9

Semi-Dictatorships and Semidemocracies

Some dictatorships have been so elaborately disguised as democracies that they can be difficult to distinguish from the partial or limited democracies, which became quite common during the 1980s–90s with the many transitions from dictatorship. The previous chapter mentioned two different forms of transitional limited democracy:

1. the limited democratisation that may occur in the initial stages of transition from dictatorship; and
2. the limitations on democracy that are to be found in a situation of protodemocracy, in which it is not clear whether a country will push on to full democracy or will relapse into dictatorship.

In addition to these transitional forms there are more stable or consolidated forms of limited democracy (including immobilised protodemocracies) that have lasted for decades. Distinguishing between democratically disguised dictatorships and these various forms of 'dictatorial' democracy can be difficult, but it is an important practical as well as academic issue.

A systematic analysis of this issue was provided by Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1989) as editors of a massive study of Third World democracies (see Figure 9.1). In their preface to this study they pointed out that the 'boundary between democratic and non-democratic is sometimes a blurred and imperfect one' but they identified a graduated range of 'less-than-democratic systems' within this border area (*ibid.*: xvii).

Figure 9.1
'Less-than-democratic' regimes (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1989)

Non-democratic --→---→---→---→---→---→---→---→ *Near*-democratic

1. Pseudodemocracy (and other types of authoritarian regime)	2. Hegemonic party system	3. Semidemocratic system – electoral outcomes deviate significantly from popular preferences

- At the clearly non-democratic end of the range they identified a type of authoritarian regime that they labelled 'pseudodemocracy', in which 'the existence of formally democratic political institutions, such as multiparty electoral competition, masks (often, in part, to legitimate) the reality of authoritarian domination' (*ibid.*: xviii).
- However, the editors acknowledged that pseudodemocracy in certain respects overlaps what they termed the 'hegemonic party system', which is not an authoritarian regime but also falls far short of being a democracy because its frequent use of state coercion and its 'pervasive electoral malpractices' deny opposition parties 'any real chance to compete for power' (*ibid.*: xvii). A hegemonic party system differs from a pseudodemocracy, though, in being more institutionalised and tending to be less personalised and coercive.
- Finally, at the near-democratic end of the range, the editors identified what they termed 'semidemocratic' regimes in which there are competitive elections but:

1. the outcome of these elections deviates significantly from the people's preferences because of

    - limits on the power of elected public officials,
    - restrictions on competition between political parties,
    - lack of freedom and fairness in the conduct of elections, and/or

2. there are limits on political and civil liberties which prevent some political orientations/interests from organising and expressing themselves (*ibid.*: xvii).
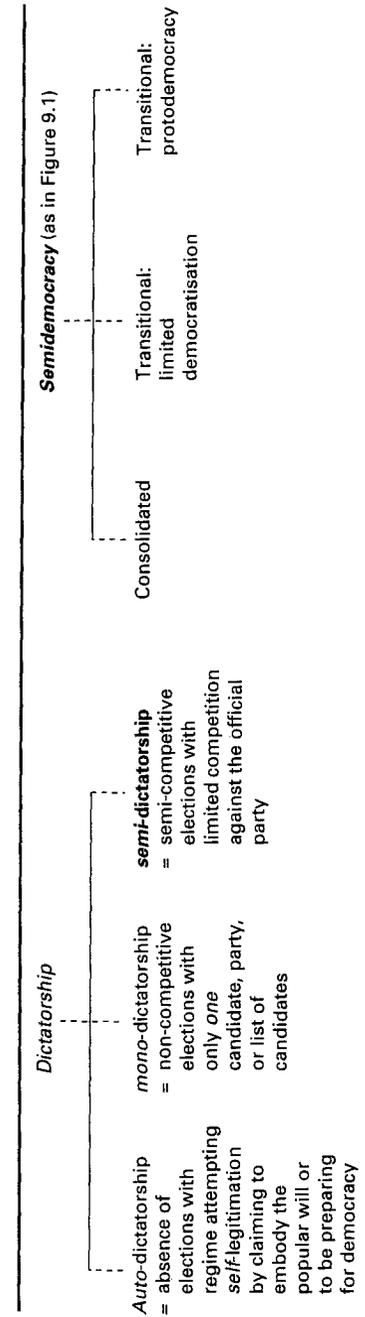
However, this analytical framework needs to be expanded in some areas and can be simplified in others. On the one hand, the conception of semidemocracy needs to be expanded to explicitly incorporate such transitional forms of limited democracy as protodemocracy and (pacted) limited democratisation – which can be viewed as transitional types distinct from the consolidated type of semidemocratic regime (see Figure 9.2). On the other hand, there is no need to adopt the conceptions of pseudodemocracy and hegemonic party system as two distinct but also overlapping conceptions of disguised dictatorship. Both are clearly undemocratic regimes, as even the hegemonic party system uses undemocratic means to deny opposition parties a chance to compete for power. That it is a less personalist and coercive system than pseudodemocracy may mean that it has a more convincing democratic disguise. But the key to any credible democratic disguise is the use of semi-competitive elections (see Chapter 5), and these appear to be present in pseudodemocracy as well as the hegemonic party system.

Therefore it is simpler to focus on the presence of semi-competitive elections as the distinctive and defining characteristic of the disguised dictatorships (see Figure 9.2). These semi-competitive (elections) dictatorships can be more concisely labelled 'semi-(competitive) dictatorships' or simply *semi-dictatorships*. They are *not* limited or partial forms of dictatorship; they are 'semi' dictatorships only in the sense of using *semi*-competitive elections to provide themselves with a more elaborate and convincing democratic disguise than if they had either refused to hold any form of election or allowed only non-competitive elections. The semi-dictatorship can therefore be distinguished typologically from the 'auto-dictatorship' and the 'mono-dictatorship' (see Figure 9.2). The auto-dictatorship refuses to hold *any* elections and seeks self-legitimation ('auto'-legitimation) by claiming to embody the popular will or to be preparing the country to attain or return to democracy. The mono-dictatorship allows only non-competitive elections, with only *one* candidate, party or list of candidates. In contrast, the semi-dictatorship goes so far in its search for democratic credibility and electoral legitimacy as to permit multiparty semi-competitive elections.

A semi-competitive election is much more credible and convincing than non-competitive elections, even if they are given a multiparty gloss by the use of regime-controlled, puppet

Figure 9.2
Semi-dictatorship and semidemocracy

opposition parties (see Chapter 5). In semi-competitive elections the regime's official party actually competes for votes (to some degree) with other parties that are (to some degree) autonomous, not puppet, parties. The elections are only *semi*-competitive in the sense that the opposition parties are denied any chance of victory by the special advantages bestowed on the official party and/or by the various ways in which the other parties are hampered. The special advantages range from vote-rigging and other forms of electoral fraud, to vote-buying and other forms of electoral 'patron–client' relationship, such as the use of state-funded public works to secure electoral support. The hampering of the other parties ranges from the arrest of their leaders to restricting their access to the mass media.

The semi-dictatorship may further secure its position against undesired electoral results by ensuring that key public offices cannot even formally or constitutionally be acquired through victory at the polls. For example, some members of the legislature might be appointed rather than elected, and/or the executive President might be elected only indirectly, whether by the legislature or some other form of electoral college. However, preferring indirect election and/or appointment to public offices can wreck the regime's democratic disguise as effectively as allowing too little competitiveness in elections.

The Classic Example: Mexico

The party dictatorship in Mexico provides the most sophisticated as well as oldest example of semi-dictatorship. Although usually classified as an authoritarian regime, it has been described as 'more complex than practically any of the authoritarian regimes that have ruled over other Latin American, African, and Asian nations in recent decades' (Cornelius, 1987: 18). The complexity of the Mexican regime arises partly from its being a sophisticated semi-dictatorship, but also partly from its revolutionary heritage. The post-1946 PRI party-state regime is the most recent manifestation of a revolutionary regime that originated in the 1910–17 Mexican Revolution – a continuity that is symbolised by continuing allegiance to the Revolution's 1917 Constitution. In fact Mexico's is the oldest regime to have originated in a social revolution, as its only rival for revolutionary

longevity disappeared from the scene with the demise of the Soviet Union.

The nature and goals of the Mexican Revolution ensured that any Mexican regime claiming a revolutionary heritage would be democratic, semidemocratic or a semi-dictatorship. The revolutionary programme expressed in the Revolution's 1917 Constitution included a commitment to liberal democracy as well as to various social goals. Moreover, the Constitution's prohibiting of presidential reelection expressed the revolutionaries' commitment (also expressed in the promise of 'effective suffrage; no reelection') to preventing Mexico from relapsing into a democratically disguised personal dictatorship like the 1876–1911 reign of President Diaz (Middlebrook, 1986: 129). Therefore, even if the post-1917 regimes' legitimacy depended primarily on commitment to the Revolution's principles rather than on winning competitive elections (Whitehead, 1994: 328), these principles required that outward, formal respect be shown to democracy and that dictatorship be convincingly disguised. The military and party dictatorships that have been established during the long history of post-Revolution Mexico have formally adhered to the democratic provisions of the Constitution, including the ban on reelection. Furthermore, political opponents have been allowed to operate within a *semi-competitive multiparty* system that is summed up by the formula 'you can be a party; but not a government', and in which the traditional role of the opposition parties has been 'to put up enough of a fight to make the ruling party's victory look credible' (Whitehead, 1994: 337; Cornelius, 1987: 32).

The regime's democratic disguise was less credible in the 1920s and 1930s when the military wing of the revolutionary movement had taken charge, but in the 1940s power was transferred to civilians and to the official party of the revolution, the Institutionalised Revolutionary Party (PRI). Founded by the military in 1928 as the National Revolutionary Party and known in 1938–46 as the Party of the Mexican Revolution, the party had already for many years enjoyed the special advantages of the official party within a semi-dictatorship. In addition to patronage opportunities, it had been able to rely on the electoral fraud perpetrated by Ministry of Government officials charged with administering the electoral system (Brooker, 1995: 222–3).

Civilianisation into a party-state regime did not bring an end to the use of electoral fraud and of extensive patronage opportunities, which were exploited by not only the PRI but also the party's huge labour and peasant organisations (Middlebrook, 1986: 129; Cornelius, 1987: 34). There was even the use of restrictive legislation to prevent such radical parties as the Mexican Communist Party from participating in elections and to hinder the forming of regional and local parties. Consequently, after more than 60 years of regular (semi-competitive) elections, Mexico still showed almost as much evidence of party monopoly as was to be found in the Soviet Union on the eve of its Gorbachev-led liberalisation. For in 1985 the PRI held the federal presidency, all the seats in the Senate, three-quarters of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, all the state governorships, and control of 96 per cent of municipal governments (Cornelius, 1987: 15).

The PRI's overwhelming electoral dominance had in fact become politically counterproductive in the 1970s, forcing the regime to launch a series of political and electoral reforms aimed at creating a more credible opposition (Cornelius, 1987; Middlebrook, 1986). The opposition parties had become too disillusioned and weak to perform their traditional role of giving some democratic credibility to the official party's electoral victories. In 1976 the main opposition party, the conservative PAN, even failed to put up a presidential candidate, leaving a very embarrassed regime to conduct an uncontested presidential election. The public's disillusionment was evident in the steadily declining levels of voter participation, in middle-class discontent (symbolised and strengthened by the student demonstrators martyred in the 1968 massacre), and eventually in the emergence of leftist underground parties and short-lived urban and rural guerrilla movements. Therefore the reforming of the electoral system can also be seen as providing a safety valve for discontent and opposition (Tagle, 1993; Whitehead, 1994). The PRI had long employed a conciliatory strategy of safety valves and diversions, cooption and incorporation, to reduce its need to resort to crude repression.

The series of reforms in 1972, 1973 and 1977 assisted the opposition in quite the reverse fashion to the manner in which opposition parties are usually disadvantaged and hampered in a semi-dictatorship (Middlebrook, 1986; Cornelius, 1987; Tagle,

1993). Already, in 1963, a small element of proportional representation had been introduced into the electoral system to allow even the smaller of the opposition parties to be represented in the Chamber of Deputies, but now the threshold for representation was reduced from 2.5 per cent to only 1.5 per cent of the national vote, and the Chamber was expanded by a third to include 100 of these (non-PRI) proportional-representation 'party deputies'. Old and new leftist parties were now allowed to participate in elections, and a Federal Electoral Commission was established to oversee the electoral system and process. Furthermore, political parties were recognised as public-interest organisations, public funding was provided for their election campaigns, and they were guaranteed regular access to radio and television.

However, there were crucial limits on how far the electoral system would be reformed. Electoral fraud had certainly been reduced but in many rural areas 'the PRI conducted the elections much as it always had' and still engaged 'in various forms of electoral fraud' (Middlebrook, 1986: 136, 142). In fact the PRI's greatest electoral advantage was its control of the rural vote, which constituted as much as a third of the total vote and was overrepresented electorally thanks to the regime's unwillingness to adjust outdated constituency boundaries (Fox, 1994). Not only was fraud widespread in rural areas, but also they received little attention from opposition parties, leaving the vote to be mobilised by local political bosses exploiting their patronage opportunities – including the large-scale opportunities provided by road-building, school-building and other public works (Fox, 1994; Harvey, 1993).

Nevertheless, the 1970s reforms proved quite sufficient for the purpose of creating a more credible opposition and election contest. In the 1982 elections there was a wider range of parties, significant increase in voter participation, and a marked rise in the opposition's vote as well as congressional representation (Middlebrook, 1986). Thereafter, changes in the electoral rules no longer necessarily strengthened the opposition parties (Tagle, 1993). For example, although the 1986 revamping of electoral laws increased the number of proportional-representation seats in the Chamber of Deputies to 200 (out of 500), now the PRI as well as the opposition parties would be entitled to a share of these seats. Other electoral

'reforms' made at this time and in 1989–90 tended, on balance, to strengthen the PRI's ability to exert control over electoral results and to actually reverse the trend towards democratising electoral procedures.

For by the later 1980s Mexican politics had become too competitive for the semi-dictatorship's comfort. In the 1988 elections the PRI lost its two-thirds majority in the Chamber of Deputies, and without its new proportional-representation seats would have failed to secure an absolute majority – which in turn was needed to ratify the party's marginal and controversial presidential victory (Tagle, 1993). The electoral debacle was partly due to a split within the PRI, as a leftist faction opposed to their party's neo-liberal economic restructuring had broken away to support the presidential candidacy of their standard-bearer, Cardenas (Dresser, 1994). He became the joint candidate of a coalition of several leftist parties and groups that was later reformed into a new party, the PRD. The election result saw the PRI's presidential candidate, Salinas, officially win less than 50.4 per cent of the vote, and in such suspicious circumstances that the opposition candidates and large public demonstrations accused the government of electoral fraud. Salinas clearly depended upon the PRI-controlled rural vote for his victory, and most of the suspicious vote counts came from rural areas (Fox, 1994; Harvey, 1993).

In the following state and municipal elections the PRI remained true to its tradition of using fraud in rural areas, where 'official recognition of opposition victories was rarely won without protests and direct action' (Harvey, 1993: 213). But the regime also adopted more positive vote-winning strategies, such as the rapid development of an urban and rural National Solidarity Programme (PRONASOL) of poverty-alleviating public works projects. In theory they were proposed and administered by local communities but in practice the Solidarity projects established new patronage networks that were used for party-political purposes, if only to undercut support for leftists (Bruhn, 1996).

The 1991 congressional elections saw something of a PRI revival (Bruhn, 1996; Dresser, 1994). The party won over 60 per cent of the vote – and collapsed the leftist vote – without having to resort to massive fraud. Although the PRI revival seemed to have been based on weak foundations, the Mexican semi-dictatorship had at least avoided the disasters experienced

in 1991 by the other long-lived revolutionary regime, the Soviet Union. By the late 1990s the Mexican regime finally seemed to be committed to real democratisation, as the PRI had accepted the loss of its majority in the Chamber of Deputies, the governorships of the six most modern states and the mayoralty of Mexico City (Klesner, 1998). But in the light of Mexico's long history of democratically disguised dictatorships, more than usual evidence of democracy would be required before sceptics accepted that this was much more than typical PRI conciliatory, safety-valve diversionary tactics.

The Historical Stronghold: Latin America

Mexico is only one of a number of countries in Latin America that have experienced semi-dictatorship. Both the other party regimes, the MNR's in 1950s–60s Bolivia and the Sandinistas' in 1970s–80s Nicaragua, were also semi-dictatorships, as were many of the longer-term military regimes. Their preference for disguised dictatorship has been particularly evident in Central America (Gilbert, 1988: 4; Rouquié, 1986: 117–9; Dunkerley, 1985). The Somoza family's 40-year rule over Nicaragua even saw political pacts being made with some opposition groups in order to secure more credible semi-competitive (fraudulent) elections. Semi-dictatorship was also employed in Panama from the late 1970s onwards to disguise the indirect personalist rule of a military leader – Torrijos until his death in 1981, and then Noriega until his removal by US invasion in 1989. And it was not only personalist regimes that favoured the semi-dictatorship approach; the military's rule in Guatemala and El Salvador was for decades disguised by semi-competitive elections, with El Salvador's official party having actually been modelled on the PRI in Mexico.

Semi-dictatorship has not been as common among military regimes in South America. However, General Stroessner's long-lived personalist regime in Paraguay developed a semi-competitive electoral system in the 1960s that was similar to the Somozas' arrangements with opponents. Two moderate opposition parties were encouraged to take part in the Stroessner regime's fraudulent elections and were legally guaranteed a third of the seats in parliament (Nickson, 1988: 241).

A far more famous case of semi-dictatorship emerged in Argentina from the conversion of General Juan Perón's democratic rule into a personalist semi-dictatorship. Having built up a large civilian following during his time as Minister of Labour and Welfare in the military government of 1943–45, Perón and his supporters had won the democratic presidential and congressional elections held in 1946. But President Perón and his party were not prepared to entrust their political fortunes to the unpredictable processes of uncontrolled democracy, and within a few years Argentina's democracy had been converted into semi-dictatorship. A wide range of often subtle undemocratic measures was used to hamper the opposition and assist the Peronist party (Brooker 1995: 175). Nevertheless, the Peronist claim to electoral legitimacy remained credible and, together with the popular following established by Perón and his wife Evita, this compensated for his weak hold on the military. Not until 1955 did the military finally overthrow a now widely unpopular Perón, who had never recovered politically from Evita's death three years earlier.

The Unusual Brazilian Case

Although less famous than Perón's regime, the Brazilian military's semi-dictatorship of the 1960s–80s was in certain respects no less significant or unusual. Unlike Perón's regime, it originated from a military coup, the 1964 'revolution', and did not develop into a personalist regime. The Brazilian military produced a succession of six one-term (or less) military presidents during the next two decades – finally approving the installation of a civilian president in 1985. However, the Brazilian military regime was similar to Perón's in having to respond to what has been termed the 'electoral imperative', which arose from the liberal, anti-authoritarian component of Brazil's 'ideological and institutional legacy' (Lamounier, 1989: 70).

This liberal, anti-authoritarian component was reflected in the military's justifications for abandoning its traditional 'restraint' (see Chapters 2 and 3) and resorting in 1964 to direct military rule. The 1964 coup against President Goulart's populism was depicted as a military-led revolution motivated by democratic ideals, and the regime committed itself to the long-term goal

of establishing the economic and social preconditions for a 'true democracy' – for the evolution of stable and democratic institutions (Martins, 1986: 77). But Brazil's liberal legacy required more than just protestations of democratic intent; it also produced an electoral imperative that forced the military to combine this typical auto-dictatorship approach with a semi-dictatorship's use of semi-competitive elections (see Figure 9.2). In order to substantiate its claim to favour democracy, and to acquire some degree of electoral legitimacy, the military was forced to allow at least semi-competitive congressional elections.

Semi-dictatorship was institutionalised by the military in 1965. The president was from now on to be elected by Congress rather than by the people, and congressional politics, in turn, was to be reshaped by the indirect imposition of a two-party system. The new party system arose from the military's dissolving all existing parties and prohibiting any new party from being formed unless it was sponsored by at least 20 senators and 120 deputies (Schneider, 1991: 245–7). These measures not only opened the way for a new official party, the National Renovating Alliance (ARENA), to win the support of the defunct conservative party and a majority of the defunct centrist party, but also gave the various opposition elements little option except to form themselves into a single party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB) – which was confidently expected by the military to be a divided and incoherent opposition party (*ibid.*: 247–8).

However, in the 1970s the two-party semi-competitive electoral system developed an anti-regime momentum that posed an awkward problem for the Brazilian military. The opposition MDB's vote dramatically increased as many people who had cast invalid votes in 1966 and 1970 to protest against military rule now instead expressed their opposition by voting for the MDB (Lamounier, 1989: 58–9). Moreover, in 1974 a new president's move to soften the regime's highly repressive approach led to liberalising measures, such as relaxing press censorship and allowing the MDB unrestricted access to radio and television, that contributed to the dramatic increase in the MDB share of the vote – from 21 to 38 per cent – in that year's elections (Martins, 1986: 83). Therefore the military was now faced by the problem that the electoral process had become

too credible and competitive; the opposition was likely to win an election victory that would force the military to reassess the whole structure and even purpose of its rule.

In response, the regime adopted a 'two steps forward; one step backwards' approach. While avoiding a return to the repressive approach of earlier years, it reduced both the competitiveness of elections and the constitutional implications of a possible electoral defeat. Controls were tightened before the 1976 municipal elections, and in the lead up to the 1978 congressional elections (a) the Senate was restructured to enable a third of its members to be indirectly elected, and (b) some state and municipal representation was introduced into the electoral college that chose the country's president (Martins, 1986: 83; Schneider, 1991: 279). Even the regime's later decision to abolish its two-party system in favour of a less restricted multipartyism has been seen as part of a strategy to encourage the creation of another, more moderate and 'reliable' opposition party (Martins, 1986: 85). However, these measures could not prevent the opposition winning a majority in the 1982 congressional elections and an opposition-backed civilian becoming president in 1985.

An Asian Example: Suharto's Indonesia

Semi-dictatorship has also occurred in other parts of the world than Latin America, as in the prominent Asian case of Suharto's Indonesia. The military regime established there in the late 1960s by General Suharto – who retained the Presidency until 1998 – became the longest-lived Asian example of semi-dictatorship.

The Indonesian regime was characterised by its unusually extensive and visible military presence, including having a hundred seats in parliament reserved for unelected military men (see Chapter 5). Moreover, the constitution inherited and preserved by the military specifies that the president be indirectly elected, by a People's Consultative Assembly comprising the members of parliament (including the swathe of appointed military members) and an equal number of appointees and delegates representing the regions and various political and social organizations (Brooker, 1995: 192). However, the military sought to

win electoral legitimacy and to substantiate its claim of favouring (Pancasila) democracy by holding regular semi-competitive parliamentary elections during the 1970s–90s, in which the official party Golkar has won from 62 to 73 per cent of the vote.

But the Indonesian semi-dictatorship comes close to the borderline with mono-dictatorship in its refusal to allow opposition parties much more autonomy than a typical puppet party (*ibid.*: 185, 187). From the outset the military regime showed an inclination to exert control over the parties competing for votes with its own party, Golkar, and in the 1971 elections it not only prohibited any criticism of government policies but also interfered in opposition parties' internal affairs and disqualified hundreds of their candidates. After Golkar's election victory the regime forced all nine other parties to merge into two new parties, one Muslim (PPP) and the other nationalist (PDI), and the 1975 Political Parties Bill allowed only Golkar, the PDI and PPP to participate in elections. Unlike the indirect means used by the Brazilian regime to introduce a two-party system, this was a quite blatant restructuring of the party system to meet the military's requirements. The Indonesian regime justified its imposition of a three-party system by arguing that these three parties together provided sufficient facilities for channelling society's opinions and ideas. The parties themselves were warned not to be antagonistic to one another and behaved more like a three-party coalition than a bevy of political opponents.

The regime also placed various restrictions on the parties' activities. For example, the politically restrictive concept of the 'floating mass' was embodied in a legal prohibition on parties' establishing village-level branches in this still largely rural society (Rogers, 1988: 258). (Exponents of the floating-mass concept argued that the mass of villagers should be left to float free of political agitation and party contact between the country's brief election campaigns.) Restrictions on party activities were tightened in the 1980s and went so far as prohibiting the Muslim PPP from appealing to voters on the basis of religion (Suryadinata, 1989: 129–30).

Moreover, the regime strengthened Golkar's competitive advantage by exploiting its status as the regime's official party (Brooker, 1995: 187). The civil service was mobilised to support Golkar and it became formally obligatory for civil servants to campaign as well as vote for the party. Officials' influence

over rural society was particularly important, with the Department of Internal Affairs being used to create a rural vote-winning patronage machine for Golkar. In addition to the various opportunities for using small-scale state patronage, public works projects, such as bringing electricity and clean water to the villages, provided opportunities for large-scale patronage (Suryadinata, 1989: 131). Furthermore, in the early 1980s village headmen were classified as civil servants, ensuring that these powerful grassroots figures would be Golkar activists. For example, in 1990 a village headman told the visiting Minister of Home Affairs that he would punish the small minority of his village that had not (yet) agreed to vote for Golkar (Vatikiotis, 1993: 103).

By the time of the 1987 elections the regime was actually becoming concerned about the weakness of the other two parties. If the PDI became so weak as to disappear, there would no longer be a 'buffer' between Golkar and the PPP, and if Golkar was to win every seat up for election, the regime's image would suffer both internationally and domestically (Suryadinata, 1989: 131). It was important to maintain a multiparty, democratic image not only in order 'to legitimize military power', but also to encourage the opposition from resorting to 'extra-parliamentary activities' (*ibid.*: 133–4). However, although Golkar did go on to win a record 73 per cent of the vote, the other parties performed their role sufficiently creditably to preempt any need for opposition-assisting reforms like those introduced in the 1970s in Mexico.

Distinguishing between Semi-Dictatorship and Semidemocracy

From this examination of a wide range of semi-dictatorships, from the classic Mexican case to an Indonesian case that borders on mono-dictatorship, it may appear that there is little difficulty in distinguishing between semi-dictatorship and semidemocracy. As was seen at the beginning of the chapter, the standard conception of semidemocracy points to a situation in which electoral outcomes 'deviate significantly' from popular preferences – as distinct from the more dictatorial situation in which opposition parties are denied 'any real chance of competing for power'. However, in practice distinguishing a deviation from a denial is not always as straightforward as it

appears. And in a few cases distinguishing between these two situations also raises the awkward issue of whether a dictatorship can take the form of a misappropriation of power by more than one party.

It is at least conceivable that two or more leading parties might collude in jointly misappropriating power. This would take the form of (a) denying other parties any real chance of competing for power, and (b) sharing that power between themselves through coalitions or alternating periods in office. In a sense this is what occurred in the old-fashioned, nineteenth-century form of oligarchical democracy or semidemocracy, in which property qualifications or other restrictions denying the poor the right to vote also denied left-wing or populist parties any chance of electoral success. A modernised, more formally democratic version of this type of regime would see two or more parties using less obviously undemocratic measures to deny other parties any real chance of competing for power. As such a regime would involve semi-competitive elections in which there are two or more official parties, it could be termed a *joint-multiparty* semi-dictatorship.

Colombia has provided a modern example of two-party collusion and alternation in power which may be a specimen of joint semi-dictatorship, or may instead be one of the few examples of consolidated semidemocracy to have survived into recent times (Hartlyn, 1989). The regime has been categorised by some analysts as a form of democracy and by others as a form of authoritarian regime, but even those who prefer the democratic category have used such adjectives as 'controlled', 'oligarchical', 'restricted', 'limited' and 'semi' democracy (Hartlyn, 1989: 292–4). The regime arose in 1957 from the removal of the country's military dictator, General Rojas. The country's two major parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, had joined together in an anti-Rojas National Front and agreed in a series of pacts to maintain their alliance during the early decades of the new democracy. There was to be coalition rule, with political parity between the two parties, and they would nominate a joint National Front candidate for president until at least 1974 (with the candidate being chosen alternately from each party).

This power-sharing arrangement between the two parties proved remarkably durable. Although the National Front was partially dismantled after 1968, the two parties continued to

put forward a joint presidential candidate until 1974 and the coalitional approach actually continued on until 1986 when the Conservatives went into opposition. More importantly, for most of this time the coalition ruled the country under 'state of siege' emergency powers which restricted civil liberties and which were invoked against student protests and labour demonstrations as well as guerrilla movements. In fact, even the regime's milder critics have had to admit that 'the regime at times employed or condoned the use of undemocratic practices' and that 'many feel fraud' was used by the regime in 1970 to deny election victory to the ANAPO populist movement (Hartlyn, 1989: 310, 316). If such serious undemocratic practices as electoral fraud did occur, the Colombian case would have to be categorised not as a semidemocracy, but as a joint-multiparty form of semi-dictatorship.

A joint semi-dictatorship may be as rare among dictatorships as the dominant-party system is among democracies. What have been described as one-party dominant 'uncommon democracies' have arisen for a time in Japan, Sweden, Italy and Israel:

> In these countries, despite free electoral competition, relatively open information systems, respect for civil liberties, and the right of free political association, a single party has managed to govern alone or as the primary and ongoing partner in coalitions, without interruption for substantial periods of time, often for three to five decades. (Pempel, 1990: 1)

The 'uncommon dictatorships', the joint semi-dictatorships, would require a similar careful definition once a few likely specimens have been reliably identified. However, the identification of such specimens is bound to be controversial. In addition to the problems involved in researching and 'proving' charges of undemocratic practices, there is also room for argument in assessing the effect and even the intent of these practices.

Furthermore, difficult conceptual and even ethical issues arise when considering whether to categorise the racist regime that ruled South Africa until 1994 as having been a case of joint-multiparty dictatorship. Dating back to the founding 1910 Constitution, the Union of South Africa's bizarre racist system combined:

(a) multiparty democracy for the Dutch/British-origin settler communities; with
(b) the exclusion of the non-white races, nearly four-fifths of the population, from the right to vote.

Within the multiparty democracy reserved exclusively for whites, there was much more party competition than occurred between Colombia's colluding Liberals and Conservatives. After the racially segregationist (apartheid) Nationalist Party was first elected to government in 1948, it did not share power or alternate in power with any other white parties; it continued to compete against and defeat them in the racist elections that continued to be regularly held until the regime's demise nearly half a century later.

However, although these elections lacked the collusion found in a typical joint dictatorship, they were even less like the racist elections found in a typical ethnic/racial semidemocracy, in which one or more ethnic/racial groups are excluded in some fashion from otherwise competitive elections. For an ethnic or racial semidemocracy involves a social *minority*, not the great majority of the population, being prevented from expressing its preferences in election outcomes. The notion of a small racial minority enjoying democratic rights and powers that are denied to the rest of the population is quite different ethically as well as conceptually, and it also seems ethically and conceptually banal to blame only the political parties for such a racist regime. The regime is better described not as some form of joint-multiparty dictatorship, but as a dictatorship of the white minority over the other racial groups – a misappropriation of power by a racial minority. Although this conception of the South African case is stretching the notions of dictatorship and misappropriation of power, it is only a further step in the direction taken in categorising the Iranian regime as the clergy's semi-dictatorship (see Exhibit 9.1).

The racial or ethnic issue also arises when dealing with the seemingly more straightforward problem of distinguishing between (a) the *semidemocracy* that excludes or reduces the electoral effect of an ethnic minority's preferences, and (b) the *semi-dictatorship* in which a party exploits ethnic divisions to secure its misappropriation of power. This distinction is particularly

Exhibit 9.1 The Clergy's Semi-Dictatorship in Iran

The Iranian case of semi-dictatorship suggests that a modern form of non-democratic regime can be established by organisations other than parties or militaries, and in fact by groups that are hardly organisations at all. For in Iran a semi-dictatorship was established by a Shiite Muslim clergy that was only partially organised (Brooker, 1997). The fewer than 200 000 clergy (in the widest sense of the term) had a hierarchy of religious titles and spiritual authority, culminating in the few Grand Ayatollahs, and had a network of mosques, seminaries and other religious institutions, but they could not be described as an 'organisation' comparable to a party or the military. The lack of organisational coherence was displayed in the open political divisions that emerged within the clergy as the more politicised members and their secular allies took charge of government, parliament and party politics after the 1978–79 Islamic revolution.

The clergy-led Islamic revolution produced a semi-democratic Islamic Republic that incorporated several constitutional safeguards against democracy's overriding the Islamic nature of the Republic. For example, a clergy-dominated Council of Guardians vetted electoral candidates' Islamic qualifications. Within a few years of the Revolution it appeared that the Islamic Republican Party had established a party semi-dictatorship, but the IRP was only a party-political vehicle for the clergy and was dissolved in 1987, having outlived its usefulness now that all other competing parties had been removed from the scene. The regime continued to be dominated by the personalist rule of (Grand) Ayatollah Khomeini, who was not only spiritual leader of the 1978–79 revolution, but also holder of the powerful constitutional office of Rahbar (leader) and Supreme Faqih (religious judge) of the Islamic Republic.

After Khomeini's death in 1989 a clergy-dominated collective leadership took over, and despite continuing factional divisions, carried the regime through the 1990s. Although the clergy's presence in parliament and government had declined, the key posts of Rahbar-Faqih and President continued to be held by clerics. And while there was no longer an official party, the competitiveness of presidential and parliamentary elections was restricted by the clergy's control over candidature and issues. The clerics and their political allies were still divided into various factions – conservative, populist, pragmatic and even liberal – but their parliamentary and electoral rivalries were not allowed to undermine the clergy's hold on power.

relevant when categorising the Malaysian regime, perhaps the best-known example of an 'ambiguous' authoritarian/democratic regime. Like the similarly ambiguous Singapore regime, it is also a leading example of what some East Asian thinkers and leaders referred to in the early 1990s as an 'Asian' form of democracy as distinct from the more individualist Western-style democracy (Jones, 1995: 41–2).

Two Ambiguous Cases: Malaysia and Singapore

Malaysia

Ever since independence from British colonial rule in 1957, the constitutional monarchy of Malaysia has been ruled by a coalition of parties, known as the Alliance and then (from 1974) as the Barisan Nasional. It has regularly won more than two-thirds of the seats in the parliamentary elections that have been regularly held every five or four years since independence. The coalition presents a combined slate or ticket of candidates at the country's parliamentary elections and has been multiethnic since its inception as an Alliance that combined the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) with a party representing the large Chinese minority and another representing the small Indian minority (Means, 1991: 1–2). When refounded in 1974 as the Barisan Nasional (National Front), the coalition organisation contained no fewer than eight parties but was now even more dominated by UMNO – which held well over half of the BN's seats in parliament – and was 'in effect a facade for UMNO rule' (*ibid.*: 30–32; Crouch, 1996: 34).

Therefore, unlike in the Colombian case of coalition, one party within the coalition has always dominated the government and in fact UMNO leader Mahathir has been the country's continual and dominating Prime Minister ever since becoming the party's leader in 1981. If Malaysia is a semi-dictatorship rather than a semidemocracy, it is not so much a joint-multiparty dictatorship as an UMNO semi-dictatorship.

It is widely acknowledged that the Malaysian regime does not follow standard democratic procedures, and even the regime itself depicts Malaysian politics as differing from the 'Western' model of democracy. While constantly asserting that

Malaysia is democratic, official spokesmen – notably Prime Minister Mahathir – have also emphasised that Malaysia had a different definition of democracy than Western countries (Munro-Kua, 1996: 151, 123). Mahathir has argued that Western-style democracy and its preoccupation with individual rights is inappropriate for Malaysian circumstances, and that Third World or Asian conceptions of democracy are no less valid than Western conceptions (Means, 1991: 140; Jones, 1995: 42).

However, although analysts of semidemocracy have categorised Malaysia as semidemocratic (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1989; Case, 1996), it has also been described as a case of authoritarian populism (Munro-Kua, 1996). Furthermore, the Malaysian regime has been labelled as 'ambiguous' not only because it combines democratic and authoritarian elements, but also because it can be categorised either as semidemocratic or as a more authoritarian type of regime, as a hegemonic party system (Crouch, 1996: 6). In fact the regime would seem to have gone well beyond the semidemocracy's level of electoral deviation if it has employed a 'wide range of authoritarian controls' which 'make it very difficult to envisage the defeat of the ruling party at the polls', and has 'actually routinely manipulated the electoral process to ensure its own victories' (*ibid.*: 5, 240).

If the Malaysian regime is a semidemocracy rather than a semi-dictatorship, it is a case of (Malay) ethnic semidemocracy. Incorporating Chinese and Indian parties in the UMNO-dominated governing coalition shrewdly disguised an electoral bias against these ethnic minorities which significantly reduced the electoral impact of their political preferences. The regime's ethnic bias is evident in the targeting of the regime's authoritarian controls as well as in the ethnic nature of its electoral gerrymandering. The 'sensitive issues' which were banned (by constitutional amendments) from public and even parliamentary discussion included Malays' special rights and privileges, as well as the status of Malay as the sole national language, and the status of Islam (the religion of most Malays) as the official religion (Means, 1991: 14–15).

But it was the gerrymandering of the electoral constituencies which was crucial in reducing the electoral effect of the minorities. For by this means the Malays' (barely) absolute majority of the electorate was transformed into potentially a more than two-thirds majority of the seats in parliament. The

gerrymander used the simple method of ensuring that the rural constituencies, which are disproportionately populated by Malays, were increasingly overrepresented in parliament – so that by 1984 Malays were in the absolute majority in nearly three-quarters of the country's constituencies (Crouch, 1996: 57–9; Means, 1991: 135). Thanks to this ethnic gerrymandering, the governing coalition has been able to achieve its target of a two-thirds majority in parliament despite the fact that substantial numbers of Malays as well as Chinese vote for parties that oppose the BN coalition. Such a large parliamentary majority has enabled the government to make its many constitutional amendments and also provides useful insurance for UMNO against a parliamentary revolt by the coalition's non-Malay parties.

In addition to the electoral bias, there is striking circumstantial evidence of ethnic semidemocracy, namely the ethnically biased New Economic Policy that has been implemented since 1971. Although under colonial rule and in Malaysia's Constitution Malays had enjoyed some 'special rights', the NEP expanded these rights, job quotas and educational opportunities and also included an ambitious programme to raise Malays to full partnership in the nation's Chinese-dominated economic life – specifically by achieving the goal of '30 per cent Malay ownership and participation in all industrial and commercial activities by 1990' (Means, 1991: 24). This was a very ambitious goal considering that Malays then owned less than 2 per cent of the country's share capital, but two decades of energetic pursuit of the NEP's goals produced a 'veritable revolution' in the reallocation of wealth and jobs (*ibid.*: 27, 265). In light of this huge policy bias in favour of the Malays, the regime does seem a clear-cut case of reducing the minorities' electoral influence in order to safeguard the benefits flowing to the ethnic majority through its control of the government.

However, the Malaysian regime can also be viewed as a party semi-dictatorship based upon ethnic factors rather than as an ethnic semidemocracy. From this perspective the UMNO party has been able to misappropriate power by exploiting the country's ethnic divisions and, in particular, by presenting itself as the political standard-bearer and benefactor of the Malay majority. It can claim to have brought Malays the benefits of the NEP and to be the political means of protecting Malays' privileged position. As Prime Minister Mahathir argued in 1989, Malays

had not yet achieved the NEP's goals and still had to protect their position through political success and specifically through UMNO's success (*ibid.*: 270).

There is much evidence of a specifically UMNO *party* (rather than simply Malay ethnic) bias in the regime's operations, particularly in its use of authoritarian controls and in its electoral practices. The regime's armoury of authoritarian controls, which included legal powers to deregister organisations, ban publications and impose preventive detention, 'were sometimes used mainly to strengthen the government against the opposition or even one government faction against another', as in the 1987 arrest and detention of more than a hundred people (Crouch, 1996: 112, 109–113). The controls over the mass media were particularly advantageous to the UMNO government. In conjunction with state or BN ownership of television and radio, the deterrent effect of these controls ensured that the mass media would present UMNO leaders and policies to the public in a solely and overly positive light (Means, 1991: 137–9, 292; Munro-Kua, 1996: 123–5).

Furthermore, as in Indonesia, there was a range of restrictions on party activities, such as a ban on public rallies, that hampered the opposition parties more than the government party (Means, 1991: 88; Munro-Kua, 1996: 122). Another similarity with the Indonesian regime was the massive use of state patronage opportunities to improve electoral performance. In addition to promises of local development projects, there was a village-level use of material benefits to secure political loyalty – in fact the village head was quite often the chairman of the local branch of UMNO (Crouch, 1996: 61, 40–1).

With these electoral and other competitive advantages, UMNO has been able to dominate the Malay vote and to prevent Malay opposition parties from capitalising on their ethnic electoral advantages. Even when faced in the 1990 elections with an UMNO breakaway party and an electoral pact among the opposition parties, UMNO was able to lead the BN coalition to another sweeping electoral victory (*ibid.*: 125–7). The coalition retained a two-thirds majority in parliament despite a fall in the overall BN vote to 53 per cent, and in the next election its vote rebounded to a record 65 per cent. But UMNO's electoral resilience begs comparison with the PRI's in Mexico, just as UMNO's competitive advantages beg comparison with Golkar's

in Indonesia. And the regime as a whole seems no less comparable to semi-dictatorship than to semidemocracy.

Singapore

The Singapore regime, like the Malaysian, has emphasised that it has developed a form of democracy that suits its country's circumstances, and has argued that it is important to retain this 'dominant-party system' (Rodan, 1993a: 78). However, among Western analysts Singapore is usually seen as less than democratic, and the issue is whether this ambiguous regime should be categorised as a semidemocracy or as effectively a one-party state (Case, 1996; Rodan, 1993a: 78, 86, 103).

The People's Action Party (PAP) regime in Singapore developed in quite different fashion from its Malaysian counterpart, UMNO. The PAP came to power in 1959, in a British decolonising election, by mobilising mass support from the Chinese ethnic majority, but it was a socialist rather than a communal or ethnic party and sought support from the Malay and Indian ethnic minorities as well as from the Chinese majority. Moreover, in 1961 the party's communist-sympathising (and mass-mobilising) faction broke away from the PAP and formed the Barisan Sosialis (BS) party. The BS was 'seriously crippled', though, in 1963 when more than a hundred leading leftists fell victim to anti-communist preventive detention measures (Chan, 1976: 198), and later in the year a now rebuilt PAP handed the BS a heavy electoral defeat. Within a decade the BS had declined into obscurity, leaving the PAP with an unchallenged electoral dominance. Although in the 1970s–80s elections there were always five or more opposition parties contesting elections with the PAP, it won every parliamentary seat in the 1970s and thereafter retained all but a few seats, despite its share of the vote falling to 61–63 per cent.

In fact the development of the PAP regime shows some resemblances with that of African one-party states (see Chapter 4). Like them, the PAP exploited the unique organisational and electoral opportunity presented by decolonising elections. As Singapore's first mass party the PAP was the first party to establish a link with the bulk of ethnic-majority Chinese voters, and therefore once the challenge from the breakaway BS had been defeated the party had an impregnable electoral advantage

over 'fledgling' competing parties (Chan, 1976: 229, 218). Another similarity with the African pattern was the use of cooption and coercion to consolidate the party's monopoly, but the PAP's commitment to a formally multiparty system meant that the cooption/coercion was aimed at parties' potential leaders and activists rather than the parties themselves. Influential or potential local leaders were appointed to the Citizens Consultative Committees – where they were at least 'quarantined' from the opposition parties – while fears of retribution deterred career-conscious individuals from becoming election candidates, or even visible supporters, of opposition parties (Chan, 1976: 144, 219; Milne and Mauzy, 1990: 93).

A further similarity with the African one-party states was the manner in which the 'founding' head of government elected during the decolonising transition went on to establish a powerful personal position within the post-independence regime. Although he shared power with a small team of other senior ministers/ party-leaders, Singapore's founding Prime Minister (and founding PAP Secretary-General) Lee Kuan Yew dominated party and state until his retirement in 1990, and thereafter retained a 'crucial' personal role as privileged Senior Minister and wielder of 'considerable influence through less formal means' (Milne and Mauzy, 1990: 103–4; Tillman, 1989: 54–7; Cotton, 1993: 9, 14, 11).

However, Singapore also shows some similarities with neighbouring Malaysia in its form of authoritarian controls and in its resort to gerrymandering parliamentary constituencies. Singapore's own Internal Security Act has allowed preventive detention for prejudicing the country's security and public order, there have been government-favouring restrictions on party activities such as the ban on election campaigning outside the official campaign period, and there has been firm control over the mass media, to the extent of moving against such international publications as *Time* magazine when they offended the government (Tremewan, 1994: 201, 169; Chan, 1976: 205–6; Rodan, 1993a: 91).

Gerrymandering has taken two different forms. The older, ethnic form saw the government use the re-delineation of constituency boundaries, rehousing programmes and other measures to break up (and prevent the reforming) of Malay-majority constituencies, in which PAP dominance had been threatened

by communal voting for Malay parties (Chan, 1976: 210; Tremewan, 1994: 65). The newer form arose from the 1988 creation of some large three-member winner-take-all parliamentary constituencies that could absorb and shore up endangered PAP single-member seats by combining them with neighbouring safer seats (Tremewan, 1994: 167).

Nevertheless, there are difficulties in classifying Singapore as a semi-dictatorship rather than a semidemocracy. The PAP can point to an impressive record of economic performance and administrative competence to support its claim that the party's electoral triumphs have been based on voters' recognition of, and gratitude for, its unparalleled record of 'good government'. More importantly, the opposition parties lack of any real chance since the 1960s to compete for power appears to be due more to such historical factors as the PAP's decolonising organisational/electoral advantage and Lee's founding-father prestige than to undemocratic measures aimed at guaranteeing victory for the official party. The PAP itself has long been concerned that what it terms a 'freak' election result will remove it from power, and in 1991 the party moved to protect itself against some of the effects of a possible future election defeat by transforming the formerly ceremonial presidency into an elected and more powerful office whose holder can be reliably expected to be a PAP sympathiser and protector thanks to the stringent legal restrictions on who can be a presidential candidate (Tremewan, 1994: 173–5; Rodan, 1993a: 100).

Finally, it is worth noting that although Singapore, Malaysia and even Indonesia were sometimes depicted in the early 1990s as examples of a distinctive 'Asian' form of democracy (Jones, 1995: 42), these three regimes differ quite markedly from one another in terms of the semi-dictatorship/semidemocracy issue. The Indonesian regime was a military semi-dictatorship close to the borderline with mono-dictatorship; the Malaysian regime was a party semi-dictatorship or an ethnic semidemocracy; and the Singaporean regime was probably more of a semidemocracy than a party semi-dictatorship.

It is true that in addition to presiding over what are at least semi-competitive elections, the three regimes have shown a common tendency towards long-lasting personalist rule and ideological legitimation. In addition to experiencing the

personalism of respectively Suharto, Mahathir and Lee, the three regimes have shown a concern for ideological legitimation, as expressed:

1. in the Indonesian Pancasila (Five Principles) ideology;
2. in Malaysia's Pancasila-like Rukunegara ideology and the Malay-nationalist NEP doctrines that were reinforced by ideologue Mahathir when he eventually became UMNO leader; and
3. in Singapore's ideology of 'survivalism' (emphasising the threats posed by communism, inter-ethnic friction and lack of economic resources) and its later attempt to develop a Pancasila-like national ideology based on Asian rather than Western values (Means, 1991: 12–13, 23–5, 83–4; Munro-Kua, 1996: 113–16; Jones, 1995: 72–3; Brown, 1995: 147; Rodan, 1993a: 90).

But these personalist and ideological as well as electoral similarities should not obscure the important differences between these sophisticated examples of semi-dictatorship and semidemocracy.

Protodemocracy in Russia and Central Asia

As was noted earlier, the standard conception of semidemocracy can incorporate several different categories of regime, transitional as well as consolidated. These transitional forms, too, are sometimes difficult to distinguish from semi-dictatorship, and often this distinction is of great practical importance. Serious consequences may arise from mistaking a shift from auto- to semi-dictatorship as being a shift to the limited democratisation that occurs during the initial stages of some transitions from dictatorship. There may also be serious consequences if an emerging semi-dictatorship is mistaken for a transitional protodemocracy. A protodemocracy has gone beyond the stage of removing the former dictatorship but has a successor regime or situation that is not fully democratic and may relapse into dictatorship (or even be consolidated as a semidemocracy) rather than evolve into a democracy. Although the term proto*democratic* implies that democracy is the most likely out-

come of this transitional situation, a semi-dictatorship may emerge and consolidate itself while using the notion of protodemocracy to excuse its 'excesses' and 'failings'.

For example, it seemed for a time in 1993 that President Yeltsin might establish a personalist semi-dictatorship in Russia under the guise of dealing with protodemocratic 'growing pains'. During that year the struggle for power between parliament and President had developed into a constitutional crisis. In March parliament sought to strip Yeltsin of the powers that it had temporarily delegated to him in 1991, but his resistance and democratic credibility were buoyed by an April referendum in which a clear majority of voters expressed confidence in him and his policies.

The 1993 crisis came to a head in September–October when Yeltsin suspended the Constitution, dissolved parliament, and decreed that parliamentary elections would be held in December. On 3–4 October a strongly anti-Yeltsin group of parliamentarians and their supporters resorted to direct action and Yeltsin was forced to rely on the military, whom he ordered to storm the parliament building. Although Yeltsin in a sense had more democratic or popular legitimacy than his parliamentary opponents, his suspension of the Constitution and dissolution of parliament – let alone the military's storming of the parliament building – indicated a likely relapse into some form of dictatorship, probably a military-supported personalist semi-dictatorship.

Yet although some parties and movements were now suspended or banned from taking part in elections, Yeltsin did not establish a widely or permanently repressive regime. A December referendum approved a new, more presidential Constitution that provided him with a constitutional basis for his powerful presidency. But the new Constitution did not strip parliament (renamed the Federal Assembly) of all its powers. The lower house, the State Duma, remained the country's legislature and could refuse to endorse Yeltsin's choice of prime minister on three successive occasions (before being automatically dissolved for new elections).

Yeltsin's lack of control over Russian politics was evident in the unfavourable result of the December elections for the State Duma. The two parties explicitly supporting Yeltsin's appointed government won less than a quarter of the vote while the

explicitly opposition parties won well over 40 per cent. Further-
more, although the new parliament did not adopt an antagonistic
or even consistently oppositional stance, neither did it become
a tame organ of presidential rule. Yeltsin's lack of dictatorial
control was evident again in the 1995 Duma elections. The
explicitly opposition parties, particularly the communists, fared
much better than the NDR 'government party' of Yeltsin's Prime
Minister, Chernomyrdin. Then, in the 1996 presidential elec-
tions, Yeltsin failed to win an absolute majority and therefore
had to enter a run-off election (which he won comfortably)
with the communist leader, Zyuganov.

On the other hand, even after these well-contested presiden-
tial elections, it was still argued by an authority on Russian
politics that democracy had not yet been consolidated and that
Yeltsin was still displaying 'his own type of authoritarianism' in
an 'authoritarian democracy', whose degeneration 'into some
uglier form of dictatorship could not be excluded' (Sakwa, 1996:
171). This notion of authoritarian democracy referred to a
protodemocratic situation of 'incomplete democratisation', in
which the 'response to governmental inadequacy and the weak-
ness of the social base of democracy' was one of intensified or
renewed authoritarianism, 'not acting directly against democ-
racy but as its accompaniment' (*ibid.*: 46). The authoritarian
democrats' rationalisation for the lack of democracy was ap-
parently that the shift from communism to democracy required
an intervening authoritarian stage in which a strong state es-
tablished the liberal economy and society appropriate for a full
democracy, and meanwhile protected the emerging democracy
from less democratic forms of authoritarianism (*ibid.*: 47). But
this begs the question of *how long* the protodemocratic stage
can be expected to last – at what point must it be deemed to
have instead evolved into stable semidemocracy?

The authoritarian-democratic approach was apparently also
to be found in other parts of the former Soviet Union, such as
the newly independent states of Central Asia (*ibid.*: 47). As in
Russia, in these five states the presidency was the focus of pol-
itical events and usually continued to be held by the 1991
incumbent. In fact three of the five new states show enough
similarities for a Central Asian 'model' of presidential rule to
be discernable (Hiro, 1995; Atkin, 1997; Gleason, 1997; Huskey,

1997; Olcott, 1997; Nissman, 1997). The Central Asian model
was for the incumbent President

1. to have once been the territory's Communist Party boss;
2. to have established a more repressive personalist rule than
   Yeltsin's;
3. to have installed the former Communist Party (in a new,
   nationalist and supposedly democratic guise) as effectively
   the official party; and
4. to have had his tenure in the presidency extended to the
   year 2000 or beyond by an overwhelmingly supportive refer-
   endum held in the mid-1990s.

. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the prime examples and
Kazakhstan differed from the model only in having a president
who had cut his ties with the former Communist Party. The
two other Central Asian states had quite different protodemocratic
experiences. Tajikistan suffered a bloody civil war that led to
the victors overseeing a dubious presidential election in 1994.
Kyrgyzstan (renamed the Kyrgyz Republic) differed from the
other four states in having a relatively liberal president, who
had not been a Communist Party boss, did not favour the former
Communist Party, and did not prolong his tenure by referen-
dum (but had entered into a potentially dangerous alliance
with regional administrators and political bosses).

Only the last of these five Central Asian cases seemed to be
likely to evolve into even consolidated semidemocracy, let alone
actual democracy. In the other Central Asian cases there was a
danger that the notion of protodemocracy would conceal the
emergence and consolidation of new semi-dictatorships. The
problem here was how *soon* could the period of protodemocracy
be said to be over, and for it to be acknowledged that these
transitions had ended in a relapse into dictatorship.