

# Divergence between market and politics

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In any democracy that respects freedom, the process of deliberation faces a pervasive problem – widespread and even enduring disagreement. A central goal of constitutional arrangements, and constitutional law, is to handle this problem, partly by turning disagreement into a creative force, partly by making it unnecessary for people to agree when agreement is not possible. Ever since our national independence followed by decades of martial law, and even more so now in the aftermath of routinely held general elections, our constitutional arrangements and the constitutional law are politically silenced, not to serve their intended purpose both efficiently and adequately.

Under good political conditions, deliberation is likely to clarify the basis for disagreement. Sometimes, it will bring people into accord with one another. Some people will have misunderstood the relevant facts. Or they might not have seen the likely consequences of proposed policies. Once it is shown that some policy will actually make things worse rather than better, those who initially supported it are likely to reconsider. If export of gas to India would deplete our gas reserves and increase our political insecurity and vulnerability to Indian hegemony, people who thought that they favoured gas export to India might consider other ways of promoting the growth of our economy. In some cases people might even be convinced to reconsider what they thought were their priorities, or their judgements of value. They might have believed, for example, that the overriding social goal is to promote economic prosperity, but after discussion, they might come to think that it makes sense to sacrifice overall prosperity for other social goals, such as national security and the quality of our sovereignty. Shift of this sort happens all the time. In many cases, however, all the deliberation in the world will not dissolve disagreement. In the face of intractable disagreements constitutional democracies have alternate ways to proceed. However, the real danger

is posed by political group polarization. Political group polarization is a process by which members of a deliberating political group or sub-groups predictably move toward a more extreme point in the direction indicated by the member's pre-deliberation tendencies. This is what Bangladesh had witnessed in the preemptive threat of impeachment by the BNP Parliamentary Committee that eventually led to the premature resignation of Dr B Chowdhury from the presidency. Political group polarization and political subgroup polarization is often the source of deliberative trouble. It is therefore an imperative for a diverse democracy to create institutions to ensure that governmental power or the power within any ruling political party is not available only to the segments of society or segments of the ruling political parties. It is also an imperative for a diverse democracy to promote deliberation among individuals of different political convictions and different political factions, who would otherwise only engage in deliberation with like-minded individuals. A system of checks and balances, or separation of powers, is best understood in this light. One of the key goals of democracy's constitution is to solve the problem of enduring disagreement. This is achieved by promoting exposure to multiple perspectives, within both a nation and a political party, by proliferating points of access to government and party leadership positions and by finding productive courses of action when disagreements cannot be solved.

## Democratic rejection of revealed political preferences

Considerations of autonomy and welfare of the people justify governmental action. Participants in a liberal government ought to be concerned with whether its citizens are experiencing satisfying lives and that the salutary liberal commitment to divergent conceptions of the good ought not to be taken to disable government from expressing that concern through law.

**Collective judgements and aspirations:** Citizens in a demo-

cratic polity might act to embody in law not the preferences that they hold as private consumers, but instead what might be described as collective judgements, including aspirations or considered reflections. Measures of this sort are a product of deliberative processes on the part of citizens and representatives. In that process, people do not simply determine what they "want." The resulting measures cannot be understood as an attempt to aggregate or trade off private preferences.

*Politics, markets, and the dependence of preferences on context:* Frequently political choices cannot easily be understood as a

made through the political process are a preferable basis for social ordering.

A generalization of this sort is far too broad in light of the multiple breakdowns of market ordering in many arenas. Respect for private markets is an important way of respecting divergent conceptions of the good and is thus properly associated with individual liberty. Respect for markets is also an engine of economic productivity, an important individual and collective goal. But it would be a mistake to suggest, as some do, that markets always reflect individual choice more reliably than politics; or the democratic choices differ from

closely related phenomena. First, citizens may seek to implement individual and collective aspirations in political behaviour but not in private consumption. As citizens, people may seek the aid of the law to bring about a social state that they consider being in some sense higher than what emerges from market ordering. Secondly, people may, in their capacity as political actors, attempt to satisfy altruistic or other-regarding desires, which diverge from the self-interested preferences sometimes characteristic of markets. Thirdly, political decisions might vindicate what might be called meta-preferences or second-order-preferences. People

this point that amounts to a rejection or at least a renovation of subjective welfare as a political conception. It is here that democracy becomes something other than an aggregate mechanism, that politics is seen to be irreducible to bargaining, and that ex-ante political "preferences" are not taken as the bedrock of political justification.

Second, to point to these various possibilities is not at all to deny that market or private behaviour frequently reflects considered judgements, altruism, aspirations, or far more complex attitudes toward diverse goods than are captured in conventional accounts of preference structures. There are count-

roots in the principles that underlie a deliberative democracy itself. Here the notions of autonomy and welfare would be defined by reference to the idea of free and equal persons acting as citizens in setting up the terms of democratic life. That idea will impose constraints on the sorts of preferences and beliefs that a political system would be permitted to inculcate. Perhaps more controversially, the system could be regarded as embodying a mild form of liberal perfectionism. Such a system would see the inculcation of critical and disparate attitudes toward prevailing conceptions of the good as part of the framework of a liberal democracy. Liberal education is of course the principal locus of this concern, but the principles embodied in liberal education need not be confined to the school system. The governing goal would be to ensure that individual capacities and capabilities are promoted and not thwarted by governmental arrangements. And this set of ideas, a different kind of perfectionism, is not so dramatically different from utilitarianism.

If government can properly respond to preferences that are based on limitations in available opportunities, it might well undertake aggressive initiatives with respect to the arts and broadcasting: subsidizing public broadcasting, ensuring a range of disparate programming, or calling for high-quality programming not sufficiently provided by the marketplace. Indeed, the need to provide diverse opportunities for preference formation suggests reasons to be quite skeptical of unrestricted markets in communications and broadcasting. There is a firm theoretical justification for governmental regulation here, including the much criticised, and now largely abandoned, "fairness doctrine," which required broadcasters to cover controversial issues and to give equal time to competing views. In view of the inevitable effects of programming on character, beliefs, and even conduct, it is hardly clear that governmental "inaction" is always appropriate in a constitutional democracy. Indeed, the contrary seems true. I take up this issue in

more detail below. Market behaviour is sometimes based on an effort to reduce cognitive dissonance by adjusting to undue limitations in current practices and opportunities. When this is so, respect for preferences seems unjustified on grounds of autonomy and under certain conditions of welfare as well. Preferences might be regarded as non-autonomous insofar as they are reflexively adaptive to unjust background conditions, and collective responses to such preferences might yield welfare gains. The point has significant implications. For example, workers appear to underestimate the risks of hazardous activity partly in order to reduce the dissonance that would be produced by an accurate understanding of the dangers of the workplace. Democratic controls might produce gains in terms of both welfare and autonomy.

## Conclusion

A constitutional democracy should not be self-consciously concerned, in a general and comprehensive way, with the souls of its citizens. Under modern conditions, liberal constraints on the operation of the public sphere and a general respect for divergent conceptions of the good are indispensable. At the same time, it would be a grave mistake to characterise liberal democracy as a system that requires existing preferences to be taken as the basis for governmental decisions and that forbids citizens, operating through democratic channels, from enacting their considered judgements into law, or from countering, through the provision of opportunities and information, preferences and beliefs that have adjusted to an unjust status quo. Ironically, a system that forecloses these routes – and that claims to do so in the name of liberalism or democracy, as we so often witness in Bangladesh – will defeat many of the aspirations that gave both liberalism and democracy their original appeal in our infant democratic republic.

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process of aggregating ex-ante political desires. Some people may, for example, not support the use of the army to keep law and order in this country where the police and all existing civilian crime prevention infrastructure has failed, even though their own vulnerability to crime might favour a situation where the presence of army is very much needed to fight crime. The same people may approve of religious laws calling for "Zakat" and welfare even though they do not save or give to the poor. The same people may support anti-discrimination laws for the Hindu minorities even though their own behaviour is hardly secular. The choices people make as political participants are different from those they make as consumers. Democracy thus calls for an intrusion on markets.

The widespread disjunction between political and consumption choices presents something of a puzzle. Indeed, it sometimes leads to the view that market ordering is undemocratic and that choices

consumption outcomes only because of confusion, as voters fail to realise that they must ultimately bear the costs of the proposed policies that they favour in Bangladesh; or that voting patterns merely reflect a willingness to seek certain goods so long as other people are footing the bill.

Undoubtedly, consumer behaviour is sometimes a better or more realistic reflection of actual preferences than is political behaviour. But in light of the fact that preferences depend on context, the very notion of a "better reflection" of "actual" preferences is a confusing one; there is no such thing as an "actual" (in the sense of unitary or contextual) preference in these settings. Moreover, the difference might be explained by the fact that political behaviour reflects a variety of influences that are distinctive to the context of politics, and that justify according additional weight to what emerges through the political setting.

These influences include four

ways wishes about their wishes, and sometimes they try to vindicate those second-order wishes, including considered judgements about what is best, through law. Fourth, people may pre-commit themselves, in democratic processes, to a course of action that they consider to be in the general interest. The adoption of a constitution is itself an example of a pre-commitment strategy.

Three qualifications are necessary here. First, some of these objections might be translated into the terms of subjective welfare. Some preferences, after all, are most effectively expressed in democratic arenas, and that expression can be supported precisely on the grounds that they are subjectively held and connected to a certain form of individual and collective welfare. My broader point, however, is that political choices will reflect a kind of deliberation and reasoning, transforming values and perceptions of interests, that is often inadequately captured in the marketplace. It is

less counterexamples to any such claim. All I mean to suggest is that divergences between market and political behaviour will sometimes be attributable to phenomena of the sort I have described.

**Excessive limitations in opportunities or unjust background conditions:** Citizens in a democracy might override existing preferences in order to foster and promote diverse experiences, with a view to providing broad opportunities for the formation of preferences and beliefs and for distance on and critical scrutiny of current desires. This goal usually supports private ordering and freedom of contract as well. But it calls for collective safeguards when those forces push toward homogeneity and uniformity, as they often do in industrialised nations. Such controls are necessary to cultivate divergent conceptions of the good and to ensure a degree of reflection on those conceptions.

A system that took this goal seriously could start from a range of different foundations. It might find its

## Rethinking effective utilization of grants and aids

ARINDAM BANIK

OVER the years a significant amount of funds has been disbursed in the form of grant and aid by the developed nations to the developing world in order to alleviate poverty. The outcomes are, however, mixed. A number of recent empirical studies suggest that many of the poverty alleviation programmes have not succeeded due to wrong selection of programmes and beneficiaries rather than the quantity of the benefit. Yet international agencies armed with policy entrepreneurs go on funding programmes, which have rarely been designed and implemented keeping the actual grass roots situation in mind.

Static theories emphasize the usefulness of government intervention such as *food for work* and other similar programmes to reduce poverty in rural areas. In fact, a few of the programmes have contributed significantly to support the theories of "trickle down". However the long run aspect is overlooked in these studies.

The rationale for poverty alleviation programmes in developing countries is considered to be the imperfections in the factor markets. Accordingly, sophisticated intervention programmes were designed and implemented without rural roots. In recent time, the idea poses fundamental challenge to this type of development enterprise. A serious government may perceive the problems differently in order to improve the plight of the poor. This can be done, for example, by providing indirect benefits, such as skill and training etc. to the poor rather than making financial transfer payments.

It may be useful to explain an individual's poverty in this context. An individual is poor perhaps due to factors such as lack of skill, lack of credit and information, obsolete skill and old age, non-existence of market and other infrastructure. This may lead us to distinguish between people with skill and people with non-skill in order to evaluate a specific transfer, or in tracking its impact over time, or in devising policies to reduce poverty.

In developing countries one can observe two categories of people in rural areas, one, farms and the other non-farms. The non-farms are again subdivided into two groups, the skilled and the unskilled. In developing countries, the non-farms constitute on average about 40 to 50 percent of the total rural population. The artisans – carpenters, masons and others – are considered as the skilled group in the non-farm category. Most of the skilled population in this group are poor and so due to their financial constraints are unable to own and use improved tools. This group as a whole may be able to exploit their skill better if better tools are provided to them. In other words, there appears to be a strong negative relationship between skill development and the level of poverty.

Experts point to a number of possible benefits of skill development for developing countries. Douglas North finds that incentives that are built into the institutional framework for skill

development and accordingly play a decisive role in shaping the kinds of skills and knowledge, are more effective. In the East Asian context, for example, it is the egalitarian education policies which have played a pivotal role in their economic growth. Joseph Stiglitz argued that the increased equality has led to enhanced political and social stability, thereby creating a better investment environment. According to him the cognitive skills, in addition to increase in literacy rate, may be considered as a precondition for economic development. The non-availability of skilled manpower in a country may explain the failure of capital to flow to the capital-poor countries in spite of the higher marginal return to capital. The lack of complementary factors such as

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product and services.

Rural people in developing countries are not always sufficiently aware of the government programmes as dissemination of information is usually less than adequate. Further, illiteracy makes bureaucratic machinery a daunting obstacle for them. Procedures should therefore be simplified and innovative mechanisms developed for rural artisans to make productive use of government support.

Inevitably, there have been calls for special attention. We have enough food but even then significant numbers of population in the developing world are unfed because simple there are not enough jobs for them to survive. In contrast food price as a proportion of industrial price is in the declining trend. Yet people are unable to buy food from the market. Short run solutions such as cash aid or food aid with the help of aids and grants hardly seem to be a satisfactory answer. It is time to rethink the issue based on practical experience. The taxpayers will be happy to know its effective utilization. They are less concerned by the policy entrepreneurs' advice that often cited by the multilateral agencies.

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## Drug abuse prevention: An agenda for youth initiative

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DRUG abuse, a diverse, complex and ever-changing phenomenon has been known since antiquity, so is its relationship with youth population. Prevention is another terminology we very often come across whenever we think of dealing with the problem. 'Youth' is defined by the United Nations as reflecting the age group 15 to 24 years. The WHO considers the 'adolescence' the period between 10 and 19 years and the term 'young people' refers to the composite age group 10 to 24 years. These definitions are based on certain consensus about biological, social and cultural factors that define youth worldwide. However, it should be mentioned that the idea of youth might vary considerably across nations in accordance with the socio-economic and cultural context. The social and cultural entry into adult life may correspond to the economic autonomy, the establishment of a family or participation in certain rituals. Drug abuse prevention, in very simpler terms and precisely, may be defined as "use of drugs having abuse potential, their related raw materials and precursor chemicals must be limited to legitimate medical and scientific purposes". From the perspective of role definition of youth in drug abuse prevention, we may elaborate the word YOUTH as an acronym and define as "a high Yielding workforce that can be effectively Organised and efficiently Utilised as a very Transparent Human resource".

Adolescence and young adulthood are the period when a drug habit sets in. The pattern and substance of abuse may vary according to the age of the abuser. Multi-country study findings also revealed that age is an important determinant of pattern of illicit consumption. Children and adolescents tend to use cannabis and solvents, young adults use heroin, other opiates and cocaine, and adults psychotropic substances and stimulants. Research studies suggest that illicit consumption decline from late 20s onwards. A number of follow up research indicated that the age of onset for drug abuse is gradually declining. A considerable proportion of youth start using drug as a part of experimentation during the phase of transition when they seem to become rebellious, and seek for identity and independence. They usually give up the habit when they reach a particular stage of maturity without any damaging consequences. However, most of the young people cannot properly evaluate the dangers and consequences of their behaviour. Subsequently, therefore, they become more vulnerable to dependence and ultimately become victims of long-term adverse impact on health, education, personal development, emotional maturity and a stable adult life.

Evidence is available that certain vulnerability factors make the mainstream young people particularly prone to long-term and chronic drug use problem. The population subgroups that may be considered particularly at risk include displaced children, those in institutional care, the sexually abused and exploited, those in contact with the criminal justice system, school dropouts and socially marginalised. Drug abuse may be seen as a functional need for some of those subpopulation. The youth population is faced with rapid social, economic and cultural changes, and they very often lack adequate family and community care and support. They are less likely to have access or been reached by available services, programmes and channels of communication in the face of their obvious increased needs. Evidence also suggest that the number of children and young people living in the vulnerable situation is growing particularly among urban population of developing countries where street culture of abuse and trafficking is becoming a norm. One

recent trend is recruitment of under-age youth and children as soldiers in some war-torn countries. Involvement in criminal activities is another reality. Often drawn from socially and economically disadvantaged population, deprived of education and deserted by their families, they are frequently subjected to exploitation and indulge themselves into atrocities and dispassionate crimes. Associated with drug abuse one needs to consider the vulnerability of children and young people especially of developing countries to HIV infection, sexual risk behaviour and sexual exploitation.

There are certain characteristic features ingrained in some of the younger people making them more vulnerable to drug habit. Rebelliousness, high level of sensation seeking, nonconformity to traditional values, high tolerance of deviance, resistance to traditional authority, strong need for independence, low self-esteem, feeling a lack of control over one's life are some of the features frequently noticed as the

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premorbid personality and attitudinal traits of young abusers.

In order to develop an effective prevention and intervention programme against the rapid spread of drug abuse, it needs multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral strategies aiming at a variety of target populations. Effective drug abuse prevention programmes rarely use single strategy exclusively. Prevention research and demonstration studies showed that the most promising approach to preventing drug abuse is a coordinated prevention effort with maximum community participation that will ultimately offer multiple strategy and provide multiple points of access. Decades of experience show that an effective prevention programme, specifically for youth, should include at least three general elements. It should address the values, perceptions, expectations and beliefs that young people associate with drugs and drug abuse; it should aim at developing life skills and social competencies to increase the capacity to make informed and healthy choices; and finally, it should pursue creating an environment where children and young people have the possibility of involving in activities in a healthy environment where substance abuse is not promoted by peers, family, the media and other influential actors in the community.

Prevention *per se* aims at population in general of a particular catchment area or a particular community, and puts more emphasis on a target population or a vulnerable community. Prevention of drug use in above perspective may call for a very wide range of policy planning. In real situation, drug use prevention may appear little different from prevention of disease and disabilities or prevention of other crimes. For, many of the drugs that are being abused are in traditional use for medical or research purposes since very long. A multi-dimensional prevention strategy typically contains a range of prevention approaches that may include one or more of the following: enhancement of protective factors and reduction of known risk factors; factual information campaign on drugs, their abuse potential and consequences; life-skill training and development of personal skill; development of social

skills and competence; interactive drug education programmes involving youth population; alternative to drug abuse including cultural and spiritual enhancement; family development; policy and community advocacy; peer education and peer group counselling; and mass media campaign for positive alternatives.

No particular approach or strategy alone has been proved to be consistently effective in reducing drug abuse over long term. Scientific evaluation of prevention programmes is not very easy because of diverse factors influencing the problem. However, there is considerable consensus among experts, professionals and youth community themselves about certain strategies that are particularly suitable for youth population, and where the role of the population may be adequately defined.

Youth and their age are not particularly the problem in drug abuse. They may rather be a key resource for making a difference in drug abuse prevention. The young population should be

may be many. However, considering our country's context, there are some specific functional tasks where youth may have their wider contribution. Responsibilities like information dissemination, life skill development, formation of leadership club, parent/family training, formation of support groups, alternative development, influencing the policy, cultural promotion, interventions including early identification of addiction/relapse/vulnerability, early referral and management, crisis intervention are few of the prevention and intervention components that are found to be very successfully accomplished by youth themselves in different situations. Certain activities may be identified for immediate implementation. Community groups may be formed with youth population for information dissemination and social clubs may be organised as leisure time and abuse alternatives for vulnerable population. Similarly, liaison with youth training centres and women vulnerable group development (VGD) programmes by the community groups may be planned for skill development and employment training. Negotiations with local leadership and employers may be held for economic rehabilitation of the vulnerable cohort in the community. Similarly, workplace programmes may be initiated to address the working children and adolescents. For early intervention of abuse problem, detoxification camps may be organised in the community. Youth are in a more advantageous situation to identify the cases, refer them and run the camps. The accomplishment of the activities only needs development of a time-bound activity plan and assigning responsibilities. However, initiative for an ongoing mechanism to provide technical assistance, maintaining positive working relationships between different groups, team building, conflict resolution, and networking among different youth organisations working in the field are some other important prerequisites. Similarly, formation and cultivation of common grounds, development of a sense of trust and credibility among the stakeholders through open and regular communication, acquisition and consolidation of available resources to maximize them and decrease the potential duplication of efforts, and formulation of a common guideline with shared views in priority selection to accomplish the well-defined goals within a time-bound period are the other issues that should be appropriately addressed.

In drug abuse prevention, the whole effort may be dichotomised into supply reduction and demand reduction. Supply reduction encompasses the whole gamut of control of drug production and its diversion, control of trafficking, and strengthening of drug control acts. Demand reduction, on the other hand, emphasises preventive education and awareness aimed at behaviour change, and also treatment and rehabilitation of already inflicted population. A judicious combination of both supply and demand reductions is the most preferred method of approach. It is imperative that preventive methodologies should be effective, inexpensive, intersectoral, integrated and innovative. Youth may be a well-motivated workforce to accomplish the major task of demand reduction. An appropriately planned and well organised advocacy campaign in favour of countrywide networking among youth organisations and bodies with specific social, economic and development agenda to promote sustainable drug abuse prevention programmes would help the nation and its government in perpetuating its mission of drug abuse prevention and minimisation of abuse related harm when there is limitation of both human and financial resources.

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The specific functional agenda that can be successfully accomplished by youth population