

DANGERS OF INTERDEPENDENCE

WITH NON-DEMOCRACIES:

INTER-STATE GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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1. Introduction

For more than three decades, researchers and practitioners of international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE) have been discussing the ongoing “international interdependence” and “globalization,” and how the interdependence would alter the nature of world politics. The shared interests of this line of thought lie in the questions: “What kind of changes the interstate interdependence brings to world polity?” and “How the interdependent world should be governed?” The answers of interdependence theorists to the first question would be the erosion of state sovereignty, and to the second, through transnational regimes/institutions/NGOs, and so forth. A “global village” needs global governance, as opposed to state-centric governance, which has been the dominant form of world politics thus far.

The literature of IR and IPE has not, however, addressed one important problem regarding to the interdependence: how the interdependence affects the human rights and democracy. This does not mean that IR has not been interested in human rights or democracy. Quite the contrary. Many have been studied and discussed on international human rights. Nevertheless, the IR literature has been treated human rights as an “ideal” and a “norm” of state actors, which states may or may not pursue.⁽¹⁾ Unfortunately, this is not the right course to answer the problem above.

This essay is an attempt to consider the impact of transnational interdependence and global/regional governance, especially with non-democracies, on human rights conditions. Because of the generality of the issue, the essay focuses on theoretical analyses. Still, in developing analyses here, I have one specific case in mind. That is, Japan’s, and other Asian democracies’, interdependence with the People’s Republic of China.

China, with its gigantic size, enormous and cheap labor force, and vast market, has been the center of East Asian universe for millennia. Now the country expands its economy

rapidly, and deepens interactions and interconnections with its surrounding nations. Actually, Asian neighbors, including Japan, have become more and more dependent on Chinese economy, like ancient “surrounding barbarians” were in the Sino-centric tributary system. There are many problems in such interdependence: China’s political uncertainty, its fragile financial system, and its unpredictable industrial relations. Concerns have been raised to these issues. Somehow, however, East Asian neighbors have not problematized China’s democracy and human rights conditions. But, if the interdependence with China, an “illiberal titan,” is going on, how can Asian neighbors secure their democracy and human rights? I believe this is the most important problem that Asia faces today.

2. Theoretical analysis 1: a system-level investigation

This section presents two theoretical analyses on interdependence with illiberal states: one, using the theory of interdependence of Keohane and Nye, I explain the effects of such interdependence; and, two, in order to analyze the effects on domestic governance, especially on domestic human rights conditions, I formulate a simple model, which emulates the trade theory of economics.

According to Keohane and Nye, the “complex interdependence” among nations transforms the nature of international relations in the following way: first, the multiple interaction channels among states in interdependence deprive the diplomats’ monopoly in foreign policy; second, interdependence obscures the supremacy of military/geopolitical concerns in state’s foreign policy; third, due to the two changes above, the use of military power now becomes obsolete. Thus, the ongoing interdependence will modify interstate military conflicts and, over time transforms the world as a more orderly, peaceful place.⁽²⁾

Of course, as Keohane and Nye rightly admit, this is an overly simplistic picture, or an “ideal type,” of the world reality. Still, the theoretical configuration captures some important aspects of globalizing world. In diplomacy, economic issues have become the top agenda, and economic technocrats, not diplomats, are the main negotiators on these issues. More and more international disputes, notably on trade, are settled in judicial and quasi-judicial means. Although military exercises are still made, policymakers have to take economic, legal and social effects thereof into account.

The beauty of Keohane and Nye’s theory is its generality and simplicity. The theory, however, assumes only the interdependence among industrialized democracies. If one is interdependent with a non-democracy, the story becomes radically different. We can extend the theory without losing much simplicity.

Firstly, the “multiple channels” exist only in the democracy. Although there are many

pathways in interaction with a totalitarian regime, all those paths lead to a single decision-making body. Therefore, for a totalitarian state, interdependence will not make the multiplicity of policy-making.

Secondly, interdependence relativizes states' geopolitical interests only in a polyarchy; in a non-democracy, the policy priorities are single-handedly defined by a handful of people in power.

Thirdly, a dictatorship may well believe the effectiveness of military power. Why not? After all, a dictatorship regime is based on fear---people's fear on governmental violence. A state which is willingly use force against its own people will not hesitate to use force internationally.

The international interdependence thus has little effect on foreign policy of totalitarian regimes. The consequence is that the interdependence between a democracy and a non-democracy is essentially asymmetrical. A democracy's foreign policy becomes "soft" due to interdependence, while a non-democracy can remain "hard." Such asymmetry makes a democracy quite vulnerable vis-à-vis a dictatorship.

Let us see how a democracy becomes helpless against a non-democracy.

3. Theoretical analysis 2: the "second image reversed" model

The interdependence with a non-democracy goes far beyond putting democracies in a vulnerable position in foreign policy; it deteriorates human rights conditions of democratic regimes. In order to understand that, we have to consider the determinants of the "human rights conditions."

3.1. Human rights and the state

Human rights, like any other kinds of rights, have to be secured somehow , by somebody. Then, who provides the security to human rights? A straightforward answer to this question is: the state does. In the modern age (but not necessarily in the "postmodern" phase of history,) the state is the institution whose main obligation is to protect its citizens' rights. A Constitution is a contract between the state and citizens, which specifies rights and obligations for the two parties. Most constitutions have the Bill of Rights in which citizens' human rights are provided. Since constitutions are state-citizen contract, the meaning of an article "citizens shall have such and such human rights" is nothing but "the state shall secure citizens' such and human rights."

In fact, without the state's protection, human rights are just rhetoric. A simple example will suffice to explain it. A journalist discovers a big payoff scandal in which a local

strongman is involved. The journalist tries to publish articles on the scandal, but due to the influence of the strongman, the articles can never be made public. The journalist is even threatened by local gangs to pull out of the scandal. In such a case, the journalist's rights for expression--one of the basic human rights--cannot be protected without the laws to secure his rights, and without government's effective enforcement of the laws.

However, there is a risk in the above "the state as human rights guardian" scheme. If the state, with its monopoly of legitimate use of violence, exploits people's rights, the people become utterly helpless. One function of democracy is to protect people from the state's human rights violation. In democracy, when those in power continuously usurp citizens' rights, the citizens can replace those in power with more rights-conscious leaders in an orderly and peaceful way. On the other hand, a non-democratic polity does not have such a rights-securing mechanism. Therefore, it is likely that a dictatorship violates human rights.

Examples show that non-democratic regimes see the very concept of human rights is irrelevant, and dangerous for maintaining order. It is not hard to see why a dictatorship cannot afford human rights; if a dictator allows freedom of political action and freedom of speech, she/he will face criticisms and popular unrests against her/his governance, which have to be suppressed by violating human rights. A non-democracy can permit human rights only to the extent that would not endanger the supremacy of its regime.

Three points should be made: i) human rights have to be secured by the state; ii) democratic polity has a capacity to restrict the state's abuse of human rights; and, iii) a non-democratic regime has to restrict its human rights conditions below a certain level. These points are not new; they are almost common-sensual. The argument of this essay will be based on these stylized facts.

3.2. International interdependence and domestic governance

Needless to say, international interdependence has a huge impact on the states' domestic governance. It is one aspect of Gourevitch's "second image reversed," although Gourevitch does not discuss the impact of international independence explicitly.⁽³⁾ Since Keohane and Nye also shy away from this important problem, we have to formulate a new framework to discuss it.

In the literature of International Relations, only an author, Edward Morse, addresses the problem. According to Morse, there are three different "levels" of international interdependence: strategic interdependence, systemic interdependence, and "public goods" interdependence. In strategic interdependence, as in the case of military alliances, state actors

strategically form cooperation for their national interests. This kind of interdependence does not require increase of interstate interactions nor mutual social penetrations. Morse's second type of interdependence, systemic interdependence, is brought about by the growth of international "dynamic density," or density of interstate communications and interactions. Morse suggests that as the systemic interdependence deepened, national states lose control on governance, and the "de-nationalized politics" would emerge. And, if the de-national politics proliferates without constrained by supra-national authorities or regimes, it may end up leading to international chaos and disorder. Morse argues that the chaos of the systemic interdependence would force state actors to create institutions and regimes for interstate/global governance, which are the foundations of his "public-good interdependence."⁽⁴⁾

In order to maintain the theoretical generality and simplicity of Keohane and Nye, we need another simple model to consider the problem. Here I try to formulate my own model, whose ideas taken from the international trade theory.

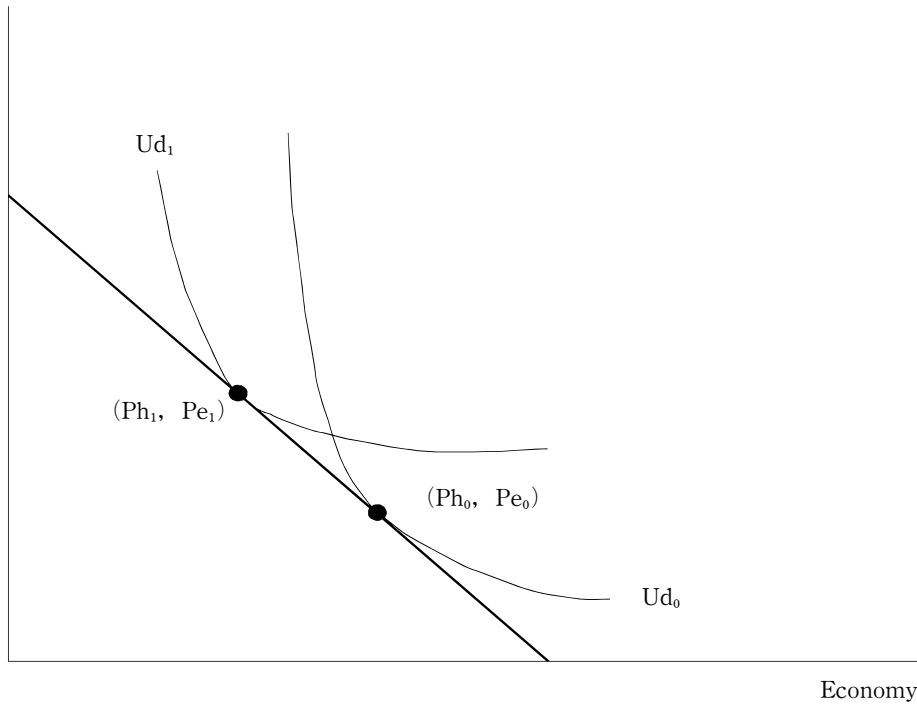
3.3. The model

There are two nations, A and B. A is a democratic nation embracing the norms of human rights, while B is dictatorial. The constitution of nation A provides electoral democracy as the principle of governance. On the other hand, the "constitution" of nation B (if any) defines the supreme power of the governing party.

Following the tradition of rational choice theory, we assume that each individual in both nations has her/his preference in her/his government's policy. There are two kinds of "goods," human rights and other values (most of which is consist of economic values.) We define an individual's preference as the relative "price" she/he puts on the government's human rights protection policy, in comparison with their evaluation on the government's other policies. We employ the general economic hypothesis that "indifference curve" of people slopes downward and convex to the origin in a human rights-economy diagram, as we see in the figure 1. As in the mainstream rational choice theory, we assume that each individual in the two nations tries to maximize her/his utility which she/he receives from the government's policy.

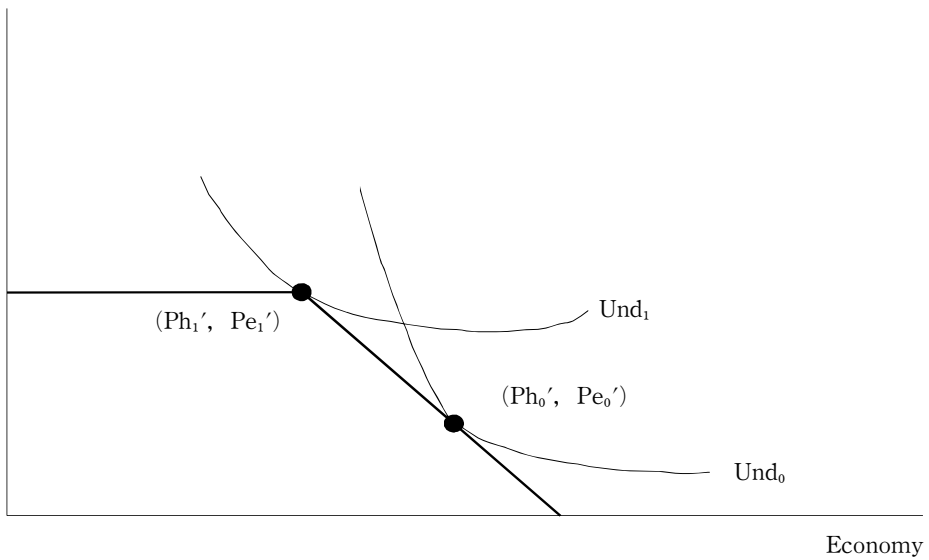
Along with the hypothesis of constructivism, we suppose that the preference is constructed by social environment. And, through education and information manipulation, the government can influence people's policy preference. In democracy, such maneuver has some limit, but a dictatorship nation can do everything to modify the people's preferences. From the reasons I stated in section 3. 1, a dictatorship manipulates its people to become

Human rights



(a) Democracy

Human rights



(b) Non-Democracy

Figure 1

human rights adverse, while a democracy encourage people to be human rights prone. (See figure 1.)

Now look at the “supply side” of the story. The government is to provide a set of policies (Ph, Pe), which denote policies for securing human rights and for other (mostly economic) objectives, respectively. In both nations, those in power are assumed to maximize the possibility of staying in power. In democracy, the politicians holding the public office try to grab a sufficient number of votes to get re-elected in the next election. In dictatorship, no formal mechanism for regime change exists, but even dictators must fear coups or revolutions. So, the dictators have a good reason to give what people want. On the other hand, the resources that the government can use are limited. Therefore, the governments of both nations, under the resource constraint, provide a set of policies (Ph, Pe) which grabs the people’s support most. Henceforth we assume that the government has sufficient information on the people’s preference. For simplicity, we assume that the “policy production frontier” of the government is linear.

A dictatorship has another constraint: it cannot allow human rights more than a certain level. A dictatorship even has to use its resources to suppress people’s demand for human rights. Therefore, the “production frontier” of a non-democratic government bends at the level of human rights.

3.4. Autarky

In autarky (i.e., there is no interaction between the two states), both nations reach “equilibrium” in which the government provides the policy-set that satisfies people’s demand most, given the government’s production frontier. Assume that at the initial stage, both nations, a democracy and a dictatorship, are in the equilibrium. Since citizens of a non-democracy is less human-rights prone (i.e., more tolerant to human rights violation), the equilibrium in a dictatorship is lower than that in a democracy.

Assume that citizens in both countries, for some reasons, suddenly embrace the norms of human rights more than before. In democracy, a shift in the people’s preference would move the equilibrium. However, in dictatorship, even if the people become more human rights prone, the dictators cannot provide the rights more than the limit. This leads to people’s dissatisfaction for the government, which would culminate to ruin the regime. In order to avoid it, a non-democracy must suppress people’s demands further. Therefore, in non-democracy, the equilibrium, as is point b in Figure 2, can be unstable, and the populace may be quite unhappy with it.

If the people’s discontent of citizens in the dictatorship regime (which is depicted in the

figure as the angle made by two lines at the equilibrium: one that is asymptotic to the policy frontier, and the other to the citizens' indifference curve) surpasses a certain threshold, the dissatisfied citizens would make a revolution. In order to avoid it, the dictatorship needs to suppress the people's movements for human rights and democracy further.

In any case, governance in autarky is determined plainly by the state's "supply" and people's "demand" of the optimal sets of policies.

3.5. Interdependence and its effects

3.5.1. Demand for international institutions

Now let us depart from our splendid isolation. The states enter economic and social intercourse with their neighbors, and interdependence deepens. Here we understand interdependence simply as the social/economic "mixture" of two or more states, and hence the mingling of state governances.

Under interdependence, country B's nationals may make various actions in country A, and/or in association with citizens/organizations of A. If B's nationals' behaviors in (or, in association with) B are not constrained by the government of A, A's society may fall into a lawless state. Therefore, now the state A is forced to exercise jurisdiction over B's nationals' activities in A.

The problem of transnational jurisdiction has always existed, much before the growth of interdependence. The issue has mostly concerned with foreign nationals reside in home country, which has been rare and could be solved by the "national treatment" thereupon. However, under interdependence, we have to deal with foreign nationals who are not (literally) "living in" the home country. Without some interstate actions, the world would follow the worst scenario of Morse's systemic interdependence.

Following Morse, we assume that states under the systemic interdependence find it valuable to cooperate in creating interstate institutions for global governance. The institutions may take various forms, from merely signing treaties to establishing a supra-national organization with over-arching jurisdiction, such as the European Union. In this essay, we assume that the states agree to establish a transnational institution and delegate some of their power onto it.

3.5.2. Level of human rights

Many issues are involved the interstate governance, but here we focus on the effects on human rights conditions. Then, what would be the human rights conditions under the interstate governance?

If the interdependence and hence the transnational governance are made between two or more democracies that equally embrace the norms of human rights, such as in the European Union, no problems would emerge; the states can set human rights standard as high as they have been imposing domestically. Similarly, the organization of dictatorship may well suppress the citizens' rights accordingly. In the case of interdependence between democracies and non-democracies, however, a problem would arise.

The problem is, needless to say, the degree of human rights the organization allows. As we saw, a democracy can provide human rights protection as much as the citizens want, but a non-democracy has to suppress human rights below a certain threshold level. Then, how do different types of regimes coordinate the different levels of human rights conditions?

A straightforward answer to the question is that the level of human rights the international organization provides is determined through negotiation among parties concerned. There are two "corner" solutions: a high level of human rights, which the democracy formerly provided; and, a low level that the non-democracy gave before the negotiation. Usually, the level is determined somewhere in between the two corner solutions.

3.5.3. Country sizes and powers

International trade theory suggests the determinants of human rights level. There are two countries, a huge one and a tiny one, each produces and consumes several products. The relative prices of the products differ across countries. If the two countries start trade, both nations' relative price will change. Nevertheless, the changes in the relative prices are bigger in the tiny state, and smaller in the huge one.

Analogously, the level of human rights will be determined by the relative size of democracy and non-democracy. If the non-democracy is much larger than the democracy, the democratic state will be more affected by the interdependence, and will be forced concede more.

Of course, balances of power matters in interstate negotiation. A powerful can go its way, and a weak has to submit.

3.5.4. Impacts on domestic governance

Interdependence between different types of regimes gives impacts on domestic governance of each state. The underlying fact is that either the democracy or the non-democracy wants to affect its interdependence partner in a desired way. Let us see them in brief.

i) Impacts on non-democracy (*huo ping yan bian*)

On one hand, interdependence will lead to demands for higher human rights standards in the non-democracy. The demands come through three channels.

First, because of interdependence, people in the non-democracy now have more information, and more chance for social and political participation. Such a change will alter the people's policy preference toward more human-rights.

Second, the interdependence means that more and more citizens of the democracy come under the jurisdiction of the non-democracy. Very naturally, the citizens will demand higher human rights standards.

Thirdly, since the interdependence increases the access points for the democracy into the non-democratic society, now the non-democracy's monopoly of power and information becomes quite vulnerable---vulnerable enough to be penetrated by the democracy. The democratic society may influence various groups inside the non-democracy, which culminated to ruin the authority of the dictator.

These impacts are well known for Chinese leaders. In China, they are called *huo ping yan bian*, or, "bringing change in a peaceful way." Thus far, the Chinese leaders have managed to suppress and undermine the impacts.

ii) Impacts on democracy

The democracy is also affected by the interdependence with an illiberal state. Due to open social structure, the democracy is much more vulnerable vis-à-vis penetration efforts of the non-democracy. The penetration will also come through three ways.

Because of interdependence, firms and industries in the democracy may have huge stakes in business with the non-democracy. And, the non-democracy can easily use the firms / industries to influence the governance of the democracy.

Due to its domestic information monopoly, its freedom in censorship, and its power to allow information gathering and establishing bureaus, the non-democratic government can put the democratic nation's newspapers and broadcasting networks under its control. If that is the case, the non-democracy can easily influence the democracy by using mass media.

Thanks to open political systems of the democracy, the non-democracy can even lobby the politicians and bureaucrats of the democracy. The policy makers in the democracy can find many reasons to obey the lobbying---such as friendship between the two nations.

We can observe numerous examples of Chinese lobbying activities in Japan, and in other Asian countries. Quite regrettably, many of such efforts have been very successful.

3.5.5. How to avoid the deterioration of human rights?

The above was a quite gloomy picture of the interdependence with non-democracies. Then, how can we avoid the awful effects of the interdependence on democratic governance? A clear-cut answer would be: “Stay out of intercourse with dictatorships!” If that is possible, it may work. Nevertheless, a democracy may already have become too dependent on its dictatorial neighbor to get out of the intercourse.

One way to alleviate the problem is to *globalize* the regional interstate governance. If more powerful democracies enter the interstate organization, the center of gravity of the organization will shift toward democracy. And, if the organization can set a “reference point” of its human rights standard somewhere outside the region, it may also help.

4. Final remarks

On November 24, 2004, Kakutaro Kitashiro, the Chairman of Japan Association of Corporate Executives (Keizai Doyukai), told the press that he (and his association) wants Prime Minister Koizumi to stop visiting to the Yasukuni Shrine, a shrine dedicated to Japanese who have died in wars. Kitashiro explains his demand that Koizumi’s visit to the shrine would deteriorate Chinese people’s perception on Japan, which is detrimental to Japanese business activity in China. He went on to say that the “majority in Japan’s business leaders” shares his opinion.⁽⁶⁾ This episode shows how far we have come ... how Japan has already become vulnerable to People’s Republic of China’s influence.

This essay is a theoretical, as opposed to an empirical, attempt to illuminate the possible effects of deepening interdependence, and hence of establishing interstate organizations, with dictatorship regimes. By its nature, such a work is not complete in itself---we need cases and evidences to make our hypotheses more realistic, and we need empirical assessments to check the theory. In the essay, I refer to the interdependence with China as if a prima-facie example of our model, but such a claim, thus far, lacks grounds. However, this essay is not aimed at slandering China. The only aim is to emphasize how critical the intercourse with China is for Asian democracies. It is, literally, a matter of life and death.

Let me restate the findings. The interdependence and interstate governance between a democracy and a non-democracy will raise a unique question: what level of human rights the interstate governance should provide and secure. By way of international trade theory analogues, we saw that a country size matters; a huge, powerful non-democracy---let me call it an “illiberal titan”--- can substantially lower the human rights standards of the interstate governance, and hence deteriorate democratic conditions of its partners. the

illiberal titan can also undermine democracy of its neighbors through the influence on businesses in the neighbor, manipulation of information, and sheer lobbying. Because of their open social systems, democracies are so vulnerable to such “fifth-column” attempts of the titan. In order to prevent the deterioration of democracy, there should be efforts to globalize regional interstate governance.

Avid readers may be aware that I have kept away from one critical issue concerning the intercourse with a non-democracy, that is, security and possible military strife. Actually, it is absurd to discuss relations with dictatorships without referring to the possibility of military conflicts. Nevertheless, in order not to make the matter unnecessarily complicated, and since (somehow) Asian multilateralism tend to avoid the security issues (although they are discussed with reserve in the ASEAN Regional Forum), I did not address this crucial issue.

NOTE

- (1) One prominent example of this line of research is Sikkink, Kathryn, “The Power of Principled Ideas: Human Rights Policies in the United States and Western Europe” in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, *Ideas & Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*. Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1993.
- (2) Keohane, Robert and Joseph Nye Jr. *Power and Interdependence*, 3rd edition, New York, Longman, 2001.
- (3) Gourevitch, Peter A. “The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,” *International Organization*, 32(4), pp. 881-912.
- (4) Edward L. Morse, *Modernization and the Transformation of International Relations*, New York; the Free Press, 1976.
- (5) Here, I refrain from raising specific cases.
- (6) <http://www.doyukai.or.jp/chairmansmsg/pressconf/2004/041124a.html>