| Title | What Asia Will or Won't Stand For : Globalizing Human Rights and Democracy |
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| Author(s) | Friedman, Edward |
| Citation | 大阪外国語大学アジア太平洋論叢. 1996, 6, p. 3-58 |
| Version Type | VoR |
| URL | https://hdl.handle.net/11094/99719 |
| rights | |
| Note | |

# What Asia Will or Won't Stand For: Globalizing Human Rights and Democracy

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> I once took part in a hunger strike for the political freedom of a gifted Korean poet, I am now deeply worried about the destiny of those gifted Chinese novelists who have been deprived of their freedom since the Tienanmen Square incident. (Kenzaburo Oe [1994], p.11)
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> ...an anti-Western discourse may belong to an oppressor, not the oppressed, to reaffirm its grip over its own sphere of power. (Thongchai Winichakul, p.9)
>
> This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women; and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain these rights or keep them. (Franklin D. Roosevelt)

Asia, to spokespeople for Asian Authoritarianism in Malaysia, Singapore, and mainland China, stands for the geographical region of East

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and Southeast Asia in a most positive way, a world of indigenous humane values and world-renowned economic success. In contrast, in Europe, Asia is regularly perceived as an enemy of humanity (Friedman [1994], p.1; Friedman [1995], ch. 12). In East and Central Europe, Leninist dictatorships are understood as despotism, a twentieth century continuation of Asia's supposed cruel incompatibility with constitutional democracy. A Polish novelist says of Russians, "there are no Russians left....Lenin murdered the last of the Slavs....Now it's strictly Asia...." "You must become European, meaning human." To which the European Russians reply "that they have been the rampart of the Christian world against the Asian hordes." This absolute opposition of a good West and an evil East colors in blood the former country of Yugoslavia where "the Orthodox Serbs see themselves...as defenders of Christian Europe against the onslaught of Islam" (Effer, p. 117). In like manner, Asia is conceived of as a nasty negative by democrats in Muslim Albania who, I found, see Asia as Leninist tyranny, a continuation or reembodiment of prior Ottoman oppression.

The imposition of singular values on diverse realities, of course, distorts. Given Asia's actual diversity, a vice-minister of Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry commented, "Asia is only a geographical word. Asian nations share nothing in common" (Pempel, p. 31).

Thus Asia is less a clearly defined geographic category than a debatable ontologically and diversely marked concept. Polarized notions of Asia are dynamized by an oppositional politics whose moral connotation is misleadingly objectified and thus masked by a seemingly neutral, general and merely geographic location. Since it is a changeable politics that shapes the many and contradictory imprecations of Asia, nothing unchangeable lies in the way of Asia even becoming a global champion of human rights. Problematizing Asia and Europe to understand the societal strengths that undergird late twentieth century Asia's equitable economic

dynamism makes manifest why Asia could well become a world leader in human rights in the twenty-first century, why the conventional European compresension of Asia as a negative opposite is so dangerously misleading.

There are Asians who also accept the absolute opposition of East against West but then imagine Asia in terms of a praiseworthy Asian Authoritarianism. Such people stigmatize liberal democracy as the source of social chaos and economic decline in the West. Muthiah Alagappa, a senior fellow from the Institute of Strategic and International Studies in Malaysia, in a 1994 report explained why "the leaders of many Asian nations see democracy [and individual human rights] as a hindrance to economic development, a threat to national and regional stability, and unsuited to Asia's political culture and traditions" (Alagappa, p.2). In the American academy, the same position has been argued by Harvard University Professor Samuel Huntington (1991) who has found Islamic and Confucian cultures incompatible with democracy and human rights. Reactionaries in China welcomed and publicized Huntington's 1994 polemics on behalf of a clash of civilizations that pitted democratic Christians against authoritarian Confucians. The tyrants used Huntington to promote the notion that China's democrats were alien creatures (Sullivan).

Yet there are good and sufficient reasons for doubting a characterization of Asian cultures as a uniform monolith that precludes a victory for human rights or democracy. The Malaysian human rights activist Chandra Muzaffar, who had earlier been jailed for his opposition to government repression, but who by the 1990s had joined with Malaysia's Asian Authoritarian leader to skewer supposed arrogant Western interference and hypocrisy on human rights, nonetheless, still saw Huntington as an adversary for having treated Malaysia as an enemy of the West, for not having seen that cultures do not invariably clash but instead can also benefit from mutual enrichment. Even Asian democrats can oppose

Western human rights activism as a patriotic resistance to foreign interference. Nationalism remains a strong force.

But Dr. Muzaffar did not reject democracy and human rights. He embraced both, as did the Prime Minister of Malaysia. In fact, democracy has proved its worth all over Asia. Therefore it is absurd to suggest, as the Government of Singapore has, that Asian culture and the world of democracy are incompatible.

The wise and able leaders of Asia's many democracies, of Japan, India, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Taiwan do not comprehend their rich Asian cultures as singularly anti-democratic. From Taiwan, following island-wide democratic elections in December 1994, a report on the election results was headlined, "Multiparty Democratic Values Can Also Be Asian Values" (*Free China Review*). The many Asian voices discussing democracy have significance for all who care about the future of human freedom because, given Asia's ever larger weight in the world, Asian actions and ideals will impact on all humanity. In fact, Asia can be decisive for the future of human rights.

Disagreeing with proponents of Asian Authoritarianism, a Taiwan publisher singled out Singapore under the influence of former premier Lee Kuan Yew as the source of complaint "about Taiwan going toward democracy because it goes against the principle of what he [Lee] calls 'Asian values'" (*Free China Review*, p.44). Actually, Singapore had first developed this perspective that Asian enlightened authoritarianism was superior to liberal democracy upon considering the dominant power of the ruling party in Malaysia which had limited its democracy in order to contain potential communalist strife (Zakaria).

The origin of Malaysia's commitment to authoritarianism is well-known. It followed murderous communalist conflict in 1969, after Chinese Malaysians did far better in an election than Muslim Malaysians expected.

That outcome seemed to subvert the promise of democracy dominated by Muslim Malaysians, who had forced Chinese-dominated Singopore into a separate existence in 1965 and had incorporated Muslim-dominated Sabah and Sarawak on the island of Borneo, and who, through their newly crafted larger percentage of Muslim Malays would electorally contral politics and leverage that power to narrow the economic gap with Chinese Malaysians. When democratic elections did not deliver what the Muslim Malaysian political elite sought, an alliance was forged above democratic politics in which authoritarianism would guarantee the equitable raising of Muslim Malaysians so that the national community would not disintegrate into communalist bloodshed.

Public discussion of "sensitive issues (citizenship rights of non-Malays, position of the Sultans, status of the Malay language, and Malay special rights)" was prohibited (Zakaria, p.229). The notion of shared Asian values is meant to deal with the experienced conflict in Malaysia between two communities, one associated with Muslim values and one with the amalgam of values associated with Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The project of Asian Authoritarianism premised on shared Asian values is a Malaysian strategy for equitable nation-building that will, hopefully, avoid divisive communalist clashes and preserve a fragile and ultimately valuable national entity.[1]

State leaders in Singapore, where the state is the key both to economic development and social equity, began to invoke Malaysia's language of Asian Authoritarianism. The Singapore state was not, however, constructed on some model of Asian values. Rather, the state institutions that independent Singapore inherited and utilized were those of the British colonial state. "Those who glibly laud the success of East Asian Confucianist societies should perhaps consider rediscovering the roots of this highly authoritarian brand of state-centered capitalism in anticommunist

Western imperialism" (Yun, p.87). Similarly, the Government of Malaysia made use of the state apparatus it inherited from Brithish colonialism.

Singapore's patriarch Lee Kuan Yew, only late in life, long after Singapore had already risen economically in an earlier era, when English was promoted in Singapore as an international language of science and business, turned to the notion of Asian values, this time meaning mainly Confucian values, to try to build a common Singapore national identity that would include people who identified with Islam and Hinduism as well as Chinese Confucians. Some Singaporeans say that Lee's conversion to Confucianism follwed on a daughter's fleeing to Canada with an Indian which is said to have broken the father's heart. But to make this explanation at all persuasive, one must find that a similar generational conflict moved those who responded positively to Lee's attempt to inculcate Chinese Confucian values.

A speak-Mandarin campaign was launched in 1979, although less than one percent of Singaporeans considered Mandarin a native language. By 1995 Singapore abandoned its synthetic project for a multicultural one (Whiting). Communalist distinctions did not readily give way to propaganda about common Asian or Confucian values. Likewise, in Malaysia, "racial polarization has increased" (Zakoria, p. 235). In short, in Malaysia and Singapore, Asian authoritarianism is a failed project that was originally legitimated as building an equitable nation with a common identity, fearing that these priority tasks could not be accomplished through liberal democratic processes.

Asian Authoritatianism is not to be confused with the vacuous rationalizations for murderous despotism from Pol Pot through Idi Amin to the Duvaliers. The governments of Singapore and Malaysia are neither blood-thirsty nor parasitic. They are promoting a system which surely is far better than most all despotisms. Indeed, many analysts would classify

Malaysia, which has held numerous contested elections, as a flawed democracy rather than an authoritarian state. The focus of this paper is not the actual governance today of Malaysia and Singapore. Surely the leaders of Malaysia's government which outlaws street demonstrations and tries to monopolize the media to promote the views of the ruling national front can easily conclude that the flaws in nineteenth and twentieth century America democracy, including legal slavery and institutionalized racism were far, far worse. If Americans could believe their flawed polity was democratic, why not Malaysians?

What will be examined is not how flawed are various proclaimed democracies but the claim that Asian values have a unique potential for political stability, social harmony and economic growth. Concerned over relative stagnation at home, many analysts in the West have accepted the notion that there is a correlation between Asian cultural values and Asian economic success. Actually the claim is devoid of merit. The contention of Asian Authoritarians that hard work, diligence and politeness are uniquely Asian or Confucian values is so hilariously absurd that it is a wonder anyone takes the explanation seriously. While the energy of Asian Authoritarians may be admirable, their rationalizations ring hollow. It is not just that nineteenth century Victorian European values were similarly defined or that their counterparts exist in virtually all cultures. The silliness in claiming that the privileging of the group over the individual, of diligence, hard work and politeness are unique to one and only one culture should be obvious. Propagandists in addition ignore what lies pulsating and pervasive beneath the facade of a nostalgic desire for repressive normality -- strong Asian individuals.

Chinese see their male children as rambunctious and almost uncontrol-lable. Confucius declared that he could not control his self-regarding passions until he was 70. Most Chinese so worry about the narrow,

materialist greed of their Chinese brethren that they often report that Chinese folk are the world's least puplic-regarding people (Ames, 1994). Victor Chung, one of the richest Southeast Asians of Chinese descent, proclaims, "Money is the only measure of value; nothing else is real" (Pan, p.368). Familism is said by many Chinese analysts to preclude concern for some proclaimed national good. Likewise in Japan, "Voters will prefer a candidate who works for local benefits over one who works for more universal benefits" (Nagahisa, p.13).

Roger Ames has brilliantly and persuasively argued that Confucians have a very strong sense of self. Indeed, feeling themselves overly selfish and factionalized, early twentieth century Chinese democrats envied European democracies their national cooperation, harmony and solidaristic energies (Friedman, 1974). The proclamation of unique Asian values as an actualized harmonious community base of Asian Authoritarianism is risible propaganda, a big lie. It is not made true by endless repetition. Why then do Asian Authoritarians embrace the creed; and why do envious foreigners take the fraud as reality?

The claim that my people do better because we indeed are a better people is the virtually ubiquitous creed of all victors. The claim pridefully puts down national adversaries. The logic of the Asian Authoritarian project is also appealing to many hardliners in China who experience chauvinist pleasure in catching up with former oppressors. It also appeals to lots of Chinese who really fear that an attempt at liberal democracy would open deadly fissures that could make Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union seem peaceful and united (Liu Qing; Liu Binyan).

In Singapore too, Asian Authoritarianism seemed a political imperative of national survival meant to inculcate "new values" in people "with little shared sense of national identity" (Lee, p.203). Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew also seemed to be betting that xenophobic-militaristic tendencies in

China would win out in China's post-Deng succession. Lee seemed to be trying to persuade an emerging Chinese Leviathan whose ships and troops might soon be heading south that Singapore was not its enemy (Nathan, pp. 39, 40).

But Singapore, at times seen by surrounding Malay Muslim nations as a Chinese fifth column in Southeast Asia, mocked as "a Chinese shrimp in a Malay sea," may have seemed to draw too close to China after Lee Kuan Yew supported the crushing in spring 1989 of China's burgeoning democracy movement. Singapore cannot afford to ignore the common cultural vision of its non-Chinese neighbors. "Adopting a policy of national harmony, the Singapore government no longer maintains Chinese...as the only official language. Instead, Malay has been stipulated as an official language. Along with Chinese, Tamil and English, they make up four equally official languages" (Hung, pp. 36, 37). Thus, Singapore's boasts about the unique superiority of Asian Authoritarianism actually thinly mask ordinary and threatening nationalist, regional and communalist divisions. The popular acceptance in Singapore of a survival-ist need to resist these dangers permits repression to be largely self-repression. The happy mystical ideology of Asian Authoritarianism obscures tragically painful, but readily comprehensible, real political problems.

Similarly the actual basis of support for Malaysia's ruling front should be distinguished from the misleading language of Asian Authori-tarianism. The rise of Dr. Mahatir's Bumiputra Investment Foundation, including its National Equity Corporation not only caused apprehension among Malaysians of Chinese ancestry because its activities seemed overly biased in favor of Malaysians who were Muslim but also because the government tried to reduce foreign corporate involvement, thereby slowing economic growth, which hurt business interests. Only after the global

depression and international debt crisis of 1982 made capital scarce did Malaysia open up to joining East Asian economic dynamism. When the 1985 Plaza Accord on foreign exchange rates suddenly gave Japan, Taiwan and South Korean light industry workers higher wages that made their exports uncompetitive in American import markets and also gave the East Asian economies a bonanza in foreign exchange, Malaysia, because of its 1982 shift, was ready to welcome their capital, technology and market know-how to manufacture products to be exported to the United States. Wealth expansion zoomed up as Malaysia welcomed foreign investors.

Still, the ruling front was challenged by growing Islamic fundamentalist sentiment (Woon, p.125), which it tried to coopt, and by open partisanship by Chinese Malaysians, who felt increasingly ill-treated by the ruling front. In short, not only was Malaysia's growth not caused by Asian values, but, in addition, the communalist split has not healed. Some richer Malaysians of Chinese descent have emigrated to the Perth area of West Australia, while some poorer ones have gone to Hong Kong, both "disaffected by their countries' discriminatory policies" (Pan, pp.362, 367).

To be sure, a national agenda of economic openness, shared cultural values, communalist equity and national growth promoted by strong states with energetic leaders may make great sense; still the evidence does not prove that Malaysia's Asian Authoritarianism has delivered on any of these goals. There is "increasing ethnic polarization" (Woon, p.132). The sources of Malaysia's impressive growth lie in particular economic policies unrelated to Asian values. The other goals -- shared values and communalist equity as a basis of national unity -- have not been attained. While Asian Authoritarianism is trumpeted, its underlying communalisms fester.

Any person aware of Catholic-Protestant communalist struggles in Ireland or the long history of racial and ethnic strife in the United States

or similar difficult and divisive issues almost everywhere would not assume that the rulers of Malaysia and Singapore have taken a uniquely erroneous path. There is no known wisdom on tamping down communalist tensions that guarantees civic peace, openness and empathetic identification. Surely Americans should remember how long its ruling groups kept one community enchained in slavery. Legal emancipation was no easy thing to achieve while maintaining national union and political democracy.

During the massively murderous Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln faced a northern officer corps pervaded by racism. Should the President have initially declared for emancipation of the enslaved and welcomed the newly freed community to join the army of Union, Mr. Lincoln might have met open rebellion, a loss of the border states to the Confederacy, a quick electoral defeat and a persistence of slavery in America. Only after anti-conscription race riots and a long war in which freed African-Americans proved their worth in the military could the President announce emancipation even for the enslaved in merely those states and regions still controlled by the Confederacy, thereby freeing no one. And the President even then had to use dull language so that the negation of an ultimate evil against humanity should not sound like a moral cause to the ears of America's racists. The emancipation and enrollment of African Americans into the Union army could, with a less gifted commander-in-chief, easily have backfired (Neely).

Even after an amended Constitution ended slavery, racists rolled back the gains of the Civil War and reimposed a reign of terror on the Africn American community for almost another century. At the outset of the twenty-first century racism still pervades the United States such that communalist bloc voting is the norm and the liberal democratic norm of "one person, one vote" remains an unrealized ideal, indeed, an experienced threat to many in the numerically dominant group, such that communalist

politics cripples and misshapes the attempt to make democracy inclusive in the United States (Davidson and Grofman).

In general, the construction of a new political identity to hold a new nation together is not easy. Even when England first rose, it experienced itself as on the defensive, threatened by powerful and ubiquitous Catholic enemies who could even subvert the nation's cultural essence. "Under Elizabeth, England was 'the beleaguered isle' holding on against fearful odds in face of a hostile Europe." The view spread that only "divine favour" led England to be able to defeat the Spanish Armada and to escape the Gunpowder Plot (Hill, p.265). England's cause was seen as one of religious human dignity, the birthright of a free people, God's chosen. In reality, division and suspicion were papered over with a peculiar notion of English values, very much as Asian Authoritarians construct an Asian identity.

Given the hellish fires of communalist hates with their potential for violence and the complex difficulties involved in grappling with communalist emotions and identifications while building a new national identity, one should not rush to judgment against efforts anywhere, certainly including Malaysia and Singpore, to come to grips with these almost intractable issues of nation-building and common identity in a way that would maintain civil peace and enhance inter-communalist equity. Asian values are a myth and a project, an experiential imperative of national survival (Ang and Stratton).

But Asian Authoritarians do not seek understanding for their complex efforts in dealing with explosive problems. Rather, they insist they are a model to the world of success. That purported model is in fact a rationalization of still unproven communalist policies, a false generaliza-tion claiming the transcendence of still intractable particulars of Malaysia and Singapore. Consequently there is no basis for the claim embraced by

many neo-conservatives in China that democratization not only is incompatible with so-called Asian values, but that, in addition, all of Asia's great economic achievements have been premised on proven policies of Asian Authoritarianism. The evidence is lacking even for Singapore and Malaysia. Asian Authoritarian ideology obscures the actual soureces of Asian growth as well as the indigenous roots of democracy in Asia.

Democrats, after all, point to Japan as a successful Asian constitutional democracy which after World War Two built on its prior Taisho era democratic heritage of the 1920s. This included the unique Taisho era electoral system of multiple seats and but one vote, Japanese style democracy then was reinstitutionalized after the Second World War (Nakamura). Indeed, every nation's democracy has to be crafted to suit that nation's particulars of history, region and culture. Japan's humanistic concern for human rights has a long and deep history (Kagan). But cruel statist forces can and do crush cultural flowers. In this perspective, contingent events such as the Great Depression and the militarist policies of the Showa emperor prematurely but temporarily ended a prior, truly Japanese effort to cratf a suitable democracy.

In recent years, this democratic Japan has begun to promote democracy and human rights (Kagan; Doyle). This democratic Japan increasingly tends to condition certain economic aid on criteria of human rights, democracy and good governance. Politics will decide whether these are harbingers of what Asia can and will stand for.

Ignoring the actual endogenous bases of Japan's democratization, Malaysian analyst Muthiah Alagappa insists that the United States "imposed" democracy on an essentially authoritarian Japan which inherntly resists human rights activism (Alagappa, p.6). In contrast, Kenzaburo Oe finds that Japan's constitution, which Americans helped craft, reflected the aspirations of most Japanese, while the constitutions

drafted by Japanese reactionaries did not (Oe [May 7, 1995], p.105). Rationalizers of Asian Authoritarianism myopically envision Japan in a peculiarly one-dimensional way. Since all the culturally rich civilizations of the world are full of diverse possibilities and elements, including democratic ones, one would have to embrace a particularly nasty and unreasonably narrow view of Japanese culture not to see that it too enjoys democratic potentials.

The proponents of Asian Authoritarianism, inheritors of a colonial administrative state, even reproduce the old nineteenth century imperialist argument for Enlightened Despotism. In the English colonial discourse, now adopted by the English-educated Lee Kuan Yew, traditional Asians lack the capacity or desire for democratic self-government. Respect for the indigenous culture therefore meant providing authoritarian rule that brought political tranquility, economic prosperity and cultural continuity. Alagappa embraces this Orientalist colonial discourse in finding that China's great 1989 democracy movement sought "better living conditions, not democracy" (p.13).

John Stuart Mill rejected this arrogant and condescending perspective which freezes a whole nation in some medieval straightjacket, as if peoples lacked the capacity to grapple with their own problems and flaws. Mill had been impressed that to defeat aristocratic landed interests, both India and Britain needed a serious land reform. He concluded that in India as in Britain, people who were not allowed to participate in their own self-government would not be able fully to develop their human potential. Therefore "neither Indians nor Europeans were to be passive beneficiaries of an enlightened despotism....Popular political participation...was an essential part of...the general project of human improvement" (Zastoupil, p.206).

Asian democrats, as democrats from Europe or Africa, find their

cultures rich with democratic elements. From Korea, the world's most rigid Confucian society, and therefore, in a cultural determinist perspective, supposedly the nation least capable of abandoning a purported singularly authoritarian heritage, former presidential candidate Kim Dae Jung wrote "A Response to Lee Kuan Yew" on "The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values." Mr.Kim found that "Asia has a rich heritage of democracy-oriented philosophies and traditions" (Kim, p.191). In fact, "Asians developed these [democratic] ideas long before the Erupoeans did" (Kim, p.192). One finds democratic elements in Mengzi's (Mencius) people based philosophy.[2] "Such an understanding [of our Asian cultures as democratic] can also be derived from Gautama Buddha's teaching that all creatures and things possess a Buddha-like quality" (Kim, p.194). "In fact, Asia has achieved the most remarkable record of democratization of any region since 1974. By 1990 a majority of Asian countries were democratic, compared to a 45 percent democratization rate worldwide" (Kim, p.192). Mr. Kim concluded his discussion of democracy and human rights in Asia finding that "The biggest obstacle is not...cultural heritage but the resistance of authoritarian rulers and their apologists" (Kim, p.194).

Mr. Kim's view that those who find Asian values incompatible with democracy are shills for dictatorships may not be quite fair to well-intentioned people trying to grapple with the enormous difficulties of nation-building in a world of terrible communalist conflict. Still, it is true, even Muthiah Alagappa concedes, that the dictators in "Beijing and Rangoon are most opposed" to democracy and human rights (Alagappa, p.8).

Conscious of how tyrants the world over rationalize despotic evil as patriotic good, as revealed in the quote. at the start of this essay from Thongchai Winichakul, Nobel Peace Prize Winner Aung San Suu Kyi, whose political party in Burma overwhelmingly won the May 1990 democratic

election, only to be placed under house arrest by a cruel military junta, noted that "There is nothing new in...governments seeking to justify... authoritarian rule by denouncing liberal democratic principles as alien... [T]hey claim for themselves the...sole right to decide what...conform[s] to indigenous cultural norms" (Aung, p.167). As a scholar of Buddhism, Aung San Suu Kyi found Buddhism supportive of democracy.[3]

Since all cultures contain democratic elements, it is misleading to insist that democracy is merely a Western political form. The institutional forms -- federalist or centralist, presidential or parliamentary, type of party system, nature of voting rules, *etcetera* -- are numerous and complex. The variety of democratic types cannot be divided into Eastern and Western. Each nation can and must instituionalize democracy in its own way. Consequently, the democratic institutions of the federalist United States might have much in common with those of federalist India, while a more nationally centralized France might be more like a nationally centralized Japan. The imagined cultural opposition of West and East misleads when one studies the diversely crafted institutions of political democracy. There is no such thing as Western democracy, which, in fact, is a political category, not an analytical one.

The usual contrast between a so-called West and a so-called East made by both Samuel Huntington and Mahatir Mohammed such that the West allegedly privileges the individual over the group while the East privileges the group over the individual is absurd since all nation states put the national whole first. One cannot choose not to pay taxes for policies of which one disapproves. One is required to risk one's life in war when called on to do so. In business, sports or any other endeavor, individuals are told in the supposedly individualistic United States to get on the team and subordinate themselves to the group's purpose. "There is no 'I' in team" is the repeated refrain of the leader. The group comes before the

individual in "the West," too. In fact, when England's John Sturat Mill argued against stifling the opinion of but one, it was mainly because to suppress the one could injure the many.

The legitimators of Asian Authoritarianism as the only moral way who dismiss human rights concerns as mere Western selfishness do not see how much of that tradition is morally and religiously rooted, as in the strong notion of human dignity in the opening quote from Franklin Roosevelt. Asian dismissals of human right commitments in the West as mere aggression and hypocrisy reveal an extraordinary religious intolerance, an inability to hear the moral worth and weight of other ultimate human values. A willingness to share political power with those who embrace other ultimate values is in fact the cultural basis of a broadly inclusive democracy. While critics insist that Asian Authoritarianism in Malaysia is merely a unique cover for Muslim hegemony and in Singapore for Chinese hegemony, actually, as shown by the treatment of Irish Catholics by the English and of African Americans by European Americans in the USA, all fledgling democracies have problems with true inclusiveness. All are flawed democracies.

In addition, every culture cares about the personal dignity of its people. Asia nourishes magnificent and distinctive people as a high priority. In fact, "throughout Asian history there has been a broad awareness of the individual as a morally self-directed and responsible entity -- in the Brahmin's lonely working out of his individual karma, in the Buddhist's progress toward enlightenment, and in the...humanistic self-cultivation of the...Confucian..." (Hall, p.23). Asia also includes brilliant and charismatic individual leaders, including rulers in places such as Malaysia and Singpore.

While rationalizers of Asian Authoritarianism err in not seeing that all the great cultures of Asia are replete with democratic elements and

that Asia is a continent with numerous robust democracies, there is still
reason to treat the cultural applogy of Asian Authoritarianism with great
respect. The claims to peculiar Asian values are made with tremendous
self-confidence. Because of the phenomenal success of Asian economies in
the final decades of the twentieth century, "Western" liberal democracies
can look like pathetic failures, at least as perceived by a successful and
haughty Asia. The Asian cultural claims are not just weak cover-ups. They
are prideful assertions of cultural superiority. These statements have
nothing in common with the tragic history of the Soviet Union in which
insecure Russians insisted they invented baseball first. The logic of Asian
Authoritarianism is a boast that Asia is superior to Europe.

No doubt Asian cultures, as all cultures, have areas that others can
learn from. Muthiah Alagappa calls attention to the poor performance of
nations which do not heed the experience of Asian Authoritarianism.
"These negatives include slow economic growth in democracies like India
and the Philippines, as well as the desperate...conditions in Russia"
(Alagappa, p.9). Actually, there is nothing to the assertion that democ-
racy hurts development, except the typical condescending arrogance of the
economically successful in looking down on those not faring as well
(Friedman[1995], ch.10). This Asian contempt for losers is a sad
commonplace shared by victors the world over -- including the Dutch,
British, Germans and Americans -- throughout history. Asia looks most
ordinary when it declares its unique virtues.

In fact, no sensible economist would find that India's rate of growth
is singularly limited by its constitutional political system. Conversely,
Singapore was doing well economically long before it decided to promote
Confucianism. Likewise, despite many years spent propagating a common
authoritarian heritage, Malaysia remains a land, not of shared Asian
values, but instead a country whose two major communities still see each

other in polarizing and stigmatizing terms. Wherever one looks in Asia, one finds the notion that Asian Authoritarianism is the unique souresce of economic success and communalist harmony to be devoid of logic, to be based on something other than the facts.

President Ramos of the Philippines, when informed that Singapore's leading patriarch Lee Kuan Yew had suggested that the Philippines could solve its problems through authoritarianism, acidly responded that the Philippine people had just liberated themselves from two decades of authoritarian rule under Ferdinand Marcos who had plunged the Philippines from being the richest county in Southeast Asia to the poorest. Ramos said that the authoritarian "prescription fails to consider our ill-fated flirtation with authoritarianism not so long ago."

Similarly, Chinese generally understand that China's Leninist dictatorship is *not* the cause of post-Mao economic success. Dictators in Beijing embrace the techniques of Asian Authoritarianism in the hopes of maintaining power and continuing economic growth. Yet China at the end of the Deng era remains vulnerable to all the disturbances that have plagued the post-Leninist world elsewhere (Lam). Likewise, Singapore and Malaysia remain bedeviled by the communalist divisions which led to the original propagation of Asian Authoritarianism. Consequently, it is doubtful whether China's dictators will find in Asian Authoritarianism solutions to their most painful political dilemmas.

Lots of folk wrongly believe that authoritarianism brings economic growth as democracy does not. Ivan Hall has suggested that it is the Japanese government's interest in blocking US and WTO market-opening initiatives that has led Japan, in some ways, to back the ideology of Asian Authoritarianism, legitimating Asian economic regionalism as a superior way. Japan thus has given the category a panache it would not otherwise possess.

It certainly is true that most people take Japan's experience as defining the Asian way. Singapore's rulers try to persuade others that a political economy that combines "a dominant party system, a centralized bureaucracy and a strong interventionist government" is "a final form" (Alagappa, p.11) pioneered in Japan, emulated in South Korea and Taiwan, successfully institutionalized in Singapore and now being copied by China and Southeast Asian governments. "Authoritarian" Japan supposedly is humankind's better future.

Yet the claim that Asian Authoritarianism inherently predisposed Japan to move ahead as a uniquely Asian dominant party regime is devoid of merit since Japan has in fact been a democracy since the end of the Asian-Pacific War.[4]

Actually, the dominant party system is not in power in Japan, Taiwan or Korea. It never was a reality in South Korea. In Japan, where it was a fact for a period of time, it emerged from a democratic process of building a broad national consensus within a genuinely democratic political system (Nakamura). Japan has been democratic, not authoritarian.

Still, the era of hegemony for the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan was just that, a moment in time that had to end. In Taiwan, where an opposition party controls the capital region, a dominatnt party system never was institutionalized. The prior ruling party is splintering. In fact, the supposedly final and general Asian authoritarian polity, the dominant party system, survives, at the end of the twentieth century, at most, only in Malaysia and Singapore. Even in those two small nations, the results do not support the claims of Asian Authoritarians. The idea that the predominant party system is a tested, viable and continuing political form in Asia is, therefore, a claim that has zero bases in truth. If China's neoconservatives or anti-democratic ruling groups elsewhere wish to

emulate Asian Authoritarianism, they, in fact, will be emulating unproven attempts to resolve difficult communalist dilemmas masked as a secret of economic success in but two very small countries.

Yet, the plaint that liberal democracy, understood as a continuing clash of individuals and interests, is in conflict with Confucian or Muslim values is a real experience for many in Asia. The conventional Western self-understanding of democracy, actually a myth (Friedman 1994), in which a free people emerged from a democratic culture of Protestant individualism has proved dangerously misleading in Asia. The erroneous description and harmful prescription of democracy as a clash of interests where "ins" and "outs" regularly replace each other in a democratic culture which thrives on individualism slights how difficult it has been to expand and deepen a breakthrough in fledgling democracies anywhere, including Europe and America. In fact, even in the many nations of those regions, it was not easy to get beyond a narrow, elite conservative consensus (Reuschemeyer, *et al.*)

To put it anachronistically, the West long ago followed today's Asian route to democracy of building on a grand conservative coalition (Friedman, 1994). Many prodemocratic people misunderstand the long and tortuous struggle to broaden and deepen democracy when they do not see that even in England, France and America, the original successful democratic consensus was made possible by a broad and moderate alliance that did not immediately welcome a transfer of political power to militant challengers. Grand conservative coalitions help consolidate fledgling democracies. This general truth is now increasingly apparent to democrats involved in political transitions in Latin America and Southern Eruope, too (Weschler).

Thus, the standard Anglo-American description of democracy as premised on individualism and clashing interests, actually is a

mystification. This tutelary narrative misunderstands democracy's own early history, even in England and America. The actual history of how non-conforming Protestants had to flee England to find religious freedom for their communities or how English Protestants long oppressed and suppressed the community of Irish Catholics should be a reminder of how long and difficult is the struggle for equity and democracy among different religious communities the world over.

A memory of John Stuart Mill as an English champion of that culture's individualism gets Mill all wrong. His classic essay "On Liberty" is, in large part, a description of how English Protestant culture, far from being a culture of individualism and tolerance that facilitated robust democratic clashes, was, in fact, still an enemy of liberty more than 200 years after Protestant pilgrims fled to America and Irish Catholics were slaughtered. Mill pointed to an "infirmity of English minds" that led regularly to a "revival of bigotry" because of the nature of the religion (p. 33). "The ravings of fanatics or charlatans from the pulpit" provide "no security of the public mind" (p. 37). Consequently, "this country [is] not a place of mental freedom" (p. 37). Instead, "every one lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship" (p. 61). Far from welcoming assertive individuals, Calvinism insists on docile surrender to God's way. The result is a tyranny that will "maim by compression, like a Chinese lady's foot, every part of human nature which stands out" (p. 69). English Protestantism, Mill found, supports a fanatic moral intolerance that wars against individual joy and dignity. It has provided a "sanction to slavery" (p.50); "it inculcates submission to all authority..." (p. 51).

In contrast, non-Christians have produced "a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teachings..." (p. 52). "It is in the *Koran*, not the New Testament, that we read the maxim -- 'A ruler who appoints any man to office when there is in his dominions another  man better

qualified for it, sins against God and against the State'" (p. 51). In short, it is not true that English Protestant culture is a uniquely rich soil in which democratic shoots naturally flourish. To John Stuart Mill, English Protestant culture did not seem a nutrient for a flowering liberal democracy.[5]

Of course, one need not treat the enemies of liberal democracy in England as immoral. But neither should one invent a non-existent toleration. The continuing challenge to democracy from Anglo-Protestants who would preserve human dignity by ferreting out homosexuals, criminalizing abortion, censoring all that is called obscene and by having the state promote Christianity is real even today. To understand what actually makes for the flourishing of democracy and human rights that can preserve differing moral ultimates, it is most improtant not to imagine Anglo-American Christian culture as some utopian idyll that, in fact, it never was, and certainly is not yet today.

If one looks at Anglo Protestants who resisted liberal democracy, seeing it as a source of barbarism, or if one looks at their counterparts in France or Germany, then, as with Malaysia or Singapore, one finds many good and decent people who deeply feared for the civilization that gave meaning to their lives. The real West was not a singularly open culture that happily adopted all that was new and progressive, as imagined by Asian Authoritarians who read Western culture as uniquely democratic. The polar binary of East versus West, Asia versus Europe obscures the similar struggles in all societies in which those who found ultimate meaning in an imaginary pure culture actually feared and opposed liberal democracy as an assault on human dignity.

As the great German novelist Thomas Mann put it in 1914, "Whoever would aspire to transform Germany into a middle-class democracy in the Western-Roman sense and spirit would wish to take away from her all

that is best and complex, to take away the problenatic character that really makes up her nationality; he would make her dull, shallow, stupid, and un-German, and he would therefore be antinationalist who insisted that Germany became a nation in a foreign sense and spirit" (Mann, p.26). A similar cultural split expressed as pitting patriots against aliens murderously split England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Heartfelt cultural nationalists the world over, including America and Europe today, still fear full democratization. Thus, purifying cultural, religious, nationalistic and communalist passions can always be mobilized against the tolerant heterogeneity of democracy, taken as an immoral realtivism.

In short, democracy involves a large transformation that may bring discombobulating cultural vertigo. But contrary to the view of Asian Authoritarianism, the cultural clash is not a war of Europe against Asia, or the West against the East, or imperialism against antiimperialism. It is a pan-human problematique. It certainly is going on in Europe and the United States right now.

All nations, even England, built the new nation state in a context of national defensiveness and great anxieties that could be mobilized in a dictatorial direction. Political freedom was only won after a prolonged and bloody struggle. A late twentieth century rise of Muslim cultural pride tied to nationalistic identities is similarly encoded. The purifying nationalists see their people as having struggled long and hard against imperialism, imagined as a millennia long realtionship with "the West" in terms of predator and prey.

> While the medieval Christian dream of crushing
> Moorish (Muslim) power and regaining control
> over Jerusalem was one of the main motivating
> forces behind the series of expeditions to the Holy

> Land, the desire to acquire the fabulous wealth of
> the Arab world was also a major consideration
> (Muzaffar [Sept. 2, 1993], p.1).

During the Gulf War, Zulkafly Baharuddin wrote in his March 2, 1991 column in the Malaysian newspaper *Utusan Malaysia* that "the Americans, especially the whites" were "gloating." "White people's arrogance is getting out of hand. But let them be. Why? Because the white race is facing destruction from within....And their number is dwindling" (Fallows, p.313). Right up to today "Muslim resistance is portrayed [in the West] as an 'Islamic threat'" because "prejudice and antagonism toward Islam and Muslims is deeply embedded in the psyche of mainstream Western society" (Muzaffar [Sept. 2, 1993], p.5). It certainly is true that Pakistan's atomic bomb project is uniquely characterized in the West in a religious manner, "the Islamic bomb."

Once Asian Authoritarians obscure the divisions in both East and West, such that a bipolar reationship between a purportedly Christaian West, the executioner, and an East of Muslim and other civilizations of profound wisdom made into victims, becomes presuppositional truth, then any policy disagreement with "the West" can be interpreted in terms of resistance to the executioner's attempt to keep the victim vulnerable, weak and poor. This indeed is the world view of Confucian authoritarians in China and their factional Islamic counterparts in Iran or Malaysia. It seems obvious to the factions of Malysians and Chinese who see through such eye glasses that the United States opposes an East Asian Economic Caucus only because the US wants to stop East Asia from developing "into the world's most dynamic economic powerhouse," because the US wants to maintain "its dominant power in the region" (Muzaffar [Sept. 2, 1993], p.3). Stigmatizing any other explanation in advance as a mask does not lead to an accurate understanding of policy in the United State.

Actually, East Asia already is the world's most dynamic economic powerhouse. In fact, it has been a long time since Japanese aid, trade and investment surpassed that of the realtively declining United States in Southeast Asia. Even Taiwan for many years has invested more than has the United States in Southeast Asia. Thus, the evil "Western" empire that is self-servingly feared by purist culturalists in China and Malaysia in fact does not even exist. Yet the United States appears most fearsome.

What seems to have inspired a monstrous new vision of America as an embodiment of a cannibalistic West at the end of the twentieth century is a combination of events, but especially the victory of America's microelectronic weaponry in the Gulf War and the implosion of Soviet communism to be replaced by governments seeking, politically, a liberal democracy and, economically, a world market orientation, both conceived of as inherently Western. This combination of events and probable futures engenders a fear among anti-imperialist cultural purists that Americ is all powerful and that all others are nakedly vulnerable. In addition, satellite technology and mircroelectronics carry "Western" culture into Muslim homes, threatening to seduce children and turn them against their parents and their people (Muzaffar, [Dec. 1994], p. 1). CNN can seem a symbol of this threat in "the East" while it seems a source of information, truth and liberalization to "the West."

Members of the privileged party-state apparatus in China were similarly anxious after the implosions in East Europe, Central Europe, Mongolia and the former Soviet Union made ruling groups in Beijing experience themselves as lone survivors of dictatorial Leninist socialism in great states. Fearing that human rights, liberty and democratization would win the hearts of the young, China's despots, feeling extremely vulnerable, energized a campaign to persuade their people that Confucian authoritarianism, true Chinese culture, was the secret of economic success

throughout the region and that alien values such as liberal democracy were part of a plot by imperialists who were out to run the world, and who therefore wanted to destroy authoritarian Chinese cultural values which supposedly gave China the wherewithal to rise in dignity as one of the great and prospering world powers. China's dictotors reached out to the governments of Malaysia and Singpore which felt similar anxieties about a hypostatized crusading America out to globalize human rights and democracy. Asian Authoritarians would not stand for a globalization of human rights and democracy.

Believing that "the West" needs to hypostatize an evil empire to mobilize its people against, feeling strength in "the current Islamic resurgence," the West is seen in Malysia as replacing "red-baiting" with "Islam baiting" (Muzaffar [Sept. 2, 1993], p.6). Muslims, as Chinese, feel under the gun. Many Muslims, especially those who seem culturally threatened in an economically rising Malaysia, imagine the United States and the West as out to get all the rising peoples of Asia.

Human rights and democracy are then imagined "as a mandate to intervene" (Muzaffar [Jan. 3, 1994]). Since these Muslims imagine themselves as the true frends of the downtrodden victims of capitalist imperialism from South African blacks to West Asian Palestinians, they see themselves as the true supporters of the most fundamental human rights, of national survival, cultural integrity, political sovereignty and economic development. They find Muslim victims everywhere. They side with the victims against the executioners. They see nothing but hypocrisy in America's human rights diplomacy.

Are children starving in Iraq? It is not because a predatory Iraqi government has policy priorities that determine this outcome but because of a US-willed United Nations embargo. Are Palestinian rights still denied? The United States must be the real cause. Do children die of

starvation in the Third World? It cannot be because of anything their own governments have done but because Northern bankers (Jews?) manipulate interest rates (Muzaffar [Jan. 3, 1994], pp.3, 4).

Because these Muslim friends of the downtrodden (Singapore, in contrast, does not imagine itself as the friend of the downtrodden) imagine themselves as the champions of human rights, they seek proof that "the West" actually is a major violator of human rights. They ask the UN to investigate the causes of the huge prison population and the large number of executions in the United States. They urge an examination of the "new citizenship and immigration laws in Europe" for evidence of systematic discrimination against Muslims (Muzaffar [Jan. 3, 1994], p.4) Despite "Western" rhetoric about democracy, "The US and its Western allies, notably France, have also failed to support the Algerian movement for human rights and social justice expressed through Islam" (Muzaffar [Dec. 1994], p.2). No credence is given a French or human rights concern that Algeria's Islamic Salvation Army and Armed Islam Group, in killing government officials (called Hezb Fransa, the Party of France, i.e. traitors), and burning schools are heading down the Pol Pot road of anti-imperialist purification when they promise to kill so-called Western-ized Algerians. Instead, since Malaysia's opponents of a dangerous and hypocritical West often also oppose Chinese violations of human rights in Tibet and oppose Indonesian violations in East Timor, they experience their perspective as the only non-selective, single-standard and non-hypocritical viewpoint. And yet, it is difficult not to see the hypocrisy in the rationales of cultural purifiers who, as other ordinary mortals, obscure their own amoral or immoral contradictions.

At the same time that the United States is seen as a powerful threat, America and/or the West are, contrariwise, imagined in the Asianist discourse as pitiful failures "buffeted by unemployment and recession"

(Muzaffar [Sept, 2, 1993], p.4). Crime and violence are seen as spreading in the West such that "the very fabric of Western society" unravels. In fact Western exports "are no longer competitive." People drown in a "spiritual and psychological morass," all supposedly caused by unbridled individualism, materialism, hedonism and greed, that is, caused by putting human freedom above God's moral plan (Muzaffar [Dec. 1994], p.3). Drugs, family disintegration and increasing poverty are the destiny of the west. Again, the actual religious sources of the west's human rights commitments are missed.

Anything and everything, to "Eastern" cultural purifiers, must be done to keep out an anti-religious "West." In this veiw, Japan already is heading down the same Western path of moral decline. "If this can happen to Japan...what guarantee is there that...South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore whose indigenous, traditional value systems are comparatively weaker, will not eventually go the same way...?" (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], p.13). All are threatened by Western germs.

This is the language of religious fundamentalism, of keeping satanic strangers outside the gates, a language that appeals to chauvinists in China who imagine their Great Wall as protecting them by keeping foreigners out. Since life, in this view, is spiritual, individuals should not be so concerned about mere material prosperity. They should curb their appetites and intergrate into society harmoniously (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], pp.18, 19). True liberation, after all, is an inner liberation in which one becomes a vehicle for God's way (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], p. 20). The West's "Capitalist democracy...is a betrayal of God's ultimate truth" (Muazffar [Jan 28, 1994]. p.21). The "question is whether Westerners...are capable of believing...in God" (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], p.23). The religious intolerance in this comprehension of the West is manifest. Another community's notion of human dignity is treated as a devilish

conspiracy.

This is a discourse that defends communalist or ethnic cleansing, the mirror image political logic not only of Christian or Western fascists, but also of those in Muslim societies. It, in fact, is a potent and poisonous threat to humanity from Christian Serbia to Islamic Iran. The purifiers would end openness and interchange, derail peace and prosperity, crush freedom and democracy. Their perspective does not permit understanding and healing among the major human communities.

Nonetheless, the Malaysian Muslim defense of Asian Authoritarianism and its attack on allegedly western style human rights, understood as a singular defense of merely secular individual freedoms, is, in fact, a two-edged sword. It contains, besides the possibility of a tyrannical reaction against the modern and post-modern, also the possibility of a deepened and broadened human rights dialogue that could advance the cause of freedom and dignity everywhere. While one should not underestimate the appeal of chauvinistic hates that can demogogically lead people into various fool's socialisms which scapegoat other peoples for one's own anxieties and misery, the genuine concern for democracy and human rights in this Asian perspective also should not be gainsaid. In fact, much good could arise out of opposition to a West imagined as greedy, immoral and hypocritical.

Malaysia's prestigious advocate of anti-imperialist culturalism, Chandra Muzaffar, after all, in considering the question of "whether development should precede democracy" answers "no" (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], p.1). The source of East Asia's economic success is not dictatorship and the repression of labor. "Effective human resource development... rather than political regimentation, is the secret of their success" (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], p.3). He denies that the political restrictions on freedom in Malaysia imposed "through the Internal Security Act (ISA)

which allows for detention without trial, and other similar laws" are the sources of Malaysia's economic development (Muzaffar [jan. 28, 1994], p.4). He instead credits "parliamentary democracy." It is this system of governance which legitimates both multi-party competition and political dissent that is partly responsible for social stability -- which in turn has facilitated continuous economic growth and progress. The ability of the national leadership to balance the diverse, sometimes conflicting interests of the different communities...should also be given due weight (Muazffar [Jan, 28, 1994], p.4). Chandra Muzaffar concludes that fuller democracy will come in Asia with greater economic growth that broadens the middle class which will then demand more fredoms and democratic right. However, human rights pressures right now are irrelevent because "this is a process that will take time and cannot be hastened through foreign threats of sanctions and reprisals" (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], p.5). Dr. Muzaffar, believing that "capitalist democracy" can never be fuller than a merely elite managed system in the interest of capital (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], p.6), consequently does not see the delay in achieving so-called full democracy as a great loss since its attainment would not be a great achievement.

This trivialization of the blessings of political freedom, from public accountability of powerholders to limits on the state's capacity to invade one's home, interfere with one's religion, prevent one from moving elsewhere or imprison one with impunity is very sad. It is also most strange that Asians should miss the central fact about peoples enjoying democracy since the end of World War Two. Most of the world's people enjoying the blessings of liberty in the second half of the twentieth century have not been prospering urban. "Western" middle classes. Rather, they have been poor Asian villagers living in India. The magnificent experience of democracy in Asia establishes that the enjoyment of

democracy need not wait for the achievement of some arbitrarily defined level of economic development. The Asian democratic success should be a lesson to all humankind (Friedman 1994).

In short, the defense of Asian Authoritarianism is fraught with errors and contradictions that obscure a continuing struggle in all countries, East and West, between democrats and their enemies. And, yet, the Asianist project has important liberating elements. In its skewering of Western hypocrisy on human rights, the Asians insist on international action against racism, against religious and communalist discrimination, and for popular access to the economic wherewithal without which democracy can become a sham where poor, vulnerable, ignorant and frightened folk will be bought, threatened or led around by the nose. There is a democratic potential in the Asian achievement that could be a promise on the side of globalizing human rights.

The Asian message of communalist equity can be crucial to all humanity because democracies may be peculiarly vulnerable at the end of the twentieth century to an economic polarization that could undermine democracy. Fundamentalist, anti-democratic and culturally chauvinist communalist forces have been gaining strength worldwide since the implosion of the Bretton Woods system of international economic governance that had facilitated mutually beneficial equitable growth. Subsequently, there was a great shift of economic power to private financial forces whose ordinary, self-interested decisions have been pushing the world in a polarizing direction and disciplining -- and therefore making irrelevant -- democratic political preferences for social justice in Britain at the end of the 1970s, France at the start of the 1980s, and elsewhere later, such that even the moderate and reserved recently deceased political theorist J.E.A.Pocock observed that "Western politics are now controlled by the movements of a global money market..." (Pocock). Canada's

Human Resources Minister, according to the Toronto *Globe and Mail* of November 12, 1994, worried out loud in 1994 about this loss of democratic self-governance, "I don't want to let our social programs be directed by New York bond-traders." A year earlier the American President cursed this loss of policy-making power. "You mean to tell me that the success of the [economic] program and my reelection hinge on the Federal Reserve and a bunch of f....ing bond traders?" (Phillips, p.77). Clearly private international money is not a Western conspiracy against the East.

To the extent that East Asia has built insulating statist institutions to buffer its people from polarizing global finance and has also imagined the issue of equitable growth as a priority matter, it is difficult to resist the contention of Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahatir that it is worth learning from Asia. Chandra Muzaffar believes "the West" is too greedy to learn. The inequality of the neo-liberal world that became ideologically hegemonic in the West in the 1980s is obvious to Asian Authoritarians. Asian culturalists marvel that no Western government will "introduce legislaton which seeks to close the income gap....Most of all, no government would have the courage to formulate...policies which would result perhaps in a lower standard of living for the upper class and sections of the middle class in order to enhance the quality of life of the majority of the people..." (Muzaffar [Jan. 28, 1994], p.15)

Since stable democracy is difficult to maintain without growth plus equity, it is just possible that democratic institutionalization in a rapidly growing and more equitable Asia may, in the long run, prove far more stable than in "the West." It is thus easy to imagine a future where stagnant, neo-liberal and polarizing nations in "the West" find their democracies economically buffeted and socially weakened such that fascist forces rise, while equitable and growing Asian nations -- so many of which are already democratic -- become the homeland of stable and dynamic

democracies.

It is most peculiar for either Singapore or Malaysia to carp about the new international finance as a threat to them from "the North." The Government of Singapore has invested heavily in trying to become a world center of this new global finance. And Malaysia's central bank, Bank Negara, of all central banks, reportedly acts in a most speculative manner, making "forays into the markets, trying to turn a profit to boost its reserves, often causing disruption and never seeming to care about its effects on the market" (Roberts, p.213). While Bank Negara has tried to scapegoat international "currency speculators," its own huge speculative losses of about $ 6-7 billion in 1992-1993 led to resignations by Bank Negara's governor and foreign exchange operations head (Roberts, p.214). Suspicions of attempts at personal profiteering and involvement of individuals yet higher could not be followed-up because of Malaysia's authoritarian ability to quash calls for further investigation. The propaganda line, however, remained one of blaming greedy northern bankers and praising Malaysia's Asian values of equity, diligence and rectitude. In fact, the bond between ruler and ruled may be weakening.

In China, Malaysia and Singapore, polls, votes and analysts suggest, people increasingly see the ruling groups as self-serving and not as acting in the public interest. All Malaysians I have talked to see the Bank Negara scandal's outcome as a cover-up to hide those at highest levels who had their hands in the cookie jar. Likewise, people in Singapore increasingly see elites as self-serving, as slighting the interests of ordinary citizens. The pupular view in China, where inequities are seen as intensifying, is that rulers are pervasively corrupt.

The authoritarians seem to be losing their legitimacy much as is suggested in the large and persuasive literature of political analysis that calls attention to what happens to people who long hold unaccountable

power. As Lord Acton put it, such power "corrodes the conscience, hardens the heart, and confounds the understanding..." (Allison, p.25). As Rousseau said of the great state-builder Lycurgus, it was a good thing he swiftly retired from power, else "his laws would be the ministers of his passions and...his private aims would inevitably mar the sanctity of his work" (Elkins, p.752). Is persistent authoritarianism then a formula for eternal and continuous national unity and equity or for growing alienation and mistrust between rulers and ruled which can eventually foster political instability, even among nations promoting Asian Authoritarianism?

Nonetheless, the equitable East Asian road to economic success should be taken most seriously since it may offer approaches that do so much better than free market neo-liberalism. Since it is difficult to long maintain a fledgling democracy without economic growth to buy off or buy in communities previously marginalized, dynamic Asian societies are seeking communalist equity. Since a fledgling democracy seldom includes all the people after the initial breakthrough to democracy, if the economic pie does not expand, then the only way the previously excluded can get their fair share of the pie is to take a big bite out of what established elites already have. Fear of this economic attack will usually lead to political resistance by elites. Political polarization and a democratic failure can result. Lacking the benefits of East Asia's more dynamic, statist and equitable path to growth, a polarizing democracy elsewhere, in neo-liberal guise, can quickly seem the enemy of most of the people. This has been the case with numerous new democracies in both Latin America and Eastern Europe. Thus it is more than imaginable that the twenty-first century will find a growing and equitable Asia to be the world center of democracy and human rights, assuming, of course, that Asia's culturally purist and fascist-prone forces are defeated.

To be sure, healthy political forces at work in Asia should not be the

basis of a mindless optimism. They should, however, make us aware of a usually unmentioned democratic potential.

At the end of the twentieth century, in the post-Bretton Woods era of predominant speculative capital and neo-liberal orthodoxies, pure market economics further polarizes a society. What is emphasized in the post-Keynsian orthodoxy is containing inflation. What is rewarded is creating a climate welcome by free-floating capital. The concerns of the marginalized, the poor and the unemployed are not high on this agenda. This post-Bretton Woods direction of change splits the political community asunder and makes it ever more likely that a new democracy will fail and fall because of political and economic pressures that are impossible to reconcile. State intervention on behalf of equity -- as with the way Singapore tries to make housing available to all, as with Malaysia's success with state aid to rural dwellers -- is for more likely to sustain democratic institutionalization. Because neoliberal orthodoxy wrongly conflates a free market (not just a market-orientation) with political democracy, the defenders of Asian Authoritariansism may well be right in their prognosis that the momentarily hegemonic Western neo-liberal prescription is a formula for political disintegration and economic failure, a counterproductive project that is making more likely a world where democracy is far less stably rooted in Europe.

There then is truth in the contention "that the West has a lot to learn from the East" (Alagappa, p.28). But this is because any human can learn from any other who does well, not because East and West are coherent cultural categories. They are not. They are symbols mobilized and manipulated for political purposes. In the European Socialist version of the nativistic stigmatization of the great civilizations of Asia and their contemporary economic achievements, Greece's Andreas Papandreou blames "low wage workers in places like East Asia" for Europe's unemployment,

economic stagnation and "frenetic competition" at the cost of social welfare so that Europe can keep up with Asians (Papendreou, p.51). Europeans generally tend to experience the new globalization which threatens to weaken their social welfare states as somehow the product of purportedly unfair Asian competition. In this manic portrayal of an Asia of miserable slave labor, one would never guess that Hong Kong's domestic product per capita actually is already higher than Britain's, that South Korea outproduces France or Italy. Automobile workers in Japan earn far more than their counterparts in the United States. Might it be that the conventional Western notions about East Asia are far more out of touch with reality than are Asian culturalist notions of the West?

In the Asian Authoritarian discourse, East means economically successful and West signifies economic greed, stagnation or decline. One reason why this claim is not experienced as purely arbitrary is because, at the end of the twentieth century, the issue area of economics is increasingly recognized as having priority. At a January 19, 1995 international conference on democratization in Washington, D. C. sponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy, Marc Plattner, an editor of the *Journal of Democracy*, averred that he had no response to those claiming unique legitimacy for the Asian Authoritarian model (Chinese). Does this signify a legitimation crisis within European and American democracies?

In an era of economic globalization and penetrable borders, many workers in industrial democracies are anxious that free trade with nations whose authoritarian goverments smash unions and permit child labor puts the jobs of workers in democracies with legal unions and protected rights at risk. That is not how the issue looks from Asia. Aware that early industrialization in Europe included similar or worse labor abuses, the Asians speak for all developing nations in denouncing a supposed human rights concern for the conditions of labor among developing nations as, in

fact, a selfish and hypocritical attempt by rich nations to keep the poor nations poor. The governments in France and the United States, which have been trying to negotiate minimum labor standards as a condition of market access, are not impressed by an argument similar to saying that because Westerners legitimated torture in the middle ages, they should not try to stop torture in the twenty-first century. The negotiators for France and America see the Asians as hypocritical in claiming to put economic rights first but then refusing to recognize the legitimacy of an agenda for economic human rights.

Clearly, the Asian Authoritarian claim that they put group rights and economic rights first is not borne out in this conflict over group economic rights (Seymour). Given understandable sensitivities about national sovereignty, what this instance reveals is that even the Asian culturalists would be better off focusing more on basic human rights and insisting that economic policy was a matter of sovereign choice in strategic economic policy.

There is a danger in insisting that flawed democracies are actually glorious authoritarianisms. Asian leaders may be inadvertently turning understable political problems into political disasters. It is important to keep the ideal of building democracy on the agenda because an argument for authoritarianism that claims that economic growth now automatically turns into political democracy soon after is not persuasive. Surely all know what happened to Japan and Germany in the 1930s. Growth did not automatically trun into democracy. Likewise, the tendency of Asian Authoritatianism at the end of the twentieth century is more growth, more nasty chauvinism and less democracy: "the political systems in Malaysia and Singapore have progressively become more authoritarian" (Alagappa, p.26). It was not some hidden hand of history, but courageous people who cared about democracy and human rights and struggled

politically and risked their lives, who ended torture and tyranny in South Korea and Taiwan, as in Chile.

While movement in Asian Authoritarian nations towards more repression should be a matter of moment to those peoples, their political dynamics remain complex and contradictory. What is most startling about the Asian culturalist approach to human rights, at least as explicated regularly in both China and Malaysia, although seldom understood in "the West," is that many public figures in fact embrace the universality of human rights concerns. The Government of Malaysia has been publicly angry at Burma for its ill treatment of Muslims (the Rohinggas) who were forced to flee into Bangladesh (Alagappa, p.20).

Even the government of China, which grew more authoritarian after 1989, did not denounce human rights as such. Instead, it chose to defend its human rights record and attack that of its detractors In response to 1995 charges made to the United Nation Human Rights Commission that China systematically violated human rights, the Chinese representative boasted of the achievements of China in the field of human rights. There is thus a possibility that Asian self-confidence and Asian growth are facilitating a feeling of superiority that makes Asian governments willing to challenge the West even on human rights. One can, therefore, imagine a democratized Asia, in which Asians will begin to make real a superior record in human rights advancement and challenge "the West." The Chinese government is actually funding social science research on human rights.

A leading Chinese scholar explains that in the view of the Chinese government, "human rights is no longer seen as a 'slogan of the bourgeois'" (Xia, p.268). People should be "promoting human rights and the rule of law today" (Xia, p.276). "Deprivation of human rights is illegal at all times" (Xia, p.266). In addition to Western traditions,

"Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are also full of the idea of freedom" (Xia, p.269). Chinese culture too respects individual dignity. Chinese culture develops "the individual's spirit" (Xia, p.274). Proud of the many Chinese who "gave their lives for righteousness and for a just cause, assailed dark and corrupt politics and even laid claims to the right of wiping out tyrants" (Xis, p.275), this Chinese analyst declared, "The Chinese people are advocating and promoting human rights together with the people all over the world" (Xia, pp.278-279).

Another Chinese analyst pointed to the hypocrisy of Americans who forget that the California constitution of 1879 did not include people from China as people with rights (Gao, p.248), and who ignorantly criticize China, not knowing that China is the home of Huang Zongxi, a Ming Dynasty philosopher who, two centuries before the European Enlightenment developed a legitimation for legal rights for all the people (Gao, p.257). Consequently, because of a history that includes resistance to painful infringements on basic human freedoms, Chinese appreciate the human liberation involved in ending human rights abuses.

> For instance, when the Manchus...enforced on the
> Han the brutal decree that 'those who keep their
> hair cannot keep their heads,' the customary
> right of the Hans of wearing their hair long was
> infringed....During the 'cultural revolution'...
> [there] were unbridled insults to the right of
> human dignity. Reflections upon the latter
> prompted the Chinese legislature to include the
> phrase 'human dignity of citizens shall not be
> infringed upon' as a legal right of citizens in the
> Constitution of 1982...(Gao, p.249).

Proud of the April 5, 1976 struggle against the group who would have

continued to assault the human rights and human dignity of China's people (Gao, p.258), this analyst welcomed "struggle waged by the people" so that "those in power are compelled to legalize human rights" (Gao, p.248). Except in the rhetoric of its reactionaries, China does not present itself to the world as an enemy of human rights.

Much as expected or predicted by international relations theorists who find power in common values, the project of democracy and human rights has attained such legitimacy at the end of the twentieth century that few violators, certainly not Singapore or Malaysia or China, boast that its way is superior because it negates and mocks universally recognized human rights. The Asian authoritarian response to human rights criticism from the United States and the Eruopean Community is to criticize racism in the West which is incompatible with the imperatives of human rights. The Asian Authoritarians want to insist that their human rights record is superior to that of their accusers. Observing human rights is an acknowlededged moral good.

One of the things that most upset Muthiah Alagappa about American positions in the 1980s and 1990s on human rights was that the Americans were inconsistent and political. Thus they reek of arbitrariness and hypocrisy. It surely seems strange in Asia that the United States never criticized the mass murders of the Mao Zedong era but has criticized post-Mao rulers whose policies have certainly brought a treemedous improvement in human rights in China. What an analyst should do is to go beyond charges of unfairness to seek the sources of the inconsistencies. After all, all governments put strategic interests first and therefore virtually never promote human rights as a top priority across the board.

Consider super-patriots in Japan who refuse to acknowledge Japan's long record of human rights violations during more then a half century of aggression and expansion in Asia. They insist that Japan was freeing

Indochina and the Malay peninsula from French and British imperialism
when the United States intervened on behalf of imperialism and forced
Japan into a defensive war against the pro-imperialist Americans. This
portrayal of Japanese history ignores the prior half century when Japan
invaded Korea and China, oppressing Asians who were already independent.
The Koreans and Chinese still might ask why "the West" did not do
something about Japanese cruelties to other Asians until Japan threatened
European colonial interests.[6] Such Asians can criticize American hypocrisy
and racism, too, although such labeling might not quite capture the
motives and interests of the 1930s in an isolationist America in the throes
of the great depression.

But Japanese amnesia and scapegoating are a reminder that Japan has
yet to have a civil rights revolution and has yet to face up to its
continuing mistreatment of Asians in Japan. That is, in Japan as in
America, formal democratic institutions are not a self-enforcing guarantee
that human rights abuses cannot occur. On this too, the Asian
Authoritarians are again correct. Many peoples should listen when Chinese
or Malaysians or Singaporeans address continued human rights violations
elsewhere. Perhaps what is nost noteworthy is how far even Asian
Authoritarians actually go in support of universally recognized human
rights.

It is worth remembering how recent is the rise of human rights as a
legitimate international relations issue. Until the United States civil rights
revolution of the 1960s, it would have been impossible for Washington to
censure Indonesia for its mistreatment of people in East Timor or to
criticize Beijing for its brutal policies in Tibet. In fact, as long as America
was bombing Vietnamese in Asia, it had too much blood on its hands to
seem sincere in a human rights posture. Of course, Malaysia, Indonesia
and Singapore in that era worried about their own Communist

"subversives" tied to Mao's China and fully supported the American war in Vietnam. The world following the U. S. withdrawal from Vietnam from 1973 to 1975 and the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 seems a very different world. Progress in legitimating a global human rights agenda came with striking swiftness.

Once the United States war in Vietnam ended and Spain, Greece and Portugal democratized while the Helsinki accords put human rights high on the political agenda in Europe, it would have been difficult for the United States not to side with the forces of democracy and human rights in Latin America and elsewhere. Aided by the new electronic media and non-governmntal organizations committed to human rights, the issue of human rights was globalized. Some specialists find Asian NGOs the world's nost vigorous. Consequently, the United States Government at the end of the 1970s no longer was silent about repression in Seoul and Taipei and Manilla. Increasingly, Washington moved to the side of the forces of democracy and human rights in Asia. Consequently, the factors that permitted Mao's China to escape scrutiny on systematic violations of most basic human rights disappeared in the Deng era. A Washington which once supported Asian dictators as long as they were anti-Communist no longer did so. This cannot help but seem totally unfair in Jakarta which once had the unambiguous support of the United States in a most bloody era of repression and suppression. It certainly seems unfair to rulers in Singapore, Kuala Lumpore and Beijing who take pride even in their human rights achievements.

In short, political change in the United States, indeed, in the world, has suddenly put human rights much higher on the political agenda at the end of the twentieth century. Muthiah Alagappa concedes that indigenous Asian forces fovoring democracy and human rights are spreading and growing stronger in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and China. He

acknowledges that the discourse of democracy has become virtually hegemonic. In fact, given how slowly the West progressed on human rights over the centuries since Magna Carta in 1215, the extraordinary rise of human rights sentiment in Asia in the last quarter of the twentieth century can betoken a great future potential for democracy and human rights. Japan is moving in that direction. Thailand is consolidating its democracy. Papua New Guinea's flawed democracy seems stable. Given an opportunity, Burmese would again opt for democracy. Even Cambodia is trying to craft a democratic polity. Analysts of China tend to agree that Chinese would embrace democracy if they but had the opportunity. This is already the case in Hong Kong. In sum, Asia, long home to the world's most populous democracy, India, could be on its way to becoming a world leader in democratization and human rights.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir Mohamad found in 1995:

> When Malaya became independent in 1957, our
> per capita income was lower than that of Haiti.
> Haiti did not take the path of democracy. We
> did. Haiti today is the poorest country in all of
> the Americas. We now have a standard of living
> higher than any major economy in the Americas,
> save only the United States and Canada.
>
> We could not have achieved what we have
> achieved without democracy (Mahatir, p.11).

In like manner, Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim declared on December 7, 1994 that "human rights are enshrined in the Quran....The Prophet said, 'Your lives, your possessions and your dignity are as sacred as this day (of the great Pilgramage).'" He noted "that more nations have been impoverished by authoritarianism than enriched by it. Authoritarian rule has been used as a masquerade for kleptocracies,

bureaucratic incompetence, and...unbridled nepotism and corrruption."

Of course, there still are many crucial factors that could move Asia away from democracy. Much depends on the succession in China, Malaysia and Singapore, on the ability to reregulate international finance, and on political restructuring in Japan. The diverse variables and concatenations are too numerours and complex to permit easy prediction about the future.

Authoritarian forces that restore order and prosperity could, under certain circumstances, win great super-patriotic legitimacy. But should successful and self-confident Asian democratic forces continue to grow, then the rcent material defending Asian Authoritarianism will seem to be precisely what Kim Dae Jung and Aung San Sue Kyi said, -- a standard apologia by dictatorships. The Asia of Asian Authoritarianism could give way to an almost fully democratic Asia. After all, even Samuel Huntington, who had invented legitimations for authoritarianism for a quarter of a century, in 1991 refused to rule out an Asia in which "A Chinese proponent of *glasnost* could come to power in Beijing....Japan could use its growing economic clout to encourage human rights and democracy in the poor countries to which it makes loans and grants" (Huntington, p.8). That could be the basis of a politics where Asia leads the world in promoting human rights and considers conditioning loans to the United States or European countries on ending Western racism and stopping the coddling of neo-fascist groups.

Threats to democracy in "the West" are building. Economic polarization defended as neo-liberal wisdom is a disaster for democracy. The chief officer of Barclays found in 1995 that "British capitalism's rejection of social values and reaction against earlier collectivist excesses has gone too far. Too much individualism is bad for too many individuals" (Taylor). World pressures based on this ultra-individualism legitimated as pure

market rationality are fostering political forces everywhere that facilitate proto-fascist communalist forces experienced as a minimal response to pressing problems of foreign pollution in a penetrated and polarizing world system.

It is a tragedy therefore that democratic forces do not join together globally, Instead of noting common dilemmas, each condemns the other. In Malaysia, as expressed by Prime Minister Mahatir at a January 1995 international human rights conference in Kuala Lumpore, the hypocritical, amoral Christian West is just trying to control the world by subverting Asia's cultures and blocking Asia's growth. The Prime Minister asked why the United States would lead a coalition to liberate Muslims in Kuwait but let Muslims in Bosnia be slaughtered. Many Muslims in China (Gladney) ask a similar question. Mahatir's answer was greed. All the United States selfishly cared about supposedly was material things like oil. America does not lift a hand for Muslims being slaughtered by Christians in Bosnia, Mahatir averred.

These words of the Prime Minister, whether fair or not, resonate throughout much of the Muslim world, where it is felt that Muslims remain the target of a world conspiracy, that whenever Muslims begin to rise -- as with OPEC in 1973-74 and 1978-79 -- "the West" soon joined to crush non-Europeans, as it is trying again with its imperialistic human rights agenda to spread disorder to stop growth. As with Thomas Mann's German cry from the heart -- indeed, even more so in our more rapidly changing and far more penetrated world -- one cannot deny the authentic feelings and fears that infuse the Asian perspective of Mahatir and others. Those passions could -- as earlier and elsewhere -- foster a purist chauvinism that would preclude building equitable coalitions among communities.

And yet, the Malaysian charge about a uniquely hypocritical "West"

is also quite a distortion of reality. After all, Prime Minister Mahatir declares that he will ignore China's long support for Communist subversives in Malaysia and join China on a platform of opposing human rights interfernce and of cooperating on building a regional economic market, the idea of an East Asian Economic Caucus that would exclude America and Australia, a "Caucus without Caucasians." Is China helping Bosnian Muslims? In fact, as Chandra Muzaffar acknowledges, the governmnts that are killing Muslim Bosnians are regularly armed and re-aremed by China. Where then is Malaysian morality in condemning America and embracing China?

Actually Malaysia, no more than America, is proven hypocritical because it is inconsistent on human rights. A government's first responsibility is to act strategically in the interests of its own citizenry. Should national interest be given priority in everything, of course, that would preclude ever promoting human rights. All governments are prone to the error of over-emphasizing the strategic. That is why it is important that non-governmental human rights organizations be there to pressure for human rights consistency. This requires democratic political freedoms. At the least, one wants to reduce the number of situations where a government lacks a vital strategic priority and still acts massively against basic human rights, promoting policies and rationalizations that only advance human hatreds.

In 1986 Mahatir Mohammed found, "The expulsion of Jews from the Holy Land some 1,000 [sic] years ago and the Nazi oppression of the Jews have taught them nothing." Prime Minister Mahatir banned the movie *Schindler's List*. Malaysia lagged behind other Asian Muslim states in ending a trade embargo with Israel and stopping the confiscation of the passports of citizens who visited Israel. Southeast Asian specialist Michael Leiffer concluded that "Mahatir's fixation with a Zionist threat would

seem to go beyond its domestic political utility...and the need to outflank Islamic fundamentalists at home" (Silberberg).

Mr. Mahatir's passionate communalist hates may unintentionally be moving his polity in a most racist direction, as manifested in his joining with the Japanese far right, anti-white politician Shintaro Ishihara in their book, *An Asia That Can Say No: A Card Against the West* (Cooke). Mr, Mahatir supports Ishihara and the extreme right's view in Japan that Japan should not even have to apologize for its aggression and war crimes during the Asian Pacific War. Ishihara denies the existence of a Japanese massacre at Nanjing in the December 1937 - January 1938 period, when the Imperial Japanese Army slaughtered some 200,000 Chinese. Ishihara calls the well-documented Nanjing Massacre "a lie," "a story made up by the Chinese" (Buruma, p.122). In siding with Ishihara, Mahatir opposes himself to Asian victims of racist slaughter in Korea and China. Thus, people in Malaysia's national front who disagree with Mr. Mahatir could still win out.

But as the earlier quote from Thomas Mann suggests, the emotions and experiences that produce chauvinist tendencies are not confined to one part of the world. In nations like France and Germany, there is growing support among rightists for the view that Europe's economic problems are caused by an invasion of Muslims, from Turkey into Germany, of Muslims from North Africa into France, a mirror image of Mr. Mahatir's nightmare of invasion by "the West."

European fascism in the earlier twentieth century built on cultural purism, with tough Germanic forest dwellers ridding themselves of softening ideas in Asia's Christianity and the Gauls trying to purify France of foreign influence. This blood-based anti-foreign dogma of racist hatred is growing in an economically anxious Europe that feels it cannot compete with exploitative Asians (Hockenos).

The European proto-fascist argument is "that Arab Islamic immigrants cannot be assimilated...." As Le Pen put it, "I love the North Africans. But their place is in North Africa" (Taguieff, p.124). Nations, for European racial purists, are biologically distinct. Peoples are different. The enemies of national survival, which suffocate the vital energy of a unique people are equality, multiculturalism and homogenization. These alien ideals, to European purists, are imports from Asia. European identities have "been attacked, colonized and corrupted by a 'foreign mentality' Judeo-Christianity" (Taguieff, p.113). "Totalitarianism was born 4,000 years ago somewhere between Mesopotamia and the Jordan valley. It was born on the day when the idea of monotheism appeared" (Taguieff, p.117). European states subverted by Asian culture and ideology have been enervating their peoples. These Asian cultures based on "oriental religion" (Taguieff, p.100) which is "foreign to" Europeans (Taguieff, p.105) must be expelled so that Europeans again can be free and strong and not oppressed by state-imposed equality and multiculturalism infused with oriental totalitarianism.

The leaders opposed at the end of the twentieth century to the purist, Europeanist effort to save Europe from Muslims, according to Hans Magnus Enzenbarger, seem, among Europe's fascists, to be "the self-declared minority of the righteous [who]...constitute a curious alliance between the remnants of the left and the 'clergy'" (Pulzer). This is a reminder to European purists that Marx and Engels found in early Christian communities the essence of communism and, further, that Christ, indeed all that supposedly is dangerously egalitarian and universalistic in the Judeo-Christaian tradition came from West Asia. These Asian values purportedly have long been undermining the viral martial energies of the various rooted tribes of Eruope. Europe, therefore to save itself from millennia of Asian invasions by egalitarians, universlists, democrats,

Christians, Jews and Muslims must defend its particular community and its unique and sacred culture from Asia, understood as the historical fount of democracy and human rights. In 1968, I found, anti-Semites in Poland thundered, "Jews, go back to Siam!" The "other" of the "fascist" mind is the open, liberal and human rights oriented democrat, imagined by proto-fascist Europe as Asia, by proto-fascist Asia as Europe. An imaginatively divided geography hides a shared political problematique.

Such reactionary sentiments need not block continuing democratization in equitable, growing societies. It is a glory of Taiwan's political freedom that Professor Yan Yuanshu's insistence that military power alone establishes national dignity can be part of the dialogue of a free Asian people, as he thunders, "Down with Western democracy! Down with Western freedom!....For freedom can only cause China to fragment and democracy can only cause it to collapse" (Kelly, p.8). In a stable, equitable Asian democracy with a competent and prestigeful state such fascistic tirades do not shake the democratic edifice.

Continuing economic decline and polarization, however, could strengthen fascism, permitting, in Europe, a greater welcome for an anti-Asian scapegoating of Muslims and Confucians. How could Asian Authoritarians complain about policies which are the mirror image of theirs? I devoutly hope that Mahatir, Muzaffar, Malaysians in general, indeed all Asians who embrace Asian purist culturalism of Authoritarianism, will not give aid and comfort to such forces, that they will, instead, build on their commitments to human rights and to equitable alliances among communities and peoples, that they will join the burgeoning forces of democracy and human rights that are spreading in Asia and could yet encompass almost all Asia's peoples. Hopefully, should fascists again win power in Europe, the more government-guided, stable and equitable development of Asia may have strengthened the forces of human rights

and democracy so as to be in a position to condemn and sanction the undemocratic Europeans. Victims of human rights violations in the West may someday need today's Asian opponents of Western human rights hypocrisy who by then would, perhaps, take pride in understanding Asian cultures as a fount of inspiration for human rights and dignity for all humankind. It very much matters to all humanity what Asia will stand for.

## NOTES

(1) Negative stereotypes held by Muslim Malaysians of Chinese Malaysians mark Chinese as alien by their dietary habits, clothing, dogs at home, relatives, etc. Even converts to Islam are treated in terms of the negative stereotype such that they are deemed insincere, proof that Chinese are merely wily materialists (Woon).

(2) Defenders of Asian Authoritarianism respond that Mencius' people-based political philosophy never transcended paternalist patriarchy. Immanuel Kant argues that paternalism is the worst despotism. Such an approach errs in not seeing that Mencius' people-based political philosophy can be interpreted in more than one way. A people's heritage is a repertoire of possibilities. As a matter of fact Chinese despots did indeed see Mencian philosophy as too democratic in its insistence not only on putting the people first but also in legitimating the overthrow of a tyrannical ruler. "Emperor Ming Taizu...was most critical of Mencius....The emperor even said, 'If that old guy were alive today, he would be severely punished....' He extirpated offensive passages, such as 'the people are the most elevated, next comes the state, the sovereign comes last'; 'Emperor Jie and Zhou had lost the world because they lost the hearts of their people'; 'I have only heard that a loner Zhou was executed, but I have not heard a sovereign was assassinated.' ...85 chapters were deleted from the 260 chapters of Mencius" (Fu, p.60).

(3) "The tenth deity of kings, non-opposition to the will of the people (avirodha), tends to be singled out as a Buddhist endorsement of democracy, supported by well-known stories from the Jakatas. Pawridasa, a monarch who acquired an unfortunate taste for human flesh, was forced to leave his kingdom because he would not heed the people's demand that he should abandon the cannibalistic habits. A very different kind of ruler was the Buddha's penultimate incarnation

on earth, the pious King Vessantara. But he too was sent into exile when in the course of his strivings for the perfections of liberality [compassion? generosity?] he gave away the white elephant of the state without the consent of the people. The real duty of non-opposition is a reminder that the legitimacy of government is founded on the consent of the peope, who may withdraw their mandate at any time if they lose confidence in the ability of the ruler to serve their best interests.

In invoking the Ten Duties of Kings, the Burmese are...drawing on time-honored values to reinforce the validity of the political reforms they consider necessary. It is a strong argument for democracy that governments regulated by principles of accountability, respect for public opinion and the supremacy of just laws are more likely than an all-powerful ruler....uninhibited by the need to honor the will of the people, to observe the traditional duties of Buddhist kingship. Traditional values serve both to justify and to decipher popular expectations of democratic government" (Aung, pp.172-173).

(4)    There surely is no reason to doubt that an economically superior Japan can be a global leader in cultural matters, with innovations such as, Karaoke, toys such as Bandai's Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, electronic video games such as Nintendo's Donkey Kong and Super Mario, and Sony Walkmen harbingers of much more Japanese cultural leadership to come from low brow to high brow, where Japanese architects have already won the international competition three times in the last 20 years.

(5)    Since Mill was employed on behalf of Britain's colonial project in India, not surprisingly Mill's work, even "On Liberty" is replete with apologias for British imperialism ("On Liberty," pp.12, 71, 72, 96).

(6)    By 1995, a section of rightist Japanese enemies of democracy apologized for what Japan did to Asians in Korea and China but defended the Japanese invasion of Sutheast Asia as a liberation war fought against Western imperialists in French Indochina, British Malaya, Dutch Indonesia and the American Philippines.

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