

CALD GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2012



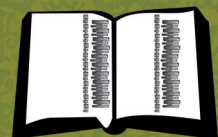
CONFERENCE REPORT

The Populist challenge to Liberal Democracy



Council of
Asian Liberals
and Democrats

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG FÜR DIE FREIHEIT



LIBERAL PARTY OF SRI LANKA

8-11 MARCH 2012 | COLOMBO, SRI LANKA



The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy

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CONCEPT PAPER

Sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason that it cannot be alienated ...the people's deputies are not and could not be its representatives; they are merely its agents; and they cannot decide anything finally. Any law which the people has not ratified in person is void; it is not law at all. The English people believes itself to be free; it is gravely mistaken; it is only free during the election of Members of Parliament; as soon as the members are elected, the people is enslaved; it is nothing.

Jean Jacques Rousseau
The Social Contract (1762)

Joseph Ejercito Estrada of the Philippines, Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Evo Morales of Bolivia, Silvio Berlusconi of Italy and Geert Wilders of the Netherlands – these are just some contemporary examples of heads of government or party who have been described as “populist” - leaders who are said to personify the notion of “general will” that political philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau and other supporters of radical democracy longed for.

But what are really the attributes associated with a populist leader? How different is populism today from populisms of the past? Is populism understood in the same way across countries and regions? How do policy-makers and members of the media respond to populism? What are the impacts of populism to democratic governance? These are just some of the questions that *CALD General Assembly 2012: The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy* attempts to address.

The Elusive Quest for Definition

Populism is an elusive, slippery concept. Its meaning varies from context to context and from author to author. Populism can be democratic or authoritarian, left-wing or right-wing, pro-status quo or anti-establishment. To make matters worse, populism is a loaded, value-laden and pejorative term. Few politicians and political parties would be happy with the label “populist”. As political analyst Philip Schmitter said, “Politicians and political scientists invariably used (populism) to designate persons or movements they do not like or would not like to have come to power.”

The concept of populism, however, has not always been conceived in a negative way. The first manifestations of modern populism emerged in the late 19th century, the *narodki* movement in Tsarist Russia and the People's Party in the USA. Both led to reforms in the political system or at the very least, critiques of the elitist institutions and processes. Populism during this time advanced democratic franchise, campaigned against cartels, and forwarded the interests of the marginalized.

Then as now, defining populism is a complex task. As political theorist Margaret Canovan (1999) observed, “there is a good deal of agreement on which political phenomena fall into this category but less clarity about what is it that makes them populist.” There is no

consensus on what qualifies as populism. Populism is understood differently by different people. Canovan (1999), for one, understands populism “as an appeal to ‘the people’ against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society.” de Raadt et.al (2004), on the other hand, views populism as “an ideology with several constituent elements, all derived from its central aim: to inject the will of the sovereign people directly into the democratic decision-making process.” Populism is also defined as “a political movement that draws its support across or with disregard for the lines of cleavage that are embodied in existing political formations and does so by focusing on the person of its leader who claims to be able to resolve a package of issues previously believed to be unattainable, incompatible or excluded” (Schmitter, 2006).

Corresponding to these definitions, it can be argued that populism may be conceived in terms of the following: (1) as a tactical device or rhetorical style; (2) as an ideology; and (3) as a political movement.

Populism as a Tactical Device or Rhetorical Style

One approach to populism views it as a political strategy that aims to appeal to a wide range of people, particularly during elections. This is closely associated with the rise of centrist politicians or catch-all political parties – which downplay their ideological inclinations in order to attract voters across the political spectrum. While rallying the widest possible section of the electorate, they also present themselves as the best placed to serve the people’s interest. By catering to what appeals to the people, populist politicians or parties identify and legitimize themselves.

Guided by this political strategy, populist leaders or parties communicate by saying what the people want to hear and by simplifying issues and choices for the electorate. In the process, however, they may make unrealistic, but popular promises.

This perspective, however, is criticized on two grounds. First, looking at populism as a tactical device or rhetorical style makes virtually all politicians and political parties contesting elections populist (Dix, 1985). Second, viewing populism as strategy to generate mass appeal by doing or saying what is popular denies the concept of any substance (de Raadt et.al, 2004).

Populism as an Ideology

Some observers argue that populism has substance – as a matter of fact, it is a full-fledged ideology. Ideology is defined as “a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides a basis for organised political action [...] intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power relationships” (Heywood 2002). Following from this definition, an ideology has three components: (1) a view of the present order; (2) a description of the ideal-typical situation; and (3) a list of strategies to move from the current to the desired situation.

Populism contains all these elements. The core of populism lies on its rejection of the political establishment, describing it as marked by the corruption of democracy and of the ruling class. It also views all political intermediary institutions as obstructive to the expression of the true will of the people. Kitschelt (2002), for example, claims that populism is “an expression of dissatisfaction with existing modes of organisation of elite-

mass political intermediation.” For the populists therefore, this system must be replaced by a more direct form of democracy where all political decisions are under the control of the people – perceived as one, unified and organic. Populists argue that “the established elites have hijacked representative democracy, and (they) will bring it back to the people” (de Raadt et.al, 2004). This ideal system can be realized, according to the populists, by establishing direct links between the people and the leader. More specifically, populists advocate the methods of direct democracy such as referenda, initiative, recall, popular consultations, direct election of officeholders, among others.

Populism as a Political Movement

If populism is indeed an ideology, it follows that it can also move people to action. For this reason, Latin American scholar Torcuato DiTella (1965) characterized populism as “a political movement which enjoys the support of the mass of the working class and/or the peasantry, but which does not result from the autonomous organizational power of either of these two sectors. It is also supported by non-working class sectors upholding an anti-status quo ideology.”

Populist leaders draw their support from across the social classes. In this regard, politicians, parties or movements which adhere to populism differ from those which subscribe to liberalism or socialism – ideologies whose support is traditionally based on a particular social class. By its very nature also, populism as a political movement lacks a well-defined structure, and is organized primarily around the personality of a charismatic leader. Populist leaders seek a direct bond with their mass following, and lead personal movements rather than well-organized parties. This makes populist politics very personalistic and opposed to political institutionalization.

The Essence of Populism

Based on the approaches identified above, scholars have attempted to identify the core elements of populism. According to de Raadt et.al (2004), populism involves “a call for the removal of the establishment, a rejection of their values, and a cry for their replacement so that the direct link between people and the political leadership can be restored.” In simple terms, populism includes an appeal to the people, anti-establishment attitude and a pro-direct democracy stance.

de la Torre (2000), on the other hand, identified the four features of populism as: an us/them discourse, a savior leader, a coalition of emergent elites with masses, and a relationship with democracy that emphasizes inclusion but not liberal procedures. The us/them discourse pertains to the division between the emergent elites (and the masses) and traditional elites, with the emergent elites claiming that they embody the general will, and that this general will can only be realized once a more democratic system guaranteeing sovereignty of the people is put in place.

Populisms of the World

Despite the emerging consensus on the main elements of populism, populism in practice still varies from place to place. The factors which led to the emergence of populism are shaped by each country or region’s distinctive political, socio-economic, cultural and historical contexts.

Asia

In Asia, the rise of contemporary populist leaders like Joseph Ejercito Estrada of the Philippines and Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand can be attributed to a significant extent to the social inequality persistent in these societies, most evident in the gap between urban and rural areas, and the resulting disillusionment with politicians and the elitist democratic system. While both Estrada and Thaksin cannot claim to come from the subaltern class, they were able to present themselves as champions of the masses or the poorest of the poor.

In analyzing the rise of Estrada, who was a very popular movie star before he entered politics, scholar Eva-Lotta Hedman (2001) said "...the rise of *artista* (movie star) candidates.. appeared symptomatic of the widespread popular disenchantment with traditional politics and politicians in the Philippines... Given the vast economic inequalities and marked social hierarchies that characterize life in the Philippines, it is perhaps not surprising that the peculiar recognition commanded by Estrada should have had a certain popular resonance and political consequence."

Like Estrada, Thaksin, a billionaire telecommunications tycoon, was also swept to power with an unprecedented electoral mandate. He was able to persuade Thai voters that he is nothing short of a national savior ready to lead the country – then still reeling from the effects of the 1997 Asian financial crisis – into a glorious future. The context of Thaksin's rise was captured best by Kazmin (2007): "In 1998 – with Thailand's economy in recession, Mr. Thaksin founded *Thai Rak Thai*, backed by academics and businessmen unhappy with the IMF-imposed austerity programme. Despite his intimate links with Thailand's old power brokers – whose poor economic stewardship had contributed to the crisis, Mr. Thaksin also managed to win the support of social reformers and long-standing leftists, convincing them that he was committed to cleaning up Thailand's notorious 'money politics' and offering a 'new deal' for long neglected rural areas."

The cases of Estrada and Thaksin show that populism can be employed primarily as a political strategy to gain popular appeal, with populist leaders not necessarily acting on behalf of the masses that they pledged to serve.

Europe

Like the Asian financial crisis of the late 90s, the economic crisis of 2008 and its social consequences also contributed to the rise (or more correctly, revival) of populism in Europe. Contemporary European populists, according to Surel (2011), have the following characteristics:

1. they present simplified answers to complex problems that seem reasonable to the majority;
2. they campaign on emotional topics that not necessarily reflect the country's actual underlying problems;
3. they utilize popular stereotypes, clichés and prejudices as tool to mobilize the masses; and
4. their rhetoric is based on strong patriotism with the focus on saving the country's own identity.

The author also provided a thorough analysis of the revival of populism in Europe. He said, "The electoral success of (populist) movements is often seen now as both an indicator and a component of a general crisis affecting both European political systems and EU integration. For some, this new populism is a consequence of globalisation and international integration, and a cause of nationalist tensions. It is also associated with a growing feeling of separation between governments and the governed, fed by scandal. The emergence or revival of extremist outfits and rhetoric – which denounce elites, supranational institutions, immigration, or all three – are seen as a danger to institutions and to traditional representative bodies" (Surel, 2011).

In Europe, it can be said that populism is more ideological as it revolves more on issues rather than personalities. Considering the more programmatic character of political parties in the region, this should not come as a surprise.

Latin America

In Latin America, the recent resurgence of populism is largely associated, rather incorrectly, with the rise of the left. A closer scrutiny, however, reveals that both populism and socialism are products of the highly unequal and exclusionary social milieu of the region. Since political parties are traditionally weak in this part of the world, the stage is set for populist leaders who are able to tap into popular disillusionment and feelings of social exclusion. As Weyland (2001) argued, "the economic policies and political repression of the military governments created a large, politically unorganized, and urban informal sector that became part of the multiclass support base of 1990s neopopulist leaders..." In this region, therefore, the persistence of inequality created the social requisite for the advent of populism.

The common threads which characterized populism in this region are nationalism and anti-capitalism. As the *Economist* observed, Latin American populists usually rally their followers against two rhetorical enemies: the "oligarchy of rural landlords and foreign imperialists". In terms of policy, they support industry and a bigger role for the state in the economy, as well as social benefits for the workers.

While these may give the impression that populism in Latin America is staunchly ideological, many analysts argue that populist movements in the region are more like "cults of personality" whose survival is strongly dependent on the leader.

Populism and Democracy

Regional or country experiences show how complex populism can be. However, the ambivalence of populism can be best observed when one looks at its relationship with democracy. While regarded as a pejorative term, populism has its share of advantages and disadvantages in its relations with democratic institutions and processes as seen in the table below:

Virtues and Vices of Populism (Schmitter, 2006)	
Virtues	Vices
1. Populisms deconsolidate sclerotic partisan loyalties and dissolve collusive party systems opening them up for the entry of new political formations.	1. Populisms undermine existing party loyalties and stable choices between competing partisan programs without replacing them with alternative ones.
2. Populisms recruit persons who were previously apathetic & passive citizens and mobilize them to participate in the electoral process.	2. Populisms recruit ill-informed persons who do not have consistent preferences and who seek 'emotional' rather than programmatic satisfactions from politics.
3. Populisms encourage the articulation of suppressed cleavages and expectations by raising and combining disparate and/or ignored political issues.	3. Populisms raise expectations that cannot be fulfilled and pursue policies that are incompatible, both of which produce negative externalities for everyone.
4. Populisms challenge "accepted" external constraints and call into question existing and often-exploitive dependencies upon foreign powers.	4. Populisms use foreigners and foreign powers as scapegoats for their own failings and weaken external linkages necessary for national welfare and security.
5. Populisms replace out-fashioned and formulistic party programs and ideologies and replace them with appeal based on the personality of leaders.	5. Populisms by shifting attention from issues and policies to persons and personalities introduce an erratic and opportunistic element into politics.
6. Populisms exercise 'decisionism' replacing policy immobilism and expand the range of 'politically possible' solutions to collective problems.	6. Populisms may be more decisive, but their decisions tend to be ill-conceived and disrespectful of long-term effects that are passed on the later generations.
7. Populisms need continuous popular ratification and are eventually defeated at the polls, leaving in their place a reinvigorated party system.	7. Populisms may be capable of altering the rules and/or of gaining the support of military and security forces such that they cannot be peacefully removed from power.

In simple terms, the relationship between populism and democracy boils down to the form of democracy being advocated – whether liberal (representative) democracy or direct (popular or radical) democracy.

For supporters of liberal democracy, populism is a threat to democratic institutions and processes and the rule of law. It develops a ‘cult of personality’ which sidesteps established institutions, rules and practices, often resulting in personalistic and not programmatic politics. Its disdain of intermediary institutions, which it views as corruptive of popular will, means that it is highly susceptible to political manipulation and demagoguery. Finally, since the populist rhetoric is based on what appeals to the most number of people, decisions and policies are made without the guide of a coherent and realizable political programme.

On the other hand, supporters of direct democracy argue that populism can counter the elitist tendencies of liberal democracy. Populism is complementary to democracy, especially given the tension between democracy as an ideal and democracy as a practice. As Surel (2011) said, “populism is one of democracy’s two constitutive processes, along with constitutionalism and the rule of law.” In this view, populism is not really anti-democracy, but it is highly critical of a particular form of democracy where the elites rule without regard for the interest of the people.

CALD General Assembly on Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy

In recognition of the importance of populism-democracy nexus, the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), in cooperation with by the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka (LPSL), chose the theme “The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy” as the theme of its 2012 General Assembly. A CALD Youth General Assembly with the theme “Preparing the Asian Youth for Leadership” will be held in parallel, although plenary sessions are also arranged to discuss the link between the two core concepts - populism and leadership.

Organized with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF), these events will take place in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 8-11 March 2012. The objectives of the Joint General Assembly are as follows:

- To analyze the relationship between populism and democracy, the rise of neo-populism in various regions, and the connection of media and policy-making to populist politics;
- To trace the connection between populism and leadership, particularly how populism enhances or undermines the capacity of political leaders;
- To enhance the leadership skills of CALD Youth members, particularly on those aspects dealing with political and social mobilization;
- To further strengthen relations between and among CALD and CALD Youth, other liberal parties and regional networks and to uphold CALD’s leading role in forwarding the principles of liberalism and democracy at both regional and global levels; and
- To discuss and sort all administrative matters concerning CALD and CALD Youth with the Execom members.

The CALD General Assembly is divided into six sessions. The first session addresses how populism, particularly its neo-populist variant, enhances or threatens democracy. The next two sessions hope to present cases of populism from the regions of Asia, Latin America and Europe, looking in particular at the factors which account for populist resurgence in these regions. In the fourth session, the issue of how political decisions or policies influence or result from populist practice, as well as the viability of populist policies, will be tackled. The next session will deal with how the media and political entrepreneurs use and are used by populist leaders in order to advance their respective agenda. The last session returns to the issue of democracy and populism, and asks whether a symbiotic relationship can be forged between the two. These sessions are capped by a synthesis, where the major issues and recommendations are to be summarized and elaborated. Below are the guide questions in each of the General Assembly sessions. Please note that this list is not exhaustive but is only meant to facilitate conceptualization and discussion. Speakers may tackle other related issues and questions apart from those listed.

Session I: New Populism: Threat or Corrective to Democracy?

What is your definition of populism or neopopulism? What do you consider as its main elements/dimensions? Do you consider populism or neopopulism as advantageous or disadvantageous to democracy? What are your reasons for subscribing to such view? Do you have concrete suggestions on how to address the threat of populism or how to make

democracy more responsive to the people? In what ways can a populist leader enhance or threaten democracy?

Session II & III: The Rise of Populism: A Comparative Perspective Part I & 2

In the region or country you are presenting, what are the factors which have led or hampered the rise of populism? How did the emergence or pre-emption of populism impact on democratic governance? Are the impacts positive or negative? How would you compare your region or country from the other cases presented or analyzed? What general conclusions can you derive from your region or country with regard to the relationship between populism and democracy?

Session IV: Policy-Making as a Cause and Result of Populism

What kind of policies breed populism? Alternatively, should policies be drafted based on what is popular to the people? How do policy-makers strike a balance between effective, technocratic governance and popular demands? What is your stance about the claim that populist policies are inefficient and not sustainable? Can you give examples of populist policies in your country or region, describe how do they come about, and their actual or potential impact?

Session V: Media, Political Entrepreneurs and Populist Politics

Is media a product of populist politics or does the media only respond to the nature of politics? Do you consider the rise of political entrepreneurs a positive or negative development? To what extent do populist leaders or parties use the media and political entrepreneurs to advance their populist agenda? Alternatively, how can media and political entrepreneurs contribute to the emergence of populism?

Session VI: Populism and Democracy: Towards a Symbiotic Relationship?

What are ways to reconcile populism and democracy? Can you cite countries or regions which have successfully incorporated populist elements without threatening democratic institutions and the rule of law? Are there ways to temper populism so it would not be taken as a threat to liberal democracy? Is it possible that populism and liberal democracy are just fundamentally incompatible? If this is so, how do we make liberal democracy responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people?

This General Assembly conference aims to tackle one of the most important developments in the world today – the rise of populism and its implications for democratic governance. CALD, as a network of liberal and democratic political parties, takes particular interest in the issue, considering that its members too are confronted with the populist challenge – when they face a populist opponent or when they are criticized as too distant to the people that they serve. Amidst the seeming tension between populism and democracy, it is important for CALD member parties to remain attuned to the needs and desires of the people without disregarding the value of democratic institutions and processes.

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8-11 MARCH 2012

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA



LIBERAL PARTY OF SRI LANKA

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG **FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**

PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

Accommodation

Galle Face Hotel

No. 2 Galle Road, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka

Tel: +94 11 254 1010

Fax: +94 11 254 1072

<http://www.gallefacehotel.com/>

8 March 2012, Thursday

Variable	Arrival Check in at the hotel Lunch (individual responsibility)
14:00	CALD Executive Committee Meeting (CALD Youth members are invited to attend) <i>Palm Lounge, Galle Face Hotel</i>
18:00	Welcome Dinner <i>1864 Restaurant, Galle Face Hotel</i>

9 March 2012, Friday

Venue: Palm Lounge, Galle Face Hotel

09:00	Registration
09:30	Opening Ceremonies <i>Session Chair:</i> Sec. J.R. Nereus “Neric” Acosta, PhD Secretary General, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection, Office of the President, The Philippines <i>National Anthem of Sri Lanka</i> <i>Ceremonial Lighting of the Lamp</i>

Welcome Addresses

Hon. Rajiva Wijesinha, MP

Chair, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Leader, Liberal Party of Sri Lanka
Presidential Adviser on Reconciliation,
Office of the President, Sri Lanka

Mr. Jules Maaten

Country Director
Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
Philippine Office

Introduction of the Keynote Speaker

Mr. Kamal Nissanka

Deputy Leader and Secretary General
Liberal Party of Sri Lanka

Opening Keynote Address

Hon. Rauff Hakeem, MP

Minister of Justice, Sri Lanka
Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress

Conference Group Photo

11:00 Coffee/Tea Break

11:15 **Session I: New Populism: Threat or Corrective to Democracy?**

Session Chair:

Mr. Ng Lip Yong

Chairman, Central Unit of International Relations and Affairs
Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia

Speakers:

Sec. J.R. Nereus “Neric” Acosta, PhD

Secretary General, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection,
Office of the President, The Philippines

Hon. Saumura Tioulong, MP

Sam Rainsy Party, Cambodia

Ms. Selyna Peiris

Chair, CALD Youth
President, Association of Young Liberals of Sri Lanka

- Open Forum
- 12:45 Lunch
Palm Lounge, Galle Face Hotel
(CALD Youth representatives will have a different program from 14:15 of March 9 to 12:45 of March 10. The youth program can be found on p. 8 of this document.)*
- 14:15 **Session II: The Rise of Populism: A Comparative Perspective Part I**
- Session Chair:*
- Dato' Seri Chia Kwang Chye**
 National Vice President
 Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia
- Speakers:*
- Southeast Asia*
- Hon. Sam Rainsy, MP**
 Leader of the Cambodian Opposition
 President, Sam Rainsy Party, Cambodia
- South Asia*
- Hon. Rajiva Wijesinha, MP**
 Chair, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
 Leader, Liberal Party of Sri Lanka
 Presidential Adviser on Reconciliation,
 Office of the President, Sri Lanka
- Open Forum
- 15:45 Coffee/Tea Break
- 16:00 **Session III: The Rise of Populism: A Comparative Perspective Part II**
- Session Chair:*
- Hon. Son Chhay, MP**
 Sam Rainsy Party, Cambodia
- Speakers:*
- Latin America*
- Prof. Francisco Luis Pérez Expósito, PhD**
 Graduate Institute of the Americas
 Tamkang University, Taiwan

Europe

Mr. Jules Maaten

Country Director
Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
Philippine Office
Former Member of European Parliament

Open Forum

17:30 End of Day 1

18:30 Assembly at the hotel lobby

19:00 Dinner
Wijesinha Residence

Book Launch

Asian Liberal Perspectives: Promoting Democracy, Equity, Pluralism

by Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha, MP

21:00 Return to the hotel

10 March 2012, Saturday

Venue: Palm Lounge, Galle Face Hotel

09:00 Registration

09:30 **Session IV: Policy-Making as a Cause and Result of Populism**

Session Chair:

Mr. Vincent Cheng

Vice Chairman
Singapore Democratic Party
Speakers:

Hon. Kasit Piromya, MP

Shadow Deputy Prime Minister
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2008-2011)
Democrat Party of Thailand

Mr. Choidorj Markhaaj

Foreign Relations Advisor to the Party Leader
Member of National Committee
Civil Will Party, Mongolia

11:00 Coffee/Tea Break

11:15 **Session V: Media, Political Entrepreneurs and Populist Politics**

Session Chair:

Ms. Jayanthi Devi Balaguru

Vice Chair, CALD Women's Caucus
Secretary General of the Women's Wing,
Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia

Speakers:

Hon. Kasit Piromya, MP

Shadow Deputy Prime Minister
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2008-2011)
Democrat Party of Thailand

Mr. Feizal Samath

Business Editor, *The Sunday Times*
Sri Lanka

Dr. Vincent Wijesingha

Candidate for Parliament, 2011 General Elections
Treasurer, Singapore Democratic Party

12:45 Lunch
Palm Lounge, Galle Face Hotel

14:15 **Session VI: Populism and Democracy: Towards a Symbiotic Relationship?**

Session Chair:

Atty. Jaime Fortunato "Jat" Caringal

Deputy Director General
Liberal Party of the Philippines

Speakers:

Ms. Huai-hui Hsieh

Acting Director, Department of International Affairs
Democratic Progressive Party, Taiwan

Hon. Gaku Kato, MP

Member of the House of Representatives
Vice Director-General of the International Department
Democratic Party of Japan

Open Forum

15:45 Coffee/Tea Break

16:00

Closing Ceremonies

Session Chair:

Sec. J.R. Nereus “Neric” Acosta, PhD

Secretary General, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection,
Office of the President, The Philippines

Introduction of the Keynote Speaker

Dr. Newton Peiris

Liberal Party of Sri Lanka

Closing Keynote Address

Hon. Vasantha Senanayake, MP

United Peoples’ Freedom Alliance

Synthesis

Sec. J.R. Nereus “Neric” Acosta, PhD

Secretary General, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection,
Office of the President, The Philippines

CALD General Assembly Administrative Session

Handover Ceremonies

Ratification of the Election of Sam Rainsy Party as CALD Chair-Party

Acceptance Speech

Hon. Sam Rainsy, MP

Chair, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Leader of the Cambodian Opposition
President, Sam Rainsy Party, Cambodia

Closing Remarks

Mr. Jules Maaten

Country Director
Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
Philippine Office

Hon. Rajiva Wijesinha, MP

Immediate Past Chair, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Leader, Liberal Party of Sri Lanka
Presidential Adviser on Reconciliation,
Office of the President, Sri Lanka

- 17:30 End of Day 2
- 18:30 Assembly at the hotel lobby
- 19:00 Farewell Dinner
Spices Restaurant, Hilton Hotel Colombo
- Hosted by
- Mrs. Swarna Amaratunga**
 President, Liberal Party
 Sri Lanka
- 21:00 Return to the hotel

11 March 2012, Sunday

- 07:00 Check-out of the hotel
- 07:30 Leave for Architect Geoffrey Bava's House
- 10:30 **CALD Youth Executive Committee Meeting**
 (Senior CALD members will serve as observers/resource persons)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:30 Leave for Galle Fort
Bay of Galle on the South East Coast of Sri Lanka
- Tour of Galle Fort
- 18:00 Arrival in Colombo
- Dinner (individual responsibility)
- Variable Departure of participants

CALD Youth General Assembly*
Preparing the Asian Youth for Leadership Workshop

Program of Activities

Facilitator

Ms. Mardi Mapa-Suplido
Executive Director
Youth Aid Philippines

Workshop Methodology

Each session will be divided into three (3) parts: 1) youth presentation/sharing (30 minutes); 2) facilitator's input (30 minutes); and 3) workshop/plenary discussion (30 minutes).

9 March 2012, Friday (pm)

Venue: Lotus A, Galle Face Hotel

14:15	Session I: Liberal Democracy and Political Youth Organizing
15:45	Coffee/Tea Break
16:00	Session II: Liberal Democratic Leadership: The Power Principle First Session
17:30	End of Day 1
18:30	Assembly at the hotel lobby
19:00	Dinner at the Wijesinha Residence
21:00	Return to the hotel

10 March 2012, Saturday (am)

Venue: Lotus D, Galle Face Hotel

09:00	Registration
09:30	Session III: Social Mobilization
11:00	Coffee/Tea Break
11:15	Session IV: Planning for an International Youth Action
12:45	Lunch <i>Palm Lounge, Galle Face Hot</i>

PROFILE OF SPEAKERS AND SESSION CHAIRS



Sec. J.R. Nereus "Neric" Acosta, PhD

Secretary General, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Philippine Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection
General Manager, Laguna Lake Development Authority

Sec. Neric Acosta is an experienced legislator, educator, ardent advocate of the environment, and international scholar. Currently CALD Secretary General, Philippine Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection, and General Manager of Laguna Lake Development Authority, Sec. Acosta also served as Secretary General of Liberal Party of the Philippines and as representative of Bukidnon province in Northern Mindanao to the Philippine House of Representatives.

His major legislation included bills on clean water, solid waste management and biodiversity protection. Sec. Acosta is also the principal author of the groundbreaking Clean Air Act, a model of environmental legislation in Asia.

Sec. Acosta's passion for education earned him various scholarships. After completing his BA in Political Science from the University of the Philippines, he went on to complete an MA in Public Affairs (International Relations and Political Studies) from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a PhD in Political Science from the University of Hawaii as an East West Center Scholar. He also attended the special programs Leaders in Development (1999) and Environmental Economics (2002) at the Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University. In 2004, he was named the first Filipino World Fellow of Yale University.



Hon. Rajiva Wijesinha, MP

Chair, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Leader, Liberal Party of Sri Lanka
Sri Lankan Presidential Adviser on Reconciliation

Hon. Rajiva Wijesinha is a Member of Parliament, Sri Lankan Presidential Adviser on Reconciliation, Leader of the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka and Chair of CALD. He previously served as Secretary General of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process in Sri Lanka and as Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights.

Hon. Wijesinha is a leading liberal theoretician in South Asia, and had conducted workshops on liberalism in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan and Indonesia. His publications include: *Liberal Values for South Asia*, *Declining Sri Lanka* and *Political Principles and Their Practice in Sri Lanka*. He will soon be releasing a collection of speeches entitled, *Asian Liberal Perspectives: Promoting Democracy, Equity, Pluralism*.



Mr. Jules Maaten

Country Director

Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Philippine Office

Former Member of the European Parliament

Mr. Jules Maaten is the Country Director of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in the Philippines. He was elected as a Member of the European Parliament in the 1999 European Elections as a member of the Dutch Liberal Party (VVD). He subsequently joined the Liberal Group in the Parliament and worked on the Committee for Environment, Public Health and Consumer Affairs and, starting 2002, the Foreign Affairs Committee. During his first term in the legislature, he sat on the Economic and Monetary Committee. Starting the end of 2001, he served as leader of the VVD-group in the European Parliament.

Before his election as MEP, Mr. Maaten was secretary general of the world union of liberal parties, the Liberal International, in London (1992-1999), during which time he was involved among others in supporting democratic movements in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Central and Eastern Europe. Prior to that (1986-1991) he was a municipal councillor in his hometown of Amstelveen, near Amsterdam, where he dealt with public finance education and social affairs. As President of the International Federation of Liberal Youth from 1983 to 1989, he worked on issues of disarmament and east-west co-operation.



Mr. Kamal Nissanka

Deputy Leader and Secretary General

Liberal Party of Sri Lanka

Mr. Kamal Nissanka is the Deputy Leader and Secretary General of the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka, where he also served before as editor of the party newspaper. He is a lawyer by profession whose interest in politics goes back to his student days.

After his graduation from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka in 1986, he joined hand with a small group intellectuals who were committed to liberal ideas and views and created the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka in 1987.



Hon. Rauff Hakeem, MP

Minister of Justice, Sri Lanka

Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress

Hon. Abdul Rauff Hibathul Hakeem is a Member of Parliament and Minister of Justice of Sri Lanka. He is also the National Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, a political party which represents the country's Muslim minority.

He holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and Master of Law (LLM), and was educated at the prestigious Royal College Colombo.



Mr. Ng Lip Yong

Chairman, Central Unit of International Relations and Affairs
Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia

Mr. Ng Lip Yong is the chairman of the International Relations and Affairs of the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia. Since joining the Party in 1981, he has held many positions at various levels including Vice President and National Youth Chairman. He was a Member of Parliament from 1999 to 2008 and was Deputy Minister of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia from 2006 to 2008. Prior to that, he was the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities.

Mr. Ng holds a B.Eng (Hons) degree in Electronic Engineering from the University of Sheffield and a M.Sc. degree in Microwave and Communications Engineering from the University of Leeds.



Hon. Saumura Tioulong, MP

Sam Rainsy Party, Cambodia

Hon. Saumura Tioulong is currently an opposition parliamentarian of the Sam Rainsy Party, representing the capital city of Phnom Penh, a post that she has held since 1998. From 1993 to 1995, she served as Deputy Governor of the National Bank of Cambodia.

Hon. Tioulong obtained her MBA as well as her Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Paris. In Paris, she later started her successful business career. This, however, did not stop her from supporting democratic development in Cambodia. She is a signatory of the Win with Women Global Initiative and has been actively involved in CALD projects.



Ms. Selyna Peiris

Chair, CALD Youth

President, Association of Young Liberals of Sri Lanka

Ms. Selyna Peiris is an alumnus of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Austria where she successfully completed her Masters in Advanced International Studies. She has previously graduated with LLB Honours from the Hull University in the UK and a further LLM in International Business Law at the University College London. After having worked at the United Nations in Vienna, she has recently returned to Sri Lanka and is currently working at Julius and Creasy, a leading law firm in Sri Lanka, and completing the Attorney-at-Law at the Sri Lanka Law College. She joined the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka in 2003 and currently serves as president of its youth wing. She is also the incumbent Chair of CALD Youth.



Dato' Seri Chia Kwang Chye
National Vice President
Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia

Dato' Seri Chia Kwang Chye is the National Vice President of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, where he has been a member for 27 years now. He also serves as Central Committee Member (since 1997), Central Working Committee Member (since 1997), Chairman of Political Training Bureau (since 2005) and Penang State Central Liaison Officer and State Working Committee Member. He was the Party Secretary General from 1999 to 2008.

He held the following government posts: Member of Parliament in Bukit Bendera, Penang (1995-2008); Deputy Minister of Information (2006 to 2008); Deputy Minister of Internal Security (2004 to 2006); and Parliamentary Secretary of Ministry of Energy, Communication and Multimedia (1999-2004).



Hon. Sam Rainsy, MP
Leader of the Cambodian Opposition
President of the Sam Rainsy Party

Hon. Sam Rainsy is the President of Sam Rainsy Party, a Member of Parliament and leader of the national opposition of Cambodia. His political career began with Prince Ranariddh's Funcinpec Party, becoming the Prince's European representative in 1989. He had previously served as Minister of Finance in a coalition government that emerged in Cambodia after the UN-supervised elections in 1993, and was a Member of the Supreme National Council of Cambodia from 1992 to 1993.

In 1995, he formed the Khmer Nation Party, which became the current Sam Rainsy Party when it was forced to change its name in order to contest the 1998 elections. In recent national elections, the party garnered the second largest number of votes.

Prior to his entry to politics, Hon. Sam was a financial analyst and investment manager with various banks and financial institutions, positions which included chairman and chief executive officer of DR Gestion, a Paris-based investment company and Bank Director at Paluel-Marmont. Hon. Sam received his MBA from INSEAD Paris.

In 2006, Liberal International awarded him with the Prize for Freedom honoring his dedication to championing human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

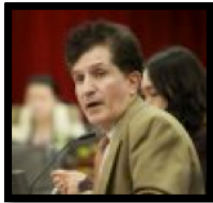


Hon. Son Chhay, MP
Sam Rainsy Party, Cambodia

Hon. Son Chhay has been a Cambodian Member of Parliament since 1993, representing first his birth province Siem Reap and later on Phnom Penh. He is a member of the Sam Rainsy Party and is actively involved in promoting democracy, human rights, equal opportunity, and good governance.

Hon. Son is also an Executive Member of the Global Network for Parliamentarians Against Corruption and a founding member of the Coalition for Transparency Cambodia, as well as a member of the executive committee of the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats.

He received his Bachelor's Degree in mathematical science from Flinders University and his diploma in education from Adelaide University in Australia. He also completed a course in business management at TAFE College in Australia. He has been working tirelessly to reach his goal of seeing an ASEAN network of MPs working effectively on the issues of corruption, democracy, human rights, social justice and eradication of poverty.



Prof. Francisco Luis Pérez Expósito, PhD

Graduate Institute of the Americas
Tamkang University, Taiwan

Prof. Francisco Luis Pérez Expósito, born in Spain but with family roots in Venezuela, is a veteran researcher on Latin American Studies who has been living in Taiwan since 1985. He has been Chairman of the Spanish Department and Graduate Institute of Latin American Studies of Tamkang University (Taiwan), and is presently Full Professor in the Graduate Institute of the Americas in that university. He has published many books and articles on the Latin American Left, and the political and economic relations between Taiwan and Latin America among other topics.

He holds a Master in Science from Seville University (Spain), a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Navarre (Spain), and postdoctoral studies on Latin American Politics at the UNED University of Spain.



Mr. Vincent Cheng

Vice Chairman
Singapore Democratic Party

Mr. Vincent Cheng is the Vice Chairman of the Singapore Democratic Party. He was a community organiser and educator during the 1970s and 80s, working with low-income earners and foreign workers. While he was the executive secretary of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission in Singapore, he was arrested by the Internal Security Department of Lee Kuan Yew. Alleged to be the ring leader of a Marxist conspiracy, he was detained without trial for 3 years and another 5 years of restriction orders. Since his release in 1995, he has been involved in natural health work.

Mr. Cheng and his fellow detainees related some of their experiences, including physical torture, in the book, *That We May Dream Again*, published in 2009. He is also in the process of writing his memoirs.



Hon. Kasit Piromya, MP

Shadow Deputy Prime Minister
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand
Former Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Leader
Democrat Party of Thailand

Hon. Kasit Piromya is currently the shadow deputy prime minister of the Kingdom of Thailand. He recently served as the Foreign Minister of the Royal Thai Government (2008-2011). Before his appointment as Foreign Minister, Hon. Piromya was the Director of International Affairs of the Democrat Party and advisor to the party leader, Hon. Abhisit Vejjajiva. He was also the former Ambassador of the Kingdom to the United States of America from 2004 to 2005. His previous postings as Thai Ambassador include the following countries: Russian Federation, People's Republic of Mongolia, Republic of Papua New Guinea, Federation Republic of Germany, and Japan.

Hon. Piromya obtained his Bachelor's degree in the School of Foreign Service in Georgetown University in 1968 and a Diploma in International Relations at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands in 1971.



Mr. Choidorj Markhaaj

Foreign Relations Advisor to the Party Leader
& Member of National Committee
Civil Will Party, Mongolia

Mr. Choidorj Markhaaj is currently the Foreign Relations Advisor to the Party Leader and Member of the National Committee of the Civil Will Party of Mongolia. In 2008-2011, he served as Head of the Mission of the Mongolian Trade and Economic Representative Office in Taiwan. He also served as member of the Policy Council under the Prime Minister of Mongolia and Foreign Relations and Parliamentary Issues Secretary of the Civil Will Party from 2007-2008.

Mr. Markhaaj received his Bachelor of Laws from Moscow Military Academy, and his Master's degree in International Relations at Keele University, UK. He also has a Diploma in Marketing and Management from Germany's Marketing and Management Academy.



Ms. Jayanthi Devi Balaguru

Vice Chair, CALD Women's Caucus
Secretary General, Women's Wing,
Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia

Ms. Jayanthi Devi Balaguru is the vice-chair of the CALD Women's Caucus. She is a lawyer, and an active member of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia. Among her posts as an elected member of the Central Committee of the party are secretary general of the Women's Wing (Wanita), vice chair of the Central Law and Human Rights Bureau and chair of the Federal Territories State Women's Wing.

An advocate for a fair and just society who believes that each voice needs to be heard and rights should be respected, Ms. Balaguru regularly conducts programs on women's empowerment.



Mr. Feizal Samath

Business Editor, *The Sunday Times*
Sri Lanka

Mr. Feizal Samath is a journalist with a career spanning over 30 years. He has worked for major Sri Lankan newspapers and international news agencies Reuters (Colombo and India) and Bloomberg (Colombo). He is currently Business Editor of *The Sunday Times* and a correspondent for Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency in Colombo.



Dr. Vincent Wijesingha

Candidate for Parliament, 2011 General Elections
Treasurer, Singapore Democratic Party

Dr. Vincent Wijesingha is currently the treasurer of Singapore Democratic Party, under whose banner he ran as candidate for Parliament in the 2011 General Elections. He is also the Executive Director of Transient Workers Count Too, a non-governmental organisation advocating the rights of low-waged migrant workers.

While Dr Wijesingha just joined the Singapore Democratic Party in 2010, he already led the team that drew up Singapore's first alternative Budget: *Shadow Budget 2011: Empowering the Nation*. At present, he is also involved in the party's outreach work as coordinator of its Community Service Subcommittee.

Dr. Wijesingha received his PhD in social policy from Sheffield University. He is a trained social worker and has worked in the field both in the UK and Singapore. He also regularly conducts lectures and publishes academic papers.



Atty. Jaime Fortunato "Jat" Caringal

Deputy Director General
Liberal Party of the Philippines

Atty. Jaime Fortunato "Jat" Caringal is the Deputy Director General (Officer-in-Charge) for Administration, Legal and Finance of the Liberal Party of the Philippines. He is also an Associate Researcher at Monash University (Australia), Chief of Staff of the Philippine Government Service Insurance Corporation, Consultant at the Institute for Government and Law Reform (University of the Philippines Law Center) and Partner at the Diaz Parreño & Caringal Law Offices.

Atty. Caringal finished his Bachelor of Laws (LLB) at the University of the Philippines, and further pursued a Master of Laws in Finance (LLM) at Wolfgang Goethe Universität in Germany.



Ms. Huai-hui Hsieh

Acting Director of Department of International Affairs
Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan

Ms. Huai-hui Hsieh is the deputy director of the Department of International Relations of the Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan. Prior to her stint in the party, she worked as a media analyst at the Singapore Trade Office in Taipei and was engaged in government service as secretary to the Deputy Governor of Taichung and Senior Specialist at the National Security Council of Taiwan. She received her Masteral degree in Politics from the University of Leeds, UK.



Hon. Gaku Kato, MP

Member of the House of Representatives
Vice Director-General of the International Department
Democratic Party of Japan

Hon. Gaku Kato is currently a Member of the House of Representatives, the lower House of the Japanese Diet, having been elected for the first time in 2009. He also serves as Vice Chair of the Administration Committee, Democratic Party of Japan and Vice Director-General of the party's International Department.

Following his graduation from Waseda University Hon. Kato worked for Japanese national broadcaster NHK. He resigned in 1996 in order to obtain specialist knowledge about Asian economic development mechanism through 5 years of study in Malaysia (University of Malaya), the UK (SOAS, University of London) and Taiwan. He then joined JETRO's Institute of Developing Economies in 2001 where he specialized in such fields as Asian diplomacy and South-East Asian politics and economy before deciding to enter politics.



Dr. Newton Peiris

Liberal Party of Sri Lanka

Dr. Newton Peiris is a leading educational and publishing entrepreneur in Sri Lanka having founded two international schools and other affiliated educational institutes in the Northwestern province of Sri Lanka. He is also currently the Senior Advisor to the Minister of Indigenous Medicines in Sri Lanka and former vice-president of the Liberal Party in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Peiris obtained the following academic degrees: BA Political Economy, Listopadu University, Prague (1969-1972); MA Public Administration, Charles University, Prague (1972-1974); PhD Law, Charles University, Prague (1974-1976); Dr Jur, Comparative Law, Free University, Berlin (1976-1977); LLB, International Law, University of Cambridge (1977-1978); and Certificate in Diplomatic Studies, The Bandaranayake International Diplomatic Training Institute, Colombo. 1986.



Hon. (Dr.) Sarath Amunugama, MP

Senior Minister for International Monetary Cooperation
Sri Lanka

Hon. (Dr.) Sarath Leelananda Bandara Amunugama is a Member of Parliament from the Kandy District (Mahanuwara) for United People's Freedom Alliance and Senior Minister for International Monetary Cooperation of Sri Lanka. He also served as Cabinet Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs and Deputy Minister of Finance and

Planning until April 2010.

He studied at the Trinity College, Kandy and graduated from the University of Ceylon. He joined the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service (CCS) in its last intake of cadets in 1962. Following the disestablishment of the CCS he was transferred to its successor the Ceylon Administrative Service which was later renamed as the Sri Lanka Administrative Service (SLAS). During his career in the SLAS he served as Government Agent of the Kandy District, Director of Information, Permanent Secretary to Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and later Chairman, The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. Before entering active politics he worked as an International Civil Servant for UNESCO headquarters in Paris.



The **Populist** Challenge to **Liberal Democracy**

CALD GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2012

8-11 MARCH 2012

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA



Council of
Asian Liberals
and Democrats



LIBERAL PARTY OF SRI LANKA

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG

FÜR DIE FREIHEIT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CALD Colombo General Assembly 2012

On Populism in General

- Populism emerges when people reach a level that they cannot stand the social and political problems anymore.
- The themes of populism include: fear, uncertainty, overwhelming complications, and anti-establishment attitude.
- Populism is capable of capturing the imagination of a population. It is more emotional than factual, it is more hopeful than real, it refers more to the “here and now” rather than the long-term policies and impact.
- There are positive and negative aspects of populism. It can be tolerant or intolerant. It can promote political participation, demagoguery, conspiracy or simple chaos or anarchy. Populism can either be a constitutional remedy or malady.
- There is no real agreement on whether populism, one way or another, is good, bad, or neutral. Populism is a challenge to liberal democracy and it can be both, it can be either, and it can be neither corrective nor a threat to democracy.
- There is a tendency to have a “conflation” between populism and fundamentalism. Fundamentalism tries to downplay the existing cultural-social structure and to postulate something that is religiously oriented but not very practical on the ground. Populism can work within the democratic process – even within systems that use polling and parliamentary apparatus.
- Modern technology is replacing the traditional form of populism that is led by a charismatic leader into a leaderless movement. Technology has transcended the need for a popular leader.

Populism as Threat to Democracy

- Populism is a political appeal to the instincts and ambitions of the lowest self in oppose to highest self. Lowest self refers to selfishness, fear of outsiders, communalism compared to the highest self which refers to selflessness, thinking about the community, and compassion among other things.

- Populism exists on perceived advantage, profit, or threat. It has no values, except that which matters to the target audience.
- Populists are demagogues, people who simplify, who oversimplify, who say that complicated problems aren't actually complicated at all.
- Direct democracy through populism is speedy and appealing, but it tends to simplify complex issues and makes it impossible to deeply understand the problems.
- Irresponsible political promises, however popular, could harm the economy and could put the public's trust on political parties into jeopardy.
- Seeking public's feedback through the polls reflects populist tendencies, but may negatively impact on the party's consistency in carrying out its vision and programme.
- The purpose of the media to inform the public through balance reporting and analysis has degraded because of populist influence --- putting at risk the capacity of the public to come up with informed decisions in a democracy.

Populism as Corrective to Democracy

- Populism can counter the elitist tendencies of liberal democracy. Populism is complementary to democracy, especially given the tension between democracy as an ideal and democracy as a practice.
- Populism can be a tool to attain power – power to govern with accountability and transparency and power to represent the needs of the people.
- Populism could be used as a more direct form of democracy to make a decision. As long as the party can transform itself by responding to the people's demand or sentiments quickly, even a populist leader could play an important role as a driver of democratic reform.

On How to Respond to Populism

- Liberals should lift and use the tools of populism towards the higher self (i.e. rule of law, accountability, the respect for human rights, and meaningful and long-term policymaking).
- Liberal democracy needs a balance between its two features majority rule and individual and minority rights, in order to escape populist tendencies.
- Some political parties in Asia need to overcome the image they project among many of the underprivileged, that they are an elite that does not understand the day-to-day problems of the peasantry and the urban poor.

- The mistake of some liberal political parties is that they do analysis, polling, market studies and then they tell the people what they need. On the contrary, populist political parties go around and ask the people what they need. A balance must be sought between these two tendencies.
- Liberals must be wary of the threat of populism and the tendency of intellectuals to assume that they necessarily know better than other people. There is always that tendency to dismiss the legitimate concerns of the people and as liberals, it is essential to take them seriously and engage them in a manner that enlightens.
- Leadership, particularly the role of young leaders, is one crucial area where a balance between populism and democracy could be achieved. The significance of human relationships and network building should not be underestimated.
- Ways to counter populist individuals and political parties: 1) Understand CAUSES and the underlying issues; 2) Take CATALYTIC ACTIONS and come with no simple solutions; 3) Have a sense of COMMON PURPOSE and find a coalition that goes in a certain direction with confidence; 4) "CORRECTNESS NO MORE" which means don't be politically correct. "Call a spade's a spade" to force the hand of populists.

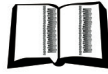


The **Populist** Challenge to **Liberal Democracy**

CALD GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2012

8-11 MARCH 2012

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA



LIBERAL PARTY OF SRI LANKA

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG **FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**

CONFERENCE REPORT

OPENING CEREMONIES



The CALD General Assembly 2012, with the theme “The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy,” was held at the historic Galle Face Hotel in Sri Lanka last March 8-11, 2012. The conference was organized by CALD and hosted by the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka (LPSL), in cooperation with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF). The Opening Ceremonies commenced with the National Anthem of Sri Lanka and the Ceremonial Lighting of the Lamp. Hon. Neric Acosta, secretary general of CALD and Philippine Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection, served as the session chair. Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha, MP, chair of CALD and leader of the LPSL, gave the welcome address together with Mr. Jules Maaten, country director of the FNF Philippine Office. Mr. Kamal Nissanka, deputy leader and secretary general the LPSL, introduced Hon. Rauff Hakeem, MP, Sri Lankan Minister of Justice, as the keynote speaker.

PROF. RAJIVA WIJESINHA, MP

Chair, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD)

Leader, Liberal Party of Sri Lanka (LPSL)

Presidential Adviser on Reconciliation,

Office of the President, Sri Lanka

Wijesinha, as host of the conference, welcomed the participants to the CALD General Assembly and to Sri Lanka. He briefly narrated the situation of his CALD predecessor and successor, Dr. Chee Soon Juan of the Singapore Democratic party (SDP) and Hon. Sam Rainsy, MP of the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) of Cambodia, respectively. Chee, convicted

repeatedly in courts, is not allowed to leave Singapore while Sam, whose parliamentary immunity was stripped, cannot enter Cambodia because if he does, he would face incarceration. Wijesinha said that both Chee and Sam face actual threats to democratic process in their countries with “harsh measures to muzzle the opposition” as reflected in the way their governments abuse the justice system and rule of law.

Wijesinha also talked about the “strange phenomenon” of the Thai Rak Thai Party of Thailand, which won the elections through aggressive populist policies. This situation reflects Thaksin Shinawatra’s continued grip in dominating the electoral process even in the guise of a surrogate party. Fortunately for Thailand, they have in place constitutional safeguards, which according to Wijesinha, would guard against exploitation of the weaknesses of democratic systems thus not allowing Thaksin to have direct control over the government. “The need to ensure safeguards against majoritarianism and against populism still remains vital. We must have constitutional safeguards that prevent legislation that allows for the state to be hijacked, either by a particular interest group, or even by an unscrupulous government”, Wijesinha noted. He also highlighted the need to have a strong but at the same time sensitive judiciary to ensure the rule of law.



According to him, there are valuable lessons that can address populism. The experience of the Greeks in being prevented to vote in a referendum where they are directly affected is fundamentally undemocratic. It is undemocratic for decision makers to assume that ordinary people will not understand the consequences of their votes. China on the other hand has this “systems of internal democracy” that can contribute to the lessening of populist threats “in that they provide outlets for popular feeling without the need for leading politicians to cater to special interests that hijack the democratic process.” Wijesinha emphasized the need to seek balance in these situations “ensuring that people can express themselves, whilst also preventing special interests from detracting from the interests of the whole, is a challenge that we need to face.”

MR. JULES MAATEN

Country Director
Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF)
Philippine Office



Maaten welcomed all the participants on behalf of FNF and Dr. Rainer Adam, FNF Regional Director for Southeast and East Asia, who was not able to attend the conference. Maaten was delighted to be in the presence of liberal colleagues from CALD and said that CALD general assemblies reflect why liberal and democratic parties and individuals continue to meet and reinforce a greater sense of purpose.

In times of crisis, he said, nations tend to become more “atomized” and start looking for their own solutions to problems. He also said that as “atomized nations” facing global problems, one could not easily find solutions. Countries would need to sit down and work together and CALD has shown this mantra from the very start – through “unity and not division.” CALD is a safe haven for reflection and dialogue for

liberals especially for those who work in very difficult circumstances like in Singapore and Cambodia. Maaten stressed that CALD provides an opportunity to transcend traditional thinking as new ideas and inspirations are shared to tackle problems on a daily basis in the member parties' respective countries. He also mentioned the importance of simple solutions to problems. He said that in highly complicated mechanisms in the interdependent world, it is much nicer and more practical to bring simple solutions to people. He added that this is the strength of CALD, especially in addressing the problem of populism: to "tackle these problems in a democratic environment in such a way that people understand what you're doing...(that) we as liberals and democrats can be better trusted to actually deal with those problems."

Finally, Maaten noted that "At the end of the day, it's all about freedom and CALD has shown that time and again." He wished CALD to continue to innovate and enlighten its members and the people of Asia.

OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS



HON. RAUFF HAKEEM, MP
Minister of Justice, Sri Lanka
Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress

Hakeem was thankful to be invited to be the keynote speaker and said that the theme of the conference is timely due to the emergence of populists movements "bringing in sweeping changes" in different parts of the world. He said he was impressed with the difficult political journey and struggles that liberals undergo to stand by and promote the "valued principles of liberal democracy."

"Politicians exist on their capacity to mobilize people," Hakeem said. And they all have their stories personalized to capture the public's attention at the widest electoral spectrum possible. He added that, "Populism exists on perceived advantage, profit, or threat. It has no values, except that which matters to the target audience." It is important, therefore, to understand that there are positive and negative aspects of populism. Hakeem examined

populism in relation to democracy and presented both positive and negative possibilities it can produce. The positive aspect of populism refers to its “functional importance” where elected representatives are compelled to respect the people’s will upon hearing their views. This aspect “suppresses inclination towards authoritarianism and prevents oppression of the people” and also provides “positive policies and movements that are concerned for welfare of the majority as opposed to favoring a small elite which often dominates political power.” Upon understanding this positive side of populism, politicians can offer voices to protests, for example, because they can make sure that the problems are resolved within the system and that violence or sectarianism are avoided. Meanwhile, the negative tendencies of populism can be seen in two forms. Hakeem presented the following: 1) tendency to whip up and implement policies that are popular but short-sighted leading to long-term harm to the society; and 2) tendency is to whip up popular support that becomes tyrannical and against the interest of minorities or small groups of people disregarding liberal values of equality, liberty, human rights and dignity. With this, populist policies, he explained, can be in all directions in the political spectrum --- “populist policies can be liberal, new liberal or neoliberal. It can be conservative, neoconservative, or perhaps liberal conservative...it can be left right, center, center-right, or center-left.” He cautioned that anyone can be on the verge of any of these tendencies. Populist movements, he said, are required to follow a straight path from then on in order to prevent the negative impacts to be further dragged on.

Hakeem also explained that populism can promote change as long as it is intended to challenge the existing status quo. The danger, however, is change can be either positive or negative. He said problems could arise when politicians do not actually understand their decisions and actions because there are “unseen dangers” in populism. “It can be tolerant or intolerant. It can promote political participation, demagoguery, conspiracy or simple chaos or anarchy...in an electoral democracy, populism can either be constitutional remedy or malady.” Hakeem admonished.

Hakeem explained populism in relation to liberal democracy, noting, “Liberal democracy is based on the idea that certain rights and freedoms are protected even from popular will.” When societies are divided, for example, in terms of identity, religion, or ethnicity, Hakeem said, “the negative aspect of populism has to be protected against.” Hakeem further explained that democracy represents a synthesis of two norms: 1) the sovereignty of the people which is the exercise of power in the name of the people; and 2) the constitutional basis of state which is vital response to concerns that abuse democratic means such as promotion of policies against long-term interests of the population and those that are against minorities within the population. “Constitutionalism hence ensures that the rulers chosen by the people are controlled by the way they exercise power,” he added. The two norms, he stressed, must complement each other and must avoid contradictions against each other.



In Sri Lanka, Hakeem said, they need to be committed to liberal democratic principles to balance the interests of popular partisan movements with longer-termed, principled constitutional goals. Sri Lankan politics, he added, needs to step away from the negative aspects of populism and gear towards more “principled constitutionalism.” He also said it is essential to learn from the lessons of modern history and understand the new wave of

changes and challenges that come and continue to shape the principles of liberal democracy. In conclusion, Hakkem highlighted that “Liberalism is about freedom and our constant struggle to be free of any form of servility. It is economic freedom. It is freedom of communication in this age of digital communication. It is freedom for nations such as Sri Lanka when powerful members of the global community pursue smart power.” The challenge for liberals worldwide is “to recognize the need to evolve our own smart power that can shield us from invasive designs of others.”

SESSION I: NEW POPULISM: THREAT OR CORRECTIVE TO DEMOCRACY?



This session provided definitions of populism and its difference from neopopulism based on the diverse perspectives of the speakers and included discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of subscribing to such views. The speakers also provided suggestions on how to address the threat of populism and how to make democracy more responsive to the people. Among the speakers were Acosta, Hon Saumura Tioulong, MP, from the Sam Rainsy Party, and Ms. Selyna Peiris, chair of the CALD Youth.

HON. J.R. NEREUS “NERIC” ACOSTA, PhD

Secretary General, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD)
Presidential Advisor for Environmental Protection,
Office of the President, The Philippines

Acosta started his presentation in an interactive manner. He asked each participant to write on a piece of paper one word that comes to mind when one hears “populism.” The responses were then categorized as positive, negative, or neutral. The results showed that the participants were almost equally divided on the topic. Through the exercise, Acosta was able to show that there are tensions in dealing with populism. He said there are two elemental pillars needed to be recognized and accepted to understand this tension: 1) the pillar of sovereign will which is essentially the will of the people --- the power exercised in the name of the people; and 2) the element of constitutional democracy which pertains to the form of government embodied in a country’s constitution. He added that as liberal democrats, leaders have to always be limited in their exercise of power and that there are restraints and limits of state power which are embodied in laws. However, democracy is

also understood as “governing in the name of the sovereign will of the people.” He said that because of this, there is an “inherent tension” as “populism will drive one of the other in either a negative or a positive direction.” Acosta further explained that there is no real agreement on whether populism, one way or another, is good, bad, or neutral.



Acosta noted that populism is a challenge to liberal democracy and “it can be both, it can be either, and it can be neither corrective nor a threat to democracy.” One approach to populism is to see how a leader uses it whether for demagogic pursuits or for the more substantive human rights, rule of law, and sovereign will purposes. He compared populism with “mediatization” or the use of mass media whether the conventional way (print, broadcast, television) or the innovative “new media” way (Facebook, Twitter, blogs). It is how one uses media and the Internet that can spark a revolution as in the case of what Wael Ghonim of Egypt did for the Arab Springs. Marshall MacLuhan, a communications social theorist, said “the medium is the message” and Acosta further explained MacLuhan’s thesis that it is not the message per se, but what the message is mediated with that actually changes human understanding. It is not about the politician’s slogan or a party’s platform in a political ad, but about how and where it is said, whether in television or radio or even in the new forms of media via the Internet.

Another approach in understanding populism is how one uses the tools of “political engineering” or the “Geographic Information Systems or GIS” to conduct demographic profiling and survey the political terrain to recognize the needs of the people and not just to know the number of voters and possible supporters. Acosta also shared the idea of knowledge management and how vital it is to “think tank” – “how we put policies that should be the basis of both what we believe in as liberal democrats and how we must really put those restraints on power.” To “think tank” is to have a basis for policies to help leaders shape these policies.

He noted that it is how one uses the features and elements of populism that will make it either corrective for constitutional democracy and the sovereign will of the people or a “malady” to liberal democracy, as what Justice Minister Hakeem stated in his keynote speech.

To Acosta, populism is more on the neutral side because “it is what you make of it.” He agrees with Carl Jung, a psychologist, about the concept of the “higher self.” Acosta said that liberals should lift and use the tools of populism towards the higher self. He explained that the word “higher self” of liberal democracy refers to rule of law, accountability, the respect for human rights, and to the meaningful and long-term policymaking and shaping vis-à-vis the “lower self” which pertains to opportunism, demagoguery and mere getting of votes in the short-term.

HON. SAUMURA TIOULONG

Member of Parliament

Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), Cambodia

Tioulong admitted it was her who wrote “Hitler” when asked what comes to mind when one hears “populism.” But with such pejorative concept, she chose to be positive

about the topic because she believes that populism can be a tool to attain power – power to govern with accountability and transparency and power to represent the needs of the people. The challenge really, she said, comes after when a leader is already in power whether or not he/she will use that power for the right purpose.

As an opposition politician and a Member of Parliament in Cambodia, Tioulong said her party, the SRP, qualifies as populist because of three features. First, they try to understand the needs and wishes of the people to get votes. She said knowing what the people need is a best reflection of a representative democracy and the GIS tool that Acosta mentioned in his presentation could really help in this area. Second, as mentioned in the concept paper of the conference, one of the key features of populism is the importance of an individual who embodies the hopes of the people. She believes that her party leader, Hon. Sam Rainsy, embodies this very element because he spearheads the party to fight against corruption, to protect the poor, and to serve as an honest leader, all of which are aspirations of the people. Tioulong said it is important to have an honest leader because the level of education in Cambodia is very low whereas the level of poverty is very high. It is hard to explain big words such as accountability, human rights, rule of law, and the like. She said, “It is easier, even though maybe a little bit paternalistic...to have one individual who plays the role of the good leader and who receives the hopes of the population and promises that he's going to fulfill those hopes.” Third feature is to provide simple solutions to problems. In corruption, for example, Tioulong said if given an opportunity to be in power, they would show that they can, if not eradicate it, at least put some kind of limit to it.



Tioulong said that the “caveat” is how one will use populism as a tool when one is in power. She said the danger of popularity and populist promises is the formation of the “cult of personality.” She recalled, for example, how the Royalist Party of Cambodia started, led by the charismatic and emblematic Norodom Sihanouk. He fought for independence against the French colonialist and formed an enormous movement until his son succeeded him. Tioulong explained that because of the failure to organize their movement into an institution, into a real political party with real machinery, the Royalist movement went down the drain. “They were in power, they succeeded, they conquered power, they got voted in and then after two, three years, they couldn't resist a coup that literally smashed this Royalist movement into almost nothing today,” she added.

The lessons of historical events are important to understand in order to not commit the same mistakes. Tioulong said that the challenge now for SRP is to use populism “as a tool, if not a remedy,” to conquer power and to “not indulge into a cult of personality that will then build another type of dictatorship and authoritarianism.”

MS. SELYN PEIRIS

Chair, CALD Youth

President, Association of Young Liberals of Sri Lanka

Peiris gave a background on populism and democracy and the different perspectives and tensions observed over the years. She also highlighted the value of good leadership in dealing with populism and why it is important to empower the young leaders of today.

Democracy, Peiris discussed, is a highly contested concept. Its etymological definition in Greek is “power or rule of the people” while it is also defined today as “rule of the majority, as expressed through free and fair elections.” Peiris said though that “majoritarianism” does not by itself constitute democracy and to be considered democratic, a regime must protect the rights of individuals and minorities and must guarantee the freedom of citizens and this is often referred to as “liberal democracy.” However, the two components of liberal democracy --- individual rights and majority rule are a complex combination, but “in today’s world, majority rule and the protection of individual rights almost always appear in tandem,” she explained.

Peiris noted that liberal democracy needs a balance between majority rule and individual and minority rights, but this challenge can easily be disrupted. She said the past two decades have experienced the rise of populism – from Hugo Chávez of Venezuela to Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador as well as Jean-Marie Le Pen in France and the mass movement behind ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Even the recent developments in the Arab Spring “saw new populist movements use the tactics of mass occupation.”



The traditional views on populism refer to it as a threat to pluralist democracy. However, Peiris explained that other theorists of the so-called new populism see it as a “response to democracy’s shortcomings” (e.g. elitism, democratic deficit, corruptions, lack of efficiency in solving social problems, etc.). Populism as defined in the Encyclopedia of Democracy is “A political movement that emphasizes the interests, cultural traits, and spontaneous feelings of the common people, as opposed to those of privileged elite. For legitimation, populist movements often appeal to the majority will directly, through mass gatherings, referendums, or other forms of popular democracy, without much concern for checks and balances or the rights of minorities.” Peiris admonished that populism remains democratic in the majoritarian sense, but charismatic populist leaders who win “have little patience with liberalism’s emphasis on procedural niceties and protections for individual rights.”

Leadership, particularly the role of young leaders, is one crucial area where a balance between populism and democracy could be achieved. Peiris said it is important for the young leaders of today to focus on the strategic and non-violent approaches to political change and to strive for systematic transformation and non-anarchic change. “Resorting to violence for change is also counter-productive and the costs often outweigh the realization of the causes,” Peiris explained while giving the example of the 18-day uprising in Tahrir Square that ousted an autocratic leader, but cost Egypt’s economy \$1 billion in capital outflow. She reiterated that non-violent political change is possible as seen through the Velvet Revolution in the former Czechoslovakia and the People Power Revolution in the Philippines and because new technology such as social media platform are readily available as tools for the young leaders to utilize.

The significance of human relationships and network-building should not be underestimated, Peiris said. With this, she shared the importance of CALD Youth as a forum aimed to “unify the present liberal and democratic generation in Asia in order to contribute strategically, effectively and intelligently to the development and preservation of democracy and freedom in the Asian region.”

In conclusion, Peiris said populist movements could be as much a threat to democracy as it is a corrective. She added that it is “visionary, strategic and intelligent leadership that can define the consequences of a populist movement.”

OPEN FORUM

What is Populism?

The open forum of the first session served to outline questions in defining populism. The main subjects were on the degree of exclusivity between populism and liberal democracy, the value of populism to a liberal democracy, and how "populist" technology can lead to direct democracy.



As a working concept, "populism" was criticized as being too broad in scope (i.e. if any mass movement born of a problem of the people can be called a populist movement, then every movement can be argued as populist). It was proposed that liberals should find a narrower definition to work with for the sake of debate. Given the ambiguous definition of populism, Hon. Son Chhay, MP, from the Sam Rainsy Party, attempted to delineate what he sees are two very different forms of populism. According to Son, one form is a popular struggle for change or reform; while the other more harmful form is characterized by the concentration of power from such a popular movement to one person; and that tendency of this "negative populism" is to corrupt and to destroy the principles of democracy and human rights. He maintains that liberals and democrats can welcome the former but prevent the latter form of populism.

Hon. Kasit Piromya, MP, from the Democrat Party of Thailand, clarified that there is a difference between being "popular" from being "populist." Piromya was convinced that populist leaders and democratic leaders operate in ways that are mutually exclusive to one another. As an example, he explains how populists follow a personality cult and therefore tend to bypass due processes versus democrats who respect institutions and strictly adhere to the rule of law.

Working with Value-Neutral Populism

A common theme in the forum was whether liberals can consider populism as inherently "bad" or value-neutral, a mere means whose value to liberalism and democracy is justified by its outcome. Panelists Tioulong and Peiris agreed that populism is value-neutral and sometimes even necessary to overthrow a dictatorship. Results can be beneficial for democracy or, as in the case of Adolf Hitler, populism can be destructive to society. According to them, hindering populism from turning into a tyranny involves protecting the pillars of democracy such as observance of individual and minority rights, rule of law and constitution, among others. Tioulong emphasized "women's power" to be a vigilant watchdog of leaders while Peiris urged the youth to reform governments from the inside as civil servants or bureaucrats instead of overhauling the system from the outside after every populist revolution.

Acosta stressed the constant presence of both populist and democratic elements in any society and that their persistent struggle is reflected in every individual. Therefore, the focus of the debate should be on how to use populism and democracy as vehicles for the good of society instead of futilely arguing over moral judgments and labels. Session chair Ng echoes the neutrality of populism, the rejection of labeling its moral value, the opportunities available with the use of populism, and emphasized the need for a constant, preventive watch on populist leaders.

Direct Democracy Through Modern Technology

Another theme raised by Hon. Sam Rainsy, MP from Cambodia, was the association of new communication technology, populism and direct democracy. Sam asked whether or not new technologies are populist by nature because they bolster populist movements in modern society. He then links this "populist technology" as the medium to a purer and direct form of democracy. Tioulong questioned the quick assumption that direct communication leads to democracy. She pointed out that just because there is an avenue for communication, it doesn't mean that a movement will translate into a set of democratic institutions. She remains skeptical of solid, democratic institutions being established in the countries of the Arab Spring despite the revolutionary use of this new social networking technology.



Peiris said that modern technology is replacing the traditional form of populism that is led by a charismatic leader into a leaderless movement; that technology has transcended the need for a popular leader. In contrast to Tioulong, she believes that this new form of communication will lead to direct democracy albeit with a caveat. With so many different websites and other sources engendered by new social media and nearly no checks for the veracity of all these sources, this new technology can pass on lies and fabrications and for that reason can be a hindrance to real democracy. Acosta added that technology is empowering and allowing citizens to be more critical and vigilant of the government and therefore a more direct democracy is available today more than ever before.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS



HON. DR. SARATH AMUNUGAMA, MP

Senior Minister for International Monetary Cooperation
Sri Lanka

Amunugama started by sharing the “laissez-faire” philosophy of William Ewart Gladstone, the former Liberal Prime Minister of Britain in the late 19th century, that good government does not interfere much in the affairs of individuals. “Leave alone” as remembered by Sri Lankan students in their British history, the “laissez-faire” philosophy was a challenge to the populist policies of Israel during Gladstone’s time. Amunugama said the conservatives that time were tagged with “jingoism” or that nationalism that appeals to arouse patriotic emotions and they mobilize people to further radical ideas.



There are three basic elements from the writings of Gladstone that Amunugama believes are useful for liberals today. First is to avoid too much government interference in order for the normal market place to function and in order to elude state capitalism. Second is to have a government mandated by the people or with the consent of the governed. And third is to focus on decentralization power or devolution solutions. Amunugama said all of these vital elements are challenged by the idea of populism. Populism, he explained, is “the idea of charismatic leaders who work on all the existing discontents and disappointments to create and launch a radical attack on the prevailing ideas or the dominant ideas of their time.” He added that the history of the modern world shows the success of many of those charismatic people (e.g. Hitler, Mussolini, etc.) and it is very crucial to look at the social structure and social background in which populism thrives.

Amunugama also focused on the difference between populism and fundamentalism because there is a tendency to have a “conflation” between the two concepts. Fundamentalism is on the rise as observed in India, Pakistan and the Middle East. It may

share certain characteristics with populism, but Amunugama said they are not the same. The tendency is that those who subscribe to fundamentalism try to downplay their actions and try “to destroy the existing cultural-social structure and to postulate sometimes something that is very, in a sense, religiously oriented but not very practical on the ground.” Populism, he noted, is something else and it can work within the democratic process – even within systems that use polling systems and parliamentary apparatus.

Populism can succeed in a democratic system as populist leaders develop their strength and scope. Amunugama said that at the bottom of the political landscape is grievance and discontent and as liberals, it is important to analyze what the discontents are in a society. The Mandal Commission established by the Janata Party government focus on the caste structure that identified the socially and educationally backward. The policies that led to putting quota systems against competence resulted in divisions towards the growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). BPJ is an example of the rise of charismatic populist activities in terms of great internal discontent caused by the Mandal report. Amunugama said, “There are undercurrents of ethnic misunderstanding that politicians can convert into various populist manifestations.” He added that analyzing the discontents, whether historical, structural, or man-made, would thwart possible “fertile ground for populist leaders and radical politics” that can launch an attack on the existing liberal and democratic values. The challenge he posed is for all liberals, party members or liberal thinkers, to raise issues of discrimination and disparities in the society, because they have the intellectual capacity to do so.

SESSION II: THE RISE OF POPULISM: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE PART 1

This session talked about the factors, as observed by the speakers, that led or hampered the rise of populism in their respective countries and their impact on democratic governance. The speakers also presented country comparisons based on their experiences and shared their perspectives with regard to the relationship between populism and democracy. Dato’ Seri Chia Kwang Chye, National Vice President of the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, facilitated the session. Hon. Sam Rainsy, MP, leader of the Cambodian opposition, and Wijesinha, provided input in this session.

HON. SAM RAINSY, MP

Leader of the Cambodian Opposition
Incoming CALD Chair

Sam provided the distinction between the two forms of populism according to his personal view: 1) democratic and gentle populism as experienced in Thailand and Italy, and 2) brutal and authoritarian populism as experienced in his own country, Cambodia.

Cambodia, he shared, holds a sad world record in political longevity because the same party has been in power for 33 years and also because the current Prime Minister of Cambodia, Hun Sen, is the longest serving political leader in the world since the death of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya (42 years on power) and the ouster of Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen (33 years in power). Sam explained that Cambodia has achieved a remarkable transition, not from communism to democracy, but from communism to fascism and fascism shares common features with populism. The transition from 1975-1991 when the country was under communism during the Khmer Rouge era until the United Nations (UN) intervened in 1991 following the Paris Peace Agreement on Cambodia was a hopeful

transition. The UN organized elections in 1993, but the democratization process collapsed when Hun Sen staged a coup d'état and toppled the democratically elected leader.

The reason Hun Sen is in power is because he adopted a populist approach over the last 15 years. Sam shared a few common points that show how Hun Sen's actions and decisions are very much similar to the legacies of communist and fascist leaders. First, he installed a police state that created fear and intimidation, repression, and cause numerous human rights violations. Second, Cambodia experiences a one-party system in the guise of a democratic system. Third, Hun Sen is a one-man system that controls everything. Sam said communists are internationalists while fascists are nationalistic and "they fan the flame of nationalism and glorify the past." Sam said, "Cambodia now has all the ingredients of a fascist state." The current system resembles fascism because the Cambodian economy has become a capitalist system where only Hun Sen's close friends and cronies have the control and even the power to crackdown trade unions. He has also restored religion and royalty, which plays a very critical political role in Cambodia. Like Mussolini to the Vatican, Hun Sen is giving a lot of privileges to the clergy. Sam said the Buddhist clergy in Cambodia has "sold out and has become materialist contrary to the teaching of the lord Buddha." It goes the same with the king. Mussolini tolerated a weak king who did not challenge his actions. Sam said he had the privilege to have a private discussion with former King Norodom Sihanouk and the king said, "The Cambodian people would reproach me to be such a weak king [who is] not able to resist a dictator." Hun Sen also pretends to represent the will of the people, and to defend and help them. He assumes that he can reduce poverty by giving donations and handouts, which most people have mistaken for generosity. He has also exacerbated nationalistic feelings to win elections when he created the Preah Vihear border problem between Thailand and Cambodia. This issue has caused the people to unite behind the government knowing that Hun Sen will defend the country. And because of this, he is destroying the institutions. He commands the parliament and the judiciary, which Sam stressed, "is totally subservient to the political power...Hun Sen has replaced all decision-makers in all fields at all levels."



Sam said Hun Sen is a genius at surviving and clinging to political power, but there would never be a long-term vision for the country if a leader is on a survival mode on a daily basis. In conclusion, Sam thinks that populism is undemocratic in the short term and regressive in the long term.

PROF. RAJIVA WIJESINHA, MP

Chair, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD)

Leader, Liberal Party of Sri Lanka (LPSL)

Presidential Adviser on Reconciliation,

Office of the President, Sri Lanka

Wijesinha first thanked the secretariat for the very useful concept paper that provided a background on theme of the conference. He discussed the fact that the individuals who are considered as populists throughout the years have been the valid choices of people for their respective countries. He also analyzed the grounds that make them popular and the difference between a populism that is worth being respected and a populism that, in the liberal point of view, can be rejected.

Geert Wilders of the Netherlands, for example, though popular, shows the limits of populism because he was never voted by majority of the population. Populism, in this case, is based on the negativity of the concept, thus causing the rejection by the people contrary to Chavez and Morales in Latin America and Shinawatra and Estrada in Asia who appealed to the public by promising poverty alleviation. Media is another factor that keeps populists popular because it sustains them to their privileges. Wijesinha said, to him personally, Ronald Reagan was the first populist President who utilized his “cinematic skills to win people to a partisan agenda.” He added that John Kenneth Galbraith claimed that Reagan’s philosophy was that “the poor were not working hard enough because they had too much money, and the rich were not working hard enough because they had too little.” The consequences of this he said may find its way to policies, but he emphasized that, “promoting the interests of the poor and the deprived is vital, and should never be seen as populism in itself.”



Wijesinha said, in Asia, populists appeal most to the deprived and this affects policies that are conceptualized and drafted to actually help them. He said the Democrat Party of Thailand and the Liberal Party of the Philippines have realized the need to “overcome the image they project amongst many of the underprivileged, that they are an elite that does not understand the day-to-day problems of the peasantry and the urban poor.” Wijesinha said what is crucial is to develop the policies that address the problems and explain “clearly and convincingly” to the people the sustainable benefits of such measures. He said this case should also apply in Sri Lanka where the challenge is to have more sensitivity and careful planning of policies particularly on language. Wijesinha said an example would be how Sinhalese was made to be the sole official language of the country. On the language issue, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the fourth Prime Minister of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), originally advocated Sinhala and Tamil as national languages, however, the “Sinhala Only” policy was adopted. Bandaranaike, who previously backed the United National Party (UNP), defected to establish the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) that appealed to the Sinhala masses in rural areas. He decided to dissolve the parliament to seek a mandate from the people to implement his policy. Wijesinha said Bandaranaike won a massive majority because “the UNP lost its Tamil voters who turned to the Leftist parties in the South and to the Tamil Federal party in the North”. Wijesinha added, “My argument then is that it was not the policy designed to compensate for disadvantages that led to the destructive side of populism, rather, it was a deliberate decision to exploit the appeal of such a policy...it was Tamils who bore the brunt of policies intended initially to overcome social disparities.” The language issue was followed a decade later by the standardization policy for university entrance that directly affected educationally privileged Tamils. Wijesinha noted that it is important for political parties to work towards an inclusive national character to prevent those without much popular appeal not to focus on the deepening narrow base otherwise then end up destroying their own party.

Wijesinha also shared a similar situation in Pakistan on the process of “Islamisation” to increase a leader’s power base. In India, however, the “spirit of Gandhism” showed a different trajectory. He said, “The Gandhian legacy has contributed to a pervasive moral imperative to avoid destructive populism,” whether this will triumph remains to be seen. He commended the leadership and character of Rajiv Gandhi who showed decency when he praised the contribution of the Sikhs in India.

In conclusion, Wijesinha said, “For, ultimately, it is strong and principled leadership that provides the only answer to the temptation to pursue popular policies...To overcome the temptation we need constant vigilance, and a constant building up of awareness of the generally positive effects of inclusivity as opposed to divisive politics.”

OPEN FORUM

Thailand's Populist Politics

The problem with opposing populism, as Piromya said, was how populist leaders like Shinawatra can be authoritarian and yet also be democratically and willingly elected by the people into power. Francisco Perez Exposito, from the Graduate Institute of the Americas in Tamkang University in Taiwan, remarked that just because a leader eventually becomes authoritarian in rule, it doesn't mean he is obviously dictatorial when he campaigned. He could appear democratic, be voted for in a democratic manner and continue to keep a facade of democracy. The case of Thailand is like this, he said. The situation where an apparent dictator happens to be democratically elected into power is another case altogether.

Occupy Wall Street, US

Piromya wanted to know what liberal democrats make of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US. According to Piromya, the movement is populist but not exactly a political movement. Wijesinha believed there must first be a clear delineation between politicians who engage in *popular* measures from politicians who engage in *populist* measures; the former being the mode liberals should employ. He said that the Occupy movement is not strictly populist until a politician uses the movement to spread hate. He added that popular movements become populist when popular sentiment is used to attack a particular sector or group; subsequently leading to the majority voting for a politician who would be willing to attack the particular group. In the case of Thailand, Wijesinha thought Shinawatra used the overwhelming sense of deprivation to attack institutions that were also in his way to greater power. He did not actually attack the elites of Thai society since he sought their approval as well. This definition of populist movement doesn't apply to the case in the US because the poor does not make a big enough group. It would grow into a populist movement if the Occupy movement turned against immigrants under the notion that they are taking the jobs from locals.

Mr. Chaudhary Usman Ali, from the Liberal Forum Pakistan, introduced the idea of religious populism wherein political leaders like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto disadvantaged religious minorities (and even tap into radical religious groups) to gain favor from a bigger majority. To illustrate, Ali said that former Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan denounced an entire religious group, the Ahmadiyya, as non-Muslim because of pressure from other religious groups. He said that destructive forms of populism like this are really dependent on the discretion of leaders. He thought this is the same problem in the US: pressure from the movement could compel President Obama to handle the Occupy movement in a populist way. Sam said that populism needs both mass frustration and blame against a perceived responsible class of people to thrive. He added that there are two kinds of populism: pro- and anti-



establishment. Pro-establishment populism tends to not survive in mature democracies like the US; but anti-establishment populism can survive in any context even in the US with Obama's presidential campaign or the Tea Party. He said that even with an educated populace, populist movements can emerge because of emotional appeal. From his experience in Latin American politics, Exposito agreed that emotion is indeed a strong initiator for populism even with an educated population.

CALD Executive Director Lito Arlegue pointed out that people believe that to address the socioeconomic gap, you have to attack or reform institutions. Given that, he asked if there's a difference between addressing the socioeconomic gap and attacking institutions, suggesting that closing the gap will always be associated with populism. Sam and Wijesinha said that not all change in institutions are necessarily populist. Change is not only legitimate if it is needed, but also a part of democracy as long as the change goes through the proper procedures.

To summarize, Sam compared populism to opportunism and how it goes against principles. He said that awareness through education or exposure makes people less swayed by personality-centered governments that trick their people to worship them. Populism would then have a weaker hold. He's convinced that individuals who uphold liberal values must also oppose populism. Wijesinha tacitly agreed by saying that South Asia has been less affected by populism, thanks to the establishment of a better educational system. He also said that South Asia had developed a large middle class that was represented best by liberal political parties. So, the educational system, in tandem with a discriminating middle class, made South Asia less prone to populist tendencies. He counted checks and balances in institutions, political parties with accurate representation of the sectors of society and mitigating frustrations as preventive measures against populism.

SESSION III: THE RISE OF POPULISM: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE PART 2



This session is a continuation of the comparative perspectives on the rise of populism from the Latin American and European standpoint. Hon. Son Chhay, MP, from the Sam Rainsy Party of Cambodia served as the session chair. Prof. Francisco Luis Perez Exposito and Mr. Jules Maaten were the speakers.

PROF. FRANCISCO LUIS PEREZ EXPOSITO, PHD

Graduate Institute of the Americas
Tamkang University, Taiwan

Exposito presented a comparative perspective on the rise of populism from the Latin America standpoint. He said they have long experienced populism and they refer to it as concrete political regimes characterized as “one breaking the system...dividing the society into two antagonized groups.” Part of this is a charismatic leader who becomes the center of all systems. Exposito explained that in the political realm, people who were disenfranchised and outside the political system becomes part of the system and this can be considered an expansion of the democratic system.

In Latin America, Exposito recounted the rise and evolution of populism, neopopulism and radical populism. He said that the start of populism could be attributed to Juan Peron of Argentina, who included all urban workers in the political system, fielded in labor union appointees in his cabinet and created and expanded trade unions and labor courts. Peron, however, created enemies (landowners and the rich in the industrial sector) due to the political participation of the people in the system. But Peron was immensely popular because of his efforts in alleviating poverty and prioritizing labor. At the end of the last century, Exposito explained the emergence of neopopulism that could be attributed to the rule of Alberto Fujimori of Peru and Carlos Menem of Argentina. In neopopulism, there is salvation and people relate to it. Fujimori, known for his decade-long presidency and his action in toppling terrorism and bringing back economic stability, still enjoys public approval in Peru despite accusations on human rights violations and corruption. Menem on the other hand pushed for social plans that increased spending on anti-poverty programs, but like Fujimori, he was also hunted by corruption charges. Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Evo Morales of Bolivia, and Rafael Correa of Ecuador have all shown radical populism – populism that could create “tyranny, lack of democracy, dictatorship of fellows who get elected...[and] economic havoc.”



Exposito also explained that though populism created problems, it has also shown positive effects in Latin America because it has expanded the participation of the people. He added, “Populism has gotten many people out of poverty.” Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, regarded as the most popular politician in Brazil, he said, was a populist leader who tried to solve the problems of the country taking into account the limits that reality imposed on him. He was known for government programs such as “Fome Zero” or “Zero Hunger” and Bolsa Familia” or “Family Allowance.”

Exposito shared some factors that were present in Latin America before populism erupted. First, the level of education and professional formation were not very high and the general public did not have the courage to voice out their opinions. Second, the privileged minority had the resources while the public had none. Third, the political parties, little by little, deviated from the needs and desires of the people. And lastly, there was a long term perception of corruption of leaders in Latin America as exemplified politically by the “clientelistic system,” and culturally by the idea of a “strong man” who is worshipped because he solve all problems. Furthermore, Exposito noted that, “Populism doesn't come out until people reach a level that they cannot stand it anymore. There is a threshold that people will not go for a populist system until they, for a long time, see that the other systems

does not fulfill [their] needs and desires.”

Lastly, Exposito highlighted that there are some cases in populism that opposition members in Latin America and in Asia should be vigilant about. Chavez achieved power, changed the constitution, controlled the political system, the judicial system, and all other systems and everything he has done was legal. Exposito said, “They [opposition] should try to participate and get whatever they can...in order to limit a little the power.” Populism can be good, he added, but it can get perpetuated to lead a tyrannical way of government.

MR. JULES MAATEN

Country Director

Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Philippines Office

Former Member of the European Parliament

Maaten discussed the populism and its rise in Europe and said that it actually came from Europe as invented in ancient Rome. A Latin-based word, populist or “popularis” is a well-known concept in Rome because of the “People’s Tribunes” who were elected in the ancient time to represent the ordinary people. The famous ones were Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus who both came from a wealthy family, but defended the cause of the people, particularly land ownership. In those days, he said populism was a very neutral term and it simply describes what people are doing such as appealing to the masses. Throughout the years, however, the concept has completely changed.



Europe saw historical changes through the rule of leaders who embodied the characteristics of populism such as Benito Mussolini of Italy and Adolf Hitler of Germany. Mussolini embraced the sentiment of Italy to go back to the former grandeur of ancient Rome. Maaten said fascism was that movement and “it looked at people who felt like losers and made them feel much better about themselves.” He also explained how the Nazi movement in Germany focused on the build up of national socialists, where neglected people were handpicked to become local leaders and suddenly transformed into bosses in society.

Maaten explained that there were many other movements that were populist in nature but were not always of the same character such as in Romania, Croatia, Serbia, and that of General Franco’s in Spain with his far-right “Falange movement.” Maaten said, “Since then, populism somehow has a bad name in Europe and there are no ifs and buts about it. Populism is a bad thing...populists are demagogues, people who simplify, who oversimplify, who say that complicated problems aren’t actually complicated at all.” This kind of thinking actually was appealing to people. Populism is usually associated with right-wing movements in Europe, but they can be left-wing movements as well because as strange as it is, Maaten noted, there can be links between the extreme left and the extreme right.

Maaten also said that populists are not always popular. However, the problem began when they started to become “prettier” and successful and started to appear normal. He gave examples of countries where populism became successful and eventually failed. Austria and France are somehow recognized as fathers of modern populism in Europe. In Austria, Jörg Haider, former leader of the Freedom Party of Austria and later led a breakaway party, praised Nazi policies and flirted with the dark past of Austria. Maaten said Haider’s party attracted disgruntled people -- people who were dissatisfied, so internal

conflicts and factions became inevitable. Jean-Marie Le Pen, a well-known populist in France, led a very traditional and very right-wing party with anti-immigrant policies. Filip Dewinter of Belgium, a right-wing Flemish nationalist, and Pim Fortuyn of the Netherlands, a politician, civil servant, author and professor, both supported anti-immigration and anti-Muslim stance. Geert Wilders, another Dutch right-wing politician and the founder and leader of the Party of Freedom (PVV), also made his capital out of an anti-immigration, anti-Islam, anti-establishment program. He changed from a liberal to a right-wing person overnight. His argument, Maaten explained, was that if Wilders sees a hole in the market then that is where he will go because there's nobody filling that particular political space. Maaten also said the reason why Wilders survives politically is because he actually comes from the establishment and because he is someone who seems to know what he's talking about. Maaten added that at the moment, "He is not in government, but he supports a minority coalition government, which gives him a certain amount of power in politics." In Norway, there is a party that strongly supports anti-immigration policies, but at the same time it is also very pro-free market and pro-individual rights. Maaten said politics in Norway shows that populism can be a mix of forms and is not necessarily something that is fascist or nationalist. Maaten also shared stories about Nick Griffin, the leader of the British National Party, and Thilo Sarrazin, member of the Social Democratic Party and was Governor of the European Central Bank of Germany, and how their racial tirades fortunately did not seem to help their populist's approaches.

Maaten succinctly discussed as well the themes of populism namely: fear, uncertainty, overwhelming complications, and anti-establishment. Maaten said populists "can't grasp what is going on...they are very anti-establishment...[and] their instincts are usually not to be tolerant...they are people with a grievance and discontent." These grievances actually translate to policies that populist leaders front in their agenda such as anti-Islam stance and opposition against globalization and the European Union. And to counter these, Maaten presented possible replies to populism. One is to do something about the **CAUSES** and the underlying issues and actually deal with them in a meaningful way. Second is to take **CATALYTIC ACTIONS** and come with no simple solutions. Third is to have a sense of **COMMON PURPOSE** and to find a coalition that goes in a certain direction with confidence. Lastly, Maaten stressed on "**CORRECTNESS NO MORE**" which means don't be politically correct and "Call a spade's a spade" to force the hand of others. He cautioned though that this is a very, very fine line to tread and is not easy at all.

Finally, Maaten said that the theme to revisit about populism is the debate about the social contract that John Locke describes because it discusses the issues in the relationships of politicians with the people. He also shared a quote from Hillary Clinton that aptly describes what politicians can do: *"The challenge is to practice politics as the art of making what appears to be impossible - possible."*

OPEN FORUM

The discussion revolved around Latin American and European insights into populism from its causes to the strategies to suppress it.

Answering a question, Exposito found that there are variegated causes for populist movements, like ethnicity for example. He also suggests the status of the middle class is pivotal since the middle class has the potential for generating wealth and is usually critical of the government. "Proletarianizing" the middle class, which he said is happening in

Venezuela, cannot bode well for any governing regime. Piromya then wondered if the opposition to Hugo Chavez is threatened or live with an element of fear. Exposito recalls an effective "black list" Chavez keeps with names of people "who can forget about making money and also [make it] in the media." He claims the list identifies nearly a third of the country.

Piromya also wanted to know what actions governments, liberal parties, and the European Parliament can implement to "expose" or make people aware of the dangers of radical, populist political parties. Maaten found that the natural impulse would be to attack such radical parties. However, he explained that attacking populist groups can harm governments and benefit only these populist groups because it gives them publicity and "legitimizes" their and their supporters' causes. Instead, he advised to ignore such radical groups. Stonewalling these groups denies them their publicity and has the possibility of either quelling supporters or forcing them to act even more radical, thereby off-putting the general citizenry. If a comment must be given, he says a remark on their blatant unfairness or disruptive character may be made.

Ms. Huai-hui Hsieh from the Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan raised the issue of globalization and how liberals should sell globalization to the underprivileged especially those working in vulnerable sectors. Maaten said that persuading people to favor globalization will always be a challenge because workers will see globalization only as a cause to lose their jobs. He urged liberals to find smarter ways of convincing people that globalization is ultimately beneficial. On the other hand, Exposito pointed out that globalization has "little to no relation" with people in Latin America; and that neopopulism is more related to the distribution of wealth inside a country.

SESSION IV: POLICY-MAKING AS A CAUSE AND RESULT OF POPULISM

This session talked about the kind policies that produce populism and discussed the issues and reasons behind drafting "popular" policies. The speakers were able to discuss as well the ways on how to strike a balance between effective, technocratic governance and popular demands. They provided their personal stance whether or not populist policies are inefficient and sustainable. Mr. Vincent Cheng, vice chairman of the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) served as the session chair. The speakers in this session were Hon. Kasit Piromya, MP, shadow deputy prime minister of the Democrat Party of Thailand, and Mr. Choidorj Markhaaj, foreign relations adviser to the party leader and member of the National Committee of the Civil Will Green Party of Mongolia.

HON. KASIT PIROMYA, MP

Shadow Deputy Prime Minister, Democrat Party of Thailand
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2008-2011), Kingdom of Thailand

Piromya gave a personal account of his political experience and observations in Thailand and how populism infiltrated the policies and institutions through the actions and decisions of one man, Thaksin Shinawatra. Piromya recalled the days when he and Shinawatra were still friends in the diplomatic community. He was Ambassador to Indonesia and Shinawatra served as Foreign Minister of Thailand. In 2001, Piromya was seconded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the government house as one of Shinawatra's advisers on Thai politics and on Thai foreign affairs. But by the end of 2001, they parted ways because of differences, and the differences became wider when Piromya

retired from the Foreign Service in 2005. He said he became one of Shinawatra's public enemies until today.

Just like Singapore and Malaysia where there is one-party rule, Piromya said that the primary objective of Shinawatra in joining politics is the creation of his own party and its eventual dominance. Moreover, his goal is to have absolute political power and socioeconomic control through monopolies and takeover. Piromya discussed and analyzed populism as reflected in the nature and actions of Shinawatra. He said as a member of the police academy of Thailand, Shinawatra was able to network with the police department for the outright monopoly of supplies in electronic equipment and computers. He then had the sole monopoly on the satellite business and communication in Thailand which he subsequently sold to the government-owned company of Singapore, Temasek. Piromya said, "Thaksin would do anything to earn money."



Shinawatra started his career as a successful businessman with a vision and he tried to show that he can serve the country to the best of his ability because he had no vested interest in the economic side of it. Piromya said Shinawatra reflected a picture himself as a man on a white horse who can save and move Thailand forward. Shinawatra's vision was a dual-track approach, Piromya explained. First was to make Thailand a modernized country that can cope with the challenges of the globalized world. He projected himself as a man who knows the world, Piromya said. Shinawatra concluded a series of free trade agreements, pushed for more regional cooperation besides the existing ASEAN group, was instrumental in the creation of Asia Cooperation Dialogue that help integrate separate regional cooperation organizations such as ASEAN, SAARC, and the Gulf Cooperation Council, and he helped found Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) that pushed for the Mekong Basin Development Cooperation. Piromya said, "A lot of sub-regional organizations were being advocated, pushed, initiated by Thaksin to show to the Thai people how visionary he is as a globalized man." The second approach was to project that he is working for the ordinary Thai people wherein he gave emphasis on the concept "localization." Piromya said, that in Thailand, one populist policy measure Shinawatra implemented was the so-called "one town, one product" or "OTOP" where handicrafts from different villages in the country were placed in the department stores such as Harrod's in London or Sak's Fifth Avenue in New York and in all other international department store chains. He also created a people's bank similar to the Grameen Bank microcredit system that Muhammad Yunus founded and provided each village in Thailand with one million baht for self-development. On top of this, there were also easy credit for taxis and scholarship for children in villages to study abroad. "The dual track from his point-of-view is to link Thailand's globalization with Thailand's localization...Thaksin is the giver of money and the well-being to the people," Piromya said.

After explaining the populist programs of Shinawatra, Piromya analyzed the organizational dimension of Shinawatra's populism actions. First, in 2001, Shinawatra bought about five or six smaller political parties to have an absolute majority in the parliament. Second, he controlled the media where a lot of editors and newspapers were under his payroll. He also controlled big enterprises to provide advertisements to newspapers that supported him. Piromya said that currently, about 85% of the various types of media are under Shinawatra's control. Third, he placed local politicians in his

payroll and placed his own people in senior positions in the Thai government. Shinawatra controlled political power, legal power, media power, and business power and he did this by permeating in every strata of the Thai society.

As a result, these populist policy measures split the society into pro and anti-Shinawatra and further damaged the society when his supporters saw everything on the basis of social differences: the elite and the masses; the haves and the have-nots. Also, by organizing the Red Shirts movement, he empowered the “downtrodden” and gave them a sense of belongingness to an organization that aims to build a new society in Thailand. Piromya warned that the situation in Thailand is very serious because it’s a struggle between two opposing forces with Shinawatra reinforcing one-party system and “amassing all the political and socioeconomic power” and with the Democrat Party that continues to believe in “multiparty system, pluralism, rule of law, and consensus and consultative decision-making.”

MR. CHOIDORJ MARKHAAJ

Foreign Relations Advisor to the Party Leader
Member of the National Committee
Civil Will Party of Mongolia

Markhaaj thanked CALD for inviting him to speak and complemented the CALD secretariat for the efficient work and for setting up an online streaming system for the conference. He said their party members were watching the stream on the CALD website.

Markhaaj started his presentation by narrating his childhood experiences vis-à-vis populism. He said Mongolia was still a communist country that time and the Soviet Union and the leaders of the Communist Party were promoting its propaganda that by the end of the century, there will be no more states, borders, class divisions, and money. They believed in the idea that people will not need money anymore because every human being will have everything. This kind of “brainwashing” was very popular that time, Markhaaj explained. In 1989, the students of Mongolia went to the streets to protest and demand for the resignation of the communist government. Markhaaj said that the last communist president of Mongolia during its transition to democracy, Mr. Batmönkh, was wise to say “I don’t want to see a drop of blood from the people of my country.” And in 1989, the country entered into democratization and a free market economy.



Mongolia is a very democratic country, Markhaaj emphasized. They have about twenty active political parties, about fifty TV channels, and more than a hundred newspapers. Before, as a communist country, they had one TV station and one radio station. The economy has liberalized as well. From one hundred state-owned companies, 85% are now privatized. The state-owned livestock was also privatized increasing to forty million from fifteen million livestock before. However in year 2000, parties became more include to the left in order to win the election. In 2004, the Democrat Party used, for the first time, a motto that they will give ten US dollars per child and it turned out to be a good campaign and this trend went further up until 2008. However, the Socialist Party, in the middle of the campaign announced that they would distribute one thousand US dollars to every Mongolian citizen. He added that the promise was something really helpful for the families especially that the average salary that time

was around two hundred US dollars. The statement changed the direction of the election, Markhaaj said. The Democrat Party was totally against the Socialist propaganda. Markhaaj said that giving out such amount would mean distributing three billion US dollar, which is already the budget of the state. But a few days before the end of the election, the Democrat Party said they are actually amenable to distributing one thousand five hundred US dollars and that was the downfall of the party.

In 2009, the world experienced the economic crisis and the mining industry of Mongolia dropped as well. In 2010, the country discovered big mines of copper and coal, the largest in the world. The Socialist government was distributing to every citizen one US hundred dollars in 2010, two hundred US dollars in 2011 and in 2012, they said they will distribute one thousand US dollars only to the elderly and student in order to fulfill their promise in 2008. Markhaaj said that all populist policies end up with very bad results starting with very poor economic returns. The outcome of all these handouts damaged the economy. Despite a very good economic growth with 10% increase in 2010 and 20% increase in 2011, the economy did not full develop because of 12% inflation. Markhaaj shared the World Bank report, which said that half of the inflation was the direct impact of cash distributions. Another bad effect of populist policies is the disbelief of the public on political parties. At the end of 2011, the poll showed only 15-20% support for the Socialist Party and Democratic Party. The Civil Will Party, Markhaaj's party, was against the cash handout policy ever since it was introduced and now his party's public support went up from 4% to 10%. Moreover, they have been working with political parties and demanding them to sign an agreement that would ban cash handover platform this coming 2012 election. In 2011, the Civil Will Party, the Socialist Party, and the Democratic Party all signed that agreement which will eventually be adopted into law.

Finally, Markhaaj said that the Mongolian experience on populism provides a lesson that irresponsible political promises, however popular, would harm the economy and would put the public's trust on political parties into jeopardy.

OPEN FORUM

Political Party Marketing, Political Message Packaging

Ng from the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia commented on how difficult Thailand's situation is because of the fact that the Pheu Thai Party has consistently won elections and sometimes with majority. Unless the election results are near totally rigged, it means the Thai people find the ruling party's policies to be beneficial, even if they govern the way they do. He asked that if when liberal and democratic parties are faced with such a problem, are they allowed to resort to undemocratic means to win support from the people?

To regain the people's support since the last election, the Democrat Party did not resort to undemocratic means. Piromya said that the Democrat Party has rebranded itself, tried reaching out to the people outside the confines of the parliament or mass politicking, and expanded operations on broadcast and social media. He also explained how principled actions could hold a party back but still must be done in good faith. For instance, when the Democrat Party despite its noted clean politics, good fundraising and favorable international reputation, could not promise more than what Shinawatra could offer, they were stigmatized as elitists. On the other hand, the Pheu Thai Party offered clever "policy packages" for the poor and consequently won. As a result, importance shifted to the

relevance or "connection" of the liberal and democratic parties to its constituents. Acosta suggested that maybe the reason political leaders, like Shinawatra and Hugo Chavez, win elections is because their policies, programs, and personalities connect to the people. Meanwhile, liberal parties are seen as elitists and parties who are really not connecting to the people. Also, liberals might use technical language and campaign in a way that the mass does not relate to instead of trying to relate to people in a simple yet effective manner. Tioulong said that the packaging of political message is highly significant to a party's connection to the people and that liberals sometimes take it for granted. She recalled how in Cambodia where broadcast and mass media are unavailable, she used real images that depicted overly cruel treatment of the police against citizens; and how the message came across as much more effective than demanding speeches to crowds. In Thailand, the Democrat Party, through their own channel, broadcasts media besides speeches or talks, which have been proven to garner support for their cause. It was expressed that sometimes, all politicians have to be paternalistic because it is what the people want.

Rethinking Political Integrity

Bearing in mind criticisms of Shinawatra's unfulfilled promises and how Mongolia's Socialist Party's promised handouts went amiss, Acosta questioned if liberals should really be cut-and-dry, should not err and not make any promises to the people that they cannot commit to. Should liberal parties really not campaign with something persuasive albeit misleading to at least win elections? Markhaaj admitted that especially in poverty-affected countries, sometimes, populist policies and populist promises can actually help the people. Even so, Piromya said that unfulfilled promises must be called out; and that the playing field is tilted heavily against fair and honest parties if not even the press would decry unfulfilled promises by elected political leaders. He also argued how liberal parties should offer alternative solutions to problems and not attempt to beat populists at their own game (e.g. how income guarantee can be an alternative to commodity price guarantee).

It was proposed that maybe the reason why populism is a strong force in Asia and Latin America as compared to Europe where it does not have much hold is because countries in these regions have not developed strong institutions that can withstand threats of populist movements. Asian politics was suggested to be much more personality-oriented than institution-oriented. Mr. Piromya added that it would also be because Europe had a dark experience of populism with leaders like Hitler and Mussolini; and that Asian countries have not experienced that level of trauma.

SESSION V: MEDIA, POLITICAL ENTREPRENEURS AND POPULIST POLITICS

This session discussed the role of media vis-à-vis populist politics, whether or not media responds to the nature of politics. The session also discussed the positive and negative impact of the rise of political entrepreneurs. The speakers provided opinion on how populist leaders or parties use the media and political entrepreneurs to advance populist agenda and how they contribute to the emergence of populism. The session chair was Ms. Jayanthi Devi Balaguru, vice chair of the CALD Women's Caucus and secretary general of the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia Women's Wing. The speakers were: Hon. Kasit Piromya, who spoke in the absence of another Democrat Party colleague, Mr. Feizal Samath, Business Editor of The Sunday Times of Sri Lanka, and Dr. Vincent Wijesingha, treasurer of the Singapore Democratic Party and was a candidate for parliament in the last 2011 general elections.

HON. KASIT PIROMYA, MP

Shadow Deputy Prime Minister, Democrat Party of Thailand
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2008-2011), Kingdom of Thailand

Piromya reiterated his view on populism that it is about “them” and “us” and it’s very undemocratic and exclusive in nature. “It belittles the human dignity...we should try to reject it as much as possible,” he underscored.

He presented his view on media as well as on political entrepreneurs and how these play out in populist politics. He focused first on media. He said that the traditional media (newspapers, magazines, TV, etc.) is as important as social media (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, SMS, etc.). Even with the success of the Arab Springs social networking, the traditional and the modern have to move in tandem. In social media, based on a study, 70% is being spent on personal matter and only 10-15% on political communication. Piromya said both are important and necessary in modern politics. “Every political party must have an excellent website,” Piromya said. It must have team to do the communication via social media and if possible, on a 24-hour basis. It must also have a team that can answer the queries and can efficiently convey the message to the government agencies concerned. He said without access to media, countries will be like Iran where the theocratic regime prevents people from accessing social media and technology. The more a country opens to new media, the more chances to have a pluralistic society. Laos and Vietnam, countries that still observes one-party system type of government, can experience changes in their political regime once media and technology are also freely utilized



Piromya then discussed the successes on political entrepreneurship by comparing the strategies of Thaksin and his party with that of the Democrats, explaining that Thaksin has actually been effective in utilizing media. Political entrepreneurs are politicians that become writers in newspapers, hosts of television and radio programs, among others. Piromya said political entrepreneurs are very important in opposing anything that is undemocratic because they can reach a wide audience. However, in Thailand, among the hundred only around ten political entrepreneurs are bold enough to engage politically. He said political parties must reach out to them as well and give them moral support. Piromya explained that Thaksin and the Red Shirts have maximized various types of media: publication, website, SMS, television program, cable, satellite TV, etc. and they have already done this seven years ago. The Democrat Party, meanwhile, only started four months ago when they started to talk to business people to set up a TV station. Piromya said his party will soon be having three cable television stations that would fight populisms and one-party system. He cautioned though that while owning media companies is a necessity, the Thai election and constitutional law prohibits political parties and politicians from doing so. Besides wide access to media, Thaksin was also successful in talking, engaging and connecting to people. He spent two hours a day in television and radio programming when he was Prime Minister. When he was in Dubai, he had the teleconference and the radio communication every week --- “giving support, giving encouragement to his own supporters and talking to the people in general.” The Democrat Party Leader and former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva also had the television and radio program every Saturday during his premiership. During Vejjajiva’s tenure, they offered the opposition two hours of government-owned television and radio time, but Piromya said they refused it. And now that the Democrats are in opposition and

they asked for the airtime, the government refused it. Piromya also said it is also important to have good professional PR and communication companies. Prime Minister Yingluck, the sister of Thaksin, is not known to be intelligent. He explained that because she has a professional team that advises her on what type of hairdo to have, what dress to wear and what sentences to say, everything seems so nice. She appears to be very approachable because of the scripted and choreographed movements and her actions are actually gaining popularity and support from the ordinary people. Vejajjiva on the other hand, struggles with communication to the people because of his “high-type” language. Piromya said they understand Vejajjiva, but his Thai should be translated to the “market-type” or into the “people’s Thai.”

Piromya also explained that the failure of the Democrat Party is that they do analysis, polling, market studies and then they tell the people what they need. On the contrary, what Thaksin and his team did was to go around and ask the people what they need. Piromya said, “We gave them the needs and then we were rejected altogether then we failed completely in our political campaign.” He added that, “the political side responds to the needs of the people and not the other way around.” He emphasized that what he presented are the current challenges his party is trying to address in order to effectively fight populism.

MR. FEIZAL SAMATH

Business Editor, The Sunday Times
Sri Lanka

Samath provided his perspective as a journalist who had a firsthand experience with the transformation of today’s media and business sector in Sri Lanka. He shared the beginnings of media, how they work as journalists, and how publishing companies cope with financial struggles, but are satisfied by the quality of work they produce in past. He also narrated how the media transformed into an entirely different entity that caters almost solely to the world of business and politics.

Samath said, “Sri Lankan politicians have always used the media to promote their agendas, populist or otherwise, some better than the others.” And the current Sri Lankan leader, President Mahinda Rajapaksa, has mastered the craft of wooing the masses. He was one of the politicians who voiced out against President Ranasinghe Premadasa who was then facing human rights allegations before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. However, after the recent war, Rajapaksa is facing the same kind of human rights allegations in Geneva.

In the 1970s, Samath narrated there was pleading and patronizing for revenue from mostly government ads that time because the private sector was not that advanced yet. There was no television and the newspaper was the only channel for messaging. Publishers, he added, run the newspaper for small profits and essentially as a service to the community. But in 1977, the market opened and business and the economy flourished. TV and radio stations started popping up and the dependence of media on the state became less and less. Large state organizations were privatized and businessmen took on the space of politicians in dictating to the media through the power of advertising. Samath said, “Powerful business



groups control – to a large extent - what the media says through advertising pressures. Any negative publicity or criticism of that group could lead to either cutbacks in advertising or a complete pullout.”

The sad reality today is that the purpose of the media to inform the public through balance reporting and analysis has degraded --- putting at risk the capacity of the public to come up with informed decisions in a democracy. Samath noted that the “new world order” in “business cronyism” is taking over the economy. He said, “It is faster to reach the top and rake in millions by befriending the politicians through commissions than work the hard way by the sheer dint of honest, straightforward business.” For example, a person has to go through 50 regulations to set up a business, but with one stroke of a pen by any powerful politician, businesses can easily be up and running. He admonished that, “the role of business in the media today is a good example of how it is increasingly used by politicians to advance their personal ambitions through populist agendas.”

Samath also presented the challenges that media faces nowadays. Business groups can call newspapers and complain about the “negative” articles written about them and these complaints can cost millions of rupees worth of advertising if withdrawn. Companies also project generosity and goodwill through façade corporate social responsibility programs, set-up only to “entice” the population and aim for the “plethora of awards.” Most of these “feel good” awards are carried on only to promote the companies’ image and reputation and not really provide for the needs of schools and communities such as donating computers and electronic equipment in areas where there is a shortage of power or no power at all. Samath also felt saddened by the fact that business leaders –who are smart, media savvy, can be ruthless and brutal in handling PR. Finally, he said, the media in many newly emerging societies are “under threat of being absolutely independent, even partially independent because we have a new breed of so-called social entrepreneurs who are the new newspaper barons guided by their own philosophy and that of their ‘masters’ (politicians) – and creating a new society that is not guided by the people but by business interests.”

DR. VINCENT WIJEYSINGHA

Candidate for Parliament, 2011 General Elections
Treasurer, Singapore Democratic Party



Wijesingha started by saying that liberal values grow through enlightenments in forums such as this CALD conference where people try to grapple with ideas. In his presentation, he discussed some definition issues of populism and in relation to his understanding of populism, focused into the Singapore experience that has significantly changed since the last May elections.

Wijesingha first laid down the nature and function of a government. He said his understanding about the guiding principle of government is to maximize joy and minimize pain. On the economic side of it, it is about creation and redistribution. Governance he said is the activity of the government to provide access to resources --- “How we create them how we generate the conditions necessary to attract them and how we distribute them.” It is also about the transparency of managing resources and decision-making processes. He said it is important to expand the decision making capabilities in the communities so that more people will get involved in the

deliberations on how a nation should be run. He added that the process of governance is a “constant balancing between economic priorities and redistributions.” It is true that people need to build wealth before they redistribute it, but he cautioned not to fall easily into the trap of delaying the gratification for the people just as what the Singapore government is doing. Singaporeans does not feel the effect of wealth the country is producing even when the GDP now is at \$62,000 a year. They are constantly told that they need to continue to strive further. Governance should also be understood in terms of how a government can uplift its community, in terms of equity and equality, and in terms of “distribution being commensurate with growth.” Today, he said, the gap has widened in Singapore where the richest 20% are ten times richer and the poorest 20% are doubled.

To Wijesingha, populism “is a political appeal to the instincts and ambitions of the lowest self in oppose to highest self.” Lowest self refers to “selfishness, fear of outsiders, communalism” compared to the highest self which refers to “selflessness, thinking about the community, and compassion among other things.” The task for CALD members as policy makers, as thinkers on these issues, and as social activists and political activists, is to focus on the uplifting of people where distribution is the key aspect. He shared how the populist actions of the People’s Action Party (PAP) started to gain popular appeal. The party decimated the Left for 15 years and rounded up activists to jail. The PAP also passed the employment act of 1968 that “changed the face of labor rights” and the trade union act of 1968 that “designated the trade union movement and restricted it as an arm of government.” Also, upgrading the communities became a very key element by which to hold the people to the PAP government because publicly built flats are the public’s principal source of retirement income.

The government managed to stay in power by controlling all together media, entrepreneurship and politics --- “It has closed down numerous newspaper outlets, threatened the editors, and...it brought in the newspaper and printing press act in the 80s which gave the government unprecedented control over management and how shares are distributed in the company...” The government also set up the People’s Association Network that runs activity centers in communities across the nation with a chairman that directly reports to the Prime Minister. It decimated the local commercial sector of Singapore, which is composed of thriving small and medium enterprises set up by the original Chinese entrepreneurs. Wijesingha said the government gradually sidelined this sector and set up two key organizations: Temasek and the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation which acts as a state bank. “The general framework of Singapore has been in terms of control,” Wijesingha stressed. The government has politicized the civil service in favor of the governing party and has won the defamation suites brought in by members of PAP in courts.

With all of the PAP’s populist actions and control of institutions, Wijesingha said that the government is now trying to rethink because from 1981 until now, there was an increase in opposition representation in the House - one opposition MP in 1981, two in 1984, four in 1991, and sixteen in 2012. The government now cannot express its political program now compared to before. In 2005 until now, the government vote share has decreased significantly – from 76% in 2001 to 60% in 2012. This slow decrease in public support, Wijesingha explained, could be attributed to the online media, the Internet, because it allows the public to hear different ideas, perspectives, and challenges in both “principal and fact to government pronouncements.” It has been helpful in revealing “government blunders.”

Wijeysingha gave a few proposals that his country needs to force changes. First is to delink the mainstream media and the People's Association Network from government control. Second is to delink the public from the culture of fear and from the mindset that the nation is in crisis and this could be achieved through education and the opening of other media outlets. Third is to delink the Civil Service from the centralized control of the governing party. Lastly is to delink the government control of data, statistics, annual reports, and statement of accounts from government departments and government-linked companies.

Wijeysingha said that at least before, the Singaporean government had a vision, message, and a program. Now, it has "bastardized" populism and it has evolved from a populist government to a "threatening hoggish government." It is vital then, he noted, to understand the genuine process of returning the decision making to the people.

OPEN FORUM

The discussion of the fifth session centered heavily around two topics: on how "populist" media can help lead a country into democracy; and the characteristics of the quickly-evolving social media vis-à-vis traditional news.



"Populist" Media and Democracy

Raising the possibly symbiotic relationship of populism and liberalism, Kamal Nissanka from the Liberal party of Sri Lanka thought that the panelists and delegates should steer away from implying populism *versus* liberal democracy. According to him, the Arab Spring revolution demonstrated the potential of populist media (or "social media") to topple powerful dictatorships and eventually lead a country to democracy. Piromya replied by comparing the revolutions of the Arab Spring and that of Burma. Unlike the "leaderless" Arab Spring movements, the Burmese revolution has strong leaders. Piromya believed that because of that, the Arab Spring's development is hampered while Burma is constantly progressing towards real democratic, institutional change thanks to its personalities particularly Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Thus, even if the new social media is a strong force for

change, it is not enough. Extending the point further, Chia warned that the Internet and other "alternative media" are double-edged: they have the power to end dictatorships but they can also end liberal democratic ones. The Internet's benefit to liberalism becomes even more uncertain if it's considered to be uncontrollable, as he thought is true.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media

On the ubiquity of social media, Samath agreed that "the social network" is gaining ground and even overcoming traditional news sources. However, he pointed that in the Sri Lankan context, a large segment of the population is not connected and so he cannot see the same strength of new social media overpowering traditional media just yet. Mr. Piromya said that traditional news having online services and investing towards that direction is indicative of the trend. Wijesingha evoked the idea that government still has a degree of control of information and the Internet is not as free or ubiquitous as we think. Politicians can still charge on the grounds of defamation as is popular in Singapore and Thailand and this still counts as control. Secondly, the Internet is not nearly as credible as mainstream news organizations. And thirdly, mainstream media still enjoys more exposure than alternative media, at least in Singapore. Although the trend shows the Internet is not slowing down, traditional media can still be argued as more influential. Even if they are more influential, Newton Peiris from the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka said that most (if not all) news companies are aligned or at least affiliated with a political party, group, or the government, citing influential news corporations around the world as examples. He did not say that it is necessarily wrong because political parties have the right to act in their own interests. Wijesingha argued that it is a natural part of human community to build alliances and to be backed by a news company. Although being backed by a news company was not necessary for a politician, he added that we shouldn't be quick to judge those who do own news companies. There are credible and responsible news companies that are also possibly owned by politicians. Wijesinha's reaction was that news becoming more partisan or more sensationalized was all for the interest of the news company, not only necessarily for politicians. And this under-analyzed, overhyped news is making populists out of journalists because all they are after is to make an impact to the people. It is also for this reason politicians find it imperative to "own" the media. Piromya proposed (albeit fantastically) that all news companies declare their political affiliations so that newsreaders will be aware.

SESSION VI: POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY: TOWARDS A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP?



This session discussed the ways to reconcile populism and democracy and provided examples of countries that have successfully incorporated populist elements without threatening democratic institutions and the rule of law. The speaker discussed the mean to temper populism and tried to answer the compatibility issues between populism and liberal democracy. Mr. Jaime Fortunato Caringal, deputy director general of the Liberal Party of the Philippines, facilitated the session. The speakers were Ms. Huai-hui Hsieh, acting director of the Department of International Affairs of the Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan and Hon. Gaku Kato, MP, vice director-general of the International Department of the Democratic Party of Japan.

MS. HUAI-HUI HSIEH

Acting Director, Department of International Affairs
Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan (DPP)

Hsieh discussed DPP's system in conducting party primaries and how it relates to populism and democracy. She said the primary system of the party changes from time to time depending on the political situation at hand and how the party fared in the past elections. She presented the election results and compared each other with the different approaches the party implemented on choosing their candidate. Before, the party chooses their candidate by direct vote from party leaders and member. Currently, DPP candidates are decided solely by public survey and Hsieh said it would really be interesting to study whether this has an impact on promoting populism and/or democratization in Taiwan.



Before 1997, Hsieh narrated that candidates were chosen by direct vote from party members and leaders and the winning candidates received scores jointly decided by survey results and direct member votes; 50% respectively. She explained that this reflected how important both party members' votes and the poll result. DPP won 12 of 23 seats in the county magisterial elections that time. And to further improve candidate selections, in 2000,

the party increased the weight for survey results in the primary to 70%. Because of this strategic move, DPP became the biggest party in the legislature in 2001 with 87 of 225 seats won. In 2007, the weight of the survey remained 70%, but the party focused only on exclusive interviewees or only those who previously voted for DPP were qualified. The results of the elections did not favor the party in 2008 having won only 27 of 113 seats after seats in the Legislative Yuan were officially cut from 225 to 113. So in 2010 for the Mayoral Election, Hsieh noted that the party decided to devote the primary decision to 100% on public polls and the nomination committee decided all legislative members at-large for the party list. As a result, DPP secured two seats in the 2010 municipal elections, but enjoyed significant growth in the city councilor elections. The most recent party primary saw Ms. Tsai Ing-wen, the party chairperson, and Mr. Su Tseng-chang, the former premier, compete for the candidacy. Hsieh said both represent different generations and have very different leadership styles. Tsai just joined the party only in 2004 when she was appointed to be a legislator in the party list by then President Chen Shui-bian. Su on the other hand has long been involved in the party and was one of its founding members. Tsai won the primary with a very slim gap and this was decided through 100% public poll. And in the recent 2012 Presidential Election, DPP received 45% of votes while the ruling party, KMT, received 51%. Though the party did not win the election, DPP still showed a big leap from its previous campaigns and a big increase in terms of the garnered votes compared to the last elections.

The candidates of the DPP were quite popular in the past two years and Hsieh said they have enjoyed a very high public support compared in past. Some candidates, however, were criticized for not really representing the value and ideals of the party. She said, "Sometimes it's positive. Sometimes it means negative." Hsieh explained that the innovations of her party in conducting primaries are aimed to seek the most competitive and qualified candidate. The dilemma, however, that seeking for the public's feedback through the polls may reflect populist tendencies and may lose the party's consistency in carrying its ideals that have been admired by supporters since its existence. She also said that when candidates feel insecure, they tend to move backward and resort to radical ways to attract traditional supporters. But as for Tsai, who recently stepped down as party chairperson, the public saw a new modern style of leadership and this attracted a lot of new supporters. And with the strategies of vote buying and bribing in campaigns, KMT, even as one of the wealthiest political parties in the world, can be vulnerable. In conclusion, Hsieh said people want to choose what they want and they do not want their choices to be influenced. And DPP as a political party, Hsieh stressed that they are trying to make a better connection with the public through dialogue, marketing, campaigning, and providing good public service.

HON. GAKU KATO, MP

Vice Director-General, International Department
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)

Kato described the populist rise of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi through his populist approach in the party and to the public. He said the phenomenon of populism started when Koizumi was chosen to be the president of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and continued on when he became the Prime Minister in 2001. He was a "heretic" among LDP member and did not even lead a party faction. But Koizumi's approach in his campaign was different. He followed the untraditional route and appealed not to the Diet members but directly to the people instead. "Break down the LDP" was his slogan and the people saw his strong will to overhaul the party. His charismatic character and appealing message

capture the public and with the help of the media, even the “general LDP members” responded to his call. The LDP Diet member, inspired by the general LDP members, decided to support Koizumi in order to fulfill the belief of the people that Koizumi can restore public trust to the party. Koizumi’s election as party president changed the image of the party from “closed anti-reform to open pro-reform.” Moreover, the public support for the Cabinet dramatically rose to 80%, Kato explained. He added that the “populist methodology” of Koizumi to push forward reform was a successful strategy. Kato said, “Populism could be used as a more direct form of democracy to make a decision. As long as the party can transform itself by responding to the people’s demand or sentiments quickly, even a populist leader could play an important role as a driver of democratic reform.”



However, Koizumi’s strong push and challenge against the order of politics became troublesome for the people. He prioritized the privatization of postal services though the state-owned company managed it efficiently. Even some LDP Diet members, Kato recalled, opposed the privatization bill. Nevertheless, the populist approach of Koizumi was able to pull him off the situation when he dissolved the House of Representatives and asked for the will of the people through a general election to separate the “forces of resistance” in LDP and make them lose their seats. Kato said, “His [Koizumi’s] merciless and revengeful tactics and provocative words were covered repeatedly and enthusiastically by media during the campaign, and many people became fans of Koizumi accepting his strong message without deep consideration of the various policies proposed.” The LDP’s victory in 2005 was the beginning of the collapse of the LDP, Kato added. Koizumi’s administration did not take seriously the voice of the people and it remained stuck to the issues in which he has personal interests.

In 2009, the DPJ took over the government not through populist appeal but through the democratic way. It emphasized a “policy manifesto” aimed to develop the means to improve the lives of ordinary people. Kato said it was a first in Japan’s history to have a party elected based on manifesto. But like all other parties, DPJ is going through some challenges due to the existing power structures, which the LDP had nurtured for a long time. In addition to this, Kato said the “stagnant economy and severe fiscal deficit are constraints on our ability to achieve the policies promised in the manifesto.” And because of the unstable situation, there are other populist movements starting to emerge. The “Ishin movement,” for example, led by Mr. Toru Hashimoto, the Mayor of Osaka, appeals to the “people’s envy and grudges in order to pull down the elites or [the] existing power itself.” They are calling for direct election of the Prime Minister and the abolition of the Upper House.

Kato said, “Direct democracy through populism is speedy and appealing, but it tends to simplify complex issues and makes it impossible to deeply understand the problems.” He also said “populism cannot bring any solution for real politics.” Though it can provide a quick solution to a situation in the short run, it only causes instability, however, in the long run.

OPEN FORUM

The discussions in this session were separated per panelist. Hsieh’s open forum centered on the DPP’s use of populist measures through the party’s primary election

candidate polls. Kato focused on the situation of the DPJ and government bureaucracy.

On the topic of DPP's primary election polls, Ng asked how the public survey is performed and who distributes it. According to Hsieh, all surveys are produced by DPP's survey center and are executed via phone interviews. For primary polls needing a small amount, roughly two thousand respondents, the DPP's survey center would suffice. For a number of respondents upward (roughly ten thousand), DPP outsources their need to bigger survey companies. When asked if phone interviewing is a safe medium and "unexploitable" by the ruling Kuomintang, Hsieh said that though this may be a problem to the integrity of the polls, she is confident that DPP's survey center is occupied by competent and very experienced people. Despite that, she said losing candidates usually complain about possible errors or maybe even biased results by the survey center. Besides the possible errors or bias, Piromya believed that the DPP stands to lose much when choosing their candidates purely by polls and not factoring in experience from veteran politicians or that "human element."



Although it is arguable that the polling system is continuing to make DPP more popular, delegates found the success of candidacy hinged to popularity and identified that as a problem. This method of polling could mean that liberal values are not sufficiently advocated by DPP's candidates. Session chair Caringal asked if there are any training or orientation candidates have to pass to help mitigate the loss of liberal values. As stated by Hsieh, it would be very rare to find a candidate with little or no knowledge of liberal principles at all; but still there is training for the selected candidates to sharpen their understanding of liberal values and enhance their campaign skills.

In a question addressed to Kato, Piromya wanted to know if liberal parties, particularly the DPJ have any other choice but to adopt a touch of populism to overthrow the government. Kato replied that even if the DPJ uses or used slightly populist measures to garner the support of the people, bureaucrats easily sabotage elected officials anyway. And this problem, as he said, is dividing the DPJ into those who wish to reform the bureaucracy and those who don't. Tioulong argued that that should not be the case and that elected officials should take precedence over bureaucrats. She also reverted to the session's theme and asked which of the lesser evil liberals should take: resort to populist strategies that

could go awry or yield to the current bureaucracy. According to Kato, the DPJ is finding the revamping of the bureaucracy to be near impossible anyway and that is why populist tendencies are swelling in Japan. Carinal concluded the session by recommending the cooperation of bureaucrats and politicians because they have qualities that complement each other and that the full and efficient implementation of policies depends on it.

CLOSING KEYNOTE ADDRESS



HON. VASANTHA SENANAYAKE, MP

United Peoples' Freedom Alliance

Senanayake shared his thoughts on the aspects of the democratic process being used by governments as tools to undermine, sabotage, and in some instances totally destroy democracy itself. He started by presenting the concept of equality saying it is “artificial rather than natural” because there are those who are really more advantageous than others. Or as George Orwell pointed out in his “Animal Farm” satire, there is equality and that the oppressor can be defeated. However, Senanayake explained that while all animals are equal, some animals are more equal than others. World opinion he said is “directed, rehearsed, played and ultimately created in media studios.” This is another factor that affects democracy and how people would participate in the social and political playing field would depend on how they are influenced or manipulated by what they see and hear. Senanayake implied that if the media would say something loud enough for a significant period of time, the tendency for the public is to start accepting it as second nature. He said it is important to ensure even a semi-level playing field where the “actions of regional and international bullying and the insensitivity to cultures” done by the media must be reduced.

It is easy to spot a democracy under threat of dictatorial actions, but Senanayake said people neglect to notice the democratic approaches that used to drown the spirit of democracy itself. In 1997, the emergence of a government with 5/6 majority created a Presidential Executive that controlled the legislature and years later vested the President with certain judicial control that ruins the concept of separation of powers. Senanayake also recalled the time when Sri Lanka passed a new constitution in parliament with an

unprecedented majority, done democratically and lawfully, but suffocated the spirit of democracy. He added that, “Even the most undemocratic and dictatorial provisions can be democratically agreed upon and can legitimately find their way into constitutions.”

To Senanayake, populism is “capable of capturing the imagination of a population.” It is more emotional than factual, it is more hopeful than real, it refers more to the “here and now” rather than the long-term policies and impact. Populism is “a beautiful thing packaged well and emotionally or sensually provocative.”



Senanayake explained that a popular politician can capture the popular mood as opposed to a more principled statesman. He said even during the Roman Empire, the Emperor had to resort to gladiators fighting to death just to keep the mob happy ensuring a peaceful administration free from riots and uprisings. Similarly, he also noted the rise to power of the Nazi with their anti-Semitic sentiments in Germany and the Rwandan genocide of the Tutsi minority, where actions were nothing but popular. The Falklands war, which damaged Britain economically, helped boost Margaret Thatcher’s popularity and reputation as The Iron Lady. Conversely, Senanayake shared the story of his uncle, Dudley Senanayake, the second Prime Minister of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), who initiated a welfare policy providing households with two measures of heavily subsidized rice. In the 1970 general election, the government decided to discontinue the subsidy due to economic drain of the treasury and Dudley Senanayake personally explained to the public that it is no longer economically sustainable. His political opponent, however, “promised to import rice from the moon if she had to” just to continue the subsidy. Senanayake said that his uncle earned the reputation of being the “Gentleman of Sri Lankan politics” even though he lost the 1970 elections.

As democracy is defined as the rule of the majority, Senanayake said the challenge then is to safeguard the minority’s interest. Populism can be particularly disadvantageous to minorities (racial, religious, tribal, etc.) In Sri Lanka, Senanayake said that 53% of the population are women and but only 12 out of 225 Members of Parliament are women. He also recalled two significant pacts in Sri Lankan history, the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam pact and the Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayagam pact, both aimed to secure the rights of the Tamil minority, but were averted by nationalist elements including those governments that throughout the years have created a wave of populism. “The fact that democracy can be, and is, used to thwart and strangle democracy is perhaps the greatest threat of all,” Senanayake emphasized. But the democratic system remains to be the best system to protect rights and liberties despite flaws, defects and idiosyncrasies as well as the fact that “it does not always produce the best national representatives.”

SYNTHESIS

HON. J.R. NEREUS “NERIC” ACOSTA, PhD

Secretary General, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD)
Presidential Advisor for Environmental Protection,
Office of the President, The Philippines

Acosta provided the synthesis of the proceeding and reiterated the points, issues, and arguments presented on the theme by the speakers as well as the participants. He said the framing of the theme was done in a way where the discussion was open to perspectives and the views were beneficial to understand both the positive and negative side of populism. The synthesis is that populism is neither good nor bad. Acosta said it only depend what “lens” a person is using and what “prism” on is viewing reality from.

The entire conference, he explained, was a mirror for all the participants. And the discussions on the theme showed whether liberals as politicians, policy makers and public servants are good-looking (doing excellent service with principles intact) or not. Acosta presented the tensions experienced by liberals vis-à-vis populism. Tensions are inherent and constant in democracies and these tensions may eventually grow into populist tendencies. First, he said the presentations showed that while liberals contest and pursue power, in some respects, they are uncomfortable with power. He added that “while we as liberals understand that we have to be in the arena of power that allows us to make decisions that will influence policy and the directions of our societies via the mechanisms of our parties and the platforms that we espouse or use...we understand that there are limits and there should be limits to these powers.” This what Hakeem highlighted in his keynote when he talked about “constitutional liberalism.” Second, like populists, liberals also make promises. As liberals it is important to act on these promises no matter how challenging it is --- continue to fight against the entrenched bureaucracies and bureaucrats who have been in position for a long time as what Kato from DPJ narrated and continue to fight ensconced interests as Samath presented about media. Third, in proposing solutions to the public, why are the “short-term goodies” the better choice and not the “long-term sound policies that governance should be about” as probed by Ng on the first session. Why believe more on Chavez, Estrada, Shinawatra, and the rest? Fourth, divisions in society are realities just as what Senanayake mentioned in his closing keynote: the people's rights and entitlements against social stability and institutional continuity. And fifth, with the changing trappings and developing role of the media, populism become tricky because it is not the usual “black and white” or “populism is bad and liberal democracy is good.” The functions of political parties and institutions are now challenged because of the new media tools that can be powerful enough to start a revolution as seen in the Arab Springs with the so-called “Facebook Revolution.” New media can be used for openness and innovation, but it can also be used for control and manipulation. Acosta said, “These are all been about dilemmas and double-edged realities, and that's the synthesis. It can be positive, negative” and with the words of Hekkem: “remedy or malady” or with what Mr. Lito Arlegue, CALD Executive Director, wrote on the concept paper: “corrective of threat” and “meaningful or destructive” as what Piromya suggested early on.



The challenged, Acosta said is “definitional” and a changing work in progress. What is

populism? What are its kinds? When does populism become bad? Under what circumstances is populism beneficial? Acosta also said that besides the qualitative discussions on populism, it is also a challenge to focus on the quantitative aspect of it. He stressed that “we must also be able to measure or assess with more quantifiable indicators, what populism really is in our countries... we must probably also have a populism index of sorts; and measure it in terms of metrics...Whether that has to do with access to information, electoral laws, the penalizing of vote buying and fraud, etc.” The use of institutional markers is also significant to find out how institutions are affected by “populist tendencies” or “populist energies.”

In conclusion, Acosta said CALD can help address the tensions or addressing populism by focusing on “knowledge management in terms of what we can deal with and research and think-tank with because we still want as CALD, to be focused on and grounded on policy formulation and institution building.” The challenge, he emphasized, ultimately falls on each other with the message to continue building institutions, working on long-term policies, and dealing with the media, particularly with the use modern tools. He noted, “we have a grand horizon of possibilities always and not just look at what limits us.”

CLOSING CEREMONIES



During the Closing Ceremonies, the participants were witness to another momentous event in CALD’s history. It highlighted the transition of chairmanship from the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka to the Sam Rainsy Party of Cambodia. Sam proudly and gratefully accepted the chairmanship of CALD from Wijesinha who served as chairperson for two productive and meaningful years. Sam shared his vision for CALD for the next two years and assured that CALD will continue to embrace solidarity in action.

Sam narrated the challenges faced by CALD member parties in the region and how CALD could play an important role in ensuring that liberal principles will continue to serve as guideposts and that the democratic process will continue to be safeguarded in countries where the creeping forces of tyranny, oppression, corruption, and abuse of power still loom. He said CALD will continue to support and strengthen the democratic gains in Burma, currently being a threshold of democratic transition. He added that CALD will continue to

help Daw Aug San Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), through its workshops and conferences. In Cambodia, he said, CALD, through its members who are in government, can exert pressure on the country's leaders or even appeal in regional



organizations like ASEAN, so as not recognize Hun Sen's government and not to engage in deals that will only sustain the totalitarian regime. In Indonesia, as represented by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Sam said CALD could help by promoting the opposition as a way to check and balance the powers of government. In Malaysia, CALD can show solidarity by continuing to help the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (PGRM) and the government in promoting not only economic growth, but also sustaining pluralistic democracy. Sam welcomed the Civil Will Party (CWP) of Mongolia, the newest CALD member, and said that

"CALD should ensure that Mongolia use the fruits of economic growth to promote human development and create a level playing field in both political and economic realms." The Liberal Party of the Philippines (LP), as a party in power and as a founding member of CALD, should be the "organization's voice to the world" especially in terms of drawing attention to the oppressive circumstances of sister parties. In Singapore, with the sacrifices and suffering of Dr. Chee Soon Juan and the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), Sam said CALD should be a voice to highlight the dark and ugly side of economic development as well as the continued suppression of the opposition by the government. Sam also thanked the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka (LPSL) for hosting the successful three-day CALD event. He said CALD can assist in monitoring the progress of the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka and ensure that "those who violated principles of international human rights and humanitarian law from both sides are brought to justice." Taiwan, as represented by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), is continually being threatened by the rise of China. CALD, he emphasized, must ensure the empowerment of Taiwanese people in understanding and exercising their democratic rights. Lastly, in a country currently governed by populist politics, CALD should ensure, with the help of the Democrat Party of Thailand (DP), that the political environment is "free, fair, and conducive to democratic development." Sam also mentioned the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and said that hopefully, they will become a full member of CALD. In conclusion, he passionately said his party will be in government and when they do get there, SRP will "stick to its principles and will respect its commitments in ensuring that CALD remains solidarity in action."

On behalf of the FNF, Maaten thanked Wijesinha and Acosta for the political advancements that CALD has achieved during their tenure. He thanked Acosta for being an inspiration as a politician driven by principles and commended Wijesinha for CALD's success over the past two years. He said that CALD is really about freedom and as what Hon. Florencio "Butch" Abad, Philippine Minister for Budget and one of the founders of CALD, said in the Freedom Speech he delivered in Manila on the occasion of FNF Manila's 25th Anniversary, "I believe that our primordial essence as human beings is to be free, to have freedom, not only to one's thoughts but also to one's decisions, to participate in society in a productive way that benefits one's self and one's neighbors and to actualize one's own possibilities and dreams, freedom must flourish." Maaten believes this is what CALD stands for. It has evolved over the years into "an efficient, effective organization with activities and views that actually matter is something that we have to recognize," he added. And now that



the chairmanship of CALD is under the SRP, Maaten said he believes it will benefit Cambodia and increase CALD's political profile, both from an Asian and global liberal perspective.

To conclude the closing session, Wijesinha thanked everyone for a productive conference. He reminded the participants about the important lessons learned over the past three days. He said that we must be wary of the threat of populism and the tendency of intellectuals "to assume that we necessarily know better than the people." There is always that tendency to dismiss the legitimate concerns of the people and as liberals, he said, it is essential to take them seriously and engage them in a manner that enlightens. He said this year's theme complemented the last theme of the CALD General Assembly, which is on education, and better education can help solve problems. Though the educated can also accede populism, Wijesinha believes "that the more the people know and understand, the less inclined they will be to easy solutions that could lead to other problems." He also said that liberals should not be "carried away by popular appeals for vengeance and retribution," just as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, honorary individual member of CALD, is determined to move forward for the sake of the country, despite the oppression she went through with the military government. Wijesinha said she is determined to "move towards compromise – not compromise on principles...but compromise with people, because that is the best way forward."

Wijesinha thanked the CALD Secretariat for organizing the event. He thanked Acosta who served as secretary general of CALD and thanked the FNF for supporting the event and the Liberal Forum Pakistan for the contribution in the discussions. He said CALD should attempt to move beyond and work towards developing Liberal principles in India. Finally, he thanked his colleagues in the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka for the tireless work during the preparation stages of the conference. Wijesinha gave his best wishes to Sam, the new CALD Chair, whom he believes will achieve triumphs not only in CALD but also for Cambodia.