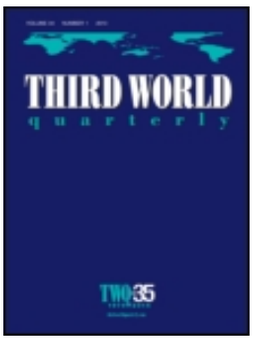

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Epilogue: political succession in the Third World

The literature on political succession in the Third World, in its broadest sense as the process by which one leader gives way to another, has overwhelmingly focused on the violent and unconstitutional overthrow of Third World governments—usually by military *coups d'état*, though also on occasion by revolution or urban upheaval. In concentrating on 'regular' succession, the replacement of one leader by another without violence, and within a generally controlled political environment, this volume not only breaks new ground, but also draws attention to important changes which have been taking place within Third World states themselves. Especially perhaps in the formerly colonial states which have become independent since 1945, this reflects the end of the post-independence era, during which 'newness' and artificiality were important ingredients in political instability, and a process of 'settling down' into political routines which reflect their own internal balance of power and the growth of an indigenous political tradition. The increasing salience of regular political succession in the newest and most artificial of all Third World states, those of sub-Saharan Africa examined in this volume by Arnold Hughes and Roy May, is the most striking evidence of a phenomenon apparent throughout the Third World.

Two immediate reservations must be made. The first is that violence is a vastly more important mechanism for leadership change in the Third World than in the industrial states, and is likely to remain so. Despite the growing role of regular succession, most leadership changes in sub-Saharan Africa, and many of those elsewhere, still take place by force. Among the states considered here, the constitutional accession to power of General Momoh in Sierra Leone, leap-frogging over senior politicians from the ruling party, must have at least partly reflected a calculation by the outgoing President that bringing in the army legally might be the only way to prevent it taking over by *coup d'état*; and even in African states where no coup has yet taken place, such as Kenya and Zambia, it must at least be an open question whether the succession to Presidents Moi and Kaunda will actually be decided within the present civilian political structure. Even constitutional successions, such as those

of Rajiv Gandhi in India and Joachim Chissano in Mozambique, have taken place under the shadow of violent death, in at least one of these cases (and possibly both) by assassination. The South Korean succession, even if it should come about peacefully, will do so (as in Argentina and the Philippines) amidst the ruins of a collapsing dictatorship.

The second is that even regular succession is not necessarily to be welcomed, if its effect is simply to entrench and perpetuate a regime which itself is regarded as bad. The increasing stability of Third World regimes is due not only to their ability to reach some acceptable accommodation with the major political forces within the societies which they govern, but also to the growing sophistication and often ruthless application of the means of repression at the state's disposal—much of which is in turn supplied for the purpose by the regime's external allies. Many readers will, I suggest, be disconcerted and indeed dismayed by the extent to which both Brian Loveman and Andrew Nickson see the likely succession in Chile and Paraguay as taking place within the parameters established by the Pinochet and Stroessner dictatorships; and the one thing about which one can be certain in the succession issue in China and North Korea, is that the people of those two states will have no direct input into it whatsoever. Among all the cases of actual succession examined in this volume, it is only in India that the new ruler has had to confirm himself in power through an election offering the voters any effective choice; and among the cases of putative future succession, it is only in South Korea that there seems any prospect that such a choice will be available. Succession, in the great majority of cases examined here, is a process by which groups of people already in power seek to perpetuate that power, by no means always necessarily to their peoples' advantage. But none the less, other things being equal, stability *is* to be welcomed. Not only is violent political conflict destructive in itself, but a regime which is thinking of succession in the long term, will be able to order its resources more constructively than one which is thinking only of survival in the near future. While short-term survival often emphasises the role of force, long-term strategies are more likely to involve some attempt to meet the economic and welfare needs of the people.

The more stable a political system, however, the less succession will be an issue. Succession matters so much in many Third World states, because of the critical role played by the top leadership in managing the various individuals, groups and interests which cluster round the state

itself. This is not to say that Third World political systems are mere personalist regimes, to be governed at their rulers' whim; there have been such regimes, of course, under a Bokassa or an Idi Amin, but they have been disastrous not only for their leaders, but also for the state itself. Most rulers are all too aware of the constraints imposed on them by domestic fragmentation and external dependence, and their task is to hold together the different elements of the political system through a set of relationships which, because of the weakness of institutions, are often essentially personal connections with the leader himself. Once the leader changes, his successor will then in turn have to build up his own network of power relationships, establishing his credentials with the same or a different coalition of interests, and seeking to build his personal strength through a direct appeal to the aspirations of his people. But because this process has to be gone through anew by each new leader, the period of succession is bound to be one of difficulty, and potentially of crisis.

It is a process which varies, obviously enough, with the nature and scale of the state concerned. In small states such as Tunisia and Sierra Leone, it may literally be a matter of dealing with individuals. Bourguiba's superbly arrogant 'System? What system? I am the system', exaggerated perhaps, is none the less not entirely ludicrous. In Sierra Leone, an extraordinary amount turned on the relationship between the two successive Presidents and a single Lebanese businessman. The politics of India or China is on an altogether different scale. Politicians must in some sense represent the interests, or control the power, not even of millions but of hundreds of millions. Yet at the top, all power is personal, and all politics turn on the decisions and capacities of a very small number of people—a point made particularly clearly by Rajiv Gandhi's attempts to grapple with the legacies of his mother's rule over India.

What ultimately makes stable succession possible is the shared interest of a wide range of key social sectors in the continuity of the state and the economy. Though some people, at some times, have an interest in violence and upheaval, most people for most of the time do not. Vincent Khapoya wisely points out that Kenyans looking across their borders to Uganda or Ethiopia, or even to Tanzania, are likely to shy away from radical change or personalist military rule. But at the same time, stability does not happen just because most people want it; there are plenty of war-torn areas in both Uganda and Ethiopia which testify to that. The weakness of political institutions in many Third World states amounts, in effect, to the lack of adequate mechanisms for converting social and

economic interests into political power, and thereby capitalising on a common interest in peace. It is then left to the leader to do what the institutions are unavailable to do, and either the capture of power by an unrepresentative leader, or its misuse by an unskilful one, can put the whole system at risk.

This need to assure stability by bridging the potentially dangerous chasm between one personal ruler and the next, must at least in part account for the fact that in no fewer than four of the fifteen countries considered in detail in this volume, the successor either has been, or is envisaged to be, a close relative of the incumbent ruler. One of these, Morocco, may as a monarchy be reckoned a special case, but it is not to be discounted for that reason. The durability of the Alawite sultanate, and Hassan II's ability to establish himself in power on his father's death, suggest that there may well be advantages in restricting the highest office to the members of a dynasty who bear a special symbolic status. But the most striking example is India. Subrata Mitra is undoubtedly right to dismiss the simplistic myth of dynastic rule, and to emphasise the institutional complexity of the exercise of power in India. But at the same time, Rajiv Gandhi was not just any airline pilot. Both the role of his brother Sanjay, and the speed with which Rajiv was called into politics on Sanjay's death, indicate a strong familial element in Indira Gandhi's style of rule; while the almost automatic turning to Rajiv Gandhi on his mother's death, in which as Mitra shows, India's politicians accurately reflected the feelings of her people, testifies to the place of the Nehru/Gandhi family as a powerful symbol of national unity and popular identification with government, across a very large part of a vast and diverse nation. In the moment of crisis prompted by Indira Gandhi's assassination, it was the family that was felt essential to provide reassurance and continuity. The other two examples of family succession considered here, North Korea and Cuba, are both, perhaps surprisingly, in Marxist–Leninist states. The Cuban case reflects the very small size of the original leadership cadre in the revolutionary war, and Raul Castro's status as, literally, a brother-in-arms, reinforced though this has been by his management of the military in post-revolutionary Cuba. North Korea is by contrast the most extreme and extraordinary example of deliberate dynastic succession, lacking the traditional legitimation of the Moroccan, the popular acclamation of the Indian, or the proved experience of the Cuban heir apparent.

One point which James Cotton's analysis brings out very clearly is the difference in perspective in looking at the succession, before and after the

great leap in the dark has taken place. Here is a leader who, unlike so many (Bourguiba in Tunisia, for example) has foreseen the need for deliberate measures to meet the crisis presented by his own death, and has provided for the succession as carefully as any politician can reasonably be expected to do. The problem is that a North Korea with Kim Il Sung in unfettered control is a very different place from a North Korea from which the Great Leader has been removed. What will happen then, only the future will show; but Cotton's analysis suggests that Kim Il Jong's fingers are simply not on the keyboard that is likely to be playing the tune after his father dies. Underlying this is a more general problem: that the leader in place will see the succession largely in terms of continuity, whereas for almost everyone else in the system, it represents the promise or threat of change. No matter how effectively the ruler has governed, he must have left unsatisfied the ambitions of at least some people who look to his departure for a chance to make their mark. He is likely, too, to have left debts which will be collected once the new regime takes over. Members of his entourage, perhaps of his family, will have used their power in ways that are held against them when their protector is removed. Policies associated with the old man, sacred if unsuccessful when he was in office, will have to be reversed—a process which is often most dramatic in the succession to communist leaders such as Stalin and Mao, and may be so again with Kim Il Sung. In the immediate aftermath of take-over, the new leader will often, like Moi in Kenya, be wise to proclaim that he walks in the 'footprints' of the departed great one. Quite apart from anything else, his predecessor's nominees will still be in all the positions of power to which he appointed them, and any step which instantly threatens them would be foolhardy. Over a period, however, he will need to broaden his constituency, meet at least some of the expectations aroused by his coming to power, move his own men into the posts that matter. One often very effective way of managing the transition is through a period of liberalisation, popular in itself, which at the same time helps the new leader to identify new people and policies associated with the national mood, while using popular reaction to single out the hangovers from the old regime which (or whom) he can safely dispose of. Once the new leader's men and measures are in place, and begin to attract adverse criticism of their own, then the repressive apparatus of the state may once again have to be used, as in Kenya, to protect them. Staying in the old leader's footprints is a confession of weakness, which at best leaves the successor a prisoner of the past, at worst leads to his downfall when he fails to find room for new

people and ideas. The only way in which he can make room, however, is to repudiate at least some of the people and policies which he has inherited. The politics of survival has little place for gratitude. President Moi in Kenya turned out Charles Njonjo, the kingmaker who brought him to power. David Fasholé Luke shows how President Momoh in Sierra Leone has moved out many of ex-President Stevens' intimates, prompting in the process an attempted coup. President Ahidjo in Cameroon picked his own successor in President Biya, yet soon found himself condemned to death, *in absentia*, in the wake of a bloody attempted coup, behind which his hand was detected. Small wonder that President Kaunda of Zambia, in the impasse which Kenneth Good so starkly analyses, apparently finds it impossible to leave office at all.

Succession is often a matter of changing not just men, but generations. Stevens in Sierra Leone, like Senghor in Senegal and Nyerere in Tanzania, was a leader of the decolonising generation, who handed over power to a man brought up, politically speaking, within the independent state. Generational change is especially difficult when it involves the transfer of power from a group of elderly men who are held together by some vital shared experience, to younger (even if late middle-aged) colleagues who lack this vital link with the heroic past. The Soviet Union in the last years of the Great Patriotic War generation of Brezhnev, followed in quick succession by Andropov and Chernenko, provides perhaps the least edifying example. In China, by contrast, as David Goodman shows, the twilight of the old Long March revolutionaries has been accompanied not by sclerosis, but by an extraordinary willingness to experiment, which may indeed be slowed once a new generation of technocrats raised in post-revolutionary China comes to power. Indonesia is another country where generational change is in the offing, due to the peculiar age structure of the officer corps, from which the successor to Suharto is almost certain to come. So too, despite the short life of its current regime, is Iran, where the Islamic revolution brought to power one of the most elderly groups of incoming leaders that the world can ever have seen. Revolutionaries usually reach power young, so that even after nearly thirty years in power, a sixty-year-old Castro and his colleagues still seem to have some time to go.

These are all cases in which the incumbent leaders face little threat to their rule, and in which the successor inherits a system which has at least the appearance of stability. The problems are greatly increased when the new leader takes over because the system through which the old one governed is already falling apart. One of the most critical groups of

Third World states, only partly represented among the case studies included in this collection, are those where a high level of political demand, especially in the urban areas, threatens or destroys the authoritarian basis of the existing government, and where a new leader faces both the high expectations of the masses who have brought him (or her) to office, and the continued power of the agencies of control inherited from the old regime. Only in Iran has a new regime brought to power by urban upheaval been able to destroy the institutions through which its predecessor governed. In the Philippines—currently the salient example of succession politics anywhere in the Third World—President Aquino by contrast ultimately depended on the defection of the military from the Marcos regime before she could claim the fruits of her election victory; and the construction of a stable governing coalition from her own volatile supporters and the remaining institutions of authoritarian rule presents an all but impossible task. Argentina and Brazil appear to have managed an equivalent transition rather more successfully, though in neither could a stable succession yet be said to have been fully secured. Among the states considered here, South Korea is currently undergoing the equivalent crisis of authoritarian succession, the outcome of which remains uncertain—though the combination of a homogeneous population and a rapidly growing economy must increase the chances that it can be managed successfully. There must be important differences for the prospects of peaceful succession to authoritarian rule between countries such as South Korea, Indonesia and Brazil, where dictatorship has been accompanied by rapid economic growth, and countries like Chile and Argentina where it has been accompanied by stagnation. Chile, Paraguay and Indonesia are the other states analysed in this volume where the prospects for stable succession to authoritarian rule must (especially in the two South American cases) be most open to doubt.

These cases of succession to authoritarian rule provide the only examples among the countries examined here where the succession is influenced to any appreciable extent by external pressures. The pattern is always the same. Dictatorial regimes which are supported by the USA, and which serve it well so long as dictatorship excites no very evident domestic opposition, become an acute embarrassment once it becomes clear that severe repression is needed to maintain them. The American perspective then abruptly switches. Whereas dictatorship was previously regarded as a stabilising factor, it is viewed as a destabilising one as soon as the level of opposition threatens to lead to its overthrow by a radical

regime, which will associate the USA with the ousted dictator. At this point, the USA looks for a centrist political leader who will be able to take over with popular support, thus associating Washington with the restoration of democracy. The Philippines, South Korea, Paraguay and Chile all provide examples of this policy at different stages of its development. The Soviet Union may similarly intervene in the succession politics of its client states, though it does not face the problem of justifying its support for dictatorial regimes to a critical domestic audience. In Afghanistan, just like the USA in South Vietnam, it has had to install a new leader who would protect its military and diplomatic investment, without arousing the same domestic hostility as his predecessor. In some states, such as South Yemen (PDRY) at the time of the civil war in January 1986, the USSR had become embroiled in factional conflict within the ruling party. In the communist states considered here, however—Cuba and North Korea, not to mention China—the domestic political structure has been resilient enough to avoid any evident Soviet involvement. Nor is there any indication of Soviet influence over the succession to President Machel in Mozambique, though some sources ascribe an important advisory role to Prime Minister Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. On the whole, however, the evidence presented in this volume suggests that succession is overwhelmingly a matter for domestic political management; and that even when foreign powers have a high interest in the outcome, they usually do not have the leverage needed to influence it, and are obliged to work with whoever is thrown up by the domestic political process.