The Contemporary Value of Hybrid Regime

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Abstract. A hybrid regime is a classical system of government in ancient times, and its spirits have been handed down to the present day, resulting in the separation of powers and its widespread use. Today, however, there is very little discussion of the hybrid regime. In some countries where democracy is in transition, or where democracy is in trouble, it is worth considering a hybrid regime. This article analyses the positive impact of hybrid regimes on the socioeconomics of Singapore and Latin America at different points in their history and points out the contemporary value. The value of a hybrid regime lies precisely in its spirit of balance. Whenever a system of government goes to extremes - whether democratic or authoritarian - it gives rise to chaos and social tensions. Reconciliation is therefore necessary. The importance and practical significance of the hybrid system of government as a system of government of reconciliation cannot be overstated.

Keywords: Hybrid regime; contemporary value; Singapore; Latin America.

1. Introduction

In the modern framework of political analysis, the definition of polity types is a key issue in political science. It is generally accepted that a more formal typology of polity dates back to the time of Aristotle. Many policies emerged in response to advances in productivity and social reforms. By the twentieth century, it was generally accepted in academic circles that modern polities generally consisted of three categories: democracies, authoritarian, and totalitarian. However, in concrete practice, it is not difficult to find that the political development of post-World War II countries has undergone a very tortuous process. Most countries choose to shift from authoritarian to democratic regimes, only to bring about numerous failures and disruptions. Among them, the people also suffered from the transition's failure or the polity's collapse. Fundamentally, this is because the so-called democratic transition theory is, in a sense, a product of the experience of Western countries, and once it is applied to countries that are economically and politically backward, it does not work well, leading to a crisis in the simple system of government that has been hastily established. In this context, some countries have been able to achieve socioeconomic development and prosperity through a mixture of political systems. It is therefore worth examining the role played by hybrid regimes, which are known for their balance, in the transformation of contemporary regimes.

Much has been written about hybrid regimes. Some scholars have focused on the study of ancient mixed polity and its historical process [1], exploring the origin, evolution and development trend of the theory of mixed polity and conducting an in-depth analysis of the theoretical ideas of the mixed polity [2-6]. However, most of the studies on modern hybrid polity have focused on its function as a transition from authoritarian to democratic politics, while neglecting to explore the significance of hybrid polity itself. A typical example is The Transformation of Authoritarian Rule - Tentative Conclusions on Uncertain Democracy. It presents a general theory of transition, summarises four possible paths from authoritarian rule to democratisation, and analyses the certainties and uncertainties in the transition process. However, the article focuses on the process of democratisation and its facilitators and blockers, simply dichotomising authoritarian and democratic regimes, while neglecting to examine the social form of change, the hybrid regime.

Most studies of modern hybrid regimes can be approached from the perspective of their socio-political and economic conditions, and most of the literature focuses on evaluating them at a high theoretical level in terms of their manifestations. Some literature emphasises the electoral and stability of hybrid regimes by citing countries such as Russia as an example [7]. Few analyses focus on the

political economy of Latin America, which has a mixed tradition and a low level of economic development. On this issue, some scholars argue that modern hybrid polities combine authority and democracy to provide good social order, thus prompting governments to improve people's livelihoods [8]. Some scholars have also analysed the economic development and challenges of the Hong Kong region under the theory of mixed polity [9].

In Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism, Levitsky and Way argues that the main factors affecting the sustainability of authoritarianism and hybrid regimes are international influence and the organisational power of the state. In turn, their international influence is determined by the power of the state. It is therefore easy to see that to study the contemporary value of the polity is to study international competitiveness and state control of the economy, and ultimately the state as a political and economic entity. The first step is to define the state as an object of study. Marx Weber gave the state three keywords: bureaucracy, strong state and legitimacy. But this theory is a theory of the state based on European experience, and the theory can hardly explain the construction of the emerging nation-state after the Second World War. Huntington then reflected on Weber and introduced the concept of 'social power' in the context of Third World countries, extending it to 'state capacity' and 'state autonomy'. The concept of "social power" was introduced in the context of Third World countries, and by extension, "state capacity" and "state autonomy". Migdale, however, builds on this with a new interpretation of Huntington's theory - that the state is born in society, and therefore the analysis of the state polity in the international world must also be based on the interaction between the state as an administrative subject and social forces.

To sum up, there is generally less research on the contemporary values related to the hybrid polity through its influence on the economic and social control of the state and the enhancement of its competitiveness, but in recent years, as the differences between the North and the South continue to widen, in order to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor in the world. There is a need for research on its relevance.

2. Dilemma of Democratization and Hybrid Regime

Beginning in the nineteenth century, many colonies emerged from backwardness and poverty to gradually establish themselves through revolution. Most of these regimes, however, had a certain authoritarian character. On the one hand, this is partly because they were mostly established by warlords who grew in disarray. This created an inertia: to keep gaining power, warlords inevitably relied on their violent institutions - the army, and the police system - to maintain order and provide security of power in the process of domination and conquest. As the development of military power became the primary source of sustaining rule, the rulers inevitably invested most of their finances to exclude others, contributing to the growth of authority. This fits in with Samuel Huntington's statement that in modern history "military governments and military coups, military rebellions and military regimes have been a continuous phenomenon in Latin American countries". On the other hand, it is only with centralised power that socio-economic development can be promoted. These authoritarian regimes matured in a continuous process of development.

Indeed, most of those who tried to escape this cycle during the regime's infancy faced failure. The President of Mexico, Antonio López de Santa Anna, presided over many reforms: to maintain social stability he proposed disarmament, to the detriment of the warlords; he advocated the abolition of church-backed compulsory taxes, blocking a part of the church's economic resources; and to train people and create an independent bureaucracy, he planned to transform the colonial legacy of church education into a secular one, which weakened the church's intellectual control. These reforms angered many powerful local forces, the landowning class and the Catholic Church, with extremely limited effect.

There is no denying that authoritarian regimes are a classic path of national development. Developed countries also practised authoritarian rule before democratic reforms were introduced. Under Elizabeth I, the enclosure was achieved, piracy and the slave trade flourished, and Britain

continued the primitive accumulation of capital. For these newly liberated countries in Latin America, direct democratic reform without the economic and social foundations in place was a very risky venture. Therefore, authoritarianism was necessary. But as socio-economic development took place, democracy gradually became an inevitable trend. But the rule of law is not strong and the foundations of society are not solid in latecomer countries. If one pursues the development of democracy, political authority is often weakened and the power structure of society becomes unbalanced. At the same time, an over-emphasis on authoritarianism, where democracy is seen as a means rather than an end, can also lead to an imbalance in the social structure. At this point, the hybrid regime took the stage as a unique institution that transcended the dichotomy between democracy and authoritarianism.

The definition of a hybrid regime today seems rather vague. It is sometimes divided into different categories, such as 'quasi-democracy', 'exclusive democracy', 'electoral democracy', 'flawed democracy', and 'electoral authority'. 'Defective democracy', 'electoral authoritarianism', etc. The scholarly community tends to use the broad concept of 'hybrid polity' to summarise it. Most of these concepts see this phase as a short-lived stage of democracy and authoritarianism, rather than a complete and stable system that can be implemented over time. In reality, however, the balanced wisdom of these 'hybrid regimes' is highly beneficial to social development.

When it went back to ancient times, the hybrid regime was once considered the best regime in some areas. For instance, Rome, where a hybrid regime was adopted, lasted longer than Athens, a democratic city-state, and Spart, which advocated authority, largely because of the wisdom of the separation of powers. Secondly, since people are inherently unequal, in terms of the number of assets they possess, their family's educational background and their personalities, choosing and trusting the elite is the way to go on most occasions. Ordinary people may not be good at or even interested in politics, so allowing everyone to vote is not always the most rational choice, let alone allowing citizens to take turns ruling in Athens.

Although the political systems of today's democracies are not the same as those designed in Athens a thousand years ago, and the quality of citizenship has improved, there are some drawbacks. Take the United States, for example. There, political parties take turns in power and appear to be balanced, while they take votes by vetoing each other, leading to many irrational policies. Also, about the fact that many authoritarian states face failure. In Latin America, leaders in charge of executive power can go beyond their term of office by illegal means, as in the case of Bolivian President Evo Morales, who was accused of rigging elections; the army interferes in politics, as in the case of Chávez, who was imprisoned on the island by the opposition on 11 April 2002. Two presidents who came to power through elections between 1997 and 2007, one was overthrown by a military coup, and one was removed from office after losing the support of the army. Overall, the chaos in Latin America lies not only in its social context but also in the conflicting nature of the electoral democracies and other political arrangements on which it was founded.

Thus, when countries seek to optimise and transform their political systems, they can include mixed polities as a reference.

3. The Contemporary Value of Hybrid Regime

It has been argued that the current hybrid polity falls into two broad categories, one of partial tolerance in authoritarian rule and the other of authoritarian interference in democratic rule [10]. This paper will then analyses the mechanisms and examine the policy implications of these typical hybrid regimes, using Singapore and Latin American countries as examples respectively.

3.1. Singapore

The Singapore Constitution provides that Singapore has a system of separation of powers. The President is the Head of State, Parliament is unicameral and the legislative power is exercised jointly with the President; the President appoints the leader of the majority party in Parliament as Prime Minister and appoints the Cabinet on the nomination of the Prime Minister, which is collectively

responsible to Parliament; and the judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court and its subordinate courts.

Theoretically, Singapore has an electoral and multi-party system that fits well with the definition of a minimum democracy in Western democratic theory. In practice, however, Singapore has a "one-party rule". This is because in all elections since 1959, the Action Party has always had an overwhelming majority in Parliament, and there is zero chance of an opposition party gaining power in an election. This has been described by some scholars as a "semi-competitive party system". Lee Kuan Yew also made no secret of the fact that "the PAP is the government, and the government is Singapore."

Thus, when looking at Singapore in the real world, it is easy to see that it is a country that gives its people some freedom within an authoritarian system. For example, in the area of press and publication, although the Singapore government has not enacted the Press Act in the form of legislation, it has enacted many specific laws to restrict the mass media, especially in the area of foreign media.

The rapid industrialisation and modernisation of Singapore in just 30 years are largely due to its authoritarian system. This is what Huntington referred to as an 'authoritarian transition', whereby political order should take precedence over democracy and the country should modernise its economy under authoritarian rule before opening up its political system to democratic competition. This is because only an authoritarian government has sufficient capacity for exploitation to concentrate national efforts on economic development and the primitive accumulation of capital. The basis of national wealth is industrialisation, which requires the primitive accumulation of capital, and the primitive accumulation of capital requires a political system to match it. In this context, authoritarian power is necessary to concentrate on the factors of production.

Industrialisation requires intensive factors and large amounts of capital. So, in countries where the economic base is lacking, without an authoritarian system, there will not be enough capacity to obtain a surplus of production for industrialisation, the economy will not develop, the capacity of the state will not develop, the regime will not be consolidated and it will only lead to poverty and chaos. Only with an adequate economic base can a democratic system emerge.

Under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, the leader of the People's Action Party (PAP), Singapore's economy has continued to grow. According to World Bank statistics, Singapore's GDP was less than $1 billion in 1965, while in 1990, it had a total GDP of over $36 billion. In these three decades, Singapore's GDP had doubled thirty-fold, transforming itself into the new economic powerhouse of Asia. It is rare for a small country to be able to achieve economic take-off in such a short period of time with resources that cannot match those of a large country in the Cold War landscape. And it was under the authoritarian leadership of the PAP that these economic achievements were achieved.

Some scholars have also summarised the shortcomings of a multi-party system, including political disorder, dispersal of talent, reduced efficiency and fragmented identity [11]. In practice, a one-party system, guided by authoritarian ideology, can integrate all social forces and mobilise all resources for development goals. This is in line with the Action Party's policy of "economic development and social stability over democracy and freedom" and the need for economic development.

According to Huntington's theory, when there is a sufficient economic base, the individual's livelihood is secured and the mind begins to awaken. The free market began to develop as demand and supply failed to satisfy the people. At a certain stage in the development of capitalism, civil rights begin to be demanded to safeguard its interests. At this point, there is an evolution towards democratic institutions and the decline of authoritarianism. Singapore's social activities in recent years have echoed this.

However, this process has been slow and incomplete. Singapore remains an authoritarian state with limited democracy. One reason for this is the concentration of talent and the inertia of the one-party system. Another reason is the uniquely Asian values of collectivism, big government and compromise. Additionally, under the global economic setback following the epidemic, Singapore will continue its hybrid regime for some time.

3.2. Latin America

Unlike Singapore, Latin America was full of countries that were constantly at war and at odds with each other and had a complex array of domestic forces. In 1808, Napoleon invaded Spain and Portugal. The Spanish royal family was captured and the Portuguese were exiled to Brazil. This event officially sparked the Latin American independence movement. Influenced by the bourgeois revolutions in Europe and the United States, the emerging bourgeoisie in Latin America took advantage of the crisis in the Spanish and Portuguese suzerainties to launch an independence movement and overthrow the colonial governments.

The war triggered social disruption and undermined the social control of the old classes, thus providing space for the new social groups that emerged to take control of society. Against this background, various political forces and their representatives emerged. The rise of warlords with armies, who conquered each other in battle and seized power, brought the caudillo system to unprecedented heights. The Caudillo system was a trinity of warlords, landowners and the Church, a home-grown dictatorship unique to Latin America, which prevailed in most countries of the country from the 1820s after independence until the 20th century. The Caudillo consisted of three groups: officers of colonial militias who came from Latin American landowning families and were appointed before the independence movement; municipal council officials from the former colonies who were bought, supported or themselves came from landowning families by the large plantation landowners; and many of the officers of the revolutionary armies that emerged during the independence period who rode the wave, the emerging warlords. However, whichever group it was, they all belonged to the same interest group. The Caudillos relied economically on the large estate owners, politically on the dictatorship of the military to maintain their political rule, and ideologically in cahoots with the Church to centralise their rule over the people.

In the context of authoritarian rule, people can only have a scant amount of political rights. In the course of socio-economic development, the history of Latin America and the construction of the modern state has led to the creation of a system of government that combines presidential and parliamentary forms of government, known as a mixed system of government, or semi-presidentialism. The concept of the semi-presidential system was first developed by the French political scientist Maurice Duverger and is characterized by the existence of a presidency alongside a prime minister (or president of the Council of Ministers) who is responsible to the legislature. Scholarly research on this system of government has focused on France, exploring the needs of the times and the spiritual significance of its semi-presidential system. However, it cannot be ignored that since the 1990s presidential and semi-presidential systems have become a trend in the third wave of democratisation. Particularly noteworthy in these regions is the combination of presidential or semi-presidential systems with multi-party systems.

Many scholars have questioned the combination of semi-presidential and multi-party systems, arguing that they are fragile and potentially divisive in the volatile Latin American context. However, this has not been the case. Carlos Pereira and Marcus André Melo point out that between 1979 and 2006, Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Panama, all of which had a combination of presidential and multi-party systems, largely achieved stability in their emerging democracies [12]. And the success of such mixed systems of government is based on the following reasons.

The first reason for the introduction of semi-presidential and multi-party systems is path dependency, i.e. countries with a long tradition of military rule are more likely to opt for a presidential system after a democratic transition. The reason for a modified presidential system, i.e. a semi-presidential system, is that in this transition the presidential system inherits from authoritarian rule, on the one hand, better accountability, better discernment, better separation of powers and checks and balances, and the fact that the president usually becomes a better political arbiter. As an improvement on the presidential system, the semi-presidential system, as a conciliatory institution, tends to overcome the rigidity of the presidential system's original fixed terms of office, achieve effective separation of powers and checks and balances, as well as having better arbitration and mediation

mechanisms. In other words, presidential powers are designed to be flexible and subject to checks and balances.

The effects of hybrid regime in Latin America have been remarkable. It is easy to see that in Latin America today, many countries are experiencing economic development and social stability, and exchanges and cooperation between countries are becoming more frequent. This is because Latin American countries are aware of the importance of balance and have carefully analysed the problems in their own context, developing theories that are appropriate for them, rather than copying the systems of other countries and following academic trends.

4. Conclusion

Mankind has always repeatedly tried to establish the perfect polity. However, as times change, so do the systems of government. There is no doubt that a hybrid system of government is not just a myth from distant history, but a practical system. With this philosophy in mind, this article analyses the institutions of two countries or regions, Singapore and Latin America, as examples. The results are clear - Singapore has found a balance between authoritarianism and democracy, allowing for limited democracy while maintaining an authoritarian path. Latin America has gradually transformed itself into a democratic government after authoritarian rule, but due to the instability of its social base, authoritarianism still plays a role in stabilising the social order to some extent.

The role of the hybrid regime is clear to all. Today's politicians and scholars should also move away from the stereotypes of hybrid regimes as 'incomplete', 'transient' and 'useless', recognise the contemporary value of the balanced spirit of hybrid regimes, and they should also learn from the historical experience of hybrid states and develop themselves.

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