

Editorial

Dear Friends,

With the advent of the 21st Century, world ushered into an era of multiple changes and challenges. Changes are witnessed in the triumph of liberal democracy after the demise of the Cold War and disintegration of the Soviet Union. This wave of democratization has been characterised as a new era of global politics. Huntington identifies this transformation as Third Wave of democratization. Collapse of communist regimes of eastern Europe and struggle for restoration of democratic regime in (Myanmar) Burma testify these epochal transformations. This process of democratization has resulted as a response to deepening legitimacy problem of authoritarian regimes, poor economic performance at domestic front and lack of inclusive development. It led the masses to question the legitimacy of authoritarian system that prevailed in the Soviet Union and east European countries. Further, rising expectations following the economic liberalisation led to demands for raising the standards of living, better education and health facilities for the growing middle class. In addition to it, policies of international organisations, role of Gorbachov and emphasis on human rights also greatly contributed towards democratization.

This process of democratization is not sudden rather it began to unfold gradually across the globe since the 19th century. With the expansion of capitalism liberal democratic systems were founded in countries like U.S., France, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Belgium and Switzerland. By the beginning of twentieth century movements for democratization were witnessed in other European countries. Democratic movements got fillip in the wake of the defeat of the Axis powers. It was gaining ground in Asia, Africa and Latin America. There was a popular pressure for change in the countries like Brazil, Costa Rica, Uruguay etc. However this democratic system encountered enormous problems in social, political and economic domains. It was soon experienced that consolidation of democracy is increasingly becoming difficult as there was a big hiatus between the aspirations of the people and performance of the state. It was experienced that consolidation of democracy was becoming quite difficult. It was also felt that merely introduction of liberal democratic institutions was not enough. It called for wide ranging social and economic reform and actual political empowerment through free & fair election & elimination of corruption. There were failures also due to the fact that powerful elites in African and Asian countries resisted democracy and social reforms. Scepticism about democratization was reflected in scholarly writings. Doubts were raised about viability of democratic system. But soon the emergence of democratic pressure in sub-Saharan Africa, end of apartheid regime in South Africa followed by the holding of non racial elections emergence of democratic struggle in China and disintegration of the Soviet Union further testified the potentials of democracy. Subsequently the collapse of Berlin wall triggered the changes in favour of democratization characterized as 'third wave of democratization'.

But the million dollar question is how to sustain democracy in the era of globalization? Deepening of democracy requires more than holding periodic elections. So far we have succeeded only in introducing minimal democracy what is required is full democratization of the state. Hierarchical structure of bureaucracy and multiple sources of authority in decision making buttress the fact that the state itself is not democratic in character. There is dire need of combining institutional changes with representative changes i.e. whose voices matter in decision making. It also required functional transformations i.e. what ultimately state is doing for safeguarding the common interests of the masses. We will have to craft new mechanisms of institutional transformation in the form of

redefining the role of party system, electoral system, the relationship between executive and legislature and the status of judicial review. These institutions require transformation in the wake of globalization. Reforming the police and criminal justice system is urgently required in order to bolster a culture of democratic rights with humanitarian face.

The path of democratization is blocked by the prevalence of non-democratic culture, poor state capacity, authoritarian legacies engrained in state practice. This process is further complicated by the nationality problem, separatist aspirations, ethnic conflicts and civil wars. Changes brought about by globalization in the sphere of economic reforms also impinge upon state capacity and democratic governance. Liberalization of import export regimes, currency devaluation rise in interest rates and privatization, removal of subsidies and lower state spending on social welfare and devaluation of currency have given birth to new challenges for democratic systems of the world in general and Asia and Africa in particular.

Now this is high time for the scholars of Political Science to delve deep into these issues and examine the impact of third wave of democratization. If triumph of democracy is unable to address the issue of gender, environment, state capacity, inclusive development and crafting a real participatory order then the global process of democratization will remain simply a pious wish. Democratization would come to its logical end only when state is able to assert its authority as a viable sovereign entity in the community of nations, protects the rights of its citizens and create congenial conditions for all round social, political, cultural and economic development of the common mass. In most of the Afro-Asian and Latin-American countries, the process of democratization requires a deep and dispassionate review in order to ensure a legitimate share of the common man in the governance.

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