggle between the landowners — in particular, the capitalist farmers — and the peasant leagues "gave fascism an opportunity to fish in troubled waters" (Cardoza 1982: 9–10). Financed by the landlords and commercial

capitalists, the fascist *squadristi* used force to break up the peasant leagues and other institutions of rural socialism. A good description of the expeditions that sowed fear in the countryside is provided by Tasca (1938: 103):

> An expedition would usually set out into the country from some urban centre. With arms provided by the Agrarian Association or by some regimental store, the blackshirts would ride to their destination in lorries. When they arrived they began by beating up any passerby who did not take off his hat to the colors or who was wearing a red tie, handkerchief, or shirt. If anyone protested or tried to defend himself, if a fascist was roughly treated or wounded, the punishment was intensified. They would rush to the buildings of the Chamber of Labor, the Syndicate, or the Co-operative, or to the People's House, break down the doors, hurl out the furniture, books, or stores into the street, pour petrol on them, and in a few moments there would be a blaze. Anyone found on the premises would be severely beaten or killed, and the flags were burnt or carried off as trophies.

The fascists carried out their acts with impunity, with police and soldiers assisting them or turning a blind eye to their deeds. These agents of the state, used to safeguarding the old class hierarchy, were themselves disconcerted by the challenge posed by the subordinate classes. The fascists' peasant victims, on the other hand, were psychologically disarmed by the knowledge that if they used their pistols, they would be putting themselves outside the law and, unlike the fascists, they could expect no mercy from the police and the judges.[2]

The punitive expeditions were imported from the Po Valley and Bologna by fascists in Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Julian Venetia, and other regions. As fascism penetrated smaller rural communities, it became "a mass movement without precedent in Italian history" (Ebner 2017). Force made a big difference. Provinces and districts where the networks of people's organizations had achieved hegemony after years of struggle fell in a matter of days or weeks to the fascist hordes. Tactics perfected in these punitive rural expeditions were then

copied in the big urban centres to disrupt workers' strikes, destroy the unions, and overpower strongholds of the Socialist Party and its rising rival, the Communist Party. By the end of 1922, after less than two years of squad violence, fascists or pro-fascists controlled virtually every communal administration in Italy (Ebner 2017). For the landed classes that had seen their world turned upside down in the period leading up to so-called *biennio rosso* ("two red years") from 1918 to 1920, when Socialists made huge electoral gains nationally and the peasant leagues and other institutions of reform socialism achieved prominence locally, the nineteenth-century order of economic, political, and cultural power was restored, at the cost of much spilled blood.

While the destruction of socialist institutions and "pacification" of working-class communities was rapidly achieved, the violence continued unabated. As Michael Ebner writes (2017),

> Only by perpetuating this "revolutionary" situation could the Fascist movement undermine the liberal state and continue its push for political power.... The power of the Ras and the bonds of squadrist camaraderie depended on Fascists sustaining a state of lawlessness and initiating new attacks. Illegal activities increased feelings of belonging and emotional interdependence among squadrists, making it more difficult for individual Blackshirts to pull out of the squads or refrain from violent acts. Any retreat, any return to normalcy, would have required dealing with potentially serious legal and psychological consequences. Violence thus became cyclical and self-sustaining.

The triumph of the counterrevolution in the Italian countryside was complete long before the time the fascists marched on Rome in October 1922. After its ascent to power, leaders of fascism conveyed the idea that they were "ruralizing Italy," romanticizing the Italian peasant as the successor of the ancient Roman farmer-soldier, with Benito Mussolini as the country's "First Farmer." This was, as Moore (2004) notes, pure nonsense. The number of owner operators dropped by 500,000 between 1921 and 1931, while the number of share tenants rose by 400,000.

While this essay, being mainly concerned with the rise and triumph of fascism, is not the place to discuss the features of the fascist state that followed, it might be useful to conclude it by briefly referring to Nicos Poulantzas's interesting characterization of fascism in power, for it suggests how the dynamic complexity of fascism as a political force, especially in the relations among the social groups whose interests it purported to represent, continued during that period.

At the first stage of fascism's control of the state, the fascist party becomes the medium for the construction of an "effective alliance between the monopolistic fraction [of capital] and the petty bourgeoisie" (Poulantzas 2017). This is followed by a phase where "through the fascist party, which is still strongly influenced by its class origins, and through the reorganization of the State system and apparatuses, the petty bourgeoisie, without ever becoming a politically dominant class, in this period becomes the ruling class and makes its debut as the class in charge of the State" (Poulantzas 2017). Finally, the mature fascist state emerges where "the monopoly capital fraction establishes its hegemony and also achieves the status of *ruling class* (the identity of the hegemonic and ruling fractions also distinguishing fascism from Bonapartism), dislodging the petty-bourgeoisie. But the latter continues to be in charge of the State — its position is even reinforced by a complete reorganization of political personnel in general" (Poulantzas 2017).

In sum, fascism was propelled to power by the muscle of the rural and urban middle classes. In power, fascism created a "state of exception" that protected the interests of agrarian capital and the landed elite, even as its main service was to sweep away working-class and democratic institutions that stood in the way of the economic hegemony of monopoly capital.

Conclusion

A number of points might be made in conclusion.

First, the counterrevolution in Italy conquered the countryside before it was triumphant in the major urban centres.

Second, the muscle or mass base of the fascist movement was the

middle strata of the towns and surrounding countryside — professionals, tradespeople, students, rich peasants, demobilized soldiers, government personnel — who were mobilized and financed by big landed interests.

Third, the propertied classes as a whole benefited from fascist violence, but it was commercial agricultural interests that played the central role in recruiting the fascists to destroy the peasant leagues and the Socialist Party, and it was them that mainly benefited.

Fourth, the fascist reaction was not a response to an insurgent, armed revolutionary movement but to the gains of reform socialism — the peasant leagues, production cooperatives, and local governments controlled by socialists — which had been achieved relatively peacefully within the bourgeois state and posed the threat of gradual political asphyxiation of the landed classes.

Fifth, while the fascist breakup of the unions and workers' institutions was carried out largely by paramilitary forces, the repressive institutions of the state often lent active support, passive support, or turned a blind eye to the acts of the *squadristi*.

Sixth, fascism was marked by a dynamic interplay between the interests of the various classes it purported to represent. While the largely petty bourgeois fascists provided the muscle for the rural bourgeoisie in fascism's period of ascent, once in power, fascism, while continuing to protect big agricultural interests, became principally a force that established the hegemony of monopoly capital via a state apparatus dominated by the middle-class personnel of the fascist party. The fascist state was a "state of exception" marked by significant relative autonomy from the dominant economic classes while creating the conditions for the stable reproduction of a capitalist system dominated by big capital.

Notes

1. There have been many studies on the rise of fascism in Italy, but few have proved as enlightening as Angelo Tasca's (1938) *The Rise of Italian Fascism*. Other important works on fascism's conquest of the countryside in Italy are by Michael Ebner (2011), Adrian Lyttleton (1982), Francis Snowden (2004), Anthony Cardoza (1982), Paul Corner (1972), and Nicos Poulantzas (1974). On fascism in power, definitely the most analytically insightful is Poulantzas (1974).

2. The invasion of the *squadristi* of the countryside in the region of Emilia was captured in Bernardo Bertolucci's 1976 film *1900*, where the character Attila Melenchini, played by Donald Sutherland, exemplifies the brutality of the fascist bands.

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3

Indonesia: Rural Bloodshed and National Counterrevolution

Indonesia is often regarded by many as the democratic exception in a Southeast Asia that is moving to more authoritarian forms of rule. Perhaps the best-known destination in the vast archipelago is the lovely, peaceful island of Bali, a favourite not only of tourists but of multilateral organizations and civil society associations that regard it as an ideal site for conferences. But Indonesia's democratic mien and Bali's touristic appeal belie a tragic, violent history. The events in Indonesia in 1965–66 have gone down as one of the most horrifying cases of counterrevolution in the last half century. And in few other places in the country was the counterrevolution bloodier than in lovely Bali.

Indeed, it was counterrevolution that turned into what Daniel Goldhagen has termed "eliminationism." There continues to be great uncertainty about how many perished in this social pogrom, but the lower end of estimates is usually 500,000 and the upper end is two million. There appears, in fact, to be greater consensus on the number of Jews murdered during the Holocaust — some six million — than on the estimate of the number killed in the Indonesian bloodbath.

The Countryside and the National Revolution

The countryside was the site of much of the counterrevolution — not surprising since at the time the massacres took place, over 80 percent of the population resided in rural areas. The counterrevolution cannot, however, be understood simply as a response to rising demands for a better social deal from the peasantry and rural workers. Organizing in the countryside for higher wages among rural workers and for land reform for peasants was closely tied to a process of national mobilization for comprehensive social change led mainly by the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). For Max

Lane, the mobilization of the left must be seen as the continuation of a national process that began with Indonesia's fight for independence from Dutch rule. Having been uneasy allies in the struggle against the Dutch, two social and political blocs competed for the direction of the newly independent country in the 1950s and early 1960s, one led by the charismatic nationalist Sukarno, the other a more conservative alliance whose mainstay was the military. What transpired, says Lane (2008: 30), was an "ideological civil war over the fate of the nation."

Just as in other great civil wars involving the creation of nations, the two sides in this war were anchored to basic class interests. Political mobilization was more and more propelled by the energies of the proletariat and the peasantry mobilizing behind demands that they saw as reflecting their interests and behind a leadership embodied in the alliance between President Sukarno and the PKI. This was reflected in the membership of the PKI and the other main Sukarnoist organization, the Indonesian National Party (PNI), in the years before 1965. By the mid-sixties, the PNI had several million members. The PKI and its mass organizations were claiming a membership of 25 million. This represented a massive proportion of the adult population; it was more than half of the 37 million voting population of just ten years before and was probably more than half of the 55 million voting population recorded in 1973 (Lane 2008: 30).

On the other side was what Lane (2008: 33) described as "an increasingly politically isolated alliance of parties representing the interests of landowning and business groups, and under the leadership of elements that were strong within the state apparatus, particularly the army." Largely in support of these forces were the urban middle classes, which "formed a tiny and fragile social layer, squeezed economically by the hyperinflation of the final years of Sukarno's rule and threatened politically by the rising tide of communism" (Aspinall 2005: 12). Though it might have been on the defensive, this coalition had some mass support, especially from Islamic political groups, the most important of which was the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Like the PKI, the forces on the right had affiliated popular organizations that were deployed in mass demonstrations and street warfare. A number had armed militias, some of them linked to and trained by the army.

As the Sukarno-PKI alliance gained ascendancy, the right felt increasingly threatened, but its members were not subjected to violence, arrest, or arbitrary purge. The PKI had, for one, become committed to achieving power peacefully through electoral means. "The real terror," writes Lane (2008: 33), "was that of being marginalized by opposing ideas actively supported among the population," among which were the nationalization of foreign business, land reform, worker participation in management, and cooperation with socialist states and the emerging Non-Aligned Movement. Be that as it may, by 1965, Geoffrey Robinson (2018: 9) notes, "Indonesia was deeply divided, largely along a left-right axis (or more precisely, communist–anti-communist) axis, and politics was increasingly played out on the streets by rival mass organizations and their armed counterparts."

It was within this larger national context that the struggle for land took place. The PKI front groups were in the forefront of the agrarian struggles. In North Sumatra, Sarekat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia, the union of plantation workers better known as SARBUPRI, launched successful campaigns, including many strikes, aimed at maintaining the living standards of plantation workers by pushing management to include or retain in-kind provision of basic commodities such as rice, cooking oil, cloth, and sugar, as part of the pay package. Plantation owners tried to weaken the workers' organization by bringing in labour from elsewhere. The situation for the workers became more difficult when the government nationalized the plantations in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They came into conflict with Indonesian managers, many of whom were administrators from the military, who sought to curb their militancy (White 2016).

Meanwhile, the Indonesia Peasants Union (BTI) provided the leadership for peasants pushing agrarian reform in Java, Bali, and other heavily tenanted agricultural areas. Pressure from below resulted in the passage of agrarian reform legislation, which regulated the conditions of share tenancy, limited the permissible size of landholdings, and prohibited absentee ownership. Although the BTI and the PKI did not endorse the legislation, they later campaigned for its implementation. Landlord resistance pushed the BTI and PKI to support some forcible land seizures (*aksi sepihak*), and these ac-

tions or fear of them taking place made enemies among the landed rural elites and provoked violent responses. Caught off guard by these violent clashes with groups against land reform, the PKI, Ben White (2016: 5) notes, "urged an easing-off of *aksi sepihak*, and in late 1964 it looked as if some measure of calm was returning in the countryside."

The PKI and the Electoral Road

The PKI's decision to opt for taking power through electoral means was a key reason for its restraint in the struggle for land reform. Winning elections meant moderating the party's class-based politics. As Benedict Anderson (1998: 280–81) observed:

> The Communists … had discovered quite quickly that in vast, backward, heavily illiterate rural Indonesia, where the bulk of the voters resided, the most efficient way to do well electorally was to attract to its ranks village headmen and other local notables. Once attached, these people could be counted on to bring in their villagers' votes, without the Party itself having to make substantial and expensive efforts lower down. … But since village headmen typically owned or controlled the most land in the villages, recruiting them required electoral programs which did not threaten their interests. Furthermore, the Party's success in these elections, and the provincial elections in Java that followed in 1957, began to give Party members a personal stake in electoral offices at all levels.

The party's success at the ballot box proved to be very alarming to its competitors, especially the army. Had it pursued an extra-parliamentary route to power, it would have been easier to discredit it as a legitimate force. Thus, as the party made short-term gains and made the right more apprehensive, it also became clear that, as Robinson (2018: 45) observes, "the commitment to a peaceful strategy left the party's huge membership exposed to physical attack by its enemies, most especially the army."

If the struggle for land in the countryside was greatly conditioned by national politics, so was the latter impacted by international poli-

tics, in particular, the Cold War. The United States saw Indonesia, the biggest country in Southeast Asia, as an extremely strategic asset. With the situation in Vietnam going from bad to worse for the US-supported regime there, Washington saw Indonesia as another "domino" that was in great danger of falling to the Communists, thus upending the geopolitical balance in Southeast Asia.[1] The electoral capabilities of the PKI also worried Washington, who feared that a successful "parliamentary road" to communist rule in Indonesia would encourage similar attempts not only in Southeast Asia but in other parts of the world.

Counterrevolution from Above

When Colonel Untung and pro-Sukarno officers launched their ill-fated coup on October 1, 1965, the political situation in Indonesia could be said to be overdetermined. The aim of the officers was apparently to purge the high command of the right wing, then provoke mass mobilizations throughout the country for the elimination of the right wing from the officer corps as a whole (Lane 2008: 42). It is not clear if the coup plotters intended to murder the six generals of the army that they were able to apprehend. What is certain is that their murders provided the right-wing officers with the opportunity to lance the boil of national politics, as it were, by blaming the PKI, which research has shown to have had little, if anything, to do with the coup.[2] Central to the narrative of General Suharto and the military high command were lurid, fabricated tales of women belonging to Gerwani, the women's organization affiliated to the PKI, dancing naked around the bodies of the dead generals and participating in their castration. These stories, says Saskia Wierenga (2001), "struck chords with the people's fear of the uncontrolled sexual powers of women, a religiously inspired apprehension that women's disobedience would endanger the entire social system, Hindu notions of all-female maniacal crowds and a male horror of castration."

In contrast to Italy, where the security agencies and the bureaucracy let the fascists take the leadership in wiping out the left, the army had an indisputable leadership role in the 1965–66 massacres in Indonesia. Most accounts agree that this was a veritable case of

counterrevolution from above carried out principally by the army. The best formulation in this regard is probably that of Robinson (2018: 19–20), who argues that while the army "faced pressure from a variety of social, religious, and political groups for 'firm action' against the Left," the "resort to mass killing and detention was neither inevitable nor spontaneous, but was encouraged, facilitated, directed, and shaped by the army's leadership. In other words, without the army leadership, those pressures—and the personal, socioeconomic, religious, and cultural tensions that fueled them—would never have resulted in mass killing and incarceration on such a wide scale."

Also in Indonesia, the killing of communists was indiscriminate, targeting not only party leaders but the base, down to people whose only "crime" was probably to vote communist, who had relatives in the party who were communists, or who were, because of their poverty, assumed to be communists. As one observer who escaped execution recounted:

> Another was also thrown in, also headless. I couldn't count how many headless corpses passed by me. Then I heard a shout from a voice I recognized and froze; it was Pak Mataim, our bicycle repairman who I think was illiterate. He seemed very thin, and he too was dragged along like a banana stalk. He moaned, begging for mercy, for his life to be spared. They laughed, mocking him. He was terrified. The rope around his feet was taken off, leaving his hands still tied. He cried and because he couldn't keep quiet, they plugged up his mouth with a clump of earth.… Rejo went into action, and like lightning, his machete cut through the neck of his victim, the one-eyed, powerless, bicycle repairman. His head went into the sack. (Quoted in Goldhagen 2009: 177)

In contrast, in Italy, as Ebner (2017) notes, fascist violence was "face-to-face violence and murder, rather than mass anonymous killing. In essence, although they could be exceeding brutal, Fascist squads practiced a selective, calibrated, and choreographed economy of violence."

One reason for this difference in the two situations could be

that in Italy, the threat of the socialists taking power was not seen as an immediate one, while in Indonesia, the military and its allies had convinced themselves that the communist takeover of power, as shown by the failed coup, was just around the corner, one that could be thwarted only by a root-and-branch destruction of the PKI mass base instead of just its national and local leaders.

The military's leading role in the massacres and the active support to the bloodletting given by the landed elites has been stressed by progressive writers. But class position can only go so far in terms of explaining who was killed and who participated in the killings. The identification of executioners and victims was refracted through the prism of politics and culture. Village leaders or landed notables who were identified as communist leaders or sympathizers could not be saved by their objective class position. At the same time, the killers included ordinary peasants, the village middle sectors, and Muslim activists from all classes who considered the PKI activists to be "godless."

But the role of non-class factors must not be exaggerated. Much has been made about the fact that there appeared to be a religious divide between the orthodox, more pious Muslims (*santri*) who participated in the killings and the nominal Muslims (*abangan*) who were on the receiving end. It appears, though, the religious division overlapped with the class divide since "Santri communities were more likely to be led by wealthy landowners and to be supporters of conservative religious parties like the NU" and "abangan communities were likely to be poorer, with greater numbers of landless and tenant farmers" (Robinson 2018: 141).

While being sensitive to nuance, it must be stressed again that in the vast majority of cases, these groups, be they organized or more in the nature of mobs, largely class based or more mixed in character, for the most part did not act spontaneously but with the "full knowledge, and usually under orders from, local or regional army commanders" (Robinson 2018: 21). As Goldhagen (2009: 355) points out, once the military decided "upon this eliminationist solution to the electorally ascendant Communist Party's political and social challenge, they easily mobilized anti-communist supporters across Indonesia, many being deeply religious, usually Islamic, or religious parties' and

orders' followers, who butchered the atheistic communists among them, usually with bayonets or machetes, often leaving their bodies in rivers or caves, a potent warning to other would-be communists."

The military appropriated and stirred pre-existing religious tensions and beliefs, with devastating effect. Throughout Bali, according to one account, "whole villages, including children, took part in an island-wide witch-hunt for Communists, who were slashed and clubbed to death by communal consent" (John Hughes, quoted in Goldhagen 2009: 384). Hindu Balinese were encouraged to see "the killing of people associated with the PKI as the fulfillment of a religious obligation to purify the land" (Robinson 1995, quoted in Wierenga 2001). This phenomenon of whole villages hunting down and killing communists was also seen in East Java.[3]

The role of armed militias or vigilantes tied to political or religious groups in carrying out the massacres has led some analysts to claim that much of the violence was the product of spontaneous horizontal rivalries among social groups. But these units and individuals "almost always acted with the support and encouragement of army authorities" and in the absence of the army's logistical support, they would "never have committed acts of violence of such great scope or duration" (Robinson 2018: 7). The military knew that once it gave the signal, ideologically motivated Islamic militias burning with hatred for their local PKI rivals would do the rest. As one likely participant in the massacres confessed, "Even though such events were pretty horrifying, the participants themselves felt thankful to have been given the chance to join in destroying infidels" (quoted in Goldhagen 2009: 193). Given the fact that the military's capacity was dwarfed by the geographical spread and population of the Indonesian archipelago, the role of these militias in carrying out the army's master plan was indispensable. Also, there were areas where key commanders or units hesitated, if not directly opposed, the central military leadership orders to carry out mass killings (Robinson 2018: 149–52).[4]

External Actors

If the military could count on enthusiastic Islamic militias like those affiliated to the NU to carry out the bloody purges in rural areas, it could also count on the support of foreign governments that had an interest in stemming the so-called Red Tide in Southeast Asia. That the United States and its allies, especially the British, had a direct hand in Suharto's post-coup counteroffensive and the genocide has been the subject of much debate. What is clear is that, by a variety of means, US and British policymakers sought to "exploit and exacerbate internal political divisions with the intention of bringing about the demise of the established government and its partners" (Robinson 2018: 116).

Methods included trying to influence the outcome of elections, conducting psychological operations against Sukarno, supporting military rebels in outlying regions, and inciting the army to move against Sukarno and the PKI. The CIA was reported to have given the Indonesian army leadership a list of 5,000 top PKI functionaries to be arrested or killed. The CIA, along with other Western intelligence agencies, also provided substantial funding and weaponry for the army after it was purged of left-leaning officers following the events of September 1965 (Cherian 2016).

Nevertheless, the counterrevolution was for the most part made by local actors, who might have been helped by foreign operatives but were largely driven by the local revolution-counterrevolution dialectic. Here Robinson's wise words are worth remembering, not only for the analysis of the Indonesian counterrevolution but also that of others, such as Chile, which is discussed in the next chapter. The foreign conspiracy scenario, he says,

> attributes too much importance to a handful of CIA and M16 operatives of doubtful capacity, while ignoring the ample motives and capacities of Indonesian actors, chief among them the Indonesian Army leadership. As such, it perpetuates a simple, neocolonial narrative in which crucial political changes in the non-Western world, whether good or bad, are routinely attributed to the influence of the United States and other powerful outside actors. (Robinson 2018: 15)

The ideological counterrevolution continued long after the PKI was physically destroyed through mass execution and mass incarceration. Throughout Suharto's long rule, the PKI was associated with these two words: *penghianat* ("traitor") and *biadab* ("savage") (Wierenga 2001). The PKI was thus excluded from the nation and even from humanity as such. Indeed, under Suharto, "anti-communism became the state religion, complete with sacred rites, rituals, and dates," with the site of the killing of the generals turned into hallowed ground (Roosa 2006: 7–8).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the following features of the 1965–66 counterrevolution in Indonesia might be emphasized.

First, the counterrevolution in the countryside must be seen within the larger context of conflict between two well-organized, bitterly opposed forces with differing visions and programs for the completion of the national revolution of Indonesia, the PKI-Sukarno alliance and the military-led social/political coalition. Though struggles over land were taking place all over the country, local dynamics were much more shaped by the broader conflict at the national level in Indonesia compared to Italy.

Second, the threat to which the right reacted with such violence was not a militant communist-led armed revolution but, as in Italy, the prospect that the PKI could actually come to power through peaceful means. But the elites' response differed in the degree of violence they deployed. Feeling that this transformation could actually be brought about in the immediate future by a well-organized PKI, which had millions of members and supporters, the Indonesian military decided that only the physical elimination of the left as a political force would ensure its survival and that of the conservative forces allied with it. In Italy, in contrast, the landed class feared a gradual political asphyxiation, so the fascists could afford to calibrate their violence, focusing for the most part on prominent leaders and including in their arsenal beating them up, torturing, then releasing them and exiling them, in addition to murder.

Third, Indonesia's counterrevolution was directed from the high-

est rungs of the military and bureaucracy and implemented mainly by state agencies. This is in contrast to Italy, where the police and local bureaucracy did not lead but served as either active or passive accomplices of the fascists.

Fourth, the security forces were supported nationwide not only by the landlords and the bureaucratic elite but also much of the middle class. In the countryside, the killings were done with the active participation of a variety of classes and groups, acting on the basis of fear of the communists or religious righteousness, like the militias of the rural-based NU. Religious differences often overlapped with class differences. But whatever pre-existing tensions and discords there were, they could not have led to massive violence without being organized by the army.

Fifth, external intervention in support of the counterrevolution in the form of military aid, covert action, and intelligence from the West played an important role in the triumph of the counterrevolution, but the central players were local forces who had more than ample motivations to eliminate the left.

One might note, in conclusion, that the annihilation, both physical and ideological, of the left was so complete that even after the ouster of Suharto in 1998, no party that can be said to carry a program of the left has emerged in Indonesia, with most parties scurrying toward the centre (Okamoto 2017: 436). Even current president Joko Widodo's pluralist attitude, which tends to show "some understanding of misconduct during the massacre in 1965," has triggered rumours that he is sympathetic to communists and thus to be distrusted (Okamoto 2017: 436). Indeed, to appease his critics on the right, the president declared during the seventy-third anniversary of the founding of the Indonesian army on October 5, 2018, "Together, we fight against ideologies other than Pancasila and eradicate communism and the legacy of PKI" (Florentin 2018).

In few other countries has the left been so completely liquidated politically, ideologically, and culturally.

Notes

1. See John Roosa's (2006) excellent study, especially pages 13–16.
2. Apparently the only one in the party leadership in touch with the

coup plotters was the head of the party, D.N. Aidit, who shared only vague details with the rest of the party leadership. See Saskia Eleonora Wierenga's (2001) insightful essay. See also John Roosa (2006).

3. This was the case, for instance, in the village of Pranggang in the district of Kediri in East Java. In the small Kediri district alone, "around 10,000 people considered to be communists were killed" (Nurchayati 2017: 342).
4. Invaluable in providing insights into the intentions and actions of perpetrators of the Indonesian genocide and their manipulation by the military are Joshua Oppenheimer's Oscar-nominated documentaries *The Act of Killing* (2013) and *The Look of Silence* (2016).

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4

Crucifying the Left in Chile

In late 1972, a Chilean periodical reported that the word "Jakarta" was seen painted on a number of walls in the capital, Santiago. I was doing research in Chile then, but I did not have the opportunity to check if the report was accurate. If it was, the message was chillingly clear: the Popular Unity (UP) government and its supporters would be dealt with in a fashion similar to how the left was by the right in Indonesia.

As in Indonesia, agrarian reform was a major battleground in Chile. And, as in the former, the dynamics of rural conflict were intimately related to the agenda of political parties. The key forces in the UP were the Communist Party, Socialist Party, and the Radical Party. When the UP came to power after its triumph in the presidential elections of September 1970, it saw its mission as leading the country on the "peaceful, constitutional road to Socialism." Its main goals were to raise the living standards of the lower classes, nationalize the foreign-owned Kennecott and Anaconda copper mines, bring key industrial firms under state control using existing legal mechanisms, and complete land reform. Over the next three years, national politics became polarized between the UP, whose base was the working class and peasantry, and a counterrevolutionary alliance between the landed elite, the big bourgeoisie, and the middle classes. Parliament was initially the main arena of struggle, but as the government and Parliament — which was controlled by an alliance between Christian Democrats and the National Party — deadlocked, the struggle shifted to the streets of the capital, where the right and left battled for control through large demonstrations, riots, strikes, and food blockades. The countryside was an important site of struggle, though it was largely in Santiago that the sharpest and most decisive clashes took place.

Radicalizing Agrarian Reform

From 1964 to 1970, the centrist, middle class–backed Christian Democratic government of President Eduardo Frei Montalva was able to pass agrarian reform legislation aimed at converting tenants in the big and medium-sized estates into small owner-operators. As in Korea and Taiwan, this US-supported enterprise aimed to create a small and medium peasant class attached to private property that would at the same time form a bulwark against the more socialist-oriented agrarian reform coming from the left, which had come together in the UP coalition.

The six years of the Frei government was a time of ferment in the countryside. While attacking what they saw as the limitations of the Christian Democratic agrarian reform, the parties of the UP took advantage of the space provided by agrarian reform to expand their political influence in the cooperatives of agrarian reform beneficiaries (*asentamientos*) and other peasant organizations. Their aim was to radicalize the process by demanding the inclusion of poor peasants and rural workers among the beneficiaries, the lowering of the size of lands to be expropriated, and a speed-up in the process of reform. There was an empirical basis for this, since the inroads of capitalism in the countryside had led to a decline in the numbers of *inquilinos* or tenant-farmers and a rise in the numbers of rural workers, which became the dominant workforce (Steenland 1975: 51–52).[1] By the end of the Frei presidency, the countryside was marked by a five-cornered struggle between landlords, Christian Democrat–affiliated peasant groups, UP-linked peasants and workers, peasant and workers mobilized by the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), and independent groups. Owing to many glitches in land redistribution, the Christian Democratic land reform lost considerable momentum, handing over the initiative to UP organizers (see, among others, Murray 2003: 189).

When the UP government led by President Salvador Allende came to power in 1970, land reform was radicalized and sped up. The new government decreed that all large estates or *latifundios* over 80 basic irrigated hectares were subject to expropriation regardless of the efficiency and land use criteria of the Frei agrarian reform.

And, under pressure from an increasingly militant peasantry and indigenous groups such as the Mapuche Indians, who were engaged in land seizures, the UP government in 1973 moved to expropriate inefficient farms from 40 to 80 basic irrigated hectares, with little reserve land and much reduced or practically no compensation offered to the *patrones* or landlords (Murray 2003: 189). Poor peasants and rural workers that had been excluded from the Frei reform were brought into the ranks of beneficiaries. Although the land reform law of 1967 permitted the expropriation of all large estates, less than a third of Chile's *latifundios* were legally seized, and only 21,000 of the promised 100,000 families received land during the six years of the Frei government (Kay 1975: 420). It was left up to the Allende government to expropriate the remaining two-thirds of *latifundios* — a move benefiting 80,000 families — which it did in less than three years (Kay 1978: 117–42; Robles and Kay 2018: 131). Moreover, the UP went beyond the Frei reform's aim of parcellizing land so as to create a stratum of small farmers from former tenants. It promoted collectivization of land as the strategic end of agrarian reform (Murray 2003: 189).

The Battle for the Middle Class

One of the most interesting features of rural struggle in Chile is how intense class conflict was accompanied by relatively little violence from 1964 to 1971, when land reform was in full swing. Some twelve people died, though farm seizures escalated from thirteen in 1965 to 1,278 in 1971 (Kay 2001: 746). One researcher who studied the *tomas de fundos* (farm seizures) during the Allende period concluded that "the tomas themselves were not violent. There were no recorded personal attacks on the landowners or managers, such as took place in the Bolivian and Mexican revolutions. Nor was there the destruction of the fundo's property, which the new possessors wanted to preserve for their own use." Where violence took place, it was usually where a landowner employed a paramilitary group to retake the fundo, an act called a *retoma*. But in general, "the tomas de fundos were not violent nor did they lead to violent retomas" (Winn 2010: 248).

The public image of what was taking place, however, was very

different. The conservative press sensationalized tomas as violent affairs, with photos of peasants with crude weapons shown guarding the fundo. It also created the impression that the tomas were much more frequent than they actually were. The war of images was critical because the left and the right were fighting for the allegiance of Chile's middle class, which, at 30 to 35 percent of the population, was Latin America's second biggest, after Argentina (Johnson 1961: 21). Both left and right knew that the middle class was the force on which the future of the revolution would pivot.

As in other countries, there was only a rough correlation between party allegiance and social class. The Christian Democratic Party accounted for some 34 percent of the vote, and this came largely from the middle class. At the same time, a not insignificant part of the 19 percent that voted for the right-wing National Party and the 43 percent that voted for the left-wing UP parties were also from the middle class.[2] The right wing sought to convince the middle class that socialism would mean a redistribution of poverty, their descent into the working class, and the collectivization of small farms. The strategy of the UP, in contrast, was to convince the middle-class base of the Christian Democrats that their interests were best served in a united front with the popular classes, the expression of which would be an informal UP–Christian Democratic political alliance. Whether or not the interests of the middle strata and the working class actually coincided, there was an implacable defensive rationale for placating the former. As one UP intellectual put it, "The dominant class has many economic resources, but numerically it is insignificant. It will not be former bankers or former industrialists who will take to the streets to confront the Popular Unity Government. The task is precisely to isolate them so they cannot use small proprietors or employees and small farmers to rush out in their defense" (Garcia 1972: 116, 121).

The social security measures and wage increases implemented by the UP were carefully calibrated to win over the urban middle class. By the end of the first year of the government, small-business people had been integrated into the social security system, and tax rates were lowered for small industries. And despite the risk of triggering inflation, middle-class salaried workers received bigger increases in

their pay than was originally planned by the UP government, with the result that they raised their portion of the total national income from 53.7 percent in 1970 to 58.6 percent in 1971 (Lopez 1971: 21–22; ODEPLAN 1972). Indeed, the UP government was seen as too accommodating to the middle class by some sectors of the left, such as the MIR (1972: 6), which complained: "How can one gain the middle classes if they are promised a splendid world of high consumption which cannot in practice be achieved, instead of calling on them to bear sacrifices for the construction of a more dignified, humane, and just Chile."

The UP government's best year in terms of its social and incomes policy toward the middle class and its management of the economy, combining high economic growth and relative low inflation, was 1971. Yet by the end of the year, a counterrevolutionary movement based on the middle class erupted into the political scene, with the famous march of thousands of women banging pots and pans that became an icon of counterrevolutionary mobilization, complete with *grupos de choque,* or paramilitary groups similar to the fascist *squadristi,* that beat up and provoked violent clashes with UP supporters and construction workers.

The December 1971 clashes showed that the right had been able to "generalize" its interests to the middle sectors, partly through the skillful employment of ideological appeals stressing the defence of individual freedom and united front strategies that pushed the Christian Democrats to take a prima donna role while National Party and other right-wing personalities stayed in the background. So successful were the tactics of the right that the Christian Democratic base became radicalized toward the right much faster than the party leadership (*Politica y Espiritu* n.d.: 78). But the tactics of the right could be effective only in a situation where the latent fears of the middle sectors, which stemmed from their position in the power structure, had been provoked by a revolutionary process.

In the countryside, the activation of small farmers as a counterrevolutionary base was probably more rapid than the middle class in the cities. Small farmers were pushed to the right by conservative press reports on violent tomas, fears that their land would also be subjected to agrarian reform, and food price controls imposed by the

UP government to combat inflation. As in the cities, the strategy of the landed class was a not insignificant factor. As Jacques Chonchol (1972: 153), the radical minister of agriculture, put it, the strategy of the minor *latifundistas* or landlords

> is not directed so much at defending the *latifundio*, which it already knows to be condemned, but at creating the image and fear that the agrarian reform not only harms the big proprietors but also the small and medium farmers who number in the thousands in this country. To the extent that chaotic and isolated actions affect big, small, and medium proprietors, we are providing the latifundista sector with weapons to fortify its base of support and achieve that which it is trying to create: a general front … against agrarian reform.

What Chonchol feared had already come about even before the UP government moved in early 1973 to expropriate inefficient *latifundios* or estates from 40 to 80 basic hectares, with little reserve land and little or practically no compensation for the owners, a move that affected mainly the minor *latifundistas.* This was clear to me in a trip I made around September 1972 to the province of Valdivia in the south of Chile, where I stayed in the home of a middle-class farmer, an account of which I published several decades later in the *Nation:*

> I remember going to Valdivia, with an American friend, to look up a Christian Democratic farmer that had been recommended by a fellow graduate student at the Princeton sociology department. After a couple of weeks of intensive interviewing and documentary research in Santiago, I thought I would relax a bit and enjoy the famed Chilean hospitality. We were warmly received by the farmer and his family, which included a son and two teenage daughters. A goat was slaughtered for us and we sat down to a hearty dinner on our first night. Then our host started cursing Allende, calling him simply a tool for the Communist Party to "impose its dictatorship on Chile." The Socialist Party of Allende was no better than the Communists, and the Izquierda Cristiana, composed of former Christian

> Democrats that had joined the Unidad Popular, were "traitors." My friend and I kept our politics to ourselves and tried to guide the discussion to more innocuous topics. I wanted to interview him on his views, I said, but we could do that after dinner. He said fine, but after a few minutes, he again began on his anti-leftist tirade.
>
> The next day at breakfast, lunch, and dinner was more of the same hospitality punctuated by lengthy invectives against "communists who will take away my property and give them to the *rotos* [broken ones]." Finally, at dinner on our second day, I could no longer tolerate his litany of "crimes of the left" and said I actually thought Allende was fighting for social justice and the land reform he was trying to push would actually benefit medium farmers like him and would negatively impact only the big landholders.
>
> Chileans, I had been told, could be really friendly and hospitable until they smelled your politics, after which you either became a really close friend or you became an outcast. My friend and I became outcasts, and our not being asked to breakfast the next day was a clear sign that we had overstayed our welcome. (Bello 2016)

The bitter anti-leftist stance of the Christian Democratic farmer was not surprising. Valdivia was one of the provinces of the Los Lagos region, where the proportion of legally expropriable land was lowest and the economic and social importance of small and medium farmers was greater than in the rest of rural Chile. Frightened by the *fundo* takeovers, which were magnified by the right-wing press, and attracted to the common defence of private property promoted by the big landlords, the small and medium farmers scurried to the right. The same rush to the right was evident in Cautín and the country's breadbasket, the Central Valley. Though the right-wing press exaggerated the violence involved in *fundo* takeovers, which, as noted earlier, were marked by remarkably little force, this did not mean that there was not a revolutionary ferment in the countryside.

It has been estimated that 1,600 to 2,000 farms were seized by peasants, and many more experienced strikes during the Allende period (Kay 1978: 127). These manifestations of a revolution from below, though not sanctioned by the UP government, contributed to the middle class's stampede toward the right.

By early 1972, the middle class was not simply a passive actor being pulled to the right; it had become the mass base of the counterrevolution. This counterrevolutionary mass had gained control of the streets from a left that seemed barely aware it had lost them — a fact that Fidel Castro had pointed out during his visit to Chile in December 1971 (*Punto Final* 1971: 46). This was brought home to me when I was nearly beaten up twice by Christian Democratic youth while observing right-wing demonstrations, unaware that the Communist Party newspaper *El Siglo* was tucked prominently under my arm.

In February 1972, the UP National Committee admitted that the right's "ideological penetration" of the middle strata "has been stronger, and it has dragged some of them—contrary to their real interests—to solidarity with the monopoly bourgeoisie and to even bring their forces into a heterogeneous National Front of the Private Sector" (Unidad Popular 1972: 63). But according to the UP's analysis, the reasons were mainly the deviations from the united front policy brought about by the seizures of lands and factories by the "extreme left" and the success of the right's calculating strategy. These certainly played a role, but the main reason behind the middle's move rightward could not be grasped within the UP's "united front" intellectual and political framework.

Underlying this view was a mechanistic and reductionist paradigm that the middle class would respond to an economic program that would not harm and even promote their economic interests. This perspective denied an independent dynamic to the middle sectors, viewing them as a mass that would passively respond to their "real" class interest, which lay in an alliance with the working class. It was one that could not have a proper appreciation of the deep-seated fears of the middle classes that the gains of workers and the lower classes would come at their expense. These fears stemmed from their position in the class structure. Latent in stable times, these apprehensions

rose to the surface during a revolutionary period, where they were skillfully stoked by middle-class and elite intellectuals into a powerful counterrevolutionary force that served as a concrete refutation of the left's simplistic political and economic cost-benefit calculus of middle-class behaviour. In short, while departures from the left-wing united front strategy and crafty right-wing united front tactics played a role, it was the inflammation of the middle class's structural position at a time of revolutionary transformation that was the decisive factor in their counterrevolutionary trajectory.

Matanza Masiva

By the time I left Chile early in 1973, the right controlled the streets, mounting demonstration after demonstration and subjecting people identified with the UP to harassment and beatings. The left still mounted demonstrations, and the streets still resounded with the happy chant "*El que no salta es momio*" ("He who does not jump is a reactionary"), but the mood of defensiveness had deepened. Increasingly, the fate of the revolution rested on the military remaining neutral. Initially respectful of civilian rule, the military leadership under Augusto Pinochet ended up siding with the counterrevolutionary coalition and launched a bloody coup on September 11, 1973.

The chilling word "Jakarta" supposedly emblazoned on some walls in Santiago in 1972 became a reality in the months following the September 11 putsch. The report of the government commission that investigated human rights violations under the Pinochet regime placed the number of people killed or disappeared at 3,065 and those tortured and imprisoned at 40,018. For a country of nine million people, these figures were relatively high (BBC 2011). The terror was probably more severe in the countryside, "where there were no embassies and no foreign journalists," with the Mapuche, the indigenous people that had carried out numerous land occupations in the south, being especially targeted (Winn 2010: 265).

As in Indonesia, indiscriminate killings, or "*matanza masiva*," as one Chilean officer described it to historian Peter Winn (2010: 265), were designed not only to decapitate the left but to wipe it out completely. The left in Chile had not only come close to power;

it had actually seized a part of the state. To the right, the situation necessitated a root-and-branch response that was so completely out of line with the country's tradition of political moderation that it shocked many Chileans who had initially supported the coup (Winn 2010: 265).

On the question of *matanza masiva*, one might ask what accounted for the use of civilian auxiliaries in Indonesia and their absence in Chile. One possible explanation is simply the enormity of the task in Indonesia, which necessitated the liquidation of hundreds of thousands of people over vast stretches of an archipelago of over 80 million people. Already overstretched, the Indonesian military was simply too limited in size for such a labour-intensive task as mass killings in countless villages that had branches of the PKI and the progressive wing of its allied party, the PNI. Another factor, alluded to earlier, was the hesitation of some Indonesian military units to carry out the orders from central command. Another consideration is that overtly fascist paramilitary groups such as Patria y Libertad (Fatherland and Liberty) in Chile were still relatively small and of recent vintage, whereas branches of the conservative Islamic organizations had been well established in many of the rural villages of Indonesia. Most likely, the most important reason is that once the Chilean military brass decided to intervene, it was determined to control the process by itself and would brook no interference from civilian auxiliaries. Pablo Rodriguez Grez, the founder of Patria y Libertad, got the message and, shortly after the coup, dissolved the fascist band, leaving its members to be recruited by the military's secret services.[3]

As in Indonesia, geopolitical factors played an important role in the counterrevolution. The US financed right-wing efforts "to make the economy scream," as Richard Nixon famously put it. In a secret 1970 memo after Allende won the elections, the CIA's deputy director for planning wrote, "It is firm and continuing policy that Allende be overthrown by a coup.... It is imperative that these actions be implemented clandestinely and securely so that the USG [United States government] and American hand be well hidden" (quoted in *Democracy Now* 2013). The agency then provided the Chilean mili-

tary with vital intelligence and right-wing groups such as the fascist Patria y Libertad with funding to destabilize the government. It is also likely to have carried out covert operations. But the contribution of foreign intervention must not be exaggerated. After the coup of September 11, progressive analysis of the event and actions leading up to it understandably focused on the role of the United States, which was seen as directing or working intimately with Pinochet and the leadership of the National and Christian Democratic parties. That a counterrevolutionary mass base had been central in the overthrow tended to be omitted or, if it wasn't, the tendency was to regard it as largely a force manipulated by the CIA and the elites.

The reality, however, was that contrary to the prevailing explanations of the coup, which attributed Pinochet's success to US intervention and the CIA, the counterrevolution was already there prior to the US's destabilization efforts; it was largely determined by internal class dynamics; and the Chilean elites were able to connect with middle-class sectors terrified by the prospect of poor sectors rising up with their agenda of justice and equality.

In short, the US intervention was successful because it was inserted into an ongoing counterrevolutionary process. CIA destabilization was just one of the factors that contributed to the victory of the right, not the decisive one. This was not something that progressives wanted to hear then, since many wanted a simple black-and-white picture — that is, that the overthrow of Allende was orchestrated from the outside, by the United States. As I noted in my *Nation* piece, "Being of the left, I could understand why politics demanded such a portrayal of events. Being a sociologist, I realized that the situation was much more nuanced" (Bello 2016).

Conclusion

In conclusion, one might advance the following observations regarding the counterrevolution in Chile.

First, the political dynamics of the countryside were inextricably linked to the national agenda of the left and the right. Compared to Indonesia, however, the left had a greater problem subordinating local struggles to its national strategy, since the peasant movement,

indigenous people, and revolutionary left had developed autonomous dynamics that often contradicted national policy. The land seizures, which the UP government opposed because it worried they would scare small farmers and wreck its united front policy, were a prime example of this conflict.

Second, the Chilean revolutionary process was remarkably peaceful, both in the cities and the countryside, with relatively few instances of violent deaths and property damage. The image of violent takeovers projected by the conservative media was far from the reality, but they did contribute to moving the urban and rural middle classes to the right.

Third, the middle class was the decisive battleground. Images of "leftist" violence, land seizures, and food price controls may have contributed to the rightward movement of the middle classes, but what was probably more decisive was the activation of their latent fears — stemming from their position in the class structure — by a revolutionary situation, this being the main factor making them an active counterrevolutionary force. In this fluid situation, the intellectuals and propagandists of the right were able to connect with the fears of the middle class about their loss of status and descent to the ranks of the poor, the levelling of society by a socialist government, and the erosion of private property. In contrast, the left operated with a united front strategy based on a view of the middle class as a passive force and simplistic reductionist assumptions that raising social security benefits and wages for both the middle class and the lower classes and reducing inflation would bring the two together against the right. But the battle was not only ideological. It was also tactical, and here the right also had the edge, with its calculating strategy of letting the Christian Democrats take centre stage and patiently working on the party's base to pull the leadership to the right. There is a great deal of truth to the observation of Armand Mattelart (1973) that in the Chilean faceoff, it was the right that proved to be more "Leninist" than the left.

Fourth, the extreme violence that accompanied the coup stemmed from the right's view that political polarization into two irreconcilable camps meant the threat from the left, which had already seized part of the state through elections, could be eliminated only

through the physical elimination of the left itself. Thus, the Chilean right adopted the *matanza masiva* of the Indonesian counterrevolution instead of the *matanza selectiva* of Italian fascism. Again, the parallel with Indonesia is striking.

Having said this, it must be noted that the effort to eliminate the left as a political actor was less sweeping or thorough than in Indonesia. As one analyst pointed out, "The military through the indiscriminate killings, imprisonments, torture and deportations, especially in the first years after the coup, had as a key objective to spread terror and thereby deactivate and paralyse the left, as well as eliminate any possible opposition to them. I doubt that they had in mind the physical elimination of all the people on the left (i.e., a *matanza masiva* à la Jakarta). Otherwise they would have eliminated all the political leaders, trade union leaders, and key government officials. Many were imprisoned, tortured, killed and "disappeared," but several were also later released into exile, and those who had sought refuge in embassies were allowed to leave the country and prohibited to return until many years later."[4] Though very savage indeed, the repression in Chile simply pales in comparison to its Indonesian counterpart.

Fifth, though right-wing and fascist *grupos de choque* played a key role in street mobilizations and intimidating the left in the lead-up to the September 11 coup d'état, they had practically no role in the violence exercised against the left after the coup, which was wholly managed by the military. This was unlike in Indonesia, where civilian auxiliaries such as Islamic militias did a lot of the killing at the direction of the military. The most likely explanation is that in Chile, the military high command was confident it could eliminate the left physically by itself, whereas in Indonesia, the military's capacity was limited by the country's large geographical expanse and population, as well as the hesitation if not opposition of some regional military commanders and units to carry out the orders for mass killing issued by the central leadership.

Finally, while the US role in overthrowing Allende was significant, what was decisive was the ongoing counterrevolution into which that support was injected.

Notes

1. The Frei agrarian reform beneficiaries were estimated to total only 100,000 *inquilinos* or semi-feudal resident labourers, supervisory personnel, skilled workers, and wage workers. See, among others, Aranda and Martinez (1971: 149).
2. These figures are from the results of the Senate elections in March 1973.
3. The most notorious former member of Patria y Libertad was Michael Townley, who carried out the assassination of the prominent Chilean exile Orlando Letelier and his assistant Ronni Moffitt in Washington, DC, in 1976 for the Chilean intelligence service DINA (Bredemeier 1979).
4. Personal communication, anonymous reviewer, October 11, 2018. The majority of the key leaders and officials of the governments of the Concertación political alliance, which gained office in 1990 with the democratic transition, were important politicians, leaders, and activists from the pre-1973 coup period, many of whom had returned some years previously while the country was still under the dictatorship of General Pinochet. The Concertación ruled for over two decades as a centre-left alliance (which, during the second government of Michele Bachelet, included the Communist Party), in sharp contrast to the case of Indonesia.

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5

Thailand: Revolution and Counterrevolution Reloaded

When the government of General Suchinda Krapayoon was ousted by a combination of middle-class-led protests and royal intervention in May 1992, it seemed that Thailand had seen the last of its military regimes, and political analysts hailed the event as another instance of the middle class being a force for democratization. But in September 2006, the Thai military ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, stepping back from power over a year later after elections were held to form a new civilian government. In May 2014, it entered politics again, ousting the government led by Thaksin's sister, Yingluck, and this time prepared to stay in power for a longer period. At the time of writing, 2018, it remains in power, with very little overt resistance from the civilian population. The key to its rule is the support of the middle class, the same class that overthrew Suchinda a quarter of a century earlier, turning from being insurgent to being counter-revolutionary.

In any counterrevolution, there are losers. And in Thailand the losers included the rural masses in the north, northeast, and central regions of the country. These were the same areas where peasant organizing for change in production and social relations was most active in the nationwide social ferment in the 1970s. Over thirty years later these areas became the bastions of the Redshirts that provided the mass support for Thaksin's populist movement. In the words of one scholar, the 1970s was a case of "revolution interrupted" by a counterrevolution (Haberkorn 2011). The momentous events of the last twelve years might be said to be a case of "revolution reloaded" followed by "counterrevolution reloaded."[1]

The revolutionary process of the 1970s, though initiated in Bangkok by students that overthrew the Thanom-Praphat military dictatorship and ushered in a parliamentary regime, was driven for-

ward by the peasants' struggle for land. With a limited role played by left-wing parties, this movement was spontaneous and organized by peasants themselves. The battle cry of this struggle was land reform.

Capitalism and Rural Crisis

In all parts of Thailand, the conditions of existence for the peasantry worsened during the decades after the Second World War. The key factor was the rapid spread of market relations or commercialization of land, as the country was more rapidly integrated into the global capitalist economy even as an antiquated system of land tenure prevailed. Thus, the benefits from the increased production of rice, which made Thailand the prime actor in the global rice market, flowed unevenly, with the big landowners, middlemen, and moneylenders siphoning off the greater part of the wealth created. The tenure system also ensured that most of the benefits of the increased productivity — triggered by chemical-intensive Green Revolution technology — would flow to the landlords.

In the country's rice basket, Central Thailand, symptoms of peasant distress amid prosperity showed themselves in the rise of share-tenancy and landlessness. Before the Second World War, a great part of rice production took place in small independent landholdings. By the early 1970s, however, a study of eleven provinces in the central region found that 39 percent of farmers were full tenants and another 30 percent were part tenants (Fallon 1983: 121). By 1981, over 36 percent of all landholdings were rented (Pongsapich et al. 1993: 44). Conditions were not easy for these tenants, with rents rising from over a quarter of the crop in pre-war days to half or more in the post-war period (Fallon 1983: 126). Landless workers were also an increasing proportion of the population, reaching up to 14 or 15 percent of rural families in the central region by the mid-1970s (Pongsapich et al. 1993: 49).

As in Central Thailand, the combination of market forces and an increasingly inequitable tenure system ensured that the greater productivity made possible by the Green Revolution would be cornered by the richer strata in Northern Thailand. Tenancy became more widespread: in one survey, the percentage of tenant households rose

from 18.3 percent of all households in 1967–68 to 27 percent by 1976 (Trikat, cited in Vaddhanaputi 1984: 141). Landlessness also shot up, with landless households in one district of Chiang Mai coming to 36 percent in 1974 (Turton 1978: 112). Landlords also became more aggressive, taking, in many cases, two-thirds of the harvest as rent (Bowie 1991: 10; see also Haberkorn 2011: 9).

In Northeastern Thailand, where traditionally small, owner-operated plots predominated, the booms and busts of the international market for rice and cash crops like kenaf and cassava led to widespread indebtedness, forcing farmers to sell their land and become tenant farmers or landless workers in land they formerly owned. Tenanted land rose by 56 percent from 1980 to 1991 (Pongsapich et al. 1993: 17). As in the central and northern regions, peasant disaffection was deep and widespread in the northeast by the late seventies. It was, as it were, waiting to be ignited.

Peasants Become Political Subjects

What ignited it was the fall of the Thanom-Praphat military dictatorship following massive protests by students and other urban sectors. This exposed a degree of fragility and vulnerability in the ruling system that was not lost on peasants. While peasant rebellions against the state were not new, these had been localized, spontaneous, and sometimes millenarian in character, such as the Holy Men Rebellions in the northeast. The peasant organizing that unfolded in the democratic interlude from 1973 to 1976 was different, being the first time the peasantry sought to organize itself autonomously as a class on a national scale and on the basis of a secular program.

While communist cadres probably played some part in the formation of the key peasant organization, the Farmers' Federation of Thailand (FFT), the central role was filled by peasant grassroots leaders, and the success of the FFT was due precisely to its non-ideological style of organizing. University students provided much needed technical and organizational support, but this was different from the approach of a vanguard party out to "organize the masses." The FFT served to bring together issues, concerns, and demands from different regions and different sectors of the Thai peasantry, not all

of whom had experienced the same problems or suffered from them to the same degree.

> Some were demands for immediate action, such as grants of land for the coming planting season, price regulation, reduction of farm rents, suspension of court cases involving farmers, release of those arrested for trespass, and help for flood victims. Others were longer term demands, such as those for land reform and permanent provision of land to the landless, and a solution to the problems of indebtedness and high interest rates. Some demands were more immediately political, such as the lifting of martial law in the outlying provinces. … Over time, the demands escalated, which seems to indicate a growing political consciousness and perhaps overconfidence. (Turton 1982: 20)

The peasant support for the FFT apparently came principally from the north and the central region, where the rates of tenancy and landlessness were highest. With an estimated membership of 1.5 million farmers nationwide, the geographical scope of the federation's organizing was unprecedented. So was the breadth of the program, which sought to speak "for the rural poor, the landless, those with smallholdings, tenants, and in a wider sense for all those who experienced injustice and denial of democratic freedoms" (Turton 1982: 25). Most significantly, noted one observer, FFT represented a historical juncture: the peasants of Thailand "had set up their own organization and drawn up a program of struggle to help solve the basic problems of Thai farmers" (Karunan 1984: 45).

Pressure from the peasantry was instrumental in wringing concessions from the elite reformist government that reigned, in unstable fashion, from 1973 to 1976. The two most important concessions were the Land Rent Control Act of 1974 and the Land Reform Act of 1975. These pieces of legislation were clumsy attempts to reduce the burden of tenancy and transform tenants into small owner-operators; compared to land reform measures in South Korea and Taiwan, they were generous in their treatment of landlords. But, as Tyrell Haberkorn (2011: 15) points out, it was not so much the

content of the legislation but the way the peasants used the two laws — especially the Land Rent Control Act — to alter the balance of class power that was of momentous significance:

> [The] struggles for rent relief in Chiang Mai province were at once about the amount of rice to be paid as rent and about who had the right to define and enforce the terms of land rental. As farmers began to educate one another about their legal rights, and to urge landowners to follow the dictates of the new Land Rent Control Act in 1974 and 1975, landowners lost rice (in comparison to prior years), but they also lost their position as the sole determinants of *deciding* how much rice would be paid by farmers as rent.

What made the actions of the farmers revolutionary was that they were transformed into political subjects when "they claimed the law as a tool that they could use to secure justice and improve their lives" (Haberkorn 2011: 130). Just as the real fear of the landed elite in Italy was not a communist revolution but their gradual asphyxiation by the grassroots institutions of reformist socialism, and just as the biggest fear of the Indonesian military was the PKI coming to power through electoral means, the deepest fear of the Thai landlords was their tenants learning to use the law to empower themselves and disempower their social "superiors."

The threat of a gradual shift in the balance of class power at the local level by uppity social subordinates using the law, not the prospect of a powerful organized left taking power at the national level, shaped the landed class's response, and this was more along the lines of calibrated fascist violence abetted by the state as in Italy than the state-directed *matanza masiva* in Indonesia and Chile.

Counterrevolution I

As in the Po Valley in Italy, the landed elites drew on the services of already existing right-wing paramilitary groups to initiate a wave of terror against the FFT and its student supporters. These formations included the Red Gaurs, Nawaphon, and the Village Scouts, who counted among their supporters people in the military, the police,

and key business elites. These groups combined terror tactics with ideological appeals in the battle for the hearts and minds of the rural populace against the peasant movement and the students. The centrepiece of the right-wing ideological offensive was the slogan "Nation-Religion-King." In the case of the Village Scouts, one of the central organizations of the counterrevolution, there was a sophisticated effort to fuse this ideological trinity with traditional rural Thai culture to create a more secure village basis for the existing order. This effort included indoctrination programs that were clearly fascist-modernist in inspiration. Indoctrination, noted one observer, was "emotionally stretching, from the lightheartedness of child's play to the seriousness of patriotism, humiliation to happiness, and competition to cooperation." The purpose of the exercise was "to make the participants feel important, and identify themselves closely with the nation, the religion, and the king" (Vaddhanaputi 1984: 556–57). Constantly cultivated by conservative forces as the symbolic lynchpin of the nation, the monarchy was a powerful ideological reserve monopolized by the right (Connors 2003: 130).

Despite the importance of ideology in the social struggle, force and repression were the principal means by which the threatened elites sought to protect their privileges. Peasant leaders were murdered systematically, with 18 FFT leaders assassinated from February to August 1975 alone. These assassinations reached their climax with the killing of a highly respected vice president of the FFT in July. As in Italy, the targeted violence severely weakened the peasant movement, which was unprepared for this kind of struggle.

Emboldened by their success in bringing the revolutionary process in the countryside to a screeching stop, conservative forces took on the weak reformist parliamentary regime in Bangkok, forcing it to put on hold the implementation of the pro-peasant land laws. This retreat, however, did not prevent the government's authority from being eroded, as the military, the bureaucracy, and the ultra-conservative royalist elite worked with the country's economic elites to regain control from the bourgeois reformists via extra-parliamentary means. In a situation reminiscent of the Allende period in Chile, the authority of the legal powerholders evaporated, and the question of power came increasingly to be dominated by the battles

in the streets, with the advantage gained by those who could deploy superior resources in organization, ideology, and, most important, firepower. The sacking of Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj's residence by uniformed policemen who were drunk and calling for respect for law on August 20, 1975, was a sign that real power had passed to the counterrevolutionary forces.

On October 6, 1976, the counterrevolution reached its bloody climax, when scores of students were killed, hundreds wounded, and thousands arrested in an assault on Thammasat University in Bangkok by paramilitary forces instigated by state security agencies. These were militants of Nawaphon, Red Gaurs, and Village Scouts, organizations that had cut their teeth suppressing the peasants. The three-year accumulation of pent-up hatred among the elites and counterrevolutionary forces was unleashed by fascist mobs that day and succeeding days. As in Indonesia and Chile, the level of violence was unprecedented and shocking to Thais. An interview conducted years later with a witness to the bloodletting underlined the role of the civilian paramilitary groups:

> "The other side believed that we were armed Communists and had defamed the monarchy," Krisadang said, trying to explain the raw sadism of lynching, murder, rape and torture that seemed to have no precedent.… Krisadang said he had no idea the paramilitary mob was capable of unleashing such hatred and violence. He faults political passions being whipped up to divide people and make them turn on one another.… Krisadang said anyone who was seen as a political opponent was branded a Communist and anti-monarchist. (Rojanaphruk 2016)

These comments from a former student activist underlined another prominent aspect of the counterrevolution. While Marxism was an influential ideological current among students, the Communist Party played a relatively minor role in the mobilizations of 1973–76 and was active mainly in the periphery of the country, especially in the northeast, as a guerrilla force. Anti-communism was, however, a prominent ideological aspect of the counterrevolution.

The fall of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam to indigenous communist forces in 1975 was deployed by the right in its counterrevolutionary campaign, which painted Thailand as the next domino to fall. There was, however, little foreign involvement in the right-wing campaign, probably because the organized left was never seen by the establishment as a serious threat, unlike in Indonesia, where it was seen as being on the cusp of power, and in Chile, where it had won (tenuous) control of the bureaucracy.

Interlude

The period from 1976 to 1992 saw a succession of military or military-dominated regimes. Living conditions in the countryside worsened. By the late 1980s, there were about one million tenant households cultivating an area of six million rai or 960,000 hectares (CUSRI 1989: 114).[2] In the northeast, where tenancy had not been as great a problem as in the north and central regions, land under tenancy increased from one million rai in 1975 to three million at the end of the 1980s (Pongpaiboon 1991). As for the landless, a study by the Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute using the Food and Agriculture Organization definition of landless found that they constituted some 33 percent of the agricultural population (CUSRI 1989: 1, 5–6).

With the middle-class-led ouster of the Suchinda military dictatorship in May 1992, some hoped that the new democratic regime would bring a new deal to the countryside, only to be frustrated. The failure of reform was, however, mitigated by the country's rapid industrialization, triggered by the massive entry of Japanese capital seeking cheap labour in the late eighties and early nineties, when Thailand joined the ranks of "newly industrializing countries." Much of the agricultural labour surplus from different parts of rural Thailand, especially from the northeast, was absorbed in industries that sprang up in the Bangkok metropolitan area.

Then in the second half of 1997, the real estate bubble in Bangkok deflated, initiating the Asian financial crisis. The collapse of the financial economy was followed by recession, which was deepened by austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary

Fund (IMF). Many migrants who had found work in boom-time Bangkok were forced to return to the countryside, with an average of five migrants returning to each of the country's 60,000 villages by December, according to one estimate.[3] It was this countryside reeling in crisis, along with the rest of the country, that set the stage for the next, remarkable turn of events.

Before we turn to this, it must be noted that the demise of the FFT was followed in the early eighties by the collapse of the Communist Party of Thailand, which had provided a home to many peasant leaders and student activists fleeing repression in the late 1970s. Many of these militants, however, did not give up on their ideals, and some of them reproduced the farmer-student alliance of the 1970s by hooking up with peasants in civil society organizations around causes such as opposition to the Pak Mun Dam in the northeast, an issue that linked environmental degradation to poverty, inequality, and the rising level of farmers' debt in the countryside. Most prominent among these groups was the Assembly of the Poor, which organized marches of thousands of peasants to Korat, Ubon Rachatani, and Bangkok in the 1990s.

Thaksin Ascendant

It was, however, Thaksin Shinawatra who won the imagination of the rural masses, precipitating what might be called, though rather loosely, "revolution reloaded."

Thaksin will probably go down as Thailand's most controversial early-twenty-first-century figure. After building up a telecommunications empire though government connections, he went into politics, rising from being a subordinate of traditional political figures to being the dominant figure in a political force, initially called the Thai Rak Thai (Thai Love Thai) Party, that won the 2001 elections and the three other elections thereafter by landslides. He bent government rules to advance his business interests while he was prime minister and used his office to create opportunities for his business cronies. But he also posed as a reformer who would modernize Thailand's politics and a nationalist who freed the country from the clutches of the IMF. Most important, he set in motion a political project that drew

massive support from the rural and urban masses, and from the populous north and northeastern regions and most of Central Thailand, which threatened to upend the country's political landscape.

Thaksin was the supreme opportunist, but an extremely clever one, who saw an opening in the vacuum of leadership for the lower classes that had been created by the loss of progressive formations like the FFT and the Communist Party. Advised by former student radicals, he devised in the wake of the IMF stabilization program debacle a Keynesian strategy that pulled the country out the depths of crisis and that had a strong redistributive component. The key elements of this program were a universal healthcare system that allowed people to be treated for the equivalent of a dollar, a one-million-baht fund for each village that villagers could invest however they wanted, and low-interest loan programs along with various kinds of food subsidies and agricultural price supports.

To the rural masses, Thaksin offered the "New Deal" they had long been in search of, and they became a central force in the political rollercoaster that was interrupted by a military coup in 2006 against Thaksin and by another putsch in 2014 against a government headed by his sister, Yingluck. While the rising opposition to Thaksin characterized the rural masses as "the greedy poor" that Thaksin "bought" with his populist politics, the reality was more complex. Naruemon Thabchumpon and Duncan McCargo claim that the characterization of the hardline Thaksin supporters known as the Redshirts as coming from the poor peasantry was simplistic. Many were, rather, "emerging forces on the margins of the middle class" or "urbanized villagers" who were not from the lowest class and who were motivated mainly by a demand for political justice and fair play rather than socioeconomic concerns (Thabchumpon and McCargo 2011: 1018). The complex character of Thaksin's rural mass base stemmed from the fact that the spread of capitalist production relations and the commercialization of land had contradictory effects, impoverishing some while providing an opportunity for others, including people who were able to access aid from the pro-Thaksin governments to help them build small businesses. Both losers and winners appeared to come together in support of Thaksin.

A not unfair judgment of Thaksin's impact on the rural

masses is provided by political scientist Ukrist Pathamanand (2016: 153):

> [Thaksin's] policies were perceived to have an impact on ordinary people's lives far beyond anything experienced under previous governments. Thaksin also presented himself as a leader of ordinary people, responsive to their demands, unlike any predecessor. Many who later came to join the Red Shirts explained that they felt grateful to Thaksin for his policies and for the sense of empowerment he gave them. …
>
> As a result, when Thaksin was toppled by a coup in 2006, many villages in the north, northeast, and central regions saw this as wrong and came out to join demonstrations. After the clashes at Sanam Luang, Victory Monument, and Ding Daeng junction in Bangkok in April-May 2010, many became even more opposed to state power and more sympathetic to Thaksin.

Many of Thaksin's supporters were not uncritical admirers. Some acknowledged that he had a corrupt and authoritarian side, but he was a modern, capitalist force that was progressive in comparison to the reactionary military-bureaucratic-royalist elite. Others saw him as a useful symbol behind which to build a new progressive movement that would eventually develop dynamics independent of him. Indeed, the coup that overthrew him spawned the Redshirt movement that became more and more independent of the self-exiled Thaksin, leading some activists to claim that "the movement signaled a real revolution in political consciousness and organization in the countryside, reflecting a shift toward a postpeasant society" (Lertchoosakul 2016: 262). This view — that Thaksin's main contribution was to serve as a springboard to people's self-empowerment — is expounded in some detail by Pathamanand (2016: 153–54):

> [Villagers'] political sophistication advanced election by election. Vote buying declined in effectiveness, as people increasingly paid attention to the policies on offer. Elections became increasingly aware of the power of the vote and their ability to use it to bring about improvement in their own lives. Loyalty

> to Thaksin was less and less about Thaksin himself and more and more an expression of the villagers' wish to protect their newly gained and understood power.

Counterrevolution II

Not surprisingly, Thaksin and his policies could not but come into conflict with the Thai establishment. Central to the power structure was King Bhumibol, a quietly charismatic figure who had moved far beyond his formally designated role as constitutional monarch. In the aftermath of the counterrevolution of 1976, the monarchy had been aggressively cultivated by the establishment as a supra-political moral authority or referee of democratic competition (Connors 2003: 128–52). Behind a carefully crafted personality cult and with strategically timed political interventions, Bhumibol, wrote Pavin Chachavalpongpun (2017: 429), "built an alliance with the military, creating a 'network monarchy' which placed the royal institution at the apex of the Thai political structure. Together, the monarchy and the military designed a political system whereby elected governments would be kept weak and vulnerable."

The elite knew, however, that to preserve their interests, they had to win over the country's middle class. One way to gather the support of the middle sectors was to paint the Thaksin movement as seeking to subvert the royalty, claiming that Thaksin and key advisers on the left had met in Finland in 1999 to plot the overthrow of the monarchy (Lertchoosakul 2016: 243–44). Yet the elite did not have to resort to sensationalist claims to win the middle sectors since the latter had themselves become alarmed at the increasing politicization and empowerment of the lower classes unleashed by Thaksin. Middle-class intellectuals began to question majority rule, a core concept of democracy. A key figure was Anek Laothamatas, whose influential thinking was summed up by Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker (2009: 240):

> Anek argued that Thaksin's populism was the inevitable result of trying to make electoral democracy work in a country where most of the electorate were rural people still bound by old-style

> patron-client ties. In the early years of Thailand's democracy, politics was dominated by godfather politicians who translated patron-client bonds into electoral majorities. Thaksin's brilliance had been to transfer those bonds to a national leader. The rural voter used to exchange his vote for the promise of the godfather's local patronage, and now exchanged it for cheap health care and local loans. In this social setting, Anek argued, a "pure democracy" was bound to lead to de Tocqueville's "tyranny of the majority" and irresponsible populism.

Another influential figure, Thirayut Boonmee, an icon from the 1973–76 student uprising, came out in favour of royal intervention to check democracy, saying the critics of such a move had "to step beyond the Western frame of thinking" (quoted in Lertchoosakul 2016: 237). Yet another prominent figure, a Chulalongkorn University professor, otherwise known as a liberal, confessed to me in an interview, "For me, democracy is not the best regime. I'm in this sense an elitist. If there are people who are more capable, why not give them more weight. Why should they not come ahead of everybody else? You may call me a Nietzschean" (quoted in Bello 2014). This reactionary thinking emerged in the context of the rise of the anti-Thaksin Yellow Shirt movement, composed mainly of the Bangkok middle class, which came out into the streets and helped trigger the coup that ousted Thaksin in September 2006. With Thaksin's electoral support remaining strong, the Yellow Shirts engaged in increasingly militant actions, such as their seizure of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport in November 2008 to destabilize a pro-Thaksin government that had won the national elections in 2007.

When the Thaksin coalition won the parliamentary elections a fourth straight time in 2011, bringing Yingluck to the premiership, the elite and middle-class opposition began to rapidly lose hope of a democratic reversal of what they considered a political trajectory harmful to their interests. Over the next few months, a strategy gradually evolved: use the judicial system to paralyze the government with charges of corruption and anti-constitutional moves; get the middle class to stage massive demonstrations in Bangkok, which was largely anti-Thaksin territory; and get the military to launch a coup

to resolve the political deadlock. Much like Santiago in 1972–73, Bangkok in 2013–14 became the site of almost daily demonstrations by the middle class, led by the Democrat Party personality Suthep Thaugsuban, that were punctuated by instances of deadly violence. A last desperate effort by the government to resolve the crisis through new elections was sabotaged by demonstrators and thugs who tried to prevent people from voting, their rationale expressed in the slogan "Reform before elections," which was a sanitized code for devising constitutional arrangements that would prevent the Redshirts from ever coming to power again.

On May 22, 2014, the military ousted the Yingluck government. In April 2017, a new constitution was promulgated, the main feature of which was a fully appointed Senate of 250 that could veto the moves of the National Assembly. Not surprisingly, this reflected the views of anti-Thaksin middle-class intellectuals like Anek, who had proposed several years earlier that to avoid the "tyranny of the majority" that had brought Thaksin to power through thumping majorities, there had to be a "better democracy" that was "a balanced compromise between three elements: the representatives of the lower classes who are the majority in the country, the middle class, and the upper class" (quoted in Phongpaichit and Baker 2009: 240). Laothamatas, a former communist turned counterrevolutionary thinker, was a member of the junta-appointed National Reform Council.

By the middle of 2017, the military government headed by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, the former army chief of staff, remained in place, having gone far beyond its originally stated goal of staying in power for only fifteen months. Unlike earlier military regimes, it was comfortably ensconced in power, a condition created partly by the successful intimidation of all opposition but mainly by the solid support of a middle class that had, like Anek, turned counterrevolutionary.

Once supportive of democracy, when there was little threat to its interests from below, the Thai middle class had become a bastion of anti-democratic sentiments. Majority rule, the centrepiece of democratic theory, had failed to preserve the thin line separating them from what they considered the uneducated, unthinking hordes. So long as political conflicts were between alternatives that did not

threaten their economic and cultural status, majority rule was fine. It was a different story when the majority came behind a transformative reform program led by a charismatic politician. The military elite realized this, and this was why it was confident it could go on and on postponing elections with no significant opposition.

One may ask though why the overthrow of the Yingluck government was accomplished with so little violence. Part of the answer may reside in the fact that the military still regarded the Red Shirt movement as a relatively loose and inchoate network centred around a personality instead of an organized and disciplined movement that posed a serious immediate threat to survival of the social order. Then there was the continuing strong hold of royalist sentiments among many in Thaksin's base, which the military unabashedly exploited to neutralize opposition to its seizure of power. A third reason was, unlike the 1976 counterrevolution, where fascist groups went on a rampage, the military made sure to monopolize the employment of coercion, which the leaders of the opposition were all too willing to give it since the main goal of their demonstrations — to get the military to launch a coup — had been accomplished.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the key features of the counterrevolutionary process in Thailand might be said to be the following.

First, the counterrevolution had two phases. The first developed in response to the period of student-peasant political ferment in the period 1973–76, the second in response to the pro-Thaksin movement that drove the dynamics of Thai politics in the period 2001–14.

Second, the peasant movement of the early seventies was a largely self-organized class movement that emerged in response to the opportunities for change provided by the fluid political situation after the ouster of the military in 1973. This movement was revolutionary in the sense that, in challenging the terms of land rent and land tenure, tenant farmers empowered themselves and became political subjects.

Third, the spread of capitalist production relations in the coun-

tryside and commercialization of land contributed to peasant distress in the period leading up to the 1973–76 political ferment.

Fourth, the counterrevolution of 1973–76 was clearly set in motion by the landed classes, but its development responded to the dynamics of fascist groups of a mixed class character that were inflamed by the ideology of "Nation-Religion-King" and received support from state security forces. This volatile mix erupted in the unprecedented violence of the counterrevolution during the right-wing invasion of Thammasat University in October 1976. The behaviour of these forces had much in common with that of the Italian fascists.

Fifth, like the peasant movement of the 1970s, the lower-class mobilization of the last fifteen years was set in motion not by revolutionary leadership but by the reformist agenda and populist style of Thaksin Shinawatra. The opposition's methods, however, radicalized it, and by the end of Yingluck Shinawatra's government in 2014, the so-called Red Shirt movement appeared to have gone beyond a simple enterprise to restore Thaksin to power.

Sixth, in contrast to the base of the peasant movement of the 1970s, the Red Shirt movement was composed not just of poor peasants but perhaps, even more, of urbanized villagers, many of whom had their feet in both agriculture and commerce, who could be classified as being on "the margins of the middle class." The complex character of the Red Shirt movement stemmed from the contradictory effects of globalization in the countryside, which impoverished some while providing an opportunity for others, including people who were able to get support from Thaksin's programs to help them build small businesses.

Seventh, the middle class formed the mass base of the counterrevolution of the Thaksin period. This middle class, however, was not simply manipulated by the traditional Thai elites. From being a force for democratization in the 1990s, its fear of the surge from below triggered by Thaksin's populist politics led it to a more and more anti-democratic position, the climax of which was its serving as the flame to provoke a military coup in 2014. The counterrevolution was directed at liberal democracy, as in the Global North, India, and the Philippines, but it did not use elections to come to power as it did in these countries but by provoking a military coup. Moreover,

in contrast to the Global North and India, where the ideological critique of democracy was that it did not protect the majority from the minority, in Thailand, the elite and the middle class claimed that democracy did not protect the thinking minority from the corruptible majority.

Eighth, while the ferment of the 1970s interacted with regional developments like the fall of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to the communists, there was little evidence of significant foreign involvement in the Thai counterrevolution. There was also little involvement of foreign groups in the ouster of Thaksin and his sister, Yingluck. In fact, relations between the military regime and the US deteriorated owing to the US ambassador taking a "hard line" against the 2014 coup (Crispin 2015).

Notes

1. A significant part of the analysis and data provided on the pre-Thaksin period covered in this section come from fieldwork and research I did in the mid-1990s on the political economy of Thailand, which became the basis of the book *A Siamese Tragedy: Development and Disintegration in Modern Thailand,* authored by Walden Bello, Shea Cunningham, and Li Kheng Poh and published by Zed Books in London in 1998.
2. A rai equals 1,600 square meters (40 m × 40 m) or 0.16 hectares.
3. Interview with Wanida Tantiwitthayapitak, spokesperson for Assembly of the Poor, January 21, 1998.

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6

The Hindu Counterrevolution: The Violent Re-Creation of an Imagined Past

Among the cases of counterrevolution touched on in this study, India is unique in that it provides a fascinating, if disturbing, direct link between an ongoing counterrevolutionary movement and classical fascism in early-twentieth-century Europe. The key Hindu right-wing nationalist organization in India is the RSS, or Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, often translated into English as the National Volunteer Corps. A tight, disciplined organization, the RSS was founded in 1925, just five years after the founding of the Nazi Party in Germany. Perhaps not surprising, images of the Fascist Blackshirts and Nazi Brownshirts are evoked when RSS units come out on parade with their trademark accoutrement of knee-length khaki shorts (lately replaced by long brown trousers) and white shirts, their long fighting sticks, or *lathi,* displayed in a fashion meant to be menacing.

But more important than the matter of uniform is inspiration. Instrumental in making European fascism an ideological influence on the Hindu right was the prime ideologue of the RSS, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who declared, "Surely Hitler knows … what suits Germany best. The very fact that Germany or Italy has so wonderfully recovered and grown so powerful as never before at the touch of the Nazi or Fascist magical wand is enough to prove that those political 'isms' were the most congenial tonics their health demanded" (quoted in Ghosh 2012).

Savarkar's glowing admiration was seconded by another figure in the RSS pantheon, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, who asserted, "To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic Races — the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures,

having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan [India] to learn and profit by" (quoted in Ghosh 2012).

Perhaps the best-known contemporary admirer of Savarkar and Gowalkar is India's current prime minister, Narendra Modi, who began his political career as an RSS organizer and is accused of supervising an anti-Muslim pogrom that took the lives of thousands in Gujarat in 2002 when he was chief minister of that state (Mishra 2017: 265). Modi has been effusive in his praise of Savarkar, saying "Savarkar means brilliance, Savarkar means sacrifice, Savarkar means penance, Savarkar means substance, Savarkar means logic, Savarkar means youth, Savarkar means an arrow, and Savarkar means a Sword!" (Sharma 2018).

Role Reversal

In his discussion of fascism in his classic work *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Barrington Moore (1966: 446) was dismissive of Hindu nationalists, writing that "their programs lack economic content and appear mainly to be a form of militant, xenophobic Hinduism, seeking to combat the stereotype that Hindus are pacific, divided by caste, and weak. So far their electoral appeal has been very small."

Moore would not be the only social analyst whose judgment would be overturned by the developments of the last few decades. Indeed, a great number of Indian academics and intellectuals and India specialists did not anticipate the blazing rise of the right, nor have they fully comprehended it intellectually, much less come to grips with how to deal with it politically.

Today, Hindu nationalists, for whom the RSS is the political centre, are the hegemonic force in Indian politics, having captured many state governments and, during the 2014 national elections, an outright majority of seats in the Lok Sabha, the national parliament, as well. Modi, once banned from entry into the US for his role in the Gujarat massacre, is probably the most powerful Indian leader since Indira Gandhi and, under his watch, the peaceful democratic competition, pluralism, and secularism that post-war India was known

for are in grave danger of becoming history.

A few decades back, the hegemony of the Hindu nationalist right would have not only been regarded as improbable but unthinkable. While not exactly on the fringe, groups associated with the ideology of Hindutva (best translated as "Hinduness") were marginal players in post-independence politics. Deriving its prestige from the role it played in the struggle for independence against the British under the moral inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi and the political leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress Party dominated the politics of post-independence India for three decades. Congress was not free of the taint of promoting or appeasing communal sentiments, the most notorious of these cases being Indira Gandhi's ordering of the army to storm the Golden Temple, one of the Sikh religion's holiest places, in Amritsar in June 1984, and the role of key party leaders in promoting or participating in the slaughter of over three thousand Sikhs by Hindu mobs five months later after Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards.[1] For the most part, however, Congress espoused the vision of an India that was secular, democratic, and diverse.

As Nehru put it in his speech on India's achievement of independence in 1948: "All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action" (quoted in Clarke 2017: 104–5). On the critical issue of the Hindu-Muslim religious divide, Gandhi and Nehru had pushed for a one-state solution in the period leading up to the British departure, but the chaos that accompanied the latter saw communal hatred and violence drive the process, leading to the establishment of India, where the Hindus were in the majority, and Pakistan, which emerged not only as a Muslim-majority state but also as a self-defined Islamic state. Notwithstanding the Partition, the Indian constitution, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, and came into effect on January 26, 1950, cemented "this inclusive and democratic objective of keeping government equidistant from all the religions of India's religiously diverse population" (Clarke 2017: 104–5).

Hindu nationalism, for its part, was regarded by many Indians as backward looking, its appeal largely confined to the central regions of the country, the Hindi heartland. Moreover, the RSS and other Hindu nationalist groupings were plunged into disrepute when a former RSS member, Nathuram Godse, was sent to the gallows for the assassination on January 30, 1948, of Mahatma Gandhi, an act for which their chief ideologue Savarkar was implicated though acquitted.

The shocking role reversal, from a hegemonic Congress to a hegemonic Hindu right, was underlined by the results of the 2014 parliamentary elections, which saw Congress reduced to a rump of 44 seats in the national parliament, while the Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gained an absolute majority of 282 seats. This was a veritable revolution, or better yet, counterrevolution. That it was a process that unfolded over three decades does not detract from its massive significance. And the answer to why it happened must address two questions: What did Congress do wrong, and what did the Hindu right "do right"? This is not meant to imply that no other political forces played a significant role in driving India's post-independence politics. Certainly, the Indian left as well lower-class or caste political formations had a major impact on the evolution of the political system. Nevertheless, the focus here on the Congress–Hindu nationalist struggle is justified, since it is the central rivalry that has driven national politics since the mid-1970s.

The Unhinging of Congress

What accounted for the erosion of the Congress Party's credibility? Several factors contributed, but foremost among them are four: the authoritarian turn of Indira Gandhi in the mid-seventies; the unhinging of the relationship between Congress's central leadership and the local brokers that provided it votes in the grassroots; Gandhi's introduction of populist politics into India, which ultimately benefited not Congress but the Hindu right; and the failure of Congress to deliver on its social contract with the Indian masses.

The turn to authoritarianism of Indira Gandhi in 1975–77, the so-called Emergency, shattered the party's image as a bulwark of democracy. Not only was there a drastic curtailment of democratic

processes, but there occurred widespread violations of human rights, like arbitrary imprisonment of Gandhi's enemies and forced sterilization aggressively promoted by Gandhi's son, Sanjay. The Emergency was unpopular and triggered widespread resistance. It is perhaps not surprising that the reinvigoration of the Hindu nationalists can be dated to the period, for the Emergency translated into opportunity for the RSS and its allied organizations. Ironically, after being associated with extremism and authoritarianism, they were able to step into the role of defender of democratic processes. As Chetan Bhatt (2004) notes, "The 'emergency period' is relevant not simply because of the participation by Hindu nationalists in mass campaigns against authoritarian rule (and their consequent rehabilitation within some democratic, Gandhian and socialist circles), but also because it enabled Hindu nationalists to present themselves for the first time ever as genuine democrats working for the 'organic' interests, liberties, and freedoms."

A second key factor behind Congress's decline, according to political scientist Paul Kenny, has been the destabilization of the relationship between its national leadership and the local bosses who ran its electoral machinery. A few words of clarification are in order here. The Congress Party emerged as a mass movement during the struggle for independence that incorporated the Indian rural and urban lower classes into the political sphere as collective agents under the charismatic leadership of Mohandas Gandhi. That was the popular image of Congress. There was, however, another dimension, one that was brought about by the difficulty of sustaining direct ties between the national leadership and the mobilized masses. This was the forging of a cross-class and cross-sectional alliance between the national leadership and locally dominant elites made up of the rich and middle peasantry that "could exploit their role as brokers between the national leadership and the lower peasant clientele below them" (Kenny 2017).

In the first decades after independence, this relationship evolved into a synergy between the Congress national leadership and regional and local power brokers. On the one hand, the "National Congress leadership … was guaranteed the delivery of vote banks by its brokers, which gave it substantial autonomy over high-level policy

formation in the domestic and international arenas" (Kenny 2017). On the other hand, the local brokers from the "middle and rich peasantry could gain external patrons in their own struggle for access to the spoils for their faction at the local level" (Kenny 2017). This was the configuration of power that lay behind the idealized picture of a secular, democratic, pluralistic, and socialist India.

The crumbling of Congress's hegemony began with the death of Nehru. That fine balance between the national centre and the subnational brokers that he had cultivated was increasingly eroded, with the local brokers gaining more and more autonomy from the centre. At the local level, Congress increasingly became merely a patronage party — that is, a mechanism for winning power and distributing spoils to its voting base — while at the national level, the strong central leadership of Nehru gave way to a feuding, fragmented, and weak party elite. This combination threatened to erode the party's dominance nationally and locally, prompting Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, who eventually became his successor, to try to decisively recentralize power. The post-Nehru crisis is well summed up by Kenny (2017):

> Although the Congress party had been able to retain power in the states for nearly two decades after independence, this situation of divided national government, or vertical fragmentation, was fatal in the context of patronage democracy. Both Indira Gandhi and her opponents within the Congress knew that the national party's survival rested on the party's continued success at the subnational level. Without control over the reins of patronage at the lower level, the national party retained only its residual emotional appeal as the party of independence.

Gandhi's project culminated in her resorting to a populist style of political mobilization and governance, which meant establishing a direct link to voters to break the hold of party brokers and prevent the emergence of autonomous power centres in the states (Kenny 2017). In this intra-Congress fight over control of the state, Indira Gandhi remade herself as a populist, appealing directly to the people "in a way no Indian leader since M.K. Gandhi had done prior to

independence" (Kenny 2017). Her populist makeover, with her appeal to "end poverty," resulted in her getting a conclusive mandate after the 1971 elections. She then moved to translate this electoral support into an authoritarian system that would enable her to gain direct access to local voters and resources:

> With a supermajority in the legislature, she quickly set about recentralizing the patronage mechanism and eliminating her rivals. Confronted by a rival populist movement under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, Mrs. Gandhi imposed Emergency Rule, locked up her political rivals, and imposed her centralist vision of modernization by executive fiat. (Kenny 2017)

The widespread abuses of human and political rights that accompanied the Emergency did not convince Gandhi that her measures were unpopular, leading her to call for elections in early 1977 in order to gain democratic legitimacy for her controversial reign. Congress, however, was routed and Gandhi ousted as prime minister. Coming back to power in 1980, she resumed her push to centralize power, but this effort was cut short by her assassination by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984. Gandhi may have disappeared from the scene, but her populist authoritarianism had done irreparable damage to the relationship between the party centre and the party's local bosses, resulting in Congress's slow unravelling as an effective patronage mechanism. This organizational dislocation compounded the organization's crisis of credibility as the party of democracy that it was already suffering from owing to Gandhi's authoritarian turn.

The Hindu Right Learns from Indira

Congress's authoritarian interlude was disastrous for the party, not only resulting in the erosion of its credibility as the party of Indian democracy but yielding four key developments that facilitated the rise of the Hindu nationalists.

First, it intensified factional disputes that further eroded Congress's grip on power.

Second, it promoted the rise of opposition coalitions of power

that successfully challenged Congress's hegemony at the national level.

Third, it facilitated even greater autonomy of state-level power brokers, with many of them forming political parties along regional, ethnolinguistic, or caste lines, but with most of these having as their central aim winning elections on an exclusivist platform in order to gain access to the spoils of government.

This more pluralistic arena at both the national and state levels, with the possibilities of coalition politics that it offered, was a key factor that influenced the transformation of the Hindu nationalist political formations from marginal to key players. Though ideological in orientation, the BJP became skilled at making alliances with regional or ethnolinguistic parties to achieve its strategic goals.

As important as the more pluralistic political arena inherited from the Indira Gandhi era was a fourth factor, and this was her introducing populist politics to India. She showed that one could bypass patronage systems and appeal directly to the voters with a populist style of campaigning. There is one important difference, however, between her populism and that of the BJP. While Gandhi's populism, however self-serving it might have been, sought to rouse the masses against entrenched economic and social privilege, Hindu populism sought to turn the majority against the imagined privilege of the country's minority religious communities. Coalition politics and populism proved to be powerful instruments that the Hindu nationalists would employ in their transformation from marginal players to hegemonic power in the space of two decades.

The Failure of the Nehruvian Ideal

The political and ideological crises of Congress were not the only developments that facilitated the rise of the extreme Hindu right. Another was the failure of Congress to deliver on the so-called "Nehruvian developmental ideal" — that is, on its economic and social commitments to the population. One analyst sums up the expectations gap in this manner:

> From a generous reading of the Nehruvian vision, a fully-

> fledged and educated citizenship should have arisen automatically from processes of modernization. Instead there exists an infra-citizenship that functionally governs the relationship between a fractionally-enfranchised poor populace and the state. By any measure, this is a crisis of genuinely democratic citizenship of which enduring poverty and the entrenchment of anti-dalit anti-lower-caste discrimination are key examples. (Bhatt 2004: 145)

Nehruvian "socialism" also became synonymous with bureaucratic control of the economy and overregulation — the so-called Licence Raj — which led, according to its critics, to Eastern European–style economic stagnation. While it was under Congress's rule that the full-scale liberalization of the economy was launched in 1991, it was the Hindu right that most enthusiastically embraced and became identified with the benefits it brought to the urban entrepreneurial and middle classes, while Congress was stuck with a large part of the blame for the greater misery among the masses that liberalization brought about.

Here, the erosion of living conditions in the countryside under Congress's rule deserves special mention in order to understand fully why a coalition dominated by the BJP came to power by the late 1990s. In the early nineties, under the leadership of then finance minister Manmohan Singh, the Congress government removed state subsidies for fertilizer and handed fertilizer distribution to the private sector, resulting in considerable price increases alongside increases in pesticide prices. This blow was followed by financial liberalization, which resulted in reduced institutional credit for small farmers, while funding for public sector investment in power production and irrigation declined. The results of this one-two punch on the rural sector are cogently summed up by Kathy Le Mons Walker (2009: 573):

> Thus in the span of a few short years the combination of, first, the state's withdrawal and, then, its increasingly predatory stance vis-à-vis the rural poor drove small peasant producers into the arms of moneylenders and traders, both of whom supply loans at usurious rates (amounting in some instances

to as much as 100 percent) are much more inflexible in rolling debts than institutional lenders. According to an NSSO report of 2003, fully 76 percent of rural households held loans from moneylenders. Increasing indebtedness in turn resulted in further land loss and landlessness among peasants. By 1999–2000, the proportion of landless rural dwellers had reached 63 percent. In this context increases in rural suicides began to occur, especially in the Green Revolution/capital intensive areas where prior to the 1990s many smaller farmers had only been able to adopt the new techniques through borrowing.

Owing to its comprehensive ideological, political, and organizational deterioration, Congress lost control of the Indian Parliament to a BJP-led coalition in 1998. A Congress-led coalition returned to power in 2004, but the party's loss of cohesion deepened until it became a party that was viewed as ridden with corruption and seemingly held together only by dynastic allegiance to Rajiv Gandhi's widow, Sonia Gandhi, and her children Rahul and Priyanka.

Hindutva and the Hindu Nationalist Ideological-Political Complex

Congress's descent, however, provided the conditions for the Hindu right's ascent to power. Most of its momentum derived from its skilled employment of coalition politics at the national and state leadership levels and its coordination of national or state leadership with its actions at the level of the mass movement. While the necessities of electoral coalition politics obliged it to calibrate its pushing of an ideological agenda at the national parliamentary level with the promotion of more popular measures, like promising growth via neoliberal measures, at the mass, street level, it cultivated ideological politics, using them not only to gain recruits but to denounce and often physically attack those considered enemies of the Hindu nation.

Here we must pause briefly to discuss the Hindu nationalist network and key elements of the Hindutva ideology, some of which inevitably led to extremist actions like the shocking slaughter of Muslims in Gujarat state in 2002. Hindutva, according to the most

influential Hindu fundamentalist ideologue Savarkar, was the fundamental essence of being Hindu. As pointed out by Sathianathan Clarke, this "essence" consists, first, of an intimate sense of belonging to a sacred geography, to a motherland, Hindustani. Second, Hindutva binds all those of the motherland together by a common blood, seeing the diverse peoples of India as parts of a race that shares the inheritance of the Vedic ancestor. Third, Hindutva asserts that as the biological community devoted to this sacred land, all Hindus share a common culture, one that is the cradle of all civilizations (Clarke 2017: 101–2). As Savarkar put it,

> We Hindus are bound together not only by the ties of love we bear to a common fatherland and by the common blood that courses through our veins and keeps our hearts throbbing and our affections warm, but also by the ties of common homage we pay to our great civilization—our Hindu culture.… We are one because we are a nation, a race, and own a common Sanskriti (civilization). (quoted in Clarke 2017: 102)

As noted by scholars such as K. Satchidanandan, Hindutva is an attempt to deny the many cultural streams that made Indian civilization so dynamic and create an artificial monolithic unity of Hinduness, one that is actually "a colonial construct borrowing elements from Western Orientalism, the Judaic idea of religion and the fascist ideals of cultural nationalism" (Satchidanandan 2018: 27).

Like all fundamentalist ideologies, Hindutva makes exorbitant claims, saying that the Vedic teachings, which go back 1,500 years, already contained the advances of modern science, and asserting that ancient Hindus developed plastic surgery and flew airplanes (Clarke 2017: 112; Mishra 2017: 269). If it were just a question of exaggerated claims for the achievements of the Hindu ancients, Hindu fundamentalism would not be so controversial. But Hindutva was articulated by Savarkar and his followers within a narrative of victimhood, whereby invaders — first the Muslim Mughals, then the Christian British — subjugated, repressed, and divided the Hindu nation. Thus, Hindutva was a project of reclaiming Hindus' collective identity, creating a Hindu government, and restoring the glory of a

culture from the depredations of alien forces, namely Muslims and Christians. Savarkar and his followers fashioned Hindutva into an exclusionary ideology and movement that justified violence against the representatives of alien forces residing in the homeland — namely, the Muslim and Christian communities. As one analyst put it, "India's fundamentalists were radicalized by anger over the past and fear for the future" (Edna Fernandes, quoted in Clarke 2017: 99).

This movement has been driven forward by a psychology that is remarkably similar to that which propelled the classical fascist movements in Europe, again a reminder that the latter did have a direct influence on the development of the Hindu extreme right. It is not difficult to see in the Hindu right, says Satchidanandan (2018: 28), "almost all the symptoms of European fascism dissected by Umberto Eco and Wilhelm Reich, though at times in transformed, veiled, or diluted forms":

> The cult of tradition that considers truth as already revealed or known—that goes against the grain of scientific thinking, rejection of modernism, action for action's sake done without reflection, suspicion of culture and intellectuals, seeing any dissent as betrayal, fear of difference and the consequent rejection of pluralist ethos, appeal to the frustrated middle classes who feel the pressure from below, the negative and exclusivist way of defining the nation that leads to xenophobia, the creation of an "other" blamed for what is wrong with the society and an obsession with conspiracies, seeing pacifism as collusion with the enemy that comes from a vision of life as permanent battle that will finally lead to the lost "gold age" that never existed in history, a form of popular elitism that results in scorn for the weak, machismo that condemns al non-conformist sexual habits and a contempt for women and sexual deviants, the cult of death ("Viva las muerte" was the slogan of the Falangists in Spain) that prefers death to life—this readiness to die also justifying the readiness to kill.

Not only did the Hindu nationalists have a militant ideology and a shared psychology; they developed the organizational capacity to

put it into action. Unlike Congress, which had a secular ideology that rested unsteadily on patronage mechanisms at the regional and local levels, Hindutva had a highly ideological organization on the ground that eventually spawned a network of closely related groups: the RSS, which is essentially a paramilitary organization. The complex of organizations developed by the RSS came to be known as the Sangh Pariver, or Syndicate, and the two key organizations in this universe, which had complementary functions in the task of filling the Indian nation space and civil space, were the BJP and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). In forging this relationship between a vanguard organization and subordinate mass organizations, the Hindu right probably copied the organizational methods of the Marxist left.

Founded in 1980, the BJP is the principal mechanism by which the Hindu nationalists compete for political power in India's democratic parliamentary system. The VHP, translated as the World Council of Hindus, was created in 1964 to bring all Hindu sects under the common agenda of creating an Indian nation state. The VHP is described as having "gone beyond the tight vanguardist structure of the originary RSS, and thereby made communalism (and communal conflict centered around politically constructed identities) into a mass force" (Mukta 2000: 443). While the BJP focuses on winning the competition within the current political system, the VHP and RSS are working hand in hand to bring about a more strategic aim, which is to "transform not only the content of the entire Indian political culture, but also the legitimate form of that culture" (Bhatt 2004: 142). As one academic observer puts it,

> This includes changing the nature of the public sphere and its forms of political discourse, the quality of the relation between nationalism, the state, and democratic citizenship, the boundaries between legal and extralegal spheres, the deepest layers of personal and civil society, and the nature of civic association, solidarity, and mass participation. A key aim of the RSS and VHP is to conflate political and civic citizenship, while transforming the understanding of both through a long-term aim to patiently but wholly transform the "body, mind, and intellect" of each Hindu adult and child. This dislocates

> traditional understandings of family, community, civil society and nation in order to replace them with a vitalist, organismic (and arguably quasi-eugenicist) conception of society and nation. (Bhatt 2004: 142)

The concept of democracy, the relationship of the state to religion, and justice — the traditional mainstays of liberal democracy — have been reformulated to fit the Hindutva paradigm. Thus, since democracy is the rule of the majority, this means it must serve as an instrument for promoting the interests of the 80 percent of India's population that are Hindu. The liberal state's doctrine of separation of Church and state is hypocritical since it protects the rights of religious minorities; thus, it must be abandoned, and the state must serve the ends of the religious majority. Achieving justice is reformulated to mean rectifying the historical injustice done to the Hindu majority by Muslim and Christian alien invaders, who continue to enjoy the privilege of being protected by the state. "Hindutva 'justice' can only be figured," notes one analyst, "through a reversal of time (the destruction of the medieval monument), the assimilation or erasure of minority identity, or the (seemingly brahminical) requirement that the state and minorities be compelled to recognize, distinguish, and honor Hindus" (Bhatt 2004: 151).

While the BJP is given room to maneuver owing to the necessities of alliance politics and political timing, the Sangh Parivar, a family of Hindu nationalist organizations, expects the BJP to deliver on its immediate demands, which are legislating that Muslims and Christians be incorporated into the common civil code instead of allowing them to live their family lives according to their own traditions; ending the special status of Kashmir, India's only state with a Muslim majority; and completing the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of the old mosque of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, which was destroyed by its militants in 1992 (Harriss 2015: 714).

The Ram Janmabhoomi campaign that began in 1986 and climaxed in 1992 with the destruction of Babri Masjid was a turning point in the fortunes of the BJP and the Hindu nationalist right more generally. Fuelled by the claim that the mosque had actually been built in the sixteenth century on a shrine of Lord Ram, the campaign,

notes one analyst, was the biggest as well as the most sustained mass mobilization in the post-independence history of India, bearing comparison with the strongest campaigns of the independence movement. It was instrumental in propelling the BJP from two parliamentary seats in 1984, to 85 in 1989, to 120 in 1991, to 161 in 1996, to 182 in 1998, and the same number in 1999.[2]

The Ram Janmabhoomi campaign and its violent climax revealed the uncompromising ideological character of Hindu nationalism, which is essentially a politics of vendetta, whereby "the political and social trajectories of the Sultanate and British rule, are not only constructed as a fall from an original state of purity, but the citizens who today belong to the Muslim and Christian faiths are reduced to standing in for the Invader, the Plunderer, the Desecrator, and are positioned as treasonable subjects to be disciplined and suborned within the nation-state" (Mukta 2000: 443). Along with Muslims and Christians, liberal and progressive intellectuals are denounced on Facebook and Twitter as "sikular libtards" and by the chief of the RSS in 1999 as that "class of bastards which tries to implant an alien culture in our land" (quoted in Mishra 2017: 162). Intellectuals, artists, and journalists who dare to criticize Hindutva and its practitioners are intimidated, if not murdered outright. It was only a matter of time before the Congress Party, which had long represented the Nehruvian ideals of secularism, tolerance, and pluralism, would be denounced as the "party of Muslims," an allegation that seems to have the support Prime Minister Modi himself (UCAN 2018b).

With Muslims, Christians, and Westernized intellectuals seen as a fifth column, violence against them is constrained only by public opinion, which can eventually be changed, or by legal criminal sanctions, the imposition or severity of which is sensitive to who is in power. For the Hindu right, it is also important to devise arrangements to keep violence at arm's-length from the main organizations of the Sangh Parivar. Thus, the VHP has spawned a number of organizations that are tied to it yet enjoy a measure of autonomy, like the Bajrang Dal and Hindu Jagran Manch, which have been implicated in "spectacular forms of violence against religious minorities" (Mukta 2000: 444). Ideological affinity coupled with an arm's-length organizational relationship allows what one otherwise restrained analyst

calls the "genocidal" VHP at one and the same time "to distance itself from these newly named organizations while providing the gestatory womb for them" (Mukta 2000: 444).

One of the most spectacular cases of Hindu nationalist violence against religious minorities was the destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque by Hindu militants referred to above. Another milestone in counterrevolutionary violence was the Gujarat riots of 2002, an orgy of killing, mainly of Muslims, triggered by the deaths of fifty-nine Hindu pilgrims returning to Gujarat from Ayodhya. In response, there was a systematic two-month-long deadly massacre of Muslims that struck many as methodical, well thought out, and carried out with the support of the state whose chief minister then was Narendra Modi (Clarke 2017: 123). Modi's role has been much debated, but it cannot be denied that, as Paul Brass points out, "the Sangh Parivar (the umbrella organization of all militant Hindu organizations) was well prepared and well-rehearsed to carry out the murderous, brutal, and sadistic attacks on Muslim men, women, and children" (quoted in Clarke 2017: 123).

By March 2002, at the end of this riot, the estimate of casualties ranged "between a thousand dead (official) and two thousand (unofficial), spread over thirty cities and towns in Gujarat. Apart from the deaths, which occurred at a ratio of 15 Muslims to every 1 Hindu, nearly 150,000 Muslims were driven from their homes while 500 mosques and Muslim shrines were destroyed. These violent attacks against Muslims put fear and anxiety in the hearts and minds of Muslims in a state that was aggressively working to extend Hindu-ness" (Clarke 2017: 123). As for Christians, they were put on notice that they were fair game for attacks, including murder, rape of nuns, and pulling down of churches, which began in 1998 with the burning of an Australian missionary and his sons.

The Class/Caste Dimension

Hindu nationalism is a complex social phenomenon. While it is important not to be class reductionist, it must be acknowledged that Hindu nationalism has a class dimension and not simply a cultural counterrevolutionary dimension. As Bhatt (2004: 136) puts it, the

emergence of Hindu nationalism can be seen as an authoritarian response on the part of both the traditional upper caste as well as the emerging rural and urban middle class to "widening democratization, especially related to the political rise of non-elite castes and dalits, but also because of the sub-national and regional importance of a range of new socio-political movements and parties."

But reaction to the rise of the lower castes and tribal communities is only part of the class story. Although the Congress government had initiated liberalization in 1991, it was the succeeding BJP-led government of Atal Bihari Vaypajee, which also adopted neoliberalism and championed the interests of big business and the urban middle classes, that drew the political payoff from it. In power at the national level from 1998 to 2004, the BJP opted for a strategy of postponing its most controversial political and cultural measures in favour of promoting a strong neoliberal agenda. This may have upset hardliners in the RSS, but it brought big business and the urban middle classes into the BJP fold. As Walker (2009: 558) describes it, neoliberal political economy discriminated against agriculture and the poorer classes and involved a "privileging of urban India associated with the 'rise' of information technology and business services sector as the most dynamic of the economy, the related growth of an affluent middle class, and the expansion of a productive structure catering to the 'class and comfort' of both the expanding middle class and India's tiny but by world standards, extremely wealthy, 'billionaire' bourgeoisie." Satisfying their material interests had an added but critical effect: it opened the ethically sterile rich and the middle classes to the ideology of Hindu nationalism.

The "Gujarat Model"

A good window into the class dimension of the BJP's appeal is provided by the French India specialist Christophe Jaffrelot in his deconstruction of the so-called "Gujarat Model." The state of Gujarat has been dominated by the BJP since 1990, and while Modi was chief minister, its pattern of economic development was extolled as a model for the whole of India. The state had a high rate of growth and was friendly to investors, providing them with tax breaks and the

elimination or loosening of restrictions governing labour, pollution, and the acquisition of land. Yet investment was capital-intensive, resulting in jobless growth, with formal employment increasing only 0.3 percent from 1999–2000 to 2009–10 in the boom years. With few new jobs in the formal sector, people went into the low-paid informal sector. In 2011, Gujarat had the third-lowest level of wages for casual labour, this being the reason why many industries flocked to the state (Jaffrelot 2017a).

What many Indians failed to note, however, was that there was an underside to the Gujarat miracle, which is aptly summed by Jaffrelot (2017a):

> While the Gujarat government gave several fiscal exemptions to industrialists, many companies did not pay taxes. As a result, the state's fiscal liabilities have increased, making Gujarat one of India's most indebted states. The lack of resources partly explains the low level of social expenditure in Gujarat. Between 2001–2002 and 2012–2013, Gujarat spent 13.22 percent of its budget on education—the national average was slightly above 15 percent. It did little better in so far as public health was concerned.
>
> With 4.2 percent of its budget devoted to health-related expenditure, Gujarat ranked seventh out of 17 large states in 2010–11. But Gujarat lags behind states like Tamil Nadu with respect to vaccination, infant mortality rate, child undernourishment and literacy. These are symptoms of rising inequalities between caste groups as well within them.
>
> The "Gujarat model" has, therefore, been characterized by attempts at attracting big investors who generate growth but few jobs (and even fewer good jobs), at the expense of the exchequer. It is also characterized by disappointing social indicators reflecting comparatively low social expenditures.

With such a poor record in terms of raising the standards of living of the poor, why does the electorate keep returning the BJP to power with 40 to 50 percent of the vote? The answer Jaffrelot (2015)

provides is an intriguing one — the negative synergy between political economy, cultural politics, and class identification:

> Even though the "Gujarat model" cultivates social polarization, Narendra Modi was able to win elections three times in the state for two major reasons. First, the main casualties of this political economy have been Muslims, Dalits ["Untouchables"] and Adivasis [tribal communities] who do not represent more than 30 percent of society. Second, the beneficiaries of this "model" were not only the middle class, but also a "neo-middle class" made up of those who have begun to be part of the urban economy or who hope to benefit from it—the "neo-middle class" is primarily aspirational. These groups were numerous enough to allow Modi's BJP to win successive elections in Gujarat.

"While the BJP is known for its expertise in religious polarization," Jaffrelot (2015) concludes, "this is clearly a case of social polarization in which the ethno-religious identity quest of the middle and neo-middle classes continues to play a role." In less academic terms, this core BJP support base is described by one journalist as "a rising middle class that is hungry for religious assertion and fed up with the socialist, rationalist legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru" (Worth 2018).

The Populist Dimension

Hindu nationalism is an ideological movement. But doctrine is just part of the reason for its success. Electoral victory is not guaranteed just because the country is 80 percent Hindu. A key ingredient is a populist style associated with some of its leaders, notably Modi. Paul Kenny (2018) expresses a common observation of many of those who have followed the career of the man: "Narendra Modi rode to power by … appealing directly to independent voters who were no longer deeply embedded in national party-patronage networks. Modi's charismatic appeal won the day." A study of the 2014 elections concludes that the BJP "victory was secured by a well-planned presidential style campaign around Modi himself" (Chhibber and Verma 2014). Yet another survey showed that one in every four

respondents who voted for the BJP-led alliance said that they would not have voted for the coalition if Modi had not been the prime ministerial candidate (Verma and Sardesai 2014).

Apparently, a key ingredient in Modi's successful populist outreach was the Hindu right's ability to exploit social media. Modi has personalized Facebook and Twitter accounts, with some 50 million Twitter followers, the highest of any world political leader. Achin Vanaik points out that the RSS helped helped the BJP set up its social media arm, with its own IT branches for "organized trolling." This is said to be "superbly organized, with paid techies given hit lists of people to attack and going to overdrive during elections" (Vanaik 2018: 44; see also Sethi 2017).

Modi's populist campaign in the national elections of 2014 allowed the BJP to break social and regional barriers by attracting voters from the so-called scheduled or historically disadvantaged classes — the Dalits and Adivasis — and regions where the BJP had not previously been dominant. Adding to its core Hindu, upper-caste, and Hindi-speaking support base allowed it to secure an outright majority in the Lok Sabha. And not to be discounted in Modi's rise to power is the BJP's skillful deployment of social media, which was also utilized to intimidate critics to silence after the elections.

Four years into his five-year term in 2018, Modi retained the image of a pro-market reformer who was injecting a new dynamism into India's economy. This was despite the damage to the economy, particularly the rural economy, of his sudden move in 2016 to demonetize the currency, making 500- and 1,000-rupee notes non-legal tender, allegedly to eliminate counterfeiting, curb terrorism, and force the destruction of cash that people hid to stop paying taxes (see, among others, D'Cunha 2017).

The Real Gujarat Model

To many foreign observers, the image of an economic-growth-focused government is hard to reconcile with communal violence, the incidence of which now outstrips that recorded during the BJP regime under Atal Bihari Vajpayee from 1998 to 2004. To others, however, this is the real Gujarat model, one that promotes neoliberal

economic growth along with ideological hegemony and communal violence.

The three thrusts of this strategy, which was honed in Gujarat by Modi, complement rather than contradict one another. The first prong, cultivating a pro-growth image, is meant to win investors, disarm the skeptical, and win over the middle class.

The second prong aims to normalize Hindu nationalist discourse, with the "public discursive space … being carefully occupied by imagery and propaganda on issues of Hindutva, in the words of Suhas Pulshikar" (quoted in Harriss 2015).

The third prong is informal encouragement of violent actions against minorities while formally decrying them, what many have characterized as the Modi government's "wink and nod attitude" toward acts of violence by Hindu nationalist mobs. Not surprisingly, as one critical observer notes, "Cow protection vigilante groups have become ubiquitous, and have lynched Muslims for allegedly selling or eating beef. Attacks on Christians, rare in the past, are more frequent and widespread. Most disturbing, the BJP chose a notoriously anti-Muslim cleric as chief minister after winning elections in India's largest state" (Swamy 2018).

While nothing of the scale of the 2002 pogrom in Gujarat has occurred since Modi took office, violence against Muslims has become routinized and normalized.[3] According to human rights crusader Harsh Mander, "Muslims are "today's castaways, political orphans with no home … [against whom] open expressions of hatred and bigotry have become the new normal, from schools to universities, work places to living rooms, internet to political rallies" (quoted in Dayal 2018: 36–37). Most of the more than forty people reported in newspapers to have been victims of lynching over the last four years on suspicion of slaughtering, skinning, or transporting cattle, the Hindu nationalists' sacred beast, have been Muslims (Dayal 2018: 31).[4] Hatred against Muslims has been deliberately cultivated by false claims about, for example, their engagement in "love jihad" — that is, seducing and Islamizing Hindu girls — so that they can give birth to more Muslims in order to eventually tip the demographic balance in their favour (Krishnan 2018: 94–95).

Despite efforts to tweak or rhetorically soften Hinduism's doc-

trinal bias against lower-caste groups and enlist them in the struggle against Muslims and Christians, which is discussed below, Hindu nationalist violence against Dalits and Adivasis continues, one instance of which was a much-publicized killing in Modi's home state of Gujarat of a Dalit for riding a horse (Godrej 2018). In addition to sectarianism,

> the Modi era is witnessing concerted assaults on dissent not seen since the 1975–77 Emergency. Laws against sedition have been used to arrest student union leaders for protesting the execution of a convicted terrorist. The same laws facilitated the arrest of Muslims accused of cheering for Pakistan in a cricket match. Journalists have been killed, subjected to legal harassment and attacked by police. Civil society leaders associated with secular values have been assassinated. Statues of leaders associated with secularism have been torn down. (Swamy 2018)

Three prominent members of the secular intelligentsia have been assassinated in the last few years: Marxist intellectual Govind Padharinath Pansare, the playwright Malleshappa Kalburgi, and the crusading woman journalist Gauri Lankesh (Roy 2018: 10–18.) Many others have been intimidated into silence, while those who continue to speak out are subjected to cyber vitriol, like author Arundhati Roy, whom one BJP MP said should be used as a human shield by the Indian Army in Kashmir (Jawed 2018).

Another critic writes, "The Modi regime wields far greater legal and extra-legal coercive power than enjoyed by any ruling party in post-independence India. It uses every possible constitutional-legal power *sans* the constraints imposed by democratic conventions: dismissal of unfriendly state governments, use of CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] and other investigative agencies and, of course, the use of armed forces. This is supplemented by the use of state apparatus for extra-legal coercive measures: harassment and persecution of political and ideological adversaries, protection to vigilante groups and the misuse of anti-terror laws. The most pernicious aspect of the BJP's use of coercive state apparatus is the silent, everyday form of surveillance, intimidation and infiltration" (Yadav 2017).

While the use of the state's security forces has been an important element in the Hindu right's repertoire of repression and violence, a special role is played by mob violence. Lynchings have usually been carried out by Hindu mobs inflamed by rumours about the identities or actions of the victims, usually in relation to the slaughter or transport of cows, which are invested with a sacred identity by hardline Hindus. These lynchings have been gruesome affairs, with the attackers usually filming the incidents and circulating them on the internet. In one video showing what Harsh Mander describes as a particularly horrifying incident in Jharkand, a mob stops the car of a Muslim and accuses him of transporting a cow. He is beaten to death, the laughing faces of his attackers appearing in the video that is uploaded even as they lynch the man and burn his car. His young son, notes Mander (2018: 51), "receives the video of his father being lynched on his mobile even as the lynching is underway." In this connection, the use of information technology to spread and promote lynchings and riots is a practice that the Hindu right has become particularly adept at, with devastating consequences, as when the uploading of a fake video by a BJP legislator in Uttar Pradesh purportedly showing a Muslim mob murdering a Hindu youth provoked riots in the city of Muzaffarnagar, taking forty-seven lives and displacing forty thousand people (DNA 2013).

Lynchings are not aberrations or deviations from their political project, as senior BJP and regime officials are wont to claim. In fact, says Ashok Swain, lynching serves to enforce "inter-group control and to keep the idea and practice of upper-caste Hindu domination" (quoted in Dayal 2018: 36). In this context, whether the victim is guilty of wrongdoing or not is irrelevant — the lynching serves a larger political objective.

Christophe Jaffrelot (2017b) lays out three additional reasons why vigilantism has become so widespread under the BJP regime, rooting it in the evolving synthesis of Hindutva ideology and populism:

> First, the RSS, since its inception, intended to transform society from the inside by infusing in it its own sense of discipline, which it thought was necessary to defend the Hindus more

> effectively.… Secondly, Hindu nationalists claim to represent society at large and do not want the state to prevail over society. The latter has to regulate itself, as the emphasis on social order and "harmony" — or hierarchy — in the Hindutva doxa suggests. This approach gives the job of policing a greater legitimacy. After all, the people's will is beyond the law; it is the law.… This facet of Hindu nationalism has clear affinities with the populist repertoire. For the populist leader, the people prevail over the rule of law and public institutions at large. In fact, the vigilantes and their leader supremo (a key component in every populist dispensation) are on the same wavelength for this very reason: They overwhelm public institutions and neutralise them.… Last but not least, the fact that the vigilantes "do the job" is very convenient for the rulers. The state is not guilty of violence since this violence is allegedly spontaneous and if the followers of Hinduism are taking the law into their hands, it is for a good reason — for defending their religion. The moral and political economies of this arrangement are even more sophisticated: The state cannot harass the minorities openly, but by letting vigilantes do so, it keeps majoritarian feelings satisfied.

Jaffrelot's observations underline not simply a collusion between right-wing movements and the state but the increasing subordination of the administrative and repressive apparatuses of the state to "Hindu civil society." This trend is supported by the fact that in a great many cases of lynching the police turn a blind eye, in some cases even prodding the attackers or lodging a case against the dead victims for "provoking the people" (Gatade 2018: 19). The parallel to the rise to power of fascism in Italy, where state security forces tuned a blind or sympathetic eye to the murders or beatings of socialists taking place before them, is striking. In India, one sees a synergy between the elected regime, acting from above, and its "civil society" allies pushing from below to neutralize and eventually take over and transform the administrative and security machineries of the state. In this connection, it must be noted that Prime Minister Modi's first recorded disapproval of lynchings was registered only in August 2018 (UCAN 2018a).

Challenging the Idea of India

In one of the most insightful analyses of the way Hindu nationalism has transformed the Indian political, social, and cultural landscape, Yogendra Yadav (2017) says that what India faces at this point may "not be 'fascism' in a textbook sense, but likely something different if not worse." What the country faces is a deep and comprehensive challenge to the idea of India itself. It is worth quoting in full his sober exposition of the different dimensions of this challenge:

> It is hard to outline the features of this evolving deformity, but some of the elements can be anticipated. The political system could be "competitive authoritarianism" where representative democracy and party competition would be limited to episodes of elections, with the playing field severely skewed in favor of one party. In between elections, it would resemble an authoritarian system with a presidential form of governance, severe curtailment of civil liberties, and a higher threshold of tolerance for deviations from constitutionally mandated procedures.
>
> Concentration of power would take many forms: state power into the Union government, governmental power into the ruling party, and the power of the party into the hands of one person. Development would mean a no-nonsense rule of … capital, with occasional populist discount but minimum "hindrance" from ecological considerations. On the diversity front, it would be a non-theocratic majoritarian rule with minor tweaking of some of the secular laws but effective delineation of the hierarchy of religious communities. The existing system of affirmative action may be diluted in a series of small steps. For its survival and popular endorsement, this regime would depend on occasional electoral endorsement, informal regimentation of the media, crushing of dissent, ongoing crusades against 'internal enemies' and a possible military adventure. To sum up, we may be looking at the mutilation of the idea of India. (Yadav 2017)

Modi, says Yadav (2017), is the crystallization of the many-sided hegemony of Hindu nationalism; he occupies "a unique point of intersection of multiple lines and embodies the opposition to the idea of India" and "he represents a constellation of forces, not all of which draw energy from the RSS-Jan Sangh-BJP lineage":

> While there was nothing inevitable about his ascent to power in 2014, Modi is not an accident or aberration. We are not just dealing with someone who happens to have won an election and captured state power. His popularity has faced its first crisis in the fourth year of his government. The BJP's victory and Modi's rise to power has been accompanied by a realignment in the social basis of politics and a shift in the spectrum of public opinion. Thus, the challenge to the idea of India comes from a force that is at once widespread, well entrenched and popular. The Modi regime should be characterized as a hegemonic power since it combines state power with street power, electoral dominance with ideological legitimacy. …
>
> This coercion draws its legitimacy from the BJP's growing electoral dominance. The BJP may not match the Congress in its heyday of one-party dominance, but it does resemble the Congress during its one-party salience period in the 1980s. Despite reversals in Delhi and Bihar, the story of the BJP since its spectacular performance in the Lok Sabha election of 2014 is one of expansion and growth. It has spread to virtually every nook and cranny of India, including the hill states of the North East, and is a force to reckon with even in the coastal belt from Kerala to Bengal, though it is as yet in no position to win elections. The organizational machine, the election machine and the propaganda machine put together make the BJP the most formidable political force to emerge in recent times.

Yadav (2017) argues that it would be a mistake to attribute Modi and the BJP's hegemonic power just to its political dominance and coercive capabilities — also central is its "secured moral, cultural and ideological legitimacy":

The BJP's and Modi's continuing popularity in opinion polls draws upon something deeper than an approval of its governmental performance. The packaging and positioning of the PM's image as 'hardworking', 'tough', 'selfless' and 'driven by larger national goals' has more takers than many would care to admit.

The BJP has successfully shifted the entire spectrum of public opinion towards its ideology. It has more or less captured key symbols of nationalism, Hinduism and our cultural heritage. The demons invented by the BJP troll brigade — 'anti-national', 'westernized', 'secular', 'enemies within' — have come to acquire a life of their own. To be sure, Modi's legitimacy is categorically different from the deeper ethical appeal of a Gandhi or a Nehru, or even the legitimacy of the Congress in the post-independence era. In a sense, a typical BJP supporter is saying, 'We may not be ethical as per the highest standards; but what the hell, why do we need to be saints?' A latent societal meanness has found a legitimate political outlet.

It needs to be underlined that the BJP's hegemony is far from total — no hegemony ever is. Its coercive power is frustrated by the endemic inefficiencies and the notoriously modest capacity of the Indian state. Its electoral dominance peters out at the geographical and the social peripheries. The BJP is not a serious contender in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and smaller states like Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and, of course, the Kashmir Valley.[5]

This hegemony is predicated on the exclusion of the Muslims and mostly Christians as well. The inclusion of Dalits is still tentative, the peasantry's association is still tenuous as is its hold over the youth. For all its seeming ideological dominance, it is yet to find acceptance among the intellectual elite, both in English and Indian languages. None of this takes away from the fact of BJP's hegemony. But it does point to spaces available for counter-hegemonic action.

Obstacles to Hegemony

Probably, among potential opposition groups, the most serious resistance Hindu nationalism faces comes from the Dalits and Adivasis, the so-called "untouchables" and "tribals" who constitute some 20 percent of the population. Sikhs are also a likely source of resistance, with their increasing resentment at attempts to incorporate venerated figures in their history into the Hindutva pantheon and the push to have them "return to Hinduism." In the assessment he made over sixty years ago of the prospects of fascism in India, Barrington Moore (1966: 446–47) wrote:

> One possible reason for the weakness of the Hindu variant of fascism to date may be the fragmentation of the Hindu world along caste, class, and ethnic lines. Thus a characteristically fascist appeal addressed to one segment would antagonize others, while a more general appeal, by taking on some color of universal panhumanism, begins to lose its fascist qualities.

Recent developments appear to confirm this observation. These sectors, who were systematically discriminated against in traditional Hindu culture, have increasingly discovered that the BJP and the Hindu nationalists are deadly serious about reversing the gains they made in terms of improving their political, economic, and cultural status in the secular, pluralistic Indian order that is now threatened. Not only are affirmative action policies to rectify historical injustices being aggressively challenged by the BJP, but the strict implementation of cow protection laws by the Modi government has exposed Dalits and Adivasis engaged in the cattle industry throughout India to violence from Hindu upper-caste mobs. Moreover, even a key law meant to protect Dalits from violence, The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989, under which anyone accused of committing an atrocity against the members of the scheduled castes and tribes is denied bail, has now been gutted, with the Supreme Court of India's recent ruling barring immediate arrest of those accused of violence against members of the scheduled castes and tribes. The significance of the Act was underlined by one observer:

> Over the years, this act became a big problem for casteist forces in India who want to maintain the oppression of Dalits and other underprivileged communities. The RSS has been training its cadre for decades to oppose any form of social change and suppress any attempts to create a caste-free India, often through violence and intimidation. To continue with their agenda, they needed a mechanism to weaken the Atrocities Act and ensure the Hindu "vigilantes" who attack Dalits would not face imprisonment. (Shepherd 2018)

But the ability of the Modi government to coopt at least some parts of the Dalit, Adivasi, and Sikh communities must not be underestimated. As noted earlier, Modi was able to win a section of the Dalit vote in the 2014 elections. This stemmed from a dual strategy. One prong was to convince the emerging Dalit middle class that his election would redound to their economic fortunes. The other was a tactical underplaying of the caste issue. As one account put it, "Caste assertion has not been the strategy of the BJP, as it once was. As a matter of fact, on the one hand, they have aggressively negotiated with caste groups, and, on the other, presented the image of a single, powerful leader. Dissociating the image of the leader from the history of the RSS has allowed them strategic maneuverability" (Roy and Singh 2017). A related tactic was to ideologically downplay caste conflicts and rhetorically appeal to all Hindus irrespective of caste to unite against the so-called common enemy: Muslims (New Indian Express 2017). Indicative of this flexibility is the fact that the BJP has introduced a bill in Parliament that would overrule the Supreme Court's weakening of the Prevention of Atrocities Act mentioned above.

Opportunism has also marked the Hindu nationalists' approach toward women. The Modi government has cast itself in the role of being the defenders of the rights of Muslim women, launching a campaign against the practice of "triple *talaq*"— that is, the practice among some Muslim men of simply uttering the word *talaq* ("I divorce you") to their wives three times for a divorce to take place. At the same time, the RSS and other Hindu nationalists subscribed to the highly patriarchal Sanskrit text, the *Manusmriti*, which op-

poses inter-class marriage and emphasizes women's subordination to men. The Hindu nationalist view on women was expressed by Yogi Adithyanath, the hardline chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, who justified his opposition to the idea of reserving 33 percent of parliamentary and assembly seats for women with the following argument:

> Assess and then decide whether women who are active in politics and public life like men, whether in this process they may not lose their importance and role as mothers, daughter, and sisters.... If men acquire women-like qualities, they become gods but when women acquire men-like qualities, they become [rakshasa] demon-like. (quoted in Krishnan 2018: 97)

In short, what opposition forces in India face is a highly ideological nationalist force whose agenda is being pushed by a highly skilled pragmatic leadership that can make tactical adjustments within what is nevertheless a determined strategic pursuit of the objective of re-creating an imagined Hindu civilization purged of the "historical shame," "aberrations," and "injustices" imposed by the Muslim, Christian, and Western secular enemies. Denunciations of violence, violations of human and democratic rights, and corruption on the part of its fanatical adherents will not stop the right-wing wave, many liberal and progressive partisans now realize. What is needed, they say, is nothing less than a comprehensive progressive vision for India that is not seen merely as an apologia for liberal democracy's failures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a number of characteristics of the rise of the Hindu nationalist right might be made in a comparative context.

First, what is transpiring in India is a counterrevolution. It may not be principally a class-based counterrevolution, and it may be protracted compared to the other cases studied in this volume, but it is a comprehensive and fundamentalist enterprise that seeks to overturn a liberal democratic, secular, and pluralistic order. It is a total counterrevolution that has transformative goals at the levels of the ideological, cultural, political, social, and economic.

Second, like all counterrevolutions, but perhaps more than the others discussed in this study, it looks back to an idealized past in order to justify and legitimize old and new mechanisms and processes of domination.

Third, while there is certainly a reactionary class dimension to Hindu nationalism — that is, it is partly an attempt by the threatened privileged castes to reassert their social dominance in the face of the gains made by the lower castes and classes in India's liberal democratic order — that is not the whole story. In opportunistically championing neoliberal reform, the Hindu right was able to tap into the dissatisfaction of the Indian bourgeoisie, formerly a pillar of the Congress regime, with the state restrictions to their activities and with what they saw as economic stagnation under Nehruvian "socialism." Equally significant in this regard has been the Hindu nationalists' ability to capture the imagination and support of the urban middle classes or, to use Jaffrelot's terms, "neo-middle classes," that are, in economic terms, among the beneficiaries of neoliberal reform or who expect to benefit from it, and, in cultural-ideological terms, are alienated from the secular and "rationalistic" ideological scaffolding of the Nehruvian liberal democrat cum "socialist" order. Also noteworthy is the fact that in its approach to the lower classes and castes, including Dalits and Adivasis, Hindu nationalism falls in line with Barrington Moore's (1966: 442) observation that fascism is an effort by the upper classes to "make reaction popular."

Fourth, in Indonesia and Chile, not just political subordination of the Communist-led left but its total organizational if not physical extermination was the aim of the counterrevolution, while in the Philippines, drug users fill the role of Jews or vermin to be stamped out in the political project of Rodrigo Duterte, which is discussed in the next section. Analysts agree that Hindu nationalism systematically discriminates against Muslims and Christians, but there is disagreement as to whether it is eliminationist in intent. Hindutva ideology considers especially the Muslim community — numbering 172 million or 14.2 percent of the population — as an alien element grafted onto the current political order, as a force that cannot be absorbed into a Hindu social and political order. While most observers would concur that the Hindu nationalist project is to effectively turn

Muslims and Christians into second-class citizens in a Hindu state, others are not so confident that this is the limit. As the Gujarat riots in 2002 revealed, the Sangh Parivar is perfectly capable of carrying out physical extermination when the opportunity presents itself.

Fifth, the counterrevolution has a heated mass base, not just an electoral base, one that is diverse, with some parts organized into paramilitary formations and others in loose vigilante groupings. While some, like the RSS, mainly provide ideological and political leadership, others engage in actions in which they take the law into their own hands, often at the slightest or false pretext, to teach the targeted community a lesson as well as to build solidarity in their ranks. In a very real sense, this is a solidarity steeped in bloodshed. It should be added that the social media, in particular Facebook and Whatsapp, have become important tools used by the Hindu right to inflame its base.

Sixth, and related to the previous point, as with all the counterrevolutionary forces discussed here, violence is a central instrument in the Hindu nationalist project and its employment is an ever-present threat, one that is constrained only by tactical political and legal considerations. When the facts on the ground change and there is a good chance of exercising or supporting violence without much political cost or serious prosecution, then violence is a method that must not be disdained. For the Hindu right, one of the key lessons they have derived from their period of ascendancy over the last few years is that the changing correlation of forces can allow even a criminal promoter or enabler of genocide such as Narendra Modi to become prime minister.

Finally, in the relationship between the right-wing mass movement and the state, the latter becomes gradually subordinate to the former, with the representatives of the state, as in Italy, turning a blind eye to the actions of the mob or even participating in them, as in many cases of lynching. But what is especially noteworthy in the dynamics of the state-civil society relationship in India is the synergy between the elected regime, acting from above, and its "civil society" allies pushing from below, to neutralize and eventually take over and transform the administrative and security machineries of the state to serve the political and ideological ends of the Hindu

nationalist movement. The parallels to fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany are striking.

Notes

1. Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded his mother, is reported to have reacted to the mob violence with the words, "When a great tree falls, the earth is bound to shake," which have been interpreted as justifying the killings. Many prominent Congress figures were accused and investigated for encouraging the slaughter of Sikh men, women, and children. See, among others, North 2014.
2. I am indebted to one of anonymous reviewers of the manuscript of this book for pointing this out.
3. The closest communal crime approaching the Gujarat bloodbath occurred in the city of Muzaffarnagar in the state of Uttar Pradesh in September 2013, taking 47 lives.
4. The situation has worsened since January 2017. According to a recent *India Spend* survey summarized by UCAN (2018a), from January 2017 to July 5, 2018, "Mob violence in India has killed 33 people and injured at least 99.... Muslims have been the target of 51 percent of violence centered on cow-related incidents during 2010 to 2017. The vast majority of those killed in such incidents were also Muslims. India Spend's survey said 97 percent of these types of attacks were reported after Modi's government came to power in May 2014.... Most of those killed by hard-line Hindus were accused of trading cows for slaughter or transporting or storing beef.... Orthodox Hindus regard cows as holy and their slaughter is banned in most Indian states. Since Modi's party assumed power in 2014, the ban has been used by Hindu nationalists to justify attacks on Muslims in public. In many cases those people killed for beef were actually storing mutton or water buffalo meat."
5. After this assessment was written, the BJP came to power as part of coalitions in Tripura and Meghalaya.

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7

The Philippines: Emergence of a Fascist Original

The inclusion of the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte in the counterrevolutionary pantheon might be regarded as premature since his administration is only three years old and its features might not have had a chance to clearly evolve into traits that could be identified as counterrevolutionary or fascist. While there might be some validity to this view, there are three substantial counterarguments: first, Duterte is regarded globally as one of the prime examples of the new authoritarianism; second, even if his regime is only into its third year, key features and thrusts have emerged decisively; and third, like Narendra Modi in India, Duterte is leading a counterrevolution that is directed not at a threat from below but against a liberal democratic regime.

There are, however, some limitations in discussing the Duterte case, in contrast to the first five cases studied here. Foremost among these is the fact that in the latter there already exists much historical data to enable in-depth comparative work. Thus, many propositions suggested in this section will have a provisional quality, many of them having come out of the personal observation of one who is closely engaged as an actor in national politics.[1]

Marcos as Predatory Ruler, Duterte as Fascist

Whenever fascism or counterrevolution in Asia is discussed, the name of Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the Philippines 50 years ago, comes up. Marcos was a dictator. But he was not a counterrevolutionary since, contrary to his claim, there was no immediate revolutionary threat that he was reacting to, nor could it be said that he was leading a mass insurgency against liberal democracy. Neither could he be said to be a fascist if the definition of a fascist leader includes one who is supported by a heated mass base that aggressively promotes acts of

violence against its chosen victims. Insofar as he had a social base, it was largely passive, as he deployed state terror against his enemies. While neither a counterrevolutionary nor a fascist, Marcos did share his counterrevolutionary and fascist counterparts' predilection for authoritarian rule. As he put it, "All that people ask is some kind of authority that can enforce the simple law of civil society.… Only an authoritarian system will be able to carry forth the mass consent and to exercise the authority necessary to implement new values, measures, and sacrifices" (Marcos 1980: 23, 25). His authoritarianism, however, must be seen in the context of a project to monopolize political power for personal ends cloaked with the rhetoric of constructing some kind of developmental state — in short, a predatory state along the lines defined by Peter Evans (1995).

Duterte is different. If we see as central to the definition of a fascist leader 1) a charismatic individual with strong inclinations toward authoritarian rule, 2) who is engaged in or supports the systematic violation of basic human, civil, and political rights; 3) who derives strength from a heated multiclass mass base; and 4) who pursues a political project that contradicts the fundamental values and aims of liberal democracy or social democracy, then Duterte fits the bill. The following sections deal in more detail with these aspects of Duterte and his regime.[2]

Carino Brutal

Duterte is charismatic, but his charisma is not the demiurgic sort like Hitler's, nor does it derive so much from an emotional personal identification with the people and nation as in the case with some populists. Duterte's charisma would probably be best described as *carino brutal*, a Filipino-Spanish term denoting a volatile mix of will to power, a commanding personality, and gangster charm that fulfills his followers' deep-seated yearning for a father figure who will finally end the national chaos. This charisma has elicited much comment, one of the most interesting being that advanced by sociologist Wataru Kusaka (2017), who posits that Duterte has been endowed with the image of a "social bandit" who breaks the law that functions mainly to protect the powerful, the criminals, and the corrupt in order to

achieve the good society marked by discipline, the absence of crime, and the banishment of corruption.

Eliminationism

Duterte's fascist signature is his bloody war on drugs. Unlike most politicians, he has delivered on his main promise, which he described as "fattening the fish in Manila Bay" with the cadavers of criminals. Thousands of drug users have been slain by the police or by police-controlled vigilante groups, with the police admitting that 2,600 deaths were attributable to police operations while another 1,400 were the work of vigilantes (Almendral 2017). Other, more reliable sources put the figure at above 7,000 as of early May 2017 (Human Rights Watch 2017). An opposition senator, citing a government report, claimed that based on an internal government report, the real number of deaths related to the drug war over a year and half was at least 20,322 (Regencia 2018).

What is beyond doubt is that Duterte has brazenly encouraged the extrajudicial killings and discouraged due process. The very night he took his oath of office on June 30, 2016, he told an audience in one of Manila's working-class communities, "If you know of any addicts, go ahead and kill them yourselves as getting their parents to do it would be too painful."[3] In October 2016, Duterte told the country, with characteristically sinister humour, that twenty thousand to thirty thousand more lives might have to be taken to cleanse the country of drugs (ABS/CBN 2017). Having learned to take Duterte seriously even when he seems to be joking, many observers expect this figure to be an underestimate. More recently, to any police officer who might be convicted of killing drug users without justification, he has offered an immediate pardon "so you can go after the people who brought you to court."[4]

Duterte's *matanza masiva* of drug users is underpinned by an eliminationist rationale that reminds one of the pseudo-scientific basis of Nazi racial theory. A whole sector of society has been unilaterally stripped of their rights to life, due process, and membership in society. This category — drug users and drug dealers — is said by Duterte to comprise some three to four million of the country's

population of 104 million. He has all but written these people out of the human race. With rhetorical flourish, he told the security forces: "Crime against humanity? In the first place, I'd like to be frank with you: are they humans? What is your definition of a human being?"

Drug users are consigned outside the borders of humanity since their brains have allegedly shrunk to the point that they are no longer in command of their faculties to will and think. In his speeches justifying the killings "in self-defence" by police, Duterte said that a year of more of the use of *shabu* — the local term for meth or metamphetamine hydrochloride — "would shrink the brain of a person, and therefore he is no longer viable for rehabilitation" (quoted in Villanueva 2016). These people are the "living dead," the "walking dead," who are "of no use to society anymore" (Villanueva 2016). Not only do these people turn to violent crime to slake their drug habit, but they are paranoid and could resist arrest, putting the lives of police officers in danger (Villanueva 2016).

Needless to say, most neuroscientists have shown that the effects of drug use on the brain are reversible and that rehabilitation, using chemical and electro-mechanical means, in a supportive social context is not only possible but is actually being successfully carried out.[5]

Duterte's Middle-Class Base

Like India's Modi, there is no doubt that Duterte is popular, enjoying an 88 percent approval rating two years after his election that beat the 86 percent he enjoyed at the beginning of his term (*Rappler* 2018). While he draws approval from all classes, support for him is most aggressively displayed among the aspiring and downwardly mobile middle classes. Inspired by Gramsci, one might advance the provisional observation that unlike Duterte's middle-class base, whom one might characterize as exhibiting "active consensus" behind Duterte's authoritarian rule, the lower classes that support the president might be said to be marked by "passive consensus."

The Philippines provides an interesting case study of the volatility of the middle class. At times, it can be a force for democracy, as in the late eighties when the middle classes played a central role in the overthrow of Marcos and other authoritarian regimes throughout

the Global South. At other times, they provide the heated mass base for authoritarian rule, as they did for Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany and as they do now for Duterte.

Duterte's middle-class base is not passive. Beginning with the presidential campaign in 2016, they have mobilized to dominate social media, engaging in the worst kind of cyberbullying of people who dare to criticize the president's policies online. Shortly after his declaration of martial law in Mindanao in May 2017, for instance, one of the most prominent pro-Duterte bloggers publicly called for the execution of two women journalists. Another Duterte fanatic registered his hope online that a woman senator who had criticized the martial law declaration, Risa Hontiveros, would be "brutally raped." Indeed, rational discourse is an increasingly scarce commodity among Duterte's partisans, who ape their leader's penchant for outrageous and incendiary utterances.

Much of Duterte's online support comes from Filipino workers overseas, many of them people with college education who suffer from occupational dissonance owing to their seeing themselves as trapped in menial blue-collar or service jobs for which they are overqualified. Their backing of Duterte is heartfelt and spontaneous, just as that of most of his other supporters. Nevertheless, much like the Hindu nationalists in India and the Hun Sen regime in Cambodia, Duterte's followers have not hesitated to weaponize the internet to manufacture consent. A study by Oxford University's Computational Propaganda Research Project claims that the Duterte campaign paid $200,000 for as many as five hundred dedicated trolls to attack dissenters and spread disinformation. Pro-Duterte bloggers, some claiming to have followers in the hundreds of thousands to millions, have been rewarded with government positions owing to their aggressive dissemination of false or slanted news (Syjuco 2017). Expressing dissent on Facebook invites concerted attack, my own experience being very similar to that of a prominent analyst:

> My opposition to the president's violent rhetoric and his disdain for democratic checks and balances has earned me attacks and threats. Usually Duterte Diehard Supporters will seize on one of my columns or Facebook posts, engaging in ad

> hominem assaults on their pages that they tacitly encourage their followers to continue onto mine.... I am far from the only Filipino to get this treatment. The attacks come in waves from outraged trolls — with social media accounts and inboxes flooded with insults, promises of violence and memes made to expressly mock and disgrace — before they move on to the next target after several days. The duration and intensity seem directly correlated to the reach and influence of the person being attacked. (Syjuco 2017)

Duterte's Political Project

As to his political project, Duterte is not a reactionary seeking to restore a mythical past. He is not a conservative dedicated to defending the status quo. His project is oriented toward an authoritarian future. He is best described as a counterrevolutionary who has engaged in the political improvisation characteristic of skilled counterrevolutionaries like Hitler and Mussolini.[6] Counterrevolutionaries are not always clear about what their next moves are, but they often have an instinctive sense of what would bring them closer to power. Ideological purity is not high on their agenda, with them putting the premium on the emotional power of their message rather on its intellectual coherence. But aside from seizing power, counterrevolutionaries do have an ideological agenda and ideological enemies. Mussolini and Hitler were leading a counterrevolution against the left or social revolution. In Duterte's case, the target, one can infer from his discourse and his actions, is liberal democracy, the dominant ideology and political system of our time.[7] In this sense, he is both a local expression as well as a pioneer of an ongoing global phenomenon: a right-wing backlash against liberal democratic values and liberal democratic discourse that Francis Fukuyama (1992) had declared as the end of history in the early 1990s.

A Fascist Original

While Duterte fits the fascist category, it must also be pointed out that he is no simple reproduction of past actors. He is a fascist ori-

ginal. Interpreting his mandate as a blank cheque to do whatever it takes to "defend the nation," Duterte has reversed the usual model by which fascists and authoritarian populists come to power. In the conventional model of creeping fascism, the fascist personality begins with violations of civil and political rights, followed by the lunge for absolute power, after which follows indiscriminate repression. He started with massive, indiscriminate repression — that is, the killing with impunity of thousands of drug users — leaving the violation of civil liberties and the grab for total power as mopping-up operations in a political atmosphere where fear has largely neutralized opposition. His approach might be called "blitzkrieg fascism," in contrast to creeping fascism. He is also original in the way he initially incorporated the traditional left, the National Democratic Front controlled by the Communist Party of the Philippines, into the ruling bloc by appointing key members to his cabinet. Though his relations with the left have since descended into recrimination over disagreements over peace talks, Duterte's move was highly original; most earlier fascist leaders, while stealing the progressive rhetoric of the left, had seen the organized left as their deadly enemy.

Moving on to the question of what accounts for Duterte's rise to power, there is no doubt that his promise to deal in a draconian fashion with the drug problem was a major factor in his election in a society where fear of crime is widespread among all sectors of the population. It is testimony to his political acumen that he was able to successfully latch onto an issue that most politicians had ignored. A blistering fivefold increase in reported crime and a marked decline in effective law enforcement was recorded from 2012 to 2014, leading to a generalized sense of lawlessness that took hold of the public consciousness prior to the 2016 elections, especially among the "aspirational middle class, who benefited from concentrated growth in the retail, real estate, and business process outsourcing sectors, but now worried about their basic safety" (Heydarian 2018a: 32). Explaining the 88 percent support for Duterte's war on drugs, Bonn Juego (2018: 136) writes,

> There are multiple psychological factors why there is popular support for the anti-drug offensive. People at large *fear* for

> their individual selves and for their families being victimized by illegal drug abuse and drug-related crimes. Some support the campaign strongly as an expression of their own *hatred*, having been themselves, or their family members, victimized by illegal drug traffickers and users. Other supporters are *in denial* of their own past illegal drug use. *Frustration* and *anger* abound with regard to the failure of previous administrations to seriously address the problems of illegal drugs and criminality. The survey suggests how much more Filipinos care about prioritizing a *sense of public security and personal safety* vis-à-vis drug-related crimes. High *trust* is given to the perception of Duterte's political will and the necessity for a strongman to deal with the complex apparatus of the illegal drug industry.

Duterte's success in stoking physical insecurity as a springboard to authoritarian rule is a grim reminder of Hobbes's thesis that at the origins of the state is the primordial contract between a people who are willing to hand over their rights and a sovereign who promises to protect their life and limb.

How EDSA's Elite Democracy Prepared the Way for Duterte

Yet there are more profound causes for Duterte's victory and his current popularity. One cannot understand his hold on society without taking into consideration the deep disenchantment with the liberal democratic regime that came into being with the landmark EDSA uprising that overthrew Marcos in February 1986 (EDSA is the acronym for the north-south highway that bisects Metro Manila, and it is where the major mass actions took place). In fact, the failure of the "EDSA Republic" was a condition for Duterte's success

What destroyed the EDSA project and paved the way for Duterte was the deadly combination of elite monopoly of the electoral system, uncontrolled corruption, continuing concentration of wealth, and neoliberal economic policies and the priority placed on foreign debt repayment imposed by Washington.[8]

By the time of the elections of 2016, there was a yawning gap between the EDSA Republic's promise of popular empowerment

and wealth redistribution and the reality of massive poverty, scandalous inequality, and pervasive corruption. The income of the top 10 percent relative to the bottom 40 percent increased from 3.09 in 2003 to 3.27 of total income in 2009 while the Gini coefficient, the best summary measure of inequality, increased from 0.438 in 1991 to 0.506 in 2009 (see Martinez, Western, and Tomazewski 2014; Remo 2013).[9] Add to this brew the widespread perception of inept governance during the preceding administration of President Benigno Aquino III, and it is not surprising that a good part of the electorate saw Duterte's tough-guy, authoritarian approach, which he had cultivated as mayor of the southern frontier city of Davao for over thirty years, as precisely what was needed.

Moreover, the EDSA Republic's discourse of democracy, human rights, and rule of law had become a suffocating straitjacket for a majority of Filipinos who simply could not relate to it owing to the overpowering reality of their powerlessness. Duterte's discourse — a mixture of outright death threats, coarse street-corner language, misogynistic outbursts, and frenzied railing coupled with disdainful humour directed at the elite, whom he calls *coños*, or cunts — is a potent formula that has proved exhilarating to his audience, who felt themselves liberated from what they experienced as the stifling political correctness and hypocrisy of the EDSA discourse. In this connection, Juego (2018: 135) notes that, unlike Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, who gives his brand of strongman rule the name "illiberal democracy,"

> Duterte's authoritarian populism is not labelled by him as such. It is not a coherent political ideology or programme. But a consistent theme in his speeches is his discursive critique of both the theory and practice of liberal democracy. His critique, particularly of the ideals of human rights, emphasises the Filipino, Asian and developing country contexts. What has gained significant traction among the public is his disparagement of the practice of liberal democracy, specifically the corruption and ineffectiveness of hypocritical liberal élites who governed the country before his rise to power.

The popularity of Duterte's populist discourse raises existential questions about the future of liberal democracy, toward which middle-class Filipinos had already displayed some deep reservations prior to his emergence as a national figure (Webb 2017). The complexities and implications of what she calls Duterte's "penal populism" are articulated by one of the country's leading sociologists, Nicole Curato (2016: 106):

> Underpinning Duterte's penal populism are seemingly opposing, yet mutually reinforcing, logics of the politics of fear and the politics of hope. While the politics of fear exposes citizens' latent anxieties, the politics of hope foregrounds the role of democratic agency, esteem and collective aspirations. … Populism is a negotiated relationship between the populist and his publics—a relationship that runs much deeper than one-way manipulation and demagoguery. Populism … gives voice to pre-existing frustrations as well as life to new possibilities for conducting electoral politics. Support for populist leaders is a product of moral calculations the public makes, given their social status and broader political contexts. To this extent, populism can claim *modest* legacies for democratic practice, especially when it disrupts the electoral system that is partial to money and political machinery.

However, making this argument on the democratic aspect of penal populism, according to Curato,

> does not mean dismissing the view of populism as a pathology of democracy. Indeed, penal populism also creates a legacy of exclusion and divisiveness in liberal democracies. Although penal populism does give a voice to citizens' frustrations, it also silences the perspective of "the dangerous other" for they are considered enemies that should be eradicated. … The punitive foundations of the politics of fear limits the public's imagination for measured and systematic responses to the drug problem. Instead, it promotes spectacular short-term solutions to complex problems at the expense of human rights.

The Decline of the Peasantry as a Political Actor

In the countryside, disaffection was high during the EDSA period owing to the EDSA Republic's very disappointing record on agrarian reform. By the end of the twenty-six-year-old enterprise in 2014 that had been its centrepiece program, some 700,000 hectares of private land — 450,000 of which constituted the best agricultural land in the country — remained undistributed (Bello 2014).[10]

Frustration did not, however, translate into class mobilization in the period prior to the 2016 elections. Several factors account for this, according to a specialist on the Philippine left and a key peasant organizer. First, during the martial law period, the Communist Party of the Philippines, which was then one of the key forces opposing Marcos, put the priority on organizing a support base for the New People's Army, not on organizing people to push for agrarian reform. Thus, when the EDSA uprising ushered in a period of more open politics, the mass organizations of the left that pushed for agrarian reform were relatively weak. A second factor that led to peasant quiescence was the vicious internecine warfare that broke out in the 1990s between the pro-armed struggle wing of the movement and a less doctrinaire grouping that put a premium on open mass struggle and participation in elections. A third was an internal party purge in the mid-eighties that took the lives of some two thousand cadres, most of whom were working among peasants in the countryside.[11]

In any event, what pollsters in the Philippines classify as classes D and E — those with lower incomes — make up the vast majority of the electorate, so we can assume that in the absence of more detailed poll categories, a significant part of the 16 million voters (40 percent of the electorate) that went for Duterte came from the rural poor.

Duterte's *Sozialepolitik*

Turning to Duterte's *sozialepolitik*, though much of his rhetoric is populist, his approach is not a populist strategy of using the masses as a battering ram for redistributive reform. Rather, his is the classic fascist way of balancing different class forces while projecting an image of being above class conflict. His campaign promises of ending contractual labour and promoting regularization of workers, curb-

ing the mining industry, and turning over to small coconut farmers the taxes collected from them by the Marcos regime have remained largely unfulfilled even as the country's key elites have positioned themselves as his allies to protect their interests. These include the landed class, big monopoly capitalist actors such as Ramon Ang and Manny Pangilinan, and big mining. He has gone back on his promise to ban the practice of hiring contractual labour to avoid regularization, angering labour groups. No new legislation to push forward the stalled agrarian reform is entertained, which is not surprising given the fact that the so-called Visayan bloc of landowners in the Philippines' House of Representatives is one of his most solid backers. From the very beginning, his economic team declared that its macroeconomic agenda would continue the neoliberal policies of the previous administration, and proceeded to craft a tax reform program focused on increased excise taxes that contributed to a significant rise in the inflation rate in 2018.

A defining moment in the debate of whether Duterte was serious about a social agenda was the congressional confirmation hearings early in 2017 on his crusading environment minister, Gina Lopez, who had shut down, suspended, or issued show-cause orders to over a hundred mining operations for encroaching on watersheds and destabilizing rural and forest communities. Her campaign had captured the public imagination, but Duterte's allies in the mining industry ganged up on her, successfully pressuring the Congressional Commission on Appointments not to confirm her, with the president sitting on the sidelines, refusing to personally lobby for her retention when a simple phone call would have made the difference (Bello 2017b). Duterte's modus operandi has been to appoint progressives to cabinet positions, then allow his conservative allies in the House of Representatives' powerful Commission on Appointments to refuse to confirm them. Duterte is not a tool of vested interests; indeed, many of the rich are scared of him and his unpredictability. But money does have its uses, and it serves as the basis of the modus vivendi between the president and the traditional elites, whom he periodically excoriates rhetorically.

But while delivering social and economic reforms is going to be central in maintaining support for his authoritarian project in the

long term, it is unlikely that the lack of observable progress so far will dent his popularity with the masses in the short and medium terms.

Duterte, Nationalism, and Geopolitics

Finally, a word on Duterte and geopolitics. Like the post-coup military regime in Thailand, Duterte could not count on the support of the US government, which under the Obama administration had placed a premium on democratic competition and human rights, though this was invoked selectively. Though a novice when it comes to foreign policy, he has had an instinctive grasp of the dynamics of Philippine nationalism. His calling former US president Barack Obama a "son of a bitch" for criticizing his policy of extrajudicial executions and his moves toward a policy less dependent on Washington and closer to China were not expected to enjoy much popularity in the Philippines, where pro-Americanism has been regarded as deeply entrenched. Surprisingly, they met with very little protest and elicited much support on the internet. As many have observed, coexisting with the admiration for the US and its institutions exhibited by ordinary Filipinos is a strong undercurrent of resentment at the colonial subjugation of the country by the US, unequal treaties that Washington has foisted on the country, and the overwhelming impact of the American way of life on local culture. Here, one need not delve into the complexity of Hegel's master-servant dialectic to understand that the undercurrent of the US-Philippine relationship has been the struggle for recognition of the dominated party. Duterte's skill has been to tap into this emotional underside of Filipinos in a way that the left has never been able to with its anti-imperialist program. Like many of his authoritarian predecessors, Duterte has been able to splice nationalism and authoritarianism in a very effective fashion.

Duterte's much-publicized move to improve relations with China, to the point of placing on the backburner the resolution of the Philippines' territorial dispute with China around the chain of maritime formations known as the Spratly Islands, is derived not so much from a desire to spite Obama, who had criticized his war on drugs, though that undoubtedly played a role. It stems more from a shrewd acceptance of changing power realities in Asia, of China's

emerging dominant role in the region. In terms of security, Duterte knew that with its consistent position of not taking sides on sovereignty issues in the South China Sea, the US could do little to come to the Philippines' aid in a military confrontation with China over the disputed territory. That the Philippines won its legal battle in the Hague with China over the latter's claim of having historically exercised sovereignty over the area gave the Philippines nothing more than moral leverage.

In terms of material incentives, with the US in economic crisis and Washington's increasing tightfistedness, Duterte knew the Americans did not have money to spare, while rapidly growing China did. Chinese loans, aid, and investment play the pivotal role in Duterte's planned acceleration of upgrading and expanding the country's infrastructure, a program named "Build! Build! Build!"

What has often been missed, however, is another dimension: Duterte's admiration for China's authoritarian system and its ability to "deliver results." The Philippine leader has occasionally declared his "love" for Chinese President Xi Jin Ping (Legaspi 2018). That bond is likely cemented by a common belief in the superiority of authoritarian rule over the messy politics of liberal democracy. It is likely that Duterte sees himself as a part of a regional alliance of authoritarian regimes that promises to deliver effective government.

While China has continued its construction of facilities in the disputed formations, thus placing Duterte in an uncomfortable position, probably more important to him has been Beijing's diplomatic support on another front: China has made repeated calls in the United Nations and multilateral fora for the international community — that is, the West — not to interfere with Duterte's domestic priorities, notably the war on drugs (Heydarian 2018b).

The Conjuncture

With his declaration of martial law across the whole island of Mindanao in May 2017, Duterte embarked on the next phase of his ascent to absolute power, the intensification of the curtailment and suppression of basic political rights. With or without the for-

mal declaration of martial law nationwide, with or without a new constitution, he is on the road to dictatorship. The US-style separation of powers has broken down, with Congress fully controlled by his allies and the Supreme Court purged of a chief justice that Duterte considered one of his top enemies. One of his most vocal opponents, Senator Leila de Lima, is in jail, while another, Senator Antonio Trillanes IV, is threatened with imprisonment, both of them on fabricated or legally flimsy charges. Most of the press is in self-censorship mode. The one possible source of opposition that could give Duterte pause is the military, but he has done his homework on this front, giving many top cabinet positions to former generals while winning the support of enlisted men with his tough-guy charisma. Senator Trillanes, a former officer, has admitted that the "majority of the rank and file" in the military support Duterte (Buan 2018).

This is not to say that opposition will not grow. His increasingly tight alliance with two controversial elite groups, the children of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the elite faction headed by former president — now Speaker of the House — Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, has troubled some of his middle-class supporters who are not enamoured of them. His unprovoked rant that saw him call god "stupid" has disturbed some of his religious supporters and emboldened those in the Catholic Church leadership who want the Church to adopt a more confrontational approach toward Duterte on human rights. His neoliberal tax policies are creating inflationary pressures that have diminished enthusiasm for him among the lower and middle classes, though his popularity ratings remain high (Dolor 2018). Moreover, he has not supported efforts by his advisers, who are savvy with street politics, to create a fascist mass party, resulting in the inability of his supporters to match the mobilizations of the opposition. This has left him greatly dependent on the police and the military, which might pose a problem should his popularity decline significantly.

Nevertheless, more than two years after the electoral insurgency that placed him in power, Duterte exercises a level of control over the political system that has not been seen since Marcos's rule in the 1970s. And he enjoys something Marcos achieved only fleetingly:

popular legitimacy. As with Mussolini and Hitler, popularity is a far more important resource than the support he receives from the military and the police, though his inability to turn electoral support into organized mass support is not a minor shortcoming. The momentum of his regime is toward dictatorship. Like Hernán Cortés, Duterte has burned his ships behind him. There is no going back. Yielding power when his six-year term ends in 2022 is a vanishing option. Not least among the reasons for this is that he and many of his lieutenants would face prosecution for the extrajudicial executions of thousands of people, not only locally but internationally; charges of systematic human rights violations have been filed against them in the International Criminal Court. There is, of course, the possibility that Duterte, who has admitted to being in poor health, will die before he can complete his authoritarian project, but should this happen, he will be leaving behind a political system whose democratic institutions have been severely weakened and an aroused mass base that is likely to demand the continuation of that enterprise.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we might highlight the following points with respect to Duterte and his regime.

First, like Hitler, Mussolini, and Modi, he reincarnates the classic charismatic individual at the centre of fascist movements.

Second, his fascist character is most fully displayed in his bloody war on drugs, which has taken over seven thousand lives and is underpinned by an eliminationist ideology.

Third, as was the case in most of the other five cases of counterrevolution, Duterte has a heated mass support, which is anchored in, though not exclusively derived from, the middle class.

Fourth, his political project is essentially a counterrevolution against liberal democracy, and it is one that enjoys much popularity owing not only to the failure of the EDSA liberal democratic regime's crushing failure to deliver the political and economic reforms that it had promised but also to a deeper ambivalence, especially among the middle class, about the appropriateness of liberal democracy for a country facing deep-seated problems.

Fifth, Duterte is a fascist original, who follows a strategy of blitzkrieg fascism as opposed to creeping fascism, starting with massive violations of human rights in the form of indiscriminate killings of drug users and dealers, and leaving the crushing of political and civil rights as mopping-up operations.

Sixth, Duterte engages in populist rhetoric, but his intent is to project an image of being above class conflict while preserving the existing balance of class forces where the traditional elites hold sway.

Seventh, in contrast to some of the other cases, the role of the countryside, as a base for revolution or counterrevolution, is negligible in the case of Duterte's ascent to power, except perhaps as the source of lower-class voters that went for him in 2016.

Eighth, unlike Modi and the reigning Hindu right wing in India, Duterte has failed to develop mass organizations to buttress his political regime. This has made his rule extremely dependent on the police and the military, which can be problematic should his popularity wane.

Finally, Duterte has played geopolitics with skill, recognizing the shift in power in the East Asian region from China to the United States, while also using anti-US rhetoric to burnish his nationalist credentials. He may also see himself as part of an authoritarian regional alliance that is geared to deliver "effective government."

Notes

1. I was a Member of Parliament (House of Representatives) from 2009 to 2015. As a public figure, I have been identified as a critic of Duterte.
2. Some of the points made below were originally laid out in Walden Bello (2017a) "The Spider Spins His Web," which appeared in *Philippine Sociological Review*, 65.
3. Statement at solidarity dinner at Del Pan Sports Complex, July 1, 2016, quoted in *I-Defend* 2016.
4. Speech before a conference of local government officials, carried over DZRH radio, March 14, 2017.
5. Interview with Dr. Yo Ying Ma, Binghamton, New York, March 5, 2017.
6. Here, I find Arno Mayer's (1971, 2000) distinction between reactionaries, conservatives, and counterrevolutionaries, discussed in the first chapter, especially useful. Fascism, in Mayer's typology, falls into the counterrevolutionary category.
7. This is not to say that liberal democracy was not also a subject of deri-

sion on the part of Hitler and Mussolini. As Goebbels famously put it, the aim of the Nazi counterrevolution was to "erase 1789 from history." However, the principal target of both leaders was the socialist project and the workers' movement, and they played on the threat of a Soviet-led international working-class revolution to unite the right on their way to power.

8. For a comprehensive analysis of the political economy of the EDSA regime, see Bello et al. (2014).
9. According to the National Statistical Coordination Board, people from the high-income class, which account for 15.1 to 15.9 percent of the country's population, enjoyed a 10.4-percent annual growth in income in 2011. In contrast, incomes of people in the middle-income segment grew by only 4.3 percent, and incomes of those in the low-income group by 8.2 percent. Overall inequality thus increased as the incomes of the top bracket increased faster than those in other brackets (Remo 2013).
10. The best in-depth treatment of the failure of agrarian reform in the Philippines can be found in Borras (2007).
11. Interview with Ricardo Reyes and Danny Carranza, Quezon City, August 8, 2017.

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8

The North: The Far Right Breaks Through

In his speech in Johannesburg on July 17, 2018, former US president Barack Obama (2018) remarked that "strongman politics are ascendant suddenly" and "on the move at a pace that would have seemed unimaginable just a few years ago," posing an existential threat to the liberal democratic tradition in the North. While this book has been mainly focused on counterrevolutions in the South, a book on counterrevolution would not be complete without addressing, even if only briefly, the rise of the extreme right in Europe and the United States.

Breakthrough

Indeed, one can say that the rapid rise of the extreme right over the last decade in what used to be regarded as stable democracies in the North has been one of the two biggest political shocks of the last generation, the other being the collapse of the socialist governments of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union two decades earlier. In just eight years, 2010 to 2018, the world has seen the extreme right move from being outside the corridors of power to the centre of power itself.

There is, of course, Donald Trump, but before his surprise electoral victory in November 2016, Viktor Orbán had come to power again in Hungary in 2010, this time reincarnated as a man of the hard right instead of the liberal democrat he was in the late nineties. And after Trump, the Alternativ fur Deutschland party won 94 of the German Bundestag's 630 seats in the September 2017 elections, the first time the far right has gained a presence in that body, and the anti-immigrant Northern League came to power in alliance with the Five Star Movement in Italy in the aftermath of the March 2018 elections. In France, it took an informal electoral alliance of the centre

right, centre, centre left, and left to fend off the presidential bid of the National Front's Marine Le Pen in the electoral runoff of May 2017.

To be a decisive player, extreme right-wing parties found that they did not need to be the ruling party or even part of a governing coalition; just by raising their share of the votes significantly, they could push policymaking to the right, as was the case in Germany in 2018, where their strident voices in the Bundestag forced Angela Merkel to a humiliating retreat from her liberal immigration policy.

In my analysis of counterrevolutions in the Global South, I have frequently, following Mayer, distinguished between the reactionary, conservative, and counterrevolutionary forces that compose the anti-revolutionary coalition. These distinctions are also very useful in understanding the dynamics of the right in the North, especially when it comes to interpreting the moves of its leaders. Counterrevolutionary leaders are pragmatic and are not afraid to modify, if not contradict, some of the long-held doctrines of their reactionary and conservative allies. Thus, Donald Trump has not only rhetorically attacked globalization and free trade, two ideological mainstays of the neoliberal ideology that guides the Republican Party, but he actually took the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a grand neoliberal trade enterprise, to solidify his white working-class base. In the case of some counterrevolutionary figures, pragmatism becomes indistinguishable from opportunism. Trump's political résumé has him at one time being an independent, at another a Democrat, and most recently a Republican — close friend Fox News founder Roger Ailes thought Trump "had no political beliefs or backbone" (Wolff 2018: 3). Viktor Orbán began as a pro-democracy student activist against the old communist regime in Hungary, moved his party Fidesz from the left to the right in the 1990s on the grounds that his party would be a bit player on the left but a big player on the right, then moved to the hard right as leader of a semi-authoritarian regime after he came to power a second time in 2010 (Buckley and Byrne 2018).

What both Trump and Orbán had, on which they pivoted to political success, was what one commentator called "a sixth sense for the public marketplace" (Wolff 2018: 2). In the case of both men, this was mainly the immigration and refugee issue, which Trump sensationalized by claiming that Mexico was sending its criminals to the

US, and Orbán capitalized on by denouncing the European Union for "forcing" Hungary to accept its quota of refugees. Immigration became the centrepiece of programs designed to address a number of real or imagined ills troubling different sectors of the majority population. In Trump's case, the program was a patchwork of measures that he marketed as "America First;" in Orbán's, Hungary was an "illiberal democracy." In both cases, the coherence of the proffered program was not so much rational as emotional.

Is It Populism?

Regimes such as that of Trump and Orbán are often described as populist. If by "populist" one means a political style of reaching out to the people directly and not relying only or mainly on intermediaries like political parties, then certainly Trump and Orbán qualify as populists, much like Narendra Modi in India. Indeed, the Republican Party's difficulty with Trump is that, via both social media and established media, he has circumvented the party's established hierarchies. In this sense of populism being a political style, the right-wing movements in the US and Europe are populist, as are some left-wing movements, such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain (Judis 2016: 109–30). But to use populism to describe the content of a right-wing program in the sense of being for the people is of limited value, for right-wing movements and regimes, while they are rhetorically anti-elitist and adopt selected pro-people measures, in fact do not seek significant change in the power structure while directing the fire and fury of the majority population to the lower strata, to minority communities, to immigrants.

Is It Fascism?

Are today's right-wing regimes in the North fascist? Fascism is commonly seen as a movement or regime that features a charismatic leader who supplants democracy with authoritarian rule, relying on both control of the state and support of a heated mass base, and adopting repressive measures affecting political opponents and substantial sections of the population. Orbán has been described as having "the self-absorption, the didacticism, and the visceral hostil-

ity to elites that make up the fascist personality, but he is no fascist" (Traub 2015). He certainly has strong authoritarian tendencies, but he has not dismantled democracy. Instead, he has translated electoral dominance into forging a parliamentary majority that passes laws restricting civil and political rights, creating a compliant bureaucracy, and subverting the judiciary. Political opponents are subjected to concerted verbal abuse, but they are not eliminated, nor are there wholesale violations of human rights, except, of course, the rights of migrants and refugees. Political analyst Timothy Garton Ash characterized Orbán's regime as "not in the strict sense a dictatorship. But it is certainly not a liberal democracy any more. It is some kind of hybrid regime, a semi-authoritarian regime" (quoted in Buckley and Byrne 2018). The same might be said of the government led by the Law and Justice Party in Poland.

As for Trump, his provocative rhetoric and incendiary lies have not been accompanied by direct violations of liberal democratic rights and practices, except in the case of migrants and refugees, who have been fair game for the most outrageous practices such as the forced separation of migrant children from their parents. However, his explosive language has provoked abuse of minority communities by state authorities and encouraged fascist-leaning groups, including the Nazis and Ku Klux Klan. He has also been accused of subverting the so-called "guard rails" of civility, tolerance, adherence to traditions of fair play, and bipartisanship that prevent polarization and intense conflict that could unravel American democracy (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 176–203).

Political leaders' behaviour destabilizing democracy is not, however, unique to Trump. Before him, the Republican Party had already adopted an extremely partisan political style — for instance, by pushing measures to curtail voting rights of minorities via laws demanding unnecessary identification, gerrymandering to alter the demographic composition of electoral districts to favour conservative candidates, and refusing to hold confirmation hearings for Democratic nominees to the Supreme Court (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 53–71; see also Mounk 2018: 116–20). Trump simply raised the Republicans' hard-boiled partisan tactics to a new level.

So while Trump and Orbán may not be fascists, their political

prejudices and styles do contribute to social polarization, which may become very destabilizing and lead to democratic breakdown, inviting authoritarian intervention.

The Right Eats the Left's Lunch

If there is one statement that analysts from the left, centre, and right can agree on, it is that neoliberalism and globalization have been a central cause of the rise of the right. As Obama (2018), who earlier promoted neoliberal trade policies as president of the US, admitted in his Johannesburg speech, the "politics of fear and resentment" stemmed from a process of globalization that "upended the agricultural and manufacturing sectors in many countries … greatly reduced the demand for certain workers … helped weaken unions and labor's bargaining power … [and] made it easier for capital to avoid tax laws and the regulations of nation-states." He further noted that "challenges to globalisation first came from the left but then came more forcefully from the right, as you started seeing populist movements … [that] tapped the unease that was felt by many people who lived outside of the urban cores; fears that economic security was slipping away, that their social status and privileges were eroding, that their cultural identities were being threatened by outsiders, somebody that didn't look like them or sound like them or pray as they did" (2018: 66).

Obama's words underline an interesting development: that the right ate the left's lunch.

The left's critique of neoliberalism and globalization took off in the mid-1980s in the context of two struggles. In the South, it unfolded as part and parcel of the opposition to structural adjustment in developing countries imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the key aims of which were accelerated liberalization of trade, deregulation, and privatization on the grounds that the aggressive release of market forces would make these economies more efficient. In the North, it was triggered by two developments. One was the drive of transnational corporations to relocate their facilities to Mexico and East Asia to take advantage of cheap labour, a trend that accelerated with China's integration into

the global capitalist economy in the 1980s. It was also a response to the determined efforts of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher to drastically emasculate labour and deregulate and denationalize the US and British economies in the early 1980s.

The establishment of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) in 1994 and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 added fuel to the spread of what came to be known as the anti-globalization or alter-globalization movement, which helped derail the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Seattle in December 1999. Seattle was an exclusively left-wing affair, as were the protests against the Group of Eight that culminated in a massive 200,000-person rally in Genoa in July 2001. While the events of September 11, 2001, dented the momentum of the anti-globalization movement, the World Social Forum, which enjoyed the support of the Workers' Party that came to power in Brazil in 2002, provided a North-South avenue for the elaboration of anti-globalization strategies. With the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008, the anti-globalization movement re-emerged in force in the North in what came to be known as the Occupy Movement, the key political products of which were the coming to power of Syriza in Greece and the rise of Podemos as a political force in Spain.

The left's ability to ride on the anti-globalization agenda, however, was severely compromised by the fact that since the 1990s the centre left in the US and Europe had bought into and aggressively promoted the neoliberal agenda. Thus, in the US, it was under the leadership of the Democratic Clinton administration that NAFTA and the WTO came into being and the New Deal–era Glass Steagall Act separating commercial from investment banking was repealed. Later, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, Obama's Democratic presidency prioritized saving the banks instead of bringing relief to millions of bankrupt homeowners, then, in what must rank as a historic misjudgment, he promoted the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which to the working class meant a continuation of the export of their jobs to China. Obama's advocacy of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and poor record in bringing back jobs was one of the central factors that led significant numbers of traditionally Democratic working-class voters in the Midwest to spurn Hillary Clinton, thus providing

Trump the edge in the key states that determined the outcome of the 2016 elections (Bello 2016).[1]

In the United Kingdom, New Labour pushed the Third Way, a key element of which was support for thoroughgoing financial liberalization and state support for the drive to make London supplant New York as the global financial centre. In Germany, the Social Democrats (SPD) under Gerard Schröder did what the centre-right Christian Democrats could never have accomplished: push neoliberal "reforms" — the so-called Hartz reforms — to loosen wage, tenure, and social security protections for workers. French socialist figures, for their part, became the most enthusiastic proponents of the euro, the adoption of which required countries to maintain tight non-expansionary fiscal policies that militated against social spending (Bello 2017).

Having embraced the neoliberal agenda, the established workers' parties became defenders of the pro-globalization agenda, leading not only to failure to expand their mass base but also to part of that base leaving their ranks, like the leaders and rank-and-file that left the SPD in the mid-2000s and helped form Die Linke (the Left).

Even as the mainstream left failed to capitalize on the ills of globalization and neoliberalism around which the independent left had built a strong critique to expand its domestic base, the extreme right was detaching itself from the neoliberal agenda that it had formerly supported along with the centre right. In the US, Donald Trump broke with the Republican Party and big business when he opposed the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which they had almost unanimously endorsed. Seeking to make inroads into the working class, right-wing parties in Europe gradually deemphasized the anti-tax, anti-big-government, and free-market concerns of their original petit bourgeois base and opportunistically embraced an anti-neoliberal agenda and the welfare state.

The strategy paid off. In France, the new look bestowed on the National Front by Marine Le Pen, who succeeded her father, the notorious racist Jean-Marie Le Pen, evoked this observation from a French socialist senator: "Left-wing voters are crossing the red line because they think that salvation from their plight is embodied by Madame Le Pen.… They say 'no' to a world that seems hard, glo-

balised, implacable. These are working-class people, pensioners, office workers who say, 'We don't want this capitalism and competition in a world where Europe is losing its leadership'" (Bremner 2014).

Stealing the left's working-class base by opposing key proposals of the neoliberal agenda and defending the welfare state became the extreme right's passport to power or to the antechamber of power throughout Europe. In Denmark, the Peoples' Party broke with its parent group's anti-tax focus, becoming instead a defender of that country's generous public sector, provided that its benefits would be limited to Danes. Norway's Progress Party followed suit (Judis 2016: 103). Austria provided one of the best examples of the electoral payoff of the right-wing "turn to the left," according to John Judis (2016: 103–4):

> In Austria in the early 1990s, the Freedom Party, which had been steadfastly libertarian in its economics, took advantage of the dominant parties embrace of neoliberalism. In order to prepare for EU membership, the Social Democratic Party and Austrian People's Party, working in a "grand coalition," had championed massive privatization of Austria' s industries, which led to the loss of about 100,00 jobs. In response to public clamor over the move, the Freedom Party became a defender of the welfare state and critic of the EU's economics and globalization. The strategy worked. In the 1986 elections, 10 percent of the party's voters were blue-collar workers; by 1999, 47 percent were. Rightwing populist parties got the same kind of results throughout Western Europe.

The raid of the left's base has accelerated in all of Europe since the 1990s, but in Hungary the right has stolen not only the left's base but also its thunder. After the Hungarian economy collapsed in 2008 and the "Third Way" Socialist government was forced to go to the IMF for an emergency loan in return for an austerity program, Orbán's Fidesz Party swept the 2010 elections. Aside from restoring economic growth and stability, Orbán, concedes an otherwise critical article in the *Financial Times*, "curbed … the foreign multinationals that bought national assets cheaply in 1990s privatizations, restoring

Hungarian majority control of the banking sector, and helped mend public finances without imposing orthodox austerity measures" (Buckley and Byrne 2018).

What makes the Hungarian right's willingness to curb neoliberalism worrisome to progressives, however, is that it has been accompanied by the accelerated centralization of power under Orbán and anti-migrant and anti-refugee policies, measures that have been promoted with the incendiary rhetoric of defending Hungary and "Christendom" from the "Muslim hordes" that the EU was said to be determined to unleash on Europe. Orbán might not be a classical fascist, but he has certainly exhibited the penchant of fascist leaders to produce a syncretic program that addresses traditional left and right concerns.

Championing Democracy

The issue that many have called the democratic deficit of the European Union is one that has preoccupied all sections of the political spectrum since it has become a massive gap that the EU and its member states have failed to bridge, with major political consequences.

The motor of the EU since its inception has been the unelected technocracy headed by an unelected executive, the Economic Commission president, who is essentially picked via backroom deals among heads of EU member states. The legislative institution to legitimize governance has been left far behind, with the European Parliament established only in 1979. While there are theoretically mechanisms of accountability that link the European Commission to the European Council of member states and the European Parliament, they are, as political economist Heikki Patomaki (2012: 9) points out, "in the eyes of many so convoluted and indirect that they have no practical meaning." For many, it is not just a democratic deficit stemming from complex chains of accountability but one that is structural in nature. As one analyst saw the problem,

> On the one hand we have the Member States with the political, administrative and budgetary tools for action; on the other

> hand, we have the European Union which is an authority independent of the Member States and which makes laws with imperative force and immediate effect to which they have agreed in advance and which they are responsible for enforcing by virtue of their own constitutions. This separation breaks down all political responsibility: the representative governments are each accountable to their own people but no longer have any authority, whereas the supranational powers have authority but are not accountable to a people. The reason for this political irresponsibility is that the EU is not by its very nature a political sovereign or the government of a state. The Commission, the Court of Justice and the Central Bank, which are the driving forces behind the EU, are authorities which are entirely independent of the Member States and which do no more nor less than to implement the Treaties negotiated and ratified by the latter with a view to the legal and commercial unification of the European continent. (Beaudouin 2013)

But whether stemming from convoluted arrangements or from structural flaws, there is a yawning democratic deficit, and nothing best illustrates it than Greece's 2015 negotiations with the infamous troika — the European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund — to deal with its sovereign debt problem, wherein unelected officials and institutions or quasi-institutions (those of the troika as well as the arbitrarily constituted Eurogroup) that were not accountable to legislative or popular bodies simply disregarded the results of a referendum wherein a large majority of Greek voters refused to accept the terms of the austerity program they were determined to impose on the country.[2]

Having been involved in the construction of the European Union, European Central Bank, and the Eurozone, the centre left and centre right were unable to address the reality of democracy playing second fiddle to technocracy, while the extreme right was able to seize the high ground, presenting itself as the champion of national sovereignty against supranational encroachment, democracy against technocracy. Nowhere was this successful appropriation of left-wing causes more in display than when Marine Le Pen came out in defence

of the results of the referendum called by Greece's left-wing Syriza government, saying the EU "mocks and brushes aside the popular wish expressed in the Greek elections and it seeks to impose a policy of austerity, the continuity of a policy of austerity which the Greek people no longer want." She asked rhetorically, "Confronted with the choice, who will win? Democracy or Euro-Dictatorship?" (quoted in Cosgrave 2015).

The picture of an out-of-touch and corrupt national elite was also present in American right-wing imagery, especially in rural America, which went for Donald Trump by a whopping 62 percent of the vote in the 2016 presidential elections, and in many places in which Hillary Clinton declined to campaign because the Democrats considered them a lost cause. To the prominent sociologist Robert Wuthnow (2018: 111), rural America's approach to Washington went beyond dislike to outrage,

> because they view the federal government's basic mode of action in recent years as an affront to their way of life. The contrasts could not be clearer, and they do not focus only on a single issue or policy. Rural communities are close, personal. Washington is distant, impersonal. People in rural places care about one another and share common understandings; people in Washington don't care and don't understand the common person; rural people know when to help and when to leave people alone; Washington intrudes unhelpfully in people's lives; rural communities are practical and use common sense; Washington's ideas are impractical and defy common sense. It was this perception of a disturbing cultural divide that prompted people again and again to say that Washington being broken was one of the most serious problems the country faces.

The rural areas, which, though losing population, play an outsized role in American politics owing to the peculiarities of the US electoral system, may, in fact, be said to have been Trumpist even before Trump came along. Indeed, the New York City–born Trump probably picked up many of the themes that animated his campaign from rural America: Washington was out of touch, intrusive, broken,

and lacked common sense. Next to his slogan about building a great wall on the US-Mexican border to keep Hispanic migrants out, the most popular battle cry of his 2016 campaign used rural imagery: he was going to Washington to "drain the swamp" of vested interests, corruption, and nonsense.

The Defining Issue

The extreme right expropriated the anti-neoliberal agenda from the independent left and outplayed both the independent left and centre left on the issue of the democratic deficit of the European Union. But its defining issue was one that it borrowed from no other force in the political spectrum: immigration. The mainstream left's capitulation and espousal of neoliberal reform in Europe lessened its appeal to the working class, but the damage here was not irreparable. More serious was the left's perceived inability to offer an alternative to the European Union's open borders policy, which had created deep anxiety among the majority populations that their national governments were losing control of their borders. The centre right was similarly viewed as tolerating if not complicit with the EU's migration policies, a feeling that was heightened by Chancellor Angela Merkel's controversial decision, motivated by what progressive and liberal quarters saw as admirable humanitarianism, to accept hundreds of thousands of refugees from the Middle East into Germany in 2015.

While Germany had previously been relatively immune to anti-immigrant inroads in its domestic politics, owing to the society's post-war efforts to come to terms with Nazi war crimes, this changed rapidly with what came to be seen by some as a historic blunder, following much-publicized crimes involving migrants, reports that the government did not have the capacity to process such a large number of people, allegations of irregularities in the process, and terrorist actions associated with migrant communities. The result was the amazing performance in the September 2017 elections of the far-right Alternativ fur Deutschland, which made it into the country's main opposition party when the Christian Democrats and SPD formed a grand coalition to keep power in the hands of the broad political centre.

A Narrative of Fear and Loathing

The combination of fear of migrants, alienation from the EU technocracy, and worries about losing jobs was translated by the right-wing parties into an explosive conspiratorial narrative along the following lines: EU policies favouring the banks had brought on the financial crisis, then the EU placed the brunt of repaying the debt on working people through austerity policies, even as it opened Europe to migrants to compete for the few jobs and limited social services available. In this narrative, the established parties of the centre left and centre right were either complicit in this policy dictated from on high in Brussels or they had lost touch with the masses. It was a winning narrative that served as a euphemistic cloak to a sinister synthesis of primordial racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious solidarities that trumped the old solidarity of the working class with marginalized communities.

In the United States, there was a similar social psychological process at work. Trump's campaign outbursts about Mexico sending its criminals across the Rio Grande were expressions of a deeper fear of members of the white majority that they would, in the medium term, be converted into a minority should immigration not be subjected to draconian controls. Black enfranchisement since the civil rights era and immigration created a feeling of siege that became the psychological touchstone of the Tea Party movement that was Trump's base. As Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (2018: 174) put it:

> Survey evidence suggests that many Tea Party Republicans share the perception that the country they grew up in is "slipping away, threatened by the rapidly changing face of what they believe is the 'real' America." To quote the title of sociologist Arlie Hochschild's recent book, they perceive themselves to be "strangers in their own land."
>
> This perception may explain the rise of a discourse that distinguishes "real Americans" from those associated with liberals and the Democratic Party. If the definition of "real Americans" is restricted to those who are native-born, English-speaking, white, and Christian, then it is easy to see how "real Americans"

> may view themselves as declining. As Ann Coulter chillingly put it, "the American electorate isn't moving to the left—it's shrinking." The perception among many Tea Party Republicans that their America is disappearing helps us understand the appeal of such slogans as "Take Our Country Back" or "Make America Great Again."

In this polarized political landscape, "the Democrats have increasingly become a party of ethnic minorities, the Republican Party has remained almost entirely a party of whites" (2018: 171).

As in Europe, racial solidarity has trumped class affiliation and liberal values among a huge swathe of the white population, making progressive and liberal whites, if not an endangered species, an increasingly defensive one. Wuthnow (2018: 155) poses the question of whether racism was behind the deep hostility and disdain that white rural America felt for Obama, and lets his respondents' comments provide the answer:

> The people we talked to held nothing back in criticizing what they did not like about Obama. They called him a socialist, a raving liberal, somebody from another planet, a president who did not know how to get anything done, and a person who made them physically sick. As one of the people we spoke with in a western state that nearly always went Republican by large margins said, "If I could speak to the President, I'd say 'Get off your bum, you doofus. Take care of things. Leave our Constitution alone.'"

Only racism could explain the fact that as late as 2015, over 40 percent of Republicans believed Obama was born in Kenya, not the United States, a falsehood of which Trump had been a central purveyor (Zorn 2017). Even when racism is denied, the very denial of it — for instance, by stating that some Blacks or Hispanics have been elected to office — is evidence of a deeply rooted racism that is structural in nature.

> White residents … emphasize minor gains that have been made, such as the election of a black or Hispanic candidate

> to the town council, but their comments betray the extent to which the "moral order" is indeed predicated on an assumption of "white-ness." Diversity for diversity's sake is rarely valued, and if it is, it means something incremental and usually symbolic. Rural communities may not be as racist or as misogynist as critics sometimes claim, but the racism and misogyny are built into patterns of life that nearly all-white communities have come to accept. And a part of their anger is assuredly the view that the promotion of diversity is a further intrusion of big government. (Wuthnow 2018: 11)

Thus, while much of the blame for stoking ugly racial fears could be attributed to hard-right commentators like Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh, it must be acknowledged that they did not create racism but simply surfaced and normalized it. "Lacking effective messaging against it," Wuthnow (2018: 158) concludes, "silent suppressed bigotry can be easily mobilized."

Counterrevolution

The right-wing movements and governments in Europe and the United States may not be counterrevolutionary in the sense of emerging mainly from the conflict of classes. But they merit the term *counterrevolutionary* because they are fundamentalist and comprehensive political responses to a range of threats felt by their mass base. Economic fears are among those that animate these movements, but while banks are seen as part of the problem, the greater villains are the culturally, ethnically, and racially different "hordes" that are seen as posing an existential threat to the majority community. In the conspiratorial right-wing mindset, the aim of these minorities is to swamp the majority, and established political elites, whether centre left or centre right, are complicit. The devil has several names, the most popular among right-wing leaders being "liberals" in the US and "Brussels" in Europe, but increasingly more and more of the right-wing base is willing to come right out and name names, that is, non-whites, Mexicans, and Muslims.

The dynamics of these movements, while seemingly inchoate,

are a counterrevolutionary drive to restore the imagined status quo ante. The most important immediate task is putting up effective barriers to migration, which is why Trump's project of building a wall on the US-Mexico border, despite its impractical character, and Orbán's razor wire fences barring refugees from entering Hungary have tremendous symbolism for their mass bases.

The vision animating these movements is an imagined golden age — in the case of the European extreme right, that of a Muslim-free Europe, and in that of the Tea Party, the 1950s American community where the only Black faces around were those who "knew their place" and Hispanics were invisible. The counterrevolutionary project has different elements that appeal to the various constituencies that its leaders opportunistically reach out to, but the glue that holds the project together are the primordial solidarities of race, religion, and culture.[3]

Conclusion

Several points may be made in conclusion.

First, extreme right-wing movements are the most dynamic political forces in the Global North today. They are populist in style but not in the content of their programs. They are not, strictly speaking, fascist, but their rhetoric and practice undermine many of the traditional practices of liberal democracy that contained extreme polarization.

Second, part of the success of these movements has stemmed from their ability to seize the anti-globalization, anti-neoliberal agenda that was originally articulated by the independent left. This was made possible by the failure of the left to translate its critique into a successful program owing to the identification of the mainstream left with neoliberal initiatives. In contrast, the extreme right was willing to play down the anti-tax and anti-welfare-state advocacies of its original petit bourgeois base to embrace the welfare state and oppose globalization in order to expand its mass base into the working class.

Third, another key reason for the right's success was its seizing on the anti-EU banner, championing national sovereignty against supranational encroachment, and democracy against technocratic

dictatorship. Both the centre left and centre right were unable to mount a significant challenge to the EU's democratic deficit because they had been intimately involved in building the key technocratic institutions of the EU — namely, the European Commission and the European Central Bank, both of which were seen as dictatorially imposing austerity programs on countries that rejected them, in the case of Greece via a democratic referendum. The image of a broken, corrupt centre also played a role in the electoral mobilization of the US right in the presidential elections of 2016, with Trump characterizing his candidacy as a crusade to "drain the swamp" of Washington.

Fourth, the central issue on which the extreme right rode, however, was that of opposition to immigration, which won over significant sectors of the working class to a narrative that depicted the dominant elites in Europe and the liberal elite in the United States as conspiring to flood their countries with non-white migrants that would take away jobs and social services from the majority community.

Finally, these movements do not primarily stem from classical class conflict. But they merit the term *counterrevolutionary* owing to the fact that they are fundamentalist and comprehensive political responses to a range of threats felt by their mass base. The genesis and dynamics of these movements have many dimensions, the most important being fears of the majority community of being overwhelmed in racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious terms. While often inchoate and made up of disparate elements owing to their leaders' opportunistic efforts to reach out to new constituencies, this counterrevolutionary project is cemented by the primordial solidarities of race, religion, and culture.

Notes

1. These states were Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Ohio. They were considered safe states by Democrats because they were heavily Democratic or had gone for Obama in the 2008 and 2012 elections. These states are marked by the heavy presence of white workers, a great number of them heavily unionized. Significant numbers of these voters, whom the Democrats had assumed would vote for Clinton, either defected to Trump or stayed at home. Since most of the other states had become consolidated as red states (Republican) or blue states (Democrat), the electoral college votes that went to the winner in the

popular vote in these formerly Democratic or Democratic-leaning states provided Trump with decisive numbers over Clinton, since in the US electoral system, the winner is the one who obtains the greatest number of electoral college votes, not the one who gains the most votes nationwide.

2. A revealing account of the lack of democratic accountability of the Brussels technocracy in its treatment of Greece is provided by Yanis Varoufakis (2017), former Greek finance minister, who was at the centre of the negotiations.
3. While sharing similar essential characteristics, extreme right-wing groups are distinguished by the different emphasis they place on the ideological components of right-wing ideology, with some stressing race, others religion, still others ethnicity or gender, or opposition to so-called infringement of individual rights by the state. These elements, however, tend to come together, though sometimes in an intricate fashion, and rivalries often mark relations among groups. See, among others, Karlin (2018).

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9

Counterrevolution: Origins, Dynamics, Consequences

This study has been an attempt to understand the counterrevolutionary experience. From this survey of seven cases of counterrevolution —which includes the previous chapter on the rise of the extreme right in the United States and Europe, though it has not been a major focus of this study — what are some of the key observations, insights, and lessons that have emerged?

Some Key Lessons

First of all, there are broadly two types of political movement that merit the term *counterrevolutionary.* The first is the classical class-driven counterrevolution pitting an insurgent underclass that is engaged in a revolutionary or reformist effort to fundamentally change a social system against the elites and allied forces that benefit from that structure of domination. In this survey, the dynamics of post–World War I Italy, and post–World War II Indonesia, Chile, and Thailand might be said to fall into this category of class-based counterrevolution.

Then there is the movement that is directed not at a revolutionary or reformist movement from below but at a liberal democratic regime that is perceived as corrupt, incompetent, and unable to deliver the goods, the goods often including social reform, the elimination of corruption, or the provision of personal security. The extreme-right movements in the North are closer to this type of counterrevolution. Also sharing many of the features of this type of counterrevolution are the Hindu counterrevolution in India, which associates liberal democracy with privileging Muslims, and the anti-liberal-democratic movement personified by Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, which derides liberal democracy for its failure to provide personal security for the majority and its perversion by corrupt elites.

While united in a strong disdain for liberal democratic practices, movements of the second type exhibit political and ideological diversity. Perhaps the most powerful ideological strand associated with some of these movements is the accusation that the liberal democratic order has failed to protect the interests of the majority, which is usually, though not exclusively, conceived of in racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious terms, or in some combination of these. While there are rhetorical populist swipes at the economic elite and institutions like banks, the main targets are powerless minorities that are perceived as being abetted in their efforts to subvert or corrupt the old order that had served or protected the dominant majority by technocratic and liberal elites. The counterrevolutionary coalition is diverse class-wise, and includes some groups that are disadvantaged in terms of economic and political power but are convinced their interests do not lie in an alliance with the minorities. "Majoritarian counterrevolution" might be a useful description for this type of movement.

Cultural narratives play an important role in some of these movements. Clearly in India, Europe, and the United States, these movements are inspired by some mythical golden age unspoiled by aliens like Muslims and coloured people in the case of the European right-wing movements, Muslims and Christians in that of Hindu nationalists, and Blacks and Hispanics in that of the American right.

A second lesson is that the class-driven counterrevolution can best be understood via a paradigm in which the revolution-counterrevolution dialectic is the centrepiece. The perceived revolutionary threat may not, however, be a takeover by an armed insurgency but a progressive movement that is able to use the law and established institutions to promote social reform. This was the case in Italy, Indonesia, Chile, and Thailand.

A third lesson is that the middle class has been the pivot around which politics revolve in times of great fluidity. The middle class is notoriously volatile. Under certain circumstances, such as the rule of a socially isolated dictatorship like the Suchinda military dictatorship in Thailand and the Marcos regime in the Philippines, it can play a progressive role in pushing democratization. In other circumstances, however, it may play a counterrevolutionary role,

and this is especially the case in periods of great political agitation by labour and the peasantry for their rights, which the middle sectors perceive as threatening to not only the position of the elite but their own position. Personal security is also critical to the politics of this class; when the middle sectors perceive themselves to be at risk from criminal elements, large numbers of them can stampede toward authoritarian figures, as in the Philippines.

Fourth, where the state is weak, lacking in legitimacy, or slow to take action owing to constitutional considerations, threatened elites resort to fascist paramilitary groups to protect or advance their interests. In some cases, as in India, the paramilitary groups are an essential part of the counterrevolutionary apparatus, whose other components are a political party and social and cultural fronts. In other cases, the inter-class relationship goes beyond an instrumental one to one in which the middle-class elements that form the fascist bands actually see their interests as converging with those of the threatened elites, the clearest examples being provided by Italy and Chile. Whatever may be the case, in their relationship to these paramilitary forces, selected agencies of weak states, as well as states with a firmer constitutional framework that restricts the freedom of parts of the state apparatus, do not remain neutral and lend active or passive support to the counterrevolutionaries. This is the case especially with the police and the military. This was clearest in the case of Italy and is likely the case in India.

On the other hand, where the state (especially the repressive agencies) is strong, it usually directs the final stage of counterrevolution — that is, the physical elimination of the leftist enemy — from above, using civilian groups mainly as junior partners. The importance of these groups in the eliminationist phase varies, however. Where the repressive capacity of the army is limited by geographical or organizational factors, as in Indonesia, much of the dirty work may be outsourced to them. In the case of Chile, the army apparently felt equal to the task of eliminating the left, so once it seized power, it disbanded these groups or integrated them into its structure.

Fifth, force and violence are often the counterrevolutionaries' preferred strategy even when the opposing side is following a strategy of gradual reform. Italy, Indonesia, and Chile are clear

examples. The intensity of violence, however, may depend on a number of factors, the most important of which appears to be how immediate the existential threat posed by the left is felt by the right. Where the threat from the left is assessed to be one of slow asphyxiation of the ruling elite and its allies via gradual electoral advances, as in Italy, the counterrevolutionaries can calibrate their violence even as they threaten its indiscriminate use to terrorize the left into submission. Where the right has convinced itself that the threat of leftist seizure of power is imminent, its response is likely to be massive, widespread, intense, even indiscriminate, violence, as in Indonesia and Chile.

Sixth, counterrevolutionary movements target certain groups as the disruptors of order or the corrupters of social purity, the favourites being minorities in the case of the majoritarian counterrevolution and communists or "corrupt populists" in that of the class-based counterrevolution. In some cases, the targeted class is seen as more than a scapegoat and is ideologically classified as vermin stripped of all humanity and deserving of elimination or systematic repression. Jews in Nazi Germany, communists in Indonesia, and drug users in the Philippines fall into this category. In other cases, as with Muslims in India, according to some observers, the strategy may not be the elimination of a minority but its reduction to a tightly controlled inferior status, one that is enforced with occasional lynchings or, when the opportunity presents itself, with pogroms, as was the case in 2002 in Gujarat.

Seventh, capitalist transformation, neoliberalism, and globalization have had complex and contradictory effects on the revolution-counterrevolution dialectic. A few examples underline the explanatory limits of a deterministic approach. In the case of Italy, the most modern agricultural regions, not the ones mired in semi-feudal production relations, were the ones where fascism first gained ascendancy, as capitalist farmers resorted to fascist squads to suppress labour and socialist organizing. In India, identification with neoliberal reforms gained the Hindu nationalists the backing not only of the Indian bourgeoisie but also the middle class and neo-middle or aspirational middle class that saw the fulfillment of their ambitions as being blocked by India's "Nehruvian socialist"

system. In Thailand, while the spread and speed of capitalist agrarian transformation deepened the crisis of the traditional peasantry, making them receptive to Thaksin's populism, those modernizing rural sectors or "urbanized villagers" that were deriving benefits from this transformation but saw their ascent blocked by traditional elites were also attracted to his message. In contemporary Europe, neoliberalism and globalization have provoked an economic crisis of the traditional working class, as many on the left had warned, but owing to the identification of the mainstream left with neoliberalism, large numbers of its constituencies have stampeded to right-wing parties. The political consequences of economic crises and transformations are mediated by political, organizational, and ideological variables, and these are oftentimes specific to a social formation.

Eighth, the local revolution-counterrevolution dialectic is often part of an international revolution-counterrevolution dialectic, so that there is sometimes significant external support for the domestic counterrevolution. However, in the cases studied where this was most evident, Indonesia and Chile, the role played by external intervention, while important, was not the central one. Indeed, foreign assistance becomes effective only when it is inserted into an ongoing domestic counterrevolutionary process.

Ninth, the countryside has played a key role in most counterrevolutionary movements, though the dynamics of the counterrevolution in the rural areas have been intimately connected if not subordinated to the larger struggle between left and right at the national level. The role of the countryside must not be underestimated. In Italy, fascists first won hegemony in the countryside. In Indonesia, the vast majority of killings were done in the countryside by right-wing forces. Even in the United States today, rural states, which play an outsized role owing to the rules of the American electoral system, are a firm base for right-wing movements.

Countering the Counterrevolution

It has not been the intention of this work to prescribe a course of action to forestall the rise of the right. However, its conclusions do highlight some considerations of a strategic and tactical nature that a

progressive opposition to counterrevolution must take into account in formulating a strategy.

First, one must shed the notion that the counterrevolution is a conspiracy concocted by threatened elites. Counterrevolutionary leaders simply stoke structural fissures, ideological propensities, and social psychological strains that are already present, and some are better than others in crafting a successful narrative that welds together the different sections of the counterrevolutionary base.

Second, progressives must squarely face the fact that these movements are either in power or on the threshold of power, and once they get power, through elections or other means, they have no intention of relinquishing it. If there is one key lesson that these movements have learned from Hitler, who came to power via democratic elections in 1932–33, this is it. Amit Shah, the president of the BJP, has boasted that his party will be in power for the next fifty years. So it is critical to keep them from getting to first base, that is, winning the national elections, though of course this must be done via democratic competition.

Third, right-wing parties and personalities are strongly misogynistic at a time that women's struggles for their rights are on the ascendant throughout the world. So it is very critical that women in great numbers play a central role in the politics of the anti-fascist movement. Women, when mobilized, are one of the strongest bulwarks against fascism.

Fourth, the state, in times of great fluidity, is marked by dissensus, with some state personnel joining the counterrevolutionaries or being sympathetic to them, while others adhere to a posture of neutrality owing to constitutionalist values. Even the military, in some instances, is split during times of severe conflict. A strategy to counter the counterrevolution must include ways to take advantage of these splits to neutralize or disorganize pro-counterrevolutionary state actors.

Fifth, great consideration must be paid to splitting the different forces that make up the counterrevolutionary base, with appeals tailored to each sector that are crafted based on the likely values, interests, aspirations, and fears of these different forces. Here one must also realize that, along the lines of the critical distinction between

active and passive consensus, a large part of the counterrevolutionary base is marked by an attitude of passive consensus with the counterrevolutionary project, and this sector is easier to neutralize and win over than those that display active consensus.

Sixth, in relation to the previous point, while the middle class may serve as the mass base of the counterrevolution, the class is not monolithic and there are sectors that could respond positively to an appeal based on values as opposed to mere class self-interest. This brings up the importance of a convincing narrative of positive solidarity to oppose the right's narrative of negative solidarity. A narrative that limits itself to a defence of a discredited liberal order invites doom. Progressives must take seriously the fact that one of the most significant shortcomings of the liberal democratic regime was its failure to address the gap between formal equality and substantive inequality, which has deeply offended all classes except of course the elite. A narrative aimed at winning the middle classes along with the working masses must lay out an attractive national project promoting equality that not only makes economic sense but transcends class or material interests by appealing to common fundamental values. Economistic appeals to self-interest showed their limitations in terms of building up inter-class alliances in Chile, where they were swamped by class fear stoked by the right.

The times, in short, call for a progressive politics that goes beyond calling for a return to the old discredited elite democracy, where equality was purely formal, and mobilizes the citizenry behind a national popular program that has as its centrepiece the achievement of genuine economic and social equality, whether one calls this socialism or post-capitalism. This program must call for stronger state and civil society management of the economy to move it beyond capitalism, with a strong dose of radical income and wealth redistribution, while championing democratic processes, secularism, diversity, and the rights of minorities, including migrants.

At the same time, a transcendental project cannot afford to come across as utopian and must be open to concessions dictated by practical political considerations. Nevertheless, no matter how much the necessities of politics may force one to skate near the border separating pragmatism from opportunism, progressives

building a broad coalition to counterrevolution must realize that unlike the right, there are red lines they cannot cross, like sacrificing the political and civil rights of a whole community, such as the deal that the northern elites of the US agreed to after Reconstruction that disenfranchised African Americans in the pursuit of national political stability and unity.[1]

There are surely other lessons to be absorbed from a careful study of the dynamics of counterrevolution, and these will be of great value, for, along with the task of mounting an effective response to climate change, there is perhaps no challenge more daunting than putting the brakes on a counterrevolution in motion.

Notes

1. For an enlightening discussion of the double-edged legacy of this compromise, see Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018: 124–126).

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Postscript

Prescript to Brazil's Embrace of Bolsonaro

This book was completed before the momentous electoral triumph of the far-right presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil on October 28, 2018.

With inflammatory language he has glorified the 1964–85 military dictatorship in Brazil, threatened the "extermination" of the left, supported the extrajudicial execution of suspected criminals, branded gays and lesbians as deviant, and told a woman member of parliament she was not worthy of being raped by him. Bolsonaro was seen as extreme even by the standards of Donald Trump. Yet 56 percent of the electorate voted for him, underlining his appeal across class lines. Also, across gender lines — even as large numbers of women mobilized against him, large numbers also came out in angry mobilizations supporting him, particularly his extreme proposals to deal with crime. And across party lines — large numbers of voters who had previously supported Luis Inácio da Silva, also known as Lula, the popular former president, and his party, the Workers' Party (PT), defected to Bolsonaro.

While not immediately evident at the beginning of the presidential campaign, it became obvious in retrospect that a perfect storm produced the overwhelming victory of a little-known seven-term member of parliament for Rio de Janeiro who went from strength to strength as his statements became more and more extreme.

First, there was widespread and deep economic distress as the effects of the global slowdown following the 2008 financial crisis caught up with Brazil.

Second, there was a tremendous rise in crime, with homicides reaching a record 63,880 in 2017, creating an overwhelming sense of physical insecurity, among women in particular.

Third, there was tremendous dissatisfaction with liberal democ-

racy, as people from all the major political parties, from right to left, were enmeshed in corruption, the most prominent case being that of Lula, who was sentenced to twelve years in prison for allegedly accepting a bribe in kind related to the construction of his house. Other members of the PT were implicated in a massive $3.7 billion kickback scheme involving funds from the giant national oil firm Petrobras.

For many on the left, the crisis was brought about by the Machiavellian machinations of the right and the centre, which resulted in the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and Lula's conviction for corruption in 2018. While the opposition certainly wanted to eliminate the PT as a political force, that was not the whole story. The fact is, corruption during the PT's 12-year rule was a central cause of the crisis and, as some PT activists admitted, it provided the opposition with an issue to mobilize public anger against the party.[1]

Corruption, in turn, was one of several factors that torpedoed what in 2002 had been eagerly anticipated as the victorious self-proclaimed workers' party's transformative project. Other elements were the PT's continuation of the neoliberal policies of its predecessors; its adoption of massive showy projects like the 2016 Olympics and the 2014 World Cup, which the country hosted and which involved large-scale displacements of people; the adoption of austerity measures as the economic criss deepened; and, not to be discounted, the loss of the party's idealism and élan as a transformative movement as its cadres were absorbed into government. The result was, by the middle of the decade, widespread disaffection with a PT that seemed to have lost its moorings, a resentful mood that was all the sharper owing to the expectations that it had aroused at the beginning. By the 2018 presidential campaign, voters were in a vindictive mood:

> In office for eight years, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil's jailed former president and founder of the Workers' party (PT), pledged to enact radical change through sweeping social reforms. But like Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, Mexico's Enrique Peña Nieto, and many American and European politicians of left and right who also promised a rosier future,

> Lula failed to deliver — and left a trail of disillusionment in his wake.… According to pre-election polls, 25% of those who backed Bolsonaro did so not because they admired him or his policies, but out of determination to punish the PT for years of misrule. This angry mood, comparable to "throw the bums out" sentiments in recent US elections, presented the PT's new standard-bearer, Fernando Haddad, with an uphill battle. (Tisdall 2018)

Indeed, one can say of the Bolsonaro triumph in relation to the PT project what Walter Benjamin said of Europe in the 1920s: "Behind every fascism lies a failed revolution."

The challenges facing the PT were the subject of a report that my colleague Cecilia Lero and I did following a visit to Brazil in 2015, before the impeachment of Dilma and the imprisonment of Lula but at a time that the PT was already paralyzed politically. The report was written partly as a small contribution to the efforts by many party militants to reform the PT by generating international support for their efforts. On hindsight, however, it seems that by the time the piece was written, it was already too late. I have decided to reproduce this report, for, with its effort to understand the intertwined crises of Brazil and the PT in the years leading up to the elections of 2018, it perhaps captures the explosive mix that eventually culminated in the Bolsonaro phenomenon more than any analysis of contemporary events on my part. One might call this a prescript to Bolsonaro.

Can the Workers' Party Surmount its Current Crisis?
By Cecilia Lero and Walden Bello (2015)

The 13-year-reign of the Workers' Party (PT) in Brazil hangs by a thread. More accurately, it hangs on 342 members of the lower legislative house, the number of votes needed to accept any one of a seemingly constant stream of impeachment requests and begin the trial of President Dilma Rousseff. An impeachment trial would immediately suspend President Rousseff and place Vice President Michel Temer of the catchall, non-ideological Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) in power. As the PMDB also has the most

members in the Senate, where the impeachment trial would take place, this would also almost certainly lead to a guilty verdict and the end of the PT in power.

Once the pride of the New Left in Latin America, the PT administration is buffeted by the worst economic crisis to hit Brazil since the country's redemocratization in 1985; charges of abetting corruption at Petrobras, the state petroleum company; falsifying its electoral spending reports; and going back on its electoral campaign pledges by imposing austerity measures.

In 2010, President Inácio Lula da Silva left office with an 83 percent approval rating, something unprecedented in Brazilian history for a departing head of state. Today, his approval rating is down to 25 percent. Dilma, his successor, won her second presidential mandate in October 2014 with 52 percent of the vote. Just a year later, her approval rating is down to 7 percent. "She dare not show herself in public," said one irate cab driver, who remarked that the "PT government has shown itself to be as rotten as the rest." Another said loss of income over the last few years had forced him to move his family from "adequate housing to a cramped apartment" owing to cuts in his income. These feelings are widespread.

Demonstrations involving thousands have backed the opposition's call for Dilma's impeachment, with a fringe but vocal element calling for a return to military rule. PT partisans and the broader left are not so much worried about these rallies, mounted by what they consider an angry but unorganized public. What really concerns them is the relatively much smaller numbers that have attended counterdemonstrations against what they are calling an anti-democratic coup.

Not surprisingly, members and allies of the party are asking themselves: What happened to us? PT programs lifted more than 30 percent of the people out of poverty and 40 percent into the middle class. Don't people realize this? Why aren't they grateful? "The PT rose to power as a party known for our militant stance against corruption," said Gonzalo Berron, a civil society activist and PT supporter. "Now we're made to look as if we invented corruption."[2]

The PT's "Heroic Age"

The PT was formally established in 1980, as a discredited military dictatorship withdrew from the political scene and social movement actors sought a vehicle to ensure that democracy would address the concerns and interests of the working class. In its beginnings, the PT was organically linked to the New Unionism that developed in the industrial belt of greater São Paulo. According to Emir Sader's classic analysis, the party was a dynamic new force produced by the creative confluence of three streams: trade unionists independent of both the union networks of the old left and yellow union bureaucrats, who emerged in the newer industries spawned by Brazil's rapid industrialization in the sixties and seventies whose key figure was the charismatic Lula da Silva; the progressive wing of Catholic clergy and laity inspired by liberation theology; and the new left with its reinvigorated Marxism and enthusiastic young cadres. By the mid-1980s, the PT, the New Unionists now organized into the Unified Workers' Central, and the Landless Workers' Movement were among the largest and best-known social forces pushing for the expansion of democratic space and a vision of a socialist Brazil (Sader and Silverstein 1991).

Unlike the vanguardist and dogmatic old-left parties, the PT was ideologically pluralistic, and internal democracy and vigorous debate were seen as sources of strength. The establishment of a mass-based, internally democratic party in a system dominated by patronage and weak, personalistic political parties was heralded by academics and leftist observers as a game changer for Brazil.

The PT's pluralism was also key to its growth and electoral appeal. In the 1980s and 1990s, the allure of the PT's open discourse, and the recent sting of dictatorship, reached beyond the working classes to attract middle forces. Dynamic and ambitious, the PT sought nothing less than the presidency, which it managed to win in 2002 after four attempts. Lula's 2002 presidential campaign caught international attention for how different it was from his first run. Whereas 1989 Lula was an outspoken T-shirt-wearing unionist, 2002 Lula featured a trimmed beard, tailored suits, and noticeably more centrist discourse. Nevertheless, the infrastructure for the national effort was

laid by the PT's success winning and administering cities and states. Thus, even before it came to power at the national level, the PT had already made its mark as a party against corruption at the local level and with innovative policies, like the participatory budgeting that was successfully institutionalized in the city of Porto Alegre.

To Latin America, Lula and the PT were an example of Gramscian politics, of a way to power that combined electoral dominance with a hegemonic discourse of social transformation that was meant to appeal to all social groups except Big Capital. Indeed, the PT became the leading force of the São Paulo Forum, a continent-wide grouping that proposed the vision of popular, egalitarian democracy as an alternative to neoliberalism. The São Paulo Declaration of 1990 confirmed the intent of the forty-six parties that signed onto it to expose the non-existent positive aspects of liberalism and capitalism, renew the concept of the left and socialism, reassert its emancipatory character, correct erroneous conceptions, overcome all manifestations of bureaucracy, and counteract the total absence of real social democracy for the masses.

Social movements allied to the PT were also prominent in the international anti-globalization movement that took off in the 1990s and were the central actors in the founding of the World Social Forum, which, among other things, became a vehicle for the international popularization of such PT– and Unified Workers' Central–connected innovations such as social movement unionism and participatory budgeting.

From Class Crusader to Ruling Party

The transition from a class crusader to a conventional electoral party was difficult enough, but the internal organizational challenge to the PT was magnified when Lula became president in 2002 and the PT became the ruling party. The PT quickly learned that campaigning on a platform of anti-corruption and social justice was much easier than running a government with those goals. Brazil's electoral system encourages the proliferation of multiple, weak parties. Although it was the top performer in both legislative houses following the 2002 elections, the PT held only 17 and 18 percent of the upper and lower houses, respectively. PT operators promptly got the party in trouble

in their attempts to bribe non-PT members of the Brazilian Congress to allow the passage of legislation benefiting the poor and marginalized. Though Lula was not accused of having a hand in the bribery, this scandal at the beginning of his term might be said to mark the beginning of the erosion of the PT's image as a clean party. In later years, the PT accepted corruption-tainted candidates in order to try to maintain its numbers in the legislature.

Brazil's mainstream media has also been a major contributor to the erosion of the party's clean image. Brazilian media is an effective monopoly, with the Globo network reaching 99.5 percent market saturation. Globo has been widely criticized for its biased coverage against the PT, including exaggerating corruption allegations when PT members are involved and editing scandal and corruption coverage to imply the involvement of PT personalities without directly accusing them.

Perhaps most tragic though has been the deterioration of grassroots organization on behalf of both the PT and allied social movements. Starting around 2005, the PT stopped organizing *núcleos de base,* the basic units of party organization. Iole Iliada, the PT's secretary for international relations, considers this a major setback to party life, owing to the virtual elimination of the ideological and political debate that once took place in the *núcleos,* as well as the disappearance of the vision of a bottom-up, participatory party.[3]

Social movements also slowed their organizing following Lula's election. Various activists, from labour unions to urban housing and service movements, admitted that many movements lost their vigour, adopting instead a "wait and see" attitude. As João Stedile, a leader of the Landless Workers' Movement, said in a 2007 interview, "We thought that a simple electoral victory would give a shock to the masses. … We thought this was it, the time had come! And it hadn't. It was really frustrating. … This is the greatest challenge that we face today: we're waiting around, seeing if the government will do this or that instead of just acting on our own" (quoted in Garmany and Bessa Maia 2007: 141).

Squaring the Circle

The Lula years from 2002 to 2010 exhibited a decrease in inequality (from a Gini coefficient of 0.59 in 2001 to 0.53 in 2012), income growth for low-wage earners (from 2001 to 2012, the income of the 5 percent poorest grew 550 percent faster than the 5 percent richest),[4] as well as increased spending on education and health by the federal government (13 percent of GDP in 2003 to over 16 percent in 2011). But these years were a far cry from breaking the hold of the ruling class over political and economic life.

Rather, the Lula years were marked by the implementation of orthodox foreign investment, trade, fiscal, and monetary policies — indeed, so orthodox that the neoliberal periodical *The Economist* toasted Lula's policies as providing a model for other big "emerging markets." Those years were also marked by declining poverty, despite the absence of the redistributive measures that both business and labour had expected the PT to put into effect. So how did Lula square the circle? In a long, illuminating article in the *London Review of Books,* the leading Marxist analyst Perry Anderson (2011) says that Lula's innovation was to combine conservative macroeconomic policy and foreign-investment-friendly policies with an anti-poverty program, the Bolsa de Familia, that cost relatively little in terms of government outlays but produced socially and politically significant impacts. Bolsa, a program of cash transfers conditioned on parents keeping children in school and subjecting them to periodic health checkups, by some estimates, contributed to reducing the number of poor people from fifty million to thirty million — and made Lula one of the few contemporary political leaders who was more popular at the end of his reign rather than at the beginning (Anderson 2011).

One other factor was decisive: the expanding global economy. The first decade of the twentieth century was marked by a rapid expansion of trade that benefited large emerging markets like Brazil, which grew by an average of 5 percent per annum from 2000 to 2012. Rapid growth meant that even with minimal redistributive policies, people's incomes increased. Lula had the good fortune of being president at a time of a global commodities boom, which also

provided the resources that allowed Brazil to weather and then delay the effects of the 2008 financial crisis.

Along with Russia, India, China, and South Africa, Brazil became part of the so-called BRICS, a group of big emerging markets that became key drivers of the world economy. The PT government's representatives played a key role in advancing the BRICS' as well as other developing countries' agendas in the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations. Unfortunately, this sense of playing a historic role on the world stage also translated into a "bread and circuses" complex that led the Lula government to bid, successfully, to host the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. The consequences of these decisions would come to roost during Dilma's presidency, when the actual events would take place.

From Triumph to Crisis

While there were protests throughout the first ten years of the PT's reign, the first really massive protests exploded in the run-up to the World Cup. These were triggered by the displacement of urban poor communities by construction activities, the popular perception of corruption surrounding some construction deals, and the sense that the focus on the World Cup was leading to government neglect of transportation and other essential public services. These were not partisan political protests, says Iole Iliada, "but the right noted that there was dissatisfaction with the government and that they might also be able to mobilize people by riding on the issue of corruption."[5]

The abandonment of basic organizing by both the PT and leftist social movements left a vacuum that steadily came to be occupied by rightist forces. The rise of evangelical churches (61 percent from 2000 to 2010, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, and the exercise of their political muscle (evangelical legislators, who belong to different parties, doubled in the 2010 election and rose by another 30 percent in the 2014 election to comprise about 18 percent of the current lower house) have come with a resurgence of conservative social values that directly contend with the progressive identity politics of the PT and social movement militants. Rightist and opportunistic parties such as the PMDB and the

Social Democratic Party of Brazil have taken advantage of the social frustration fomented by these churches, as well as their grassroots organization, to rally discontent with PT rule.

While tension has been building since Brazil's economy began shrinking in 2011, a major opportunity for the right came in 2014, when the Petrobras scandal broke out. Over fifty members of Congress and the PT were implicated in a massive $3.7-billion kickback scandal, one of them being the national treasurer of the PT. While Dilma has not been directly implicated in the affair, she was, in fact, head of the ministry of energy that oversaw Petrobras at the time of the kickbacks.

If corruption brought the middle class into the streets, Dilma's shockingly quick turnaround from the pro-social-services, pro-employment program she aggressively pushed in the last month of the hotly contested elections of October 2014 dampened support for the PT among the organized working class that has long served as the base of the party. Expectations that keeping unemployment low, focusing on growth, and maintaining social programs benefiting the poor would be her priorities were punctured by her raising of interest rates just three days after the elections and her appointment of Joaquim Levy, an aggressive fiscal conservative popularly known as "Mr. Scissorhands," as finance minister. Also, the rural lower classes were affronted by the appointment as minister of agriculture of Katia Abreu, a senator known as a fierce defender of landowning interests who had displayed such disregard for the environment that she received Greenpeace's Golden Chainsaw award.

The appointments of Mr. Scissorhands and Mrs. Chainsaw were seen as a strong indication that Dilma endorsed the neoliberal view that the way out of Brazil's current recession lay in a strategy of cutting government costs while intensifying Brazil's export drive, particularly of large agricultural products like soybeans and sugarcane. It is important to note that neither these appointments nor the government's fiscal austerity program were decided in consultation with the PT membership.

One cannot avoid speculating, however, that if international commodity prices had not lurched into crisis, Dilma would not be in the pickle she is in today. Lula, in many ways, surfed on the wave

of a growing global economy that benefited Brazilian exports, particularly soya exports to the burgeoning Chinese market. With the financial implosion of 2008, Brazilian exports to the US and Europe fell, but it seemed like the domestic economy would suffer nothing but a hiccup, especially since the Lula government put into motion a strong Keynesian spending program. By 2011, however, the global recession caught up with Brazil, with the economy growing by only 1.3 percent over the last four years compared to 4 to 5 percent during the Lula period. This year Brazil is in recession while inflation has reached a twelve-year high.

One of the key beneficiaries of capitalist globalization over the last three decades, Brazil has now become a prime victim as the downside of that process — global contraction and long-term stagnation — have taken hold.

With massive opposition-inspired protests, the Dilma administration's survival depends greatly on the moves of its supposed allies in the non-ideological PMDB. Wooed by the opposition Social Democratic Party of Brazil to support its initiative to impeach the president, the PMDB, opportunistic as usual, is weighing whether to stick with Dilma in return for more positions or join the impeachment drive, which might have an even bigger payoff.

PT Militants Fight Back

Though much delayed, PT militants and leftist social movements are beginning to fight back. A study, *For a Just and Democratic Brazil*, put out by the party's Perseu Abramo Foundation, based on consultations with over one hundred economists and other analysts, lays the blame for the economic crisis principally on the international crisis rather than wrong policies, as alleged by the right. Since it was based on the wrong diagnosis, the adjustment program pushed by the government and personified in Levy has merely worsened the situation, "reducing aggregate demand, blocking growth and incurring social costs." The document claims that half a year into the second Dilma term, the fiscal retrenchment strategy has raised unemployment to 7.5 percent in July, compared to 4.9 percent a year earlier, a drop that represents the loss of nearly 500,000 formal sector jobs. In May alone, the PT study claims, average real income fell by five percent.

In place of the fiscal retrenchment program, the document lays out in great detail a strategy of maintaining or increasing the levels of public investment to trigger increasing income and economic growth, reducing interest payments, engaging in tax reform, revising fiscal incentives, and combating tax evasion. The avowed aim of these measures is to preserve the PT legacy of social inclusion that is now under threat from the neoliberals.

What impact the alternative program will have remains to be seen. But the consensus among party members and sympathizers we talked to is that the problems of the PT government go much deeper and will require more fundamental solutions.

Back to the Past?

Some of the more thoughtful progressive critics trace the problem to the erosion in internal party discourse and bottom-up participation, combined with the collapse of grassroots recruiting and organizing on behalf of both the PT and leftist social movements. When the party gained power and, in some places, prioritized winning seats over the quality of candidates over the last fifteen years, party cadres got absorbed into government, party life ossified if not disappeared, and ideological debates on key issues were overshadowed by pragmatic adjustment to capitalism as a reformist force. For some, regaining the party's early identity and vigour as an anti-capitalist force linked to an insurgent labour movement and a dynamic civil society is the real answer to the PT's troubles. In order to do this, the party faces the puzzling predicament of shaping a new generation of anti-establishment militants when it has been the face of the state for over a decade.

The question is, are the forces of renewal within the party strong enough to push the party back to its roots in its heroic era?

Notes

1. Iola Ilada, the secretary of international relations of the PT, interview, São Paulo, September 30, 2015.
2. Interview, September 29, 2015.
3. Interview, São Paulo, September 30, 2015.
4. <http://www1.wider.unu.edu/inequalityconf/sites/default/files/IGA/Neri.pdf>.
5. Interview, São Paulo, September 30, 2015.

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