"ASIAN VALUES" AS "ZIVILISATIONSKRITIK"?

Mark R. Thompson

University of Glasgow
and
University Erlangen-Nürnberg
Contact address: Kochstr. 4, 91054 Erlangen, Germany
MKTHOMPS@phil.uni-erlangen.de

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The financial crisis in the Asia-Pacific region has prompted Frank Ching of the Far Eastern Economic Review to ask: "Are Asian values finished?"1 Will a discourse emphasizing the family and consensual governance over personal and political individualism which blossomed during East and Southeast Asia's long economic boom wither after an economic bust?2 How can the claim that communitarian-authoritarianism is the key reason for the region's rapid growth be upheld when these countries are now in economic depression? Will East and Southeast Asians continue

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2 It is not easy to say what exactly "Asian values" are. The discussion of "Asian values" has largely been conducted in an ad hoc fashion by leaders of several Asia-Pacific countries, particularly Singapore and Malaysia. Aside from "Pancasila democracy" in Indonesia, an authoritarian interpretation of the vague unitary philosophy set out at the country's independence, the major statement of Asian values is the "White Paper on Shared Values" issued in 1991 by the Singaporean government. (A good overview of its origins is provided in Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee, The Politics of Nation Building and Citizenship in Singapore, London: Routledge, 1995, chp. 8). The White Paper argues that the family is the basic unit of society, that nation and society must be placed before community and self, that there should be consensus not contention, and that racial and ethnic harmony must be maintained. Though apparently unpolitical, Garry Rodan detects an authoritarian agenda: "The 'shared core values' statement was intended to assert Singapore's distinctiveness and thereby discourage any emulation of other 'Western' - notably pluralist - political systems. The political significance of the document was that it opened the possibility for the PAP to portray challenges to itself as challenges to the national consensus or the collectively shared values of Singaporeans. Rodan, "Preserving the One-Party State in Contemporary Singapore," in Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison, and Garry Rodan (eds.), Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, Democracy, and Capitalism (St. Leonard's: Allen and Unwin, 1993), p. 91.
to accept developmental dictatorships that can no longer deliver development? "Asian values" adieu?

The critics of "Asian values" have been unable to suppress their Schadenfreude. They argue that the region's Machiavellian leaders, who have hidden dictatorial ways behind a culturalist disguise, have finally been unmasked. Long frustrated that their criticisms were parried by the obvious "evidence" that Asian authoritarians had limited personal liberties in order to promote economic development, they can now claim with Camus that those denied freedom may one day find themselves without bread as well.

While opponents of "Asian values" feel vindicated, its official proponents face popular protest or have begun bickering among themselves. The fall of the Indonesian President Suharto - advocate-in-chief of so called Pancasila democracy which proclaimed depoliticized "consensus building" as the culturally appropriate form of governance - removed a leading ideologue of "Asian values" from power. The governments of Singapore and Malaysia, two countries that took the lead in denouncing the decadence of "the West" while praising the more conservative values of "the East," have fallen out in the midst of financial turmoil. While Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad blames a conspiracy of global capital and the "neo-colonialism" of the West for his country's current economic difficulties, Singapore has

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3 Eun-Heung Lee, Konfuzianismus und Kapitalismus: Markt und Herrschaft (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1997) uses the phrase "a Machiavellian in a Confucian mask" to describe Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew. One of the most prominent critics of Asian values has been Christopher Lingle. His most recent book is The Rise and Decline of the Asian Century (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998). Lingle's critical perspective led him into legal troubles with Singapore's government. After writing an opinion piece in the International Herald Tribune that, in answer to an article by a prominent Singapore academic, implicitly found fault with the island state, Lingle was interrogated by the authorities, quit his university job, and fled the country. He was later convicted in absentia a Singapore court and his savings were confiscated. One of Lingle's most important contributions to the critique of Asian values is to show the obsequiousness of the international press which have often bowed to the Singapore government's threats to ban their publications in the country. Alone in 1994 the International Herald Tribune apologized to the Singapore government four times! For an account of Lingle's experiences in Singapore, mixed with his interesting though clearly exaggerated criticisms of the government, see his Singapore's Authoritarian Capitalism: Asian Values, Free Market Illusions, and Political Dependency (Barcelona and Fairfax, VA: Edicions Sirocco and the Locke Institute, 1996).
cautioned its neighbor to tone down its "bristling nationalism" for fear it will scare away foreign investors and further contribute to the turbulence on the international financial markets. Current troubles are also behind Malaysia and Singapore's bickering over a railway border checkpoint in and water supply to the island republic. The great financial crisis seems to mark yet another failed attempt at political cooperation between the two countries on the Straits of Melaka (they broke apart in 1965 after a failed political union).

In the Western world, academics, conservative politicians, and business people who sympathize with "Asian values" have also been embarrassed. Economic theorists who had claimed that a Confucian ethos had promoted capitalist growth in Asia as the Protestant ethic had in the West (an inversion of Max Weber's thesis that Confucianism was an obstacle to economic development), found themselves with no

7 In order to explain the non-appearance of capitalism in imperial China, Weber analyzed the lack of economic and political autonomy of Chinese cities, the patrimonialized bureaucratic system, the dominance of extended families, and the unification of church and state in the person of the emperor. But he ultimately grounds his answer in the distinct economic ethos (evident above all in the attitudes of literati officials) that developed in China compared to that in the West. While the two cultures shared an emphasis on self-control and conscientious behavior, "Confucian rationalism meant rational adjustment to the world; Puritan rationalism meant rational mastery of the world": Weber, *The Religion of China*, translated and edited by H.H. Gerth (New York: Collier and Macmillan, 1964), p. 248. Reinhard Bendix elaborates Weber's view: "The Confucian aimed at attaining and preserving 'a cultured status position,' and he used as means to this end adjustment to the world, education and self-perfection, the polite gesture and the observance of proprieties, the enjoyment of wealth as opposed to acquisitiveness, esthetic refinement as opposed to specialized skills, and, above all, familial piety as the model of conduct in a bureaucratic context. For the Puritan, rationalism and acquisitiveness had a different meaning. The systematic control of one's nature and the moral bookkeeping of daily life were tools
Asian economic miracle left to explain. Cultural relativists had suggested liberal
democratic universalism was an arrogant and naive attempt to impose the ways of "the
West" on "the East" that would only undermine the remarkable economic
achievements of the region. But Asians from Indonesia to Malaysia are now blaming
authoritarianism for their economic ills and hoping democracy will contribute to the
cure. Civilization-clashers had made out a major threat to the West derived from the
authoritarian cultures, rapid economic growth, and increasing military muscle in the
Asia-Pacific. But now the would-be foes are in a state of economic and often political
collapse. British Tories and other Western conservatives had often expressed
admiration for the now wayward "Asian way." Foreign investors and fund managers

in the service of God that led to a mastery of the world. As 'tools of God' the Puritans
combined their ascetic conduct with an intensity of belief and an enthusiasm for action
that were completely alien to the esthetic values of Confucianism. It was this
difference in the prevailing mentality that contributed to an autonomous capitalist
development in the West and the absence of a similar development in China.”
Bendix, Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait (Berkeley: University of California

8 Garry Rodan, "Theorizing Political Opposition" in Rodan, ed., Political
Oppositions in Industrialising Asia (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 16, points out that
such relativistic critiques of "Western imperialism" can rationalize governmental
actions that elsewhere would be considered human rights violations.

9 Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?", Foreign Affairs, Summer
1993, pp. 22-49 and The Clash of Civilizations [note the removal of the question
mark] and the Remaking of World Order (New York: Touchstone, 1996). One of the
most puzzling aspects of Huntington's work is despite his positively Schmittian
proclivity to distinguish between friends from foes ("the West and the rest"), he has
elsewhere offered a Tocqueville-like perspective in which democratization is seen to
be spreading throughout the world. See his The Third Wave: Democratization in the
This paradox has led Jacob Heilbrunn to speak of "The Clash of Samuel

10 Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher claimed that Asia's economic
success was "the result of unremitting hard work, an unquenchable spirit of enterprise,
and sound economic policies": Margaret Thatcher, "The Triumph of Trade," Far
Eastern Economic Review, September 2, 1993, p. 23. As will be shown later in this
paper, this was based on a misinterpretation of the Asian miracle as the result of
laissez faire policies. But there was also an anti-democratic undertone to such
economic praise from the West. Along with Reaganites, Thatcherites have often
pointed to danger of the development of powerful "distributional coalitions," as
Manfred Olson termed them, while arguing that a return to moral values is needed to
guide social life. This critique of "excessive" democracy and the advocacy of
traditional norms is combined in this brand of Asian and Anglo-American
conservatism with a strong commitment to economic individualism. This
who had praised strict labor laws and the developmental emphasis of authoritarian
Asian governments were either themselves bankrupted by holdings in crony
companies (such as the Hong-Kong-based Peregrine which had pointed to "Asian
values" to counter criticisms of the human rights records of countries in which it
invested\textsuperscript{11}) or joined the rush for the financial exit.

**Development and "Asian Values"**

Much of the "debate" about "Asian values" was conducted by government
officials in the pages of international journals such as *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign
Policy*.\textsuperscript{12} Asia-Pacific autocrats won the attention of Western elites primarily because
they were making cultural claims for authoritarianism that were matched by
impressive economic results. While many other countries had made similar efforts to
justify non-democratic rule (for example, sub-Saharan African dictators who in the
1970s said they were ruling according to "African traditions"\textsuperscript{13}), such arguments
enjoyed little international credibility due to obvious economic failings. In the Asia-
Pacific, by contrast, fast growing countries confounded their Western critics by taking
distinguishes it from an older kind of conservatism that was skeptical of the workings
of the free marketplace. For an interesting discussion of this point, see Richard
322.

\textsuperscript{11} Henny Sender with Alkman Granitsas, "Broken Wings," *Far Eastern Economic

\textsuperscript{12} See, for example, Bilahari Kausikan (of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of
Singapore), "Asia's Different Standard," *Foreign Policy*, No. 42 (Fall 1993), pp. 24-
51, Fareed Zakaria, "Culture is Destiny: A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew,"
(also of the Singaporean Foreign Affairs Ministry), "The Pacific Way," *Foreign

\textsuperscript{13} J. Gus Liebenow, *African Politics: Crises and Challenges* (Bloomington: Indiana
University Press, 1986), pp. 225-228. One of the few exceptions to this tendency to
"culturalize" Third World politics is Latin America. The dominance of universalist
frameworks - from *dependencia* to rational choice theory - in this region is striking. A
strong Marxist tradition may be one explanation for this phenomenon. Another is that
Latin American scholars play a greater role in the scholarship about Latin America
and are less willing to "orientalize" their societies than some Western academics who,
in addition, perceive Africa and Asia as more "exotic." Asian and African *politicians*,
on the other hand, are often all too happy to accept orientalizing analyses of their
cultures when it proves useful in justifying authoritarian rule.
advantage of the doubled-edged nature of international legitimacy, which emphasizes both democracy and development. By competing successfully in global markets, these countries were able to return fire on the issue of democracy. 14 Up to three decades of high growth (and the Asia-Pacific was as a whole the fastest growing region in the world during this period 15) made the "Asian challenge" much more interesting than the anti-Western positions in the past as "Asian authoritarians argue from a position of economic and social success." 16 Without doubt, the current financial crisis in the Asia-Pacific has undermined the international prestige of the "Asian values." Pushed onto the defensive, a Singaporean official government official attempted to convince an international audience that "Asian values" were not to blame for the current economic crisis! 17

When we turn to the domestic politics of "Asian values," however, the picture is more complex. "Asian values" have been invoked by some countries during the process of economic development, while in others they have become part of official government discourse only after substantial economic development had been achieved. In other words, this cultural-based ideology can help justify authoritarian development in a "backward" society or it can be invoked to legitimize non-democratic rule in a highly industrialized one. Where "Asian values" are "developmental," economic crisis has been a particularly effective form of ideological critique. But in countries that are already economically advanced, a financial downturn has been less devastating.

"Asian values" can provide additional support for "developmentalism," the claim that the urgency of development precludes the luxury of political democracy. For example, Indonesia's "New Order" government argued that its authoritarian developmentalism was suitable to the country's indigenous values. A similar pattern

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17 Tommy Koh, "In Fact, East Asia is Diverse, Resilient and Unstoppable," International Herald Tribune, December 12, 1997, p. 8: "The bashers of Asian values seem to forget that Singapore, one of the champions of such values, has suffered less
was evident in the Philippines under Marcos in the 1970s and Thailand in the 1960s. Here too "developmentalist" dictators suggested it was culturally problematic for their countries to be democratic before a sufficient level of economic development had been reached. Repression was justified both in the name of advancing developmental and upholding traditional social hierarchies. This helps explain why advocates of "Asian values" have been so intent on weakening international human rights conventions.\(^\text{18}\) Democracy, with its proclivity to pander to special interests and its "excessive" popular participation, creates chaotic conditions that stand in the way of economic development, a point that supporters of "Asian values" made about Philippine democracy, for example.\(^\text{19}\)

Even before the onset of economic crisis, the highly neo-patrimonial character of the Suharto and the neo-"sultanism" of the Marcos regime undermined popular support.\(^\text{20}\) Economic crises in the Philippines in the early 1980s and in Indonesia in the late 1990s were catalysts that led to the overthrow of these highly personalistic dictatorships by angry, though largely peaceful, "people power" movements.\(^\text{21}\) With the economy in crisis and "crony capitalism" widespread, no culturalist argument can cover over the fact that the would-be developmentalist dictator is wearing no clothes.
The military regime of Burma (Myanmar) made a conscious effort to imitate the "Indonesian model." The Burmese junta hoped that this "facelift" would "make it respectable, as Suharto and the Indonesian military have become despite their dubious human-rights record." With the New Order now an ancien régime and Burma badly affected by the regional economic crisis, the Burmese Generals have been forced to return to the familiar pattern of relying on brute force without any pretense of ideological justification.

But "Asian values" are also propagated in countries in which high living standards have been attained. Despite such prosperity, it is claimed that democratic government remains culturally inappropriate. Democracy is rejected not as unaffordable, but as a "Western" product unfit for the cultural conditions of Asia. It is asserted that society has supposedly "chosen" (in some communitarian sense) to retain a more culturally fitting authoritarian system (which is sometimes confusingly referred to as "Asian democracy"). Society has modernized, but values remain traditional. Below this culturalist superstructure, post-developmental "Asian values" aim to counter worrying trends toward "Westernization" (high divorce rates, increased drug use, etc.) and fend off popular pressures for greater political participation that are nurtured by the emergence of a large middle class. With the working class in such societies effectively demobilized and the importance of the peasantry sharply reduced, resort to force becomes less "necessary." While "Asian values" in developing countries help combat criticisms of human rights violations, in more economically advanced societies "soft authoritarianism" is offered as an alternative to "Western" democracy. Civil liberties may be better respected but democratization is still resisted. "Asian values" in such a context accompany the state's attempt to co-opt an increasingly affluent and well educated population.

The current economic crisis has also weakened these post-developmentalist advocates of "Asian values." The regimes of Singapore and Malaysia, as mentioned above, have been put on the defensive. Yet this strand of "Asian values" is less susceptible to "falsification" because it is not as dependent on economic growth. The

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openly nationalist rhetoric of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir since the beginning of the current financial difficulties suggests that the "Asian values" are superfluous at present. The Malaysian government can more easily manipulate the sense of threat from outsiders. Mahathir's anti-global-capitalist populism includes a thinly veiled anti-Semitism. Mahathir has even identified an enemy within the ruling establishment. He has put his former deputy and long presumed successor Anwar Ibrahim on trial, using lurid sexual charges in an attempt to undermine a close associate who had dared to advocate greater political liberalization and more market reforms. Indeed, as an attempt to fend off demands for greater political participation that follows rapid economic modernization, the discourse of "Asian values" is likely only to be re-emphasized when the economies of these countries again begin to grow.

A Brief Genealogy of "Asian Values" in Singapore and Malaysia

The oft told tale of rapid economic growth of Singapore and Malaysia need not be repeated here. But rapid modernization lead to political liberalization in either country. On contrary, in the last few years there have been several crackdowns on dissent in both countries. Often termed "semi-democratic" or "quasi-authoritarian," the Singaporean and Malaysian regimes have clearly authoritarian features alongside formally democratic institutions. Democratic elements (free elections, a certain

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26 For a thoughtful discussion see Harold Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), chp. 1. It is itself an interesting phenomenon how many political scientists contest or relativize the authoritarian character of the Malaysian government (Singapore is accepted as a clearer cut case of non-democratic rule). For example Arend Lijphart has frequently argued that Malaysia is democratic (perhaps to add another case to the category "consociational democracy"?). What appears to confuse social scientists is the apparently fair nature of elections and the lack of overt state terror in Malaysia. But the muzzling of the press, the sharp limits on civil liberties, and the intimidation of the opposition (often through the courts but sometimes by thugs) appears to allude them. The experience of Eastern Europe suggests that if democratic regime change takes place in Singapore and Malaysia, revelations of an extensive state security apparatus are likely to emerge.
amount of the rule of law, and the toleration of opposition parties) are mixed with authoritarianism (open-ended "laws" that allow anyone who is said to endanger national security to be arrested at any time and detained indefinitely, the general intimidation of the opposition, a co-opted judiciary, and heavy press censorship).

The co-existence of high living standards and illiberal politics make Singapore and Malaysia international exceptions of the "rule" that democracy follows economic ripeness.27 Singapore is the wealthiest non-oil producing country in the world that is not a democracy.28 Malaysia was - before the current economic crisis - the second most prosperous country whose export earnings were not primarily based on oil.29

Advanced capitalism in Asia - as well as in industrialized countries everywhere - has produced a large middle class that, if not co-opted through institutional and ideological mechanisms, offers a socio-economic base for demands for greater political participation. A few statistics show the rapid growth and the substantial size of the middle class in both countries. In Malaysia upon independence, those classified by the census as "professional and technical" and "administrative and managerial" made up only four percent of the workforce. At the same time 11.5% of the population were classified as being in "clerical" and "sales" occupations. This made for a broad middle class of a little over 15%. Rapid economic growth in the 1960s pushed this last total up to 20% at the end of that decade. By 1990 the professional/administrative category had jumped to 11.3%, with the middle class as a whole now composing nearly 33% of the population.30 In Singapore, the educated

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28 United Nations, Human Development Report (New York: 1994) table one. The exclusion of oil-producing countries is based on the assumption that with substantial oil revenues, oil sheikdoms do not have to rely on domestic taxation. This gives a new meaning to the phrase: "no taxation without representation."
30 Data from the Government of Malaysia cited in Harold Crouch, "Malaysia: Neither Authoritarian nor Democratic," in Hewison, Robison, and Rodan, eds., Southeast Asia in the 1990s, pp. 142 and 156, n. 1. Crouch points out that these categories, drawn from the International Standard Classification of Occupations, are by no means an exact measure of the "middle class" but rather should be seen as a rough indicator. I would add that they provide a comparative measure of changes in Malaysia over more than three decades. The growth in the size of the middle class in that country may have been even greater than these figures suggest as the 1957 and
elite class (professionals, managers, and executives) was expanding rapidly: from 7% in 1960s to 13.6% in 1980 and 16.9% in 1986.\textsuperscript{31} If, as in Malaysia, clerical and sales workers are added in as part of the "broad middle class," then this led to a total percentage of 46.1% of the workforce in 1986, up from 36.7% in 1960.\textsuperscript{32}

Beginning in the early 1980s, opposition groups emerged which - drawing support from a growing middle class as well as a sizable working class - demanded democratization. In Singapore, an electoral swing away from the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) - their vote was down 16.7% since 1980, to just over 60% of the vote by 1991 - and the victory of a handful of opposition candidates appeared to mark the emergence of a two-party system. In Malaysia, Prime Minister Mahathir's increasingly authoritarian rule contributed to a split within the ruling UMNO party. This led to a unique opposition alliance between dissident UMNO leaders who formed the Semangat '46, strict Muslim Malays in the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), and the largely Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP). As William Case writes, opposition leader Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah "elevated these separate demands into a general call for democracy, proclaiming the worth of a two-party system, judicial independence and a free press."\textsuperscript{33}

But a government crackdown in both countries thwarted these pro-democracy efforts. In Singapore, opposition candidates were attacked in the pro-government press and in parliament in a highly personal fashion and convicted of various offenses in court. The internal security law was invoked in 1987 to arrest Catholic Church activists supposedly engaged in a Marxist conspiracy, an action meant to destroy the country's nascent NGO movement. Shortly thereafter, when the president of the law society criticized curbs on the press, he was blocked from re-election, arrested, and - after a brief stint in an opposition party - forced into exile. The regime made it clear


\textsuperscript{32} The rest of the working populace was classified in the service, agricultural, and "other" sectors (11.9%, 1.1%, and 5%, respectively, in 1986).

\textsuperscript{33} William Case, "Sources of Legitimacy in the Case of Malaysia: Stateness, Regime Form, and Policy Performance" (ms. 1992).
that it would allow no interference from the civil realm in politics. As Minister for Communications and Information Wong Kan Seng put it: "public policy is the domain of the government...[Professional societies should not] get involved in issues of public policy which do not effect their professional interests." At the same time, the government of Singapore launched a massive program of political co-optation, designed to integrate, but also intimidate, the population into supporting the status quo. Government initiatives included an extra-parliamentary body to take citizen suggestions for improvements of public policy, called the Feedback Unit; the Nominated Member of Parliament program in which parliament can appoint up to six experts for two year terms; and the Government Parliamentary Committees in which experts could be consulted in the legislative process. Aside from such pseudo-democratic measures, voting rules were changed in ways the opposition complained disadvantaged them and districts that voted for the opposition were threatened with the withholding or reduction of government funding for housing projects and other key state programs.

In Malaysia several Supreme Court Justices were sacked when they handed down a major ruling unfavorable to the UMNO party. In 1987, 112 oppositionists were arrested and three newspapers banned under the Internal Security Act. In subsequent months the government imposed further curbs on media coverage (domestic and foreign) as well as restrictions on public gatherings. Although the opposition alliance performed respectably in the 1990 elections, due to the weighting of the electoral system they were not to break the ruling coalition's two-thirds majority in parliament, which gave it a continued stranglehold on law-making, including constitutional changes. The government wore down the opposition through denial of public projects to opposition dominated states and the removal of several opposition leaders from office through questionable legal means. In elections held in April 1995, the UMNO-led ruling coalition crushed the now fragmented opposition, winning by the largest margin since independence in 1957.

It is striking that the claim of distinctive "Asian values" in Singapore and Malaysia arose as democracy movements began to form in both countries. Mike Hill and Lian Kwen Fee point out that while the Singaporean government first showed interest in "Asian values" in the mid-1970s "after the initial period of economic consolidation had been completed," their interest in it intensified after the 1987 discovery of a "Marxist conspiracy" led by Catholic social activists.37 A few years later the new Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong argued that Singaporeans must avoid materialism, "Western" democracy, a free press, foreign television, and pop music "which could bring the country down."38 In short, the Singapore state had created an ideology to combat democratic tendencies despite the country's advanced stage of economic development.

From the beginning of his prime ministership in 1981, Mahathir had "articulated a highly racialized anti-Western position" which drew on "relatively fresh" colonial resentments.39 It was a small step from there to denounce, as he did shortly after the 1987 crackdown, "Western imperialism" on issues of democracy and human rights. Mahathir defended "Asian" notions of governance and accused the West of "ramming an arbitrary version of democracy" down Malaysia's throat.40 International criticisms of pollution and logging in Malaysia are parried by pointing out that most environmental destruction occurs in the industrialized states. Such attacks on Western hypocrisy has led him to be hailed "the Hero of the South" in Malaysia.41 As in Singapore, the Malaysian government used culturalist arguments to discredit demands for "Western" (i.e. fully competitive) political democracy despite economic prosperity.

Such ideological claims are usually treated with skepticism by social scientists, and these doubts are often justified. I do not wish to suggest that this anti-democratic discourse enjoyed a high degree of popular support in Malaysia and Singapore (both governments prohibit opinion surveys on "sensitive" subjects). But the claim of distinctive "Asian values" has helped to set the political agenda. In Singapore, leading oppositionist Joshua B. Jeyaretnam is generally perceived as "radical" because of his confrontations political style and his open calls for a Western-

style democracy. The Singapore media is currently making a similar attempt to marginalize Chee Soon Juan who has been convicted of the heinous crime of making a speech in public without a police permit. Although criticizing the government's record on human rights, Malaysian dissidents have often shared its criticism of Western "imperialism," thereby lending credence to a discourse used to legitimize the regime.

Parallels to "Zivilisationskritik"

Several authors have argued that there are historical parallels between contemporary authoritarianism in Singapore and Malaysia and Imperial Germany of the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. These similarities may be more than mere coincidence given the influence of Imperial Germany on Meiji Japan and the latter's impact on the rest of the Asia-Pacific. Several structural approximations can

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44 This was particularly true after US Vice President Al Gore's critical remarks on Malaysia during the APEC summit in Kuala Lumpur in November 1998. In fact, pro-reformasi activists found themselves in the uncomfortable position of being associated with the political "meddling" of the US government.
46 Meiji Japan imported much of the political system and ideology of Imperial Germany. Two top-level Meiji delegations visited Germany in the 1870s and 1880s, meeting Bismarck and the German Kaiser Wilhelm I. The historian Bernd Martin, in his fascinating book *Japan and Germany in the Modern World* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1995), shows that after considering several different Western "models," particularly the United States and Britain, Japan chose "the Prussian modernisation concept," p. 19. The British, "deprived of their former influence, used to call the Japanese adoption of everything German....the 'German measles,'" pp. 33-34. A Prussian jurist, Hermann Roesler, wrote the draft of the 1889 Japanese constitution and a German officer, Major Jakob Meckel, reorganized the Japanese military. The Imperial Rescript on Education - which combined Confucian values and a fighting spirit derived from the Shinto cult and aimed at improving moral standards
be identified. Like in Imperial Germany, Singapore and, to a lesser extent, Malaysia have "strong" bureaucratic states that emerged from playing a significant role "late" industrial development, much as Alexander Gerschenkron had predicted. Imperial Germany's political system had a formal parliamentary component, but like in contemporary Singapore and Malaysia, it was pseudo-democratic because of weak parliamentary control of the government, the independent power of the emperor, official discrimination against socialists and Catholics, and the existence of a coterie of conservative elites prepared to overthrow the system should it ever become democratic. More controversially, one can draw a parallel between the social control exercised through welfare and in particular housing policy in Singapore in which access is directly tied to political loyalty and the welfare state enacted by Bismarck in an effort to buy off working class opposition.

But the key similarity is that Singapore and Malaysia, like Imperial Germany, tried to fend off pressures for democratization by invoking cultural otherness. With as well as strengthening national unity - was written by a Japanese philosopher trained in Germany, pp. 33-43. Martin concludes: "The institutional and ideological foundation of the modern Japanese state and society on authoritarian structures would not have been possible without German influence and support, nor without the pro-German factions among the government who consequently relied on Prussian patterns" (p. 43). Bruce Cumings in "The Origins and Development of the Northeastern Political Economy," Frederic C. Deyo, ed., The Political Economy of the New Asian Political Economy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), shows how the authoritarianism of pre-war Japan influenced the former Japanese colonies of Taiwan and (South) Korea after the W.W.II. Pre-war Japan was a model for many authoritarian regimes in the Asia-Pacific, but particularly in Malaysia ("Look East"), Singapore ("Learn from Japan"), and South Korea (Meiji-Japan was the model for Korean modernization). Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir recently co-authored a book with the Japanese nationalist Shintaro Ishihara: Mahathir and Ishihara entitled The Voice of Asia: Two Leaders Discuss the Coming Century (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1995) - the Japanese title is more revealing - The Asia that can say No. A Policy to Combat Europe and America.


On Singapore see Tremewan, The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore, particularly chp. 3; on Germany Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany, chp. 3.

Here one can also draw a parallel between "Asian values" and the "pan-Asianism" of militaristic Japan from 1932-1945. By claiming a common "Asian" culture with a spiritual-based sense of loyalty to the community, "Western" individualism and liberalism could be rejected as egocentric. See Kenneth B. Pyle, The Making of Modern Japan (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1996), p. 203.
industrialization quite advanced, developmental arguments urging the temporary renunciation of democratic goals until significant modernization has been achieved could no longer justify authoritarian rule. Rather, authoritarianism had to be shown to be suitable even after the advent of economic modernity. Ideologues of Imperial Germany were aware that by not democratizing politically in the course of economic development their country had departed significantly from the pattern of other industrial nations - above all Britain, France, and the US. 

But while this so called German Sonderweg (special path) is today widely considered to be a key reason for the "German catastrophe" of the Nazi rise to power and the Second World War, in the 19th century it was a source of national pride. By distinguishing between Western Zivilisation and German Kultur, ideologues were able to claim industrialization need not lead to democratization in Germany; indeed, it should not do so because democracy was not part of German culture.

How can a discussion of German "Zivilisationskritik" help us better understand "Asian values"? First, it shows us that the real issue involved in the "Asian values" discourse is not "Asia" versus the "West," but rather authoritarian versus democratic modernity. Imperial Germany was a European country that was nonetheless denying that it was a part of Western civilization. The dichotomy of "West" and "East" in Singapore and Malaysia is the functional equivalent (a term that may be discredited in current social sciences but is quite helpful here) of Western Zivilisation and German Kultur. Cultural difference only serves as a cover for an argument about the way the modern world should be constructed. The ideologists of "Zivilisationskritik," like the advocates of "Asian values," attempted to prove that authoritarianism is compatible with an advanced form of modern living. Jeffrey Herf speaks of "reactionary modernism."

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51 One of the most celebrated accounts of the problematic perception of a dichotomy between "Kultur" and "Zivilisation" in Germany is Norbert Elias, Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation, Bd. 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997), pp. 89-131.
Thomas Mann provided perhaps the most famous statement of "Zivilisationskritik" in his "Observations of an Unpolitical Person." Mann contrasted German culture with European civilization in order to emphasize the profundity of the former and the superficiality of the latter. Germany, he said, protested against the "imperialism of civilization." He decried the proponents of European civilization who claimed its applicability anywhere in the world. Against Western civilizational universalism he held up German cultural particularism. Germans' unpolitical and spiritual character set them fundamentally apart from other peoples. He distinguished between the genuine Volk in Germany as a collective that knew instinctively what its national interests were from a mere collection of individuals who could only pursue their egoistic interests. He wrote that the conservative character of German politics was not intended "to keep everything that existed, but to keep Germany German...And it is German above all not to confound the Volk with the individual atoms that compose the mass." Mann wrote further that an artist concerned with Germany's condition can only repeat, out of his own deepest conviction, what the giants of our people, Nietzsche, Lagarde, and Wagner, had said, that democracy in the Western sense and flavor is alien to us, something translated, something "present only in the press," and something that can never become German life and truth.

Like the discourse of "Asian values," "Zivilisationskritik" begins with an invidious comparison of "us" and "them," of indigenous values versus outside norms. The distinction is based on crass stereotypes of both "insiders" and "outsiders." Culture is essentialized and presented as static, instead of being viewed as inherently differentiated and contested, capable of being rapidly transformed or subtly modified. In German, this was known as Wesensschau, the metaphysical search for the "true" essence of Kultur. "Asian values," in turn, can be characterized as a kind of reverse "orientalism." Edward Said's critique of the Western simplification of the "East" for

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53 Thomas Mann, Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen (Berlin: Fischer, 1918). In fairness, it must be added that Mann later changed his position to become an advocate of democracy during the Weimar Republic.


55 Faulenbach, Ideologie des deutschen Weges, p. 123.
its own hegemonial aims has, through the discourse of "Asian values," been turned into a self-made reductionism of "Asia" and the "West" in order to consolidate Asian leaders' political power. In both reactionary modernities, the people and the nation are said come before the self. There was also a strand of familialism and patriarchy in "Zivilisationskritik" which parallels the defense of the traditional family in "Asian values." A familiar image of the Wilhelminian era in German was that a woman's world should be limited to Kinder, Küche, Kirche - children, the kitchen and the Church - and that children should be strictly disciplined. Advocates of "Asian values" have stressed the importance of reproduction within marriage, while denouncing pre-marital sex, children out of wedlock, and homosexuality. For both Zivilisation-critics and advocates of the "Asian way," politics should involve consensus and not conflict as the people, the Volk, pursue common goals under enlightened leadership. Dissent can be labeled as pro-Western and anti-German or anti-Asian. In both cases, "Western" democracy is dismissed as harmful to these indigenous value systems.

The second way in which the comparison to "Zivilisationskritik" sheds light on "Asian values" is the fact the former was also directed at a largely middle class society. It has often been claimed that the weakness of the "bourgeoisie" - an overly general label that in many writers' minds includes big business and the middle class - was the reason for the failure of democratization in Imperial Germany. But the middle and upper classes were not numerically weak. The German Empire was an increasingly urbanized country in which a rapidly expanding civil service, business, and professional sector was one of the three major pillars of society along with a working class, that never made up an absolute majority of the population, and a

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57 Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, p. 48.
rapidly shrinking though, thanks to the Prussian Junkers, still influential agrarian sector. The British historian Geoff Eley has questioned whether class position can necessarily be associated with certain political attitudes, i.e., that the "bourgeoisie" necessarily desires liberal democracy. Instead, bourgeois political views in Germany were largely the outcome of ideological struggle. "Zivilisationskritik" played a major role in this battle of ideas. By effectively equating democracy with foreign, Western Zivilisation, ideologues of the "German way" marginalized advocates of democratization. This explains why Max Weber, in his famous Freiburg opening lecture of 1895, criticized the German bourgeoisie for its unpolitical spirit and its unwillingness to take the lead in liberalizing society.60 Weber decried an intellectual atmosphere that later led Thomas Mann to oppose democratization and express his commitment to the authoritarian values of traditional German Kultur. The unpolitical bourgeoisie that accepted the authoritarian Prussian/German state in the name of "Zivilisationskritik" parallels the systematic de-politicization of the Singapore middle class through state co-optation justified by the leadership's invocation of "Asian values." This shows that Barrington Moore, Jr.'s claim - "no bourgeoisie, no democracy"61 - formulates at most a necessary but not a sufficient condition. Democratization can be blocked by an anti-liberal ideology.

Democratic Diffusion and "Asian Values"

The defeat of Nazi Germany did not destroy "Zivilisationskritik" in Germany. This anti-democratic ideology was only fully marginalized by the slow but steady rise of a democratic political culture in the Federal Republic.62 Similarly, while "Asian values" may survive the current economic crisis in Singapore and Malaysia, they are endangered by the strengthening and spread of democratic ideas. This danger is

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60 Cited in Wilfried Röhrich, Die verspätete Demokratie: Zur politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Cologne: Eugen Diederichs, 1983), p. 46
62 Dirk Berg-Schlosser, in "Entwicklung der Politischen Kultur in der Bundesrepublik," Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, B 7 (1990), 30-46, uses a number of empirical studies to document how the "normalization" of German political culture occurred only after the foundation of the Federal Republic. "Zivilisationskritik" persisted in East Germany, however. For a fascinating account see Sigrid Meuschel, Legitimation und Partei herrschaft in der DDR (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).
particular acute because of the difficulty of establishing an ideological alternative to democracy in the late twentieth century, as opposed to the 19th century or during the interwar period. One form of diffusion is democratic "snowballing" (however meteorologically inappropriate this metaphor is for Southeast Asia!), in which democratization in one country encourages a transition in another, usually neighboring, nation. The reformasi (reform) protests against Suharto in Indonesia in 1998, for example, inspired a democratic movement with the same name later in the year in Malaysia. But democratic diffusion can involve more complicated and often largely hidden processes that are only unveiled in the course of a political protest movement. In order to better understand how diffusion works, while at the same time glimpsing the probable political future of Singapore and Malaysia, it is helpful to study the diffusion of democracy in South Korea and Taiwan, two recently democratized countries in the Asia-Pacific that share a similar (relatively high) standard of living.

Modeling his policies on Meiji Japan, the South Korean dictator Chung Hee Park attempted to inculcate Confucian "virtues" through the school curriculum and government campaigns. Similar to the "Asian values" discussion, this official

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64 The pathbreaking work of Juan J. Linz demonstrated the usefulness of such comparisons to understand future political developments. In his study of authoritarian Spain, he used Italian electoral data to understand the way party formation would be likely to develop given the country's similarity to Italy. See Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain," in Erik Allard and Stein Rokkan, eds, Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology (New York: Free Press, 1970).


66 Park criticized the literati tradition of Confucianism which he claimed had contributed to Korea's backwardness. Yet despite these attacks the old Confucian elite came to admire Park's practical use of Confucian concepts of governance. Kim Kwang-ok, "The Reproduction of Confucian Culture in Contemporary Korea: An Anthropological Study," in Tu Wei-ming, Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and the Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 218, writes: "[T]he ideal of loyalty to the state, ch'ung was emphasized. People were indoctrinated to perceive the nation as a family, with the president as the patriarchal head."
Confucianism emphasized the collective over the individual, the importance of preserving social hierarchy, and, above all, the right of a "wise leader" to guide the people without their political participation in the decision-making process. But this attempt to legitimize his regime met with only limited success, nor did it help Park's successor Chun Doo Hwan to secure his grip on power. On the contrary, Confucian ideologies were more effectively used against military rule. Oppositionists in South Korea, particularly student demonstrators, often invoked the Confucian tradition of protesting against unjust rulers, a claim that has also been made by Chinese dissidents. This claim helped student protesters win the sympathy and support of a substantial part of the large South Korean middle class. The former oppositionist and current South Korean President Kim Dae Jung has accused Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and other advocates of "Asian values" of asserting that Asian culture is inherently authoritarian in order to justify authoritarian rule. This self-interested view overlooks the "rich heritage of democracy oriented philosophies and traditions" in Asia which are "as profound of those of the West." He claims the "biggest obstacle" to democracy is not Asia's "cultural heritage but the resistance of authoritarian rulers and their apologists." The example of South Korea shows how fundamentally contested cultural tradition is: an authoritarian interpretation finds a an adamant democratic riposte. Much of the democratic diffusion in South Korea assumed traditional cultural guise.

67 Lee, Konfuzianismus und Kapitalismus, p. 16. In Singapore, an official Confucianist preceded the "Asian values" discourse. The switch to the latter was a concession to the non-ethnic-Chinese who are about one fourth of the country's population. It also enabled Singapore to propagate "Asian values" alongside its neighbor Malaysia, in which there is a non-Chinese majority. This use of "Asia" involves the conscious adaptation of a Western concept that does not exist in most "Asian" languages (where only Chinese, Hindu, Malay, etc. groupings are recognized). The pan-Asianist ideology of interwar Japan set a key precedent in this attempt to create a ethnically cross-cutting identity using a Western concept. Ian Buruma, "Asiatische Werte? Zum Beispiel Singapur," Merkur, Heft 3 (März 1996), pp. 191-192.


In Taiwan democratization began in 1986 largely at the initiative of the one-party KMT regime. Long committed to an conservative-authoritarian ideology that contained elements of Confucianism, democratic ideas gradually gained strength within the ruling party.\(^1\) Aside from focusing on the role of Chiang Ching-kuo - the son and successor (in 1972) of Chiang K'ai-shek - who made the decision to liberalize, the literature has concentrated on the rise of a reformist or "soft-line" faction within the regime.\(^2\) This faction was composed overwhelmingly of native Taiwanese (as opposed to the mainland Chinese) KMT members who were drawn primarily from the emergent middle class.\(^3\) The third explanation often given for Taiwan's democratization is the support of the much of the non-co-opted middle class and the "petty-bourgeois" for the opposition tangwai ("outside the party," i.e. non-KMT members) movement which raised the costs of authoritarian rule.\(^4\) The current democratic government in Taiwan uses a liberal interpretation of Confucianism to claim - in a similar fashion to Kim Dae Jung in South Korea - that democracy is part of the country's Confucian traditions.\(^5\) In Taiwan as well, democratic ideas have been "carried" by the middle class and often expressed in culturalist terms.

In Malaysia and Singapore, "Asian values" have not yet been as effectively turned against the government as they were by student protesters who invoked

\(^1\) For a prescient analysis of the coming Taiwanese transition to democracy in cultural terms see Lucian W. Pye, Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 228-236.


\(^4\) Lo, "Liberalization and Democratization," pp. 224-229 and Schubert, Taiwan, chp. 4.

\(^5\) Talk given by Dr. Wolfgang Ommerborn, Univ. Erlangen-Nürnberg, 23 Nov. 1998. In a recent interview, Taiwan's president Lee Teng-hui put the point slightly differently. Disagreeing with Singaporean Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew he said: "I don't think there are distinctly Asian values. There are human values." "Why Asia's Two Lees See Matters Differently," The Straits Times, February 17, 1997, p. 29.
Confucianism in South Korea. Nor is there much indication of the rise of a "soft-line" faction in the ruling parties of Malaysia and Singapore (though if the former had Anwar Ibrahim not been purged, his UMNO-faction might have emerged as such a pro-democratic grouping). The middle class has been more effectively co-opted in these two countries than in South Korea or Taiwan. Yet the comparison with South Korea and Taiwan shows how, particularly at higher levels of development, the rise of a broad middle-class can promote democratic diffusion. This is not to say that the modernization theory thesis that it is the middle class that will lead a democratization movement should be unconditionally accepted. Recent comparative historical research has shown that it is often the working class that has been the most pro-democratic. In the Asia-Pacific, however, democratization has often had to "wait" for the rise of a broad middle class, in part because of the effective demobilization of the working class. One of the common features of "developmentalism" in the region has been the repression of independent unions and the incorporation of workers into state controlled corporatist alternatives. The discourse of "Asian values" in Malaysia and Singapore, like official Confucianism in South Korea and Taiwan earlier, aimed to co-opt the rise of the middle class. The failure of this strategy in the latter two countries must lead to skepticism about its chance for long-term success in the former two.

In Malaysia, a substantial democratic movement has already emerged, mobilizing many once co-opted members of the middle class, in part by drawing on traditional symbolism. The immediate cause for the current political crisis in Malaysia was a dispute between Mahathir and his deputy Anwar. But it is striking how easily Anwar and his supporters have been able to win over former UMNO supporters within the ethnic Malay community for their reformasi movement. Two new alliances - the Coalition for People's Democracy and People's Justice Movement bring together middle class oppositionists in NGOs, the ethnic Chinese opposition party, the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and with orthodox Islamicists of the Pan-

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Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Similar to the situation in 1987, when the UMNO party split into two factions, a middle class opposition has emerged across ethnic lines in Malaysia, although this time it appears to be much stronger. Even before his fall from power, Anwar was beginning to articulate a culturalist argument for democracy in his writings ("the Asian renaissance"), a point he made very openly in the speeches he held around the country after his removal from office and before his arrest autumn 1998. Anwar has also very effectively combined Islamic language with his liberal program, a form of democratic diffusion that has also been used by many Muslim intellectuals and political activists in Indonesia. This middle class-based reformist movement could well spell the end of authoritarian "Asian values" in Malaysia.

In Singapore, a scholar with close links to the regime admits there are three disaffected groups in Singaporean society: ethnic Malays, who often feel the effects of subtle discrimination; private domestic entrepreneurs, small businessmen, and some independent professions, who are "deeply resentful" of Singapore's dirigiste economy; and "the increasing numbers of well-educated, articulate, and materially secure professionals, civil servants, academics, and school teachers" who are "patently alienated." Others would add the workers to this list - who have experienced political repression through the strict control of unions and who have suffered "relative deprivations" as their standard of living has not kept up with other sectors of society. Despite having one of the world's highest growth rates and achieving the highest standard of living in the Asia-Pacific besides Japan, the ruling PAP vote has steadily declined in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet since the rise of a middle class-based

79 In Malaysia and, to a lesser extent, Indonesia, this articulation of a "political Islam" for democratic aims involves a delicate balancing act between Islamic "fundamentalists," on the one hand, who claim Islam requires a theocratic political order, and non-Muslims, on the other, who fear that such liberal rhetoric is only a disguise for Islamicist aims. Nonetheless, the Islamic democratic discourse in these two countries is one of the most impressive rebuttals of the old canard that democracy is impossible in predominantly Muslim states (an assertion, incidentally, that used to be made about Catholic countries as well).
opposition parties in 1980, the regime has been very successful in using a mixture of repression and co-optation against this middle class opposition, as discussed above. It is striking how many oppositionists in Singapore are less Westernized and more traditionally oriented than the highly technocratic PAP-regime. This suggests that cultural traditions in Singapore do not stand in the way of democratization. The obstacle is a neo-conservatism - claiming that there is a need for greater communitarianism to prevent moral and political decline - that has been appropriated by the PAP and dressed up as "Asian values." While democratization is by no means a certainty in Singapore, there is a high probability it will occur in the not too distant future because of the widespread diffusion of democratic ideas to, and the absence of genuine cultural barriers in the middle class.

Economics and "Asian Values"

Capitalist development is not necessarily inhibited by authoritarian rule at low per capita levels, although the claim that "developmental" authoritarianism is necessary for growth is not confirmed by statistical comparisons of regime types and economic performance. But higher income countries have greater difficulty reconciling capitalism and non-democratic rule. In the Asia-Pacific, the first challenge has been the pressure applied by the US and other Western industrialized powers on the neo-mercantilist Asian states to open their markets to Western imports. Both Taiwan and South Korea came under such pressures in the mid-1980s, about the time democratization began, which has led some observers to claim

82 See the references in note 36.
83 Chua, Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore, pp. 186-187. One of the more ironic aspects of "Asian values" in Singapore is that several of its chief advocates in the PAP are English but not Mandarin speakers and know so little about Confucianism that they had to bring in foreign experts to be "briefed" about it.
86 This section draws on Robison, "The Politics of 'Asian Values,'" pp. 318-320.
causation between the former and the latter.\textsuperscript{87} Malaysia and Singapore also have neo-mercantilist tendencies. This became particularly apparent during the current economic crisis in Asia in which Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir became the 	extit{enfant terrible} of the world financial community with his critique of global capitalist conspiracies and his personal attacks on George Soros. This is where Thatcherites/Reaganites and the advocates of "Asian values" clearly part ways. The former have supported free trade and international financial liberalization with a vengeance, while the latter have been among its most outspoken critics.\textsuperscript{88} Despite the admiration of many Western conservatives for the "Asian valuists," when it comes to trade they clash.

A second challenge is the age of information technology, which is dependent on rapid, dependable, and virtually unrestricted communication flows. The governments of both Singapore and Malaysia have tried to encourage the establishment of information technology industries, even sponsoring a major multimedia project in cooperation with international firms such as Microsoft in the case of Malaysia.\textsuperscript{89} But concerns about authoritarian interference (that has involved the reading of the emails of foreign and domestic businesses in Singapore, for example) as well as the general problems of the international legitimacy of non-democratic regimes (particularly in Malaysia after the arrest of Anwar Ibrahim) have slowed these efforts. More generally, Lee Kuan Yew has complained that Singapore lacks the "free-wheeling buzz" of Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{90} Lee, innocent of any irony, overlooks the government's role in the heavy regimentation of Singaporean society, including the


\textsuperscript{88} An objection might be raised here that while Malaysia's Mahathir has been critical, the Singaporean leadership has been much more low key in attacking the global financial community. But while Singapore may be more diplomatic (which is a wise as it is a world financial center), its leading technocrats are self-confidently dirigiste, heftily objecting, for example, to Milton Friedman's claim during a visit to the island-state some years ago that its economic growth was due to the magic of the marketplace.


\textsuperscript{90} Dolwen, "Where's the Buzz," p. 13.
business world. Aside from the state's direct role in the economy and the strict political controls (which criminalize "illegal" newspaper reporting of companies balance sheets), the educational system of the island-state is designed to promote conformity not creativity.91 One Western diplomat has argued: "It's hard for Singaporeans to learn that questioning is acceptable. People aren't trained to be creative. Companies feel that if you were educated in Singapore, you'll need to be re-educated before you can do a lot of things."92 Comparison with Taiwan suggests that political democratization can also have positive economic consequences in a developed country. There are many important differences between the Singaporean and Taiwanese economy (which is outperforming the former during the current economic crisis), most significantly the decentralized and more laissez-faire character of the latter compared to the centralized and statist nature of the former. But according to Ben Dolwen of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Taiwan's democratic political system has also made a difference:

> But perhaps the most important factor is this: Taiwan's exuberant and emerging democracy now encourages free expression of ideas, however out-of-step with others they may be, an environment under which entrepreneurship thrives. By contrast Singaporeans grow up in a culture that encourages them to follow the government's lead, not to strike out on their own.93

**Conclusion**

The discourse of "Asian values" has lost its international appeal during the current economic crisis. Where "Asian values" were invoked in support of a strategy of developmentalism - the repression of popular participation in the name of rapid economic development - their domestic legitimization function has been undermined as well. Appeals to the supposedly authoritarian nature of Asian political culture were unable to save self-proclaimed developmental regimes in countries that were no longer developing.

But in Singapore and Malaysia "Asian values" have been used more to combat the "ill" (democratic) effects of modernization, than to enhance the prospects of

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further development. In the 1980s, the "Asian values" discourse helped thwart nascent democracy movements in these two countries. With organized labor demobilized, the most promising social base for such political transformation in both countries was the new middle class. Yet a mixture of carrot and stick methods - repression and rewards for political loyalty legitimized through the invocation of "Asian values" - helps explain why there is still no democracy in Malaysia and Singapore despite high levels of economic development. Governments did not successfully brainwash their populations with this ideology. Rather, they were able to set the political agenda through institutional and ideological co-optation so that oppositionists could be marginalized and potential supporters of democratization scared away. Yet this success is likely to prove temporary. The diffusion of democracy - primarily through the middle class and often in the name of traditional culture - as well as the difficulties of maintaining authoritarianism in the age of globalization mitigate against the long-term survival of this post-developmentalist form of "Asian values."

The brief genealogy of morals offered in this paper attempts to show the similarities between the discourse of "Asian values" and "Zivilisationskritik." The "functional equivalence" to "Zivilisationskritik" in Imperial Germany demonstrates that the key issue is not the supposed difference between cultures - both German Kultur and "Asian values" are essentialized, "orientalized" concepts - but rather involves a search for ideological justification of a "reactionary modernism."

The outcome of the struggle for China's ideological soul will determine the long-term significance of "Asian values." The "Hong Kong experiment" of using "Asian values" to justify authoritarianism in a wealthy society has clearly failed. Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa and his pro-Beijing allies, who proclaimed "Asian values" against democracy, were badly defeated in recent legislative elections in the small percentage of seats open to electoral competition. Yet Singapore continues to be well a well studied model by conservative Chinese ideologues. One author speaks of a "rhetorical alliance" around "Asian values" of the two governments. It is

95 Roy, "Singapore, China, and the 'Soft Authoritarian' Challenge."
revealing that Lee Kuan Yew was recently elected honorary chairman of the International Confucius Association established by the Chinese government. In its effort to justify authoritarian rule, the (previously militantly anti-Confucian) Chinese government has now begun experimenting with traditional culture as a possible new form of ideological cover. In the mid-1980s, "greater China" (China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan) were all authoritarian in one way or another. At the end of the 20th century this collection of Chinese states is much more politically diverse. This has shown beyond any doubt that culturally "the Chinese" are not inevitably authoritarian. Should China continue to modernize under authoritarian rule, "Asian values" are likely to be part of the regime's legitimation strategy. But should a major mainland Chinese democratization movement again emerge (which can draw on precedents as diverse as those of 1919 and 1989), then other kinds of values, even those supposedly confined to Western "Zivilisation," may prove more important.

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