Chapter 7: The Transition from Authoritarian Rule

“No dictator, no invader, can hold an imprisoned population by force of arms forever. There is no greater power in the universe than the need for freedom. Against that power, governments and tyrants and armies cannot stand.”

J. Michael Straczynski

In the previous chapter, I discussed a possible means to replace western democracy with a TDG. This chapter will discuss the transition of authoritarian rule to a TDG. By authoritarian rule, I include all other system of government, such as developing democracies, monarchies, dictatorships, and one-party states.

In many aspects, replacing an authoritarian rule with a TDG could be much easier than in a western democracy. For example, authoritarian rules usually do not have the arrogance that their system of governance is irreplaceable. And authoritarian rules have the power to start building the TDG without their citizenry's approval. The big question is why an authoritarian rule would willingly hand over responsibility of governance to its citizens.

I can see two reasons that may appeal to some authoritarian rules. First, authoritarian rules have always needed some formal or informal mechanisms to placate their population. By letting citizens feel that they are participating in building a new system of governance that will take several decades to build should give the citizenry some degree of satisfaction as well as letting the rule know where the “pressure points” are. Building the TDG may actually let the authoritarian rule reign longer than it normally would.

Second, history has not been kind to authoritarian rule of the last century. If any authoritarian rule just runs their country for several decades before its eventual fall, very likely history will not look favorably on it. However if the authoritarian rule—in its several decades of reign it traditionally has—actually builds the TDG that eventually forms the government to replace the authoritarian rule, history will judge these rules very favorably.

Will the world's authoritarian rules be moved to start building a TDG? Most won't. But the world needs only one to two authoritarian rules to show this can be done. Such rules should be able get their TDGs working well before any western democracy can. What a place in history!

*By developing democracies, I mean democratic nations who have a reasonable possibility of losing their democracy. A good sign of a mature democracy is when the parties no longer rely on
massive voter fraud to win elections and the party in power willingly relinquishes power when it loses the election.

The Nature of TDG Building

The TDG principles for building the TDG under an authoritarian rule are the same as for a western democracy:

1. Tiered, indirect elections.
2. Decisions by consultation.
3. An appointed advisory board.

I believe I have acquired a reasonable idea of how western democracies work, and this knowledge has allowed me to speculate on a somewhat thorough process for transitioning from western democracy to the TDG. I have to admit, however, that I don't understand fully how authoritarian rules keep civil order (force and fear do not explain everything). And I suspect the societal glue that keeps order varies considerably from one authoritarian rule to another. Therefore my transitional suggestions are only suggestions for any authoritarian rule wishing to go through the TDG process in a few decades. I suspect each authoritarian rule is going to have to invent some transitional processes specifically for its own TDG evolution.

The Experiment

To start building the TDG, the authoritarian rule should pick a small area of the country, maybe about 20,000 citizens (or maybe several areas of this population size). Leave the rest of the country alone for a few more years.

There are several reasons for starting small. First, this will be a time of experimentation. Building and maintaining neighborhood membership lists, conducting the elections, and teaching citizens about the qualities of people worthy of casting their votes towards are all lessons that need to be learned by trial and error, analysis, and making changes. A second set of lessons that also need to be learned is about how the elected representatives are to work together; in particular, using the consultative process rather than forcing their own opinions onto others with less power and influence. When these lessons are learned in a small locality, they can be applied to the other parts of the country.

Another good reason for starting small is for building the advisory board in the future. The citizens who play an important part in the initial TDG area(s) have some great experience behind them. The authoritarian rule can appoint these people as advisory board members to the new areas as the TDG is expanded.
For the building of the TDG in an authoritarian rule, all adult citizens should be allowed to vote in the neighborhood elections. Likewise all citizens are eligible for election. There should be no distinction between gender, age, education, race, religion, ethnicity, occupation, or party affiliation. Giving one group a preferable status in the early TDG will not build the credibility to make the TDG work in the long term.

**The Structure**

I recommend that for these initial areas (of about 20,000 people), set up two tiers. The lowest tier will comprise of about 10 to 25 neighborhoods, and this group of neighborhoods shall constitute one district. The neighborhoods elect their own members once a year. Six months after the neighborhood elections, the elected neighborhood representatives will meet and, from amongst themselves, elect the people they feel best to serve their district.

To give this evolving TDG some credibility, the district representatives need some tasks to do. I recommend that they be given a small, but significant amount of money to spend on something in their district. The stipulation to get that money is that the district representatives must be united in their decision. If the decision is not unanimous, the money is not provided. Hopefully, the representatives do something wise and beneficial with this resource, such as supplies for local schools or hospitals. But they could allocate funds to the decision of the neighborhood councils (who should also be unanimous in their decision). Or maybe they will be foolish or corrupt with their decision. Whatever they decide, the authoritarian rule should grant them the money under the condition of a unanimous vote.

If the decision is contrary to the wishes of the authoritarian rule, let education, not application of power, be the force that leads the people to better decisions in the future. For example, if the district representatives decide to split the money amongst themselves, let this happen. The authoritarian rule, through its appointed advisory board members, should tell the citizens about the decision of their elected representatives and ask them to think more wisely in the next set of elections.

As the neighborhood and district representatives mature and the electoral process is running smoothly, the authoritarian rule should grant some local decision-making powers to these elected bodies.

**Branching Out, Then Up**

As these initial areas of 20,000 mature, the authoritarian rule should open up new areas to the TDG process, applying the lessons that have already been learned. Bringing these new areas up...
to a mature level should not take as long. Eventually the entire country should be covered with a two-tiered system of local governance.

Obviously, the next step will be building the third tier, amalgamating several districts into one “big area,” and having these district representatives elect their representatives to this tier. And obviously, this new level should be given some additional responsibilities—and perhaps giving it some higher control of certain government operations is in order.

But the authoritarian rule could ask the elected bodies of this tier (or maybe a higher tier when it is built) for some advice. For this advice to be seriously considered, the qualification of a unanimous decision still applies. While the authoritarian rule is not obligated to take this advice, it should do so some of the time to let the citizenry know it is taking the building of TDG seriously, and is preparing for the eventual time for when the authoritarian regime will retire.

The TDG Transition

As the TDG grows and matures, the authoritarian rule should grant it more and more decision-making capacity within government. There will be a time when it becomes obvious that the TDG is ready for actual governance—and the authoritarian rule should not resist this social change.

Instead it should enter negotiations with the TDG for a transfer of power. Part of this negotiation is an amnesty for whatever bad things the authoritarian rule felt it had to do to maintain social order while building the TDG. Many readers won’t like this last statement, but we should be looking to the future: the TDG replacing the authoritarian rule. Besides, in the latter years of this social change, there will be fewer bad things emanating from the authoritarian rule as it is interacting more with the TDG, which means less forceful ways to maintain power because citizens are more involved with the decision-making process.

A wise authoritarian rule will see that several decades are needed to build the TDG. As it is engineering the TDG construction, I am sure that it can plan for its own departure in a peaceful manner. What a place in history to accomplish something like this!