Does Democracy Work In Deeply Divided Societies?[1]

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The sad fate of recent political reforms pushed on the Middle East and on some African countries should make all of us skeptical about the value of blanket recommendations to promote democracy as a universal solution to the problems of autocratic and corrupt regimes. As the cases of Iraq and Lebanon in the early 2000s have demonstrated, if ethno-religious communities that compete with each other place their own values, interests, and loyalties above those of a theoretical national welfare, then stable democracy is impossible. This is all the more so if such competition is viewed as being zero-sum, with gains by any community necessarily resulting in equal losses by the others.

The Problem of Divided but Strong Communal, Culturally Based Identities

In a prescient comment made at a time when it seemed that deep religious conflicts were less important than they had been in the past, Milton Friedman wrote, "Fundamental differences in basic values can seldom if ever be resolved at the ballot box; ultimately they can only be decided, though not resolved, by conflict. The religious and civil wars of history are a bloody testament to this judgment." (Friedman 2002, 24) Friedman concludes from this that extending market relations into as many areas of social life as possible and away from politics is the best way to avoid such conflicts. Coming from a noted economist, this is not surprising. It mirrors the Enlightenment's faith in commerce as a solvent best able to resolve the passions that lead to violence because economic relations are likely to be based on rational self-interest. Albert Hirschman's great work on this subject, *The Passions and the Interests* (1977, v) opens with Montesquieu's famous quote, "And it is men's good fortune that they are in a situation where, at the same time that their passions make them think mean thoughts, they nevertheless have an interest in not being nasty." Hirschman goes on to show that many Enlightenment thinkers came to believe that commerce, and more generally, economic activity was more rational, and therefore less likely to lead to bloodshed than religion, considerations of honor, prestige, or sheer lust for power.

It is terribly difficult, however, to separate the material interests of various communities from their loyalty to their members and their religious or other

ideological values. In practice, these are so intertwined that untangling beliefs that are created to legitimate interests from interests that emerge from deep loyalties or beliefs is best left to theorists who take it on faith that one or the other of these provides the key independent variable to explain behavior. Fortunately, we do not need to do this. If competing communities' economic interests are highly correlated with different culturally based identities, they become much harder to reconcile than purely economic differences between groups, even if material differences are at the heart of actual disputes. In other words, merely encouraging commerce is not enough.

Why do Shia Muslims fight Sunni ones in Lebanon and Iraq? Is it because of deep religious differences that go back to seventh century power struggles between various Arab clans for control of their new empire, or in Lebanon is it, as Fouad Ajami has persuasively argued in *The Vanished Imam* (1986) really because Shia Muslims were long a marginalized, impoverished underclass looked down upon by both Christian and Sunni Arabs? Ajami is certainly right that it was economic deprivation, and its inevitable accompaniment, social contempt, that shaped Lebanese Shia anger and eventually their political rise to power. Yet, this growing power has come about through explicitly religious leaders, and in both Lebanon and Iraq, where the Shia were similarly marginalized for a long time, their political activism is legitimized by their faith and led by imams, not secular politicians. On the other hand, in the case of Iraq, we know that the majority of southern Iraqi Shia are descendents of Arabs who were Sunni until the nineteenth, and often the early twentieth century (Nakash 2002, 14-48)! How and why these Sunni Muslims converted to Shi'ism is a long a complex story that has to do with the ways in which nomadic tribes were sedentarized in places where the small urban elites were already Shia, the commercial advantages obtained by Shia merchants in the holy pilgrimage cities of Najaf and Karbala, Ottoman and later British policies that went awry, and much else. The point is not to deny that Shia-Sunni differences date back to seventh century conflicts for political power in the Muslim Empire of that time, but to show that such simplified historical explanations that rely on age old ideological and theological differences have too little explanatory power to stand alone.

Vali Nasr makes it clear that Shia and Sunni conflicts combine very old historical elements with contemporary religious interpretations of Islam, memories of long ago political and economic differences with entirely modern ones, and practically inseparable ideological and material conflicts.

There are few places in the world where the confusion between religiously, ethnically, nationally, and economically motivated conflict is as obvious as in the Middle East. Are Druzes an ethnic community or a religious one? Is Walid Jumblat, their hereditary leader in Lebanon, primarily interested in defending Druze property rights and economic well being, or in preserving their obscure faith that is an offshoot of an eleventh century Shia sect that developed under the rule of the Egyptian Fatimids? Is it that the Lebanese Druzes are held together mostly by kinship ties that trump all other loyalties in an area with such a weak state and turbulent history that only alliances of extended families can offer

basic protection of life and property? All of these are valid explanations, and which came first is probably an unsolvable historical puzzle.[2]

Similarly, whether or not to call Shia and Sunni Muslims different sects, different religions, or in places such as Lebanon and Iraq, different ethnic groups can best be left to those who insist on precise definitions rather than genuine understanding. They are all of these, mixed together and separated by belief, history, kinship, and competing interests.

There are many excellent definitions of ethnicity put forward by political theorists, but in the end, it turns out that ethnicity, like nation, is a subjective sense that somehow, whether through assumed kinship or common beliefs and values, "we" all have enough in common to stick together against other communities (Smith 2001; Fenton 2003). Were the Croats, Serbs, and Bosnian Muslims in the Yugoslavia of the 1980s increasingly hostile to each other because of their ethnic differences? If so what, other than religion, distinguished them since they spoke a common language, shared a common state, and were not different in any obvious physical way? Would Yugoslavia have had a civil war that broke it apart if its economy had thrived in the 1980s? Probably not, as much work has shown (Woodward 1995). Yet, as Takis Pappas (among others) has demonstrated in explaining the secret of Slobodan Milošević's rise to power, had there not been deeply held and relatively old (that is, dating to at least the nineteenth century, and perhaps earlier) ethnic and national mythologies about Serbia and Croatia that legitimized radically exclusionist behavior by their leaders, mere economic difficulties would not have created a civil war (Banac 1984; Judah 2000; Pappas 2005).

We could travel around the world and through time to come up with countless examples of deep divisions within states that were based on such a conflation of ideology, values, and material interests that reconciliation between communities proved impossible and conflict became inevitable. Americans, for example, tend to forget that in 1860 the differences between the South and the North were a mixture of all of these. Slavery was the key, of course, but poor Southern whites (except in Appalachian mountain regions) who had no slaves joined in willingly to defend their culture against Yankees outsiders. John Reed (1983) has explored the cultural differences that persist to this day between white Southerners and the rest of the United States, and he has gone so far as to claim that they are a distinct ethnicity with its own religious and social values that transcend pure material interest. This white Southern ethnic group, as it happens, came very close to forming its own nation, and it is only in retrospect

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[2] Few Americans policy makers have much knowledge about the immense diversity of clans, tribes, sects, theologies, and ethnicities in the Middle East. Druzes, Alawites, Mandeans, Nusayris, Isma'ilis, and many other kinds of Muslim or semi-Muslim sects exist, without mentioning divergences between mainstream Shia and Sunni, Sufi orders, or the bewildering number of Christian or semi-Christian groups. For a brief, learned introduction to the main religious groups, see Hourani (2002, 172-188). On Druze history, see Firro (1992) and Swayd (2006).

and with a good bit of historical fudging that we Americans have come to think that the Civil War was just a big mistake that interrupted what had been and then again became a nation with shared values and interests. The South was, and in many respects remained well into the twentieth century (perhaps into the twenty-first), a different culture, partly for economic reasons, but also because of anti-liberal values with respect to race and religion (Hartz, 1955; Potter and Fehrenbacher 1976; Marx 1998; Black and Black 2002).

This reference to the American South brings us back to the main topic at hand, the difficulties of solving deep communal divisions with democracy. Though the American election of 1860 was not democratic by today's standards as women and non-whites were excluded, it was, for its day, quite democratic, as the large majority of male whites were eligible to vote. The election that resulted in Lincoln's victory solved nothing and led directly to a bloody Civil War. This war might have occurred anyway, even without an election, but the election certainly did nothing at all to ease the conflict over slavery and what had become two different economies and cultures. The election of 1860 fit quite neatly into a remark about elections made by the political scientist Donald Horowitz (1985, 83-89). Elections in deeply divided societies are a kind of census that measures how many are on each side because people vote with their community and very few think of elections in terms other than a way of promoting their ethnic, religious, or regional group's interests, whatever these may be based on. Identity trumps direct material interest. Rich and poor Druzes, Shia Muslims, Serbs, or Southern whites in the United States have more often than not stuck together when faced by "outsiders," that is, those with different identities.

If economic class comes to be highly correlated with cultural identity, it becomes much harder to resolve differences with democratic or other forms of bargaining. That is what Milton Friedman meant by the remark cited above. Furthermore, economic class does not trump kin or culturally based forms of identity, but rather the other way around. Cultures may result in part from old economic differences between communities or societies, and may at some point come from particular (to use Marxist terms) "modes of production," but once they become the basis of strong group identities, they take on a life of their own. This is why Lenin was so shocked by the betrayal of Western Europe's, especially Germany's working class at the start of World War I when socialist parties overwhelming chose to be loyal to their nations, not their class (Lenin 1939, Preface from 1917). This is also why Marxist attempts to deal with ethnic and nationalist differences tend to be reduced to simple assertions that all those strong non-class identities are simple examples of false consciousness, or can be explained away as really being based on economic class, whatever nonsense other analysts, and people themselves may say (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991).

All this is by now quite well known, as are its implications for understanding why it is difficult to create what Fareed Zakaria has called liberal democracy. As the number of states with formal voting that can claim to be in some sense democracies has increased since the collapse of European communism in 1989-1991, so have the number of "illiberal" democracies, that is, those that do not respect constitutional norms, individual freedoms, or the

property rights of those in the opposition, and that use elections to legitimize autocracy (1997). Many of these are formal democracies in which elections cannot solve communal conflicts, but rather tend to exacerbate them because they are so threatening to the losers who know that they risk losing everything. As Zakaria has put it in his well-known article that now seems astonishingly prescient:

> Once an ethnic group is in power, it tends to exclude other ethnic groups. Compromise seems impossible; one can bargain on material issues like housing, hospitals, and handouts, but how does one split the difference on a national religion? Political competition that is so divisive can rapidly degenerate into violence. Opposition movements, armed rebellions, and coups in Africa have often been directed against ethnically based regimes, many of which came to power through elections (1997, 36).

So, to cite a well-known Leninist text, though with the goal of promoting viable, stable, and liberal democracy rather than a Bolshevik revolution: what is to be done? Before addressing this question, it is useful to look more closely at a few representative cases.

When Democratic Elections Exacerbate Communal Conflicts
What has happened in Côte d'Ivoire (the Ivory Coast) since the early 1990s is quite representative of African cases. Briefly, this was a country that became the most successful example of export led, agricultural development in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. Cocoa, and to a lesser extent coffee and other tropical crops (including lumber) provided the wealth that made Côte d'Ivoire the envy of its neighbors. But this stimulated migration from its less successful neighbors, as well as a substantial internal migration from its Muslim and Savannah north into its forested and Christian/Animist south where the richest cocoa and coffee lands were being established in newly cleared forest lands, and where the capital city of Abidjan became one of West Africa's main commercial hubs. As long as the economy boomed, and the country was led by a reasonably benevolent dictator able to hand out benefits to regional elites throughout the country, political discontent and ethnic rivalries could be contained. The fact that the president was a southerner, as was most of the political elite, was generally accepted. Unfortunately, the economy began to stagnate in the 1980s and 1990s as cocoa prices fell and insufficient investment failed to diversify the economy. By 1990 the old way of doing business was facing extreme pressures at the very same time that Côte d'Ivoire's big power supporters, chiefly France, were starting to insist on democratization as a way of solving endemic corruption and waste. Also, the collapse of communism in Europe led to an international atmosphere that demanded more democracy. This is when the monopoly of power held by the old dictator and first president, Houphouët-Boigny, began to break down as ethnic discontent was increasing. Southern political leaders told southerners that they had been cheated by outsiders and were now threatened by "foreigners" whose voting power might put them at great risk. Northerners were told by their leaders that southern power

(Houphouët was an Akan from the southeast) threatened their property rights. Southerners themselves were divided between the power holding Akan speakers and people in the southwest whose lands had been most subject to immigrant settlement. Houphouët was able to hold on until he died in 1993, but then tensions over forthcoming elections split the country apart. To remain in power southern politicians essentially took away citizenship rights from northerners, calling all of them all immigrants. This also led to gradual expropriations in the southwest of lands developed for decades by migrants from other parts of the country and from neighboring, mostly northern states. Eventually, this led to a series of violent elections, coups by northern military officers, and in 2002, the division of the country into a rebel north and a south controlled by a minority politician from the southwest, Laurent Gbagbo, who held on to power by manipulating ethnic hatreds and relying increasingly on strong arm tactics by his ethnic militias. The solution that emerged in 2007 and may work is a compromise between competing regional elites who will hold rigged elections, allowing Gbagbo to retain power while sharing some benefits with those northerners willing to go along (Chirot 2006, Boone 2003, 326; Crook 1997).

The establishment of formal democracy in 1990 did not create Côte d'Ivoire's economic and social problems, but it certainly aggravated them. It did nothing whatsoever to resolve them. Ethnic communities had no trust in each other, and saw the potential victory of any single ethno-regional group as a disaster for others. Under such circumstances, establishing a genuinely transparent democracy could be counterproductive by making the tacit division of spoils between regional elites politically impossible.

In one form or another, this story could be told about much of Africa. It is not simply religion, or ethnicity that is at stake, but also economic interests protected by communal membership. As Carles Boix has shown in his work when some group controls a preponderance of the resources, those in control are fundamentally unwilling to let democratic elections change the situation, and those without the power to enforce their property rights are ultimately reduced to violence. Thus, the absence of stable property rights, combined with growing competition over scarce resources enhances any kind of communal conflict and makes it most unlikely that formal democratic mechanisms might mitigate conflict (Boix 2003, 2006).

In concluding remarks to a recent article, Boix also points to the fact that imposing democracy on a society without adequate institutional support is very difficult, requires a "heavy-handed" and prolonged occupation, and therefore, broad support for a long time within the occupying country's own population. "Without generalized support, it ends up in failure – as shown by the partial reconstruction of the American South after the Civil War and its abandonment in the 1880s." (Boix 2006, 21)

Sri Lanka is another example of country where democratic elections made ethnic tensions far worse and ultimately provoked a civil war. At the time of independence from Britain in 1948, Ceylon (as it was then called) seemed to be one of the most promising of newly decolonized countries. It had a relatively high literacy rate and a well-educated, moderate elite, it had achieved independence

peacefully and without creating much rancor, and it had a sound economy. The problem was that much of the Sinhalese Buddhist majority felt left out of power, not so much because the Tamil ethnic minority held more than its share of civil service jobs, but because the Anglophone, educated Sinhalese elite was disproportionately Christian and seemingly disdainful of Buddhist-Sinhalese tradition. Led by Buddhist monks and politicians who capitalized on this discontent, the Sinhalese population was mobilized to demand a more Buddhist, less English polity. This Sinhalese-Buddhist fundamentalism naturally alienated the Tamils who were dismissed as outsiders with no right to claim full Sri Lankan citizenship. Though linguistic-religious exclusivity produced some violence, including the assassination by a Buddhist monk of the prime minister in 1959, elections continued to be held, and the Sinhalese majority increasingly pushed for the exclusion of Tamils from civil service jobs and university opportunities for Tamil students. Eventually, a radical separatist Tamil movement, the Tamil Tigers, took advantage of this by recruiting young, frustrated Tamils. Ruthlessly suppressing opposition to its draconian policies, the Tamil Tigers set up a virtually independent Tamil state in the north and parts of the east. Though successive Sri Lankan governments have tried to find compromise solutions to this problem, the radical Buddhist Sinhalese have never allowed this.   So, in election after election, the balance of power held by these extremists has prevented a genuinely compromising policy. On the other side, the long civil war and high death toll, with well over 70,000 killed over the years, has solidified the power of the Tamil Tigers who will accept nothing short of complete separation. Continuing free elections in the majority of the country not controlled by the Tigers has resolved nothing (Tambiah 1992; Batholomeusz and De Silva 1998; Wilson 2000; Horowitz 2001, Namy 2006).

There are other similar cases where relatively free elections have repeatedly failed to produce regimes acceptable to all ethno-religious factions and instead turned into opportunities for the winners to pay off their ethnic supporters while leaving others dissatisfied. Nigeria has experienced this phenomenon from the time it became independent in 1960, and this has produced, since 1966, a series of military coups alternating with periods of relative democracy. It also resulted in one extremely bloody civil war in the late 1960s, and endemic local ethnic and religious violence that continues to kill thousands each year (Rotberg 2004; Soyinka 1996).

In those Latin American countries with substantial indigenous populations, for example Bolivia, past elections did little to address the demands of the poorer Indian population, and with increasing democratization, ethnic tensions have increased as populist leaders have taken advantage of the widespread discontent to mobilize protest movements and make claims against the established elite. Whether this will result in ethnic and regional violent conflict in Bolivia is an open question right now, but the mere existence of democratic procedures is no guarantee that conflicts will be solved peacefully (Crabtree and Whitehead 2001; Eaton 2007).

Though discontent in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) against West Pakistani domination long predated the civil war that led to separation in 1971, it

was the attempt to hold free lections that proved a decisive breaking point. Because of East Pakistan's demographic weight, Bengali Pakistanis won a free election, but rather than be ruled by Bengalis, West Pakistan refused to accept the results. The outcome was an attempt by the Pakistani army to suppress East Pakistan, a revolt, hundreds of thousands of deaths, and the eventual separation of the two parts of Pakistan into separate states. Here it was neither religion nor ethnicity alone, but the complex interaction between the development of a distinctive Bengali Islamic identity, linguistically based ethnic grievances in East Pakistan, and very different kinds of socio-economic structures in East and West Pakistan that created growing political tensions. The attempt to hold together two very different Muslim societies made any democratic resolution difficult, but the ways in which political leaders exploited these differences before and after the election only made things worse. Again, the election was not the cause of long standing conflicts, but it was the event that turned a difficult situation into a murderous civil war (Sisson and Rose 1990; Uddin 2006).

In Yugoslavia both Slobodan Milošević in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia were elected in free elections, and both worked hard to exploit existing ethnic tensions. These were perfect examples of the triumph of illiberal democracy at work, and it was chiefly their intransigence, supported by popular opinion, that led to the exceptionally brutal series of Yugoslav wars that killed hundreds of thousands in the 1990s (Hayden 1992).

One more example will suffice to show the range of possible catastrophes that democratic elections may produce. In late 1991 Algeria held its first free elections since independence. Discontent was high because its military dictatorship had failed to produce sufficient economic growth to employ a growing population, because its socialism had become so inefficient and corrupt, and because the entrenched elite seemed to care little for the well being of the general population. In the first round of elections, it became obvious that a strongly Islamic movement would take power and overthrow the largely secular military elite, so the elections were cancelled, and this began a civil war that has killed over 100,000 people. This is not a case in which free elections produced a conflictual outcome, but in which an elections revealed the unpopularity of the ruling elite, and it then moved to suppress democracy. The basis of organized discontent was not, in this case, ethnic, though there is considerable opposition to the regime among Algerian Berbers who feel marginalized by the Arab majority. Instead it became religious and Algeria remains a cauldron of potential violence (Malley 1996; Martinez 2000).

This is not to say that dictatorships, or the kinds of fraudulent elections conducted in much of the world are a solution, either, because there are many more cases in which political elites from one ethnicity, religion, or region have steered benefits very disproportionately toward their group, and made it almost impossible for other communities to redress the situation without violence. This has been the story in Rwanda and Burundi, in Sudan, Burma, Guatemala (where the violence was primarily a matter of class and ideology, but where indigenous Mayans suffered a disproportionately high number of deaths in the massacres of the 1970s and 1980s), Congo, and other places. Even in Algeria, it is

conceivable (but not very likely) that had free elections been allowed to proceed, there would have been no violence.

Holding elections and then violently suppressing the results, as happened in Algeria in 1992 and Bangladesh in 1971 combines the worse of all possible outcomes. Ethnic, religious, economic, and regional hostilities are mobilized but then disappointed, and the result is likely to be lasting bitterness and civil war.

Clearly, democracy is not a panacea, and in some important cases it actually increases the potential for violence between competing ethnic, religious, and regional communities. To confound any neat conclusion, however, there are cases that demonstrate the exact opposite, where democratic institutions have made accommodation between competing ethno-religious and regional communities possible.

When Democratic Elections Ease Communal Conflicts

In 1969 there were deadly ethnic riots in Malaysia that threatened to ignite a civil war between a very large Chinese minority and a politically dominant Malay Muslim population. The Malays were a slim majority of the population. (Singapore, with its large ethnic Chinese majority, had been expelled from Malaysia in 1965 to guarantee the Malays' majority.) The Malaysian Chinese had a preponderant portion of the wealth. Yet, almost 40 years later, Malaysia is relatively, if imperfectly democratic, holds regular elections, and remains peacefully ethnically diverse. The worse did not happen. The Malays kept their political power, but the dominant Malay political party struck a bargain with the dominant Chinese party to bolster its parliamentary majority against more extremist Muslims and discontented Malays. The Malay elite instituted a New Economic Policy that favored Malays, and university positions went mostly to the favored Malays. On the other hand, Chinese property was not confiscated. Because the government's economic policy was oriented toward market capitalism rather than socialist centralization, and because it was so favorable to outside investment, the economy boomed, and the Chinese as well as the Malays benefited.

In fact, the Chinese commercial elite even under British rule had been willing to collaborate with Malay leaders as they had been united in their opposition to the Communist insurgency that had been composed almost entirely of ethnic Chinese during the late 1940s and 1950s. This had enabled the British to win that guerrilla war and turn an independent Malaysia over to the leading, conservative Malay political movement in 1957. What therefore emerged was a workable alliance between a growing Malay middle class and business elite with their Chinese middle class and business counterparts, and this has guaranteed peace. Radical Muslim Malays and more radically inclined Chinese have been marginalized. Economic growth and the respect of property rights have eased Chinese fears even though they are politically weaker than the Malays. The Chinese eventually were allowed to create private schools to educate those of their children who felt discriminated against by official pro-Malay policies, and the Chinese have prospered. The smaller Indian minority has also accepted this bargain that guarantees their survival and property at the cost of ceding political

power to the Malays. Malaysia is not a society in which ethnic tensions have disappeared, and many poor Malays feel left out. Nevertheless, a bargain struck by elites of the main ethnic groups has held, and is legitimized by more or less free elections and parliamentary compromises (Horowitz 1985, 404-427, 582; Crouch 1996; Jomo 1997; Lee 2000).

This is a road that could have been followed by Sri Lanka, but was not. There, a more state centered development strategy slowed economic growth, and instead of bargaining with each other, the more moderate Tamil and Sinhalese parties were taken over by their extremists.

India, an exceptionally diverse set of cultures, languages, religions, and regions, has held together in relative peace in large part because of its democracy. There has always been violence in some pars of India, much of it ethno-religious, but despite a bloody Sikh rebellion, continuing deadly violence between Muslims and Hindus in some (but hardly all) of India, uprisings and deadly ethnic clashes in the northeast, and a bloody civil war in Kashmir, in the end, most of the country has held together and not broken down into the kind of all consuming war and separation experienced by Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, or African countries such as Sudan or Côte d'Ivoire. Given the enormous differences in wealth, religions, and ethnicity between various regions, how was this done? There was, to begin, a strong and united civil service inherited from British rule. After the bloody break with Pakistan and the associated killings and war at the time of independence in 1947-48, India was led for a long time by the moderate Jawaharlal Nehru who insisted on maintaining democratic norms. Provinces were realigned so that in each ethno-religious majorities could have their government and substantial powers. Thus, it was possible for, say, southern Tamils to have careers and their own government without having to give in to the Hindu speaking northerners who dominated in national politics. Since no ethnicity or religion has a clear majority, and because democratic federalism was maintained (except for a few short years under Nehru's authoritarian daughter, Indira Gandhi), democratic bargaining over interests prevailed. Political scientist Ashutosh Varshney has written:

> India has a dispersed, not a centrally focused ethnic configuration. Since independence no single identity or cleavage – religious, linguistic, caste – has had the power to override all other identities at the national level….To come to power in Delhi, politicians must build bridges and coalitions across cleavages. In short, because of India's multicultural diversity, its politics is oriented towards ideological centrism (Varshney 2002, 73-74, 85).

Again, for all its imperfections, India is as clear an example as there is of a poor country beset by countless economic, social, ethnic, and religious conflicts that holds together democratically. Even during its long period of economic stagnation after independence, the political system survived and loyalty to the Indian nation solidified. Any attempt by a particular community to force the others to conform, or to accept exclusion from power, would have been disastrous. Those areas that have revolted have been precisely the ones where minorities have felt it was impossible to have a say, either because they are too

small to count, as in the far northeast, or because central rule has been excessively heavy handed, as in the majority Muslim parts of Kashmir. Meanwhile, Indian democracy has permitted lower classes to gain more say, Hindu ultra-nationalists to compete for power peacefully, and most varieties of local separatists to be more or less accommodated into the political system and to pursue their claims without resorting to separatism, or at least to resolve disputes without breaking up India (Horowitz 1985, 672-676; Rudolph and Rudolph 2002; Harriss 2002; Namy 2006).

There are of course, many examples of democratic polities in the rich parts of the world that have defused ethnic conflict through democratic power sharing. These do not seem as dramatic because economic prosperity obviously makes it easier to spread out benefits, but it is worth mentioning some cases that demonstrate how democracy can mitigate ethnic conflict, and even contain it so that it remains peaceful. Canada and Switzerland, both highly federalized polities in which the regions have great power and can maintain their own languages and governments, are good examples. Arend Lijphard (1977) developed a whole theory of what he called consociational democracies to explain these successes. Unfortunately, some of his cases, most notably Lebanon, proved to be mirages, but others such as India, Switzerland, and Canada have worked relatively well. Majority or predominant ethno-religious groups have not generally attempted to impose themselves on minorities, or else over time have become more flexible about this, and thus allowed those with less power to share. Democratic norms have privileged negotiations over violent protest and federalism has allowed local majorities to hold regional power.

This can be contrasted to Northern Ireland, also an economically highly developed area, where Protestants for decades excluded Catholics from power and economic opportunity, until sectarian violence brought direct British rule and three decades of murderous conflict in the late twentieth century (McGarry and O'Leary 1995; Gallagher 2001).

It is possible that in the early twenty-first century Indonesia is setting out on the kind of democratic course that has worked in India. The outbreak of extreme ethnic, religious, and regional violence in many parts of that country in the late 1990s and early 2000s was largely caused by the nature of the repressive Suharto regime and the void it left as it collapsed. The ensuing uncertainty provoked struggles to redress old grievances, and a competition for power between various groups. Despite this, democratic reforms took hold and promise to promote a more peaceful outcome. Robert Hefner ascribes this success to the moderation of the mainstream, majority Islamic parties that learned from the horrible slaughter of their enemies in 1965-66 and the subsequent repression of the Suharto years that neither violence nor sectarian intolerance are viable ways of holding their country together. Whether or not democracy lasts and holds together so many diverse groups in the future is far from clear, but it could happen if moderate Muslims continue to hold power in this, the largest of all Muslim countries in the world. So far, democratic elections have provided a soothing rather than a polarizing effect. (Betrand 2004; Hefner 2000, 2005)

But all this returns us to the question of how to achieve this? What can be done to make such a favorable outcome more likely? If, as we have seen, formal democracy with elections sometimes helps, but at other times makes the situation worse, what is the best way to promote peaceful outcomes?

Making Democracy: Some Discouraging Historical Precedents

It would be possible to code every country in the world, assign some value to the degree of ethnic or religious division, the extent to which each is democratic, and then measure how well or poorly this correlates with political violence, including civil war. This would be a useful exercise, but an incomplete one because it would miss the causal mechanisms that lead to political violence and the important, though sometimes subtle differences between very different kinds of democracy and the vastly different historical traditions in the many countries that have tried to adopt some kind of democracy.

Making working democracies is partly a matter of getting communities in conflict with each other to bargain, but also of having the right institutional framework widely accepted by all, or at least most of the contending groups.

When there were proposals to resolve Yugoslavia's ethno-religious differences in the early 1990s, one popular idea was to create "cantons" on the Swiss model, and a kind of confederation, or at most a loose federation of small units that could each be relatively homogeneous. Needless to say, even though they are not geographically very far apart, Switzerland, whose cantonal system developed over seven centuries before it evolved into the modern Swiss state, has had an entirely different history than Yugoslavia, and its model is probably totally useless elsewhere (Barber 1973; Steinberg 1996). Similarly, the "pillarization" adopted by the Dutch to smooth religious tensions between Catholics and Protestants, and later extended to include other groups, never really had much chance of working in Lebanon which was set up to give the major communities proportional power, but never created much sense of genuine national unity, and so has led to repeated, violent disasters (El-Khazen 2000; Zijdervel 1998).

The problem with making generalizations about democracy is not only that there are such large differences between individual cases, but also that many of those who propose to spread democratic reforms around the world, particularly Americans, have forgotten the history of how democracy evolved in those Western countries where it originated, and particularly how it developed in the Anglo-American context or in a very different way, in France. Great Britain, France, and the United States may be the three major power examples of democratic development, but the advocates of democratization in the twenty-first century rarely reflect on how these three countries actually became democratic.

English democracy was not decreed, but developed slowly out of a medieval compromise between local lords, the church, and the monarchy. Similar compromises were worked out throughout much of Western Europe, but in England, this peculiar power sharing agreement somehow survived as an archaic remnant of the medieval "Standestaat" (Poggi 1978; Plumb 1973; Woodward 1938; Bagehot and St John-Stevas 1966). That this institution

cobbled together through centuries of frequently violent conflict should have left England with a Parliamentary system capable of being adapted to the growing demands of the new middle classes in the nineteenth century, and then to those of the working classes in the twentieth was something that would certainly have astonished the elites who crafted Magna Carta in the thirteenth century and the politicians who, four and a half centuries later, turned the Tudor/Stuart Parliaments into a political force capable of overthrowing the monarchy itself.

France had a different evolution. Its medieval parliamentary institutions were destroyed by the centralizing monarchy. This made its trajectory to democracy in the nineteenth and twentieth century much harder. Its democratic institutions repeatedly failed, and its last successful military coup was in 1958. This led to its Fifth Republic. The prior four republics were interspersed with two empires, two different kinds of monarchy, and one brief corporatist-fascist experiment (Cobb 1998, 24-36; Agullhon 1995).

The United States is still on its first republic (or second, if the Articles of Confederation are counted), but had a very nasty civil war before its unity was solidified. The original American colonies that formed the United States benefited from what was, by then, a long English tradition of regional self-government and parliamentary norms. Even so, repeated bargains between regions had to be struck to keep the system together. From the Constitutional Compromise of 1787, through the many attempts to conciliate growing Northern and Southern differences, to the electoral compromise of 1877 that allowed the South to maintain a system of racial exclusion and white domination for another 90 years, it was only by compromising its liberal principles that American democracy grew strong enough to finally resolve some of this regional cultural clash without provoking a new civil war (Marx 1998).

Anthony Marx's comparison of the United States and South Africa (with Brazil as the contrasting, different case) forcefully makes the point that white nationalism was solidified after wars between different white communities by marginalizing blacks and defining them as "others" who were not part of the nation. In a more recent work (2003) he extends this argument to the origins of French and English nationalism that united disparate regions and communities by defining the excluded, enemy "others" on religious grounds. English national unity was forged as anti-Catholicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and French nationalism on anti-Protestantism. Thus, the comforting story of how the French, English, and Americans overcame communal divisions by being inclusively "civic" and democratic is belied by the historical reality, and all three had their share of internal wars and persecution of certain selected communities.

Unfortunately this is deeply discouraging, because it suggests that to create unity from diversity requires excluding some and finding an enemy against whom to unite a majority. Only when that has been done and there is a strong sense of nation can democracy work because different communal interests then become secondary to an overriding national cause. Bargaining instead of civil war becomes relatively easy, and democratic elections can pick winners and losers peacefully. Because of shared national values, losers need no longer feel that they will be dispossessed. Indeed, there is ample evidence that all strong

European nations emerged from warfare that united them against outsiders, and that democracy, where it emerged, did so through struggles that often turned violent. This has been one of Charles Tilly's consistent themes throughout his distinguished scholarly career (Tilly 1975, 2004).

Miguel Centeno has made an equally discouraging argument about Latin America. Latin America was actually much less militarized and had far fewer international wars than Western Europe, but this resulted in a lower degree of national integration, particularly in countries with large ethnic, indigenous populations, and consequently, a very high degree of internal repression. Thus, nationalism developed, but because it was generally not necessary to mobilize the peasant masses of the nation against external enemies as much as in Western Europe, integration between rich elites and the masses was never as complete. This may well be one of the reasons Latin American states are less united across class and ethnic lines than Western European ones and the United States, and this has made democracy far more fragile (Centeno 2002).

Where does this leave us, other than to urge states beset by ethnic, religious, or sectional conflicts to decide whom to persecute and exclude in order to unite, and then to get involved in desperate wars with their neighbors to integrate those who constitute "the nation." Is this the only way to establish the national unity that makes stable democracy possible? Does India need a Pakistan on its borders to unite it? Was Malaysian Prime Minister Mohamad Mahatir right to demonize Jews, Americans, and the West to unite his own disparate communities?

Fortunately, more optimistic conclusions can be drawn as long as we remain cautiously aware of how easily a blanket push for immediate democracy can cause more harm than good. Making democracy may take more than one generation, but it need not take as long as from Magna Carta to the establishment of universal suffrage in England – 700 years. It may not require the exclusion of different ethnic or religious groups, of civil wars, or the waging of wars against neighbors. But it does require much more than holding elections and moralizing pressure from foreigners, a point nicely elucidated by Thomas Pangle in his philosophically oriented chapter in the present volume.

Peaceful and Less Peaceful Strategies for Incorporating Minorities
The problem is that almost all modern states, including those that consider themselves to be legitimate nations, contain religious, ethnic, regional, or even in some cases economic groups whose loyalties are suspect. In many cases these distinct groups go so far as to claim that they ought not be part of the state in which they reside because others who do not serve their interests dominate the state, or worse, persecute them. States that have not succeeded in creating a national consensus about whom they represent are in the most precarious situation, but even the most highly integrated, successful nations were far from being that in the past. The reality is that the nation-state is a project that is rarely if ever fully finished, not a primordial fact waiting to burst into existence (Geary 2002; Smith 1986, Weber 1976). Even some very old states that once claimed to be solidly nationalized such as Great Britain and Spain might still split up into

different nations, while smaller, once seemingly homogeneous entities such as those in Scandinavia are now presented with a growing minority immigrant problem. Very few modern nations that are deemed solid became that way without civil wars and international conflicts to decide where their boundaries would lie.

Establishing stable democracies in the modern world, where the role of states in providing education, securing property rights, offering jobs, and enforcing core values is crucial, the treatment of minority or less powerful communities is one of the major, often the single most important issue. No longer is a traditional imperial system, such as the one practiced by the Ottomans, feasible. Then, various ethno-religious groups could follow their own laws and practices as long as they did not interfere with central Ottoman Muslim rule; but this all broke down in increasing inter-communal warfare as the Ottoman Empire tried to create a modern, united nation-state capable of mobilizing its forces against its European enemies (Barkey and Von Hagen1997; Keyder 1997; Mardin 1997).

What strategies have been followed to deal with minorities, and how successful have they been? There have been three broad ones, but each can be divided into two parts, relatively tolerant and relatively intolerant approaches. The three kinds of strategies are inclusion, separation, and exclusion. The following chart lays these out. (Chirot & McCauley 2006, 159; O'Leary 2001)

STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH MINORITIES IN NATION-STATES

	INCLUSION	SEPARATION	EXCLUSION
TOLERANT	Gradual and mostly consensual assimilation	Multiculturalism	Consensual emigration or separation
INTOLERANT	Forced assimilation	Segregation	Ethnic cleansing or genocide

The curious thing about this chart is that many existing nation-states have used all of these strategies at one time or another in order to strengthen nationalist unity. In the United States, for example, assimilation of voluntary white immigrants was not always perfectly tolerant, but on the whole it was, and rarely became brutally intolerant. The same cannot be said of how African-Americans or Native Americans were treated. Forced assimilation, segregation, and genocidal ethnic cleansing were all practiced at one time or another on some non-whites. Abraham Lincoln at one time said that, "[P]hysical differences between the white and black race … will forever forbid the two races living together upon terms of social and political equality." So he concluded that emigration of freed slaves back to Africa was the best solution (Marx 1998, 59). That form of "tolerant exclusion" was the original idea behind the creation of Liberia, though it proved wildly impractical as a realistic solution. More recently, tolerant multiculturalism that recognizes the legitimacy of holding on to different languages and cultures has become more widely accepted in the United States,

but it is still contested. It may be shocking to see multiculturalism and segregation put into the same category, but both make the claim that establishing a single, unitary culture is impossible, so different ethnic groups will remain separate in many ways. The tolerant version is presumably kinder, but some assumptions made by both strategies are similar.

Some of the ways in which nations have become more culturally homogeneous have already been discussed. England excluded Catholics from political participation, and though eventually this rift was healed within England itself, it never was in British controlled Ireland. France went through a long series of forced, very brutal assimilations. This is what Ernest Renan meant about nations having to forget as much as they remembered about their past. He was thinking of the genocidal massacres that only slowly unified France, particularly the thirteenth century Albigensian Crusades, the sixteenth century Protestant-Catholic wars, and the bloody civil war that was the French Revolution (Anderson 1991, 199).

There could hardly be a better example of a forged sense of nationalism than how after the American Civil War a mythologized version of the romantic South gradually got most Americans to forget both the brutality and real nature of this war, and that it was fought by the South to preserve slavery, not some genteel way of life or constitutional "states' rights." Today a number of the East and Central European nations, some claiming to be quite old, are solid nation-states because their large minorities were recently exterminated, expelled, or cut away after war. Poland is a good example, as are Greece, Romania (except for its Gypsy and Hungarian minorities), Hungary, and of course the little new former Yugoslav states. Turkey is yet another example. Its remaining minority problem with the Kurds where forced, intolerant assimilation has not really worked was greatly simplified by the massacre of Armenians, the forced changes in boundaries, and the expulsion of almost all of its Greek Christians. The new nation states of Slovakia and the Czech Republic separated peacefully, thus providing a recent, gentle example of tolerant separation, though Slovakia still has problems dealing with is Hungarian minority and both have Gypsy minorities that are far from assimilated. The Czech Republic, however, might not have been established so peacefully had its very large ethnic German minority not been forcibly and brutally expelled after World War II (Naimark 2001 discusses many of these ethnic cleansings).

In Latin America there have been attempts to assimilate indigenous populations by forced acculturation, there have been some gentler, gradual assimilations, but there have also been numerous examples of virtual segregation and genocidal ethnic cleansings and massacres. Russia as an empire before 1917, in Soviet times, and now has used all of the possible strategies, from ethnic cleansing of various Caucasian people, deportations, consensual or sometimes forced assimilation, multiculturalism, and shedding of ethnically hostile provinces. (One of Naimark's cases [2001, 85-107] is about the treatment of Chechen and Ingush people by the Soviet Union.) Going around the world we can find numerous examples of all possible strategies, case of extremely intolerant brutality, others of tolerant strategies, and many cases of

both success and failure with each particular approach. What is important is to admit that turning heterogeneous populations into nations is a long and complex process. It may be accomplished relatively peacefully, but it has always and everywhere had the potential to become violently conflictual.

My contention is that to create a working democracy it is necessary to create a sense that, as Liah Greenfeld (1992) put it, the nation becomes the central political identity of all, or almost all within the state's borders. Swiss or Indian multiculturalism, Czech and Slovak peaceful separation, separation after a long period of repression, bloodshed, and civil war as between the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain, or tolerant assimilation, as in the United States with white immigrants can all work. So can forced assimilation, as happened with many ethnic and religious minorities in France; but if the process is incomplete, that risks producing permanent ethnic conflict, as has happened with Kurds in Turkey (McDowall 1997, 418-444). Segregation works only as long as the segregated community is so totally marginalized as to become completely impotent, but it can work to unite a majority against the segregated minority as it did in the United States for almost a century after the Civil War. To finally achieve full democracy in the United States meant ending segregation and moving toward a version of tolerant assimilation. (Many Americans call this multiculturalism, but they are mislabeling what actually happened.) Genocide and ethnic cleansing can also work. Turkey may be a very imperfect democracy, but it is difficult to imagine any kind of a viable democracy, or even a Turkish state in anything close to its present borders if the Armenians and Greeks had remained demographically significant communities in Anatolia and Istanbul. The relatively smooth transition to democracy in most of eastern and central Europe after 1989 would have been much harder had most of each state's major minorities not been massacred or expelled in the twentieth century.

Since it is not my purpose to recommend new genocides or brutal attempts to assimilate recalcitrant communities to dominant national identities, the question at hand becomes: What viable tolerant strategy can be used to create the kind of harmony necessary for democracy to work? As this could be the subject of an entire book all by itself, the answer here must necessarily be brief.

How to Promote Tolerant Democracy

The first rule is to remember is that in many cases ranging from medieval England to contemporary India the elites of various communities based on region, ethnicity, or religion had to be reassured that they would not lose their property, their local power, or their opportunities to gain from being part of the state. That remains important today.

Playing by such rules almost necessarily diminishes the possibility of having full democracy. It has long been known that tolerant (Zakaria would say liberal) democracy has to protect minorities from majorities, but it is at least if not more important to protect communal leaders, that is the elites who are also seen as the protectors of their communities against competing other groups. It is those elites, particularly their younger and best educated members who are the

ones most likely to start revolts against the state on behalf of their supposedly persecuted communities if they are dissatisfied. If they are not guaranteed security of opportunity, it will be very easy for such young elites to persuade many in their communities to oppose the state. Democratic elections cannot resolve this issue. Elites in each of the participating communities have to be given substantial reasons to participate in the political process that may eventually lead, but perhaps not right away, to democracy. Only then can democratic bargaining gain a foothold.

Civil society organizations, so highly touted as the basis of democracy from the time of Tocqueville until now, can help only if they are led by elites who accept the nation, and therefore, are willing to gradually democratize because that does not threaten either their interests or their communities' future prospects. Then the leaders of these communities become willing to bargain with each other as representatives of their groups. If at first elites are not chosen democratically, no matter. Democracy must be put off in favor of something like what the English and Americas first had, bargaining between elite representatives of various local and communal interests. Once they had learned how to do this democratic institutions had some chance of developing.

At all times property rights need to be respected. That is more important than establishing democracy, because democracies in which the rights of various ethnicities, religions, or regions are not guaranteed have little or no chance of working.

This, however, raises a very difficult question. Tolerance is not simply a matter of bargaining between elites or respecting property rights. The United States had this well before it became tolerant of non-whites, and we know that deep prejudices can persist long after minorities are no longer a threat to the nation. Given the fact that intolerant exclusion can work, and that many of Europe's democracies built national solidarity by persecuting and in many cases destroying minorities, how is this to be avoided? The only solution is to eventually move beyond community toward acceptance of the primacy of individual rights. As long as Jews, Tutsis, Chinese, Armenians, Catholics, or any other group are treated as entities that are characterized by their own rules, customs, and group rights, but in which all the members of that community are essentially the same and only have rights through their group, tolerance remains a very fragile commodity. Adam Seligman shows in his paper in this volume that accepting different others is more than a matter of tolerance; individualizing rights involves privatizing differences in way that could hardly exist in the pre-Enlightenment past.

India is very far from having achieved that level of generalized acceptance of individual over communal rights, and none of the Western European democracies really did until sometime in the twentieth century. Until that happens, it is possible to hold nations together through bargaining between elites and communities. But instituting mass voting creates the opportunity for communal leaders to gain power by promoting prejudice and discrimination.

Therefore, during the long period in which democracy remains very imperfect (as it still is in India, for example, where local elites manipulate results

to keep themselves in power, and where the appeal to caste and sectarian passions remains an ever present danger), some attention must be paid to instilling those Enlightenment notions that individual rights are important. This means eventually accepting the idea that no one should be characterized primarily by ascriptively assigned ethnicity, religion, or regional membership, or, at least, that those ascriptive qualities are of secondary importance. That is a multi-generational transformative project. It only happened recently in the West, and cannot be imposed on non-Western societies. Such notions must develop within each society, and come from their own intellectual elites. In the meantime, it would be well to recognize that progress can be made in creating more stable modern societies without necessarily insisting on what Westerners consider to be formal democracy, absolute respect for differences, or extensive individual rights. It is hard enough to maintain such values in long established liberal Western democracies, much less imposing them on others.

As national solidarity is being built, as elites are integrated into a functioning and secure system of bargaining for political power, and as greater respect for individual rights and greater tolerance become more widely accepted, economic growth is also vital. If every group feels it has more to gain by remaining loyal to the nation than by leaving it, or trying to seize power to exclude others, the long, tedious process of building liberal democracy is made far easier.

If all this sounds like a very tall order, it is. Premature democracy in divided societies is likely to cause more harm than good. Excluding local or other ethnically and religiously based elites as part of democratization is a prescription for disaster. Neglecting the reality of intolerance and the general lack of respect for individual rights in most societies turns the search for democracy into a vain exercise, but creating tolerance and respect for differences without the support of local elites is impossible. Democracy must develop as a set of alliances between elites, and only over time can its more basic values be instilled.

That is how some Western societies did it, and it is foolish to pretend that it was easy. This does not mean that non-Western societies cannot achieve some version of liberal democracy. Some have gone quite far in that direction, but with differences that unduly disturb Western observers (Bell 2006). Quick elections, imposition of institutions by outsiders who do not know the local situation, and preaching from afar are not the way to do this.

We can now answer the question posed at the start of this essay. Can democracy help resolve deep communal divisions? Yes, but much has to be done to establish the right institutions before full democracy can work. Ultimately, part of this work has to be a change of certain values and attitudes about ethnicity and religion, but that is a final step that can neither be forced nor accomplished before the right institutions are in place and working well. In other words, some version of liberal democracy can be spread, and once it is in place, it can work wonders in mitigating ethnic and religious conflicts. But establishing tolerant, lawful, functioning democracies requires patience, generations of hard work, and a willingness to accept very incomplete and different versions of that democracy for a long preparatory period.

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