

Ye Myint

Dissertation Proposal

A Comparative Study of Democratic
Experiences of Burma and Indonesia in
1950's-1960's

A Comparative Study of
Democratic Experiences of Burma and Indonesia
in 1950's-1960's

Introduction

Burma and Indonesia bear striking similarities in their political histories. Currently, Indonesia is in the process of re-establishing a democratic system in the country after three decades of authoritarian rule while Burma is still struggling to free herself from the grip of military-imposed authoritarianism. Just as there are differences between the two nations in terms of culture, religion, and geography, there are also parallels in their political experiences.

Both had experienced western colonial rule and, to a lesser or greater extent, had fought against it. The struggle for independence in both countries were led by young nationalists who were, ironically, educated by the colonial institutions. These young leaders had supported the Japanese overthrow of the Western colonial powers in Asia during the Second World War and many of them received the military training which Japan's Imperial Army provided for them. When both nations gained independence in the years following the conclusion of the Second World War, parliamentary democracy was adopted by these young leaders as the system of choice to begin a new era as independent nations, with prosperity and unified nation as goals. Unfortunately democracy lasted only a decade or so in both countries as their parliamentary systems dramatically collapsed in the late 1950's and early 1960's, followed by some three-decades of authoritarian rule.

To justify their undemocratic take-over of state power, authoritarian leaders in both countries depicted the parliamentary systems as meaningless imitation of Western political forms which resulted in partisan bickering, deadlocked government, and political and religious polarizations, ultimately pushing the countries to the edge of national disintegration. As history made a full turn around in both countries, it became evident that authoritarian rule, built on strong state and suppression of civil and political rights, did not fare any much better than parliamentary democracies either. The collapse of Suharto regime in Indonesia in the late 1990's and that of Ne Win's military regime¹

¹Ne Win's military regime of 1962-1988 superficially assumed leftist structures and ideology but was a military regime

in late 1980's in Burma were even more dramatic than the collapse of parliamentary democracy in both countries.

Today, as both countries are striving to establish democratic political systems again, it is crucial as well as instructive to look back into the past and learn lessons from the failed experiences with democracy through which both underwent during the 1950s-1960's. After all, today's global trends show that democracy has emerged, along with free market, as the best political choice for countries striving for stability and prosperity. However, we cannot assume that establishing and consolidating democratic institutions and practice to be smooth and seamless. History has shown that such a process could be one of a dramatic failure as happened in Burma and Indonesia in 1950's-1960's.

As a comparative political analysis of this period, this study will emphasize the questions of why democracy failed in both countries, what common factors were in play to bring about such a failure, and what are the implications for today's proponents of democracy in both countries. Inside and outside Burma, comparison between Indonesia and Burma has been intriguing to both pro- and anti-democracy camps. Just as Indonesian's New Order had been an inspiring model to the leaders of the Burmese military regime, its spectacular collapse in the late 1990's was a source of encouragement to the Burmese democrats. To contribute to the literature of democracy in these two countries, this study dips deeper back into history to analyze why democracy failed in the first place following their independence from colonial rule.

Democracy in Post-Colonial Period and Its Collapse

Emergence of democratic systems in Burma and Indonesia in the late 1940's falls into what Samuel Huntington calls "the Second Wave" of democratization in modern history.² Just as the Allied occupation promoted democratization in European and Asian countries, the end of Western colonial rule at the time brought about newly independent countries where a democratic form of government was adopted. Burma's independence at the beginning of 1948 and Indonesia's independence at the end of 1949 ushered in parliamentary democratic governments.

intrinsically.

² Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratization in Late Twentieth Century (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), P.16-20.

During the Second World War, the Japanese-supported nationalist leaders of Burma and Indonesia were able to fill in the shoes of the Colonial rulers, though as puppets of the Japanese military rule, before the return of the colonial powers. Japanese-trained and armed indigenous armies had already existed before such a return, with a resolve to achieve independence by all means. However, the colonial powers, the British and Dutch, were not disposed to grant independence to these countries. In Burma, the British colonial government returned with a policy to continue with British rule at least three more years. The Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) led by Aung San, which was the umbrella organization of pro-independence Burmese forces, had to politically manoeuvre for three years to gain independence from the British, with the solidarity of popular support, its paramilitary forces and its determined leadership.³

In Indonesia, the struggle for independence was even harder. Two days after the ending of the Second World War, on August 17, 1945, Sukarno and Hatta declared the Republic of Indonesia with a temporary constitution. Fighting broke out between the Indonesian nationalist forces and the Dutch as soon as the latter returned to the islands. After about three years of fighting and with the international mediation from the United Nations Security Council, Indonesia's independence war ended and the country was granted independence in 1949.

For approximately two decades following their independence, the two countries came under parliamentary democratic regimes. In the case of Burma, the young nationalist leadership, who led the independence movement, adopted democratic constitution largely modeled on those of Britain and Yugoslavia.⁴ As regards to the question of why a parliamentary democracy system, not any other system, was adopted in Burma, could be answered citing to several factors. First of all, it was the system which the emerging elites, that is, those young nationalist leaders of the independence movements, knew best. Given that the emerging elites in a colony had been nurtured in the democratic system of government and had

³ Josef Silverstein, Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977), P.18.

⁴The bicameral Burmese parliament was based on the British system, which was supplemented with the trappings of a federal to similar to those of Yugoslavia at the time to accommodate the interests of various ethnic minorities who inhabit the hilly frontier regions.

come to believe in democracy as an ideal to be cherished and achieved, these elites would strive for an independent state with such a system because this was the model best known to them.⁵ This is especially the case if these elites are Western-educated and aspired for positions in the governments of the independent states.⁶ Ideologically, the goal of the new Burmese leadership was to create a government, blending the liberal democratic values inherited from the British with the socialist goals and values which were in vogue at the time and which they heartily learned during their formative years at Rangoon University.⁷

In addition, it is instructive to point out that some representative institutions were already in place in Burma long before independence. As for Burma, which was a part of British India, the British Government announced in 1917 that the goal of the British policy in India was the gradual realization of responsible government within the British Empire. The Empire's decision to do so was in response to the political agitations led by the nascent nationalist organizations such as the General Council of Burmese Association (GCBA) and its predecessor, the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA, which called for self-determination and "home rule." Largely to calm these nationalist clamors, the British introduced limited representative institutions. At the local levels, municipal committees were introduced since 1874, which were formed of about 35% of elected members.⁸ Rural District Councils were set up in 1884 and, at the national level, the Legislative Council was enlarged in 1917 to 103 members, of which 79 members were elected.⁹

However, the more important and practical factor which contributed to the choosing of the parliamentary system in Burma

⁵ Leslie Palmier, "Indonesia's Rejection of Tradition", Asian Affairs 20(2)(1989): 195-204.

⁶ Syed Farid Alatas, Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia (London and New York: MacMillan Press and St. Martin Press, 1997), P.111.

⁷ Josef Silverstein, Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977), P.54.

⁸ J.S. Furnivall Colonial Policy and Practice (Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1956) P.142-145.

⁹ Ibid, P.151 and 160.

in those days was the need to accommodate concerns and interests of non-Burman peoples who populate the frontier areas. A union which would encompass all these areas, with constitutional guarantees to benefit from unity while maintaining some degree of autonomy for them, was envisioned. A bicameral parliamentary system, but with the Chamber of Deputies, which elected the prime minister and to which he was responsible to, and the Chamber of Deputies for which seats were allotted to ethnic and social groups to reflect the states' social and ethnic composition.¹⁰ Together, the two chambers approved appointments of judges to the High and Supreme Courts, elect the ceremonial President, approved constitutional amendments, and passed legislation.

As regards Indonesia, the factors which contributed to the emergence of a parliamentary regime in the country was more complex. Parallel to Burma, the Dutch colonial authority did indeed some representational institutions in the Netherlands Indies to clam Indonesian nationalist aspirations. However, in comparison to Burma, where Burmese political parties, starting in 1937, ran in elections to form cabinet governments which were responsible to the British Governor,¹¹ the Dutch introduction of representative forms of governance in Indonesia were extremely limited and nominal. The Dutch colonial government restricted and repressed nationalist politics and inhibited the gradual development of representative government in the colony.

Starting in the early 1900's, the Dutch began to grant some degree of legal political rights to the peoples of the Dutch East Indies, apparently to match the accentuation of social divisions which accompanied the development of capitalist economy in the country.¹² In 1915 the general rights of political association and

¹⁰ The 1948 Constitution divided Burma into 6 geographical entities: Burma proper, the largest which comprises the lowland Burmese heartland where the majority inhabit and five states of outer regions where various ethnic groups live. For detailed treatise of the 1948 constitution, please see Maung Maung, Burma's Constitution (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959).

¹¹ The Burmese prime ministers and their cabinets were granted powers over the ministries responsible internal matters only. Ministries of critical importance were, such as finance, defense, and foreign affairs, along with the frontier areas, were directly controlled by the British Governor's office.

¹² J.D. Legge Indonesia (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1964), P.102.

assembly were introduced. In 1918, the colonial government agreed to the establishment of the Volksraad or People's council. The council was an advisory body whose membership was partly elected and partly appointed, on the basis of a small and racially defined franchise. Feith analyzed that beyond this point there was no progress and thus little experience with representative government was obtained by the Indonesians.¹³ No matter how limited the degree and scope of such representative institutions and the experience in their execution were, they provided the many of the new leaders of Burma and Indonesia some degree of confidence that such systems were viable in their newly independent nations. From a more practical standpoint, when negotiating with the colonial powers for independence, as Feith pointed out, national self-respect caused these nationalist leaders to strive for democracy as this was the way they could show the colonial powers that they were capable of self-government along democratic lines.¹⁴

Indonesia's parliamentary democracy system of 1950-1957 in fact evolved following the creation of the 1945 Republic, which was in contrast to the Burmese parliamentary system which was adopted from time of its independence. Indonesia's 1945 Constitution, which was prepared for the declaration of independence in August 1945 following the Japanese surrender, was modeled on the presidential system and the Five Principles or Pancasila.¹⁵ The constitution was intended to be a short-term document to help stabilize the country. It granted considerable power to the president and was vague in many ways, making it susceptible to different interpretations. This constitution lasted through the Indonesian independence war until the Dutch and Indonesian forces reached a settlement¹⁶ in 1949 which created what was called the Republic of United States of Indonesia

¹³ Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962) P.7-8.

¹⁴ Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962) P.44.

¹⁵ The Five Principles are (1) belief in God, (2) national unity, (3) humanitarianism, (4) people's sovereignty, and (5) social justice and prosperity.

¹⁶ Indonesian independence was achieved as a result of both fighting and negotiation. Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962) P.15.

(RUSI) in which the Indonesian Republic, which was formed under the 1945 constitution, was a constituent member along with the outer states.

During the time of the Republic of Indonesia (of the 1945 constitution), some political developments had taken place which would effect a move away from the concentration of powers in the presidency. A more open political system, in which political parties were allowed to compete for power, which in effect was a parliamentary system, was called for by various political organizations. A coalition of politicized youth groups (Permuda) and leftist pressed for change for a open political system to widen political participation. The force of their argument was so great that the authoritarian, centralized nature of the 1945 constitution began to crumble.¹⁷ In October 1945, Vice-President Hatta issued an order to transfer the president's provisional powers to a working committee. A month later, the government acknowledged the right of all Indonesians to for their political parties.¹⁸ Put in a nutshell, various political forces of the time successfully initiated a move toward a parliament system which would provide them an arena in which they could contend for power and pursue their interests.

The most important of these parties were the Masyumi (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims), the Parti National Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party or PNI), and the Socialist Party (PSI). The Indonesian communist party (the PKI) and other smaller parties also emerged. In place of a formal parliament, until such a parliament emerged, a Central Indonesian National Committee (Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat: the KNIP) existed under the 1945 constitution. The committee was presided over by the president. As political parties emerged, the KNIP's membership was extended to incorporate all the regions and major political parties. A coalition of parties formed the government and the cabinet was headed by a prime minister who was responsible to the KNIP. The rule of this proto-parliament was not clearly specified. Sukarno's prestige and power as the president had some degree of fluence on the choice of the prime minister.

Following the independence form the Dutch in 1949, Sukarno was sworn in as the president of the RUSI and Hatta the prime minister.

¹⁷ Robert Cribb and Colin Brown, Modern Indonesia: A History Since 1945 (London and New York: Longman, 1995) P.48.

¹⁸ Ibid. P.48.

By that time, political power essentially lay with prime minister Hatta and his colleagues who had managed the revolutionary struggle and administered the affairs of the Republic under siege by the Dutch.¹⁹ During that time, a popular movement which called for the conversion of the federal republic (the RUSI) into a unitary republic. The movement had enormous popular support and political parties of various colors participated in it.²⁰ A provisional constitution was drafted by a committee whose members were members of the parliament representing the several parts of the RUSI and the Republic. The provisional constitution they produced was effectively a parliamentary one. Effective power was placed in the hands of a prime minister and the president was made a mere figurehead of state.²¹

The parliamentary democracy governments that came into existence in Burma and Indonesia in the late 1940's after their independence lasted only about one and half decades. In Burma, the parliamentary government was abolished by the military coup d'etat led by General Ne Win in 1962. In Indonesia, the parliament was abrogated when President Sukarno introduced what was termed "guided democracy" in March 1957.²² The collapse of democratic systems in Burma and Indonesia during that period falls in Samuel Huntington's category of "the second reverse wave (of democratization)." In the developing world, political development and regime transitions were

¹⁹ J.D. Legge Sukarno: A Political Biography (New York and Washington, Praeger Publishers, 1972) P.241.

²⁰ Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962) P.71.

²¹ J.D. Legge Sukarno: A Political Biography (New York and Washington, Praeger Publishers, 1972) P.242.

²² Though Ne Win and Sukarno took down parliamentary democracies the same decade, there was no historical evidence that indicates any contact between them. Only U Nu (Burmese prime minister of the time) and Sukarno had intimate relationship as the leaders of the non-alignment movement. When Ne Win came to power in the 1962 coup, relations between Burma and Indonesia were minimal because of Ne Win's self-imposed isolationism and Sukarno's pro-West and anti-Communist stance. Chi-Shad Liang, Burma's Foreign Relations: Neutralism in Theory and Practice (New York, Westport, Connecticut, London, Praeger, 1990) P.107.

taking on a heavily authoritarian cast during that period.²³ Rupert Emerson called 1958 "the year of collapse for democratic constitutionalism" because in Burma²⁴, Pakistan, and Sudan, the military took over state power in 1958 and ,in Indonesia, the existing regime was being supplanted by an unstable authoritarian rule by President Sukarno.²⁵

In Burma, the AFPFL led by U Nu²⁶ was in firm control of the parliament and government since the independence in 1948. In 1956, the opposition party the National Unity Front(NUF) shook the AFPFL's political domination by winning forty eight seats in the parliament and capturing thirty percent of the popular vote. U Nu stepped down as a result and handed the party leadership over to Ba Swe and Kyaw Nyein who became prime minister and deputy prime minister respectively. A year later, the AFPFL split into two factions, "clean AFPFL" and "stable AFPFL". The ensuing bickering by the two factions in the parliament resulted in governmental deadlock and it was agreed by both factions to temporarily hand over the power to the Army led by General Ne Win. When new elections were held in 1960, U Nu's clean AFPFL won the majority of parliamentary seats. However, in March 1962, the Army staged a successful coup and took down his government, effectively ending the period of constitutional government in Burma.

In Indonesia, the 1950 constitution put an end to the RUSI and established a parliamentary system reducing Sukarno to the role of a ceremonial figurehead. This marked the beginning of the constitutional democracy period in the country which saw altogether seven cabinets(seven governments) until it was ended by Sukarno's guided democracy in 1957. Several political parties came into existence following the independence. The most important were the

²³ Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratization in Late Twentieth Century(Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), P.16-20.

²⁴ In 1958, Prime Minister U Nu transferred power to the Army led by General Ne Win constitutionally. The issue is still debated to this day whether U Nu himself decided the transfer of power or he was pressured by the Army to do so.

²⁵ Rupert Emerson, "The Erosion of Democracy" Journal of Asian Studies 20, November 1960, P-1.

²⁶ General Aung San, who led Burmese independence movement, was assassinated along with 7 other leaders 5 months before independence. U Nu carried on the leadership of the AFPFL afterwards.

Masjumi, the Partai National Indonesia (PNI), the Socialist Party and the Indonesian Communist party (the Parti Kommunis Indonesia or PKI). The general elections of 1955-56 brought in an uneasy coalition of the PNI, the Masjumi and the Nahdatul Ulama parties. The PKI won sixteen percent of the vote in the 1955 election but was left out of the cabinet that emerged. Consequences of the exclusion was profound. The PKI, with the support of the PNI, called for a transitional cabinet whose composition was more in line with the election results. When a second cabinet was later formed to broaden the membership, the PKI was still excluded. These developments had important ramifications. First, there was a drastic decline in the prestige of the parliamentary system and the political parties. Second, the removal from the second cabinet of the Masjumi party, vice-president Hatta and the PSI, which the PKI called the reactionary forces, gave president Sukarno and the PKI a stronger position. Third, president Sukarno and the PKI came to aligned together as a political force, and Sukarno was not a ceremonial figurehead of state anymore in practical terms.²⁷ Citing intense political maneuvering among the coalition members and other characteristics of parliamentary democracy which are susceptible to criticism, President Sukarno and his allies called for an end to Western Institutions and its replacement by, according to him, a system more suited to Indonesia.²⁸

The Failure of Parliamentary Democracy in Burma and Indonesia,
and Theoretical Framework

Before proposing a theoretical framework to analyze why parliamentary democracy failed in the two countries under study, it is relevant to review that part of the democratization literature which discusses the conditions that bring and/or sustain democracy. Such a literature proposes four distinct categories of preconditions which are conducive to the rise of democracy in a country. They are socioeconomic conditions, political culture, social structure, and external factors.

Firstly, modernization theorists, following the thesis by Seymour Martin Lipset, expounds that economic development creates socioeconomic conditions which are conducive to the coming of, or the sustaining of, democracy: these conditions are expansion of

²⁷ Donald Hindley, The Communist Party of Indonesia: 1951-1963 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1964) P.125-127.

²⁸ J.R.E. Waddell, An Introduction to Southeast Asian Politics (Sydney, New York, London, and Toronto: John Wiley & Sons Australia Pty. Ltd., 1972), P.199-201.

autonomous entrepreneurial middle classes; industrialization and the movement of labor into manufacturing furthering the differentiation and organization of the urban sector; improvements in literacy, education and communication; mass media expansion and the emergence of an autonomous civil society.²⁹

Secondly, there are theorists who argue that political culture is an important factor in bringing and/or consolidating democracy. Political culture concerns the system of values and beliefs that defines the context and meaning of political action. Such literature asserts that, among other variables, Protestantism supports democracy whereas Catholicism hinders it, citing the Latin American cases. It was pointed out that some cultures which emphasize hierarchy, authority, and intolerance, such as Confucianism and Islam, work against democracy.

Thirdly, there are scholars who emphasize the social structure of society, that is, the specific classes and social groups which favor or disfavor democracy. They follow Barrington Moore's classic statement which claims that "No Bourgeoisie, No Democracy."³⁰ This category of theorists assert that bourgeoisie, who are urban dwellers, has been an indispensable element in the growth of democracy. Unlike landowners who are anti-democratic, the bourgeoisie class is in favor of democracy because such a system is conducive to their interests.

Lastly, there are writers who emphasize external factors, that is, the economic, political, ideological, and other elements that constitute the international context. Such has been the case in the wave of democratization in the 1980's and 1990's, which Samuel Huntington called the third wave, that took the world by storm. The fall of communism and the coming of democracy and free market as a universal phenomenon created an international context which was conducive to transition to democracy.

²⁹ Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and S. Martin Lipset, "Introduction: Comparing Experiences with Democracy," in Politics in Developing Countries Comparing Experiences with Democracy ed. Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset. (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990), 11-13.

³⁰ Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of Modern World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), P-418.

The independence from the colonial powers and establishment of parliamentary democracy systems in Burma and Indonesia following the conclusion of the World War II was made possible by the dramatic changes in the international context at the time. By and large, the victory by the Western democracies in the war and decolonization by those democracies brought about a number of new states in Asia and Africa. In former colonies, such as Burma and Indonesia, democracy was transplanted from their mother countries. While democracy in these countries was largely a transplant, the two countries had to struggle with the processes of the consolidation of political institutions and state-building simultaneously following their independence. Thus, right from the outset, Burma and Indonesia were faced with the daunting tasks of democratic consolidation and state-building while their socioeconomic conditions and political culture were below the levels which scholars of the democratization literature consider as being conducive to democracy. After all, the two countries had their economies based on traditional agriculture and their experience with democracy as practiced under the colonial rule was only at the elite level in urban areas.

Huntington in The Third Wave analyzed three problems in developing and consolidating new democratic political systems.³¹ There are three issues for the new democracies to deal with: transition problems, contextual problems and, and systemic problems. Transition problems concern new democracies which had a authoritarian past. These countries have to establish democratic institutions to replace authoritarian institutions and their personnel while they have to weed out authoritarian remnants and punish those who committed serious human rights violations. Because the establishment of democracy in Burma and Indonesia did not follow a repressive authoritarian past, this problem did not exist. Instead, a multitude of problem stemming from the process of state-building ensued.

Such problems coincided with what Huntington calls the contextual problems, which refer those problems which were specific to individual countries, which any government in power would have to tackle. Communal and/or religious conflicts, insurgencies, regional antagonism and the like are such problems. Both countries were faced with insurgencies based on regional, ethnic and/or ideological differences as young democracies in the late 1940's.

The last category of problems which Huntington identifies as being troubling to new and developing democracies is of particular importance to this study. Huntington calls these problems "systemic

³¹ Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratization in Late Twentieth Century (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), P-209.

problems" which refer to the problems stemming from the workings of the democratic system itself.³² Just as authoritarian systems suffer from the problems that arise from their particular nature, such as concentration of decision-making and lack of feed-back, democracies suffer from the peculiar nature of democratic process, such as political stalemates, unstable governments, domination of special interests, and the like. This notion of systemic problems in democracies correspond to what Larry Diamond calls "three paradoxes" of democracies.³³

Diamond correctly points out that democracy is the most admired political system but also the most difficult to maintain. The cases of parliamentary democracies in Burma and Indonesia which failed after about a decade were just two instances of the numerous democratic failures in modern history. In explaining democratic breakdowns, Diamond presents three analytical constructs which he termed "three paradoxes of democracy."³⁴ Such paradoxes are intrinsic to all democracies and particularly troubling for new ones.³⁵ They refer to a number of factors in democratic political process which pull in contradictory directions. Without proper balancing, these contradictions ultimately lead to democratic breakdowns.

In analyzing and explaining the fall of parliamentary democracies in Burma and Indonesia, this study makes use of

³² Ibid. P-210.

³³ Larry Diamond, "Three Paradoxes of Democracy", in The Global Resurgence of Democracy ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) P-111.

³⁴ There is another treatise on the democratic breakdowns, which is seminal and voluminous: The Breakdown Democratic Regimes edited by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stephen (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). However, the authors clearly reminds the reader that "We doubt that our analysis would be applicable to the breakdown of post-independence democratic institutions in Africa and Asia, as in Nigeria or Pakistan, for it is limited in almost every case to states whose existence was consolidated before they became democracies." P-7.

³⁵ Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, "Introduction", in The Global Resurgence of Democracy ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) P-xv.

Diamond's democratic paradoxes as the basic theoretical framework.³⁶ In Diamond's analysis, there are three of such paradoxes, the first of which concerns the contradiction between conflict and consensus. By its very nature, Diamonds points out that, democracy is institutionalized competition and conflict.³⁷ Competition and conflict are quintessential parts of a democratic system, and without competition and competition, there is no democracy. However, if competition and conflict in a democratic system becomes too intense, then it runs the risk of disorder and political instability, which might ultimately lead to the system breakdown.

The second paradox as discussed by Diamond is the contradiction between representativeness and governability. Representativeness refers to the distribution of political power among elected leaders. Governability refers to the need that, while political power is dispersed, there must be sufficient concentration of power and autonomy of power to choose and implement public policies. This requires a party system that can produce a government stable and cohesive enough to represent and respond to competing groups and interest in society without being paralyzed or captured by them.³⁸

The third paradox of democracy concerns the contradiction between consent and effectiveness, which in many ways are connected to the second paradox. Democracy requires public consent. Public consent requires legitimacy which in turn requires effective performance of government. However effectiveness may be sacrificed

³⁶ Diamond's analysis of the three paradoxes of democracy is based on the evidence from a comparative study of experience with democracy in 26 developing countries, which was conducted with Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset in a four-volume series titled Democracy in Developing Countries. Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., Democracy in Developing Countries: Vol.2 Africa; Vol.3 Asian; and Vol.4 Latin America (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988 and 1989).

³⁷ There are several different conceptualizations of democracy. In addition to the competitive model of democracy, there are participatory, communitarian, and unitary models of democracy. Joseph Schumpeter, Robert Dahl and Seymour Martin Lipset are proponents of the competitive model. Kaare Strom, "Democracy as Political Competition," American Behavioral Scientist 35(4)(1992):375-396.

³⁸ Larry Diamond, "Three Paradoxes of Democracy", in The Global Resurgence of Democracy ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) P-112.

to public consent because those elected are most likely to be reluctant to pursue unpopular policies, no matter how wise or necessary such policies may be.³⁹

If these three contradictions are not mitigated by way of proper institutional designs, civic culture, and other arrangements such as federalism, new and developing democracies are likely to break down as happened in Burma and Indonesia in the late 1950's and early 1960's. These three analytical constructs are adopted for this study because it was exactly those three paradoxes that played an important role, among others, in the failure of parliamentary democracy systems in Burma and Indonesian in the late 1950's and early 1960's. On the other hand, a plausible, alternative analysis might be suggested by employing the strengths and weaknesses of parliamentary vs. presidential systems. Since both Burma and Indonesia were parliamentary systems at the time, it would be plausible to point out the weaknesses of parliamentary systems and expound that such weaknesses might have led both systems to their demise. However, such an analysis might not be water-tight because whether parliamentary or presidential systems was chosen, the two countries would have to face with the three paradoxes of democracy as democracies.⁴⁰

This study therefore finds Diamond's three analytical constructs, or three paradoxes of democracy, as the most fitting theoretical framework to employ in trying to answer the question of why democracy, parliamentary democracy in particular, failed in Burma and Indonesia. As is the case, the fall of democracy in the two countries in the late 1950's and early 1960's is considered the dependent variable. Those three intrinsic contradictions or paradoxes of democracy are treated as independent variables. Being contradictions, each is composed of two opposing concepts: conflict and consensus, representativeness and governability, and consent and effectiveness. These concepts will be proposed and defined as follows.

In this study, the term "conflict" refers to the conflict of interests in society which is the basis of democratic competition in a democratic system. It is the basic driving force for political competition and it is the most generic agent of political activity. However, conflict in a democratic system should be resolved on the basis of consent and cohesion. The term "consensus" here refers to

³⁹ Ibid. P-113.

⁴⁰ For a detailed treatment of parliamentary vs. presidential system, as well as other topics on institutional designs, see Matthew Shugart and John Carey Presidents and Assemblies (New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

the public consent to obey law and accept government authority. Once the conflict of interests are ironed out and become laws or governmental policies, citizens are expected to obey such laws or policies so that the whole political process runs smoothly. As Diamond cited, it exactly why Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba called democratic political culture "mixed" because it balances the citizens' role as participant, in other words, as agents of competition and conflict, with their role as subject, that is, obeyers of state authority.⁴¹

The concept of "representativeness" refers to the dispersing of political power and holding it accountable. Political power is distributed among elected leaders rather than being concentrated in the hands of a few. Representativeness permeates all kinds of groups, regional, ethnic and religious. The concept of "governability" refers to the ability of the government to act decisively and effectively though political power is dispersed. As Diamond points out, government must not only be able to respond to interest-group demands but also it must be able to restrain them and mediate among them as necessary.⁴²

The concept of "consent" refers to public approval of governmental actions and its performance. Popular assessment of government, or public consent, is important in democratic systems because government leaders and their political parties will be judged in the next elections by the people. This is the basic democratic principle of "rule by the people." Such is not the case for authoritarian governments which disregard popular consent. Lastly, the concept of "effectiveness" means the ability of the government to pursue policies which are wise and necessary, even if such outcomes of policies are tangible only in the long run. Democratic governments are always under pressure to win both public consent and the next elections, which could lead them in many stances to adopt short-sighted policies to appease the immediate demands of the public. Effective government should not only be able to care for immediate demands but also convey long-term benefits for the people and the country.

In this study, the terms such as "regime", "government", and "state" are used in the same token as commonly accepted in the field of political science. Regime is a particular political system

⁴¹ Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963) P-339-360.

⁴² Larry Diamond, "Three Paradoxes of Democracy", in The Global Resurgence of Democracy ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) P-112.

of government. Government means a set of institutions and people who pass laws and regulation, do administrative work of the country, take care of judicial process and so on. Power and structure of governments are written in a constitution. State refers to a broader notion that includes all people and institutions that exercise power.

Literature Review

While the literature on Indonesia in general is sufficient for this study, there is a dearth of literature in all aspects on Burma due to the closed-door policy of the successive military-dominated, authoritarian regimes that have been in power since 1962. However, because the time-frame of this study is limited from the beginning of parliamentary democratic regimes in the two countries to their fall a decade or so later, that is, from the late 1940's to the late 1950's and early 1960's, there was some cumulation of literature over time on the parliamentary democracy period in Burma which this study will rely on.

The best starting point for the review of the literature for this study would be Herbert Feith's seminal work, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia.⁴³ As Feith reviewed his own work in the 1990's, much of the Feith(1962) is about the way Indonesian leaders at the time who were committed to make constitutional democracy work were repeatedly frustrated and defeated.⁴⁴ Feith formulated a dichotomy of "administrators" and "solidarity-makers" out of the Indonesian national leaders of those days. Administrators were leaders with administrative, legal, technical, and foreign skills, required for running a modern state. Solidarity-makers were leaders with skills in integrative works, cultural mediation, symbolic manipulation, and mass organization.⁴⁵

Feith's point is that the administrators, who largely belonged to Hatta's group, succeeded only to some degree in trying to tackle administrative, military, and economic problems, but not enough to create a new rule-based politics. Ultimately, the administrators

⁴³ Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962).

⁴⁴ Herbert Feith, "Constitutional Democracy: how well it function?", in David Bourchier and John Legge ed., Democracy In Indonesia: 1950's and 1990's (Clayton, Australia: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994). P-17.

⁴⁵ Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962). P-24.

failed because the property basis of their power was weak, their influence over the army was insufficient, and most importantly they antagonized the powerful groups of former revolutionaries who stood to lose by their efforts to make the whole process of government rule-based. As Feith reviewed his work in the 1990's, Feith(1962) reads as if the cards were stacked against constitutional democracy right from the beginning.

Harry Benda (1964) reviewed Feith's book and made counter arguments on Feith's explanation of the fall constitutional democracy in Indonesia.⁴⁶ Benda dismissed Feith's dichotomy of "administrators" and "solidarity-makers" as being too bound to the assumption that Indonesia should adopt Western-style modernization.⁴⁷ He argued that if Indonesia were to modernize, it should do so in its own way rather than following the developmental steps of Western countries. Put in a nutshell, Benda(1964)'s counter-points to Feith's thesis could be summarized as that constitutional democracy in Indonesia in the 1950's was doomed to failure from the start because only a handful of Western-influenced leaders were committed to it while Indonesia's indigenous culture and past experiences were not conducive to it.

Apart from elitist and cultural views, another perspective on the failure of parliamentary system in Indonesia suggests various contingent reasons that stemmed from events of the late 1950's. Mackie(1994) is one of those who held this view.⁴⁸ The article presents four reasons for such failure. First, the immediate cause of the regime crisis which led to the fall of the parliamentary system was the threat to national security by the regional rebellions. Second, the regime crisis was accentuated by the loss of confidence in the system by the regional leaders because of the belief that party-based government was intrinsically weak, divisive, unstable and incapable of solving the nation's economic problems. Third, confidence in the parliament was also damaged by the calls by the coalition of Sukarno and the Army led by Nasution, demanding political reforms for a return to the 1945 Constitution. Fourth and last, the lack of consensus within the cabinet and the

⁴⁶ Harry Bender "Democracy in Indonesia: The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia, by Herbert Feith," The Journal of Asian Studies 23, May 1964, P-449.

⁴⁷ Ibid. P-454.

⁴⁸ Jamie Mackie, "Inevitable or Avoidable? : Interpretations of the Collapse of Parliamentary Democracy," in in David Bouchier and John Legge ed., Democracy In Indonesia: 1950's and 1990's (Clayton, Australia: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994). P-35.

society at large in the late 1950's, which was characterized by a cross-cutting political alignments, also contributed the fall of the parliamentary regime in Indonesia.

In the same vein, Liddle(1992) argued that the spiraling political tensions in the late 1950's was compounded by economic decline. The Korean War stimulated Indonesian economy into a brief boom in the early 1950's, but with the end of the war the economy stagnated for a decade, finally leading to a collapse. The source of the trouble in the parliamentary period was policy inconsistency caused by a weak executive and sharp differences between the major political parties in the parliament. Such an ineffectiveness on the part of the government and the parliament gave Sukarno and the army coalition more leverage, finally leading to the former's decree to return to the constitution of 1945.⁴⁹

Another string of arguments on this subject cites the role of the Indonesian army in those days as the major cause. Lev (1994) and Rahman Tolleng (1992) blamed the Army for it killed the parliamentary regime.⁵⁰ Lev (1994) boldly claims that the army did it because it could and also because it had compelling interests in a quite different political system. He points out that it was clear from the start the army under Nasution's leadership was politically active. The army was ambitious, assertive, and engaged right from the beginning. The army leaders conceived their organization politically from the start, which was wrongly disenfranchised but entitled to a share of political authority. The army wanted to eliminate the competitive interests of the political parties and their claims to priority and favored a centralized bureaucracy and a command economy into which officers could play an important role at will and by right.

Rahman(1992)'s argument is based more on political actors and events than institutions because he asserts that the coalition of Sukarno and the Army led by Nasution were advantaged by the events that took place 1957-58: the vote at the United Nations against

⁴⁹ R. William Liddle, "Indonesia's Democratic Past and Future," Comparative Politics 24(4)(1992):443-462.

⁵⁰ Daniel S. Lev, "On the Fall of the Parliamentary System," in David Bourchier and John Legge ed., Democracy In Indonesia: 1950's and 1990's (Clayton, Australia: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994). P-39. Rahman Tolleng's argument was cited by Herbert Feith in Herbert Feith, "Constitutional Democracy: how well it function?", in David Bourchier and John Legge ed., Democracy In Indonesia: 1950's and 1990's (Clayton, Australia: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994). P-22.

Indonesia's claim to West Irian, an abortive attempt to assassinate Sukarno, the seizure of the remaining Dutch businesses by the PNI, communist unions and the army, the departure of Dutch nationals, and the flight of inter-island fleet. It was expected that the coalition of Hatta and regional councils would be able to force Sukarno to accept a compromise. However, the snowballing of these events put Sukarno and the army in a better position to wrangle for political power.

From an economist point of view, Schmitt (1963) argued that, based on economic interests, the political arena was polarized. Inflation and the undervalued exchange rates of the 1950's hurt exporters of the outer islands and benefitted imports of the inner islands. The Masyumi represented the former politically while the PNI-NU-PKI group the latter. Traders tended to support the Masyumi and government bureaucrats the latter. Such a political polarization existed from the early 1950's onward, leading both sides towards the clash that reached its climax in 1957-58.⁵¹

Finally, there is an argument by Sundhaussen(1989), made common as it was frequently iterated by the New Order government, that the civilian leaders who were leading the political parties and in charge of government had failed to deal with the threats to national unity and that democracy had proved an unsuitable form of government for Indonesia.⁵² With the benefit of hindsight, the literature on the fall the parliamentary regime in Indonesia in the late 1950's could be grouped into two major categories: the literature that argues that constitutional democracy was doomed to failure from the outset because it was not culturally fit and historically irrelevant to Indonesia and the literature which asserts that constitutional democracy was culturally possible in the 1950's just as it is today.⁵³ The second category of the literature diverse into structuralist explanation(Feith (1962)), multifactoral explanation(Mackie(1994)), and institutionalist explanations(Lev(1994) and Tolleng(1992)) while the first category was supplemented by economic arguments by such writer as Schmitt(1963).

In comparison to the literature on Indonesia regarding the subject of this study, the literature on Burma is sparse. However,

⁵¹ Hans O. Schmitt, "Post-Colonial Politics: A Suggested Interpretation of the Indonesian Experience, 1950-1958," The Australian Journal Of Politics and History 9(2)(1963): 176-183.

⁵² Ulf Sundhaussen, "Indonesia" in Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset ed. Democracy in Developing Countries, Vol 3: Asia (London, Adamantine Press, 1989).

⁵³ Herbert Feith (1994), P-23.

there are decent works on this topic which this study finds invaluable. Silverstein(1977) believes that, though there are many reasons for the failure of parliamentary democracy in the late 1950's and early 1960's, the root was the inability of the party system to become a deep and meaningful part of the society.⁵⁴ He correctly points out that residents of rural Burma had little understanding of and practically no commitment to party ideals and institutions. Such an assessment is important because of the fact that, being a traditional agrarian society, about 85% of the population lived in the rural areas. In addition, a power struggle among the leading political elite gave the people no reason for confidence in their leadership. To compound this problem, the government was not able to put down insurgencies and curb the predatory activities of the rebels and bandits which had been terrorizing the populace. He points out that more than a decade of democracy had provided no evidence that it was a system that could provide good government.

Silverstein(1977)'s second major point was the inability of the national leaders to solve the minority problem.⁵⁵ The people of the plains and those of the hills, that is, Burmans and non-Burmans, did not trust each other. Fears of Burmanization among the non-Burmans and fears among the military that secession of the non-Burman areas would leave the country indefensible constantly pressured the political leadership. None of the propositions to alleviate these fears appealed to the majority of the country. The issue of possible secession by the non-Burmans was one of the major causes of the collapse of the parliamentary democracy in the early 1960's.

From statist perspective, Taylor(1987) saw the collapse of the parliamentary democracy and the coming of military dictatorship only as the "reassertion of state".⁵⁶ To him, the Burmese state had been displaced during the previous twenty years from the dominant position to that where it was only the most important competitor for power ,public support ,and obedience.⁵⁷ It was because, according to Taylor, the state became enfeebled and incompetent, and, for twenty years, capture of state's carapace became the

⁵⁴ Josef Silverstein, Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1977) P-30.

⁵⁵ Ibid. P-31.

⁵⁶ Robert Taylor, The State in Burma (Honolulu, The University of Hawaii Press, 1987)P-292.

⁵⁷ Ibid. P-11.

purpose of almost all political action by various groups.⁵⁸ Such groups included the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), the Burma Army, the Burma Communist Party (BCP), the Karen National Union (KNU) and other less known groups. Taylor thus saw the collapse of the parliamentary regime both as the ending of a weak and displaced state and the reassertion of state.

From the perspective of political culture, Gyi(1983) points out that there are loveable characteristics in Burmese personality and society, but the seamy side of that personality is invariably associated with the streak of authoritarianism often displayed when in power.⁵⁹ The study was done on the Burmese thought patterns and political culture, based on the premise that authoritarianism could only thrive on authoritarian soil.⁶⁰ From 1044 to 1885, Burma lived under absolute monarchy for 800 years. Absolute authority was never challenged by any liberal forces until it was swept away by the British colonialism in 1885. Such a long experience under absolute rule resulted in the traditional Burmese thought pattern which was made up of attitudes that encouraged authoritarian rule. Out of 11 attitudes, which Gyi(1983) identified as being receptive to authoritarianism, the most important ones are (1) the government(the executive and bureaucracy) is evil, (2) that oppression and misrule was natural, (3)that it was futile to stand up against the government, and (4)the government is not the concern of the people.⁶¹

Those attitudes developed under the absolute monarchy, had parallels in social life, and even displayed during the parliamentary democracy period in the House debates and in the Executive-Judiciary relationship. The study quoted a former Supreme Court Judge that the Judiciary had in many cases failed to do its duty for fear of the Executive. In brief, there did exist authoritarian tendencies even among the leaders of the parliamentary democracy regime. Thus, the study concluded that authoritarianism thrived in Burma because the Burmese soil was indeed fertile for authoritarianism. This conclusion was supported by Silverstein(1977) who wrote that many of the traditional Burmese values and attitudes which characterized precolonial Burma persisted through the colonial period into the period of

⁵⁸ Ibid. P-217.

⁵⁹ Maung Maung Gyi, Burmese Political Values: The Socio-Politico Roots of Authoritarianism (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1983) P-vi.

⁶⁰ Ibid. P-3.

⁶¹ Ibid. P-37.

independence. The Burmese continued to accept the authority from above and have never widely absorbed the idea that authority stems from the people.⁶²

Callahan(1998) argues that those who oppose the SLORC/SPDC rule and long for the days of elections and civilian rule of the 1950's and those who are sympathetic to the SLORC/SPCD and evoke the images of political instability and turmoil and weak governments of those days are both incorrect.⁶³ She points out that the period of parliamentary democracy was hardly civilian rule because, except for the Rangoon proper, political bosses and their pocket-armies ruled the rest of the country and elections were rigged in most cases through thuggery and violence. She argues that the collapse of the parliamentary system in Burma was not inescapable though such a system should have looked quite different after a decade or so. She assessed the 1950s' as that it was not the parliamentary politics that crashed the system but it was the problem of governability.

Her article asserts that the problem of governability was found not only in border areas but also in the regions where railroads and telegraphs could transport government policies. The rushed production of the 1947 constitution was not able to solve the problems regarding the minority-dominated areas. The little institutional capacity which the AFPFL government inherited from the British disintegrated in the chaotic early years of independence. Beset by a multitude of problems, the parliamentary governments were in no position to start a state-building process. Therefore, Callahan believes that problem of governability was the main cause of the parliamentary system in Burma - not the system itself.

From a very different perspective from other scholars on Burma, Aung-Thwin(1989) believes that, apart from other historical reasons for the coup of 1962, which toppled the parliamentary regime, there was a more fundamental cause, which had to do with the collective psychology of the majority Burmese.⁶⁴ According to

⁶² Silverstein (1977) P-35.

⁶³ Mary P. Callahan, "On Time Warps and Warped Time: Lessons from Burma's 'Democratic Era'", in Robert I. Rotberg eds. Burma: Prospect for a Democratic Future (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Washington D.C., The World Peace Foundation and Harvard University International Development and Brookings Institute Press, 1998)P-59.

⁶⁴ Michael Aung-Thwin, "1948 and Burma's Myth of independence" in Joseph Silverstein eds. Independent Burma at Forty Years: Six Assessments (Ithaca, New York, Cornell Southeast

Aung-Thwin, British colonial rule produced inferiority and insecurity in the Burmese and such a psychological impact did not go away with the formal independence in 1948. The coup of 1962 was a manifestation of the collective psychological desire to establish "real" independence, which necessarily included purging one's colonial past. And, he asserts that the majority of the Burmese accepted the coup as a good thing because they felt the coup set right what had been wrong.

Methodology and Significance of the Research

This study applies a methodology called comparative historical method with a small-N. Liphart(1971) defines the comparative method as the small number of cases, entailing at least two observations, but less than about twenty.⁶⁵ This study is historical because it covers a period in both Burma and Indonesia from the time of independence to the fall of the parliamentary regime which was established following the independence. It is a small-N study because the focus of this study is only on two countries in comparison. Small-N studies could face the problem of the weak capacity to sort out rival explanations and that of "many variables, too few cases."⁶⁶ However, given the scarcity of time and financial resources, the small-N analysis is more promising than the superficial statistical analysis of many.⁶⁷

The major research question asked in this study is why parliamentary democracy regimes failed in Burma and Indonesia? Following this question other relevant questions are asked as follows. Was the system itself responsible for such a failure? And, what other factors/variables were also at play to cause such a failure? The major thesis of the study is that democratic systems have intrinsic contradictions which are the inevitable products of the system itself. If these contradictions are not mitigated with institutional and other arrangements until a democratic political culture develops to mitigate these contradictions, the system itself is most likely to collapse.

Asia Program, 1989) P-24.

⁶⁵ Arend Liphart, "Comparative Politics and Comparative Method," American Political Science Review 65(3)(1971):683-691.

⁶⁶ David Collier, "The Comparative Method: Two Decades of Change", in Dunkwart A. Rustow and Kenneth P. Erickson eds., Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives (New York, Harper and Collins Publishers, 1991) P-9.

⁶⁷ Liphart(1971), P-685.

This study largely relies on secondary sources such as published government documents, statistics from international organizations, scholar journals and periodicals, and scholarly writings on the subject in focus regarding the two countries. Thus, research for this study is mainly done in the library. The scarcity of literature on Burma is an important issue to this study. However, the extensive collection of literature on Burma both in English and Burmese at the NIU library offers a invaluable source of information. The other source of information on Burma is the Library of Congress collection Burma which this study also relies on.

This study will contribute to the literature on democracy, particularly the topic on democratic consolidation. It will do so by providing insight into what are possible pitfalls, which could arise from the system itself, for the democratic systems which are being consolidated. It will presumably affirm Diamond's thesis of three paradoxes of democratic systems by looking at the evidence provided by the two cases of democratic failures. Then, it will attempt to identify what other major factors also contributed to this failure and whether such a failure could have been avoided or not. In doing so, it is ultimately intended to provide an insight, as well as lessons, for today's democrats in Burma and Indonesia so that history would not repeat itself again.