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**The Rise and Fall of the Asian Way Debate?:
Clash, Convergence, and Social Values**

by

T.K. Rousseau

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

at

**Dalhousie University
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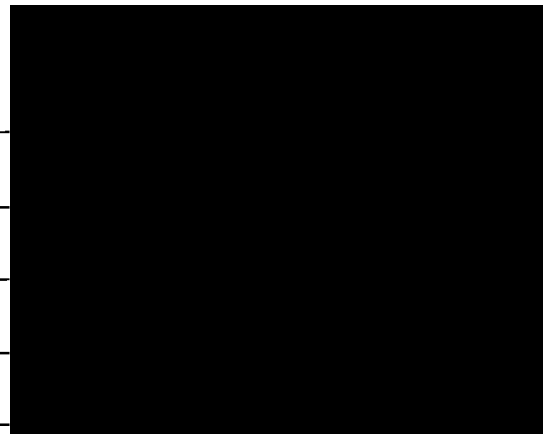
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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	Page v
List of Abbreviations.....	Page vi
Acknowledgements.....	Page vii
Introduction: The Misunderstood Miracle.....	Page 1
Chapter One: A Question of Clash Literatures of Confrontation.....	Page 41
Chapter Two: Confucianism and The Asian Way Debate The Mandate of Heaven.....	Page 97
Chapter Three: The Success of ‘Asian’ Success The Asian Way Debate and Economic Growth.....	Page 129
Chapter Four: Peaceful Under Heaven State, Society, and the ‘Asian Way’.....	Page 168
Chapter Five: The Bangkok Conference and the Asian Way Debate Actors and Issues.....	Page 203
Conclusion: Clash or Convergence? Rudyard Kipling’s Fallacies and The Future of the Asian Way Debate.....	Page 247
Bibliography.....	Page 292

Abstract

The end of the 1990s is a pivotal time to examine and reassess the controversy concerning 'Asian values', or the Asian Way debate. The heart of this debate -- played out in influential journals, the international media, and numerous academics and policy circles -- is the idea of a uniquely 'Asian' path to economic, political, and social life, rooted in regional cultures. Asian Way perspectives propose a set of cultural values based on discipline, cohesion, social order, group- and family-orientation, and respect for authority; these values are said to have contributed to stable political systems and economic growth. However, economic and political crises in the Asia-Pacific at the end of the decade have revealed that many observers misinterpreted complex and varied conditions in the region, and the stylized Asian Way debate has only encouraged this. Moreover, this misapprehension is all the more serious, given that the 'Rising East' is but one stereotyped image in a larger pattern. Since global observers have come to new conclusions -- notably, that the region is characterized by corruption and crony capitalism -- and have initiated potentially harmful policies, like structural adjustment, based on those conclusions, ending this cycle of misunderstanding is a pressing task. Hence, critiques of Asian Way perspectives that quickly dismiss the debate are insufficient: to help end this pattern, the shortcomings of the debate's themes must be closely examined and assessed. From this, analytical proposals for alternate ways of approaching 'Asian' societies can be drawn; such proposals are a crucial and concrete way of challenging ideas of ancient animosities, clashing civilizations, and monolithic actors.

The Asian Way debate has been framed by larger themes of global clash, stressing inevitable confrontation and conflict between civilizations. This clash literature must be understood within a context of global political and economic changes: since the end of the Cold War, there has been much emphasis on new threats and enemies to the industrialized countries, the United States in particular. The notion of a 'Rising East', imbued with a mystified and reified culture, has provided one of several possible competitors for the 'West'. Within this context, weaknesses of the Asian Way debate reveal the limitations of 'Asian' cultural approaches, 'East-West' clash, and monolithic state and non-state actors. The static, anti-democratic portrayal of Confucianism has not addressed issues of social change; nor have arguments for the cultural roots of economic success dealt with diversity among regional governments or structural explanations for prosperity. Moreover, the description of 'Asian' state and non-state actors as monolithic and adversarial fails to explain the variegation among groups -- certain non-state actors in societies like the Philippines, for example, even appeal to selected Asian Way themes on their own terms. A case like the 1993 Bangkok Conference further reveals the inadequacy of concepts like clash and homogeneity within the Asian Way debate; at the conference, both state and non-state responses were varied, and in some regards, even shared some common ground.

Ultimately, the Asian Way case shows that analysis of the Asia-Pacific must be approached differently: it must stress differentiation among actors, the impact of the global environment, the ongoing processes of social change, and the more specific examination of particular cultural traditions. Even if changes in the region at the end of the 1990s signal an end to the Asian Way debate, an enduring lesson of the discussions is that 'civilizations' are not clashing; rather, societies are increasingly overlapping.

List of Abbreviations

AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
EAEC	East Asian Economic Caucus
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HPAE	High Performing Asian Economy
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPE	International Political Economy
IR	International Relations
MFN	Most Favoured Nation
NAFTA	North America Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIC	Newly Industrialized Country
NIE	Newly Industrialized Economy
NIDL	New International Division of Labour
NIDP	New International Division of Power
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NWO	New World Order
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WTO	World Trade Organization

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**The Rise and Fall of the Asian Way Debate?:
Clash, Convergence, and Social Values**

Introduction: The Misunderstood Miracle

The backdrop for the Asian Way debate has fundamentally changed by the end of the 1990s. Indeed, it may be more accurate and more illuminating to speak of the decline of the Asian Way debate, or even its demise. The Asia-Pacific may have experienced unprecedented growth among developing regions between the 1960s and 1990s, but as it enters the 21st century, societies in the geographic region have been hit by a procession of serious economic blows, referred to as the Asian crisis. Despite the fact that the term ‘Asian crisis’ is misleading in many respects – suggesting that the events affected the geographic region in similar ways, or that the causes come from within the region and are not shaped by factors like International Monetary Fund liberalization policies, or that the situation is so grave that further structural adjustments must certainly be implemented – it has been widely used, by mainstream and academic observers alike. In content, this crisis has ranged from financial slumps (such as Japan’s recession since 1992) to more dramatic socio-political change (unrest and changes in government leaders in Thailand and Indonesia). In addition to currency devaluations, beginning in Thailand in July 1997, and the crash of numerous banks, there has been political protest against existing governments, as well as price increases, wage cuts, and unemployment. The Hong Kong stock market plunged in 1997, and major brokerage firms in Japan closed in the midst of financial and political scandals.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has intervened in South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia, providing loans and the accompanying austerity measures, theoretically designed to fix the existing problems; South Korea's bail out of US \$57 million was the largest package ever given by the international organization. There are many opinions as to the precise causes of this downturn, but the war of words among economists has generally included mismanagement by regional policy-makers, corruption and crony capitalism, and unregulated capital flows.

At the very least, this round of sweeping political and economic changes in the Asia-Pacific region has permanently altered the context of the Asian Way debate, that of regional economic prowess and relative political stability and cohesion. Instead of the "Asian miracle," some began speaking of the "Asian flu," as markets all over the world, notably in Latin America, experienced the fall-out of events. Even if some international actors like the IMF and finance officials of G7 nations increasingly proclaimed that by mid-1999, the crisis had passed, and had begun working on preventive loan policies to avoid future calamities, the impact of events has been far-reaching. This encompasses, for example, ongoing worker protest in South Korea and continuing social and religious strife in Indonesia.

Certainly, the developments in the Asia-Pacific region in the late 1990s have provoked attention and surprise throughout the world. Long-anticipated events such as Chinese tanks rolling into Hong Kong in June 1997 may well have provoked anxiety on the part of some observers, but more alarming to many was the unpredicted and unexpected faltering of the region long thought to be a miracle. From the ousting of former President Suharto in Indonesia in 1998, to riots and violently-crushed protests

throughout Southeast Asia, to the loss of much international confidence in Tokyo's financial state, circumstances have created a pivotal time for re-examining the region, in political and economic terms. How could observers have so misjudged or misunderstood the conditions behind the so-called miracle, so that its seeming degeneration caused so much shock and distress?

A key reason is the debate surrounding the economic, political, and social life in the region, concerning 'Asian values' or an 'Asian Way'. This debate has contributed to a mystified picture of the so-called rising East: the stylized discussion, frequently based around concepts of clash between stereotyped civilizations, has shaped distorted and misleading perceptions of success and failure in the region. This thesis is concerned with the inadequacies of Asian Way perspectives, and how their distorted pictures of the Asia-Pacific and East-West relationships arose – inadequacies that added to the puzzlement and consternation over cracks in the miracle model. If future misapprehensions are to be avoided, in favour of appropriate responses to such events as those of the late 1990s, then the inadequacies of a debate as stereotyped as that surrounding 'Asian values' must be fully understood. If this project is not undertaken, there is a danger of replacing the stereotypes of the 'Asian Way', presenting the region as anti-Western, cohesive, disciplined, and community-minded, with a new set of stereotypes; this time, of corruption, decay, unrest, and incompetence. Hence, examining the stereotypes so central to the Asian Way debate, and proposing alternate approaches for analyzing societies in the geographic Asia-Pacific, is the driving force behind this thesis.

From this vantage point, we must reassess the Asian Way debate, and explore what role it has played in regional and global contexts. In order to examine the debate, certain parameters must be laid out. The nature of the Asian Way debate must be summarized; its context should also be explained; and the reasons for reassessing the discussion should also be clarified. Within this framework, the limitations of Asian Way perspectives can be assessed. When these points are laid out and explored, they can be used as a springboard to developing alternative guidelines for the exploration of cultures in 'Asian' societies. Only then we can decide whether the debate has indeed closed, and we can speak of its possible demise.

The Asian Way Debate: A Summary

Those who live and travel in the Asia-Pacific region can feel that they are moving into a new epoch in which the incomes of most will double and treble in their lifetimes. They can fly from Hong Kong to Vancouver, from Seoul to Los Angeles, from Tokyo to Hawaii, or from Kuala Lumpur yet not feel that they have crossed a cultural divide....A sense of community is emerging.¹

These words were written by Kishore Mahbubani, of the Singaporean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1995. Mahbubani has long been looked to as an abundant source of views on an 'Asian Way' to governance, economics, and human rights. He has been at the fore of the debate concerning the role of cultures in politics and finance -- one that examines the role of East and Southeast Asian cultures and society in the region's emerging global profile. Mahbubani, among others, has put forward the idea

¹ Kishore Mahbubani, "The Pacific Way," *Foreign Affairs* 74 no.1 (January/February 1995) 106.

of the Asia-Pacific as an emerging, pivotal region in the world in terms of global political and economic action; in order to realize the region's potential, the argument goes, the community based in common values and culture must be encouraged, and the pitfalls of 'Western' society must be avoided.²

For the purposes of this thesis, the Asian Way debate will refer to the dialogue among academics, policy-makers, and the media principally in North America and Great Britain. In this regard, the debate discusses actors from 'Asia' -- governments and leaders, non-state actors such as NGOs and business associations, members of the media, academics -- as they have been presented in journals, academic presses, newspapers, magazines and other sources based in North America and Great Britain. It should be noted that some sources, such as Far Eastern Economic Review and Asia Week, are published within the Asia-Pacific, but are widely available and widely read in North America and Europe.

Certainly, there are many debates surrounding the 'Asian Way', involving different communities and opinions, and as this thesis will indicate, there are indigenous discussions among state and non-state actors as well. However, the focus on North America and Great Britain was chosen for several reasons. First, sources from these societies are English-language -- and it should be noted that while most observers in a society such as Canada cannot read Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai or so on, distinctive, rich Asian Way debates would indubitably arise from a survey of sources in any of these languages. Second, these are the sources available and relevant to researchers and scholars in North America: the academic and media discussion that

² For one of Kishore Mahbubani's most recent elaborations on these ideas, see "An Asia-Pacific

helps shape debate and opinion in these societies. This is significant, because policy-makers and scholars in places like Canada and the United States can have a profound influence on international events: their development money, their military assistance and arms sales, their trade policies, and their memberships in organizations like the International Monetary Fund make the debate operating in their societies highly significant. Likewise, scholarship can underscore and influence these policies: in the case of the Asian Way debate, both Kevin Tan and Meredith Woo-Cummings point to the role of 'Western' academics in perpetuating the controversy. So, while there are many debates and many agendas arising from a reassessment of Asian Way themes, this focus is key for international policies aimed at 'Asia', especially in the wake of the 1997 currency crisis.

This debate has attracted scholarly and popular attention, despite the fact that many of its tenets have been vigorously challenged throughout the discussions. As Chapter One will demonstrate, the notion of an 'Asian Way' has been discussed by heads of state, diplomats, and the academic community; it has been featured in the news media worldwide, as well as in scholarly journals. The accompanying assumptions and stereotypes can become an overall way of looking at the 'East', with political and epistemological consequences; as Mark Berger states:

The rise of East Asia and the end of the Cold War have been accompanied by the international resurgence of racialized politics and have meshed with the continued importance of fixed cultural/racial categories to the ordering of knowledge in and beyond the Asia-Pacific.³

Consensus," *Foreign Affairs* 76 no.5 (September/October 1997) 149-158.

³ Mark T. Berger, "Post Cold War Indonesia and the Revenge of History: The Colonial Legacy, National Visions, and Global Capitalism," *The Rise of East Asia: Critical Visions of the Pacific Century*, Mark T. Berger and Douglas A. Borer, eds. (London: Routledge, 1997) 283.

What are the idea behind this set of discussions, then, that have such serious implications?

To begin, Kenneth Christie has proposed that in the Asia-Pacific region, a “discourse on human rights has emerged in the 1990s,” which has been “premised on the claims that there exists a ‘unique’ set of Asian values.”⁴ In order to evaluate this claim, we must first clarify what is meant by the Asian Way debate. Its beginnings have been identified as early as the 1980s, with the debate gaining in popularity during the early 1990s; 1992 and 1993 are indicated as especially pivotal years for statements by regional leaders and opinion-makers.⁵ It has also been suggested that an adversarial relationship extends to scholarly debate itself, encompassing colliding schools of thought on human rights and social justice in East and West.⁶

At its peak, the Asian Way debate resonated in numerous policy and academic circles. Rodan states that the notion of a clash of values between ‘East’ and ‘West’ has proved influential among academics, politicians, and journalists, in spite of its tendency to create false monoliths locked in ideological conflict.⁷ Thompson suggests that Asian Way perspectives “set the political agenda” for the area, and that the ideas of countries like Singapore and Malaysia have been “warmly received in the rest of the Asia-Pacific region” – even though claims to an Asian perspective should be approached with scepticism, and it is unclear whether this viewpoint enjoyed

⁴ Kenneth Christie, “Regime Security and Human Rights in Southeast Asia.” *Political Studies* 43, Special Issue (1995) 204.

⁵ Alan Dupont. “Is There An Asian Way?” *Survival* 38 no.2 (Summer 1996) 13.

⁶ Christopher Tremewan. “Human Rights in Asia.” *Pacific Review* 6 no.1 (1993) 18.

widespread popular support. For example, says Thompson, neo-authoritarianism in China is said to be based upon Singapore's political model, revealing how influential such ideas can be. Likewise, China was at the forefront of the much-publicized 'Asian cultural attack' on international human rights norms at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna – a critique which attracted much global attention.⁸ Hence, the significance of the debate – “an issue that has wide-ranging implications for Asian-Pacific security, policy-makers, and scholars alike”⁹ -- makes the subject as compelling as it is complex. As a background for the arguments to follow, we must ask what the political context is for the debate; in particular, before a critique of the clash themes is presented, it is important to discuss reasons why the controversy has persisted.

A number of different themes have been incorporated into the debate. These will be developed more fully in the following chapter, but a brief summary is useful, to demonstrate the controversies surrounding competing perspectives about human rights, social organization, economic arrangements, and political life. First, the 'Western' human rights perspective tends to be criticized for its universalist assumptions, versus an appreciation of “situational uniqueness.” Second, the 'West' is said to see human rights as international, while the Asia-Pacific sees human rights as domestic, which must be free from outside interference. Third, the Asian paradigm of rights is said to be less individual-centred, and more community centred; as well, duties are more important than rights. Fourth, the Asia-Pacific has been interpreted as

⁷ Garry Rodan, “The Internationalization of Ideological Conflict: Asia's New Significance,” *Pacific Review* 9 no.3 (1996) 328-351.

⁸ Mark R. Thompson, “Late Industrialisers, Late Democratisers: Developmental States in the Asia-Pacific,” *Third World Quarterly* 17 no.4 (1996) 642-3.

⁹ Dupont, 13.

supporting a step-by-step implementation of human rights -- economic rights before civil-political ones, for example. It is argued that historical and cultural factors prevent the implementation of human rights too quickly, or all at once.¹⁰

Moreover, a common thread is an East and Southeast Asian spirit of communalism, which can be found in “a paternalism that dictates responsibilities and duties, and ultimately makes individuals subservient to a greater interest, and a greater power.”¹¹ Consequently, the idea of an Asian cultural perspective underlines a respect for authority and the common good. China, for example, has been described as a society where community and obligation come before individuals and rights. Law is not about protecting the rights of the citizen, but rather about maintaining and fulfilling social harmony. For example, in 1991, Judy Polumbaum remarked that only a minority of Chinese agreed with dissidents-in-exile that their country would need a wholesale change to Western-style capitalism, democracy, and human rights. She quotes a Chinese newsman who says that “[the Chinese people] don't want to overthrow the government; they don't want Western-style democracy; what they really want is a good leader, a good ruler.”¹² Other frequently-cited examples from Southeast Asia of respect for community and authority are the post-colonial Indonesian ideology of *gotong royong* (the communalist discourse of mutual

¹⁰ Carolina Hernandez. “ASEAN and Human Rights.” Paper presented to the weekly speakers series of the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, Canada, 22 March 1995. Throughout this presentation, Hernandez referred several times to an Asian way of approaching foreign relations, at least in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), even though she condemned government uses of ‘Asian Way’ rhetoric. She discussed the importance of “saving face” in ASEAN relations, and the avoidance of direct conflict or criticism. She also complimented Canada’s recent trade-oriented human rights stance on China and East Asia, saying that Canada had taken a very Japanese path, refraining from overt condemnation.

¹¹ John Stackhouse, “Confident Region Seeks ‘Asian Way’,” *Globe and Mail* (June 7, 1994) A10.

¹² Judy Polumbaum, “Dateline China: The People's Malaise,” *Foreign Policy* 81 (Winter 1990-1991) 167.

cooperation, with an emphasis on harmony and group goals), and the state-sponsored philosophy of *pancasila* (with general principles of social justice and societal unity, stressing order, stability, and national security).¹³

It has been proposed that mystifying the East can establish or reinforce relationships of power and privilege. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism is well-known as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience." By defining the Orient as "the Other," Europe is in turn defined, and Western voices gain the necessary control "for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." In Said's words, "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."¹⁴ Said suggests that the establishment of monolithic cultural blocs can serve an important political purpose: to control or to assert superiority by means of specific perspectives in writing, scholarship, and general thought concerning the Orient. Interestingly enough, however, the Asian Way debate establishes a reverse Orientalism of sorts, in which the purported discipline and harmony of the 'East' are hallmarks of a positive, empowered self-identity. Dupont argues that cultural stereotypes associated with Asian Way perspectives – those based, for example, on purportedly Confucian values – are a kind of reverse Orientalism, "reflecting the same distorted, uncritical embrace of [cultures

¹³ For a discussion of the communitarian discourses of *gotong royong* and *pancasila*, see John Sullivan, *Inventing and Imagining Community: Two Modern Indonesian Ideologies*, Working Paper 69, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies (Clayton: Monash University, 1991); Sukarno, "The Pantja Sila," *Indonesian Political Thinking 1945-1965*, Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970); John R. Bowen, "On the Political Construction of Tradition: Gotong Royong in Indonesia," *Journal of Asian Studies* XLV no.3 (1986) 545-561; Michael van Langenberg, "The New Order State: Language, Ideology, and Hegemony," *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, Arief Budiman, ed. (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990).

such as] Chinese culture and governance which has characterised some Western images of China.”¹⁵ Hence, ‘Western’ values are interpreted as less unified, less orderly, less moral. To quote Chan Heng Chee, director of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, “We can see the strong points and bad points of Western development, and most of us can put our finger on one thing: too much individualism is wrong.”¹⁶

In this setting, difference and social change within the regional blocks are less emphasized, in favour of a more simplistic framework of competing cultures. As Chua Beng-Huat states, a critique of the absence of social responsibility in ‘Western’ liberalism can create a framework of confrontation, since “ideological confrontation is... drawn between the supposedly corrupting Western liberal individualism and wholesome Eastern communitarianism.”¹⁷ The idea of clashing civilizations – explored in the next chapter through the works of Samuel Huntington and others – is able to flourish. Now that the debate is fading in its current form, this theme can be more clearly assessed. Clash literature, based upon inevitable competition and confrontation between cultural blocks, is a pivotal point of departure for critical examinations of Asian Way perspectives. The idea of clash established between opposed civilizations is an underlying problem that endures throughout the Asian Way debate. There is the

¹⁴ Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1978) 1-3.

¹⁵ The concept of “reverse orientalism” is also employed both by Lawson and Thompson; the latter refers to it as an idea which “reifies the dichotomy between the ‘West’ and ‘Asia’.” Mark R. Thompson, “Late Industrialisers, Late Democratisers: Developmental States in the Asia-Pacific,” *Third World Quarterly* 17 no.4 (1996) 642. This is reminiscent of Turner’s assessment of the Orientalism debate of the 1970s: it created, according to the author, “an equally pernicious Occidentalism,” which rejected everything associated with the West, and implicitly, with modernization. Bryan S. Turner, Orientalism, Postmodernism, and Globalization (London: Routledge, 1994) 7.

¹⁶ Stackhouse, “Confident Region Seeks ‘Asian Way’,” A10.

‘West’, frequently characterized as fearful and defensive in the face of the supposed Eastern miracle, and the mystified ‘East’, consisting of a monolithic block of repressive governments plus a secondary block of non-state actors united in support of universal values. The repressive camp is associated with the view that ‘Asian values’ are superior, and that the “cultural siege” of the West threatens traditional ways of life, with its blue jeans, soft drinks, and television programs.¹⁸ This notion of siege calls into question the enthusiasm surrounding a global culture of human rights,¹⁹ proclaimed by some as part of the New World Order. This thesis contends that there is a close relationship between the more general global clash literature and the more specific Asian Way literature. At the same time as publications like *Foreign Affairs* were discussing ‘Asian values’ and covering leaders like Lee Kuan Yew – who was explaining how an Asian path was not only distinct from a Western one, but had much to teach those in the West – there were viewpoints making waves, talking about an era of clash and confrontation and a return to ancient ethnic animosities, now that the buffer of Cold War politics was gone. So, when we examine the Asian Way debate, we must keep in mind its context: its relationship with broader debates, brewing and re-emerging in the 1990s in influential forms, in the wake of the attempt to establish new understandings and new analytical frameworks for a so-called New World Order.

¹⁷ Chua Beng-Huat, “Arrested Development: Democratisation in Singapore.” *Third World Quarterly* 15 no.4 (1994) 663.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* An example of the literature on global patterns of socio-economic change challenging regional traditions is Jersey Liang, Shengzu Gu, and Neal Krause, “Family Change and Support of the Elderly in Asia: What Do We Know?” *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* 7 no.3 (September 1992) 14-23.

¹⁹ For an analysis on how precisely this sense of optimism has been challenged, see Alan Tonelson, “Jettison the Policy,” *Foreign Policy* no.97 (Winter 1994-1995) 121-132.

The Context for the Asian Way Debate

Asian Way perspectives have been advanced as a framework for the discussion of values – political, economic, social and moral. They have been argued by some to express a certain cultural pride, through a language of confidence and progress. Moreover, they have acted in concert with global changes, playing into the idea that a post-Cold War order segued into a multi-polar world of emerging regions. At their core, Asian Way perspectives have been aimed at mounting a critique of ‘Western’ ideas -- individualism, liberalism, democratization – that have carried weight in all corners of the world. If, as this thesis argues, the debate has been stylized and simplistic, there must be reasons for its influence and persistence. Two key factors must be identified, both requiring particular attention. First, the political interests and goals of regional actors have fed into the debate, emphasizing the desire of governments for stability, cohesion, or order. Second, there has been a tendency to focus on new global threats in an uncertain, post-Cold War environment, re-enforced in the ‘West’, in some cases, by ideas of internal social decline; Asian Way perspectives attracted attention because they pointed to a significant potential threat: a ‘Rising East’ with an inherently different culture. These factors have helped sustain the debate, even when it has faced significant criticism.

The Political Context

The Asian Way debate cannot be separated from its political context. Certainly, there are particular parties within the Asia-Pacific region who have benefited from the persistence of Asian Way perspectives, and these parties may have the political power to put policy and law behind their interests. Specifically, individual political leaders or governments in the geographic Asia-Pacific stand to gain from ideas of an 'Asian Way' -- which, with its emphasis on community, homogeneity, discipline and order, is a potentially useful set of concepts for maintaining political order and status. There are numerous examples of this pattern cited throughout the text of this thesis: for example, state officials in Singapore have used principles of the community's good to limit technology and information with potentially liberalizing effects, such as Internet access or open media debate on human rights. Certain governments in the region have referred to principles of 'guided democracy' in order to justify a rejection of supposedly Western democratic principles of constitutionalism, political equality, and representation. States, it is argued extensively, can use principles of order and harmony to excuse repressive measures and maintain one-party systems, in a fairly tradition appeal to regime security. In the case of Singapore, in particular, ideas of 'Asian values' are said to have helped establish one-party social control, useful for the post-colonial development and consolidation process.²⁰

²⁰ These ideas are brought out by Garry Rodan, "The Internet and Political Control in Singapore." *Political Science Quarterly* 113 no.1 (Spring 1998): 63-90; Donald K. Emmerson, "Singapore and the 'Asian Values' Debate." *Journal of Democracy* 6 no.4 (October 1995) 95-105; Stephanie Lawson, "Institutionalising Peaceful Conflict: Political Opposition and the Challenge of Democratisation in Asia." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 47 no.1 (May 1993) 15-30; Christie; Dupont; Clark Neher.

There are specific cases in the academic literature on the Asian Way debate emphasizing this power-seeking nature of governments; regimes may lack legitimate support of the people and therefore appeal to a philosophy that justifies their methods and means. Christopher Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong, argues in his book, East and West: China, Power, and the Future of Asia, that Asian Way perspectives are nothing but “an excuse for Westerners to close their eyes to abuses of human rights in Asia.”²¹ For Patten, any differences between East and West are a function of “time lags,” and not cultures: processes of globalization will update any Asian tendencies towards, say, family solidarity and emphasis on education, as the development process unfolds. Stephanie Lawson, to cite another example, points out the difference between political culture and cultural politics, especially as it applies to the Asian Way debate. ‘Asian’ paths to human rights and politics, founded in religion, philosophy, tradition, and so on, are said to defend political uniformity and conformity. This could not happen without “a dichotomous formulation of ‘Asian’ versus ‘Western’ political values.” This is where cultural politics are critical, argues Lawson, since “the idea of culture has been used in [a place like] Singapore as a political device which serves the purpose of upholding ‘Asian’ values in the face of undesirable Western political values.” Lawson contends that this is about political power and control.²² Likewise, Melanie Chew argues that the appeal to an ‘Asian Way’ is in part a function of regional government fears that in the post-Cold War world, human rights

“Asian Style Democracy,” *Asian Survey* 34 no.11 (November 1994) 949-961; Melanie Chew, “Human Rights in Singapore,” *Asian Survey* 34 no.11 (November 1994) 937-938.

²¹ Christopher Patten, East and West: China, Power, and the Future of Asia (New York: Times Books, 1998) 129.

will serve as a conditionality for trade and finance, especially in American foreign policy, or that 'Western' actors have sinister or naive motives in promoting their human rights agenda.²³

The political interests of regional states have also been expressed in terms of independence or power within the global political economy. While the future of the Asian Way debate is uncertain, given the shadows cast by the crises of the late 1990s, its past has focused firmly on economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region. Economic growth added an air of legitimacy to the notion of 'Asian values', since this cycle of high economic performance among the Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) and near-NICs has been closely examined and widely admired. Some commentators anchored Asian Way perspectives in a growing confidence that stemmed from this era of economic success.²⁴ Others have argued that this new confidence also allowed for greater independence from the 'West':

Countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia that once depended on Western aid no longer feel the need to kowtow to foreign powers. They believe in their own definition of human rights and democracy, one that puts national interests ahead of individual rights, and imbeds economic development as a nation's primary goal.²⁵

Asian cultural perspectives, then, and the extent to which they may contribute to economic 'success', have been the object of intense scrutiny. James Fallows' view of Asian economies, to be explored later in this thesis, illustrate this point: Fallows

²² Stephanie Lawson, "Institutionalising Peaceful Conflict: Political Opposition and the Challenge of Democratisation in Asia," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 47 no.1 (May 1993) 27.

²³ Melanie Chew, "Human Rights in Singapore: Perceptions and Problems," *Asian Survey* 34 no.11 (November 1994) 937-938.

²⁴ Bilahari Kausikan, "Human Rights Must Adjust to Asian Power," *New Perspective Quarterly* 10 no.4 (Fall 1993) 62.

²⁵ Stackhouse, "Confident Region Seeks 'Asian Way'," A10.

attempts to identify that elusive quality that was supposed to have underpinned the economic success and relative political stability of Japan and other Asia-Pacific states. The search for this formula has had a number of significant ramifications: it has suggested a clash between a 'Western way' and an 'Asian way' in terms of competing capitalisms; it has conjured up a picture of American economic and political decline in the face of a changing international system; it rendered an Asian model, whatever that may have been, as mysterious as it was enviable. Thus, the central role of international trade and finance in the 1990s meant that in the midst of the Asian Way debate, repressive regimes in East and Southeast Asia were not as strenuously confronted or condemned for their appeal to 'Asian' cultures, since they were generally seen as globalization success stories. This point indicates that there are significant overlaps between factors within and beyond the geographic Asia-Pacific that pushed the debate forward.

The Global Context

The international relations and international political economy must also be taken into account as driving forces behind the persistence of the Asian Way debate. That is, there is a broader international basis for the debate's continuance, centred on the problems and priorities of a post-Cold War world. The theme of a search for new global rivals fed into ideas of clash and confrontation between 'East' and 'West'.

In one sense, the end of the Cold War placed a spotlight on issues of human rights and democratization – issues central to the Asian Way debate -- given the

reduced need to unconditionally support repressive regimes in a superpower chess game. Events such as the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the end of Apartheid government in South Africa, and the relatively democratic elections in Cambodia in 1992 helped solidify the view that global values were taking centre stage. According to Bilahari Kausikan, such events were indicative of an “emerging global culture of human rights” since the end of the Cold War,²⁶ even if, according to other commentators, this view has been framed with “a sense that the West has won the [post-Cold War] human rights debate.”²⁷

However, not only has the end of the Cold War emphasized ideas such as global cultures and a peace dividend, post-Cold War uncertainties have given rise to emphases on potential clashes between ‘the West’ and competing societies. Numerous accounts reflect upon and analyze the post-Cold War international environment, and its potential strategic or economic adversaries for the ‘West’. These have included, with varying degrees of suspicion, Islam, Russia, Japan, China, and ‘the Rising East’ in general. Moreover, as Chapter One will show, contributing to the idea of possible clash between industrialized societies and rising tigers is the issue of potential North-South opposition in general, based upon increasing tensions from growing socio-economic disparities or incompatible political cultures. Because of the latter’s potential drain on industrialized countries, in terms of migration, unrest, or pollution,

²⁶ Bilahari Kausikan, “Asia’s Different Standard,” *Foreign Policy* no.92 (Fall 1993) 24. The question of a global culture of human rights in the post-Cold War world has been taken up by other commentators as well, such as Claude Welch, in his discussion of the growing awareness of global human rights as a mitigation of *realpolitik*. Claude E. Welch, Jr, “Global Change and Human Rights: Asian Perspectives in Comparative Context,” *Asian Perspectives on Human Rights*, Claude E. Welch Jr. and Virginia A. Leary, eds. (Boulder: Westview, 1990) 3-4.

²⁷ Tremewan, 21.

developing countries have been argued by some to be a threat. So, while the end of the American-Soviet rivalry -- acting as a linchpin for international analysis for several decades -- has been viewed by some as ushering in a change in paradigms of confrontation and opposition²⁸, others have been preoccupied with identifying new, and sometimes inevitable, enemies and rivalries.

Potential threats are varied in nature: in some cases, they are argued to be economic, and revolve around challenges posed by ascendant actors in the international economy.²⁹ The period of prolonged economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region may have been frequently seen in a favourable light; however, the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) and near-NICs have also been interpreted as a threat to established, industrialized societies. In particular, the future economic role of China has been hotly debated as a possible global economic powerhouse, with its vast territory and population, given increasing economic liberalization. Likewise, Edward Olsen has identified Asia in general and Japan in particular as an emerging menace to

²⁸ Yoichi Funabashi draws particular attention to the need to decrease Japanese-American rivalries in the post-Cold War world. Cooperation and responsibility must be the priorities of these two leading capitalist countries, argues the author. Yoichi Funabashi, "Japan and America: Global Partners," *Foreign Policy* no.86 (Spring 1992) 24-39.

²⁹ Closely related to this expansion of the traditional definition of strategic threats is the discourse of supposedly new security issues. The 1994 United Nations Human Development Report, to cite one example, attempts to broaden the concept of security beyond the protection of territory and the promotion of national interest. The Report favours a conception of "human security" that focuses on people rather than nation-states, and includes issues of food, health, employment, ecology, and community. United Nations, Human Development Report 1993 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). In keeping with these concerns, there has been a theme of 'new' security threats in post-Cold War discourses. Nationalism is said to have re-emerged as a threat, especially in Europe, after the dampening effect of the Cold War has disappeared; the question of global population and pressures from the South has been discussed as a likely source of trouble for North America, Japan and Europe; potentially unstable regions, such as the former Soviet Union, are seen as emerging flashpoints. See, for example, James Mayall, "Nationalism and International Security After the Cold War," *Survival* 34 no.1 (Spring 1992) 19-35; Ariel Cohen, "Crime Without Punishment," *Journal of Democracy* 6 no.2 (April 1995) 34-45; Walter Laqueur, "Russian Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs* 71 no.5 (Winter 1992-1993) 103-116; Kishore Mahbubani, "The West and the Rest," *National Interest* no.28 (Summer 1992) 3-12. How genuinely

the United States after the end of the Cold War, and he urges a shift in threat perceptions and security to encompass economic as well as military questions.³⁰ As well, in a global system increasingly marked by disparity, Karl Magyar argues that economic competition will replace more traditional military methods; despite contemporary examples like Kosovo or Iraq, the author states that strategy will come to mean economic policy, and force will only be used by more marginalized actors. In this framework, the market economies of the 'West' are said to be facing off against the emergent dragons of Japan, China, and Southeast Asia, with technology and productivity deciding the victors.³¹ Somewhat similarly, Reg Whitaker identifies technology and intelligence, especially relating to economics, as the battlegrounds in the emerging contest between the United States on one hand and rivals in Japan and Europe on the other.³²

In addition to these international factors, underlining the global political background to the Asian Way debate, internal factors at work in non-Asian societies have in many cases helped to perpetuate Asian Way perspectives. Often overlooked in critiques of such perspectives is the possible contribution of societal factors outside the geographic Asia-Pacific region to the debate. That is, internal elements may have encouraged onlookers in countries like the United States, Canada, and Great Britain to closely examine the Asia-Pacific, and make subsequent, often stylized, comparisons.

'new' these questions are is a subject for continued debate, but they have indeed attracted great attention in the 1990s.

³⁰ Edward Olsen, "Target Japan as America's Economic Foe," *Orbis* 36 no.4 (Fall 1992)491-503; Richard J. Ellings and Edward Olsen, "A New Pacific Profile," *Foreign Policy* no.89 (Winter 1992-1993) 116-136.

³¹ Karl P. Magyar, "Classifying the International Political Economy: A Third World Proto-Theory," *Third World Quarterly* 16 no.4 (December 1995) 703-716.

³² Reg Whitaker, "Security and Intelligence in post-Cold War World," *Socialist Register* (1992) 111-130.

Concepts of decline in the 'West' – tied into ideas of new, unsettling threats in a rapidly shifting world – have arguably added fuel to the fire of the Asian Way debate. It is thus significant, as previously argued, that Asian Way perspectives have tended to frame 'Eastern values' as superior to 'Western' counterparts; 'Asian values' have been argued to be more than a variation on a Western theme of industrialization and modernization, but rather, a *different* and *better* model. In the words of the ever-quotable Lee Kuan Yew: "Asians will valiantly defend order against the corrosive influence of Western-style freedom."³³ This has also played into the now questionable theme of the 'East' as the world's economic powerhouse, so much so that the post-Cold War environment was at one time said to feature a shift in the balance of productive force from West to East. This suggested to some that the "East-West" pendulum was swinging in favour the East, leaving the West behind.³⁴

Certainly, one the themes often accompanying clash literature, particularly in the United States, was the idea that the 'West' has experienced decline; it is possible that the notion of a declining civilization could have rendered the idea of a rising one all the more compelling. The declinist theme has persisted in various forms, continuing to Fukuyama's declaration in mid-1999 that advanced industrial societies have experienced a "Great Disruption" in civility and social values, brought on by the

³³ Sebastian Mallaby, "Does Modernization Mean Westernization?" *Globe and Mail* (August 6, 1994) D4.

³⁴ Stein Tonnesson, "Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Knowing about Others," *Nordic Newsletter of Asian Studies* no.2, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Internet, April 1994, Available <http://nias.ku.dk/Nytt/Thematic/Orientalism/orientalism.html>. Interestingly enough, and perhaps underscoring how much resonance the idea of the 'pendulum' has, some suggest that the American period of dominance is indeed returning, or was never truly threatened; in the end, the West is said by some to have outperformed – or at least, outlasted – the East. See Mortimer B. Zuckerman, "A Second American Century," *Foreign Affairs* 77 no.3 (May/June 1998) 18-31. Still others remain nonplussed by the pendulum swing, and argue that cycles of pessimism and triumphalism are exaggerations. See Paul Krugman, "America the Boastful," *Foreign Affairs* 77 no.3 (May/June 1998) 32-45.

information age³⁵ -- despite, presumably, the triumph of their liberal, free market paradigm in the march of history. Charles William Maynes has discussed commentary from Fukuyama, as well as Huntington, Kaplan, and Kennedy: these observers have fuelled feelings that much-vaunted post-Cold War hopes -- for a new world order, peace dividends, and multilateral solutions for problems like those in Somalia and Yugoslavia -- have been frustrated. "How far we have fallen from those confident days," he contends, given seemingly intractable problems such as Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda. He states:

At home the sense of confidence was also receding. Few now believe that America will soon see a new age. Throughout the land there is a growing sense that the future will be worse than the past. Racial animosity is mounting. Fear of losing one's job is spreading. The sense of community is disappearing. The horror of the Oklahoma City bombing seems more vivid than the dreams of a better future held only a short time ago. Similar phenomena are also evidenced in Europe, where millions of young people enter adulthood knowing they face a lifetime without work. Anti-immigrant sentiments abound, and, as in the United States, these sentiments have had an impact on legislators. There is little generosity of spirit toward those outside Europe.³⁶

Maynes also argues that intellectuals have had a role in spreading the pessimism of the age, as its interpreters.

While he calls for cautious optimism in the end, the author certainly captures a mood: the 1990s have seen a language of malaise conjured up not only by the suggestion of global siege according to Kaplan or Connelly and Kennedy, but also by other accounts implying general social disillusionment in places like the United States. There was much talk of voter disaffection, even hostility, during the early 1990s in

³⁵ Francis Fukuyama, "The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order." *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1999) 55-80.

³⁶ Charles William Maynes, "The New Pessimism," *Foreign Policy* no. 100 (Fall 1995) 35.

Canada and the United States³⁷, fuelling many heated town hall sessions and the rise of so-called outsider candidates such as Ross Perot and Preston Manning. Similarly, other sources have spoken of a general search in countries like the United States for a new sense of moral community in the face of such disgruntlement, or for the processes underlying this public alienation.³⁸ Commentators such as the always controversial Huntington have pointed to the lack of an “enemy” figure in the world, with America losing its sense of identity, and its foreign policy subsequently becoming misdirected.³⁹

Such a discourse of disillusionment, amplified by media reports, was particularly marked in the celebrated Michael Fay case. When a US youth was sentenced to several lashings with a bamboo cane for vandalism while in Singapore in 1994, some Americans seemed to have a surprising reaction. Instead of condemning Singapore’s disciplinarian, ‘Asian’ behaviour, a significant portion of public opinion expressed support for a society which was orderly and anti-crime, forcing young offenders to respect community laws.⁴⁰ Some have speculated that the American public were frustrated with a certain moral breakdown to their own culture – juxtaposing it with the picture of a disciplined, orderly Singapore.⁴¹ These battlegrounds have extended to the end of the decade, as the international community

³⁷ See, for example, “Disgruntleds Have It,” *Economist* (November 5, 1994) 23-24; “The Weirdest Year,” *Economist* (November 5, 1994) 24; Norman Ornstein, “Angry Voters,” *Fortune* (October 17, 1994) 141-144; Anthony Wilson-Smith, “Some Politicians Just Don’t Get It,” *Macleans* (July 26, 1993) 18; “Hope in Hope,” *Vancouver Sun* (October 28, 1993) A21.

³⁸ Michael J. Sandel, “The Source of Our Discontent,” *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1996) 57-74; Joseph S. Nye, Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King, eds., *Why People Don’t Trust Government* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1997).

³⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Erosion of American National Interests,” *Foreign Affairs* 76 no.5 (September-October 1997) 28-49.

⁴⁰ See James Walsh, “The Whipping Boy,” *Time* (May 2, 1994) 80; Michael Elliott and Steven Strasser, “Crime and Punishment,” *Newsweek* (April 18, 1994) 18-22; “No Mercy,” *The Nation* (April 25, 1994) 543-544; Melissa Roberts, “Justice for Six Lashes?” *Newsweek* (April 11, 1994) 40.

struggles to pinpoint the American role in the world, in light of ongoing initiatives such as those against Iraq and Yugoslavia: the United States may be the only superpower, but it may also be a unilateralist bully, complete with an eroding national identity that causes it to focus on threats and conflicts abroad.⁴²

These factors – the interests of state actors in the Asia-Pacific region, the international political climate and the search for new rivals, and the internal socio-political malaise in some non-Asian societies – form the political context for the Asian Way debate. With this context in mind, the Asian Way debate can be re-evaluated at this pivotal time.

The Need to Rethink the Asian Way Debate

Clearly, the Asian Way debate involved a set of issues with wide-ranging implications. If we are to confront problems or crises in the Asia-Pacific in a more meaningful way, without the confusion surrounding the most recent cycle of economic and political difficulties, the weaknesses of the debate must be used in order to address current issues more fully. As it stands, many critiques of the Asian Way debate, such as those mentioned above, concentrate almost exclusively on Asian Way perspectives as a tool of oppressive governments, and the debate is dismissed without sufficient, in-depth examination. Certainly, as the previous section showed, it is vital to point out

⁴¹ Kim Dae Jung, "Is Culture Destiny?" *Foreign Affairs* 73 no.6 (November-December 1994) 190-191.

⁴² See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Erosion of American National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* 76 no.5 (September/October 1997) 28-49; Samuel P. Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs* 78 no.2 (March/April 1999) 21-38; Gary Willis, "Bully of the Free World," *Foreign Affairs* 78 no.2 (March/April 1999) 39-52.

that the debate has had political uses, and that it has benefited specific governments and leaders to achieve goals of political order. It should also be noted that analyses of the political context for the protracted debate have tended to focus heavily on the regime building and interest maximizing state elites in the Asia-Pacific; however, political interests of non-state actors are also significant. As Chapter Four and Chapter Five will show, the tendency to portray non-state actors as a unified group opposing and repudiating Asian Way perspectives is overly simplistic. Some non-state actors in the region maintain that there are distinctly Asian approaches to protest and social action, and speak of the need to protect indigenous cultures.

However, while certain state and non-state actors may have used Asian Way perspectives to offset the potential social change brought about by ‘Western’ liberalization, this is not sufficient grounds to reject the entire debate, given its potential insights. For example, while some specific state leaders or parties may stand to benefit from Asian Way perspectives, as argued above, to reduce the motives of all states to one single dimension is as stereotypical as the notion of a single, unified Asian culture. Southeast Asian governments, to cite one case, have been referred to as a bloc of actors “on the defensive,” and as elites urgently attempting to maintain political control in a changing world, in the face of their opposition: pro-democracy activists with “alternative voices.”⁴³ To create such a simple picture does not adequately challenge stereotypes based on a society’s values – it merely shifts their boundaries. As well, it has been proposed that intellectuals in the Asia-Pacific region have advanced substantial discussions around the pertinent issues, distinct from the stylized

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 204, 218.

extremes of the Asian Way debate.⁴⁴ An example of this is the volume of writings, The Asian Renaissance, by Anwar Ibrahim, the now-jailed former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. In this collection, Ibrahim differentiates the Asian renaissance from that of the 'West' in terms of the importance of religious and communitarian values in a society like Malaysia.⁴⁵ So, that manner in which states have been aggregated, the range of actors that have incorporated some form of 'Asian values' into their perspectives and activities, and the way the debate has been amplified and received in other parts of the world, all bear close attention. They also offer potent lessons for future analyses.

Thus, this topic requires a multi-faceted critique of Asian Way perspectives, and a subsequent set of guidelines for 'regional' analysis. This involves multiple arenas of change and controversy associated with the debate: social, involving the Confucian tradition; economic, encompassing ongoing processes of globalization and unfolding crises; and social-political, taking in the roles of state and non-state actors. These factors, along with the theoretical underpinnings of the Asian Way debate – both in the Asian Way literatures and the broader, more global literatures – must be explored to understand how the theme of clash is presented and reinforced. These steps are necessary to offer a truly meaningful challenge to the idea of an 'Asian Way' that conflicts with other competing cultural ways, rather than dismissing this powerful

⁴⁴ Joanne Bauer and Daniel Bell, eds., The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴⁵ Ironically, Ibrahim has been criticized for aiming these essays and speeches at an overly 'Western' audience, making them culturally ambiguous and non-threatening to a wider audience. See Farish A. Noor, "Pondering Over Anwar Ibrahim's Asian Renaissance," *Al-Qalam: Southern Africa's Muslim Newspaper* Internet, January 1998, Available: mandla.co.za/al-qalam/jan98/asian.htm.

idea out-of-hand based on a single argument, that it is a manipulative discourse used as a smokescreen by repressive regimes.⁴⁶

The second reason for a reassessment of the Asian Way debate is the pivotal context in the Asia-Pacific: the much-discussed Asian financial and political crisis. Clearly, as stated above, the debate cannot continue as it has. Many assumptions at the heart of Asian Way perspectives, as Chapter One will outline, involve the economic success and political stability of societies with 'Asian values'; yet, the more recent context of economic slumps, currency crises, social unrest and in some cases, massive political upheaval, do not contribute to a picture of harmonious, successful, cohesive societies. The Asian Way has been argued by some proponents to be desirable, even preferable, to other political and economic paths, yet it would be difficult to mount such an argument at the close of the 1990s. This is not to say that an appeal to 'Asian values' cannot resurface in some other form in the future – it may well be that any economic recovery in the region, for example, will be attributed in part to a distinctive cultural or social base. Moreover, issues related to the Asian Way debate, such as the overlap of cultures among mobile, educated people, or the need to protect indigenous cultures against potentially corrosive outside interference, are unlikely to disappear. However, until such redirections in the debate emerge more clearly, there remains the task of synthesizing the issues at this significant time. As the Conclusion will argue, this task is especially important, given that the Asian Way debate is part of a continuum of misunderstanding and mystification concerning 'the East', and we are entering into a new phase of the cycle. The emerging picture of

⁴⁶ For an example of this perspective, see Christie, 204.

'Asia' as marked by corruption, nepotism, unrest, and mismanagement must be addressed with new analytical tools, offering a less homogenized regional picture, and encouraging less homogenized and potentially destructive policies like those of International Monetary Fund structural adjustments.

In sum, then, while there are existing critiques of the Asian Way debate, a comprehensive analysis of the issues, encompassing elements of social change, economic strategy, and state policy, is a key addition to the literature. Also necessary is an account that does not summarily dismiss Asian Way perspectives, establishing in their place viewpoints equally as stereotypical -- but instead, one that considers how specific themes in the Asian Way debate have failed to capture current and complex social realities. Only then can we reshape reactions to such events as the current Asian flu, and develop more nuanced understandings of the region, thus avoiding the trap of trading 'Asian Way' stereotypes for 'Asian Crisis' ones. Finally, developments in the social, political, and economic circumstances of the Asia-Pacific region signal a turning point for the Asian Way debate, and regardless of whether the debate survives in some form, this is an opportune and important time to evaluate the course of the discussions.

Sources and Methodology

In terms of methodology, the approach of this thesis is descriptive, making use of document analysis: specifically, what Johnson and Joslyn refer to as "running records" for researchers of International Relations and Comparative Politics, including

speeches, mass media materials, and data on socio-economic and political attributes of nations.⁴⁷ It also draws on Moody's method of considering cultural variables – not as stand-alone features, but as possible contexts for political life.⁴⁸ Oros' emphasis on a larger, changing international relations context for the Asian values debate is also valuable, if not his assertion that a positivist methodology is the best means to shed light on this complex discussion.⁴⁹ Rather, this thesis employs a more qualitative approach, informed by challenges to positivist epistemology in the social sciences, and emphasizing diversity and subjectivity in human affairs.⁵⁰ It is also informed by other approaches: first, by the idea that international relations theory and postcolonial studies have much to offer each other, despite the traditional separation between the two discourses⁵¹; and second, by existing debates on methods of examining and interpreting cultures in a global, political context. These debates include: literatures which propose that culture itself serves specific political and economic interests in capitalist societies; cultural studies which use concepts of “othering,” especially within the framework of postcolonial criticism; and related works that attempt to problematize opposed relationships between socio-cultural blocks, especially given existing patterns of power and domination.⁵² It is beyond the scope of this thesis to

⁴⁷ Janet Buttolph Johnson and Richard A. Joslyn, Political Science Research Methods, 3rd ed. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1995) 237-238.

⁴⁸ Peter R. Moody. “Trends in the Study of Chinese Political Culture.” *China Quarterly* no.139 (September 1994) 731-740.

⁴⁹ Andrew Oros. “Asian Values or Asian Ideology?” *Journal of Public and International Affairs* no.6 (1995) 129-147.

⁵⁰ Shifts in political theory from positivism to a more diverse, if more uncertain, epistemological context is traced by Richard Bellamy in “The Demise and Rise of Political Theory,” Theories and Concepts of Politics, Bellamy, ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

⁵¹ “Bridging International Relations and Postcolonialism,” *Alternatives* 19 no.3 (Summer 1994) 371-397.

⁵² See, for example, Theodor Adorno, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture, J.M. Bernstein, ed. (London: Routledge, 1991); analyses of Gramscian cultural

consider all these theoretical currents, in terms of their potential contributions and their shortcomings, but they must be acknowledged as a relevant backdrop to the Asian Way debate.

Use of Media Sources

Throughout this thesis, English-language academic sources are used, mainly published in North America and Great Britain; these focus on the Asian Way debate and general themes of civilizational clash. Other key sources include mainstream media reports, when a parallel examination of the media is appropriate; these accounts are primarily from newspapers and news magazines in North America and Great Britain, such as the *Globe and Mail*, the *New York Times*, and the *Economist*, or similar sources published in English as widely read in North America and Europe, such as the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review*. These sources include interviews with Asian leaders and non-state actors.

Why is it important to look at the media when discussing the debate?

Certainly, the relevance of media accounts to issues of policy and opinion has been proposed elsewhere.⁵³ And indeed, the media have been heavily involved in the Asian

hegemony by theorists such as Terry Eagleton and Ien Ang; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Sub-Altern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Edward Said, "Kim, The Pleasures of Imperialism," *Raritan* 7 (1987): 52-78; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); John D. Rogers, "Post-Orientalism and the Interpretation of Premodern and Modern Political Identities: The Case of Sri Lanka," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53 no.1 (February 1994) 10-23.

⁵³ See, for example, Eleanor O'Donnell, "Mass Media Worldviews: Canadian Images and the Third World," *Conflicts of Interest: Canada and the Third World*, Jamie Swift and Brian Tomlinson, eds. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991); Leon T. Hadar, "What Green Peril?" *Foreign Affairs* 72 no.2 (Spring 1993) 27-42; Vicky Randall, "The Media and Democratization in the Third World," *Third World*

Way debate, as described in the following chapter; they have pinpointed key issues, such as collectivism and harmony, which have resonated in policy and academic debates. Furthermore, they make the debate more accessible to precisely the audience that Kevin Tan⁵⁴, for example, claims is the main constituency of the debate: ‘Western’ scholars and commentators.

As well, some of the Asian Way literature makes reference to the key role the media can play in reflecting, and even shaping, the debate. Tan examines the role of the Western media in the East-West human rights debate, asserting that the media have “impassioned the debate” and revealed, perhaps even shaped, the differing perspectives in East and West. The debate has “come to be planted along civilizational lines,” says the author, “that cut deep into the national and hemispheric pride of both parties,” that explains the amount of “baggage” associated with either position.⁵⁵ As well, one commentator gives a conceptual background to the importance of media roles in the encouragement of certain representations of an ‘Asian Way’:

There is a new sense of pride and achievement in this emphasis which appears no longer confined to intellectuals seeking inspiration from their cultural heritage, nor to political leaders turning to the past for the justification of their present rule. Cover stories on Asian values and the “The Asian Way” in magazines such as *Asia Week* (March 1994), *The Economist* (May 1994), and *Asian Business* (June 1994) indicate that the search for a specific Asian identity based on its own traditional moral values has firmly taken root in various Asian societies and replaced the intoxicated look to the West.⁵⁶

Quarterly 14 no.3 (1993) 625-646; Timothy E. Cook, *Governing With the News: The News Media As a Political Institution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁵⁴ Kevin Y. L. Tan, “What Asians Think About the West’s Response to the Human Rights Debate,” in Joanne Bauer, “The Bangkok Declaration Three Years After: Reflections on the State of the Asia-West Dialogue on Human Rights,” *Human Rights Dialogue* 4, March 1996, Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Internet, Available: www.cceia.org/dialog4.htm.

⁵⁵ David Little, “Human Rights: East and West,” *Behind the Headlines: Canadian Institute of International Affairs Quarterly* (Winter/Spring 1996) 18.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

And, in a more spectacular example of how media sources can contribute to the debate, journalists in places such as Singapore have become mired in controversy themselves: Since the mid-1980s, for example, publications such as *Time*, the *Economist*, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, and *Far Eastern Economic Review* have all had their Singaporean distribution limited for commenting on the city-state's domestic affairs. Foreign journalists in Singapore have found their travel documents closely scrutinized by the government, and legal action against individual correspondents has occurred. In a particularly well-known case, an American academic, Christopher Lingle, was embroiled in a legal battle over a 1994 article in the Singapore-based *International Herald Tribune*, when he alluded to corruption and repression by unspecified Asian regimes.⁵⁷ In kind, state representatives such as Kishore Mahbubani have been openly critical of hypocrisy and sensationalism in the press of liberal

⁵⁷ Christopher Lingle, "The Smoke over Parts of Asia Obscures Some Profound Concerns," *International Herald Tribune* (10 July 1994) 4. In this article, Lingle argued that while Mahbubani and others criticized liberal democracy, Western governments at least assured public knowledge, while in East Asia, repression and deaths were concealed. The objectionable phrase stated that Asian governments were "relying upon a compliant judiciary to bankrupt opposition politicians." There was a rather bizarre fall-out to this incident. After Lingle had left Singapore in the wake of the controversy, Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong went to the US to receive an honorary degree from Williams College in Massachusetts. Faculty members, dismayed by the Singaporean human rights situation, called for a new, in-person debate between Goh and Lingle – Lingle to be joined by Singaporean dissident Francis Seow. The New York Times' William Safire backed the idea. Then, Goh invited Safire to debate him in Singapore. To counter, Safire offered to debate Lee Kuan Yew before an impartial press in Switzerland, if and only if Goh would face Seow at Williams College. Lee's son declared that this convoluted proposal meant that Safire had "chickened out." All this, says Emerson, over Singapore defending "a thoroughly Western concept": judicial impartiality. Emerson, 99. The odd nature of this exchange is underlined, however, by the grim human rights violations committed against one of the participants. In his 1994 book, *To Catch a Tatar: A Dissident in Lee Kuan Yew's Prison*, Francis Seow describes how he was stripped and questioned for 17 hours under three spotlights in a freezing room, not allowed to sit down or move. On a tour to Canada, Seow stated that the humiliation of the experience was far worse than the beatings or physical torture. He has also stated that "[t]hese acts of repression are quite unnecessary to the economic prosperity of Singapore." Marcus Gee, "Surviving Singapore's Dark Side," *Globe and Mail* (April 5, 1994) C1.

democracies, when coverage of Asia is concerned.⁵⁸ This gives some indication of the role the mainstream press can play in both shaping and reflecting the content and tone of the debate.

Use of Interviews

In Chapter 4, "State and Society in the Asian Way Debate," interviews with non-state actors in the Philippines, gathered from November 1995 to February 1996 in Manila, Baguio, and Ifagao, are used. Information was collected from women's groups, peasant groups, farmer and fisher organizations, and groups working for economic development and social justice. In addition, groups concerned with human rights, both civil-political (such as electoral reform and human rights lawyers) and socio-economic (such as advocates for persons displaced by industrial programs) were included. During these interviews, members of non-governmental organizations and coalitions for social action were asked about: their specific activities and aims; their relationships with other state and non-state actors; and their views concerning an 'Asian Way' to human rights or political action. The Philippines was chosen for this work because of its extensive use of English, and because of its comparatively open society, with many groups and organizations functioning relatively openly, able to discuss their activities and aims.

⁵⁸ See Emerson, 97-98, paraphrasing Kishore Mahbubani's "You May Not Like It, Europe, But This Asian Medicine Might Help." *International Herald Tribune* (1-2 October 1994) 4; Mahbubani. "The Dangers of Decadence: What the Rest Can Teach the West." *Foreign Affairs* 72 no.4 (September-October 1993) 12.

The debate has been largely framed in terms of a dichotomous state-society relationship: repressive regional regimes enforce belief in ‘Asian values’, while the more legitimate voices of society reject ‘Asian values’. However, the Filipino groups’ varying approaches to the idea of an ‘Asian Way’ helps to challenge this dichotomy, offering a more detailed picture of opinions underlying the discussions. This is especially true given the extensive discussions within the Filipino activist community at the time, involving the rejection or acceptance of universal principles, among other subjects. Critiques have argued that Asian Way perspectives are nothing but the self-serving opinions of power-seeking governments, but such analysis fails to consider, for example, Filipino groups who discussed an ‘Asian’ path to social protest, distinct from any government rhetoric they condemned.

State and Non-State Actors

The Asian Way debate often assumes that states are central, even primary, actors in the policy framework, so this thesis frequently treats states as its main area of inquiry. This is not because other actors are not present or significant, but because state leaders are looked to as the chief antagonists in the Asian Way debate, and states in the Asia-Pacific are the entities generally examined. Non-state actors are also brought into the discussion as central participants.

Terms

The term “Asia-Pacific” refers to the geographic area encompassing Northeast Asia (China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan) and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Indochina Peninsula). It is not intended as a denotation of a conceptual region, but rather, a geographic one, since this thesis concludes that generalized concepts of regionalism in the Asia-Pacific must be reworked. The Asian Way debate refers to the controversy surrounding purportedly Asian cultural beliefs and methods of arranging societies, in political, economic, and social terms. These discussions and arguments are not a single, grand debate, but rather, incorporate diverse themes and viewpoints, explained in Chapter One. Asian Way perspectives refer to articulations supporting a specifically Asian approach to politics, economics, and/or social values. The term ‘Asian Way’ refers to the contested idea of an Asian cultural path to political and/or socio-economic life; similarly, ‘Asian values’ are the disputed set of moral behaviours believed to be held by cultures in the Asia-Pacific region.

Organization and Arguments

This thesis is organized as follows: first, the theoretical context for the discussion is established (Chapter One), and the themes at the centre of clash literatures and ‘Asian Way’ literatures are considered. If the Asian Way debate has contributed to a misjudgement or misunderstanding of the Asia-Pacific region, what

elements have been most significant in this process? There are three principle issue-areas that have provided a stereotyped understanding of 'Asian values'; these three issue-areas are not only primary arenas of concern for a reassessment of the debate, but that are also key arenas for current changes in the Asia-Pacific. First, ideas of clash have been interpreted in socio-cultural terms, with the Confucian question in the Asia-Pacific being at the forefront of the debate. The supposed Confucian context of the region has been an enduring theme, establishing the 'East' as communitarian and harmonious, with markedly different values from individualist, liberal societies (Chapter Two). Second, and closely related to issues of culture and Confucianism, are economic factors, at the core of perceptions concerning 'Asian' confidence, independence, and ascendance; Asian Way perspectives have tended to reify economic approaches in the region, proposing a successful Asian economic path based on Asian values, which contrasts with the path of Western liberal democracies (Chapter Three). Third, political factors concerning the role of states, and relationship between states and societies, must also be put at the heart of the debate, since distorted views of state and non-state positions have created an impression of monolithic Asian interests, and contributed to notions of global clash (Chapters Four and Five).

Chapter One, "A Question of Clash: Literatures of Confrontation," examines the literatures surrounding the concept of cultural clash, first in the more general, global context, and then specifically related to the Asia-Pacific region. Chapter Two, "Confucianism and the Asian Way Debate: The Mandate of Heaven," looks at the central role of Confucian philosophies within the discussions. Chapter Three, "The Success of 'Asian' Success: The Asian Way Debate and Economic Growth," explores

the significance of the region's extended period of economic growth in the debate. Chapter Four, "State, Society, and an 'Asian Way'," addresses the varying roles given to state and non-state actors in the context of Asian Way perspectives. Chapter Five, "The Bangkok Conference and the Asian Way Debate: Actors and Issues," uses the 1993 Regional Preparatory Conference for the UN Conference on Human Rights as a case study, in order to examine key issues arising from previous chapters.

The central points in the argument of this thesis are the following: first, Chapter One makes the claim that there is a body of literature, encompassing scholarly material but also incorporating more mainstream analyses, describing purportedly Asian cultural approaches to political, social, and economic arrangements. This literature is anchored in sources outside the Asia-Pacific – academic journals in North America and Great Britain, for example – but also has included statements by regional policy-makers as they are gathered in these non-Asian sources, and media reports. It is established as part of an adversarial relationship with the 'Western values' frequently portrayed as the opposite of 'Asian' values – e.g. where the East is harmonious, the West is chaotic; where the West values freedom, the East requires obedience. This literature operates within the more general context of clashing cultures, often presented in a West vs. non-West or North vs. South framework.

Chapter Two argues that the philosophy of Confucianism has been pivotal in establishing the idea of clash between supposedly 'Eastern' and 'Western' values. This is achieved in part by presenting Confucianism as static and anti-democratic; thus, this element of Asian Way perspectives can be challenged by underscoring Confucianism's dynamic role in accommodating social change. Particular attention

will be paid to the communitarian argument: that Confucianism reinforces the allegedly Asian emphasis on group-oriented values. It will be argued that the idea of a group-oriented 'Asian' lifestyle cannot explain the ongoing influence of individual and liberal ideas.

Chapter Three critiques the notion that the period of Asian economic success was anchored in 'Asian' cultural life. It will be argued that the linking of the period of regional economic success with 'Asian values' fails on several grounds. The theoretical underpinnings of an association between social/cultural values and economic prosperity are questioned, and the trade-off model, with its sacrifice of 'un-Asian' freedom in the name of growth, is challenged. Moreover, the presentation of regional state actors as an undifferentiated bloc, with essentially similar economic lives based on a common culture, is refuted. These points address the theoretical assumptions about economics central to Asian Way perspectives. As well, the validity of the Asia-Pacific's success, when applied to the period of rapid Asia-Pacific economic growth and prosperity, is questioned, in terms of ecology and social welfare.

Chapter Four argues that Asian Way perspectives fail to account for diversity among state and non-state actors; the diverse approaches to issues of human rights and democratization taken by regional state and non-state actors will be examined by way of illustration. The Filipino example is offered as an in-depth case.

Chapter Five explores the 1993 Bangkok Conference as a case study in diversity among state and non-state actors, developing the argument that the monolithic presentation of 'Asian' culture is inadequate. This conference is a pivotal one for the Asian Way debate. It was the regional preparatory conference for the 1993

World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, a well-publicized gathering frequently cast as a forum for East-West clash.⁵⁹ The Bangkok Conference, preparing for the first world conference of its kind in 25 years, provided a platform for issues central to the Asian Way debate, such as human rights, social justice, and development.

Moreover, the Bangkok Conference was the first formal human rights conference held in the Asia-Pacific, establishing public stances on social justice issues; this was particularly relevant, given that conferences and documents on human rights have not been as prevalent in the Asia-Pacific as they have been in, for example, Africa or Latin America. As well, the Bangkok Conference produced extensive state and non-state declarations, examined in Chapter Five, which are useful for identifying the positions of different parties within in the debate.

The Conclusion uses these shortcomings of the Asian Way debate to propose alternate guidelines for analysis. In order to go forward, we must speak of individual societies, and the forces that operate within and across individual borders, and step away from blanket notions of the Asia-Pacific as a conceptual regional. Societal and non-state actors must be disaggregated, and not characterized as a bloc, allied against corrupt governments in favour of universal principles. The central important of social change must be explicitly acknowledged, since any set of values are not fixed. We must look to specific cases of cultural beliefs and traditions in communities, and not

⁵⁹ See Susumu Awanohara, Michael Vatikiotis, and Shada Islam. "Vienna Showdown." *Far Eastern Economic Review* (17 June 1993) 16-20; Matthew D'Ancona, "Nations Cling to Concept of Global Rules on Human Rights." *Times of London* (June 26, 1993) 11; Matthew D'Ancona, "China Leads Asian Challenge to the Principle of Universal Human Rights," *Times of London* (June 17, 1993) 13; "Human Rights: Hot Air." *Economist* (June 26, 1993) 46; Alan Riding, "Rights Forum Ends in Call for a Greater Role by UN," *New York Times* (June 26, 1993) A2; Alan Riding, "China Wins Fight on Right Groups: Conference in Vienna Ejects Nongovernment Monitors from Key Committee." *New York Times* (June 17, 1993) A15.

bypass or minimize them. As well, processes of globalization must not be established as the opposite of cultural clash, promising integration and common interests.

In conclusion, the Asian Way debate must be closely examined for its persistence and vitality, for the wide range of actors who have grappled with the issues involved, and for its larger framework of clash and confrontation among competing civilizations. At this pivotal point, many unanswered questions remain, and a review of the debate may help explain why observers were so unprepared for the events beginning in Thailand in 1997: fundamental misunderstandings of the circumstances behind the 'miracle' may be an important root of the shocked response to the crisis, and one part of a longer cycle of misapprehension. Once Asian Way perspectives have been challenged in a substantial manner, then the debate must be re-framed in the conclusion, both in terms of its past – how the critiques have left us with a more complete picture of the debate – and in terms of its future. Is the debate truly dead? While this era of the discussions may have closed, there are indications that the dispute could resurface. This makes the search for alternative analytical guidelines all the more meaningful. In light of dramatic and ongoing changes in the Asia-Pacific, there should not be monolithic statements of difference between 'East' and 'West', but rather, an examination of differences and convergences in more specific cases, in order to understand how varying societies interact with each other.

Chapter One:
A Question of Clash: Literatures of Confrontation

An Unshakeable Destiny -- Hong Kong 1997 and the Search for an 'Asian Way'

During the writing of this thesis, one of many pivotal events in the Asia-Pacific regional occurred: on June 30, 1997, CBC Newsworld announced that the sun had finally set on the British Empire, and Hong Kong had reverted back to Chinese rule after over one hundred and fifty years as a colony. The ceremony marking the occasion seemed oddly flat; it was, as one commentator put it, the process of the British saying goodbye to themselves. Christopher Patten, the 28th and final governor of Hong Kong, gave a farewell speech claiming that British rule had provided scaffolding for Hong Kong's ascent: political liberties; freedom and the rule of law; light, honest government. Hong Kong values, he stated optimistically, are decent values; they are universal values, and they are the future beliefs of Asia. After Patten spoke, Prince Charles took centre stage, further highlighting the anachronistic feel of the pull-out ceremony: a member of the beleaguered and scandal-ridden British Royal Family seemed ill-suited for contemporary Hong Kong. The British may have been marking the end of a century, but East and Southeast Asia have been frequently portrayed as embarking on a new, Pacific century.

Ultimately, the Newsworld coverage suggested that there was a reversal of fortune at play. It is no small irony that Hong Kong has been the most liberalized of

the original Four Tigers, the East Asian Newly Industrialized Countries, and part of a region with a dramatic experience of economic growth, while Great Britain, its former colonizer, must work to protect its traditional status in the face of distressing questions -- why does it still have a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council? Why is it still a member of the G7, when more prosperous nations are not? No matter how many bagpipes played for the last Governor, or how enthusiastically the band performed "Rule Britannia," two striking visual images overshadowed the pomp: the skyscraper background of Hong Kong's economic sector; and the trucks carrying troops from the Chinese People's Army across the border into the city.

The media coverage of the transfer of power repeatedly emphasized that Hong Kong's nature was dual. Hong Kong, said Patten in his televised farewell speech, is a Chinese city with British characteristics. CNN's web page coverage was entitled: "Hong Kong: Between Two Worlds." These sorts of dichotomies -- Hong Kong trapped between Eastern and Western cultures, Hong Kong rising as its former Western colonizer is falling -- are common in discussions about the Asia-Pacific, even though a society like China encompasses many worlds, and is home to a significant portion of the entire globe's population. Certainly, there is a temptation to reduce complex issues to more simple, accessible dualities -- and there are varying ways of doing so, as evidenced by Deng Xio-Peng's statement to Margaret Thatcher when the Hong Kong deal was struck: that the city-state is one country with two systems, one for economics, and one for politics. However, such a generalized analysis removes from the picture much of its detail and richness, reinforcing ideas that cultures are colliding based on opposed value systems. The 'West' has its values, as does the

‘East’, and these traditions are locked in an inexorable struggle; moreover, there is a purportedly Asian approach to human rights, economics, and governance, distinct from, and in conflict with, the ‘Western’ method of arranging political and economic life. This is the ‘Asian values’ or Asian Way debate which is the focus of this thesis.

In order to examine the implications of this debate, and how its stereotypes may be avoided for future developments in politics or economics, we should first look to the theories and ideas that have run through the discussions. The Asian Way debate has operated within the context of a more general literature concerning opposition and conflict between cultures or civilizations. Both the general clash literature and the specific Asian Way literature must be outlined if they are to be critically examined in upcoming chapters. Thus, this chapter will offer an overview of the two interrelated literatures, emphasizing their themes of clash and confrontation. It will be divided into two sections: the first will discuss general clash literature, beginning with academic sources, then more mainstream sources. The second section will examine the Asian Way debate itself, exploring academic debates, the statements of regional policy-makers, and media input.

Throughout this chapter, the theme of opposition and clash between monolithic blocs such as West and non-West, North and South, and particularly, East and West, will be highlighted, as it is consistently presented in varying sources. This theme of clash in its ‘East-West’ context also will be explored in the chapters to come, and the conclusion of this thesis will suggest that as the Asian Way debate faces unprecedented change and challenge, a vision of convergence may be more appropriate in specific regional case studies.

Part I-- Civilizations in Collision: General Clash Literature

This thesis contends that the Asian Way debate is embedded in a larger discourse of clash, reification, dichotomies – one that has appeared in many forms, but has also emerged strongly and been given legitimacy in the post Cold War era. The Asian Way debate is not without a context, and it is not unrelated to global debates about clashes in Rwanda or Kashmir or Yugoslavia or Dagestan. The emerging theme of a US-China rift is not isolated from other proposed global rivalries, such as West versus Islam, or from the re-legitimation of questions of nationalisms or ethnic states. The global discussions of clash and culture have helped create particularly ripe conditions for the incubation of Asian Way themes. This thesis does not wish to ignore an Asia-Pacific society's own history and context to relate it to post-Cold War; indeed, it does not diminish the significance of local contexts to add global contexts. Rather, this thesis wishes to underscore the importance of the search for post-Cold War paradigms for 'Western' participants in the debate, and the enormous impact post-Cold War politics have for the region, in terms of development assistance, arms transfers, trade policy, and so on.

How do we approach questions of clash, then? The notion of opposing sides, frequently based on cultures, nationalities, or ethnicities, is a recurring theme in analyses of social values and their accompanying political-economic contexts. There are countless "imagined communities," to use Benedict Anderson's phrase, and likewise, there are similar groupings beyond borders, with different values, political

systems, and economic arrangements.¹ Dealing with such diversity has proved a challenge for many global regimes: in the field of international human rights, for example, discussions of cultural difference have been especially problematic. The process of resolving universal human rights with specific contexts and traditions continues to provoke heated debate. It has been repeatedly asked if there is one correct vision of human rights that must be applied to all societies in the same manner, or if there are different approaches to human rights in different cultures.

Certainly, in discussions about international human rights, different ‘timelines’ have been associated with different historical and cultural contexts, sometimes referred to as a generational model of rights. The ‘Western’ human rights timeline, or first generation of civil-political human rights, was associated with natural law, humanism, rationalism, and limitations of the state in relation to individuals’ rights to life and property. However, alternative timelines have been established, based on the experiences and arguments of Communist-Marxist or developing nations, and emphasizing social-economic and group rights as the second- and third-generation models. The second generation involved Cold War ideological divisions, which frequently pitted the values of Western liberal democracies against East Bloc socialism; the third generation spoke to a range of clashes proposed between North and South, including those surrounding development rights, or people’s rights, based upon international justice, independence, and self-sufficiency.² Christopher Tremewan

¹ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso Press, 1983).

² For further discussion on issues of comparative human rights in the international context, see R.J. Vincent, Human Rights and International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Rhoda E. Howard and Jack Donnelly, eds. International Handbook of Human

states that “the debate [concerning ideological divisions over human rights in West and non-West] has raged over the decades and has often been characterized as a stand-off.”³ In this sense, then, the idea of competing social or cultural values affecting justice and governance is constantly revisited in varying contexts. However, within a framework of competing blocs – East and West, developed and developing, Western and Socialist – oversimplifications are inevitable. The very discussion of, for example, a ‘Chinese’ cultural path to human rights or governance raises enormous questions: what can it really mean to share an identity with over a billion people? These concerns central to the Asian Way debate.

There is a general literature of confrontation and clash – along North-South and West-East fault-lines – that is important to examine before exploring the specific vision of East-West clash presented in Asian Way literature. This more general literature establishes a theoretical context for the specific Asian Way debate, demonstrating a dichotomy between the ‘West’ and some competing culture or society in the present global context. Moreover, some examples of the general literature on clash are well known -- such as those by Robert Kaplan and Samuel Huntington -- and bring to the forefront issues that are crucial in the ‘East-West’ as well as global context: security; the environment; overpopulation; and the concept of new post-Cold War threats or dichotomies. In this sense, then, there are many overlapping issue-

Rights (New York: Greenwood, 1987); Richard E. Claude, “The Classical Model of Human Rights Development,” Claude ed. Comparative Human Rights (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); David P. Forsythe, Human Rights and World Politics (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Jack Donnelly, Universal Rights in Theory and Practice (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); George Shepherd, “African People’s Rights: The Third Generation in Global Perspective,” Emerging Human Rights: The African Political Economy Context, George W. Shepherd and Mark O.C. Anikpo, eds. (New York: Greenwood, 1989).

³ Christopher Tremewan. “Human Rights in Asia,” *Pacific Review* 6 no.1 (1993) 21.

areas and problems in the general clash literature and the more specific Asian Way literature, and examples of both often work within similar frames of reference.

General clash perspectives can be found both in academic literature and in the mainstream media, and as such, are widely accessible in different forms and sources. In this chapter, I will explore the literatures relating to cultural clash in an 'East-West' and 'North-South' context; in this way, I will demonstrate how the idea of clash among discrete, monolithic cultures has been promoted first in academic sources, and then in more mainstream, media sources. This provides a foundation for understanding how specific perspectives of clash between a monolithic Asia and a monolithic, opposed West are presented.

Creating Opposites: Clash Literature meets the Brave New World

As outlined in the Introduction, the post-Cold War setting has encouraged the search for new adversaries, threats, and competitors; this search forms an important backdrop to the Asian Way debate. Both the themes of new enemies after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the danger posed by developing societies with supposedly radically different political cultures are important for establishing critiques of an 'Asian Way'.

Commentaries like those of Olsen and Whitaker, outlined in the Introduction, put the spotlight on issues of confrontation and clash in the international system. Certainly, their work is not an isolated phenomenon. A number of articles and opinion pieces published in recent years have emphasized issues of intractable confrontation,

especially in terms of cultures, both to propose them and to refute them. These types of arguments form the basis of a dialogue around ideas of clash. Among those works that propose competing, largely static civilizations, there is an underlying theme of antagonism. For the purposes of discussion, I will refer to these works collectively as ‘clash literature.’

Clash literature is, perhaps by its very nature, controversial, and certainly not new, though the post-Cold War environment has given it new energy and direction. Even though it has produced critical responses, its impact continues to be felt; examples of clash perspectives persist in theoretical and policy discussions, especially in the United States. Most commentators, for example, have something to say about Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” or Francis Fukuyama’s “End of History,” and more often than not, it is said quite emphatically. The aim of clash literature proponents may well be to provoke, offering broad, controversial statements, and certainly, there seems to be no small success in realizing this aim.

One important theme in general clash literature has been the division between North and South, as outlined in the Introduction, frequently along lines of culture.⁴

This is a separation, even a potential source of conflict. On one side are the developed

⁴ The case of Islam is a revealing example of potential cultural clashes attracting particular attention after the fading of the Cold War context: not only is Islam an important component of Asian culture, frequently portrayed as such a provocateur to ‘Western’ values, it is also one of the most dramatic instances of ‘clash’ language. According to one source, Islam is looked to as “one of the future ideological rivals to the West.” The author of these words, Robin Wright, claims that this perception of the Islamic world -- a haphazard amalgamation of regions as diverse as the Middle East, Central Asia, and South and Southeast Asia -- is erroneous, if influential, and is part of a larger discourse of Western-Islam confrontation. It is a clash that should no longer exist -- “[t]he clash [between Islam and the West] of the past 13 years...need no longer serve as the paradigm” -- but that does not alter the fact that the two sides are interpreted as opposites in many respects, confronting each other from either side of a cultural line. Wright even reinforces this notion of opposition, asking whether ‘Western’ democracy is “adaptable” to Islamic and

nations with long-established liberal democratic cultures, and on the other, the former Second and Third Worlds, which have only recently adopted similar political cultures, and are thus “set... apart from those customarily called Western.”⁵ Potential conflict has also been factored into this analysis. Barry Buzan argues that after the collapse of the Cold War system, the North – in particular, capitalist ideology in the North -- has more power over the South than ever. Moreover, Buzan speculates about a new cold war based on divisions between North and South civilizations.⁶

There are numerous examples of this theme of North-South and East-West clash. Francis Fukuyama attracted worldwide attention in 1989⁷ and 1992⁸, discussing the conflict between the triumphant ideology of liberal democracy, associated explicitly and implicitly in his argument with the West, and its defeated ideological challengers in other parts of the world. Fukuyama contends that liberal democracy has proved itself superior to other political-economic systems, being free of “grave defects” and irrationalities; thus, it has conquered its “rival ideologies” such as monarchism and communism.⁹ For Fukuyama, liberal, free-market democracy, with its “conquering” nature, represents the best and final form of human government.

Fukuyama’s argument works within a framework of cultural clash, with clear cultural connotations. His unfolding of history is teleological, tracing a path from the “primitive and traditional” to the “advanced and modern,” with the most advanced

Confucian societies. Robin Wright, “Islam, Democracy, and the West,” *Foreign Affairs* 71 no.3 (Summer 1992) 131, 144.

⁵ Mehran Kamrava, “Political Culture and a New Definition of the Third World,” *Third World Quarterly* 16 no.4 (Dec 1995) 700.

⁶ Barry Buzan, “New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century,” *International Affairs* 67 no.3 (July 1991) 431-451.

Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989) 3-18.

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man (New York: Free Press, 1992).

nations being Europe and North America. Within the “universal history” of mankind, there is a rational progression, and non-liberal democratic societies (in this analysis, largely non-Western, or at least non-Northern societies) serve as a contrast with the advanced societies. They are rivals, in Fukuyama’s own words. Fukuyama is modernism incarnate, and a contented child of the Enlightenment; the coherence or universality of history is not questioned, and its culmination in liberal democracy is driven and regulated by the superior forces of modernization.¹⁰ The societies that stand on the favoured side of Fukuyama’s historical line are compressed into a modernizing, homogenizing, block; these “advanced” states, mostly in Europe and North America, provide the norm. They are in conflict with, and in opposition to, different societies, with the latter destined for historical decline; these anti-modern states would be identified with the South, with its less established relationship with liberal democracy.

In a more policy-oriented treatment of global clash, Graham Fuller uses the idea of clash and opposition in his discussion. According to Fuller, “the current reign of Western principles is headed for trouble as the United States seeks broad application of its values to global problems.”¹¹ For Fuller, the “Western view” is based on three main principles: capitalism and the free market; human rights and secular liberal democracy; and the nation-state framework of international relations. The Third World is the opposite of the West, and these “troubled societies” may not benefit from the Western vision. Thus, there will be an opposed, competing vision from the

⁹ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

¹¹ Graham Fuller, “The Next Ideology,” *Foreign Policy* no.98 (Spring 1995) 145.

Third World, predicts the author: “[t]he ‘next ideology’ to emerge, then, will be opposition to Western challenges by Third World regimes that cannot cope with their effects.” Fuller’s Western-Third World opposition is a confrontation meant to fill the void left after the collapse of the Western-Communist opposition; it is an “amalgam of opposition to [Western] values” reminiscent of movements such as the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1970s.¹²

Here, then, civilizational lines are written large, to coincide with socio-economic circumstances. In the global clash, culture is just one variable caught up in a broader economic and political struggle: “civilizational clash,” says Fuller, “is not so much over Jesus Christ, Confucius, or the Prophet Muhammad as it is over the unequal distribution of world power, wealth, and influence, and the perceived historical lack of respect accorded to small states and peoples by larger ones.”¹³ Fuller cites Paul Kennedy to support his case; in 1994, Kennedy wrote that there is “a vast demographic-technological fault-line appearing across our planet.” The fast-growing, under-resourced, under-educated “adolescent” societies are on one side of the line, and the rich societies in demographic decline are on the other. “The greatest challenge global society faces today,” says Kennedy, “is preventing this fault-line from erupting into a world-shaking crisis.”¹⁴

Any survey of clash literature would be incomplete without the most well-known example in the debate, Samuel P. Huntington’s controversial article, “The Clash of Civilizations?” – thought to be “the most widely discussed and influential

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 153-154.

¹⁴ Paul Kennedy in Fuller, 146.

article” published in *Foreign Affairs* for half a century.¹⁵ In this article, later expanded into a book, Huntington argues that world politics is in a state of change, and will be shaped by international conflict based on divisions between cultures, or civilizations.¹⁶

Huntington pinpoints seven or eight “major civilizations”: Western; Confucian; Japanese; Islamic; Hindu; Slavic-Orthodox; Latin American, and “possibly” African.

Huntington states:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.¹⁷

These clashes could result from any number of factors, he says: human rights; immigration; trade and commerce; the environment; territorial claims; democratization.

¹⁵ Mark T. Berger. “A New East-West Synthesis? APEC and Competing Narratives of Regional Integration in the Post-Cold War Asia-Pacific.” *Alternatives* 23 no.1 (January-March 1998) 9. Certainly, the impact of such questions has been felt beyond the realm of the media, and includes scholarly inquiry as well; the wide-ranging influence of the Huntington article echoes Bilahari Kausikan’s statement that an “academic industry” has emerged to dissect the idea of Singaporean values. Kausikan. “Hong Kong, Singapore, and ‘Asian Values’: Governance that Works.” *Journal of Democracy* 8 no.2 (April 1997) 24-34.

¹⁶ According to the author, a civilization is a “cultural entity” which is the “highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.” Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72 no.3 (Summer 1993) 23-24. Huntington’s subsequent book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, continues the theme of an increasing tendency of states to identify their interests and goals along civilizational lines.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22. This article appears to be especially provocative; elsewhere: Huntington has offered a slightly more nuanced view of culture, arguing in a 1991 article that cultures are too complex to be described as wholly democratic or non-democratic. Societies described by some as anti-democratic (eg. Confucian or Islamic societies) may have some aspects of democracy. “Religion and the Third Wave.” *National Interest* no.24 (Summer 1991): 29-42.

and militarization.¹⁸

The author offers a number of reasons why conflict will occur among these different cultures. First, the differences involved are fundamental and, it is suggested, cardinal; they encompass history, language, culture, and most important, religion. Second, the world is becoming a smaller place, and as interactions among cultures increase, there is an increased chance of conflict. Third, there is a propensity for economic globalization and social change to diminish local or national identities -- and here, Huntington disagrees with observers who focus on the potential damage nationalism causes in the post Cold War world -- leaving a vacuum to be filled by world religions, a major component in the author's vision of confrontation. Fourth, there is an increasing "civilization-consciousness" which sees the West at a peak of power while other civilizations "have the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways."¹⁹ He cites the "Asianization" of Japan, the "Hinduization" of India, and the "re-Islamization" of the Middle East. Fifth, cultural factors are less mutable and less easily resolved than political and economic ones; a political system can change from communist to democratic, but Russians cannot become Estonians, to use Huntington's example. Ethno-religious identities are immutable in Huntington's framework. Finally, economic regionalism and intra-regional trade is increasing, and the emergence of regional economic blocs reinforces civilization-consciousness.

In essence, Huntington's formula is one of inevitable future conflict. This is not to say that this is a new perspective -- some have noted that far from being innovative, Huntington's approach is hardly new, but seeks "to revive that peculiar

¹⁸ Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations?," 29.

strain in Western thinking” which painted so many conflicts, the Cold War in particular, as *kulturkampf*, or a clash of civilizations. Then and now, there is some Other, and this Other is inferior.²⁰ And indeed, Huntington is reaching into an age-old bag of tricks to discuss the concept of inevitable clash: he posits that this is a re-emergence of ancient dividing lines in a post-Cold War, post-ideological era, involving religion, history, geography, and demographics. In this scenario, conflict between different civilizations cannot be avoided, both at the micro and the macro level. The author states: “As people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ relation existing between themselves and people of different ethnicity of religion.”²¹ This perspective sets up a ready-made oppositional relationship on a number of fronts, including human rights and forms of governance. Indeed, Huntington uses Kishore Mahbubani’s phrase, “the West and the Rest,” to describe the central issues for world politics in the future.²²

Commentators such as Fuller, Huntington, and Fukuyama have established global dichotomies -- a world characterized by conflict between hostile or even irreconcilable blocs. The conflict found in clash literature is not always literal, and economic or cultural-social forms of clash may be another aspect of the tension. Certainly, there have been attempts to challenge the idea of clash, but the sources that emphasize confrontation have attracted a great deal of attention nonetheless. Moreover, there are diverse sources of the clash perspective; more mainstream

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁰ Richard E. Rubenstein and Jarle Crocker, “Challenging Huntington,” *Foreign Policy* no.96 (Fall 1994) 119-120. Rubenstein and Crocker draw on Nigel Harris in particular for their analysis.

²¹ Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations,” 29.

commentators and the media in general have also developed the idea of a clash between opposing cultures.

The Media: CNN Covers the Showdown

A 1994 *Globe and Mail* article describes wealthy ‘Westernized’ Iranian teenagers as caught between two worlds. They play video games, wear American jeans, and listen to American pop music, but they also live in an Islamic Republic, and are subject to the laws banning Western music, alcohol, and contact between unrelated men and women. “Hanging Out in a Tehran Mall,” reads the headline: “[r]aised on a Western diet of rock and video games, children of returning Iranians face a clash of cultures.”²³ It is suggested that the dividing line between Western and non-Western is leading to a cultural war, and the lives of these Iranian teenagers, among others, constitute the battleground.

Such a theme in a news article is not unusual. A quick look at the CNN coverage of the 1996 World Trade Organization (WTO) Conference might lead one to believe that an East-West showdown, the cultural war between the ‘West’ and ‘non-West’, is imminent. On the one hand are the intractable Asian nations at the WTO Conference, unwilling to link trade to workers’ rights, and on the other, unyielding Western governments with fixed demands.²⁴ According to the CNN report, this issue could be a decisive dividing line between Western and Asian nations, since “[t]he

²² *Ibid.*, 41.

²³ Tara Bahrapour, “Hanging out in a Tehran Mall,” *Globe and Mail* (March 26, 1994) D2.

²⁴ “Human Rights Issues to Dominate WTO Conference,” CNN, Internet, 8 Dec. 1996,

ministerial meeting of the WTO has been billed as a showdown between Eastern and Western nations over labour practices and workers' rights, issues that are expected to be the focus of a heated debate at the conference."²⁵

The so-called showdown concerns more than labour and children's rights in countries like India and Pakistan, however, since economic matters are paramount. The report states that the US wants to eliminate tariffs on certain high-tech items, such as computers, software, and semiconductors, a move opposed by Asian and Latin American countries. As argued by the latter, that tariff protection fosters infant industries not competitive enough to face the demands of the international market. Asia and Latin America, for their part, wish to open American and European markets to their textile and clothing imports. As if this were not enough conflict between West and non-West, the CNN report also relates that China is to be an observer at the 1996 conference, and while it wishes to become a full member, it faces resistance from the United States.

In another example, an *Economist* article begins with the question, "How different are Asians?" While the article casts doubt on the idea that "Asian values" encourage harmony -- the specific case of South Korea, which has experienced much unrest and disunity among different sectors of society, is cited, as is the "argumentative" nature of emergent Taiwanese and Indonesian democracy -- these contradictions to the idea of an 'Asian Way' are followed by generalized statements about "Asian authoritarians."²⁶ There is some disaggregation of society, but it is

Available: www.cnn.com/WORLD/9612/08/wto.conference/.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "Those Deferential Asians," *Economist* 337 no.7944 (December 9, 1995) 12-13.

superficial: if there are differences within Asian society, it is between the virtuous, democratic society and the power-seeking, oppressive state and, possibly, elites. So even though the Asian Way debate is challenged in the article, there is still the persistent theme of an Asian state which is espousing a set of values in conflict with a universalist camp of regional activists and the 'West'.

From these three instances of media coverage, it would seem that there indeed exists a smoldering fault-line between 'West' and 'non-West', and notably between 'West' and 'East', on a variety of fronts. Many media accounts reinforce the idea that the West and non-West are identifiable, discrete, static entities, and on many issues, irreconcilably opposed. The conflict between these two blocs is often presented as though it were inevitable and unchanging.

If this is how relations between 'West' and 'non-West' are portrayed, issues such as human rights, workers' rights, and children's rights are subject to confusion and misinterpretation, since the Eastern civilization is frequently seen as mystified and inscrutable. In the process, the complexities of the dialogue are lost. To use an example brought up by the WTO article, activism involving opposition to child labour exploitation and related social issues crosses borders, and is not contained to one civilizational bloc, cut off from developments in the rest of the world²⁷; likewise, contributing causes of child labour around the world can be found in the consumer

²⁷ An example would be the organization Global March Against Child Labour, an international alliance of over a thousand organizations in more than a hundred countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. The umbrella movement began in Manila, the Philippines in January 1998, and has organized marches and demonstrations in communities all over the world, through to May 1998, in preparation for the International Labor Organization (ILO) conference in Geneva, convened to discuss a new international convention on child labour standards.

habits in and across varying 'civilizations'.²⁸

Nonetheless, in recent years, there have been a number of controversial mainstream pieces that have become focal points of intense debate. Robert Kaplan's 1994 *Atlantic Monthly* article, "The Coming Anarchy," invoked by American vice-president Al Gore among others, develops the idea of a world characterized by inevitable conflict. This time, the conflict is between the largely Western haves and the largely non-Western have-nots. Kaplan looks at societies such as Liberia and the Ivory Coast in West Africa – a case-study perhaps reinforced in the minds of many, given ongoing developments in Sierra Leone -- focussing on lawlessness, poverty, crime, overpopulation, and pollution. From this scenario, Kaplan extrapolates a new set of "strategic" concerns for the world.²⁹ Ironically, while Kaplan argues that traditional borders and divisions – the lines on the map that govern our lives and our fortunes – are losing their meaning in a potentially chaotic world, he is setting up new divisions, perhaps more disturbing than those man-made borders. To emphasize the clear line between purportedly viable and non-viable societies, he cites the metaphor of a stretch limo driving through a poor neighbourhood in New York:

Inside the limo are the air-conditioned post-industrial regions of North America, Europe, the emerging Pacific Rim, and a few other isolated places, with their trade-summitry and computer-information highways. Outside is the rest of mankind, going in a completely different

²⁸ NGOs such as the National Labor Committee in the US, a human rights advocacy group focussing on workers' rights in conjunction with other human rights groups, provide information on the working conditions in societies like China. The violations of human rights for international workers producing American consumer goods are highlighted by this group and others.

²⁹ Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994): 44-76. Kaplan developed his ideas in his subsequent book, The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century (New York: Random House, 1996).

direction.³⁰

Elsewhere, he elaborates on the dichotomy:

We are entering a bifurcated world. Part of the globe is inhabited by Hegel's and Fukuyama's Last Man, healthy, well-fed, and pampered by technology. The other, larger, part is inhabited by Hobbes' First Man, condemned to a life that is "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Although both parts will be threatened by environmental stress, the Last Man will be able to master it; the First Man will not.³¹

This divide, implicitly tied up with cultural concepts of North and South, is as difficult to cross as Huntington's clash-line, and as deterministic. ("...The Balkans...could be a powder keg for cultural war at the turn of the twenty-first [century] between Orthodox Christians...and the House of Islam," and, "In the Caucasus that House of Islam is falling into a clash between Turkic and Iranian civilizations"). Kaplan, it should be noted, does find fault with Huntington's picture of the world, saying that the latter's "brush is broad" and thus, "his specifics are vulnerable to attack."³² However, Kaplan is not saying that Huntington's deterministic analysis is incorrect, merely simplistic: Huntington fails to capture the nuances of cultural clash in the Caucasus, for example, and doesn't recognize that various non-Western civilizations may possibly fight among themselves. But the clash still exists, and is part of the fabric of global issues. Notably, Kaplan's approach persists into the new millennium: even as the Red Cross 1999 World Disasters Report predicted increased "super disasters" caused by ecological destruction and profoundly affecting displaced people in the developing world, news outlets were casting entire countries as

³⁰ Daniel Deudney, quoted in Robert Kaplan, 60.

³¹ Kaplan, 60.

³² Kaplan, 62.

the teeming, clamouring masses. A CNN report on India, given the country's nearing of the one billion population mark, speaks of a "crammed country" that "looks ready to burst." When men reach for soup, they are "a mass of jobless men thrusting twig-thin arms upward for a ladle of...fatty purple slop"; the country suffers "the ravages of poverty, ignorance and malnutrition"; and "thousands of people gush into the cities, forming sprawling, filthy shantytowns where only flies outnumber people."³³ All these pictures, we must assume, are unsurprising, viewed from the window of the air-conditioned limousine presented by Kaplan.

Kaplan's analysis is not unlike Benjamin R. Barber's, in *Jihad vs. McWorld*³⁴; both these authors are searching to make sense of a world which, on the one hand, is exploding with tensions long-considered obsolescent, and on the other, is subject to socio-economic integration with widespread repercussions. Kaplan and Barber are agonizing over the Brave New World, the future gone awry: technology puts nature and society at our disposal, but we are still subject to the baseness of human impulses and our tendency towards conflict with those different from us. Barber outlines two diametrically opposed global forces: consumer capitalism, involving technology and corporatism; and tribalism, or Jihad. The former serves as a challenge to state borders and an agent of worldwide homogenization, while the latter consists of racial, religious, and ethnic hatreds that split up political units into ever smaller factions.

³³ "India Set to Burst as Population Races to 1 Billion." CNN, Internet, 15 Aug. 1999, Available://cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9908/15/AM-India-BillionBabies.ap/index.html.

³⁴ Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995). To give some indication of the potential impact of 'clash literature', Barber's *Atlantic Monthly* article, the basis for the book, is cited in a "Further Reading" section of an introductory Political Science text. According to the textbook's author, James Danziger, Barber's is "an incisive analysis of current world trends." James N. Danziger, *Understanding the Political World: A Comparative Introduction to Political Science*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1994) 141.

Both these influences – carrying strong ‘West vs. non-West’ or ‘North vs. South’ implications -- are challenges to democracy, and may precipitate global crisis.

“History is not over,” says Barber, in reply to Fukuyama’s claims, but neither have we arrived in a technological promised land.³⁵

Here is Barber’s twist on the idea of clash, then: he is creating an opposition between two perspectives, one of which is anti-modern and invokes cultural war, and one which is ultra-modern and prophesizes economic and political interdependence and integration. Both these possibilities promise a bleak future, if Barber is correct. Jihad brings a “retribalization of large swaths of humankind by war and bloodshed” in which “culture is pitted against culture, people against people, tribe against tribe, a Jihad in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths.” McWorld is the more powerful and ultimately, the more successful of the two forces. It is “a future in shimmering pastels,” subject to “economic, technological, and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and that mesmerize peoples everywhere with fast music, fast computers, and fast food.”³⁶ In it, we are no longer citizens, but consumers.

Barber claims he is breaking down global dichotomies, but in the end, he only reinforces them. Barber’s two concepts, Jihad and McWorld, correspond clearly to the ‘non-West’ and ‘West’ blocs; Jihad, in particular, carries profound cultural baggage, with the most fundamentalist, anti-modern variations discussed by the author occurring outside Europe and North America. Therefore, the argument that Barber’s

³⁵ Benjamin Barber, “Between Babel and Disneyland,” *Across the Board* 33 no.1 (January 1996) 14.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 14.

work is a commentary that condemns the use of simplistic dichotomies as a way to understand the world, is difficult to accept.³⁷

Clash literature and its idea of inevitable, static clash, then, can be presented in different ways: it can use different cultural blocs as its basis, or it can use socio-economic and political divisions -- such as Jihad, non-viable regions, or anti-modern societies juxtaposed against their corresponding 'opposites' -- with cultural connotations. Clash can also be used in theoretical terms: Fukuyama's concept of a clash between liberal democracy and a continuum of rivals, for instance, which resulted in the triumph of the former and the decimation of the latter. But whatever the framework, the result is a picture of hostile, contentious relationships, and one which may encourage a shadowy, arcane picture of 'non-Western' views on issues like human rights or governance. The potential impact of such analyses should not be downplayed. Removing cultures entirely from analytical inquiries can eliminate an important set of factors, undoubtedly, but reducing everything to cultural clash is just as serious. If unrest in Indonesia hinges on Christian versus Muslim in Jakarta, West Timor and Ambon, then all other contexts are lost: government policies, unemployment or economic privation, and structural adjustments, to name a few. The same can be said of Yugoslavia, Rwanda, or Dagestan. If cultures inevitably clash, then there is less of a call to examine the roles played by other local and global actors

³⁷ Barber's major theme, says Patrick Noonan, is that "[i]ncreasingly, we are reduced to seeing the world in terms of conflicting sides or empty choices, while we shun the depth and discourse required to sustain civil society and, hence, genuine democracy." However, the reduction of complex global forces to two major categories, both of which have strong cultural overtones is not a credible example of "depth and discourse," or the opposite of "reducing a world to a simple yin and yang," as Noonan suggests. Patrick Noonan, "Them vs. Me vs. Us," *Journal of Marketing* (April 1996) 135-139.

in such conflicts.

This clash literature, as I stated earlier, provides a context for, and overlaps with, the literature dealing specifically with the idea of 'Asian-West' confrontation. I will now turn to the Asian Way literature, highlighting how the theme of clash is developed.

Part II: Explaining the Asian Way Debate

Academic Literature and an Asian Way

The Asia-Pacific has proved a dynamic issue-area for academic inquiry, and current upheavals only serve to focus more attention on contemporary issues. A range of issues and theories can be evaluated and reevaluated in light of East and Southeast Asian cases: conflict analysis, state building, development, economic modernizations, and political cultures are some especially relevant subjects. The region is a rich source of scholarly material; rising or falling in profile, its economic, political, and strategic concerns have commanded close attention.

In particular, Asian social trends and 'Asian values' have sparked controversial discussions in the academic literature about the Asia-Pacific. According to Donald Emmerson of the University of Wisconsin:

The 'Asian values' debate is not a formally organized oral disputation between two sides advancing contrary answers to the same question. It is a large, diverse, and ongoing array of written and oral pronouncements and exchanges that share some relevance to a set of questions about 'Asian values' -- their existence, their contents, and the implications of the answers to these first two questions for policy and

behaviour.³⁸

In this section, I will discuss the academic debate around these “pronouncements and exchanges” by way of four themes: authoritarianism and order; Asianization and confidence; communitarianism; and the specific issues of human rights and democratization. As in the case with the general literature on civilizational oppositions, the theme of clash between monolithic, competing blocs is a significant one.

Authoritarianism and Order: The Closed Fist which Holds Gold

There has been a strong emphasis on the *authoritarian nature* of an ‘Asian Way’, given a historical predominance of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes in the region. There is no consensus as to whether this authoritarianism could be cultural -- in Meredith Woo-Cummings’ words, “genetically coded” -- or whether it might be a “tried and true political arrangement.”³⁹

Some analyses suggest that the region has been fertile ground for an authoritarian style of governance. Certain societies have been cited as making progress towards more liberal or democratic political arrangements, Taiwan being a noteworthy example⁴⁰, but others have followed what has been referred to as an Asian

³⁸ Donald K. Emmerson, “Singapore and the ‘Asian Values’ Debate,” *Journal of Democracy* 6 no.4 (October 1995) 96.

³⁹ Meredith Woo-Cummings, “The ‘New Authoritarianism’ in East Asia,” *Current History* 93 (December 1994) 413. This analysis is characteristic of a trend to separate the causes of Asian social values and institutions into two distinct, unrelated categories: culture or structure.

⁴⁰ For an examination of the liberalization process in Taiwan, in a comparative context, see Alvin Y. So and Sai Hsin May, “Democratization in East Asia in the late 1980s: Taiwan Breakthrough, Hong Kong Frustration,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 28 no.2 (Summer

path to democracy, emphasizing social order and cohesion. One author, for example, notes that in the wake of its 1992 democratic transition, Cambodia may ultimately follow the “Southeast Asian version of democracy,” identified as a democratic regime where political openness is minimal, dissent is discouraged, existing power structures are not changed, and prosperity is the paramount goal of the state, even at the cost of political or social freedoms.⁴¹ Elsewhere, “Asian style democracy” is identified as a sort of “semi-democracy.” Western liberal democracy, it is argued, is not feasible because Asian cultures are too different, and thus, societies like South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and Japan have had authoritarian-tinged democracies based on patron-client relationships, communitarianism, interventionism, and deference to authority.⁴²

Singapore, known around the world for the Michael Fay case and its strict laws on chewing gum, has often been cited as the prototype of East and Southeast Asian authoritarianism. This prototypical role can be attributed in part to the outspoken conviction of certain Singaporean political figures, discussed in detail below. Singapore’s political system has been characterized as “soft authoritarian”; its leaders are portrayed as increasingly critical of Western liberalism and the threat of “Western

1993) 61-80.

⁴¹ Steve Heder, “Cambodia’s Democratic Transition to Neauthoritarianism,” *Current History* 94 (December 1995) 425-429. This concept of ‘Asian democracy’, with its emphasis on political order over political freedoms, echoes trade-off literature, which argues that for long-term economic development to occur, short-term political and social freedoms must be sacrificed in exchange. An example of this trade-off literature in the Asian context is Sang Jin Han’s 1995 article on South Korea. He states that Korea may be used as a model of a society where political liberalization is traded off -- or perhaps put off -- in the name of rapid economic growth. The author contends that East Asia’s period of growth demonstrates how an authoritarian state can better carry out economic management. Sang Jin Han, “Economic Development and Democracy: Korea as a New Model?” *Korea Journal* 35 no.2 (Summer 1995) 5-17.

⁴² Clark D. Neher, “Asian Style Democracy,” *Asian Survey* 34 no.11 (November 1994) 949-961.

values,” and as desiring to maintain control over the political system.⁴³ Specifically, a Singapore School espousing ‘Asian values’ has been identified in academic sources: this group, most frequently associated with elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew, has spoken favourably of authoritarian governments that bring prosperity.⁴⁴

This proposed connection between prosperity and authoritarianism has been much-remarked upon, and has proved one of the most alluring puzzles presented by NICs. In many ‘Asian Way’ sources, the market is an instrument of the state, not a mechanism in itself⁴⁵, though it is unresolved in the literature whether authoritarianism is a cultural or policy-induced political phenomenon. In the case of Singapore, a mixture of causes has been identified by some observers, with an emphasis on the structural aspects. While the Singaporean case cannot necessarily be replicated in other societies, according to Mukul,⁴⁶ Paul argues that financial policy, location, culture, and size have combined to produce the authoritarian system in the city-state.⁴⁷

While Singapore is frequently cited as the test case for the fusion of authoritarian government and economic guidance, there are other Asia-Pacific countries whose authoritarian nature is more pronounced. China, in particular, has

⁴³ Denny Roy, “Singapore, China, and the ‘Soft Authoritarian’ Challenge,” *Asian Survey* 34 no.3 (March 1994) 231-242. Roy’s combination of Singapore and China as soft authoritarian states has some serious limitations, as do any general regional labels of authoritarianism. By putting China and Singapore in the same category, the author is glossing over the much more serious nature of human rights violations in China. Moreover, the vast differences in size and development between China and Singapore makes the comparison an unrealistic one.

⁴⁴ Citizens of the prosperous authoritarian state are also said to prefer this model, according to Jones. Eric Jones, “Asia’s Fate: A Response to the Singapore School,” *National Interest* 35 (Spring 1994) 18-28.

⁴⁵ Mukul G. Asher, “Some Aspects of the Role of the State in Singapore,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 29 no.14 (2 April 1994) 795-804.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Erik C. Paul, “Prospects for Liberalization in Singapore,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 23 no.3 (1993) 291-305. Paul contends that these factors make democratization in Singapore unlikely in any lasting or meaningful sense.

generated its own distinct literature on authoritarianism. Deng Xiaoping's reforms, continued after his death, are associated with neo-authoritarianism. Neo-authoritarianism, in the Chinese context, is said to reflect both continuity and change: continuity in terms of the established political power structures and the protracted, strong role of the state; and change in terms of economic policies favouring liberalization in the global economy.⁴⁸ In this regard, it is argued, China has looked to the NICs like Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore as a "mirror of the future,"⁴⁹ where neo-authoritarianism has been effective. Some have also suggested that if liberalization policies are not handled in a manner consistent with 'Asian values', the cohesive, traditional society could be eroded.⁵⁰

Related to authoritarianism is the concept of order. Some have rooted political order firmly in its authoritarian context -- the order created, for example, by restricting courts, journalists, and civil society in Singapore has been linked to an authoritarian consolidation of control⁵¹ -- but to return to the previously mentioned concept of Asian-style democracy, others have located order in any system where freedom is

⁴⁸ Woo-Cummings, 414.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* See also Barry Sautmann for a discussion of the lively debate within Chinese policy making circles, in which different factions of elites, conservatives and liberals alike, sought the 'magic formula' developed by the neighbouring East Asian NICs. Barry Sautmann, "Sirens of the Strongman: Neo-Authoritarianism in Recent Chinese Debate," *The China Quarterly* 129 (March 1992) 72-102. In a related article, Elizabeth Perry sees this attempt to blend market freedom with societal limitation as an investigation into a central issue to the social sciences: the relationship between economic and political reform. Elizabeth J. Perry, "China in 1992: An Experiment in Neo-Authoritarianism," *Asian Survey* 33 no.1 (January 1993) 12-21.

⁵⁰ Perry Link, for example, argues that 'Western' forms of liberalization have been seen as harmful to culture and society in a country such as China, with many negative results: a rise in crime rates; a resurgence in prostitution; market fraud; growing gangs of *liumang*, or hoodlums; a "floating population" of displaced persons from the countryside; and environmental pressures from unchecked development in certain areas. Chinese journalist Liu Binyan's use of the word *xie* -- bedeviled or irregular -- to describe much of modern Chinese life, is cited. Perry Link, "China's 'Core' Problems," *Daedalus* 122 no.2 (Spring 1993) 190.

⁵¹ Gerry Rodan, "Singapore: Continuity in Change as the New Guard's Agenda Becomes

secondary to other goals. Donald Emmerson argues that a society like Singapore is an example of an orderly, communitarian democracy. He recounts an interesting anecdote to illustrate his point: while taking a taxi from the Singapore airport to town, his taxi driver exceeded the speed limit. A chime sounded under the dashboard, a device required by law on all cabs in Singapore, and would not stop until the taxi slowed down. When asked whether he ever considered disconnecting the device, the taxi driver reacted with shock. If he disconnected his, the man stated, other taxi drivers would do the same; everyone would exceed speed limits, and traffic and accidents would send the city into lawless anarchy. This story is meant to demonstrate how order (beyond the level of order we expect in, say, a country like Canada) and democracy could be linked in certain societies.

Notably, the aforementioned Singapore School has also been cited as a leading proponent of social order in Eastern societies. Order, within this framework, has been intimately connected with economic growth and, some would argue, with specific historical and cultural contexts.⁵² As a concept, it has been a recurring theme in discussions of an 'Asian Way'.

Asianization and Confidence: The Strength to Do It 'Our Way'

Assertiveness and a rising profile carry great weight in the global community,

Clearer." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1990) 295-316.

⁵² Melanie Chew, "Human Rights in Singapore: Perceptions and Problems," *Asian Survey* 34 no.11 (November 1994) 948. Chew connects Singapore's order/growth approach to its post-independence history: the communitarian, order-stressing regime was appropriate to early phases of development, but it may not be a viable choice for the future.

and for a period during the 1980s and 1990s, the Asia-Pacific region seemed to have had both in abundance. During this time, a buzzword for discussions of the Pacific Rim has been confidence.⁵³ Melanie Chew argues that this assertiveness on the part of Singapore and other Asian countries was “mainly due to the rising economic ‘muscle’ of countries in the Asian region, coupled with the apparent Western economic decline,” and that “[a] part of that new, mature confidence is the ability to take on the former colonial masters in the human rights debate.”⁵⁴

‘Asianization’ has been another phenomenon associated with Asian confidence. Asianization, according to Yoichi Funabashi, was generated by economic success and communication links, and gave actors in the region a sense that they could make their own way in the world, and create distinct paths in a number of areas: politics, human rights, security, and economics. The author states that “Asia has at long last started to define itself,” and that “Asian consciousness and identity are coming vigorously to life.” Moreover, “Western nations are increasingly impressed by the economic power and political gravity of the region.”⁵⁵ Funabashi has identified several actors and issues around which this new mindset has converged: Japan’s aspirations for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council; efforts by former Indonesian President Suharto to revive the Non-Aligned Movement; and the conflict between Asia and the West at the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. The example of the Non-Aligned Movement in particular evokes a whole language of pride and self-

⁵³ Jusuf Wanandi, “ASEAN’s Domestic Political Developments and their Impact on Foreign Policy,” *Pacific Review* 8 no.3 (1995) 440-458.

⁵⁴ Chew, 938.

⁵⁵ Yoichi Funabashi, “The Asianization of Asia,” *Foreign Affairs* 72 no.5 (November-December 1993) 75.

determination.

Funabashi has offered several explanations for this Asianization process. Culture is a factor, due to shared emotion, history, and religious traditions and growing links among Asian middle classes. Economics has also been key, because of the period of financial dynamism in the region. Asian models of growth and production, and Asian philosophical-theoretical approaches, have also enjoyed popularity in the 80s and 90s.⁵⁶ The Japanese multi-national corporation, featuring aspects of quality control, technology, and flexible management, is an example.

Another pivotal issue discussed within the Asianization framework has been the presence of Japan in East Asia; according to some, Japan provides a possible alternative to Western forms of production and political organization. Not only has this question involved the economic influence of Japan, in terms of flexible models of production and Japan's preeminence as a regional trading partner, but it has also encompassed security concerns. Japan has been said by some to be the natural inheritor of the strategic leadership role vacated by the Americans in the wake of US disengagement. With this decreased dependence on America and Europe, the Japanese model is said to revolve around the Asianization of Asia.⁵⁷

It has also been argued that the 'Western Way' has nothing to offer to Asia, because it is rife with instances of human rights abuse itself, and thus, there are no

⁵⁶ This point is illustrated by the business section of any bookstore in Canada, which will carry books on Asian forms of management, such as Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. Rosalie Tung examines four East Asian texts, concluding that their important lessons -- such as patience, avoiding strong emotions, compromising, deception, and flexibility -- form an East Asian approach to business. Western business people who want to be successful in East Asia should strive to understand this mind-set, she argues. Rosalie L. Tung, "Strategic Management Thought in East Asia," *Organizational Dynamics* 22 no.4 (Spring 1994) 55-65.

⁵⁷ G. Naidu, "Japan and Southeast Asia," *Security Analysis* 17 no.1 (April 1994) 109-121.

grounds to condemn an Asian path as inherently abusive. Bilahari Kausikan argues:

Economic success has engendered a greater cultural self-confidence. Whatever their differences, East and Southeast Asian countries are increasingly conscious of their own civilizations and tend to locate the sources of their economic success in their own distinctive traditions and institutions. The self-congratulatory, simplistic, and sanctimonious tone of much Western commentary at the end of the Cold War and the current triumphalism of Western values grate on East and Southeast Asians. It is, after all, a West that launched two world wars, supported racism and colonialism, perpetrated the Holocaust and the Great Purge, and now suffers from serious social and economic deficiencies.⁵⁸

As much as this stance may be politically motivated, it is not entirely groundless. To take a country like the United States, criticisms by Amnesty International and others for its use of the death penalty, repeated cases of police racism and brutality, and the failure to ratify a basic international human rights documents such as the International Convention on the Rights of the Child all demonstrate a disjuncture between what 'Western' leaders say their human rights ethos is, and how it actually operates within the society. This disjuncture may provide fuel for the arguments of 'Asian Way' proponents.

Clearly, this theme is undergoing transformation, since the economic context at the heart of ideas of Asian confidence has fundamentally changed. However, confidence and support for Asianization on the part of many Asian actors and governments in the past has been instrumental in the articulation of an 'Asian Way'.

Communitarianism: United We Stand

Much has been written concerning 'Asian' views on individualism. As

Emmerson's example of the Singaporean taxi-driver suggests, communitarianism has been a recurring theme in the Asian Way debate. In one notable 1994 study, described by Alan Dupont as ground-breaking for its systematic and quantitative treatment of 'Asian values', David Hitchcock notes that when Asian academics, officials, business people, journalists, and cultural and religious leaders were surveyed on the subject of 'Asian values', a trend to "defer gratification for family's sake" emerged. This was especially marked amongst respondents from Thailand, Indonesia, and to a lesser extent, Japan and Korea.⁵⁹ The idea of sacrifice and service to the family or group, even at the potential expense of the individual, has been a pivotal idea for 'Asian values'.

Clark Neher includes communitarianism as one of the key building blocks in the previously mentioned "Asian style of democracy." This "semi-democracy," a combination of democratic and authoritarian elements, is unlike Western liberal democracy. Communitarianism combines with factors such as personalism, deference to authority, and state interventionism to create the political system. The author traces this communitarianism to historic social factors, since "[t]raditionally, Asian societies have been concerned more with the individual as part of a group than with the individual alone" and the "[t]eachings of Eastern philosophers and religious leaders have emphasized the place of individuals in terms of their status with others."⁶⁰ Neher relates this communitarianism to the patron-client hierarchies in the region: an individual seeks identity and status by working within the community.

⁵⁸ Bilahari Kausikan, "Asia's Different Standard," *Foreign Policy* no.92 (Fall 1993) 34.

⁵⁹ David I. Hitchcock in Alan Dupont, "Is There an 'Asian Way'?" *Survival* 38 no.2 (Summer 1996) 29-30.

Bilahari Kausikan agrees that communalism has proved an ingrained trait in the region. He states:

...[M]any East and Southeast Asians tend to look askance at the starkly individualistic ethos of the West in which authority tends to be seen as oppressive and rights are an individual's "trump" over the state. Most people of the region prefer a situation in which distinctions between the individual, society, and state are less clear-cut, or at least less adversarial.⁶¹

For Kausikan, Western individualism has become an ideology, forced upon Asian nations through conditionalities or sanctions; in this sense, the Asian Way debate is once again used as a language of empowerment and independence, purportedly opposing outside interference through mechanisms like sanctions.

Human Rights and Democracy: Liberty, If We Say So

Clearly, each of the aforementioned features of an 'Asian Way' carries profound implications for issues of human rights and democratization. In addition, there has also been a specific sub-set of the Asian Way literature focussing on human rights and governance. There are significant questions raised by this literature: could an 'Asian Way', whatever that may be, protect some rights better than others? Could it even protect certain rights better than a 'Western Way'?

Josuf Wanandi has identified four principle differences between what he terms as Asian and Western concepts of human rights:

- the principle of universality ("Western") versus cultural relativism ("Asian")

⁶⁰ Neher, 949-950.

⁶¹ Kausikan, 36.

- the stress on civil political rights in the “West,” as opposed to socio-economic and cultural rights in developing countries
- the recognition of mainly individual rights (“West”) against the concept of balance between individual rights and communal or societal rights; the right to development is included as a communal right, often ignored by the “West”
- the issue of sanctions or intervention, either in favour (“West”) or opposed (“Asian”)⁶²

Wanandi argues that while some rights are absolute and universal, such as the rights against arbitrary killing, torture, and slavery, some political rights might be more relative, and dependent upon history, values, and stages of development. He cites the implementation of democracy as an example, “because there is no single model for democracy.”⁶³

Two key themes arise from these points: first, how have understandings of human rights in the Asia-Pacific *formed*? Chew proposes that human rights practices and understandings stem from social, cultural, and historical context. Specifically, she states that Singapore’s approach to human rights -- which she bases around the viewpoints of the Singapore School -- has been a result of the city-state’s post-colonial nation-building experience.⁶⁴ Second, how have human rights been embedded in an ongoing process of socio-economic change in the region -- what has been the *sequence*? Is there a relationship between human rights and prosperity in the region? Chee Chan Heng has tackled this controversial topic, proposing that there are trade-offs to be made in the name of rapid economic modernization; in NICs such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore, social development and redistribution came first,

⁶² Jusuf Wanandi, “Confrontation on Human Rights?” *Indonesian Quarterly* XXI no.3 (1994) 245. This paper was presented to the ASEAN Senior Official Meeting in Singapore, May 1993.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁶⁴ Chew, 939.

followed by human rights and democracy.⁶⁵ This sequence, it is argued by some, may prove to be a helpful example for other societies.

Kausikan incorporates both of these issues in his 1993 article, "Asia's Different Standard."⁶⁶ East Asia's period of economic success resulted in more independence in the area of human rights: "Western leverage over East and Southeast Asia has been greatly reduced," says the author, and "countries in the region are reacting accordingly." Because of the experience with economic growth, there has been less potential for sanctions and conditionalities to carry weight in the region. At the 1992 ASEAN-EC ministerial meeting, to cite one striking example, representatives of the majority of EC countries agreed that East Timor was a bilateral problem between Indonesia and Portugal, and not an issue-area where the EC could interfere.⁶⁷ Kausikan argues that concepts of human rights have been formed by cultural and social experiences, and furthermore, that an awareness of 'Asian' human rights has formed during the region's period of prosperity.

Democracy has been as key a theme as human rights in the Asian Way literature. Certainly, the question of whether democracy is a universally-expressed political arrangement, or even an appropriate political arrangement for all societies, has been an enduring and unsettling one. In the 1997 piece, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," Fareed Zakaria establishes the 'West' as the champion of liberal democracy in a world characterized by a competing, illiberal camp, seeking to ignore

⁶⁵ Chee Chan Heng, "Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice as Key Factors in Balanced Development," *Round Table* no.329 (January 1994) 27-32.

⁶⁶ When he wrote this article, Kausikan was director of the East Asian and Pacific Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore. "Asia's Different Standard" was part of a debate in *Foreign Policy*, and was followed by a rebuttal article, "Asia's Unacceptable Standard."

or pervert 'Western' democratic principles. The West has encouraged elections and democratic transitions around the world, says the author, but in many states, these elected governments are turning to authoritarian methods and bypassing people's rights. Zakaria terms this phenomenon "illiberal democracy." The West has expected its experience of democracy -- operating in conjunction with civil liberties and human rights -- to be repeated in other societies, but this has not been the case; there are "modest offenders" like Argentina, "near tyrannies," like Kazakhstan, and countries like Romania and Bangladesh in between. Moreover, illiberal democracy is argued by Zakaria to be a "growth industry," with rising numbers of states falling into the category. This is not necessarily a negative development, but could come to reflect different cultural contexts; just as there are varying forms of capitalism around the world, there could also be various forms of democracy, and "Western liberal democracy might prove to be not the final destination on the democratic road, but just one of many possible exits."⁶⁸ For example, East Asian governments are described in the article as being a "mix of democracy, liberalism, capitalism, oligarchy, and corruption,"⁶⁹ though less "illiberal" a region, on the whole, than others.

As outlined earlier, others also argue that there is a distinctly 'Asian' path to democracy -- an authoritarian or neo-authoritarian way, or to use Clark Neher's term, a semi-democratic way. As suggested above, certain elements of this ostensible strain of Asian 'democracy' have been identified: patron-client personalism; leadership personalism; authority; single party dominance; and a strong state. Stephanie Lawson

⁶⁷ Chee, 29.

⁶⁸ Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76 no.6 (November/December 1997) 24.

states:

Resistance to the idea that criticism and dissent are legitimate expressions of political interests... has led in some cases to revision of the principles of modern democracy in such terms as 'guided democracy' or 'organic democracy'. In parts of Asia, this has sometimes been justified by reference to autochthonous political traditions which are accorded greater legitimacy vis-à-vis Western ideas about political equality, participation, constitutionalism, and so forth.⁷⁰

Joseph Tamney identifies similar characteristics of 'Asian' democracy: "people's trust in morally superior leaders is the basis of democracy; the political process entails consensus-building rather than conflict among political parties; and social order is more important than individual freedom."⁷¹

What is the source of such a guided or organic democracy? For Neher, this style of governance has its roots in both culture and policy. "The prevailing values of Asia," he states, "have been different enough from those in the West to make Western democracy unachievable."⁷² However, specific policy problems, such as insurgency, national security, the challenge of development, and state-building, have also led to Asian semi-democracy.

The 'Asian' style of democracy has also served as a critique of 'Western' democracy, according to some commentators. It has been proposed that Asian democracy, with its deference to authority and dominant party system, facilitated the region's era of economic growth, which may not have occurred otherwise. This

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁰ Stephanie Lawson, "Institutionalising Peaceful Conflict: Political Opposition and the Challenge of Democratisation in Asia," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 47 no.1 (May 1993) 15.

⁷¹ Joseph Tamney, "Confucianism and Democracy," *Asian Profile* 19 no.5 (October 1991) 405.

argument clearly favours economic development as a necessary precursor to democracy.⁷³ Moreover, democracy has been criticized by some Asian leaders as leading to a decline in Western nations. Neher states that “defenses of Asian-style democracy and criticisms of liberal democracy have resonated with most Asians who have grown tired of American preaching” and that “the rise of Asian democracies economically has limited American influence and strengthened the views of Asia’s leaders that... Asian democracy is the most appropriate system for their own and for other developing nations.”⁷⁴

Samuel Huntington has added his influential voice to the debate on Asian styles of democratization. In his 1991 book, The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century,⁷⁵ Huntington discusses the cultural appropriateness of democracy in different countries. Like Neher, Huntington argues that “[t]he interaction of economic progress and Asian cultures appeared to generate a distinct East Asian variety of democratic institutions.”⁷⁶ Its characteristics are the primacy of political stability and order and a one-party dominant system -- though these are dynamic features, and ‘Asian democracy’ “covered a continuum between democracy and

⁷² Neher, 958.

⁷³ Neher cites Kishore Mahbubani, deputy secretary of the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as an advocate of this view. *Ibid.*, 959-960.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 961.

⁷⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). Huntington argues that there have been three waves of global democratization, a wave being a group of lasting transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes within a specific period of time. Huntington believes that economic development makes democracy possible. In terms of setting up his discussion of democracy in the Asia-Pacific societies, and specifically, Confucian societies, he evaluates the “Western cultural thesis,” advocated by George Kennan. This position states that “only Western culture provides a suitable base for the development of democratic institutions and democracy is, consequently, largely inappropriate for non-Western cultures.” The author concedes that certain cultures may indeed be “peculiarly hostile” to democracy, even if democracy is not impossible.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 304.

authoritarianism” into the 1990s.⁷⁷ This style of governance “could meet the formal requisites of democracy, but it would differ significantly from the democratic systems held prevalent in the West,” since its “[d]emocratic institutions work not to promote Western values of competition and change but Confucian values of consensus and stability.”⁷⁸ Thus, Huntington argues that the Confucian tradition in the region, undemocratic in its nature, has meant that a society like China has no experience with democracy, and “democracy of the Western variety” has only been advocated by a small number of “radical dissidents.”

Evidently, the Asian Way debate has been a complex one, incorporating diverse issues and themes from academic treatments of the Asia-Pacific region. Academic debate, however, has been only one source of information on an ‘Asian Way’; in addition to scholarly perspectives, the statements of regional policy-makers have fuelled the discussion.

Going to the Source -- Policy Statements on an ‘Asian Way’ by Regional Leaders

“Had the Chinese government not taken the resolute measures then, we could not have enjoyed the stability that we are enjoying today.”
Chinese President Jiang Zemin in a June 1998 debate with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Beijing, commenting on the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

Perhaps the most controversial and compelling source of information

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 305-306. Huntington says that Western democracy, with its emphasis on competition and its plurality of parties, is less dependent on performance legitimacy, since failure is blamed on incumbents, not the system. Asian democracies with one-party dominant systems are much more vulnerable to performance legitimacy, and when one party cannot sustain economic growth, for example, it is more likely that the entire system would be blamed. Performance failure of East Asian governments, Huntington contends, could conceivably lead to demonstrations, protests, and riots – perhaps reflecting recent trends in Southeast Asia, as well. That, in turn, would lead

concerning an 'Asian Way' has been state leaders in the Asia-Pacific. Throughout the debate, there has been a colourful cast of characters involved, and these officials have created a body of thought on East and Southeast Asia's place in the world that bears close examination.

The previously discussed Singapore School is frequently invoked as the chief spokes-group for Asian Way perspectives. According to Chew, the Singapore School is comprised of key public officials who assert that human dignity and good government are best achieved by a state favouring social order and rapid economic growth. Certain civil-political rights, such as the right to free speech and freedom of the press, may be sacrificed in this process, and the interests of the community, in terms of its cohesion and prosperity, are given preference over the interests of the individual. Chew states that the Singaporean path has been put forward "as a developmental model which may be more applicable for Asian and developing states than the European model of liberal democracy."⁷⁹ Key figures in the Singapore School are: Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew ("Singapore would go down the drain" if it adopted Western-style, individualist liberal democracy); Ambassador Tommy Koh ("East Asians do not believe in the extreme form of individualism practiced in the West"); Kishore Mahbubani, permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ("Freedom does not only solve problems, it can also create them"); Bilahari Kausikan, Director of the East Asian and Pacific Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ("[Asian] experience sees order and stability as preconditions for economic growth, and growth as the necessary foundation of any political order that claims to advance

to authoritarian suppression of dissent, according to Huntington.

human dignity”); and Sree Kumar, Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore (“East Asia has succeeded in defining the political framework which incipient industrializing economies require for sustained growth”).⁸⁰

Policy statements of East and Southeast Asian policy makers will be explored in this section, with particular attention to this influential Singapore School. There will be three main headings for discussion: general statements concerning social issues and values; statements concerning human rights; and statements concerning economics.

The Dangers of Decadence: ‘Asian Values’ and Society

In 1993, Foreign Affairs ran a follow-up issue to the controversial Huntington article, “Clash of Civilizations?” Kishore Mahbubani, continually outspoken on the topic of ‘Asian values’, contributed an article, underlining the potential hazards that a ‘Western’ way of life could mean for the Asia-Pacific. He argues that “Asians see that Western public opinion -- deified in Western democracy -- can produce irrational consequences. They watch with trepidation as Western policies on China lurch to and fro, threatening the otherwise smooth progress of East Asia.”⁸¹ The West, argues Mahbubani, has been selective and inconsistent in its own human rights policies, and thus, has little to teach Asia.

In a 1993 conference paper, Mahbubani presented a systematic overview of his version of an ‘Asian Way’, highlighting the inherent difference between these two

⁷⁹ Chew, 934-935.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 935-937.

⁸¹ Kishore Mahbubani, “The Dangers of Decadence: What the Rest can Teach the West,”

schools of thought and the importance of a culturally specific path for Asia:

- Asians are not afraid of “soft” authoritarianism; instead, they fear chaos, anarchy, and “hard” authoritarianism
- Asian societies have little awareness, let alone understanding, of human rights concepts, since they are preoccupied with immediate challenges such as poverty
- value systems, such as those concerning human rights, are choices each society must make; Asia’s view that law and order take precedence over human rights is merely an alternative view, not inferior or superior
- the only liberating force is economic development, because it “shakes up” societies and value systems, and unleashes popular demands for participation; if the West wants to improve Asia’s human rights situation, it must help in the region’s economic development.⁸²

On a more general level, Mahbubani says that the West has a “fatal flaw,” which is “an inability to come to terms with the shifts in the relative weights of civilizations.”⁸³ In terms of population and economic dominance, the West has faltered at many points, but still remains suspicious of a different part of the world, with different values, which can aid its situation. Yet another fatal flaw has been the inability to conceive that the West may have inherent weaknesses in its structures and institutions: there is corruption, overspending, and inefficiency in Western government, and a poor work ethic among its people. Mahbubani also finds the “hero-worship” given to individual freedom objectionable, as it has resulted in increased crime, divorce, and widespread social decay. While some Western attitudes have brought about great good, he criticizes “the inability to realize that some of the values

Foreign Affairs 4 (September/October 1993) 10.

⁸² Chew, 936. Mahbubani’s paper was entitled, “An Asian Perspective on Human Rights and Freedom of the Press,” delivered at the conference, “Asian and American Perspectives on Capitalism and Democracy,” jointly organized by the Asia Society of New York and Singapore’s Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, International Foundation, and Institute of Policy Studies, January 1993, Singapore.

that come with this package may be harmful.”⁸⁴

Elsewhere, Mahbubani points out that while poor Asian nations have looked to the US for leadership in the past, the time has come for that mind-set to end. Many Western societies, argues the author, have been doing “major things fundamentally wrong” while a growing number of East Asian societies were “doing the same things right.”⁸⁵ At the peak of the debate, social decay in the US had seemingly increased, while the Asian star had risen. Says Mahbubani:

This is an area where American society could benefit if it tries to draw closer to East Asia. East Asian societies are by no means universally harmonious. They have their share of family and societal breakdowns. But, relative to most societies in the world, they are disciplined and cohesive. Social order prevails. The deep value placed on family in Asian societies is not easily erased.⁸⁶

In this sense, the author argues that the time had come for the teacher and student to switch roles. The former teacher had abandoned himself to “mindless ideology” of ultra-individualism, where “principle takes precedence over people’s well-being.”

Lee Kuan Yew has advanced similar critiques of a ‘Western Way’. Lee’s reservations about ‘Western’ society have been numerous, as evidenced by an interview he gave to the Hong Kong based-*South China Morning Post*; were Singapore to adopt liberal democracy of the kind practiced in North America and Europe, he contends, there would be “more people in the streets, sleeping in the open, we’d have more drugs, more crime, more single mothers with delinquent children, a

⁸³ Mahbubani, “The Dangers of Decadence,” 13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Kishore Mahbubani, “Go East, Young Man,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* 157 no.20 (May 19, 1994) 32.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

troubled society and a poor economy.”⁸⁷ In a 1994 interview article with Fareed Zakaria, Lee elaborates on such arguments. He describes how he has overseen his city-state’s move from “poverty to plenty,” overshadowing its former colonizer, Great Britain, with its status as one of the original Asian Tigers. Lee’s method echoes the idea of a distinct blend of politics and economics in the region: “soft authoritarianism,” or the encouragement of the economy accompanied by tight political control. As Lee himself has put it, he is not so much concerned with telling people what is wrong with their system, despite his appearance to treat the ‘Western Way’ with disdain; rather, he believes that people should not “foist their system indiscriminately on societies in which it will not work.”⁸⁸

Ultimately, while Lee finds the openness and accountability of liberal democracy admirable, there are other aspects – crime, drugs, disorder – which are not as praiseworthy. Moreover, they give rise to hypocrisy. When dealing with drugs, for example, Singapore allows the police to detain suspects for testing, while in America, this is a violation of civil rights; nonetheless, in the case of American-Panamanian relations, the US deems it appropriate to imprison the president of another state in the name of the drug problem, which Lee characterizes as “incomprehensible.” Lee also points to “the erosion of the moral underpinnings of society and the diminution of personal responsibility” in the United States as the cause for its ills. “Westerners have abandoned an ethical basis for society,” he says, “believing that all problems are

⁸⁷ Chew, 935.

⁸⁸ Fareed Zakaria, “Culture is Destiny: A Conversation With Lee Kuan Yew,” *Foreign Affairs* 73 no.2 (March/April 1994) 110.

solvable by a good government, which we in the East never believed possible.”⁸⁹

Perhaps most notably, Lee does not believe that there is in fact an ‘Asian model.’ However, he does argue that Asian⁹⁰ societies are unlike Western ones. They put the individual citizen in the context of the family, and not “pristine and separate.” The basic concept of society is a mixture of duty to oneself, one’s family, one’s country, and the world as a whole; through this, Lee suggests that East Asians have had less of a relationship with the state, or at least, less of a dependent relationship as ‘Western’ societies with vast social safety nets.⁹¹ In short, Lee Kuan Yew and members of the ‘Singapore School’ have recognized that Western influences have been valuable, but they “do not want all of the West.”⁹²

Asian Human Rights and Democracy: Live and Let Live

At the Bangkok Conference, the Asian preparatory conference for the 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, China’s representative, Jin Yongjian, stated that human rights cannot exist without self-determination and state sovereignty. The Chinese representative also stressed economic development as a human right.⁹³ This was interpreted as an indirect way of conveying to European and

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹⁰ Elsewhere, Lee has referred to Asian societies as Korea, Japan, China, and Vietnam; these cultures are distinct, he says, from Southeast Asia, which is a mixture of Sinic and Indian influences. Andrew Tanzer, “Ride it! You Can’t Fight It: An Interview with Lee Kuan Yew,” *Forbes* 158 no.4 (August 12, 1996) 48.

⁹¹ Zakaria, 114.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 125.

⁹³ Jin Yongjian, “Asia’s Major Human Rights Concerns: Excerpts from a Speech to the Asian Preparatory Conference for the World Conference on Human Rights, March 30, 1993,” *Beijing Review* 36 no.16 (April 19, 1993) 10-11.

North American governments that they should keep out of Chinese affairs. The business at hand, it would seem, is economic growth, without interference by outside forces. This type of statement is a theme running through Asian policy makers' stances on human rights. At the Vienna Conference, to cite another example, Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Alatas made it clear that in Asia, human rights are embedded in the region's specific history and society, and that the individualistic view of human rights may not match Asian experiences.⁹⁴ Universality must be respected, he argues, but so must "sovereign equality."⁹⁵

Mahbubani has pointed out that while he does not claim to speak on behalf of Asia, he believes that there is, ironically, "no unified Asian view on human rights," since these are "Western concepts." He says that Asian reactions to these concepts has run the gamut between total acceptance and total rejection, but the "truth is that in most Asian societies there is little awareness, let alone understanding, of these concepts."⁹⁶ There have existed more pressing issues of development, he argues, so Asian societies have been hard-pressed to debate human rights. For Mahbubani, economic development is not a human right, as Jin Yongjian argued, but a precursor to human rights, as stated by the trade-off model.

Kim Dae Jung, former human rights dissident and now President of South Korea, does not agree with Mahbubani's views, and believes that human rights and democracy are certainly appropriate in Asia. However, the idea of an Asian path is not

⁹⁴ Ali Alatas, "Indonesia Against Dictates on Rights," a transcript of the Minister's speech before the Second World Conference on Human Rights, June 14, in Vienna, *Jakarta Post* (June 18, 1993) 4.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Kishore Mahbubani, "Live and Let Live: Allow Asians to Choose Their Own Course," *Far*

lost in Kim's perspective, and human rights and democracy are argued to have been grounded in the region's distinct "rich heritage of democracy-oriented philosophies and traditions." Furthermore, this Asian model has "the necessary conditions to develop democracy even beyond the level of the West," incorporating the religious traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism, traditional systems of law, and existing steps toward solidly democratic states. Western democracy has made mistakes, and 'Asian democracy' can learn from them, even improve on them: "Instead of making Western culture the scapegoat for the disruptions of rapid economic change," says Kim, "it is more appropriate to look at how the traditional strengths of Asian society can provide for better democracy." Kim's vision of Asian democracy is a system that respects culture, while fostering self-reliance and responsibility for all levels of society: the individual, the family, the state, and the environment. An Asian path, therefore, has carried many meanings throughout the debate, and may accommodate diverse views; 'Asian democracy' may be possible, and may differ from an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian order. "Culture is not necessarily our destiny," Kim concludes; "democracy is."⁹⁷

The Economics of an 'Asian Way': The Rising East

Judging from the debate that has surrounded East and Southeast Asia's economic success, one might be justified in thinking that East-West relations has

Eastern Economic Review (17 June 1993) 26.

⁹⁷ Kim Dae Jung, "Is Culture Destiny?: The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values," *Foreign Affairs* 73 no.6 (November/December 1994) 190-194.

consisted mainly of a financial race, in which the West has undergone periodic and troubling bouts of insecurity, feeling a newcomer breathing down its neck. For better or for worse, economic performance has become intimately intertwined with the Asian Way debate. Questions of prosperity conjure up Mahbubani's assertion that, at least during the less problematic period of economic growth in the region, the West was doing something wrong, while the East was doing something right. A commentator such as Mahbubani would say that in the economic sphere, this right and wrong could be seen in the region's development trajectory. For example, when East Asia's gross domestic product outstripped that of the US and the EC in the mid-1990s, this was supposedly due not only to market arrangements, but also to "the right social and political choices."⁹⁸ Of course, as with all arguments in the Asian Way debate as it has existed thus far, these points operate within a dynamic IPE context; at present, they continue to be informed by ongoing fluctuations in the economic profile of the Asia-Pacific.

Economics, according to Mahbubani, has been the reason that "East Asia has arrived on the world stage."⁹⁹ However, the heart of Asian Way perspectives is not confrontation, he argues; rather, it is to improve on the 'Western Way'. This is similar to Kim's argument that Asia can have superior democracy to that of Europe or North America by drawing on its own traditions. As long as the future of Asia is not extrapolated from the past of Europe, it was argued, with its mistakes and its inexperience with colonization and domination, the region's economic successes could be transferred to social areas. In this sense, East Asians are said to have moved away

⁹⁸ Mahbubani, "Go East, Young Man," 32.

from the assumption that their growth is just like that of Europe.¹⁰⁰

Lee Kuan Yew has also been outspoken on the topic of an 'Asian Way' to economic growth, distinct from the 'Western' path. He has referred to a concept that has gained currency in theories of international political economy, the idea of separate cultural capitalisms in East Asia and North America.¹⁰¹ In his 1994 Foreign Affairs interview, Lee uses the Singaporean growth strategy as a contemporary example of the Asian capitalism, with its blending of policy and cultural factors: an encouragement of high education; a use of cultural traits like the belief in thrift, hard work, filial piety, loyalty to family, and the respect for learning; and a conscious following of the Japanese model. "We knew where we were," says Lee, "and we knew where we had to go."¹⁰² In an interview with Forbes magazine, Lee attributes the period of Asian economic success to "the people," who are "disciplined, take education seriously -- especially math, science, and engineering -- and have cultural habits of high savings and high investments, always working for the next generation."¹⁰³ Lee tells the interviewer that "your [the United States'] relative prominence will be lost, but you've been losing it since the end of World War II."¹⁰⁴ At the end of the day, then, 'Western' societies should not feel a sense of superiority towards economically nascent countries like China: "I would not go around baiting them or provoking

⁹⁹ Mahbubani, "The Pacific Way," 100.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁰¹ Lee Kuan Yew, "The East Asian Way," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 9 no.1 (Winter 1992) 4-12.

¹⁰² Zakaria, "Culture is Destiny," 115.

¹⁰³ Tanzer, 46.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 48. Elsewhere, Lee has leveled similar criticisms at other developed nations, such as Australia, a society that "carries too much fat compared with the intensely competitive, self-reliant, resource-poor countries of East Asia" and possesses a "poor work ethic." Ian Jarred, "An Old Friend's Hard Truths," *Asian Business* 30 no.6 (June 1994) 64.

them,” warns Lee.¹⁰⁵

So, in essence, Lee has located the Asia-Pacific’s period of growth in its people and their cultures, as well as in policy. He faults the 1993 World Bank report, The East Asian Miracle, for glossing over such cultural factors in its assessment; even though a cultural approach would have given a less universal picture, he argues, it would help explain the differences between a case like Taiwan and a case like the Philippines. As for the transferability of the Asian model, Lee says that other societies would be helped by getting the policy “fundamentals” right, but they “will not succeed in the same way as East Asia did because certain driving forces will be absent.”¹⁰⁶

In this sense, Lee has located the process of economic development within the context of social emancipation: as nations become richer, the argument goes, they become stronger, and less concerned with domination and humiliation of the past. Notably, Lee does not discuss the colonization by Asians of other Asians. That troublesome point aside, it is striking, once again, how Asian Way perspectives can be presented as empowering, almost a variation on a non-aligned or Third Worldist movement, opposing domination by foreign powers, especially the ‘West’. But instead of culminating in something along the lines of an NIEO, which demanded that the ‘First World’ make compensation for the structural underdevelopment that is colonialism’s legacy, the Asian Way debate has pointed to an independent, self-assured route that requires no such assistance. Within the debate, ‘Asian values’ not only are granted the power to shake loose the domination of the ‘West’, but they may carry the potential to surpass it.

¹⁰⁵ Tanzer, 48.

The Media and 'Asian Values': Startling Differences

The media is the main source of information concerning Asia for most North Americans and Europeans: newspapers, televised news, and magazines all shape perceptions of distant parts of the world. But all media, even non-commercial media like the CBC, operate within a context of soundbites and snappy catch-phrases; complex social situations and human tragedies must be wrapped up in thirty seconds and then put aside. Media reports – these sound bites and pictures that extrapolate a global picture from one single page – help to mystify and dichotomize the 'East', and hence, the media is another vital source of Asian Way perspectives. Even well into the Asian financial debacle of 1998, for example, a *Time* article, when contemplating the visit of Bill Clinton to China in June, wondered if that nation might be the "next Evil Empire."¹⁰⁷

Similarly, during the media frenzy that surrounded the 1993 United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, an article on Chinese women in an issue of *Homemaker's* magazine, aimed primarily at middle-income working women with families, offered some general statements about the gap between Chinese and Westerners:

The startling difference between people in the West and people in China is rooted in Confucian teachings that have been the fundamental facts of life in China: respect for elders, the family, the group; restraint

¹⁰⁶ Zakaria, "Culture is Destiny," 115.

¹⁰⁷ Johanna McGeary, "How Bad is China," from the feature section, "China: The Next Evil Empire?" *Time* 151 no.25 (June 29, 1998) 26-38.

of self as an individual. In the West, individual freedom and self-fulfillment are glorified. China is governed by the importance of the group, of rigid codes and structures.¹⁰⁸

However, says the article, “[n]ow the Chinese version of glasnost is creating a psychological explosion,” and this value system is being shaken up by “western-style business,” impacting issues of motherhood and marriage.

This is a fairly representative snapshot of the way East and Southeast Asia is portrayed in media accounts. East and West are two blocks that stare at each other from across a cultural divide. Either there is an acknowledgment of economic growth or development, with the ‘East’ becoming more like the ‘West’, or else the ‘East’ is providing the ‘West’ with a successful model to emulate. In many reports, the concepts of ‘East’ and ‘West’ as unproblematic blocs are frequently left unchallenged. In one newspaper report, late twentieth century Japan is said to have to choose between two philosophies: an ‘Asian Way’, which is orderly and harmonious, and the Western path, which is decadent and anarchic.¹⁰⁹

The concept of an ‘East-West’ divide has been evident in numerous sources. One article from the *Washington Post* states that American budgetary dilemmas “can only strengthen the Asians’ growing superiority complex toward the once-revered USA.”¹¹⁰ Many Asian politicians, scholars and business leaders have been said to be “proudly proclaiming that there is an ocean of difference in basic social values across the Pacific,” having “decided that the Western, democratic, Judeo-Christian value

¹⁰⁸ Sally Armstrong, “In Pursuit of Happiness,” *Homemaker’s* (September 1995) 21.

¹⁰⁹ Sebastian Mallaby, “Does Modernization Mean Westernization?” *Globe and Mail* (August 6, 1994) D4. While Mallaby challenges the idea of a Western Way, calling it a “crude and monolithic caricature,” he also treats the Asia-Pacific in over-general terms.

structure” is fundamentally different from “the Eastern, group-oriented, vaguely Confucian pattern that is now proudly labeled ‘The Asian Way’.” “These Asian Neo-Confucianists,” states the author, “insist that their cultural values are better than ours.” in an “endless series of articles and lectures.” The article goes on to say that “[t]here’s an arrogant flavour to this kind of attack -- not terribly surprising for people who have decided they are winners.” Similarly, articles by William Safire in the *New York Times* have identified the Asia-Pacific with an anti-West, Singaporean “despo-nepotism,” completely opposed to human rights.¹¹¹ At one point, the staff writer went so far as to become involved in a protracted challenge to debate Singaporean officials on their repressive system.¹¹²

In media accounts, the battle has often played out against a backdrop of Asian countries asserting their position in global affairs. Notably, the Asia-Pacific has been presented as preparing its own vision of human rights at international forums such as the 1993 Vienna Conference, standing by principles of cultural context and sovereignty.¹¹³ Along similar lines, another journalist suggests that an “Asian view” of human rights has arisen from the Vienna Conference debate, even as the region has been called to defend itself and its human rights records to the world.¹¹⁴ To cite a specific case, Roberto Romulo articulates the Philippines’ unique human rights position, caught in the clash between a pro-universalism West and a pro-culture

¹¹⁰ T.R. Reid, “Confucius Says: Go East, Young Man,” *National Times* (April 1996) 14.

¹¹¹ William Safire, “Singapoerty,” *New York Times* (February 2, 1995) A23.

¹¹² William Safire, “Honoring Repression,” *New York Times* (July 10, 1995) A13; William Safire, “Singapore’s Fear,” *New York Times* (July 20, 1995) A23.

¹¹³ Gordon Fairclough, “Standing Firm: Asia Sticks to Its View of Human Rights,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (April 15, 1993) 22.

¹¹⁴ Frank Ching, “Eye on Asia: Asian View of Human Rights Is Beginning to Take Shape,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (April 29, 1993) 27.

East.¹¹⁵

Another major theme in media reports of an Asian Way has been, to draw on Kishore Mahbubani's words, what the East has done right, socially and economically. A *Globe and Mail* article, for example, points to social causes for Japan's low crime rate. Not only are small income gaps, low unemployment, and cohesion cited as contributing factors, the low rate of broken families and "family values" is also taken into account. The article tells how it is possible for a commuter in Tokyo to borrow fare from the police for the ride home if he has lost his wallet in such an orderly, community-minded society.¹¹⁶ Other articles tell of the secrets of the Asian Tigers' economic lift-off: "a tale of business before pleasure," reads one headline, followed by a story highlighting hard work, frugality, and sound government policy.¹¹⁷ Another headline states, "Confident Region seeks 'Asian Way'," arguing that due to an increase in prosperity and profile, rising nations in the East "no longer feel the need to kowtow to foreign powers."¹¹⁸ Likewise, various magazines in Canada and the US, especially business magazines, have carried stories on the relationship between 'Asian values' and Asian prosperity, and on the best way for 'Western' businesses to adapt an 'Eastern' system.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Roberto R. Romulo. "We Must Try Harder," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (August 12, 1993) 24.

¹¹⁶ Nicholas D. Kristof, "Why Japan Wins the War on Crime." *Globe and Mail* (May 26, 1995) A10.

¹¹⁷ John Stackhouse, "Why Asia's Tigers Burn so Bright." *Globe and Mail* (June 4, 1994) A1, A6.

¹¹⁸ John Stackhouse, "Confident Region Seeks 'Asian Way'," *Globe and Mail* (June 7, 1994) A10.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, "The Asian Way: Asian Culture and Values May Hold the Key to This Region's Phenomenal Economic Growth," *Benefits Canada* 20 no.8 (September 1996) 65-66; Edward Watkins, "Doing Hotels the Asian Way," *Lodging Hospitality* 50 no.11 (November 1994) 62-64; Mo Yuet-Ha, "Orienting Values with Eastern Ways," *People Management* 2 no.15

Both of these themes, the East as an intractable opposite on issues of human rights, and the East as a monolithic competitor in the global economy, have served to reinforce ideas of inexorable conflict in the Asian Way debate. Media coverage, combined with academic perspectives and statements by regional policy-makers, creates a discussion which has been far-reaching, in its audience and in its significance.

Conclusions

The general phenomenon of clash literature, as well as the more specific Asian Way literature, contain strong themes of opposition and conflict. These themes gained momentum in the post-Cold War era concern over potential enemies for the 'West': the debate has also been concerned with a new era of global competition and regional economic blocs, suggesting opposing civilizations staring at each other across an inscrutable dividing line based on cultures or levels of development. In this regard, discussions of supposedly increasing threats to global stability have been vital in understanding a world defined by clashing civilizations.

In terms of the Asia-Pacific, academic sources have highlighted themes of authoritarianism, order, and cultural visions of democracy and human rights within the debate. As well, commentators have emphasized the interrelated differences between 'East' and 'West' in terms of human rights, social values, and economic policy, with the Asia-Pacific portrayed as a rising, frequently monolithic actor. These factors play into themes of global clash. The idea of the 'East' as a dichotomous opponent to the

'West' will be examined and critiqued in the coming chapters, since this notion has been at the heart of the Asian Way debate.

Chapter Two:
Confucianism and the Asian Way Debate: The Mandate of Heaven

The Confucian aspect of the debate is an appropriate place to begin investigating the themes of clash and Asian Way literatures. If there is one single idea where the stereotypes of ‘Asian values’ have converged, then surely it is Confucianism: the philosophy has been invented and re-invented, and ascribed to a vast region, even though in some places, its influence is not felt. Confucianism has been discussed in reference to regional politics, economics, religion, and social behaviour. If the generalizations and dichotomies of Asian Way perspectives are to face a meaningful challenge, and if events such as regional political and economic turmoil of the late 1990s are to be better anticipated and understood, then the relationship between Confucianism and ‘Asian values’ must be reconsidered.

“Cultures being complex,” says Fareed Zakaria, in an afterword to an interview with Lee Kuan Yew; “one finds in them what one wants.”¹ This statement applies very well to the Confucianism theme in the Asian Way debate, given that the tradition has been adapted to so many analytical frameworks. After all, Max Weber once argued that the heritage of Confucianism was responsible for Asia’s slow economic development, due to the Confucian culture’s conservatism and lack of entrepreneurial spirit; this remained an influential position for many years.² Of course, the interpretation of Confucianism’s impact has since been transformed, and an influential view has emerged, holding that the

¹ Zakaria, “Culture is Destiny,” 125.

² Max Weber, The Religion of China trans. Hans H. Gerth (New York: Free Press, 1951).

philosophy's emphasis on discipline and order was a root cause of the Asia-Pacific's period of economic growth.³ Says Woo-Cummings: "Confucius is suddenly active, promoting aggressive Confucianism, samurai Confucianism, post-Confucianism, and maybe one day even appearing in an Adam Smith tie."⁴ Here, then, we have an obvious shift in perspective, and even, perhaps, a paradox: what was supposed to have slowed economic growth for four centuries was now causing it; what is supposed to be a philosophy of communitarian, harmonious values is now an engine for prosperity in a capitalist world economy. Nonetheless, in the context of the Asian Way debate, Confucian principles are argued to be pivotal in political and economic arrangements.

The philosophy of Confucianism, then, with its rich heritage, is one aspect of 'Eastern' cultures that has been a contributor to 'Asian values', even though its influence has not been universal throughout the Asia-Pacific, even given the role of Chinese diasporas. Nonetheless, it has been continually presented as a force that runs counter to 'Western' values because it is hostile to democracy and individualism, and upholds an ancient, inherited set of traditions that are incompatible with liberalism. In this sense, interpretations of the Confucian philosophy feed into the idea of a confrontation between the camps in East and West. Certainly, the Asian Way debate has suggested that Confucianism is a static tradition reinforcing the dividing line between clashing civilizations; it has even been argued that the idea of competing cultures with static, communitarian, and idealized values are particularly appealing to 'Western' observers

³ See James C. Hsiung, "Asia Pacific in Perspective: The Impact of the End of the Cold War," *Asia Pacific in the New World Politics*, James C. Hsiung, ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993) 216-217.

⁴ Woo-Cummings, 414. A similar argument is made by Patten, who states that the very Confucian values which were once used to explain Asian economic torpor are now used to explain the exact opposite. Chris Patten, "Asian Values and Asian Success," *Survival* 38 no.2 (Summer 1996) 8.

dissatisfied with supposedly competitive, hyper-individualistic societies.⁵ However, there are strong arguments in favour of Confucianism as a dynamic force, continuing to adapt to “cross-civilizational” pressures like processes of globalization, and hence, the ‘Asian Way’ presentation of Confucianism is one of its key weaknesses.

In the first section of this chapter, I will show how Confucianism has been established within the Asian Way debate as an opposing force to the ‘West’, and in particular, to Western liberal-democratic values. Certain government policies and statements, such as those of Singapore, have reinforced this notion of clash. In the second section, I will show that this clash has been based on distorted conceptions of Confucianism: in its appeal to Confucianism as a fount of disciplined ‘Asian values’, the tradition has been presented as a static, anti-democratic force, rooted in unchanging historical principles. As such, it fails to come to terms with contemporary social change and the ongoing imperatives of political actors. In particular, the argument that Confucian societies are by their very nature predisposed towards communitarian, anti-individual ‘Asian’ values will be examined, in light of present-day pressures in the Asia-Pacific.

Introduction

There is, of course, an extensive and complex range of religions and moral philosophies in the Asia-Pacific region. The presence of Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, and varying indigenous religions, among others, demonstrates the diversity that characterizes any geographical region, in terms of belief systems and their

⁵ Rhoda Howard, “Occidentalism, Human Rights, and the Obligations of Western Scholars,” *Canadian*

related institutions. The Islamic tradition, for example, relevant in societies like Indonesia and Malaysia, is a profound influence in the region. Islam is said to emphasise the religious community which comes before the individual:

The Muslim community is 'a compact wall whose bricks support each other.' And the wall must stand on its own without any external buttress. The part of the individual in this community is not merely to act so as to ensure its preservation, but also to recognize that it is the community that provides for the integration of human personality realized through self-abnegation and action for the good of the collectivity.⁶

In this sense, Islam is argued to build a society more focussed on duties, within the community context, than rights, in the individual context. Likewise, others have pointed to the key role of rights oriented towards the community within an Islamic, duty-centred society, including the right of the community to benefit from wealth and production.⁷ Similarly, Buddhism, with its distinct variations in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and Japan, has been argued impart values of harmony with the community and with nature.⁸ Others examine Taoist teachings, significant in Northeast Asia, emphasizing its balance between individual autonomy and obedience to the state – each individual being unique, but having to harmonize with surrounding forces.⁹

Journal of African Studies 29 no.1 (1995) 112-113.

⁶ R.J. Vincent, Human Rights and International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 42. For these statements, Vincent draws upon two sources: Majid Khadduri, War and Peace in the Law of Islam (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955) 3; Abdul Aziz Said, "Precept and Practice of Human Rights in Islam," *Universal Human Rights* 1 no.1 (1979) 64-65.

⁷ Ahmad Farrag, "Human Rights and Liberties in Islam," Human Rights in a Pluralist World: Individuals and Collectivities, Jan Berting, Peter R. Baehr, J. Herman Burgers, et al., eds. (Westport: Meckler, 1990).

⁸ Kenneth K. Inada discusses Buddhism and the ideas of harmony, holism, and feeling, relating them to Buddhist Asian concepts of human rights. "A Buddhist Response to the Nature of Human Rights," in Asian Perspectives on Human Rights, Claude E. Welch and Virginia A. Leary, eds. (Boulder: Westview, 1990).

⁹ Stephen B. Young, "Human Rights Questions in Southeast Asian Cultures: Problems for American Response," The Politics of Human Rights, Paula R. Newberg, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1980) 191.

As important as these and other religious and philosophical traditions are in the Asia-Pacific region, and as controversial as the literatures are that surround them, I would like to single out Confucianism as a philosophy that requires particular attention. The “Confucian cultural area” -- encompassing China, Taiwan, the two Koreas, Vietnam, Japan, and by default, Singapore¹⁰ -- is at the heart of the Asian Way debate, and the philosophy most frequently associated with its proponents. Specifically, Confucianism is often cited as reinforcing ‘Asian Way’ emphases on order, hierarchy, and discipline, key foundations of the debate. The reasons why Confucianism bears special attention will be examined in the following section.

Part I: Confucianism and Its Relation to the Asian Way Debate

Confucianism and the Media

Before discussing the literature concerning the influence of Confucianism on the Asian Way debate, it should be noted that the mainstream media in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain have added to the discussion. Much has been made of the link between Confucianism and Asian Way perspectives; in most cases, the connection has centred around the economic ramifications of this relationship.

¹⁰ Stephanie Lawson, “Institutionalising Peaceful Conflict: Political Opposition and the Challenge of Democratisation in Asia,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 47 no.1 (May 1993) 22. Lawson also includes Singapore later in her article as a society not traditionally associated with this “cultural area” but adopting its philosophies for its own purposes. It should also be noted that the influence of Chinese communities in the region, especially in Southeast Asia, arguably extends the range of Confucian influence.

The *Economist* ran an article in 1995 stating that explanations for Asian economic success based around Confucianism are resurging¹¹; another article in a later issue of the same publication cites Confucianism as a ready-made “family values” package for Asian governments.¹² In a 1994 business magazine, a professor of sociology at the University of California proposes Confucianism as an explanatory factor in the growth of Asian network marketing, with its emphasis on community and connections.¹³ Likewise, it has been argued that Confucianism’s emphasis on hierarchy and family is a significant factor in Chinese business, pervading Chinese attitudes and cultures.¹⁴ Affecting business and social relations, says another article, is Confucianism’s reverence for elders and authorities:

Business in China, Japan, and Korea is conducted according to the precepts of the Chinese philosopher [Confucius]. These include an emphasis on education, titles, thrift, moderation, kindness and, most emphatically, respect for seniority....Obedience to [the Confucian [hierarchy is mandatory].¹⁵

In order to take advantage of business opportunities in the region, says the piece, these cultural values must be kept in mind by ‘Westerners’.

Economic issues aside, the social significance of the relationship between Confucianism and the Asian Way debate has also been examined. T.R. Reid of the *Washington Post* writes of the connection between Confucianism and ‘Asian values’ rhetoric. “Even in Japan,” says Reid, “most Westernized of the Asian nations, there is a movement to turn back East.” He quotes a Japanese academic, Kichitaro Katsuta, who

¹¹ “New Fashion for Old Wisdom: Confucianism,” *Economist* (January 21, 1995) 38-39.

¹² “The Confucian Confusion,” *Economist* (February 24, 1996) 40.

¹³ Mark B. Yarnell, “Fertile Ground,” *Success* 41 no.5 (June 1994) 18.

¹⁴ Lawrence Jacobs, Gao Guopei, and Paul Herbig, “Confucian Roots in China: A Force for Today’s Business,” *Management Decision* 33 no.10 (1995) 29-34.

states that “[b]y following the insights of Confucianism, we can avoid the social catastrophe befalling the West, the result of centuries of individualism and egotism.”¹⁶

Reid points out that the heart of the Neo-Confucian critique of ‘Western’ democracy is its overemphasis on freedom: “[Europe and America] have gone too far to indulge individual freedom at the expense of society at a whole.”¹⁷

These media accounts are snapshots of Confucianism’s impact on the popular debate surrounding an ‘Asian Way’. With this as a general introduction, we can turn to the vibrant scholarly debate on the relationship between the Confucian tradition and the Asian Way debate.

The Academic Debate

The academic debate concerning Confucianism in East and Southeast Asia has been wide and varied, encompassing a complex political landscape -- Neher, for example, argues that Confucianism is an intricate philosophy, incorporating elements that oppose *and* support a supposedly anti-Confucian political arrangement like democracy.¹⁸

Likewise, there has been no scholarly agreement as to the nature of Confucianism’s role in an ordered, disciplined society; Williams argues that it is only “a thin line exists between authoritarianism on one hand, and traditional Confucian ideas of firm direction on the

¹⁵ Richard D. Lewis, “Wizened and Wiser,” *Management Today* (May 1996) 102.

¹⁶ T.R. Reid. “Confucius Say: Go East, Young Man,” *The National Times* (April 1996) 14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸ Neher states that Confucianism’s emphasis on hierarchy and deference make it a natural companion to authoritarian rule, but its stress on harmony and stability make it compatible with democracy as well. Neher, 953.

other,”¹⁹ while Michael Hechter and Satoshi Kanazawa reject the Confucian, normative explanation of the high degree of social order in a society such as Japan, preferring an explanation rooted in a solidaristic framework of key social groups, such as families, schools, and firms.²⁰

Within the context of this rich debate, however, there has emerged an influential stream of thought linking the philosophy of Confucianism in a natural relationship with an ‘Asian Way’, due to its emphasis on order, discipline, harmony, communitarianism, and deference to authority. Confucianism has been argued by some to reinforce these ‘Asian values’, and in many cases, to oppose ‘Western’ paths to democracy and human rights. As Dupont states, not only does the ‘Singapore School’, which will be discussed shortly, appeal to the Confucian argument -- that “Confucianism is held to be the civilizational glue uniting the Sino-oriented societies of Asia” -- but “non-Asian specialists of Chinese and Japanese political and security issues also feature it in their writings.”²¹ It is no small irony that Asian Way perspectives attempting to honour Confucian principles for their harmonious, disciplined legacy must paint it as such a closed, static tradition.

David Wen Wei Chang outlines the connection between Confucianism and Asian Way perspectives in his 1990 article, “Confucianism, Democracy, and Communism.” He points to the teachings of Confucius in the 6th century BC, which taught the people how to achieve “Order and Stability.” There were clearly delineated classifications of

¹⁹ Jeremy B. Williams, “Capitalist Development and Human Rights: Singapore Under Lee Kuan Yew.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 22 no.3 (1992) 369.

²⁰ Michael Hechter and Satoshi Kanazawa, “Group Solidarity and Social Order in Japan,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 5 no.4 (October, 1993): 455-493.

²¹ Dupont, 20. As examples of these non-Asian specialists invoking Confucian philosophy as significant in contemporary political and social contexts, Dupont cites Lucian Pye, Rosita Dellios, Reg Little and Warren Reed.

relationships -- between ruler and ruled, husband and wife, parents and children, elder and younger siblings – which were to be carried out with respect and attention to obligation, within traditional institutions. Thus, hierarchy, order, and harmony were highly valued in this system. He states:

In essence, the Confucian system is more a hierarchically regulated cultural system than it is a centralized authoritarian exercise of political power. Confucius believed in the enlightenment of all humans through daily education at home, in the village, and in society. The Confucian education was accomplished through established customs, rites, institutions such as classical Chinese which maintained social conformity and regulated individual behaviour. It was a politically elitist system which vested governing tasks in the gentry class of scholars who had successfully passed the imperial civil service examination.²²

This attention to hierarchy and order was maintained through accepted institutions, connecting the Confucian philosophy to political cultures and the state through education, society, and the family. Family life, for example, and the hierarchies it embodies, were seen as a model for other forms of authority.²³

These structures helped to locate Confucianism within the framework of the Asian Way debate, given the debate's emphasis on harmony, order, and respect for authority. It has also tied into the theme in Asian Way perspectives that 'Western' forms of democracy have no cultural basis in the region's history.

In The Third Wave, Huntington builds on this argument, stating that there is "almost no scholarly disagreement" that traditional Confucianism was undemocratic, even anti-democratic:

²² David Wen Wei Chang, "Confucianism, Democracy, and Communism: The Chinese Example in Search of a New Political Typology for Systemic Integration," *Issues and Studies* 26 no.11 (November 1990) 59.

Classic Chinese Confucianism and its derivatives in Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, Taiwan, and , in a diluted fashion, Japan, emphasized the group over the individual, authority over liberty, and responsibilities over rights. Confucian societies lacked a tradition of rights against the state; to the extent that individual rights did exist, they were created by the state. Harmony and cooperation were preferred over disagreement and competition. The maintenance of order and respect for hierarchy were central values. The conflict of ideas, groups, and parties was viewed as dangerous and illegitimate. Most important, Confucianism merged society and the state and provided no legitimacy for autonomous social institutions to balance the state at the national level.²⁴

Huntington is supported by other commentators such as Stanley Vittoz, who stresses that Confucianism is inherently hostile to democracy: just as Asian Communism has interfered with democratic development, Vittoz argues, so have the ancient, traditional values of Confucianism.²⁵ Likewise, Nathan Gardels, in an editorial of *New Perspectives Quarterly*, states that “the authoritarian bent of East Asian culture is rooted in the millennial mentality of the Confucian tradition,”²⁶ and that the influence of Confucianism has led to a different regional model of human rights and economic development, based on collective needs and priorities. “How can communitarian Japan,” asks Gardels, “whose oft-repeated cultural model is ‘hammer down all nails,’ possibly share the same level of concern for the rights of the individual as a culture [like the United States’] whose mythic emblem is the Lone Ranger?”²⁷

²³ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁴ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 300-301.

²⁵ Stanley Vittoz, “Confucianism and the Spirit of Democracy in China: The Beijing Uprising of 1989.” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 7 no.2 (Winter 1993) 329-365.

²⁶ Nathan Gardels, “Looking East: The Confucian Challenge to Western Liberalism,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 9 no.1 (Winter 1992) 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.* The Japanese example is not the best one for Gardels to offer as evidence – although it is not an uncommon one in the literature – since the Confucianist tradition he refers to in the rest of his editorial is generally overshadowed in Japan by Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism, and even Christianity. John Peek, for example, favours the Buddhist tradition as opposed to Confucianism as an explanation for Japan’s respect

Likewise, Chang establishes Confucianism as a value system that conflicts with modernity; 'Western' democracy, for this system, is a foreign, relatively new force in China, for example, opposed to ancient Confucian civilization and adopted mainly by elites. He speaks of Chinese responses to "Western ideological and economic challenges" and "Western concepts of constitutional and human rights,"²⁸ making explicit his dichotomy between the Chinese-Confucian model of democracy and the 'Western,' neo-colonial one. Economic activity has been expressed as a key to this cultural divide between Confucian and non-Confucian governance, since Western private enterprise led to expansion and colonialism. Chang argues that "[b]ecause Eastern countries did not develop along these lines, even up until the present there remains a conflict between the East and the West." This conflict persists, says Chang, because of the wide gap in income between the democratized 'West' and most of the 'East'.

In this way, Chang has painted a picture of Confucianism in conflict with 'Western' liberal values and modes of governance. Similarly, Lawson outlines the argument that Confucianism has "little tolerance...for the style of competitive politics usually associated with Western systems of government and opposition." This is due to the emphasis in Confucian thought on "harmony, which is the basic principle for the right ordering of these realms," and the idea that "each and every individual [must be] acting correctly in their assigned roles." Tradition has primacy in such a society. The "fundamental principles" in this system are based on "static, passive, paternalistic, and

for rights; Confucianism, he argues, is too dependent on duties to have a strong relationship with rights. John Peek, "Buddhism, Human Rights, and the Japanese State," *Human Rights Quarterly* 17 no.3 (August 1995) 527-540. However, Confucianist philosophy still has some influence in Japan, and Gardels' point is certainly representative of arguments in the literature, regardless of the relative strength of Confucianism in the country he uses as an illustration.

hierarchical order.” This has been evidenced by the uneasy relationship between Confucianism and adversarial politics, states Lawson, since this emphasis on harmony in the community is said “to make the act of criticizing those who hold political power anathema, since criticism is viewed as an act of disloyalty which threatens the integrity of the state and brings disorder and confusion.”²⁹

Joseph Tamney agrees that traditional Confucianism “is inimical to democracy.” The “sage-emperor ideal, the importance of harmony, and the absence of a belief in human rights,” within the Confucian tradition are all “inconsistent with notions of popular sovereignty, legitimate opposition, and equality before the law.” Heaven’s Mandate, it is argued, belongs to the ruler alone, and not in a system of law.³⁰ In its more contemporary manifestations, Confucianism has seemed related to the “Asian form of democracy,” says the author, and the future success of both are interrelated.³¹

These sources demonstrate how the Asian Way debate has become intertwined with interpretations of Confucian philosophy. Similar values, such as harmony, order, and communitarianism, have been emphasized in both debates; as well, the dichotomy established between ‘East’ and ‘West’ in the Asian Way debate has been echoed in treatments of Confucianism, and its relationship to liberal democracy. Perhaps the most interesting case of the link drawn between Confucian philosophy and the Asian Way

²⁸ Chang, 54, 73.

²⁹ Lawson, 22.

³⁰ Joseph Tamney, “Confucianism and Democracy,” *Asian Profile* 19 no.5 (October 1991) 402. This concept of Heaven’s Mandate is consistent with Little and Reed’s analysis of neo-Confucian thought, which is said to unite China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam: one key element of this contemporary school of thought, argue the authors, is “a preference for government according to moral dictates, rather than by law.” Reg Little and Warren Reed in Dupont, 16.

³¹ Tamney, 406.

debate can be found in the example of Singapore, which is outside Lawson's designated "Confucian cultural area," but is nonetheless at the forefront of Confucianist arguments.³²

Singapore: The Political Uses of Confucian Thought

Singapore, a state using certain authoritarian measures in conjunction with a system of elected governments and relatively freely functioning parties, has been argued to advance certain state goals through the political use of Confucian thought. This has reinforced the idea of an opposition between 'East' and 'West' on philosophical grounds, reflecting a split between civilizations.

Lee Kuan Yew, says Lawson, has accomplished several tasks by employing Confucianist rhetoric: showing that a 'Western', adversarial model of governance is unthinkable in Singapore, where consensus and harmony in a one-party system are key; encouraging a form of Singaporean nationalism which adopts Confucian values; demonstrating that chaotic Western values are in opposition to Asian, Confucian values; and reinforcing the idea that governments are best controlled by educated statesmen, who have a privileged role in Confucian thought. These goals can be traced back to the government's involvement in foundations such as the Institute of East Asian Philosophies (IEAP), whose government-sponsored mandate at its inception was "to advance the understanding of Confucian philosophy so that it can be reinterpreted and adapted to the

³² Lawson points out that this reinvention of Confucian thought – in a place like Singapore, where it has not been as strong – raises important questions about "the validity of 'alien' traditions and political culture, as well as the politics of culture." Lawson, 24. Singapore is one example of a diverse society with multiple faiths and philosophies, including Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Christianity among the Chinese population, as well as the Malay and Indian minorities.

needs of present society.” Likewise, in the 1980s, the secondary school curriculum included a Confucian Ethics course, and the Ministry of Education developed all pertinent materials, including textbooks. This, argues Joseph Tamney, was consistent with Singapore’s strategy: “during the eighties,” he states, “significant efforts were made in Singapore to modernize Confucianism.”³³ More explicitly, it has been claimed that in the Singaporean case, Confucianism may be used as “an ideological force underscoring coercive methods of control,” particularly when the state becomes involved in the interpretation and dissemination of philosophical ideas.³⁴

Certainly, many have identified the use of Confucian rhetoric in Singapore as a hallmark -- Neher states that Lee attempted to be “the quintessential Confucian ruler,” with his emphasis on paternalistic authority and moral example.³⁵ The push during the 1980s to disseminate Confucian ideals in Singapore, states Huntington, occurred hand-in-hand with a move to suppress dissent and criticism of government policies. Thus, even as it took its place among the wealthy states of the world, Singapore was an “authoritarian Confucian anomaly” in the midst of liberal democracies.³⁶

It has been explicitly suggested that in the appeal to Confucian values, and the difference between them and ‘Western’ values, it has been part of a trend: states that appeal to cultural differences and frictions in order to establish their identities.³⁷ And indeed, the above arguments and viewpoints demonstrate a theme: Confucianism is seen as an anti-Western, anti-democratic force, used by a government like Singapore’s to

³³ Tamney, 399.

³⁴ Tu Wei Ming in Lawson, 26.

³⁵ Neher, 954.

³⁶ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 302.

³⁷ Zakaria, 125.

consolidate authoritarian power. This encourages the idea that Confucianism is a philosophy linked with an ‘Asian Way’ and opposed to liberal democracies like those in North America and Europe. However, the proposition that the Confucian tradition is one which encourages or feeds into an Asian authoritarianism has come under attack, from various perspectives.

The next section will critique the Confucian argument for its suggestion that the philosophy is static, and based on unchanging principles and traditions. Confucianism, as generally presented in Asian Way perspectives, has failed to come to terms both with social change – particularly, the increasing role of individualism in societies thought to be duty-minded and communitarian – and political goals.

Part II: Critiques of the Confucian Argument – Confucianism and Clash in the Asia-Pacific

Confucianism and Politics

Not only have Asian Way presentations of Confucianism overlooked the importance of social change, as upcoming arguments will show, but the debate has also failed to address the political nature of the philosophy. A set of Confucian principles is not merely inherited by societies; rather, the philosophy becomes intertwined with a complex set of political aims. When the political dimension of the debate is ignored – when Confucianism is discussed in terms of unchanging tradition in Asian Way perspectives – the philosophy’s historical principles cannot comprise a full picture. While I argue that critiques of the Asian Way debate must be more detailed than a repudiation of

autocratic political leaders, it does not mean that political motives for the reinvention of a philosophy such as Confucianism can be discounted. Indeed, the distinction must be made between “Confucianism as philosophy and as state orthodoxy.” Even if the diversity of the philosophy were discounted, including the competing streams of thought and debate *within* the tradition, what is used as part of Asian Way perspectives is quite different from the classical precepts of Confucianism. An example is adapting the Confucian belief in a higher moral authority into a cultural deference to contemporary political authorities³⁸ -- one of many ways that Confucianism could be adapted, and a very different interpretation that one that supports existing principles of universal human rights.³⁹

Politically, the idea of Confucianism has been used to serve many purposes. According to Perry Link, explicit Confucian guidelines had been an intrinsic part of imperial history for more than a thousand years.⁴⁰ However, Confucianism found itself under heavy attack in the twentieth century, by both Nationalists and Communists, as counter to prevailing ideologies; Maoism, for example, espoused morality as a force to transform character into “new Socialist Man,” even though it shared with certain Confucian ideals the need for the individual to contribute to the life of the community. This is changing yet again, says the author, as a “fear of chaos” and a “lean towards

³⁸ Dupont. 21.

³⁹ Joseph Chan. “A Confucian Perspective on Human Rights For Contemporary China.” The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights. Chan argues that Confucianism is indeed compatible with human rights such as freedom of expression, though not as an end in themselves – rather, as a way of achieving an ethically correct or virtuous society.

⁴⁰ These guidelines, especially in the classic Confucian text “The Great Learning,” relate how a person’s moral power and learning should improve the society as a whole -- through regulation of the family, for example, or proper governance of the state -- and permeate the community, particularly through civil service training. Morality began with the individual but had to radiate outwards towards the family and the community, eventually to reach “all under heaven” via service to the highest authority, the Son of Heaven. Link sets up this holistic ethos, which interconnects all levels of human behaviour, as an opposite to “the disciplinary boundaries taken for granted in the modern West,” where scholarship

preservation of a core” of Chinese cultures in the face of globalization has led to a reassessment of cultural inheritances, including the Confucian philosophy, especially among Chinese intellectuals. Tongqi Lin adds to this position, exploring the “culture fever” in Chinese scholarship in the 1980s, which sparked a revival of the study of Chinese traditional cultures, including comparative studies of Chinese and Western cultures. This “redefinition or reconstruction of Chinese consciousness,” contributing to the 1989 democracy movement, led to the publication of over 1,500 articles on themes of Chinese cultures, including the role of Confucianism.⁴¹

The dynamic role of Confucianism in the political goals of Chinese authorities is also pointed out by Dupont, who states:

In China...the government has attempted to revive many of the Confucian practices and beliefs that were once vilified under Maoism because of the loss of authority suffered by Mao’s successors as communism’s many failings have become increasingly obvious to a generally cynical populace. A rapidly liberalizing economy, and the inevitable devolution of economic and political decision-making away from the centre, has also fuelled the government’s drive to rehabilitate Confucianism...⁴²

Here, Dupont suggests that this rehabilitation of selected themes in Confucian thought has indicated a shift in the tradition, both in its ability to satisfy the cynical populace and in its changing ability to suit the goals of state leaders. Whether Confucianism has been completely able to reinforce authoritarianism on a population experiencing socio-economic change is uncertain, Dupont points out.

separates different subject areas. Perry Link, “China’s ‘Core’ Problem,” *Daedalus* 122 no.2 (Spring 1993) 193.

⁴¹ Tongqi Lin, “A Search for China’s Soul,” *Daedalus* 122 no.2 (Spring 1993) 183.

⁴² Dupont, 23.

In sum, the reliance of Asian Way perspectives idea on a model of Confucianism that upholds centuries-old principles uniformly, into the present day, has been inadequate to explain contemporary social and political developments. If Confucianism is seen as a static tradition, unchanging in the face of the late twentieth century world and its pressures to democratize, liberalize, and globalize, then the mystified picture of 'Asian values' presented by the debate remains unchallenged.

Challenging the 'Confucian Way': A Tradition in Flux

Any critiques of the Confucian-Asian Way stream of thought must address the misleading and distorting characterization of the philosophy as rigidly hierarchical and anti-democratic. Equally as problematic is the establishment of the Confucianism 'East' as the opposite of the democratic 'West'. Lawson states that while it is reasonable to suggest that contradictions exist between aspects of Confucianism and liberal democracy as practiced in "the West," Confucianism is not therefore incapable of accommodating opposition. "Confucian tradition itself," she states, "[is] like most complex, long-standing traditions, [and] contains any number of ambiguities."⁴³ She points out that there was room in Confucian society for dissent and criticism: rulers could be critiqued if they behaved immorally, and in such cases, there was even an ethical responsibility for an individual to defy the law. Confucian scholars, in particular, had a theoretical role in opposing political authorities. So while dissent had to be disguised in flattery for leaders,

⁴³ Lawson, 23.

and while “liberal notions” such as human rights were not entrenched, in a general sense, opposition was not absent in the historical Confucian tradition.⁴⁴

As well, Francis Fukuyama argues that there are no inherent obstacles to democracy in modern Confucian states based on traditional, cultural principles. Fukuyama does not agree with the link between Confucianism and authoritarianism; rather, he sees the potential for the philosophy to reign in excessive individualism in a liberal democratic system.⁴⁵ This plays into the notion that Confucianism is deterministically associated with communitarianism – to be sure, a problematic association, and one that will be examined later in this chapter – but it does call into question the connection between Confucianism and anti-democratic governance. Thus, it cannot be taken for granted that Confucianism reinforces ‘Asian Way’ themes of authoritarianism.

Perhaps most seriously, Asian Way perspectives have continued to portray Confucianism as rigid and anti-democratic by separating it from present social and political contexts. Within the values debate, centuries-old principles, such as those shaping the lives of traditional civil servants and advisors in the emperors court, are invoked; it is as though Confucianism could be understood in the same way today as it was at its inception. Obviously, this ignores the practice of Confucian traditions within a constantly changing setting. This point is made by Alan Dupont, who states:

In emphasizing continuity with the past, there has been a tendency among scholars to suggest an enduring, essentially unchanging tradition of thought and action, which has allegedly bestowed a nation, community or civilisation with its distinctive characteristics and ‘soul’ ... [There is an inclination] to discount the effect of change and to homogenize

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Francis Fukuyama, “Confucianism and Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 6 no.2 (April 1995) 20-33.

values...apparent in...attempts to present an idealised image of East Asian states bound by a common commitment to Confucian values.⁴⁶

This inclination is all the more crucial when we consider the current forces of economic change in the Asia-Pacific region – forces that will continue to shape the Confucian debate.

Even Samuel Huntington, previously discussed as proposing a future of clashing civilizations, has given some recognition to the role of cultural change in societies said to embody Confucian values. He discusses liberalization, urbanization, modernization, and so on as affecting the nature and extent of Confucian values. Consider his case study of Korea as an illustration of his point: in that country, he argues, the tradition exhibited “the Confucian components uncongenial to democracy, including a tradition of authoritarianism and strong-man rule” because “[i]n the Confucian tradition, toleration for dissent had little place, and unorthodoxy was disloyalty.” However, in the 1980s, ongoing factors such as urbanization, education, the development of a substantial middle class, and the impressive spread of Christianity “all weakened Confucianism as an obstacle to democracy in Korea.”⁴⁷ Whether or not one agrees with the particulars of Huntington’s account of social change in Korea, it is significant that such factors have been stressed as a challenge to static ‘Confucian values’.

⁴⁶ Dupont, 19-20. Dupont argues that this view of Confucian culture as unchanging is unnecessary, since political theory has challenged the nature of culture as static. Ongoing and shifting customs, such as the decreasing proportion of rice that makes up part of the Japanese diet, disprove the idea that traditions are static. He cites Jeffrey Wasserstrom, who observes that “culture needs to be treated as something that people create and recreate” and Benjamin Schwarz, who argues against cultural systems as “static, integrated and closed.”

⁴⁷ Huntington, The Third Wave, 303-304.

Thus, proponents of ‘Asian values’ may invoke respect for order or deference to authority as part of Confucian societies, but the shifting global landscape is frequently overlooked. Ultimately, the Asian Way debate fails to address the changing context of Confucianism: its political role, distinct from its classical principles; and the weakening of arguably Confucian principles associated with Asian Way perspectives. Confucianism’s current political character and dynamic social context make it problematic, at best, to revive and invoke elements in the philosophy that at one time may have accommodated authoritarianism or other ‘Asian Way’ elements. In terms of shifting social and political landscapes, one of the most compelling examples is the emergence of societies in the region with increasingly blended models of individualism and communitarianism, belying the oft-repeated theme of Confucianism as rooted in ‘Asian’ communalism.⁴⁸

Individualism and Communitarianism: Confucian Thought in Shifting Context

A November 1998 survey conducted by *Far Eastern Economic Review*, intended to gauge the economic and political views of China’s upper middle class, rendered some ambiguous results. 43% agreeing that “in life everyone has to look for themselves,” while the majority, 75%, believed that the “good of the society should come before the good of

⁴⁸ This is a pivotal point to consider; as Sorensen and Holm argue, individualism is one of the prime forces currently challenging the state in international relations. Hans Henrik Holm and Georg Sorensen, “A New World Order: The Withering Away of Anarchy and the Triumph of Individualism? Consequences for IR Theory,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 28 no.3 (September 1993) 265-301.

the individual.”⁴⁹ These interesting responses are framed by a vibrant debate on communitarianism in supposedly Confucian societies, such as China.

It has long been argued that Confucian governance centered around, as Lawson puts it, “an ideology of political uniformity and conformity,”⁵⁰ a theme which has proved significant in establishing a contrast to ‘Western’ individualism.⁵¹ Patten, to cite another example, identifies the Confucian tradition’s emphasis on “authority [and] collective obligations over individual rights and the importance of the family as the basic unit of social organization and support” as a main proposition of Asian Way perspectives.⁵² Likewise, Neher states that there are two basic values embedded in Confucianism, at least in its Vietnamese and Chinese variants: first, a respect for hierarchy; and second, a lack of respect for the individual. Indeed, the author states that “individuals did not view themselves as independent and isolated persons, for they did not distinguish themselves from their position in society.” Hence, argues Neher, the consensus and order-driven Confucian societies are not driven to focus on individual rights, since “communitarianism rather than individualism has predominated.”⁵³ The idea of Confucianism as reinforcing communitarianism and diminishing individualism has been significant for the Asian Way debate, bolstering emphases on hierarchy, order, and deference to the group. However, this view of Confucianism, rooted in a static set of traditions, cannot adequately address the significant role of individualism, which is proving to be increasingly influential in the

⁴⁹ “China’s Elite,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Internet, 26 Nov. 1998, Available: www.feer.com/Restricted/98nov_26/focus2.html.

⁵⁰ Lawson, 27.

⁵¹ Confucianism, for example, has been cited as an alternative to individualistic Protestantism as value system which encourages hard work and economic growth. See Dupont, 15.

⁵² Patten, “Asian Values and Asian Success,” 7.

⁵³ Neher, 953-954. Neher points out that this perspective was complementary to the Marxist philosophies adopted in China, North Korea, and Vietnam, since both stressed collective discipline.

Asia-Pacific. In particular, elements of individual interests and protest against the ostensibly harmonious community are significant.

It is not the intention of this thesis to replace a straightforward communal model of a 'Confucian society' with a straightforward individualist one. The very nature of social change in a society such as China makes it problematic to exchange one blanket characteristic with another. As Lin Binyan argues, it is difficult even to discern whether personal freedom in a society like China has really increased in recent years, because of the complex, problematic nature of political culture. It is dependent upon what indicators are chosen to examine personal freedom. Yes, China has more newspapers than ever before, but it also continues to have the largest number of imprisoned journalists in the world. There is a burgeoning black market in China, allowing individuals to make a space for themselves in illicit activities, but there has also been an increase in the size and coercive power of Chinese security forces.⁵⁴ Hence, this thesis proposes that individualist factors as well as communitarianism must be considered in order to draw a more detailed picture of supposedly 'Confucian societies', since these various forces co-exist. This is not even necessarily a new development; as an indication that the philosophy is more complex than the Asian Way perspectives generally suggest, Chris Patten argues that Confucius had a great deal to say about individual rights *and* obedience to authority.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Lin Binyan, "The Expansion of Personal Freedom in China," *Asian Perspective* 19 no.1 (Spring-Summer 1995) 151-153.

⁵⁵ Patten, "Asian Values and Asian Success," 7. Nor should it be argued that themes of communitarianism are absent in societies outside the Asia-Pacific, or that 'Western' societies are individualist in a similarly straightforward way. As Fukuyama argues, communitarianism appeared in various forms in various societies: as the tendency to form civic groups in "high-trust" societies with "social capital" (Germany, Japan, and until recently, the United States) and as the more familistic leanings of "low-trust" societies (Korea, China, France, Southern Italy). See Francis Fukuyama, Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

In terms of the role of the individual in society, Lucian Pye explores this dynamism by using China as a case-study: “no people,” he begins, “have ever outdone the Chinese in ascribing moral virtues to the state or in deprecating the worth of the individual.”⁵⁶ This devaluation of the individual, Pye argues, has occurred both through Confucianism and Chinese Leninism, two philosophies which emphasize the importance of the collective society, denying individual autonomy and making “self-sacrifice for the state the highest ideal of citizenship.” Thus, in China, the state has been privileged as the embodiment and agent of communal values, while individual needs have been subordinated to the group. Specifically, in the case of Confucianism, dependency and not individual rights has defined society-state relations in China, even though a Confucian state was expected to treat individuals with benevolence. “It remains true,” states Pye, “that the dominant feature of Confucianism was a pervasive hostility to the notion of personal autonomy and individualism.”⁵⁷

But while Confucian cultures may be argued to have encouraged an association between communitarianism and virtue, Pye indicates that this relationship is not fixed. Rather, state-individual relations have experienced “ups and downs” over time, and respect for the individual, subordinated within a certain historical context of Confucian communalism, shows signs of change. Pye refers to these trends as increasingly large cracks in the system of state-individual relations. In his view, some changes in the

⁵⁶ Lucian Pye, “The State and the Individual in China: An Overview Interpretation,” *China Quarterly* no. 127 (September, 1991) 443. Pye points out that the debate concerning the nature of individualism in China is a complex one, particularly as it relates to Confucian thought. Some scholars have argued that Chinese Confucian culture contains strong elements of individual perfection and achievement, notably in scholarship. However, Pye points to another strain of thought indicating that self-realization notwithstanding, “there was no appreciation of liberty and individual rights” in the Chinese Confucian state. And, adds Pye, this self-realization was sought primarily by elites and in terms of “conformity to social norms, not in terms of the uniqueness of each individual.” Pye, 446.

'traditional Confucian society' are, ironically, the result of state policies, even though critics of 'Asian values' indicate the state as a key proponent of Confucian values. The Chinese Communist state, for example, chose to target and weaken institutions that best defined group identities and group feelings, the family in particular. In their place, more administratively binding groups were established, such as work units or classification groups based on socio-economic class or political behaviour. Psychologically, argues Pye, these groups are less strong than the Confucian cultural patterns of the family and community.

Hence, state policies -- combined with factors like the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, the legacy of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, and incidents like Tienanmen Square - - have served to widen Pye's cracks in the wall. There is an "erosion of moral authority" in China, the author states: economic liberalization; political reforms; the growth of informal and voluntary associations; emerging competition of interests; pro-democracy movements; and migrant populations are some of the factors weakening the Chinese state, the traditional holder of the community's official Confucian value system. In this setting, argues Pye, individuals are becoming more autonomous, in economic, political, and social spheres, because the state can no longer look after them. He contends that individuals are increasingly shaping their own identities, instead of defining their identities through groups.

So in the case of China, some scholars, Pye among them, argue that liberalism is increasing⁵⁸, carrying profound implications for the static model of Confucianism in that

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 446.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Beogang He, "Democracy as Viewed by Three Chinese Liberals: Wei Jingsheng, Hu Ping, and Yan Jiaqi." *China Information* 6 no.2 (Autumn 1991) 23-43. According to this article, some

society, so significant in the Asian Way debate. This argument, that social change and in particular, the forces of individualism are transforming understandings of Confucianism's role in the region, has also been made in reference to other countries in the region. In the case of Taiwan, or the Republic of China (ROC), Laure Paquette points to a debate emphasizing the continued importance of Confucianism to contemporary Chinese cultures. Alongside this debate, a related controversy flourishes, concerning any emphasis on the group over the individual. "One of the cornerstones of Confucianism," she states, "...is not just the subjugation of the individual to the group, but the very abhorrence of the individual, and the portrayal of the individual interest as selfishness."⁵⁹ However, Paquette points to "new, individualistic tendencies permeating the ROC's political culture," best shown through economic reforms and the growth of the market economy. This is true for political liberalization as well as for economic liberalization: just as the market economy encourages individual initiative, contends the author, liberal democracy atomizes a society in terms of individual interests. In the case of Taiwan, this has been dramatically demonstrated by pro-democracy protest in the 1990s.

Other scholars note that purportedly communitarian Confucian societies, predisposed towards an orderly, group-oriented set of values, have felt the pressures of social change. In the case of Singapore, Thomas Bellows traces the growing influence of individualism in the city-state with a snapshot of the year 1989. At the beginning of that year, President Wee Kim Wee presented a set of "common values intended to pertain to all communal groups" before Parliament: "[t]hese core values include placing society

democracy activists have pointed to a fusion of liberalization and individualism as an emerging model for the country.

above self, upholding the family as a basic building block of society, resolving major issues through consensus instead of contention, and stressing religious tolerance and harmony.”⁶⁰

The Cabinet, says Bellows, was developing a national ideology “to inculcate Asian values and fend off negative aspects of ‘Westernization’ ... [such as] hedonism, materialism, and self-centredness.” To these ends, Prime Minister Lee was maintaining that thrift, industry, and social cohesion explained the Eastern success story, “while excessive individualism has contributed to the West’s decline.” However, in the midst of this scenario, Bellows identifies signs of “individualism, pluralism, accommodation, and tolerance” in Singapore’s future. Political diversity, though orderly and gradual, was one key reason for these developments in 1989, demonstrated by criticism from backbenchers in Parliament. New organizations, such as a “Women’s Wing” of the PAP, were also formed. Bellows even correlates this growing diversity of opinion to economic development in the city-state.⁶¹

Likewise, in the case of Korea, Kwang-Ok Kim has noted that Korean Confucianism has helped reinforce conservative elitism – separating those with noble birth and rank, with “proper elitiness,” from the general community – and its values of “harmony, etiquette, and loyalty to the hierarchical system.”⁶² Nonetheless, these Confucian elites, or *yurim*, are facing “challenges from various newly emerging social and political power groups,” which are less focussed on the needs of community order.⁶³

⁵⁹ Laure Paquette, “The Republic of China’s New National Strategy for the Post-Cold War World.” *Issues and Studies* 32 no.3 (March, 1996) 14.

⁶⁰ Thomas J. Bellows. “Singapore in 1989: Progress in Search for Roots.” *Asian Survey* 30 no.2 (February, 1990) 201.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁶² Kwang-Ok Kim, “A Study on the Political Manipulation of Elite [South Korean] Culture: Confucian Culture in Local Level Politics,” *Korea Journal* 28 no.11 (November, 1988) 9-10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14.

These include other religious groups, such as Christian and Buddhist, whose status has increased. In this sense, Confucianism is being challenged as the predominant cultural basis for present-day Korea, since "social change has produced complicated struggle and competition."⁶⁴

The economic aspects of these developments must be emphasized. As mentioned previously, Samuel Huntington, examines Taiwan and Korea as cases of economic change in Confucian societies, concluding that forces of development, education, and entrepreneurial spirit have all combined to weaken the influence of communitarian Confucianism.⁶⁵ Similarly, Bellows argues that in Singapore, market economics and globalization strategies have created the basis for challenges to communitarianism in the form of individualism.⁶⁶

It should be noted that some observers believe present-day Confucianism does have the capacity to adapt to social changes such as increasing emphasis on individualism. Tamney's analysis, while dichotomized in terms of "the present face-off between Confucianism and Westernization,"⁶⁷ is helpful in his attention to Confucianism's ability to accommodate "the modern world." He points to contemporary Confucian scholarship, which has explored themes of rising criticism and debate in the face of a consensus-driven environment. He also indicates social changes that have allowed individual perspectives and problems to emerge; for example, gender roles are changing in Singapore, giving women more freedom to choose their partners and make decisions within the marriage

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁵ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 302-303.

⁶⁶ Thomas J. Bellows, "The Singapore Polity: Community, Leadership, and Institutions," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 1 no.1 (June 1993) 113-132; Bellows, "Singapore in 1989: Progress in a Search for Roots," 201-209.

than they did in the past,⁶⁸ a development that has a profound impact on assumptions made by Asian Way perspectives concerning deference and community values. “Equality and individualism,” says Tamney, “are becoming more important as determinants of how family members treat each other in actual families.”⁶⁹ Present-day Confucian scholarship, with its exploratory aspects, can be seen as a force that is finding a role in changing societies, instead of a conservative one which must espouse authoritarian values. However, while Confucianism is a complex tradition that may well accommodate all manner of social change – Confucius himself maintained that the philosophy must be adaptable, and change with changing times⁷⁰ -- this is a different portrayal of the philosophy than generally presented in Asian Way perspectives. The emphasis on the endurance of traditional Confucian principles de-emphasizes the significance of social change and the potential for adaptation.

These examples demonstrate that the idea of a Confucian tradition, with its group-oriented and deferential aspects taken for granted as an enduring cornerstone for the Asian Way debate, exists within a framework of social change. ‘Confucian values’ are combined with a range of factors to produce a less easily classified and more culturally diverse region. Thus, the idea of a single ‘Asian Way’ that draws upon the communal, orderly Confucian tradition to reinforce its position must be questioned, given increasing pressures of social change.

⁶⁷ Tamney, 399.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 409.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁷⁰ Dupont, 21.

Conclusion

Confucianism is not located within a static world: the political, social, and economic changes in Lawson's "Confucian cultural area" have affected the philosophy, just as they have affected other aspects of life. The Asia-Pacific at the end of the twentieth century is shaped by multiple forces, including an ethos of individualism encouraged by, among other factors, the forces of market liberalism. Events like the currency crisis of the late 1990s only underscore the myriad pressures that any tradition must currently face. With this in mind, the legacy of the Asian Way debate's Confucian argument – that there is a strong Confucian influence in the region that reinforces or predisposes societies towards disciplined, orderly, communitarian values -- must be rethought.

So, if the Confucian philosophy were indeed one of the roots of 'Asian' identities and cultures, it is now working within more pluralistic societies, influenced by global pressures as well as local ones. Given such factors as the increasing role of liberalization, as well as the ongoing political role of the philosophy, perhaps Confucianism is no longer, as Peter Moody argues, a "consummatory value system."⁷¹ However, the communitarian argument in particular treats Confucianism as if it did not operate in a dynamic world, where social and economic developments increasingly add layers to traditions in all societies, including those in East and Southeast Asia.

This is not a surprising portrayal, given the one-dimensional presentation of the philosophy in much of the Asian Way debate: despite the fact that it is an ancient and

⁷¹ Peter Moody, Political Opposition in Post-Confucian Societies (New York: Praeger, 1988) 1.

intricate tradition, and, as Lawson points out, subject to any number of ambiguities, Confucianism has been interpreted as contributing to a clear dividing line between 'East' and 'West'. It has been seen as hostile to democracy and liberalism, which are closely associated with 'Western' values. This opposition has served as a favourable platform for Asian Way perspectives, by allowing a critique of liberal individualism and inserting supposedly Asian traditional values of collectivism and harmony as the virtuous other. In this sense, an ideological attack on liberalism has been launched, and personal self-sacrifice in the name of the community has been more easily justified.⁷²

In sum, then, Asian Way perspectives draw upon a simplified Confucian tradition from the past to reinforce the ideas of order and communalism in the present, as opposed to a Confucian value system that faces ongoing social developments. This, in addition to the recurrence of broad themes of clash in Confucianist arguments, are significant weaknesses in the use of the philosophy by Asian Way perspectives. It only serves to obscure understandings of conditions in the Asia-Pacific region, instead of helping to clarify them.

On a concluding note, some observers have remarked that the dynamic nature of 'Asian' cultures, including the influence of Confucian philosophy, has been intertwined in the overall process of development. Patterns of change, says Dupont, have been "highlighting the catalytic impact of modernisation and challenging the notion of an immutable cultural core which unites the East Asian region," leading to a less rigid set of classifications between civilizations. Dupont states:

⁷² Chua Beng-Huat, "Arrested Development: Democratisation in Singapore," *Third World Quarterly* 15 no.4 (1994) 663.

Not only are Asian values changing, but the new post-industrial society, with its rapid advances in communication and information technology, may be inexorably creating a global culture in which traditional values are being subsumed or becoming more and more similar, thus diminishing further what differences remain between East and West.⁷³

This evokes Cable's view of a globalized world where communitarian values, generally protected by the state, are undermined by weakening borders.⁷⁴ The idea of an emergent global culture is a controversial one, as are its potential of positive and negative effects, but the emphasis on social change endures, reminding us that the processes and problems in 'Confucian' societies are constantly unfolding.

⁷³ Dupont, 20.

⁷⁴ Vincent Cable, "The Diminished Nation-State: A Study in the Loss of Economic Power," *Daedalus* 124 no.2 (Spring 1995) 23-53.

Chapter Three:
The Success of 'Asian' Success: The Asian Way Debate and Economic Growth

The July 20, 1997 edition of the CBC Newsworld show, “Schlesinger,” with Canadian journalist Joe Schlesinger, featured a story on global economic changes, and their ability to shape attitudes and actions. In Canada, the role of human rights and social justice advocacy has been de-emphasized during the 1990s, according to the piece. It was easy in the 1970s and 1980s to emphasize values in the international sphere: activists could oppose Pinochet’s Chile or Apartheid South Africa, because it was not so difficult to give up, say, a bottle of South African wine. It is less desirable to be left behind in the increasingly integrated international economy of the 1990s. This story raised a crucial point: there is an increasing perception of each nation’s economic interdependence in the global political economy, and thus, of its attendant vulnerabilities. It is problematic to take on a would-be economic giant like China, forecast by the World Bank to be the largest economy of the next century, and risk the consequences. This is not only true for a middle power like Canada, but even for a superpower like the United States, as evidenced by continued debates in the US Congress over how to balance condemnation of Chinese human rights abuses with the primacy of keeping this immense nation as a trading partner.

Likewise, our ever-shifting picture of the globalizing world is captured well by two articles in back-to-back issues of *Foreign Affairs*. At the end of 1997, Steven Radelet and Jeffrey Sachs paint a rosy picture of the economic prowess of the Asia-Pacific: by the early 21st century, state the authors, Asia will be “the world’s center of economic

activity,” and its “rapid growth is an economic miracle that calls for a reevaluation of Western economic strategies.”¹ Currency crises in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand are dismissed as understandable blips -- a “pattern of financial instability that often accompanies rapid economic growth.” Praise is given to governments who have created a favourable economic environment, even if they have yet to create a “virtuous circle” of modernized political-economic institutions.²

In the very next issue of this influential journal, Bruce Koppel begins his article with the words: “Asia’s economic miracle is in trouble.”³ In his opinion, the recent economic problems in the region should be taken very seriously, since they indicate larger, underlying social problems in Asian societies, such as deep disparities that ultimately create instabilities. In order to restore stable prosperity, these social problems will have to be addressed.

Certainly, the unrest and uncertainty caused by economic developments in the Asia-Pacific during the late 1990s has sparked controversy in economic circles: what happened, observers wonder, to the emerging new generation of Tigers, who were frequently commended for making all the right moves? Equally as disturbing has been the social and political upheaval associated, in some cases, with the financial troubles. Unrest and violence have hit places like Jakarta, where looting, protests, and angry calls for former President Suharto’s resignation were some of the frustrated responses to the plunging value of the rupiah and related economic hardships. Violence based on religious differences has been widely reported throughout

¹ Steven Radelet and Jeffrey Sachs, “Asia’s Reemergence.” *Foreign Affairs* 76 no.6 (November/December 1997) 44.

² *Ibid.*, 45-46.

the archipelago. As well, the shaky pyramid of national debt Indonesia struggles under -- estimated at \$133 billion US⁴ -- and the accompanying IMF guidelines that govern its repayment make potential human costs even more dramatic. Moreover, Indonesian's specific context was not generally seen as an isolated incident, but a sign of a larger trend in the region.⁵ In some news reports, East and Southeast Asian governments were characterized as similarly intractable, balking at fiscal restraints required by the IMF to "fix the region's problems."⁶ Developments in Malaysia, such as social protest, the controversial detainment and trial of former finance minister Anwar Ibrahim, and a 1998 budget openly resistant to IMF policies, serve as notable examples.

Perhaps even more intriguing has been the shadow cast on the first generation of Tigers, including Japan. Japan has been frequently spoken of in terms of its multi-year slide, suggesting that perceptions of its economic success have undergone significant changes. Now, at the closing of an epoch in Asian political economy, it is uncertain to many observers if the miracle was indeed so miraculous as originally thought.

At a time when the assumptions about the 'Asian' potential for prosperity face unprecedented scrutiny, we need to assess the Asian Way debate and how it has intertwined with discussions of regional economic growth. Are authoritarian states necessary to foster growth? Are they sufficient? Are the traditional values of societies changing with economic liberalization and foreign consumer goods, or in the case of Asia,

³ Bruce Koppel, "Fixing the Other Asia." *Foreign Affairs* 77 no.1 (January/February 1998) 98.

⁴ "Indonesia on the Brink: Southeast Asian Country Struggles with Political and Financial Turmoil," CNN, Internet, 9 January 1998, Available: www.cnnfn.com/markets/9801/09/jakarta.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "Asians Balk at IMF Rules: Indonesia Rejects Agency's Budgetary Restrictions Sending Currencies Lower," CNN, Internet, 7 Jan. 1998, Available: www.cnnf.com/hotstories/economy/9801/07/currencies/.

were those values merely misinterpreted or misconstrued in the first place? And were 'Asian values' particularly amenable to economic growth in the first place? The literatures on Asian cultures and Asian economic life wrestle with these issues as the picture of regional success shifts and transforms. As previously stated, this is an especially important time for a reassessment of the Asian Way debate. It can provide insights for future understandings of conditions in the Asia-Pacific; moreover, it underscores that ongoing social changes in the region have put the very future of such debates in question. For example, how can we speak of orderly, disciplined, economically successful societies when Asian monetary and economic policies have come under such a cloud, or when a country such as Indonesia has experienced such sweeping political changes?

In the midst of these complex questions, Asian Way perspectives have tended to reify 'Asian' economic life. They have not addressed underlying assumptions about the definition of economic success, for example, or have not differentiated the varying policies or circumstances within the region. Generalizations about economic life within Asian Way perspectives have encouraged a clash framework, and in this regard, calling these generalizations into question can help challenge clash approaches.

Growth and Legitimacy: Getting the Basics Right

Essential to the Asian Way debate has been the notion that a disciplined, harmonious society is related to economic success, with growth supposedly fostered by the 'Asian' society. As discussed in Chapter One, the economic aspects of Asian Way perspectives have encompassed elements such as: the invocation of an Asian economic

model which runs counter to – and is frequently argued to be superior to – the ‘Western’, declining economic way; the appeal to this economic model as an embodiment of growing Asian pride and self-determination; and the claim to a disciplined set of cultural values which fosters this successful economic model, such as cultural propensities towards thrift, high education, or a closely-knit family structure. It has also been suggested that there is a cultural commonality among Asian nations, by virtue of their ‘Asian-ness’, which makes them a natural economic bloc.⁷ Furthermore, within the framework of this argument, trade-offs in freedoms -- such as a rejection of ‘Western’ freedoms, like comprehensive freedoms of speech or assembly, which might cost the community some of its cohesion and order -- have often been seen as acceptable in the name of prosperity. Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, for example, has been quoted as saying that “Singapore’s economic success could be undermined...if it followed the ways of the West,” and that “materialism, ‘Western’ democracy, a free press, foreign television and pop music...could bring the country down.”⁸ This viewpoint has been an important one for Asian Way perspectives.

It has been argued, then, that a country like Singapore could retain an authoritarian state and continue to enjoy widespread international admiration, because it was

⁷ In “The Clash of Civilizations,” for example, Huntington makes a characteristically bold statement: “economic regionalism may succeed only when it is rooted in a common civilization.” He explains the establishment of the European Community (EC) in terms of its shared European culture and Western Christian religion; likewise, the success of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) is attributed to the present convergence among Mexican, Canadian, and American cultures. The integration of Japan with other Asian countries is judged to be problematic, because Japan is a distinct culture in itself. However, common culture is fostering economic growth elsewhere in Asia, notably in Confucian settings. China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are predicted to form an East Asian economic bloc, with China at the centre. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” 27-28.

⁸ Mark R. Thompson, “Late Industrialisers, Late Democratizers: Developmental States in the Asia-Pacific,” *Third World Quarterly* 17 no.4 (1996) 642.

experiencing impressive growth. It has also been argued that continued growth can augment internal legitimacy, because prosperity can stave off demands for political liberalization. This serves as a contrast to the school of thought which holds that an advanced level of economic development will lead to social change, political activity and an almost inevitable shift to a more democratic order. In the former view, a prosperous NIC or a prospering near-NIC, such as Singapore or Malaysia, could have an emerging middle class without necessarily facing the predicted pressures for democracy.⁹

Ultimately, the period of perceived economic success of an 'Asian Way' made the perspective's social arguments more compelling, even if this is subject to question in light of the Asian flu: it was held that there must be some worth to 'Asian values', if the results are widespread economic success. As Kishore Mahbubani put it in 1995, the "sheer economic weight [of East Asia] will give it a voice and a role" and "with more than half of the world's economic growth taking place in Asia in the 1990s, the economies of North American and Europe will progressively become relatively smaller."¹⁰ This, according to the author, heralded Asia's arrival on the world scene as a force to be reckoned with, and its social, political, and philosophical norms would therefore reflect legitimate Asian aspirations.¹¹ Moreover, even though growth may be argued to keep internal dissent under wraps, in a global sense it may be a cause of fundamental change in the economic order: Mahbubani states that "[e]conomic development is the only force that can liberate the Third World," and that it is "[p]robably the most subversive force created in history" because "it shakes up old social arrangements and enables more people to take part in

⁹ *Ibid.*, 642-644.

¹⁰ Kishore Mahbubani, "The Pacific Way," *Foreign Affairs* 74 no.1 (January/February 1995) 100-101.

social and political decisions.”¹²

If the region’s era of economic success has been connected to Asian Way perspectives, then this economic model must be examined if the Asian Way debate is to be critically reassessed. This is especially true, given that an undifferentiated Asian ‘economic’ model can contribute to a framework of clash and confrontation between Eastern success stories and Western liberal democracies.

For this reassessment, the set of economic arguments related to the debate must be evaluated in terms of key initial assumptions. First, if we are discussing ‘Asian’ economic success as interdependent with ‘Asian’ culture, then the meaning of “Asian” must be explored; and second, the significance of “success” must be weighed as well. In this regard, the picture of regional economic life generally presented within by Asian Way perspectives has been misleading because it is based upon misleading terms. Far from being a cohesive cultural region in terms of economic policy, the Asia-Pacific is characterized by diversity among actors and policies, casting significant doubt on the idea of a monolithic cultural path. Moreover, the very idea of economic growth being a success in the Asia-Pacific region has been subject to much scrutiny, given the human and ecological costs it incurs; hence, the notion of orderly, harmonious cultures yielding prosperity and fortune to its people has been a principal shortcoming.

Once these concerns regarding definitions and economic growth are addressed, several crucial questions remain. There are two key factors implicit in Asian Way

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹² Kishore Mahbubani. “Live and Let live: Allow Asians to Choose their Own Course,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (17 June, 1993) 26. Rather conveniently, Mahbubani is not referring here to movements within Asian societies to have a greater voice in governance, but to the ability of economic prosperity to allow the Asia-Pacific to shrug off the hegemony of the ‘West’, turning

economic perspectives: first, it is frequently assumed that cultures have been the *main* factor in economic growth, while economic policies themselves are minimized. Second, and more specifically, it has been taken for granted that an authoritarian, 'Asian values' state has been pivotal to the region's period of prosperity. That chapter will argue that the first assertion inadequately addresses the significant role of state planning in the region's economic life, and that the second creates an unsubstantiated link between 'Asian-style' governance -- authoritarianism or semi-authoritarianism in particular -- and prosperity.

Together, these themes provide a critique of the economic aspects of the debate, encompassing both theory and policy. In terms of theory, other literatures on development in the Asia-Pacific have explained it more in terms of structural-institutional factors than cultural ones, even though the former have been de-emphasized in the Asian Way literature. In terms of policy, regional states cannot be said to have pursued a common cultural path through their economic decisions; moreover, these policies of growth can set in motion social consequences that are far from the orderly, harmonious picture of success presented by advocates of 'Asian values'.

Part I: Inside the 'Asian Success' Story

In order to highlight the shortcomings of links between Asian economic success and 'Asian values', the meaning of the terms "Asian" and "success" must first be explored. In this section, I will first show that the idea of regional commonality in matters of economics has been misleading; then, I will outline how the very concept of success has

instead to an indigenous set of values.

failed to account for a range of social and ecological consequences.

The Flying Geese: Differentiating Economic Contexts in the Asia-Pacific

Is there something to “Asian values,” invoked by certain Asian managers, to explain financial success, asks an editorial in the *Economist*? “Not much,” the piece declares, since “[t]here exists no single ‘Asian’ style of business common to, say, the family firms of the overseas Chinese and the bureaucratic *chaebols* of South Korea.”¹³

This quote identifies another challenge to ‘Asian Way’ explanations for economic success in the region: the diversity of economic conditions and approaches in varying East and Southeast Asian states. As indicated by policy initiatives such as, say, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad’s aforementioned October 1998 budget – released in the midst of social unrest and featuring a budget deficit and an open defiance of IMF austerity measures – governments respond to financial issues in varied ways. Thus, while the region is aggregated in terms of Asian Way perspectives, different countries have employed differing economic models, with differing results. So, while it may be useful to identify an Asian forms of capitalism distinct from the European and American forms – characterized by a strong interventionist state, a post-Fordist industrial structure, and the influence of Japanese and Chinese personalistic networks¹⁴ -- it must be emphasized that

¹³ “Competing for Asia? Its a Fair Fight,” *Globe and Mail* (November 28, 1994) A21.

¹⁴ Richard Stubbs, “Asia-Pacific Regionalization and the Global Economy: A Third Form of Capitalism,” *Asian Survey* 35 no.9 (September 1995) 785-797. Stubbs also makes reference to Harianto’s concept of “oriental capitalism,” characterized by flexible production methods, Japanese/Chinese networks, and the establishment of links between government and the private sectors. Farid Harianto, *Oriental Capitalism* (Toronto: Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, 1993). For a treatment of ‘Asian values’ possibly leading to regional capitalisms, particularly in the case of China, also see S.G. Redding, “The Distinct Nature of

the 'Asian' economic model is quite variegated. As Hawes and Liu put it, while many onlookers want to distinguish between regional mega-blocks, such as the "inward-oriented" Latin America and the "outward-oriented" Northeast Asia, recent work has "demonstrated a number of significant intra-regional variations."¹⁵ Given these variations, Asian Way perspectives that fail to highlight unique economic contexts have also failed to address such issues as, say, the inability of APEC to develop a common lower-tariff policy on fishing and forest industries

Andrew Brick points to the diversity in economic policies and practices in the region. "The success of Asia's tigers," he states, "makes it easy to gloss over the differences in the way the region's successful governments and people worked to better their condition."¹⁶ Hong Kong, for example, is the most laissez-faire of the NICs (despite state intervention in areas such as housing, which would seem less than liberal to many observers), while Singapore is the most obviously statist. Some states, like South Korea, have achieved a level of prosperity through low interest rates and providing credit to domestic world-scale companies or *chaebols*, while others, like Taiwan and China, have let interest rates rise. Taiwan in particular emphasized much smaller and much less cohesive firms than the *chaebol* in its development strategy; the structure of the firms are family-based, but the reach is international.

While Brick does identify common threads that have run through the East Asian

Chinese Capitalism," *Pacific Review* 9 no.3 (1996) 426-440.

¹⁵ Hawes and Liu, 631. For another account of economic blocks based on shared, regional approaches to economics, see Harland, where the author contends that "East Asia" will be a strong, even dominant force, of the next century. Bryce Harland, "Whither East Asia?" *Pacific Review* 6 no.1 (1993) 9-16.

¹⁶ Andrew Brick, "The East Asian Development Miracle: Taiwan as a Model," *Issues and Studies* 28 no.8 (August, 1992) 2.

development model -- growth through international competition, 'business-first' government policies, relatively equal distribution of income, investment in education -- he expresses skepticism towards the more "intangible" explanations. The Confucian cultural theory, he says, "may be too glib." Confucianism is not unique to Asia, and echoes the Calvinist work ethic argument; as well, Confucianism was for a long time used to explain the region's poverty,¹⁷ a point brought up in the previous chapter. So, in this case, policy choices are favoured over cultural explanations when examining growth, and those policy choices are acknowledged as differing from state to state. If there is indeed a common cultural thread of 'Asian-ness' in these societies, it would appear to have influenced economic policy and encouraged economic growth in very different ways from country to country.¹⁸

Similarly, Lee Kuen and Lee Hong Yong indicate differences in state policies in various East Asian countries -- Taiwan, Korea, China, and Japan -- beyond the presence of "hard" Confucian states in all.¹⁹ In this case, even authors who subscribe to a cultural foundation for economic activity, such as a Confucian state reinforcing Confucian values, may distinguish between the performance and policies of different countries. The authors contend that China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan can be put on a continuum "ranging from a pure capitalist market economy to a centrally planned socialist economy"; Japan, Taiwan,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁸ It should be noted that this analysis, and many others in the literatures on Asia-Pacific development, are limited in scope, because they concentrate almost exclusively on formal sector economics, and does not include transnational, illegal, or informal economic activity, which is crucial in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in Southeast Asia. Such activity further challenges the idea of a single Asian form of capitalism.

¹⁹ Lee Kuen and Lee Hong Yong, "States, Markets, and Economic Development in East Asian Capitalism and Socialism," *Development Policy Review* 10 no.2 (June 1992) 107-130.

and South Korea, for example, can be classified as “capitalist medium states.”²⁰ This is a dynamic continuum, certainly: China, for example, is changing constantly as it experiences economic liberalization, moving from a more extensively centrally planned economy towards some form of market socialism. According to the authors, the four countries may have “similar cultural and historical traditions, which differ from those in the West,” including “the tradition of a hard Confucian state,”²¹ but the different states have taken different paths. “The Three,” i.e., Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, have had a positive and productive experience with an economically activist state, and have used different mechanisms of intervention than socialist states -- mechanisms based on genuine state power and disciplining businesses. And even among the Three, South Korea and Taiwan have faced different challenges, based on their specific political contexts. So, while the authors emphasize “the historically inherited hard Confucian state” as a shared, crucial background for economic growth, there is also an allowance for diversity as states move from that background.

This is supported by Bernard and Ravenhill’s argument. It has been proposed that development in the Asia-Pacific region is like a flock of flying geese, with Japan at the head of the V-formation, and other countries in a tight pattern behind it, replicating its experience of growth. However, the authors state, the pattern of Japanese industrial development has not in fact been replicated, because of the differing political and historical

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 107-109.

²¹ A “hard” state is defined by the authors as “autonomous from the partisan interests of social groups and foreign interests, while soft states are not.” The hard Confucian state in the region combines this autonomy with the Confucian emphasis on paternalism and elite hierarchy. The Confucian value system, according to this argument, nurtured economic development through the stress on political authority and the collective interest. Lee and Lee, 109-113.

contexts in varying countries.²² They emphasize the dynamic nature of industrialization at different points of time and in different regional/global contexts:

[T]he analogy [of Asia-Pacific countries as a tight formation of flying geese], as well as other approaches that suggest a unilinear path of industrial transformation, should finally be laid to rest. Not only has the pattern of industrialization in Korea and Taiwan been dramatically different from that pursued by the original goose, Japan, but it in turn differs significantly from the current rapid growth in manufacturing exports in Southeast Asia. The flying geese analogy fails to note that the changing global political economy and developments in technology and production techniques preclude a homogenization of industrial structures....in terms of both industrial organization and geopolitics.²³

In essence, this position states that circumstances are not as they were for Japan, or for the original Four Tigers; learning curves are different, as are methods of production, research costs, and the nature of the global political economy. As an *Economist* piece states, to see “booming economies of Southeast Asia as pupils in a Japanese masterclass is to miss the point” because the economic “stars” of the region have followed a different path. Indeed, states the article, this Southeast Asian model might have been even better suited to adaptation elsewhere than the Japanese model; consequently, Southeast Asia was described at the time as “exporting not just goods, but ideas.”²⁴ It is, therefore, unfair to generalize about one Asian economic model, in spite of what the Asian Way perspectives might suggest.

²² Mitchell Bernard and John Ravenhill, “Beyond Product Cycles and Flying Geese: Regionalization, Hierarchy, and the Industrialization of East Asia,” *World Politics* 47 no.2 (January 1995) 171-209.

²³ *Ibid.*, 206.

²⁴ “Asia’s Competing Capitalisms,” *Economist* (June 4, 1995) 16. This piece argues that the ‘Southeast Asian approach’, notwithstanding financial developments of 1997-1998, is more

Living with the Miracle -- The Costs of Growth

Throughout the Asian Way debate, there is very little critical examination of the term "economic growth." It is automatically assumed to be a desired, beneficial thing, and this is one of the main defenses of the 'Asian values' school -- the NICs and near-NICs had learned how to do something that everyone wants to do, and they had achieved something that everyone ought to achieve. If this achievement were challenged -- if it were asked, what is the price of economic success, or, how truly successful are East and Southeast Asian countries in light of these costs? -- then the legitimacy of Asian Way perspectives, with its emphasis on orderly, disciplined societies that encourage economic growth, would also be brought into question. In this section, I will examine two areas in which the Asian economic 'miracle' has incurred high costs: ecology and social justice.

Growth and Ecology in the Asia-Pacific

The process of industrialization in the Asia-Pacific, while admired by many observers worldwide during its more dramatic phases, has incurred grave social costs. Ecological destruction has been a serious "crack in the NIC model," as societies such as Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand and others deal with deforestation, salination from fish farming, industrial pollution, nuclear waste, and mega-projects that displace the most marginalized people in the society and monopolize land resources.²⁵ Large urban centres

useful for nations like China and India than the Northeast Asian model of South Korea and Japan.

²⁵ Robin Broad, John Cavanagh, and Walden Bello, "Development: The Market is Not Enough,"

in the region, such as Jakarta and Bangkok, have severe problems with noise, air, and water pollution, which are only expected to rise in coming decades, even as the demand for resources, especially clean water, increases. Half of Thailand's forests and seventy per cent of the Philippines' coral reefs have been destroyed by logging and dynamite fishing. The Gulf of Thailand's fish stocks have fallen seventy-five per cent since the 1960s.²⁶ High levels of pesticides, the use of drift nets, and increased energy demands are other persistent problems among NICs.²⁷

Moreover, the problems caused by NIC-style growth in any one society have potentially disastrous consequences throughout the region and the world. As referenced in the Introduction, there is a school of thought arguing that the concept of security has increasing human and community-based dimensions, ecological security being one important aspect²⁸; indeed, the trans-border nature of the ecological problems in the area

Foreign Policy no.81 (Winter 1990-1991) 147, 154. This article is a non-radical critique of liberal economic growth from a socio-ecological perspective, and can be viewed as part of the sustainable development discourse initiated by such viewpoints as the 1987 Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*. This report encouraged economic growth, but also emphasized partnerships between North and South, in order to create a development process that was sustainable for future generations -- for example, through environmental clean-up in the South. This sustainable development approach was continued through such initiatives as Agenda 21, the action plan drawn up after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio, which posits the interrelation of social, economic, and environmental development. More radical critiques, including deep ecology and ecofeminism, would focus more on the underlying development and/or liberal paradigm in the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand. Some radical ecologists oppose economic growth; others see it as an offshoot of a patriarchal and hierarchical system; others still encourage a view that sees humans as connected with their environment, and not apart from it in a rational, political life. The most numerous critiques in the literature on environmental problems in the Asia-Pacific, however, are the non-radical ones, pointing out difficulties and proposing solutions within the same paradigm.²⁶ John Stackhouse, "Asian Giants are up Against the Limits of Growth," *Globe and Mail* (June 6, 1994) A9.

²⁷ Devlin and Yap, 54-55.

²⁸ For an account of the ecological dimensions in regional state and human security, see Jennifer Clapp, "Environment, Development, and Security in Southeast Asia: Making the Linkages," Report of the Environment, Development, and Security Task Force, Development and Security in Southeast Asia Project, Task Forces of the Development and Security in Southeast Asia Project, Manila, the Philippines, 12-18 December 1995, 4.

has prompted the idea of an "environmental region" in the Asia-Pacific, united by common obstacles and potentially, by common responses.²⁹ Harris, for example, argues that environmental problems have global ramifications that transcend any one society's boundaries, since ecosystems extend across regions.³⁰

It should also be noted that many of the region's flashpoints involve environment and natural resources: who controls them and who exploits them. The Spratly Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia, with no government recognizing the claim of any other; not only are these islands strategic possessions, they are also resource rich, in terms of fisheries and possible hydrocarbon and phosphate deposits. Another case in point is the growing speculation surrounding the resource consumption of China, with its 1.2 billion citizens, as it develops³¹; the prospect of the Chinese consuming the same amount of electricity and oil as, say, Canadians, invites a global crisis in pollution and resources, even as it raises questions of whether 'developed' societies can compel 'developing' ones to limit their use of world resources.

In Taiwan and South Korea, export-led industrialization, which tends to emphasize environmentally intensive industries, has caused ecological harm even as it has achieved increased living standards. However, the paradigm of global neo-liberalism works against

²⁹ See Montgomery's analysis, where he argues that regional cooperation is the most promising solution to environmental problems such as deforestation and water pollution in the Asia-Pacific. The author proposes a kind of environmental initiative of scale: many nations can address transborder dilemmas that one single society could not. John D. Montgomery, "The Asia-Pacific as an Environmental Region," *Journal of Developing Areas* 28 no.1 (October 1993) 3-12. For a similar perspective, see Jonathan M. Lindsay, "Overlaps and Tradeoffs: Coordinating Policies for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific," *Journal of Developing Areas* 28 no.1 (October 1993) 21-30.

³⁰ Jonathan M. Harris, "Global Institutions and Ecological Crisis," *World Development* 19 no.1 (January 1991) 111-122.

³¹ See, for example, Daniel Yergin, Dennis Eklof, and Jefferson Edwards, "Fueling Asia's Recovery," *Foreign Affairs* 77 no.2 (March/April 1998). This article focusses on a possible

the necessary policy steps to address these ecological problems; deep institutional reform, argue Devlin and Yap, would be necessary for change, as would cooperation between low- and high-consumption societies on living standards and global constraints.³² These seem to be unlikely occurrences, as the 1992 Rio Summit and its follow-up negotiations have revealed.

To continue with the case of Taiwan -- a noteworthy example because, as Devlin and Yap state, it is one of the few low-consumption countries, along with South Korea, to have achieved a comparable level of development to industrialized nations, and as such, it serves "as a model towards which many other low-consumption countries, including Thailand, currently aspire"³³ -- economic growth has translated into disturbing ecological problems. Twenty per cent of the country's farmland is now polluted by industrial waste, and increased levels of unregulated industrial waste are being dumped. A nascent environmental movement and a 1985 poll -- suggesting that the majority of Taiwanese are rejecting the 'Asian' path to prosperity, and rank environmental protection above economic growth -- indicate the extent to which these problems have affected people's attitudes.³⁴

The push for economic growth in the next tier of NICs has particularly acute consequences in ecological terms, since social disparity in less prosperous countries can increase the price paid in environmental terms. In the next chapter, the social

crisis in global oil resources because of growing Asian demand.

³² Devlin and Yap, 58-59.

³³ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁴ Broad, Cavanagh, and Bello, 147. For more analysis of the Taiwanese environmental movement, see Devlin and Yap, 56. As well, Mab Huang argues that environmental activism, notably around the issue of nuclear power, has been so central a movement in Taiwan that it increased levels of public participation and heightened awareness of human rights. Mab Huang, "The Anti-Nuclear Power Movement in Taiwan: Claiming the Right to Clean Environment."

ramifications of the Medium Term Philippines Development Plan (Philippines 2000) will be discussed: the national economic policy begun during the Fidel Ramos administration, which has as its goal the entry of the Philippines into the ranks of middle income nations by the year 2000. The environmental effects of this program have been severe, and cannot be separated from socio-economic, class, and cultural issues: indigenous people, peasants and farmers have lost their land and livelihoods, and the poorest members of society, notably poor women with children, have borne the brunt of deforestation, dam projects, and soil erosion, as the traditional economic bases of communities shift and reshape to fit the global norm. As Broad, Cavanagh, and Bello state, this shift grows out of a standard NIC policy of export-led growth:

Ecological sustainability has been undermined in country after country. In their frenzy to export, countries often resort to the easiest short-term approach: unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. The stories of ecological disasters lurking behind export successes have become common: timber exporting has denuded mountains, causing soil erosion and drying critical watersheds. Cash crop exports have depended on polluting pesticides and fertilizers. Large fishing boats have destroyed the coral reefs in which fish breed and live. Tailings from mines have polluted rivers and bays.³⁵

To return to the example of the Philippines, the authors cite the ecologically disastrous practice of Filipino prawn farming for export, an industry promoted by the UN and some development agencies. Prawn farming uses a mixture of fresh and salt water, and salinates

The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights.

³⁵ Broad, Cavanagh, and Bello, 150. On an interesting side-note, Devlin and Yap point out that characterizing the NIC model as exclusively export-led growth is a misinterpretation, given the emphasis on practices such as nurturing domestic industries, fostering state-society linkages, and compressing elite consumption; however, as the authors admit, this neo-liberal misinterpretation has led to the encouragement of export-oriented practices in aspiring NICs, which leads to such industries as prawn farming in the Philippines. Devlin and Yap, 52.

the soil, affecting small rice farmers in particular and contaminating local drinking water sources. "Like many cash crops," state the authors, "prawns do little to increase equity."³⁶

While ecological dimensions of NIC models have been gaining wider attention, there are other costs of Asia-Pacific growth that deserve exploration. Among them, the social costs of economic growth remain a central concern to many commentators.

Growth and Society

In 1987, just as countries like Canada were becoming more familiar with the concept of the 'Asian Miracle', the *Globe and Mail Report on Business* ran a story which described the consequences of South Korea's development trajectory. It talked about the worker who laboured for 12-hour days, six days a week, with a dormitory floor to sleep on at night and three meals of soup and pickled cabbage, all for a total of \$150. This article did not describe such a dedicated workforce with admiration -- this was a "severe, military discipline," fostered in sweat-shop like conditions. In the Hyundai company, new, young workers were molded by a former military colonel: a kind of "spiritual training" emphasizing energy, frugality, and diligence. This, combined with urban slums, rural poverty, student unrest, and union repression, is the South Korean story behind the miracle, according to the article.³⁷

While media reports on South Korea in subsequent years were much more likely to emphasize the miracle side of the equation than the costs, this piece did point to some

³⁶ Broad, Cavanagh, and Bello, 151.

³⁷ "South Korea: The Malevolent Miracle," *Globe and Mail Report on Business* (November 1987) 27-37.

issues which would not disappear with the increasing legitimacy of the NIC model. In particular, the repressive atmosphere for South Korean workers, and their subsequent attempts at organization and protest, have continued to be a “warning sign” to “suggest caution in the face of [neo-liberal] triumphalism.”³⁸ Development by a centralized, authoritarian state may have maintained control over agitating workers, but disputes and discontent continued to fester as Korean workers look to share in the profits of the ordered society. Broad, Cavanagh, and Bello state:

[T]he evidence indicates that [countries like Taiwan and South Korea] can no longer practice a growth strategy based on repression of workers and abuse of the environment. It is now clear that each would have been better off trading some economic growth for more democracy and more ecological sensitivity from the start. Korea and Taiwan hardly serve as exemplary models for development.³⁹

Once again, these costs are even more marked in the near-NICs, where social disparities are more exaggerated to begin with. There has been a trend for companies from the NICs (Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan) to move to ASEAN countries (Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines) in order to take advantage of cheaper, less regulated, low-skilled labour as their own economies grow; in this context, environmental degradation, particularly rampant deforestation and industrial pollution, carried out by governments, local corporations, and trans-national corporations, threatens people’s safety and health.⁴⁰ Economic strategies, such as export of timber or prawns, as

³⁸ Broad, Cavanagh, and Bello, 144.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴⁰ Linda Y.C. Lim, “ASEAN: New Modes of Economic Cooperation,” and James Clad and Aurora Medina Siy, “The Emergence of Ecological Issues in Southeast Asia,” *Southeast Asia in the New World Order: The Political Economy of a Dynamic Region*, David Wurfel and Bruce Burton, eds. (London: Macmillan, 1996).

discussed previously, have grave consequences for farmers, peasants and indigenous peoples displaced or denied traditional resources. Such consequences are well documented in countries like Thailand: outside the cities, deforestation has displaced rural communities in the northeastern provinces of Khon Khaen and Nakhon Rathchasi. In Bangkok, many women have turned to the sex tourism trade to generate income, and workers rely on low-paying jobs in dangerous, badly-ventilated textile and toy factories. In one toy factory, for example, the Buddha Monthon, 200 workers were fatally trapped during a fire, blamed on poor working conditions designed to cut costs and attract investment.⁴¹ Hence, there are those who contend that the process of liberalization in a near-NIC has not reduced economic inequity, but increased it, providing benefits to a relatively small sector of society while vulnerable groups bear the brunt of socio-economic changes.⁴²

Little uses this debate on human rights and economic development as another example of the possible social damage caused by growth. He states that while human rights compliance may theoretically have an affinity with “good business practice,” there is evidence to suggest that the human rights consequences of much contemporary business activity is negative; economic booms, for example, bring with them new human rights abuses, such as those related to child labour and unsafe sweatshops.⁴³ Moreover,

⁴¹ Devlin and Yap, 52.

⁴² Armin Taubert, “Liberalism Under Pressure in Indonesia,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1991) 122-138.

⁴³ There is evidence elsewhere in the world which substantiates this assertion. Conditions in large, poor cities around in various regions, such as South Asia, show how industrialization can lead to overcrowding, pollution, and unsafe health conditions. John Stackhouse, “How Progress Caused the Plague,” *Globe and Mail* (September 28, 1994) A1, A8. Moreover, unchecked economic growth and market reform has been cited as a link in the chain of political unrest and social injustice in places like Chiapas, Mexico. “Behind the Clash in Mexico,” from the

international actors, such as transnational corporations, may act in a way which sustains human rights violations.⁴⁴

There is also speculation that the 'Asian' growth strategy can, in some cases, lead to increased social unrest, instead of reaffirming social cohesion. In a country like China, for example, where the coastal areas are experiencing growth at such a different pace than the interior of the country, existing regional disparities have become more and more exaggerated. Similarly, in countries like Indonesia, where a Chinese minority, through traditional commercial networks, has held a disproportionate amount of economic power and own a substantial set of resources, "politics of envy" can flourish – as recent unrest and rioting has demonstrated, the Chinese minority, among other groups, was vulnerable during the late 1990s economic downturn. In the case of Indonesia, the government has attempted to offset this problem by using Islamic groups, which has proved yet another potential source of unrest. "The political and social structures of...giant developing countries," says Funabashi, "are vulnerable to identity crises" such as refugee communities, religious rivalries, and competition for resources as the shape of the societies change.⁴⁵

One of the most compelling and potentially disturbing reasons to explore the social

Economist, reprinted in the *Globe and Mail* (January 24, 1994) A17. These types of developments have prompted University of California economist Albert Fishlow to argue that "[t]he triumph of the market is insufficient," and that recent emphases on economic growth have taken the focus of development away from equity issues such as income distribution and land reform. John Stackhouse, "Bankers Get a Lesson in Social Justice," *Globe and Mail* (October 3, 1994) B4.

⁴⁴ Little, 19.

⁴⁵ Funabashi, 82. For a specific study of the issue of regional disparities in China, see Haishun Sun and Dilip Dutta, "China's Economic Growth During 1984-1993: A Case of Regional Dualism," *Third World Quarterly* 18 no.5 (1997) 843-864; the authors examine the causes and possible solutions for the increasing economic gap between Eastern-coastal China and Western-inland China.

costs of NIC growth has been the speculation that this economic model could be appropriate for transfer from the Asia-Pacific to other parts of the world – specifically, to developing countries that have not experienced the ‘success’ of Dragons. McCord, for example, discusses the positive potential of NIC policies in South America, South Asia, and Africa⁴⁶; Sharma addresses those who would apply NIC policies to India, and while a superficial comparison is dismissed, some lessons are drawn out.⁴⁷ If Asia-Pacific experiences are seen as prescriptive, then the critical evaluation of the drawbacks of these economic policies becomes all the more vital.

Part II: Models of Economic Success in the Asia-Pacific -- Causes and Controversies

Having examined the shortcomings of the idea of “Asian success” in the economic sphere, it is necessary to explore more deeply key economic points of Asian Way perspectives. In this section, I will argue that contention that cultures are the root of economic growth has failed to address the large body of literature ascribing such performance to specific state policies. Then, I will critique the suggested link between economic performance and orderly, even authoritarian, government.

Culture and Policy in Regional Growth

The World Bank’s influential 1993 policy research report, The East Asian Miracle:

⁴⁶ William McCord. “An East Asian Model of Development: Growth With Equity,” *Pacific Review* 2 no.3 (1989) 209-217.

⁴⁷ Shalendra D. Sharma, “Markets and States in Development: India’s Reformers and the East

Economic Growth and Public Policy, helped establish a significant viewpoint regarding growth in the Asia-Pacific. In the report, the World Bank revisits a well-worn path: the factors underpinned the dramatic economic growth in the eight “high-performing Asian economies” (HPAEs): Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. Specifically, the report is concerned with public policy in the HPAEs, and how these policies have influenced growth and human welfare.

According to the World Bank, the eight HPAEs got “the basics” right: they adopted what the institution considers “sensible” development policies, including the promotion of capital accumulation, the education of a skilled workforce, the implementation of a modest tax program, the encouragement of new technologies and foreign investment, and the cooperation between government and private enterprise. As well, the HPAEs targeted key industries for rapid development. All in all, says the report, the economies were managed by careful state intervention.⁴⁸

The World Bank report brings the role of economic success in the legitimacy of ‘Asian values’ to the forefront. Was growth fostered principally by cultural values, or, as The East Asian Miracle Success suggests, by state-sponsored policies? While cultural factors or expressions of cultural identities should not be ignored as a potentially relevant to economic life, it must also be acknowledged that there are a wide range of explanations for growth and development in different societies. However, Asian Way perspectives do not come to terms with the extensive literature stressing policy decisions as key roots of economic life, concentrating primarily on the cultural aspects of decisions and behaviour.

Asian Experience,” *Asia Survey* 33 no.9 (September 1993) 894-904.

⁴⁸ World Bank, The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy (World Bank: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Certainly, these treatments that ignore cultural factors altogether run the risk of missing crucial elements of the picture, but for the purposes of this chapter, the factors overlooked or minimized by Asian Way perspectives in their focus on regional cultural explanations will be stressed.

The elusive 'Asian' formula for economic success, and any related reasons for downturns, have remained a compelling puzzle in scholarly debate and mainstream commentary. The Asia-Pacific seemed to be a region that escaped many of the conditions associated with 'underdevelopment', unlike other regions in the South; hence, the struggle to pinpoint factors accounting for the period of NIC and near-NIC growth has been considerable. Asian Way perspectives have suggested that cultural and social factors have been tied to economic success in East and Southeast Asia: these societies have different values, based on community, order, discipline, family, and hard work, and these values have been a foundation for any rising economic profile of the region. This perspective was as much an expression of pride and identity as a prescriptive model, and it has been used as a way of denoting 'Asian' independence and self-determination. As Mahbubani states, if East Asia's great economic success had occurred in the nineteenth century, there would have been a natural impulse to see it, as Japan did, in terms of acceptability into the then-premier Club of Europe; however, contemporary East Asians had moved away from that assumption, and no longer needed the validation of this exclusive circle.⁴⁹

Various theories have been presented to account for the economic growth in the region. In The End of History and the Last Man, Francis Fukuyama argues in the chapter "The Victory of the VCR" that there are two possible explanations for any Asian

⁴⁹ Mahbubani, "The Pacific Way," 104.

economic growth, as well as the lack of dramatic growth in other Third World areas: culture and policy. While discussions of political economy are generally more nuanced than to fall into these two broad categories, there has indeed been an emphasis on *policy-based* as opposed to *cultural* explanations in much of the academic literature concerning growth in the Asia-Pacific. That is, the role of specific government policies and decisions, as well as the nature of labour, factor endowments, and social stability, has often received the primary emphasis.

The importance of policy in theories of economic growth in the Asia-Pacific, then, must not be underestimated. According to Robert Wade, any theories explaining East Asian economic success could be divided into three groups: free market; simulated free market; and governed market. The first two groupings are neo-classical in approach, positing that East Asia experienced growth because states did not interfere with the market; this set of theories has been largely rejected due to overwhelming evidence to the contrary.⁵⁰ The third grouping has attributed the period of Asian success to “the state’s activities aimed at governing the market allocation of resources.”⁵¹ Wilkinson’s typology, on the other hand, more closely resembles Fukuyama’s: he groups explanations for NIC

⁵⁰ See, for example, Doner’s discussion of the shortcomings of neoclassical theory to explain the NICs. Richard F. Doner, “Approaches to the Politics of Economic Growth in Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 50 no.4 (November 1991) 818-849. For the opposing viewpoint, that NICs are indeed an example of the success of liberal policies, see James A. Dorn, “Economic Liberty and Democracy in East Asia,” *Orbis* 37 no.4 (Fall 1993) 599-619.

⁵¹ Robert Wade cited in Grabowski, “The Successful Developmental State: Where Does It Come From?” *World Development* 22 no.3 (March 1994) 413-414. Grabowski is discussing Wade’s 1990 book, Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization. Other commentators have further refined this concept of state activities to include some of its more nuanced interactions with society: Hawes and Hong distinguish between the structuralist approach (concentrating on the processes by which the state in Southeast Asia may be controlled by a vibrant capitalist class but still retain some autonomy), and the institutionalist approach (concentrating on the areas of private and public cooperation/coalitions to create growth, in a more interest-group oriented analysis). Gary Hawes and Liu Hong, “Explaining the Dynamics of the Southeast Asian Political Economy: State, Society, and the

'miracle' economies into two types. First, the culturalist perspective "posits causal links between pre-modern religious (or other fundamental) beliefs and modern organizational forms." Second, the institutionalist perspective "also emphasizes continuities with the pre-modern world in their accounts of business structures, but their independent variable is a 'way of life' and a set of social and political arrangements rather than merely a belief system."⁵² This latter policy-oriented school has revisited, in some regards, the concept of modernization in developing societies, except with a firm emphasis on the idea of the developmental state.⁵³ Certainly, the category of state-based, policy-oriented explanations for growth has generated a rich, diverse literature examining economic activity in the Asia-Pacific region. It is not the intention of this thesis to argue that cultures have no place in explanations of a society's economic life; however, it must be emphasized that this 'Asian Way' theme – that of culture as a central foundation of economic life – has been seriously challenged in much of the literature on economic growth in the region.

The Developmental State

Ziya Onis' study of the "development state" concept, as it relates to East Asia, is a

Search for Economic Growth," *World Politics* 45 no.4 (July 1993) 629-660.

⁵² Barry Wilkinson, "Culture, Institutions, and Business in East Asia," *Organization Studies* 17 no.3 (1996) 421.

⁵³ As Thompson points out, NICs and near-NICs are complicated examples to fit into the modernization paradigm of the 1960s, which holds that economic growth is a first principle which leads to societal mobilization and thereby, to increased political activity and often, to democracy. This is a contrast to Huntington's argument in Political Order in Changing Societies: modernization did not produce democracy in many cases, but rather, more authoritarian systems within a context of weak democratic political institutions. For Thompson, this is precisely the missing variable in modernization theory, as it could be applied to the Asia-Pacific: the role of the developmental state, sidelined by modernization's tendency to focus on the chain reaction of social change. Thompson, "Late Industrialisers, Late Democratizers," 625-627.

prime example of policy-oriented explanations for regional economic growth. She identifies the Asian capitalist development state, proposed by Chalmers Johnson and elaborated upon by others such as Robert Wade and Alice Amsden, as one with the following characteristics: “economic development, defined in terms of growth, productivity and competitiveness, constitutes the foremost and single-minded priority of state action.” There is state intervention, with the market guided by a small group of bureaucratic-economic elites; strong links are forged between this bureaucratic-economic elite and private enterprise, and strategic industrial policy is the preoccupation of this powerful, effective elite.⁵⁴ This model is expanded by Wade and Amsden to encompass the governed market (GM) theory, with its emphasis on high levels of state-guided investment and resource allocation through incentives and controls. Amsden’s analysis of South Korea -- with Korea characterized “as a prototype case of a guided market economy in which market rationality has been constrained by the priorities of industrialization” and where “the government has performed a strategic role in taming domestic and international forces and harnessing them to national economic interests”⁵⁵ -- is an apropos example. In short, then, this economic model of Asian success has been based up on a melding of state-directed competition and cooperation, with a heavy

⁵⁴ Ziya Onis, “The Logic of the Developmental State,” *Comparative Politics* 24 no.1 (October 1991) 111. Onis makes reference to Johnson’s 1982 book, MITI and the Japanese Miracle, for these points.

⁵⁵ Onis uses Alice H. Amsden’s 1989 book, Asia’s Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization, in her explanation of GM theory. In a related article, Robert Wade questions the central neoliberal assumption -- that growth will result if the state does not interfere with the natural forces of the market -- using the example of Taiwan and South Korea, and making reference to Amsden’s book, among others. Robert Wade, “East Asia’s Economic Success: Conflicting Perspectives, Partial Insights, Shaky Evidence,” *World Politics* 44 no.2 (January 1992) 270-320.

investment in human capital.⁵⁶ When explaining why states in East Asian societies have taken on these specific roles, Onis points to explanations which intersect questions of culture, but rely even more on structural circumstances or historical events. The East Asian regime type, authoritarian, is given as one possible cause, as are the external threats to the region during the postwar period, and the postwar redistribution of wealth and income in these societies.⁵⁷

McCord takes a similar stance when examining the legacy of growth in East Asia, emphasizing political and economic factors. Politically, the creation of a stable business environment, state intervention to balance out fluctuations in the market, and government support of education and human capital have been key; economically, land reform, high rates of savings, and a concentration on high tech industries have also been important. These have been sound policies, argues the author, which could be adapted to other developing countries.⁵⁸ Likewise, Devlin and Yap indicate the key role of state policies that took high-growth economies like South Korea and Taiwan beyond labour-intensive manufacturing bases, into the carefully crafted realm of “miracles.”⁵⁹

An interesting example that speaks to this policy perspective has been the social safety net in the region. The expansion of the welfare state in parts of the Asia-Pacific has been thought by some to be culturally “un-Asian.” However, through specific state

⁵⁶ Onis, 113.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

⁵⁸ McCord, 209-217.

⁵⁹ John F. Devlin and Nonita T. Yap. “Sustainable Development and NICs: Cautionary Tales for the South in the New World (Dis)Order,” *Third World Quarterly* 15 no.1 (March 1994) 51-52. Devlin and Yap state: “[Taiwan and South Korea] are emergent nationally-controlled mass consumption economies having a diversified export bundle, rising living standards, competitive, technologically sophisticated firms and a portfolio of international investments. They demonstrate that targeted, state-supported capital formation, skill development, and organisational deepening combined with expanded domestic consumption supported by asset and

policies, such as housing policy in Singapore or limited social assistance for the poor and elderly in Thailand, the ideas of what is 'Asian' and what is, say, 'European' has become blurred.⁶⁰

Certainly, the notion of the state's role in the successful evolution of economies has been a controversial topic in many circles; in particular, there have remained numerous advocates of an independently functioning marketplace in policy debates. James Fallows addresses this question, saying that in some Asian circles, culture has been a popular explanation for the rise of high-tech industries in Japan and the parallel flagging of these industries in the United States. Fallows states:

The Japanese explanation [for the flourishing semiconductor industry in Japan and the losses of the same industry in the US] is simpler. During the 1980s, most Japanese high-tech industries thrived. Japanese commentators and politicians are quick to see the "unique" traits of the Japanese people as an explanation for almost any phenomenon in Japan. Therefore Japanese discussions of the semiconductor industry have stressed "harmonious" working patterns, attention to detail, and related characteristics which supposedly make it natural for Japanese companies to excel.⁶¹

To underscore his point, he quotes a manager of a semiconductor factory in Kyushu:

There is a difference in culture. It is often said that we Japanese are united as a single people, or even race. In the US there are so many people with different backgrounds and religions and races, it is harder to work together in harmony.⁶²

However, Fallows disagrees with this analysis. Americans, he says, were trained to

income redistribution can generate economic miracles."

⁶⁰ "Is Welfare Un-Asian?" *Economist* (February 11, 1995) 16-17.

⁶¹ James Fallows, "Looking at the Sun," *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1993) 88.

⁶² *Ibid.*

believe that the efficiency of the market is key, but the success of high-tech industries in Japan has revealed that economic success may, in some cases, be predicated on sound government policies. Unfortunately, while some academic economists have refined liberal assumptions about markets to explain the semiconductor case, “very few of these refinements make their way into the public debate, where we’re usually presented with the stark choice between free markets and state control.”⁶³

In essence, then, this approach has identified the magic ingredient of economic success in the Asia-Pacific not as any characteristic of ‘Asian’ cultures, but as specific policies and behaviours of states and firms, and specific state-firm relationships. It has been argued that the state may intervene to discipline firms or control the size of the market, for example⁶⁴; or that it may strengthen consensus building institutions, making its policies more acceptable to market actors⁶⁵; or that it may choose to consistently favour the needs of capital over those of labour.⁶⁶ Whatever the specific policy-making decision, this school of thought has stressed the choices and actions of individuals or groups, rather than the cultural context favoured in the Asian Way debate.

Once again, it must be reiterated that this examination of the literature challenging ‘Asian Way’ assumptions is not meant to dismiss any potential impact of cultural factors

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶⁴ Richard Grabowski identifies this as the key factor in the effectiveness of development policy made by East Asian states, as opposed to the rest of the developing world; his aim is to contrast “hard” and “soft” developmental states, showing that the hard states, such as those in East Asia “have the will and the power to carry out successful intervention.” Grabowski, 413.

⁶⁵ Jose Edgardo Campos, “Leadership and the Principle of Shared Growth: Insights into the Asian Miracle,” *Asian Journal of Political Science* 1 no.2 (December 1993) 1-38.

⁶⁶ In the midst of the late 1980s debate between liberal and statist explanations for NIC growth, Frederic Deyo argued that “[i]n all four cases [of the original Four Tigers, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea], rapid industrialization has reflected an overwhelming priority given to the economic expansion and the needs of capital, with a corresponding neglect of the redistributive and welfare demands of workers and farmers.” Frederic C. Deyo, “Labour and

on a society's economic life. Certainly, there is room for a 'why' underneath many of the explanations posed by the authors mentioned: why, to use Onis as an example, was meritocracy so important to some Asian countries, allowing a measure of state autonomy from society and consequent policy-making freedom, not present in some other bureaucratic-authoritarian states? Or, to use Fallows as another example, have the attitudes that constitute the economic 'Asian' philosophy' – an economic life that increases national strength, concentrated power as a fact of life and used for the collective good, government intervention to regulate untrustworthy markets for the national interest, and competition between nations as a natural and permanent condition⁶⁷ -- been influenced by cultures in any way? Or, how have the cultures of specific state sub-groups impact on the formation of economic policy?: Liddle, for example, examines the military elite in Indonesia, arguing that its belief that democracy and economic growth are irreconcilable has hindered social justice.⁶⁸ Little, for one, suggests that it is culture, combined with other global and institutional factors, which shape the economic policies employed by regional governments.⁶⁹

Thus, while the possible role of cultures in a given policy-making environment cannot be eliminated, it is clear that cultural explanations for economic success, so important to Asian Way perspectives, have been challenged and have faced conflicting evidence. The examination of alternative explanations to cultural theory shows that Asian

Development Policy in East Asia," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* no.505 (September 1989) 154.

⁶⁷ James Fallows. "What's an Economy For?" *Atlantic Monthly* (January 1994) 76.

⁶⁸ William R. Liddle. "Indonesia's Democratic Past and Future," *Comparative Politics* 24 no.4 (July 1992) 443-462.

⁶⁹ Yash Ghai in David Little, "Human Rights: East and West," *Behind the Headlines: Canadian Institute of International Affairs Quarterly* (Winter/Spring 1996) 18.

Way perspectives, outlined in the chapter on clash literature, have glossed over an entire stream of thought in the examination of economic development in the region. As such, this position must come to terms with this alternative set of theories, and explain why and how policy and culture are interrelated.

Our Culture of Prosperity: Rethinking the Governance-Prosperity Link

Asian Way perspectives hold that a certain set of cultural values -- those espousing harmony, order, discipline and the interests of the community over the individual -- have been, in conjunction with a strong state, conducive to economic growth. Certainly, some external commentators in academic debates and the mainstream media⁷⁰ have suggested that democracy, in the 'Western' individualist sense, may hold ambivalent results for the Asia-Pacific region.

Koppel, for instance, points out that while there are significant democratizing forces in Southeast Asia, especially given the growth of the middle classes, the context is complex -- encompassing political, social, economic, and cultural factors -- and there may be limited room for the growth of democratic forces. "Asian experience," he states, "...suggests that while there is an association between the adoption of market-oriented economic processes and the pace of economic development, the association between economic development and political democratization is much less certain."⁷¹ Likewise,

⁷⁰ See, for example, Gaurev Dalmia's piece in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, which contends that while the democracy-prosperity link is even more pronounced in recent years, East Asia had its most dramatic period of growth before political liberalization was introduced. Gaurav Dalmia, "The Price of Liberty," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (March 3, 1994) 25.

⁷¹ Bruce M. Koppel, "The Prospects for Democratization in Southeast Asia: Local Perspectives

Williams contends that while the necessity of democracy for free markets has become orthodoxy, a strong state may be needed in developing countries, if only to implement economic liberalization; in the case of Singapore, the author argues, wealth has occurred during a period of maximum repression.⁷²

However, the uncertain fit of 'Western' systems of governance to the Asia-Pacific does not mean that an 'Asian values' alternative is necessarily the best path. There are many unanswered questions regarding the economic efficacy of an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian state, so central to Asian Way perspectives. A first principle – that the proposed set of 'Asian values' fosters growth in the first place – faces extensive contradictory evidence.

Investigations of links between economic growth and forms of governance is an tenacious area of inquiry. Certainly, in the fields of comparative politics and international relations, many words and much effort have been devoted to the question of how political life – its systems of government, its arrangements of state-society relations, and its respect for certain types of rights – can foster development, whatever development is argued to mean in terms of efficiency or equity. In past decades, the trade-off paradigm has been influential, contending that certain freedoms have to be curtailed or sacrificed by a developmental state to encourage economic growth⁷³, much as some Asian Way perspectives have proposed; however, there is also a school of thought which sees development and social justice as two sides of the same coin, where both are required for

and International Roles," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 12 no.3 (Fall 1993) 8.

⁷² Jeremy B. Williams, "Capitalist Development and Human Rights: Singapore Under Lee Kuan Yew," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 22 no.3 (1992) 360-372.

⁷³ See, for example, Jack Donnelly, "Repression and Development: The Political Contingency of Human Rights Trade-Offs," *Human Rights and Development: International Views*, David P.

a stable society.⁷⁴ There is still another dialogue devoted to development rights, and how they can serve societies in the South. All these issue-areas have been investigated for some time, yet no convincing evidence has surfaced that an 'Asian values' state is the most promising type for fostering economic growth – much less, as previously argued, for fostering other goals, such as social justice or ecological sustainability.

Indeed, there are some observers who argue that the link between an Asian Way state and prosperity is entirely spurious. Christopher Wood points to inefficiency in political life as the cause for Japan's economic slump, due to its outmoded and inflexible policies; moreover, in contrast to the idea of an 'Asian' political system which is orderly and disciplined, Japanese political life is experiencing a period of uncertainty and turbulence, says the author.⁷⁵ Likewise, Christopher Lingle, at the centre of the controversial *International Herald Tribune* article criticizing the Singaporean government, argues that Singapore's authoritarian system has backfired; its repressive nature has economic costs, and the ruling PAP cannot maintain growth in its present form.⁷⁶ These commentaries speak to the growing consensus after the late 1990s Asian flu: Asian developmental states, it is now argued, have proved to be inefficient, unstable,

Forsythe, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1989).

⁷⁴ This perspective is represented in the statements of international figures such as former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, as well as in scholarly literature. See Theo Van Boven, "Human Rights and Development: The UN Experience," Human Rights and Development; George B.N. Ayittey, "Human Rights and Economic Development: The Case of Africa," Human Rights, Development, and Foreign Policy: Canadian Perspectives, Irving Brecher, ed. (Halifax: Institute for Research on Foreign Policy, 1989); Bernard Wood, "Human Rights and Development: Reflections on Canadian Process and Policy," Human Rights, Development, and Foreign Policy.

⁷⁵ Christopher Ward, The End of Japan, Inc.: And How the New Japan Will Look (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), reviewed by Donald Zagoria, *Foreign Policy* 73 no.6 (November/December, 1994) 183-184.

⁷⁶ Christopher Lingle, Singapore's Authoritarian Capitalism: Asian Values, Free Market Illusions, and Political Dependency (Fairfax: Locke Institute, 1996), reviewed by Donald Zagoria, *Foreign Policy* 75 no.4 (July/August, 1996) 160.

overextended, and corrupt.

Further challenging the idea that ‘Asian Way’ governance ensures economic growth, James Lilley argues that it is the fostering of democracy and human rights in the foreign polices of nations like the United States that has lead to increased development. Taiwan, South Korea and Japan have all been success stories of democracy combined with free markets, states the author, and their democratic systems, nascent or more established, should continue to be supported if growth is to continue.⁷⁷ Bello and Rosenfeld agree: they argue that the attempt of the NICs to defer democratization has posed a threat to economic growth, since authoritarianism weakens the state and society in the end, stunting economic benefits. They present a “paradox” which counters the argument that economic growth is aided by a strong-willed and heavy-handed ‘Asian values’ states: a successful economic development strategy must, in fact, be democratically planned.⁷⁸

This means that instead of prosperity existing comfortably as a correlate of ‘Asian-style’ governance, regional politics becomes a balancing act to offset the push for democratization with ever-increasing economic growth. This view, wherein the Asian state counterbalances forces of political liberalization with increased wealth, runs counter to the legitimacy argument: that an Asian Way state is inherently desirable and legitimate because it reflects the culture of its citizens. Rather, growth is necessary, and if it dissipates, then the state will lose its legitimacy. So, instead of growth being a natural process associated with ‘Asian values’, it may have provided a mandate for non-democratic or semi-democratic rule in countries such as Indonesia, Singapore, and

⁷⁷ James Lilley, “Freedom Through Trade,” *Foreign Policy* no.94 (Spring 1994) 40.

⁷⁸ Walden Bello and Stephanie Rosenfeld, “Dragons in Distress: The Crisis of the NICs,” *World Policy Journal* 7 no.3 (Summer 1990) 431-468.

Malaysia.⁷⁹

To return to that thorny issue of legitimacy, we must ask, what happens if the growth stops? Interestingly enough, certain contemporary events surrounding the Asian crisis were anticipated by Samuel Huntington, in his closing section on Confucian values in The Third Wave. Addressing the troublesome question of legitimacy, Huntington considers whether 'Asian' democracy, with its purported mix of Western procedures and Confucian values, is indeed predicated on economic growth, and whether it can survive a prolonged economic downturn without turning to ever-increasing political oppression.⁸⁰ Likewise, Acharya, Dewitt, and Hernandez state that in Southeast Asia, many regimes have sustained legitimacy by force in some cases, but in others, by remarkable economic growth over extended periods of time, and this has led to a new source of potential problems. "Failure to sustain this achievement," the authors contend, "can erode popular support and political legitimacy of governing elites," as well as create increased social and ethnic tension which further weakens the government.⁸¹ Thus, as Asian NICs move farther into their development trajectories, and as accompanying social change spreads throughout societies, it is increasingly unclear whether regional governments are providing growth, through the application of 'Asian values' or alternatively, riding on the coat-tails of growth. As events in the region, particularly in Southeast Asia, continue to unfold, it remains to be seen whether state backlash on popular protest is an enduring feature of post-Asian flu societies, and whether the predictions of Huntington and others are being

⁷⁹ Mark R. Thompson, "The Limits of Democratization in ASEAN," *Third World Quarterly* 14 no.3 (1993) 469-484.

⁸⁰ Huntington, The Third Wave, 306-307.

⁸¹ Amitav Acharya, David B. Dewitt, and Carolina G. Hernandez, "Sustainable Development and Security in Southeast Asia," CANCEPS Paper 6 (North York: Centre for International and

fully realized. Ultimately, however, the generalized ability of an 'Asian Way' state to foster growth must be seriously called into question.

Conclusion

While the 'Asian Way' economic model may have gained legitimacy in the wake of the region's record of growth, there have been various factors in policy and theoretical debate demonstrating that the straightforward relationship between 'Asian' cultures and 'Asian' growth has been oversimplified. In the academic discussions of economic development in the Asia-Pacific, cultures, in the form of 'Asian values' or otherwise, have been much less emphasized than specific state policies or structural conditions. As well, it is evident that there has been no single 'Asian' set of economic policies, since different governments and firms have adopted different strategies, and embarked upon development trajectories within differing contexts. This only encourages a clash framework, where a relatively homogenous 'Asian' capitalism contrasts to a relatively homogenous 'Western' one. Moreover, it is unclear whether a stereotypical 'Asian values' state is even truly necessary to achieve growth in the first place. There are those who continue to argue that democracies, rather than either hard or soft authoritarian regimes, are best capable of achieving long-term economic growth, and that a heavy-handed government will sabotage its own best efforts in the end, a noteworthy point given events in places like Indonesia and Malaysia during the late 1990s. Finally, the period of supposed success in the Asia-Pacific region must be balanced against ecological and social ramifications of the growth

process; while the desirability of growth is unquestioned in many theoretical and policy circles, the process of making one's society into an economic 'miracle' has profound impact on the people and the land. This has certainly been the case in the Asia-Pacific. And ultimately, as recent developments have shown, the process may falter.

Such developments continue to alter perceptions of economic success in the Asia-Pacific, yielding further rounds of reinterpretation of the region's experiences. Certainly, economics is a lynchpin for establishing both policy and opinion, and the economic component of the Asian Way debate is thus a central element for critical reassessment. The current round of reinterpretation, precipitated by the Asian crisis, may well continue to focus attention on the controversy surrounding the Asian Way debate's legacy.

Chapter Four:
Peaceful Under Heaven: State, Society and the 'Asian Way'

The best intentions of the Asian Way debate may be reflected in a Chinese phrase, *Xiushen qijia zhiguo pingtianxia*. This saying indicates the different levels of personal responsibility: *Xiushen*, look after yourself and make yourself useful; *Qijia*, look after your family; *Zhiguo*, look after your country; and *pingtianxia*, expressing harmony between the person and the world, translating as “all is peaceful under heaven.”¹ According to this scheme, a person has multiple alliances and duties in dealings with society, as well as a clear significance in the order of the world.

This saying demonstrates the complexity of the forces behind the idea of an ‘Asian Way’; certainly, they have been more complex than repressive governments with poor human rights records making excuses, while ‘the people’ stand opposed. While the suggestion that Asian civilization is a monolithic bloc is inadequate, the suggestion that all Asian states and all Asian people respond to, evoke, and protest against an ‘Asian Way’ in an identical manner is, similarly, unsatisfactory. To challenge assumptions examine the reactions of state and non-state actors, while no small task, is a vital element of questioning the stereotypical clash viewpoint. It is also significant because a more meaningful understanding of the conditions in the region, including events of the late 1990s, requires a closer look at the policy-makers, activists, and organizers involved in the debate. In order to form appropriate responses to events surrounding the Asian crisis,

¹ Lee Kuan Yew quoted in Fareed Zakaria, “Culture is Destiny: A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew,” *Foreign Affairs* 73 no.2 (March-April 1994) 113-114.

these are the actors that must be differentiated and reconsidered.

This chapter will argue that Asian Way perspectives, as found in clash and Asian Way literatures outlined in Chapter One, have been inadequate in their generalized treatment of state and non-state responses to the debate. The suggestion has been that states are a relatively unified force on social values issues, and that non-state actors are a relatively unified force in opposing this unjust position, in favour of universal principle, the natural allies of the 'West'. However, this does not emphasize the truly varied nature of actors within the debate. First, the diversity of the 'Asian' region will be outlined briefly; then, I will examine the differences in regional state policy approaches to issues of human rights and democratization, in order to highlight variation among states within the Asian Way debate on matters of social justice. Next, it will be argued that like state responses, societal responses have been more diverse than the debate implies – and more diverse than many critiques suggest, as well – given the variety of non-state goals and responses. The specific case of the Philippines will be used as an example of this variety.

Part I: Beyond the Asian Bloc

In 1994, *The Economist* ran a feature story on "Asian Values," showing on its cover a large group of people from the Asian-Pacific region: men and women, young and old, in traditional and modern dress. The picture is not an especially cheerful one, with few of the subjects smiling, but what it lacks in casualness, it makes up in cohesion, and seems aimed at illustrating a strong, united front. The cover article, written in 1994, highlights the desire among commentators to explain economic success through cultural

factors rather than a “dreary shift in comparative advantage.” Asia, says the piece, is “on the rise,” “having scored one economic triumph after another,” with some Asians locating their success in superior values.

While the idea of Asia scoring one economic success after another is being reevaluated, the article’s discussion of diversity remains nonetheless central to critiques of the Asian Way perspectives. It states:

One reason for the muddle [over the precise nature of Asian values] is that ‘Asia’ is an even bigger and more diverse place than westerners think, with not only 60% of the world’s population but four or five major cultures, several distinct forms of social organization, an ethnic mosaic of astonishing complexity, and three or four big religions. It may make sense to talk about Confucian values, or Islamic values, maybe even Japanese or Hindu values. But ‘Asian’ values is a tall order.²

The article points out that because of this confusion, the image of an ‘Asian Way’ that filtered through to places like Canada, the US, and Great Britain has been unclear; “some spokesmen for the Asian Way,” for example, “when pressed to delineate it, come up with descriptions of such vapidness that they tell you nothing.” The talk of family, community, education, and high savings has been so broad that it “makes some westerners smell a rat,” since the point of any values talk must be a “personal cloak” and a cover for authoritarianism.³

As this article suggests, one of the most significant and troubling problems created by Asian Way approaches has been the idea that Asia – or even Confucian Asia, or Chinese Asia, and so on -- is a homogenous entity, exhibiting a single, identifiable set of

² “Asian Values,” *Economist* 331 no.7865 (May 28-June 3, 1994) 13.

³ *Ibid.*

traits.⁴ As Chapter One demonstrated, this monolithic presentation of Asian civilization, opposed to the 'West' in a deterministic struggle, has been central to Asian Way perspectives.

The creation of monolithic entities, based on broad notions of a civilization's culture, has belied vast regional diversity. Indeed, diversity even calls the very notion of the Asia-Pacific as a conceptual region into question. Virginia Leary points out that "'Asia' is not a homogenous entity that can be viewed as a single 'region'," since the term encompasses a range of states, communities, religions, languages, and cultures.⁵ Leary emphasizes size and diversity as the governing factors in the region: if we use the definition of 'Asia' employed by the group of human rights lawyers, LAWSIA, then Asia extends from Afghanistan in the West to the Pacific Islands in the East, encompassing over 35 countries. While Asia is less culturally homogenous than Europe, Latin America, and even Africa, and has not experienced an analogous establishment of human rights organizations or conventions, the author argues that it may be more useful to conceptualize Asia as a group of sub-regions, such as the ASEAN countries or the Pacific Islands. However, even this is a questionable proposition.

When challenging the idea of Asia as a 'civilization', it is important to keep in mind that many of the forces shaping people's lives act within and across borders, and are not limited to boundary lines on a map. That is, issues are not necessarily contained neatly to

⁴ The tendency to amalgamate varied societies into easily identifiable mega-cultures is certainly not new; studies of homogenizing terms such as 'Third World' reveal how broad definitions can reflect changing political and social aims. See Mark T. Berger, "The End of the 'Third World'?" *Third World Quarterly* 15 no.2 (1994) 257-275; Mehran Kamrava, "Political Culture and a New Definition of the Third World," *Third World Quarterly* 16 no.4 (Dec 1995) 691-702. Melanie Chew, Chua Beng-Huat, and Edward Said are examples of commentators exploring the uses of such conceptual monoliths in the Asian case.

⁵ Virginia A. Leary, "The Asian Region and the International Human Rights Movement," *Asian Perspectives on Human Rights*, 15.

an identified region or a subregion, and may act across ‘civilizations’, further underscoring the inadequacy of an Asian bloc. One pressing contemporary example of this are informal and illegal activities occurring across Lawson’s sub-regions and indeed, beyond the borders of the Asian region. In Malaysia, to cite one case, drug trafficking, smuggling, and legal and illegal migrant workforces have created a continual flow of goods and people across the Malaysian border⁶; another transnational force is the foreign investment encouraged by the Malaysian government as part of the Vision 2020 plan, aimed at making Malaysia a developed nation by the year 2020.⁷ Ultimately, forces and pressures acting across regional and state borders limit the idea of countries as homogenous building blocks sharing similar cultural and social views, upon which an ‘Asian Way’ could be readily built.

The idea of states in the region as homogenous supporters of Asian Way perspectives is even more inadequate in the face of remarkable cultural subtleties within populous nations. A society like China, for example, is used as a leading example of purportedly Confucian culture, key in Asian Way perspectives; however, it has been argued that the term “Chinese” itself presents “many faces and meanings.”⁸ As Helen Siu states, “ ‘Chineseness’ is not an immutable set of beliefs and practices, but a process which captures a wide range of emotions and states of being.” It is “a civilization, a place, a polity, a history, and a people who acquire identities through associations with these

⁶ S. Gunasekaran and Gerard Sullivan, “Cross-border Labour Flows in Southeast Asia: Patterns and Prospects,” *Southeast Asian Affairs 1990* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990) 48-53. For a deeper discussion of regional and super-regional informal activities, see Kiaras Gharabaghi, “Informal Regionalisms: Globalization, the Third Economy, and Narcotics in Central Asia,” *International Insights* 10 no.2 (Fall 1994) 76-85.

⁷ Daljit Singh, “A Political Overview of Southeast Asia,” *Southeast Asian Affairs 1992* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1992) 11.

⁸ Helen F. Siu, “Cultural Identity and the Politics of Difference in South China,” *Daedalus* 122 no.2

characteristics.”⁹ Cultural identities in South China, or Huanan, for example, are “fluid and negotiated,” “rooted in particular social, political, and economic relationships.” Huanan has historically been associated with a freer, enterprise-oriented ethos, a more ethnically diverse population, and a separation from the more regimented, centralized culture of Beijing. In recent years, forces such as commercialization, urbanization, and an increasingly mobile workforce, especially back and forth between Hong Kong, have helped encourage this distinctiveness. In this context, Siu argues that in South China in particular, people have used the fluid nature of their cultures to ensure a more beneficial position for themselves in their society.

So, given these points – the diversity within the region, the forces which act across it, and the problems with conceptualizing societies as ready-made component blocs of a ‘civilization’ – it is imperative to stress the diversity of state and non-state actors in their approaches to Asian Way issues. In terms of state approaches, while there are numerous ways to distinguish states in the Asia-Pacific region, actions centering around human rights and democratization speak most specifically to issues raised in Asian Way perspectives. The first task is to make clear that in terms of policies on human rights and democratization, there are significant variations among states within the region, calling into question a common state front based on common cultural values.

(Spring 1993) 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 37. Siu points out that the idea of culture as a process, or to quote one of her sources, “a moving target subject to constant reinvention,” is an accepted viewpoint – even “conventional wisdom” – in other fields, such as anthropology.

State Policy Differences

Just as states outside the Asia-Pacific have had differences in their approaches to the Asian Way debate – the November 1998 APEC summit in Kuala Lumpur, for example, saw US Vice President Al Gore criticizing Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad for cracking down on protesters, while the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers openly reprimanded such American statements as counterproductive – governments within the region have had unique policies and approaches. Even if the more spectacular instances of friction were overlooked – say, the two Koreas existing in a technical state of war since the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armistice, sharing a border among the world's most heavily armed – other questions persist. For example, financial developments in the region are said to contribute to a general disunity in organizations such as ASEAN, not only emphasizing splits on issues of economic policy, but also on political matters like Anwar Ibrahim's arrest and trial, or the admission of Cambodia as an ASEAN member given the co-premiership of Hun Sen. Likewise, there is no common ASEAN attitude towards pivotal issues surrounding globalization processes: at a recent summit, Malaysia and Vietnam warned of globalization's dangers, while Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines spoke of the process as inevitable.¹⁰ Indeed, individual governments and their preferred policies can be quite constrained by organizations like ASEAN: cooperation can limit state sovereignty, and the economic and

¹⁰ "ASEAN Leaders Seek to End Disunity," CNN, Internet, 15 December 1998, Available: www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9812/15/asean.summit.02/; "ASEAN Summit Ends with Plans for Economic Recovery," CNN, Internet, 16 December 1998, Available: www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9812/16/asean.01/.

political decisions of one member may well affect another.¹¹

If 'Asian values' were the driving force behind attitudes towards these questions, policy flashpoints might be rarer; if 'Asian values' were indeed such a powerful, unifying force, states in the region might be less likely to present such obviously fractious faces to the world. However, the most cursory examination of the regional human rights dynamic reveals that there are continuous sources of friction among Asian governments. Like economic policy in the region, social policy is unique and diverse within this 'civilization'.¹² Two societies as different as Indonesia and China, for example, have quite different human rights policies. While they share the dubious distinction of having been two of the most serious, publicly acknowledged human rights abusers in the geographic region, and both have strongly protested foreign interference in their domestic affairs, their official human rights instruments and bodies are markedly dissimilar. Indonesia's official human rights commission has operated more independently of the government than China's, relatively speaking, and China's more limited civil society has resulted in lessened pressure on the government in this regard.¹³ These types of differences have not been accommodated within an 'Asian Way' framework, and have reflected the diversity of

¹¹ Jusuf Wanandi, "ASEAN's Domestic Political Developments and Their Impact on Foreign Policy," *Pacific Review* 8 no.3 (1995) 440-458.

¹² The lack of harmony on regional policy issues has been explored elsewhere: for example, Stuart Harris argues that the Asia-Pacific region is entering a phase where policy must be examined and changed, if there is ever to be a consensus. Human rights is one notable area that must be considered, as are workers' rights, economic integration, and the role of continued American presence. Interestingly enough, Harris injects an element of Asian Way thought into this policy analysis: even if the Asian countries cannot agree, he claims, they do wish to conduct their affairs in a less confrontational, competition-oriented milieu than do 'Western' states. Stuart Harris, "Policy Networks and Economic Cooperation: Policy Coordination in the Asia-Pacific Region," *Pacific Review* 7 no.4 (1994) 381-395.

¹³ Frank Ching, "A Tale of Two Countries: Indonesia and China Respond Differently to Pressure on Rights," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 20, 1996) 40.

political contexts within the region.¹⁴

Even at conferences and summits where there has been a division of opinion between certain Asian states and activists, governments have diverged on social issues. In terms of attitudes towards human rights, democracy, and governance, specific questions have divided the Asia-Pacific: for instance, the Bangkok Conference, to be examined in the next chapter, demonstrates that some East and Southeast Asian states have more flexible policies than others on issues of human rights, and some, such as Singapore and Indonesia, have been more apt to invoke the 'Asian Way' than others. To cite another example, the 1994 Asian-Pacific Conference on East Timor (APCET), held in Manila to discuss the deteriorating human rights situation in East Timor, caused friction between the governments of the Philippines and Indonesia in particular. Former Indonesia President Suharto objected to the conference, on the grounds that it interfered with a sensitive, internal Indonesian matter: the independence of East Timor and the extensive human rights violations committed there. Filipino President Fidel Ramos put restrictions on the conference to ensure "good bilateral relations with Indonesia and the accompanying economic benefits,"¹⁵ but let it go ahead because of the clause in the Filipino constitution

¹⁴ Moreover, if we are to include socio-economic circumstances as an important element of human rights in societies, then the UNDP 1998 Human Development Report also reveals marked variations in the Asia-Pacific – variations that would profoundly effect the human rights context in a given society. Among countries with a high human development index – measured according to variables such as per capita GDP, life expectancy, and literacy rate – Japan ranked eighth, Hong Kong twenty-fifth, Singapore twenty-eighth and South Korea thirtieth. Thailand and Malaysia were fifty-ninth and sixtieth respectively. North Korea was classified in the middle human development range, ranked seventy-fifth in the world, as were Indonesia, ninety-sixth and the Philippines, ninety-eighth. China was one hundred and sixth. Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar were in the low human development range, according to the report. United Nations Development Program, Human Development Report 1998: Consumption for Human Development (London: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Renato Constantino, "Agreeing to Disagree," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 30, 1994) 26.

which ensures free speech. This response – described as “weak-kneed”¹⁶ – backfired, in that it created more friction and controversy than might have existed otherwise; high profile representatives to the APCET conference were deported, including the wife of then-French President Francois Mitterrand, in a bid to prevent volatile foreign participation. This raised the profile of the conference – which might, ironically, have otherwise gone largely unnoticed by the international community – to an international level.¹⁷ In this regard, ASEAN is certainly not a monolithic block regarding human rights, operating uniformly within the logic of Asian Way perspectives. “ASEAN solidarity,” notes one commentator, “cannot be strengthened if one country tries to bully another.”¹⁸

Another well-known flashpoint involved the 1995 Flor Contemplacion case, a source of tension between the Philippines and Singapore. Contemplacion, one of many Filipina domestic workers abroad, was hanged for a double murder in Singapore, in the face of questionable evidence. Public opinion in the Philippines expressed outrage and disbelief at the charges, given the often harsh treatment that female domestic servants receive abroad. The Philippines recalled its ambassador to Singapore, banned other women from going to the city as domestics, and threatened to break all diplomatic ties. The Filipino foreign minister resigned. Singapore, in turn, recalled its ambassador to the Philippines. According to one media report, “...Ramos’s action against Singapore, a major trading partner, is rare in Southeast Asia, where governments usually avoid criticizing one another on internal affairs.”¹⁹ It has been argued that Ramos was influenced by a coalition

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ John McBeth, Rigoberto Tiglao, and Colin James, “Indonesia: Beating a Retreat,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 2, 1994) 17-19.

¹⁸ Constantino, 26.

¹⁹ Robert Reid, “Singapore, Manila at Odds on Hanging,” *Globe and Mail* (March 23, 1995) A10.

of activists, including workers' associations, leftists, opposition politicians, and the Roman Catholic church²⁰, further underlining the multiplicity of opinion that belies 'Asian Way' assumptions.

Moving from Southeast Asia to Northeast Asia, there have also been numerous points of contention involving issues of freedom, openness, and human rights. Not only has the Japanese government been confronted with the historical context of its policies – notably, with issues arising from World War II, such as the treatment of Korean 'comfort women' – but it has continued to wrestle with the idea of regional leadership on issues such as human rights. David Arase argues that while Japan has made some policy concessions in the name of East Asian unity – its failure to initiate any meaningful sanctions or censure against Beijing after Tiananmen Square in 1989 being a prime example²¹ -- there is a policy ambivalence that makes it difficult to affiliate Japan with 'the rest of Asia'. According to the author, the Japanese state may aspire to a leadership role in the region, but it has also refused to "insulate [East Asia] against inconvenient Western pressures," even though some governments see democratization and human rights as a potential threat to growth or stability. Japanese policy concerning democracy and human rights, then, have been shaped by reasons quite separate from 'Asian values'.²² This demonstrates the sometimes uneasy balance Japanese state actors have struck between a liberalized, global environment frequently invoked after the Cold War world on the one

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ David Arase, "Japanese Policy Towards Democracy and Human Rights in Asia," *Asian Survey* 33 no. 10 (October 1993) 943-945. In the days following the Tiananmen Square crackdown, the Japanese government froze its aid to China and issued "a response," even as it continued to increase its economic ties with China, prompting international criticism. Moreover, Japan tried to convince the other G-7 nations in July 1989 to avoid sanctions against China. Arase argues that Japanese policy was to continue building ties with China, while pleading China's case with the West.

²² *Ibid.*, 938.

hand, and on the other, a region that offers a tempting leadership role; it also reveals how the idea of 'Asian' solidarity through shared, uniform 'Asian values' cannot address regional issues and interactions.²³

Another striking example in Northeast Asia is, of course, tensions between China and Taiwan. Aryeh Neier, an Executive Director of Human Rights Watch and a critic of an Asian approach to human rights in the 1993 *Foreign Policy* debate²⁴, has examined the rift between the two governments on the topic of human rights. The political and social liberalizations in Taiwan under President Lee Teng-hui have been attacked by the Chinese government as a threat and a potentially disastrous example for its own people.²⁵ This uneasiness over issues of rights and governance, one of the many offshoots of the decades-long struggle between Beijing and Taipei, sparked a controversy over President Lee's diplomatic visit to the United States in 1995.

These cases demonstrate that on issues of human rights and governance, societies in East and Southeast Asia have no instinctive policy unanimity, despite what Asian Way perspectives might suggest, or similarly, what critiques suggest when they focus on a group of corrupt, authoritarian Asian governments. There are significant differences between states that have violently suppressed political dissidence, such as China or Indonesia, and states like Singapore that work through "comparatively sophisticated...legalistic and cooptive methods of political control," so much so that globalizing technologies thought to undermine authoritarianism, such as the internet, are

²³ This is a point that must be underlined, given events following the Asian currency crisis: some commentators laid blame for the economic troubles at Japan's doorstep, in terms of its policies, and moreover, in terms of its reluctance in taking a leading role in shoring up the region.

²⁴ Aryeh Neier's article, "Asia's Unacceptable Standard," was a reply to Bilihari Kausikan's "Asia's Different Standard," in the Fall 1993 issue of *Foreign Policy*.

subject to trend-setting, government controls.²⁶ Clearly, there are some significant unresolved policy questions and points of contention.²⁷ Thus, overgeneralization on the basis of 'Asian-ness' creates a dangerously inaccurate picture of the regional dynamic.

Apart from the differences among states on policy issues, there has also been a thriving debate on the role of non-state actors in the Asian Way debate. Just as transnational/sub-national forces and policy issues have helped differentiate societies grouped together under an Asian Way umbrella, so have the activities of groups and individuals helped distinguish among varying interests within these societies.

Part II: Non-State Actors and the Asian Way Debate

Certain non-state actors have been ascribed a positive role in many aspects of social change, particularly in relation to development and democratization. Social groups have been presented as a necessary element of development and liberal democracy²⁸, and

²⁶ Aryeh Neier, "Watching Rights," *The Nation* (September 11, 1995) 229.

²⁷ Gary Rodan, "The Internet and Political Control in Singapore," *Political Science Quarterly* 113 no.1 (Spring 1998): 63-90.

²⁸ This speaks to general 'Asian' dissension on matters of policy, reflected in the scholarly literature on regionalization in the Asia-Pacific: there is heated debate as to whether policy differences among states will hinder moves towards this purportedly new Pacific community. For analyses advocating potential regional cooperation around economic and ecological issue-areas, see Michael Haas, "Seven Waves of Asian -Pacific Regional Cooperation," *Current World Leaders* 38 no.4 (August 1995) 11-27; John D. Montgomery, "The Asia-Pacific as an Environmental Region," *Journal of Developing Areas* 28 no.1 (October 1993) 3-12. Others, however, argue that cultural and/or political differences ultimately weaken the prospects for genuine regional integration. See Richard Higgott and Richard Stubbs, "Competing Conceptions of Economic Regionalism: APEC versus EAEC in the Asia Pacific," *Review of International Political Economy* 2 no.3 (Summer 1995) 516-525; Karl J. Fields, "Circling the Wagons: The Trend Toward Economic Regionalism and Its Consequences for Asia," *Issues and Studies* 28 no.12 (December 1992) 84.

²⁹ Mustapha K. Al-Sayyid, "A Civil Society in Egypt?" *Middle East Journal* no.47 (Spring 1993): 228-242.

Francis Fukuyama also makes the argument that civil society can promote Western-style liberal democracy. Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *National Interest*, 16 (Summer 1989) 3-18.

NGOs in particular have been incorporated, as least in theory, as an important component of World Bank projects and the Rio Summit's Agenda 21, as well as some nations' development assistance programs.²⁹ In terms of democracy, it has been stated that "[a] pluralist and self-organising civil society independent of the state is often assumed to be an indispensable condition for democracy" and that "successful transformation to democratic politics depends upon the development of a civil society."³⁰ The Philippines has been indicated as a notable example of this relationship between social action and democratization, creating a more stable and sustainable political transition.³¹ Likewise, Indonesia's NGOs and pro-democracy workers have been said to be at the forefront of a push for a more open society³² -- an assertion that is supported by recent events in that country.

To cite a specific example, the era of the global conference as a media event -- be the subject matter human rights, gender, environment, or social policy -- has also given

²⁹ Canadian International Development Agency, Sharing Our Future (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1988). Other CIDA policy statements have underlined the potential importance of NGOs in Canada's development strategy, as well as the agency's alleged commitment to working with such actors in the promotion of development, human rights, and democracy. The statements include the 1994 Statement on Population and Sustainable Development, the 1996 Policy on Poverty Reduction, the 1996 Government of Canada Policy for CIDA on Human Rights, Democratization, and Good Governance, and the 1997 Policy on Meeting Basic Human Needs. For similar viewpoints on the role of NGOs, see James V. Riker, "From Cooptation to Cooperation and Collaboration in Government-NGO Relations: Toward an Enabling Policy Environment for People-Centred Development in Asia," Government-NGO Relations in Asia, Neoleen Heyzer, James V. Riker, and Antonio B. Quizon, eds. (London: Macmillan, 1995) 102; Neoleen Heyzer, "Toward New Government-NGO Relations for Sustainable and People-Centred Development," in Government-NGO Relations in Asia, 2.

³⁰ This perspective is outlined by He Baogang, "Dual Roles of Semi-Civil Society in Chinese Democratisation," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 29 no.1 (1993) 154.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Blair A. King, "The 1992 General Election and Indonesia's Political Landscape," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 14 no.2 (September 1992) 154-173. There are other social issues where NGOs and societal groups are said to have a positive role, apart from human rights and democratization: environmental protection is another example. See Environment, Development, and Security Task Force, "Exploring the Linkages Between Environment, Development, and Security in Southeast Asia: Report of the Environment, Development and Security Task Force, Development in Southeast Asia Project," a paper presented at the Task Force of the Development and Security in Southeast Asia Project, Manila, the

rise to arguments that activist social groups may be the hopeful counterpoint to the flagging social consciences of the international community. At the Earth Summit, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio, Clyde Sanger interprets NGO activity as the conference's redeeming aspect, since NGOs became "active players in the policy-making process" and did the most "durable work." He notes that Tim Draimin, of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), says that the Canadian NGO delegation to Rio represented the "inventors and builders of the sustainable society."³³

Given such worthy activities, there is a school of thought which holds that society must be the true holder of cultural values, and not the state. This has certainly been applied to the Asian Way debate. In the words of one *New York Times* editorial:

The last word in the [Asian Way] debate should go to Asia's increasingly vocal citizens. During the summer [of 1996], Indonesians poured into the streets to protest the crackdown on an opposition party. A recent meeting of Asian non-governmental organizations applauded the pressure Europe and the United States were putting on Myanmar. These are some of the many endorsements of human rights from the members of Asia's growing civil society, who believe that governments that declare their people want orderly silence might do well to consult them first.³⁴

This echoes the words of Sidney Jones, an executive of the Washington-based human rights organization Asia Watch: across Asia, NGOs have been "chipping away at entrenched power structures" and "[i]n the absence of any real checks on executive power in much of the region, it is the NGOs that hold governments accountable for human rights

Philippines, 12-18 December 1995, 41.

³³ Clyde Sanger, "Environment and Development," *Canada Among Nations 1993-1994: Global Jeopardy*, 166-167.

³⁴ "A Turn in the 'Asian Way'," *New York Times* (November 17, 1996) E12.

violations.”³⁵ Likewise, Christine Loh argues that “[t]he existence of indigenous Asian human rights movements refutes the claim that such rights are a Western concept.”³⁶

As a balance to this positive view of “the people” and their organized representatives, there has been a correspondingly negative view of the state in critiques of Asian Way perspectives. One observer notes that the traditional role of civil society remains as the middle class engine pushing for democratization – unless, of course, the process is forcibly stopped by corrupt Asian states invoking the ‘Asian values’ excuse.³⁷ Within this framework, the state has been merely the coercive, self-interested entity seeking to violate human rights and arrest the process of democratization, in order to consolidate power and maintain order. As such, any viewpoint a state espouses could be immediately discounted as inauthentic. Kenneth Christie, for example, sees Asian Way perspectives as nothing but a defensive reaction to criticism of states’ human rights records, in order to contain social change and legitimate authoritarian regimes. He states:

... [T]hese claims [that there exists a ‘unique’ set of Asian values and that these justify claims to be ‘special’ and ‘different’] serve as a device for authoritarian regimes in the region to enhance their own, often declining, legitimacy, and protect the security of their particular regime, in a context in which the excuse authoritarian governments employed in the past to justify repression -- the need to prevent the spread of communism -- has been rendered irrelevant by the end of the Cold War....An examination of the claims of the regimes and their defenders to be protecting a distinctive set of Asian values will suggest that, behind the principled assertion of difference, lies a more fundamental concern for their own regime security.³⁸

³⁵ Sidney Jones, “The Organic Growth: Asian NGOs Have Come Into their Own,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 17, 1993) 23.

³⁶ Christine Loh, “The rights stuff,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* 156 no.27 (July 8, 1993) 15.

³⁷ Mark Thompson, “Late Industrialisers, Late Democratisers: Developmental States in the Asia-Pacific,” *Third World Quarterly* 17 no.4 (1996) 625-647.

³⁸ Kenneth Christie, “Regime Security and Human Rights,” *Political Studies* 43 (1995) 204.

Likewise, Alan Dupont argues that regional governments have adopted Asian Way perspectives solely for domestic political purposes:

The cultural arguments employed under the rubric of an 'Asian Way' are as much about regime legitimation and nation-building as they are about a genuine concern for the loss of traditional values. Thus we see governments of nominally different ideological and political persuasions attempting to draw strength and legitimacy from representing themselves as the modern-day successors and interpreters of an enduring national, communal, or civilisational ethos.³⁹

And later, he states:

In the case of the larger or more culturally diverse states in the region, like China and Indonesia, the recycling of old traditions, verities and myths is not just an exercise in image-building or redefining national culture – it is seen by governments as critical to the state's unity and stability, and to their own political longevity.⁴⁰

In the case of Singapore, for example, it is argued that the government has continued to "engage in large scale social control" to limit the influence of democracy. However, in the face of declining voter support for the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and dissent from opposition politicians, says Christie, the state has striven to maintain political stability through an authoritarian, one-party system.⁴¹

In contrast to this pursuit of political longevity, then, social groups in East and Southeast Asia have been frequently portrayed as a cohesive counter-balance to the authoritarian state and its 'Asian Way' rhetoric, sharing a respect for universal values with the 'West'. Asian Way perspectives have merely been a smokescreen for abuse, it is

³⁹ Alan Dupont, "Is There an 'Asian Way'?" *Survival* 38 no.2 (Summer 1996) 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

argued, and while governments may have used this standpoint to decry external interference on matters of rights and governance, the true voices from within have revealed the legitimate Asian stance.⁴² This idea is consistent with the view that Asian Way perspectives have been essentially disproved by the democratic aspirations of “Asian peoples.”⁴³ The scoldings given by some state leaders to social groups for complicity with the ‘West’ has only reinforced this idea.⁴⁴

Commentators have pointed to many such factors as proof of the lack of validity for ‘Asian values’: the 1993 Bangkok NGO Declaration of Human Rights (discussed in depth in the next chapter); regional dissidents and pro-democracy workers; and intellectuals criticizing government policies.⁴⁵ However, this straightforward split between governments and people has been almost as stereotypical as the idea of an ‘Asian Way’. Here, then, is another clash that has obscured debate, by having created an artificial and over-generalized dividing line: on one side of the line stand authoritarian states that have used widespread repression to restrict dissent, and on the other side, the agents of dissent, with beliefs more in line with international movements and governments abroad that respect human rights. The very presence of these dissenters has been suggested to disprove Asian Way perspectives. This straightforward clash between state and society, as broad as the one between East and West, does not promote a meaningful understanding of

⁴² Two such reports are Michael Vatikiotis’ “Going Regional,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (October 20, 1994) 16, and “Asia: Who Speaks for the People?” *Economist* (January 27, 1996) 31-32. The former points out that ASEAN countries cannot criticize foreign countries for interfering in their internal affairs regarding issues of human rights or the environment because most criticism comes from within, from NGOs. The latter points to the cases of Cambodia and Myanmar, where the opposition of activists belies the argument that authoritarianism is supported by the community as a means to development.

⁴³ Boo Tion Kwa, “Righteous Talk,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 17, 1993) 28.

⁴⁴ See Kausikan, “Asia’s Different Standard,” 33; Aryeh Neier, “The New Double Standard,” *Foreign Policy* no.105 (Winter 1996-1997) 91-102.

⁴⁵ Christie, 216-217.

the issues involved.

In this respect, the complexity of societal responses within the Asian Way debate must be highlighted: some non-state actors, from members of the media to activist groups, have even adopted the Asian Way viewpoint to varying degrees, to serve their own causes and goals. A theoretical context for this more complex view of non-state actors in the Asian Way debate can be established: there are, in Bauer and Bell's words, "unofficial" East Asian viewpoints beyond the provocative viewpoints of states, hammering out the meaning of universality and the areas of "justifiable difference."⁴⁶ University of Hong Kong professor Joseph Chan argues that the 'Asian values' controversy has not reflected regional groups and individuals who protest human rights violations, yet seek to build a long-term human rights environment which reflects their own cultural and historical circumstances.⁴⁷ Cambridge University scholar Amartya Sen argues that even though the "clash of cultures" is currently a popular way of seeing the world, the necessary task is for Asians to study their own beliefs, traditions, and texts in a historical context, not a repudiation of the Asian through an adoption of the Western:

If the grabbing of 'Asian values' by the champions of authoritarianism has to be effectively and fairly questioned, what is needed is not the claim – often implicit – of the preeminence of what are taken as 'Western values', but a broader historical study of Chinese, Sanskrit, Arabic, and other Asian literatures....Nearer our times, acknowledgement would have to be made to the contribution of national leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi or Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who were, over a hundred years ago, cogently vocal in defense of the widest forms of democracy and political and civil rights.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Joanne Bauer and Daniel Bell, The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights, 4.

⁴⁷ Joseph Chan, "Hong Kong, Singapore, and 'Asian Values': An Alternative View," *Journal of Democracy* 8 no.2 (April 1997) 35-48.

⁴⁸ Amartya Sen, "Human Rights and Economic Achievements," The East Asian Challenge for Human

As well, University of Tokyo law professor Onuma Yasuaki is critical of “West-centrism” and “civil rights-centrism” in current dialogues on international human rights, as well as the assumption that Asian traditions must be reinterpreted to ground them in human rights, whereas Western cultures automatically have such a grounding. He also finds fault with human rights “absolutism” and “fetishism” – regarding them as an all-important end instead of a means of achieve human well-being – among human rights activists and academics.⁴⁹ Ultimately, instead of weakening the critique of Asian Way perspectives, a more nuanced approach makes the critique stronger: the truly variegated nature of regional society must be emphasized in order to further call the idea of a monolithic ‘Asian Way’ into question.

Non-State Actors: Fighting for Whom?

The examples of non-state activism in the Asia-Pacific region are as extensive as they are diverse: there is the Japan-based International Federation for East Timor and Free East Timor Coalition (both banned from the Bangkok Conference, as Indonesia threatened to boycott if they were present), and the Philippines-based coalition Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor (APCET). The Malaysian human rights group Suara Rakyat

Rights, 98.

⁴⁹ Onuma Yasuaki, “Towards an Intercivilizational Approach to Human Rights,” The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights. Onuma has a point, concerning the scholarly trend to rework ‘Asian’ traditions to show that they are, after all, grounded in human rights. Examples include, from the same volume, The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights: Norani Othman’s “Grounding Human Rights Arguments in Non-Western Culture: Shari’a and the Citizenship Rights of Women in a Modern Islamic State”; Suwanna Satha-Anand’s “Looking to Buddhism to Turn Back Prostitution in Thailand”; and Joseph Chan’s “A Confucian Perspective on Human Rights for Contemporary China.” Be this as it may, Onuma does not explain why academics from societies such as China or Thailand would necessarily think that ‘Western cultures’ did not also require such a similar treatment, or re-grounding.

works towards upholding internationally established human rights standards. There is the Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation, which has represented those who cannot afford a lawyer, including those arrested in connection with the 1991 crackdown in Dili, but as well, loose associations of pro-Jakarta Indonesians with controversial ties to the government, spearheading violent opposition to East Timorese independence. There is the UN-recognized International Commission of Justice and Law Asia, the comprehensive association of Asian lawyers who fought against the execution of Filipino maid Flor Contemplacion. Also active are the Women Workers' Organization of South Korea and the Council of Families for Democracy, as well as Taiwan's first and oldest feminist NGO, the Awakening Foundation, working to revise Taiwanese discriminatory law. In China, there is the nascent China Democracy Party, and in Hong Kong, the Information Center of Human Rights. There are also the extensive trade and commerce associations throughout the region: the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT); the Korea International Trade Association (KITA); the Taiwan Universal Commerce Information Center; and the Chinese Manufacturer's Association of Hong Kong. There are similar organizations operating across the traditional boundaries of the Asia-Pacific, such as the Confederation of Indian Industry regional group in Singapore; the Hong Kong Association of Northern California. In addition, there are media sources, with relationships of varying intensity to business or government: Asia Business; the Malaysia Star; China News Digest; Thai Business News; and Nekkei Weekly are just a handful of examples open to English readers.

Certainly, within this diverse mix, there are groups and individuals in the Asia-Pacific that have advanced the cause of social justice through their activism, often at great

personal risk. The problem arises when commentators create a divide – another clash of sorts – between monolithic state and societal blocks, both with simple motives and goals. Accounts of regional conferences where protesters come up against government representatives, such as the July 1994 ASEAN summit,⁵⁰ and treatments of specific issues, such as unfulfilled pledges of ASEAN members to establish national human rights commissions⁵¹, reflect this tendency.

However, not only have Asia-Pacific state positions been diverse, as the previous exploration of policy issues showed; as well, societal responses to Asian Way perspectives have been multi-dimensional. Thus, the relationship so glibly established between ‘the people’ and opposition to an unjust ‘Asian Way’ becomes problematic: ‘the people’ have been invoked as evidence that governments discussing Asian Way perspectives are corrupt and wrong, and yet there is still considerable debate as to *who* constitutes the people. This can be seen in recent elaborations on Almond and Verba’s civic culture project, in which intellectual activists calling for democracy in a country like China have been argued to be an isolated, less powerful group, lacking support from the general populace in their anti-government stances.⁵² It is also evident in studies that underscore the range of objectives pursued by non-state actors: certain groups work towards a vision of human rights and democracy, opposing their governments, but there are also organizations that support

⁵⁰ One report states that “[i]nside the conference halls were Asian leaders who hold that they have their own brands of democracy and human rights” while “[o]utside, forbidden to enter, were activists who believed the ‘Asian road to democracy’, which downplays individual rights and competing political parties, is a pretext by authoritarian regimes to retain power, and at times, to imprison, torture, and execute opponents.” Denis Gray, “Asia Divided on Human Rights,” *Indonesia Reports – Human Rights Supplement* no.65 (July 29, 1994) 6.

⁵¹ Frank Ching, “ASEAN’s Unkept Promise: 1993 Pledge on Human Rights Seems to Have Been Forgotten,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (August 22, 1996) 31.

⁵² Andrew J. Nathan and Tianjian Shi, “Cultural Requisites for Democracy in China: Findings from a Survey,” *Daedalus* 122 no. 2 (Spring 1993) 95-123. One of the goals of the survey, the authors conclude,

trade and economic activity, which have been influential in policy circles.⁵³ Moreover, the dynamic nature of Asian NGOs, in terms of methods of activism and specific goals, has been established, from civil liberties organizations to community development groups,⁵⁴ so it is no simple task to identify what non-state actors would want.

We can readily see that the idea of a single ‘people’, united against repressive government repressive policies, and is misleading – especially the implicit suggestion that the people are natural allies of the ‘West’, given their mutual concern with universal human rights. In order to truly challenge the ideas of clash embedded within Asian Way perspectives, a more complete understanding of the state-society dynamic must be attempted. Not only are social groups in the region variegated and, in many cases, fragmented⁵⁵, demonstrating that ‘Asian’ society is as diverse in its activism as in its cultural make-up, but some regional non-state actors even appeal to their own idea of an ‘Asian Way’, defining it in their own terms and using it for their own purposes. If the Asian Way perspectives publicly-championed by states are a “nascent Asian interpretation of human rights,”⁵⁶ then the societal version of an ‘Asian Way’ is a fluid interpretation, subject to the beliefs of particular groups.

is to illuminate “how Chinese vary among themselves.”

⁵³ Lawrence T. Woods, “Learning from NGO Proponents of Asia-Pacific Regionalism: Success and Its Lessons.” *Asian Survey* 35 no.9 (September 1995) 812-828; Lawrence T. Woods, “Non-Governmental Organizations and Pacific Cooperation: Back to the Future?” *Pacific Review* 4 no.4 (1991) 312-321.

⁵⁴ As Sidney Jones points out, the evolution of NGOs in the region has been marked by much development in their nature and goals. She defines four broad groups: civil-liberties organizations, emerging out of political situations where the law was ignored, such as the Philippines under Martial Law; community-development groups, comprised of less privileged sectors of society, such as peasants, tribal groups, and the urban poor; environmental advocacy groups; and women’s organizations, the latter two types emerging in the late 1970s and 1980s. These four types of NGOs, she contends, have been quite dynamic, increasing coordination in their domestic and international activity. Jones, 23.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Neoleen Heyzer, “Toward New Government-NGO Relations for Sustainable and People-Centred Development,” in *Government-NGO Relations in Asia*, Neoleen Heyzer, James V. Riker, and Antonio B. Quizon, eds. (London: Macmillan, 1995).

⁵⁶ Frank Ching, “Asian View of Human Rights is Beginning to Take Place,” *Far Eastern Economic*

This acknowledges, but goes beyond, the assertion that actors such as Asia-Pacific NGOs are political entities seeking to acquire power, despite their virtuous profile in the Asian Way debate.⁵⁷ Rather, activism in the region can also be rooted in existing social alliances based on factors like class and capital -- “[s]tates, companies, NGOs, political parties would be seen as representing particular social forces in these alliances,” states Tremewan⁵⁸ – and these factors may encourage a different societal response to Asian Way perspectives than those often suggested by existing critiques. For example, some non-state actors, even if they are fighting for human rights and are critical of their governments, express reluctance to accept the approaches of outside observers from the ‘West.’ Tremewan indicates that “[t]here is...considerable discomfort in Asia when western countries criticise the abuses of Asian ruling elites which they have sustained.”⁵⁹ In some cases, these elites can be the very human rights activists that are often grouped together against the government. Tremewan recounts his experience at a human rights conference in Kuala Lumpur, where the Indonesians present – all human rights lawyers protesting against their government’s human rights violations and the invasion of East Timor in particular – reacted defensively to Australian criticisms of the East Timor situation because it came from a different cultural and developmental context.

There are other instances of activists who have been outspoken advocates of human rights and democratization without condemning Asian Way perspectives as invalid

Review (April 29, 1993) 27.

⁵⁷ For examples of literature highlighting the political and power seeking role of social organizations, see Bruce M. Koppel, “The Prospects for Democratization in Southeast Asia: Local Perspectives and International Roles,” *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 12 no.3 (Fall 1993) 3-33; Anil Bhatt, “Asian NGOs in Development: Their Role and Impact,” in *Government-NGO Relations in Asia*; Heyzer, “Toward New Government-NGO Relations for Sustainable and People-Centred Development.”

⁵⁸ Christopher Tremewan, “Human Rights in Asia,” *Pacific Review* 6 no.1 (1993) 20.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

tools of repressive governments. Malaysian journalist Boo Tian Kwa, for example, condemns human rights violations, but is unwilling to summarily dismiss the argument that Asian governments need to favour economic development over civil-political freedom as part of their Asian Way perspectives. He points out that in Malaysia, Mahathir's government had been returned to power in successive elections, and that "[t]he grand pronouncement of human rights is put off in the more or less honest pursuit of economic well-being."⁶⁰

If we look once again to the 1994 APCET conference, the comments of the chairman of the Philippine Host Convenors Group are also revealing. Renato Constantino condemns Asian states for their ineffective words and repressive policies, but also invokes some of the same themes as the Asian Way debate. He suggests that activists at the conference are in favour of "ASEAN's laudable efforts to prevent the North from re-colonising the South under new forms of domination" and recognize that "ASEAN has legitimate reasons for banding together in [the] face of the increasing global intervention by Northern economies into those of the South."⁶¹ He also states that ASEAN needs "unity in diversity – unity that is necessary so that the nations of the South can defend themselves from the inroads of the North, if only because what is good for advanced countries is not necessarily beneficial for developing countries."⁶² This idea of South against North, and differing, opposed values between them, has much in common with the idea of a distinctive 'Asian' path that can stand up to the powers of the 'West'.

In another case, Carolina Hernandez, of the Institute for Strategic and

⁶⁰ Boo Tian Kwa, "Righteous Talk," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 17, 1993) 28.

⁶¹ Constantino, 26.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Development Studies in Quezon City, has referred to an Asian approach to foreign relations, in the context of ASEAN, even though she has condemned government uses of 'Asian Way' rhetoric. This includes the societal importance of "saving face" in ASEAN foreign relations, and the cultural avoidance of direct conflict or criticism. She has complimented Canada's trade-oriented human rights stance on China and East Asia, for example, saying that Canada has taken a very Japanese path, refraining from overt condemnation or confrontation, the most productive political route in the Asian cultural context.⁶³

Clearly, non-state actors have played a more complex role within the debate than suggested by generalized critiques of Asian Way perspective: instead of constituting a force that stands together in opposition to the state's 'Asian Way' rhetoric, the final arbiters of what constitutes authentic cultures and aligned with the universalist camp worldwide, they form an array of actors with varying goals and methods.

He Baogang's warning should therefore be kept in mind: he states that caution should be used when suggesting a straightforward relationship in the region between activism and the process of democratization and human rights. He indicates that there has been some discussion of the potentially harmful impact of a "violent and overpoliticized" society, and thus, overgeneral causal links must be carefully examined.⁶⁴

As shown by a society such as contemporary China -- where social groups are not a homogenous unit and have potential negative as well as positive effects, and young

⁶³ Carolina Hernandez, "ASEAN and Human Rights," Paper presented to the weekly speakers series of the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, Canada, 22 March 1995.

⁶⁴ Baogang, 154.

intellectuals trade their academic careers for private enterprise and conservative lifestyles⁶⁵ -- it cannot be easily predicted what 'the people' will make of Asian Way themes. Even if the possible excesses of an "overpoliticized" society are groundless, the cautionary note on undetermined causal links is not.

This is a more revealing critique of Asian Way perspectives, further distinguishing unique actors within a debate that concentrates so heavily on homogenous blocs. The following example of Filipino activism will demonstrate further that individual groups and activists have approached Asian Way perspectives in various ways. The actors involved have employed some similar themes as those in the Asian Way debate, in order to reinforce and refine their own positions; they have shown that they are not an undifferentiated force allied with the 'West', rejecting cultural values in political and economic matters.

The Filipino Case and the Asian Way Debate

While the Philippines is not part of the 'Confucian core' cited by some in discussions of Asian Way perspectives, it is an interesting and revealing case to examine. If the Asian Way debate has claimed to be truly Asian, then it should be explored in reference to all countries in the area, and not merely a select few; the cultural, social, and

⁶⁵ According to Margaret Pearson, Chinese universities, for example, are often associated with pro-democracy activists, but there is also a prestigious class of business elites at these institutions, being prepared for new economic activity. Pearson takes specific aim at the thesis that such new actors in a more open "civil society" are a force for Chinese democratization, since this new business elite may have some relative autonomy, but is ultimately subject to state direction and co-optation. Pearson defines civil society, for the purposes of her argument, as "the autonomous economic, religious, intellectual, and political institutions that act independently of the state and compete among themselves." Margaret M. Pearson, "China's Emerging Business Elites: Democracy's Harbinger?" *Current History* 97 no.620

economic distinctions in the Philippines -- its Catholic inheritance, its highly indebted status, its ethnic make-up -- do not make the society non-Asian, and indeed, the Asian Way debate has been a relevant and controversial topic among Filipino activists.

Moreover, the diverse and plentiful social groups in the country also make it an engaging example.

My time in the Philippines in 1995-1996 was particularly revealing in this regard; the early 1990s were characterized by a series of conflicts and re-orientations in non-state perspectives referred to by many as "the split." The lifting of Martial Law under the Corizon Aquino administration led to an explosion of newly legitimate social activity, repressed during the Marcos regime. The Fidel Ramos administration ushered in an era of aggressive economic liberalization, continued by Joseph Estrada's government: most notably, the Medium Term Philippines Development Plan, or Philippines 2000 project, has promoted the country's goal as a middle income nation in the new millennium, even as it has lifted the overtly political pressures on Communist rebels in the countryside. This, combined with the collapse of Communist regimes worldwide led to a period of crisis among Filipino activists. Long united against the state through solidarity with the Communist movement, social groups found themselves splitting into competing factions when the political and social landscape began to change, and at least one of these factions drew on Asian Way perspectives.

From my conversations with various groups and individuals, distinct labels for perspectives emerged, although different parties had markedly different opinions on the varying players and their beliefs. Some of the central points of the debate were the

method of obtaining state power and the role of universalism versus culture in matters of human rights. The reaffirmist group was generally explained as being allied with the Communist forces, and situated mostly in the rural areas; this group was identified with the Maoist-influenced view that any social revolution would be won through protracted struggle in the countryside, with a gradual taking of the cities to obtain state power. The Philippines was seen by this group as a semi-feudal society, so there could be no capitalist development. Change, through long-term conflict, would only begin outside urban centres. This school of thought was generally associated with the belief that Filipino human rights groups conformed to the standards of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, but that this document was created in 1948 by bourgeois, Western governments. In this context, concepts of universality are distorted; human rights, it was argued, should be based on specific social, cultural and economic contexts, such as the human rights that are specifically abused for peasants, farmers, and workers in the Philippines. Rights drawn up by Western nations -- favouring political rights over economic ones -- are inappropriately framed for a developing, Asian nation.

The rejectionist group was identified with the position that city-based organization and tactical alliances remain the best hope for social change in the Philippines. The country has some level of capitalist development, according to this point of view, and can thus be considered as semi-capitalist. This group drew on the success of the 1986 social movement, centred in Manila, that helped precipitate the end the Marcos regime. In terms of human rights, the rejectionist camp focused more on the content of human rights documents, and not their origin. Human rights standards should not be looked at from a Marxist point of view, but from a people's point of view, according to this perspective.

There were NGOs and individuals that did not ally themselves with either of these viewpoints. They preferred to think of themselves as non-aligned, or a “third force,” independent of any political agenda. For example, a representative of one organization, aimed at helping the families of the disappeared, told me that his group had its own mandate and that no other political interest should interfere. While “certain interests” had attempted to sway the group, this organization would not join either the rejectionists or the reaffirmists.

The implications of this split were quite serious during the early 1990s. Groups such as the Taskforce Detainees of the Philippines (TFD) and the Medical Action Group (MAG) splintered into two sub-groups because of the debate. Similar splits occurred within student organizations, trade unions (Kilusang Mayo Uno, KMU), and peasant organizations (National Federation of Peasants, KMP). Even the Catholic Church in the Philippines, very much caught up in the Marxist debate and the Communist struggle in that country, experienced some splits, with various church groups choosing sides. I was repeatedly told of the cost of this schism: the economic liberalization policies of the Ramos government, destructive to many farmers, indigenous peoples, and peasants in the country, went forward more easily because there was no unified opposition; some foreign funding agencies became wary of the Philippines; political prisoners were actually divided up between groups, so that reaffirmists would only support and supply ‘their’ political prisoners; the Communist party required groups to choose sides, and families and friends, joined for years in a common set of beliefs and struggles, were divided. One group, focusing on female workers’ rights, was ejected from its umbrella organization for not choosing the reaffirmist camp. Another group, concerned with fishers and coastal

sustainability, indicated that there were some communities where one group could not safely travel, because it was 'declared' for another faction. The reaffirmist camp, with its critique of 'Western-engineered' human rights standards and its belief in culturally appropriate needs for Asian countries, intersected with certain 'Asian Way' themes. Activists who identified themselves with this group expressed, on many occasions, anti-Western sentiments.

Furthermore, while this split had declined in intensity, in part because of a series of natural calamities and pressing economic issues, I repeatedly heard statements from individual groups which also echoed 'Asian Way' themes. Even members of the groups who criticized the reaffirmist camp frequently highlighted the inappropriateness of 'Western' policies in a Filipino setting. Issues of "development aggression" -- anti-people moves such as the clearing of farm land and fishing areas, the displacement of peasants and indigenous peoples for industrial projects, and the creation of internal refugees, all for government economic policies aimed at bringing the Philippines into a larger globalizing process by the year 2000 -- were a recurring concern for most organizations and individuals I spoke with. Given this situation, I was frequently told that the way the 'West' conducts its affairs is not the same as the way Asia should. Indigenous methods and traditions -- such as natural fertilization for agriculture and community projects -- were said to be supplanted by this other way, which could not accurately reflect the values of the Filipino people.

In one specific case, a representative from a group working for socio-economic and political human rights criticized "Western and Japanese" companies for decimating the forests in the mountains of Ifogao. (The fact that Japan, in this case, was grouped with

the West is an interesting commentary on the association of a richer nation with less traditional cultures.) This resulted, said the woman, in the prostitution of traditional indigenous cultures for Western tourists – elders, long revered in their communities, sitting by tourist attractions in sacred costumes and charging pesos for photographs – that was unthinkable for this Filipino community’s cultural values. I was told that the cultural ways of this community would emphasize a set of social, economic, and political rules favouring tradition, elders, and the environment, “not like in the West.” Members of this organization also criticized what they viewed as the harmful aspects of “my [the author’s] society,” such as CNN, which moved the focus from the community values and traditional cultures to American consumer society and behaviour.

In addition, questions surrounding the Asian Way debate had a profound impact on some NGOs with international ties. One executive member of the Philippines section of a major international human rights NGO spoke of the complexities of the debate. He stated that his organization as a whole was a “Western body,” and the challenge facing chapters like his was making the organization’s issues relevant to the South -- Asia in particular. He saw the Asian Way idea largely as a rhetorical smokescreen for abusive governments *and* non-state actors such as the reaffirmists, adopted to undermine universal human rights; however, he also felt there was some truth to the idea of a separate cultural context for Asia when it came to the enforcement of human rights. Asians understand other Asians, he said, and concepts such as “saving face” are not appreciated in the West. Consequently, the Philippines would know better how to approach a nation like Indonesia or China regarding human rights abuses. For example, having activists clandestinely enter a nation like China on a human rights research mission and then make a splash in the

international press is not helpful, and misunderstands aspects of Asian culture. Rather, this representative said, methods such as sending a statement to a government before it is released should be employed. More productive results might come out of a consensual, Asian process, as opposed to a confrontational one, where Western governments or activists embarrass Asian governments with public statements.

Ultimately, he stated, the cultural roots of Asia had been deeply damaged by the region's colonial past. Thus, it would be difficult to identify what a non-repressive 'Asian Way' might actually be. Certainly, he stated, the recognition of human rights could be reinforced by examining a society's cultural roots. The Asian path could be quite different from the Western one, or it could be quite similar. Hence, he concluded, the biggest project facing this NGO and others in the country is to find the essence of Filipino human rights and Asian human rights, not as a smokescreen, but as a process of discovery of culture and history. This could develop ideas for Asian human rights solidarity, training, and institutions.

From these Filipino examples, we can see that non-state activity has added varied dimensions to the Asian Way debate. Non-state actors may challenge state-based characterizations, or call into question many of the statements made by public figures in the region. However, in terms of a meaningful critique, it is much more useful and revealing to focus on the complex reactions of society to the Asian Way debate, instead of casting 'the people' as a monolithic force set against governments and Asian Way perspectives. When talking to non-state actors in the Philippines, it became clear that certain groups have a stake in the current political system -- financial groups, academic and research groups, or groups looking for economic assistance from the government, for

instance -- and have a relationship with government officials. Other groups oppose the human rights violations committed by the government, but range from ambivalent to supportive of the idea of an 'Asian Way.' Many expressed suspicion of 'Western' governments -- the American government in particular, given the colonization of that country by the United States, as well as the protracted influence of American military bases and economic policy -- and feared the loss of their own traditions and histories in the onslaught of global popular culture. I met several indigenous groups in the north of the Philippines in particular who were vocal on this point.

So, even though certain non-state actors may oppose official Asian Way perspectives, they do not necessarily align themselves with a 'Western' universalist camp in yet another bloc. The picture is too complicated to be reduced to two camps: an oppressive, pro-'Asian values' state camp and an honourable, universalist non-state camp allied with the 'West'. Rather, the diverse responses of actors to the debate must be highlighted as a means of challenging ideas of clash.

Conclusion

In some regards, it is not surprising that observers were taken off-guard by the string of regional crises set off in Thailand in 1997, and that the background of the 'Asian miracle' was misunderstood. Discussions of the miracle, and the values and circumstances that may have underpinned it, have used stereotypes for the range of actors involved, state and non-state. A more detailed account of these actors can only help contribute to a better understanding of such crises.

Ultimately, the Asian Way debate has not been abstract and isolated, but rather injected into a world of economic policy, political expediency, heated debate, international ties, and cultural exchange. The very concept of 'Asia' is an impossible one, especially in light of activity within and across state borders. Even East and Southeast Asian states -- largely portrayed as a unified force using Asian Way perspectives to violate human rights and retain political power -- have been divided on many policy issues concerning human rights and democratization. An analysis that focuses on 'Asian' states as having a common culture shaping their policies towards human rights and democratization has been inadequate in the face of such marked policy differences. Likewise, an exploration of societal responses to the Asian Way debate reveals that 'the people' have reacted to the debate in different ways; in some cases, the idea of a distinct 'Asian Way' has not been dismissed, but has been adapted to the needs and priorities of the group. In this sense, the political force of Asian states -- their ability to repress opponents of 'Asian values' and to continue a discourse that serves their power-seeking interests -- cannot be relied upon as the *sole* determining factor in the continuation Asian Way debate.

Once again, we can see that Asian Way perspectives have been over-general in proposing an Asian civilization clashing with non-Asian ones, and as such, have not been able to address complex social forces and issues. These forces have been constantly at work, moving and changing, shaping the duties and entitlements mentioned in the Chinese proverb: to oneself, to one's family, to one's country, and to the world as a whole.

Chapter Five:
The Bangkok Conference and the Asian Way Debate: Actors and Issues

The Bangkok Preparatory Conference, held in Thailand in 1993 as a regional lead-up forum to the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, was a significant watershed for debates on 'Asian values'. As argued in the previous chapter on non-state actors and the Asian Way debate, the concepts of society and state are diverse, and have encompassed a broad range of conceptions and attitudes. Neither state nor non-state actors can be generalized or oversimplified when it comes to Asian Way perspectives. Using the 1993 Bangkok Preparatory Conference as a case study, this chapter will show that despite the arguments for Asian Way perspectives as monolithic viewpoints supported by states and opposed by non-state actors, the players involved have had diverse and at times, overlapping, interests. It is not accurate, therefore, to characterize 'Asian' states as a homogenous camp, favouring a culturally specific, 'Asian Way' stance, and clashing with non-state actors. This chapter serves as a more focussed study on the points raised in the previous chapter: that Asian Way perspectives have relied on stereotypes in their treatment of state and non-state actors, and as such, are inadequate to explain or anticipate situations like the upheavals of the late-1990s.

The first section of this chapter will outline the specific context provided by the Bangkok Conference: its significance as a regional gathering and the theoretical literature arising from it. These theoretical perspectives will be evaluated, and it will be shown that they have failed to sufficiently emphasise three relevant factors: the role of the mainstream

media in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain in the establishment of global clash; the varied nature of state roles at the Conference, including state goals distinct from any 'East-West' clash; and the varied roles of non-state actors at the Conference, especially in reference to the assumption that regional non-state actors were allied with the 'West' in opposition to repressive governments.

Part I: Theoretical Approaches to the Bangkok Declaration

The Bangkok Conference on Human Rights was the Asian preparatory conference for the 1993 United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, held from March 29 to April 2 1993 in Bangkok, Thailand, and consisting of seven meetings. Similar regional conferences leading up to the UN World Conference on Human Rights were held in Costa Rica and Tunisia for Latin America and Africa, respectively. In attendance at the Bangkok Conference were representatives from 40 countries from the Middle East to the South Pacific¹; also present were state observers and a series of specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations organizations and human rights bodies, national human rights institutions, and non-governmental organizations. The conference produced the Bangkok Declaration, adopted on April 2 1993. This case is a significant one for the Asian Way debate: in the words of Joanne Bauer, the official statements at the Bangkok Conference were meant to "represent the

¹ Australia and New Zealand were forced to withdraw from the conference because of pressure from Middle Eastern countries; certain state representatives claimed that these nations were too 'Western' in approach.

Asian region's stance on human rights" to the world in Vienna², and thus, came to be seen as a significant regional gathering in terms of communicating to the world the 'Asian' stance on values and rights. This conference, in a region that has lacked the human rights bodies and documents existing in other parts of the world, has also been referred to as "the first time Asian nations have sat down with one another to discuss human rights."³

In this section, the academic literature on the Bangkok Conference and the subsequent Bangkok Declaration will be examined, to show how the gathering was represented and interpreted in theoretical and analytical terms. It is important to consider this literature, because the academic debate surrounding the Bangkok Conference has touched on many of the key critiques of Asian Way perspectives in general, and has been referred to as an important starting point for the growth of an East Asian discourse of human rights.⁴ Furthermore, it serves as a detailed foundation for upcoming discussions of media analysis of the Conference. The academic treatment of the Bangkok Conference has been somewhat limited, but there are some useful sources that have explored the idea of a monolithic, confrontational split between civilizations on issues of rights and social values. It is the contention of this thesis, however, that the problematic notions of a monolithic actors and/or inevitable clash between 'East' and 'West' cultural blocs have not been sufficiently challenged in the scholarly literature on the Bangkok Conference. As well, those commentators that do mount more complete challenges do not necessarily

² Joanne Bauer, "The Bangkok Declaration Three Years After: Reflections on the State of the Asia-West Dialogue on Human Rights," *Human Rights Dialogue* 4 (March 1996). Online WWW source <http://www.cceia.org/dialog4.htm>. Source appended.

³ Frank Ching, "Asian View of Human Rights Beginning to Take Place," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (29 April, 1993) 27.

⁴ Joanne R. Bauer and Daniel A. Bell, eds. *The East Asian Challenge For Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 3.

dismiss completely the existence or relevance of an ‘Asian Way’; rather, they call for a more complete elucidation of cultures and viewpoints.

Scholarly Literature on the Bangkok Conference

Some scholarly analyses of the Bangkok Conference do attempt to question themes of clash and monolithic blocs. One example is a four-paper series on the Bangkok Conference, introduced by Joanne Bauer, and starting with Amartya Sen of Cambridge University. Sen’s analysis is less reliant on stereotypes and homogenous groupings: he challenges the idea of a clash framework for the Bangkok Conference, and he specifically criticizes the tendency in the clash framework to relate everything in the ‘East’ back to its comparison with the ‘West’ as a static point of reference. Sen sees the debate as primarily an Asian project, whose roots can be found in Asian literature and history, and not as something that involves a deterministic threat to another, competing culture.

Sen critically explores the language of antagonism between cultural blocks used to discuss social values in an international context; he targets the presentation of the ‘Asian values’ debate in terms of a clash between civilizations. It is asked, for example, to what extent Japan’s “new” forms of nationalism pose a threat to Western nations, and how is this nationalism translated into economic concerns? Sen argues that this idea of a clash – “Western liberalism” versus “Asian reluctance”⁵ – has obscured other concerns. Here, Sen raises a crucial point for the upcoming discussion of the Bangkok Declaration later in this

⁵ Amartya Sen, “Human Rights and Economic Achievements,” presented at the Hakone Workshop of the Human Rights Initiative 23-26 June 1995, “The Bangkok Declaration Three Years After: Reflections on the State of the Asia-West Dialogue on Human Rights.”

chapter: the Asian Way debate has often focussed on the ramifications of the clash for the 'West', instead of highlighting the debate occurring with, among, and across societies in the region. Moreover, clash perspectives have set up a deterministic opposition between competing cultures in the 'East' and 'West', as argued previously, focussing debate on the clash as opposed to the social processes involved. Sen states:

This is not to deny that America or Europe has legitimate reasons to worry about the outcome of this and related contentions about ideas and politics in Asia...but this dispute over principles and practice is really about the lives of Asians and their beliefs and traditions, their rules and regulations, their achievements and failures, and ultimately their lives and freedoms. The Western concern legitimate on its own may even contribute to mis-specifying the central features of the debate.⁶

Sen goes on to challenge the idea of static cultural traditions of human rights, arguing that it is historically inaccurate to assume that a traditional human rights culture is somehow missing in Asia, or that a traditional despotic culture is somehow always present. Any East-West division of philosophies, he argues, has been a contemporary phenomenon, perhaps rooted in the assumption that Western values are superior to others; hence, the author recommends an exploration of Asian texts and beliefs, in order to better understand what lies behind the rhetoric of 'Asian values'. This indicates that there may indeed be a text- or cultural-driven basis for features underlying the Asian Way debate, and the potential manipulations by individual state actors are not sufficient to dismiss the entire perspective without careful examination.

Also exploring the ramifications of the Bangkok Declaration is Joseph Chan, of the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Hong Kong. Chan's

⁶ *Ibid.*

analysis is similar in some respects to Sen's: he argues that it is a uniquely Asian task to develop understandings of Asian cultural values, without reference to any East-West contest. He contends that there might indeed be some basis to the idea of an 'Asian Way', but that it has not yet been soundly articulated.

Chan begins his argument by expressing scepticism about the concept of cultural relativity in the debate that had surrounded the Bangkok Conference; East Asian states have not clarified the grounds on which they are distinctive, and the positions of leaders has been inconsistent. Says Chan:

This [inconsistency] is evident in [East Asian states'] constant oscillation between a stated acceptance of universal human rights and an emphasis on the legitimacy of a different understanding and practice of human rights arising from different historical traditions. Likewise, they have oscillated between a commitment to equal importance of political and economic rights and selective priority given to economic development at the expense of political and civil rights.⁷

Emphasizing a need for fruitful dialogue with Pacific Rim countries, Chan calls for an overall development of a "coherent political morality," suitable to the diverse societies in the region. Ultimately, he states, this is an Asian task, though it may involve some fusion across cultural lines: it is not a contest between Asia and the West, but an elucidation of core values. Chan's argument, in this regard, is another possible step in eliminating the framework of opposition in the 'East-West' human rights debate.

Like Sen, Chan is more open to the possible existence of some type of an 'Asian

⁷ Joseph Chan, "The Task for Asians: To Discover their Own Political Morality for Human Rights." Excerpt a Paper Presented at the Conference "The Contest for 'Asia'," the Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, and the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Hong Kong, 4-5 December 1995, "The Bangkok Declaration Three Years After: Reflections on the State of the Asia-West Dialogue on Human Rights."

Way', demonstrating that some scholars are not necessarily dismissive of regional cultural paths. He argues that while political morality in East Asia must be liberal and enforce certain basic individual rights, there may indeed be some significant divergence of opinion between political morality in East Asia and the West, the United States in particular.⁸ The 'Western' type of liberalism identified by Chan is argued to be unsuitable for East Asians in a cultural sense: it is foreign to the region's Confucian-based traditions, and it is based on the ideal of the state which shapes the lives of its citizens, in terms of their protection and education, distinct from the liberal ideal of a non-interfering state. In Confucian political thought, the "primary task of the state" is to give people fatherly guidance towards correct ways of living, which is necessary, says Chan, in light of "the forces of marketization and commercialization have eroded the traditional ethos of various East Asian societies."⁹

Certainly, Chan's analysis does not avoid elements of clash and generalization. The characterization of 'Western cultural values' as based so firmly upon liberalism and a non-interfering state is beyond the immediate scope of this thesis, but we can see that Chan's picture of East Asian society as Confucian is also unhelpfully broad. Not only are there many cultural and religious traditions which overlap in the region, but the dynamic nature of Confucianism must be examined – a necessary point of inquiry when discussing

⁸ Chan identifies one of the basic problematques involved with examining an "Asian Way": in an attempt to diversify and explore different Asian perspectives, there is the danger of caricaturing Western views in turn. That is, the central focus becomes deconstructing the Asian to the point of neglecting the deconstruction of "the West." To address this problem, Chan states that "while there is no such thing as a single, unified American political morality, it is hard to deny that there is an influential political vision in both the American academic community and the general public." Chan refers to this vision as exclusionary liberalism, which involves a limited, neutral state whose primary duties are to enforce basic individual rights but not to restrict individual liberty. The pursuit of a good life is excluded from the framework of state action, according to this view.

⁹ *Ibid.*

the Confucian tradition, as argued earlier. Confucianism in China, for example, has been shaped and will continue to be shaped by other social factors, such as Communism, the growth of a middle class, the impact of technology, and gender issues. So while Chan makes some useful points, his analysis could be significantly improved by a recognition of change, interdependence, and diversity; this would help challenge the idea of a monolithic 'Asian' camp, in conflict with so-called 'Western' values and possessing a static, traditional ethos. However, calls by Sen and Chan for a deeper exploration of any cultural forces behind the Bangkok Conference demonstrate how academic perspectives have taken the debate seriously, and have pushed for greater detail and specificity.

The Incomplete Challenge

There are numerous examples of incomplete challenges to civilizational clash and monolithic players at the Conference. Joanne Bauer also examines the implications of the Bangkok Declaration for international human rights in the four-paper series. Focussing on an undertaking of the American Carnegie Council's Human Rights Initiative, a multi-year research and dialogue project on Human Rights in East and Southeast Asia, "The Growth of East Asia and Its Impact on Human Rights," Bauer assesses the declaration at its three-year mark. According to Bauer, the participants of the Carnegie initiative are addressing several questions:

What are "Asian values" and how have they played into the debate? Has the West responded appropriately? Should "Asian values" be dismissed as a cloak for authoritarian leaders to hang on to a monopoly of power? Or is

there something more to the concept that the West has missed?¹⁰

In Bauer's framework, there is an implicit dichotomy between an 'Asian' initiative, possibly hostile and deceptive, and the necessary, appropriate 'Western' counter-position, underscoring the idea of a confrontation between competing cultures. Her own perspective uses an analytical framework of confrontation, creating a dividing line between 'East' and 'West', the only differentiation being a monolithic block of NGOs allied with the latter camp in favour of universal human rights principles. In reference to the Conference's declaration, she states:

What surprised many observers, including Asian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), was the bold opposition to universal human rights contained in the [Bangkok] Declaration, made on the grounds that human rights as such do not accord with "Asian values." This marked the first of many messages Asian state representatives would send to the West saying that Asia intends to set its own standards for human rights.¹¹

Like many commentators, then, Bauer establishes the idea of clash, alienation, and antagonism in the 'East-West' context.

Kevin Y. L. Tan, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore, puts the Bangkok Conference firmly within the context of the broader Asian Way debate, arguing that this debate had become a "cottage industry" of sorts. As politicians and academics rushed to give their cultural interpretations of human rights and social values, the existence of individual agendas became clear, Tan contends; neither opponents nor proponents of 'Asian values' could speak with a single voice, and there has

¹⁰ Bauer, "The Bangkok Declaration Three Years After."

¹¹ *Ibid.*

been a danger of clouding the issues in the midst of the controversy.¹² However, while Tan's is a useful account for its criticism of generalized Asian Way perspectives, he ultimately falls back upon a framework of clash himself.

Unlike Amartya Sen, Tan makes his points within the established framework of an inevitable cultural gap, giving less weight to his own calls for the recognition of different voices. Tan places the issues surrounding the Conference within the context of an "age-old divide between East and West."¹³ The appeal to this context is due in part to his stress on the global political economy, and how it may serve to reinforce the idea of East-West opposition. This dichotomy is illustrated in terms of the relative success and failure of purportedly clashing civilizations. Tan contends that the Asian Way debate, as evidenced at the Bangkok Conference, has not been primarily about cultural differences or human rights. Rather, the real issue has always been economic success and confidence in the Asia-Pacific, and the region's reaction to colonial attitudes and legacies. Discussions of the so-called "Pacific Century," and a success mentality on the part of Asian leaders, may have helped fuel notions of East-West confrontation. Tan points out that international institutions such as the World Bank had linked the Asian "economic miracle" to Confucian or Asian culture – values invoked as a confidence-boosting vehicle for regional leaders. Not only were high-growth countries supposed to be able to stand up to their detractors by virtue of their success, but such performance was supposed to foster pride among leaders and citizens. Given this "performance legitimacy," to use Carl Freiderich's term, the opposition became one between the ascendant East and the "decadent" West, which

¹² Kevin Y. L. Tan, "What Asians Think About the West's Response to the Human Rights Debate," "The Bangkok Declaration Three Years After: Reflections on the State of the Asia-West Dialogue on Human Rights."

was preaching to Asia and “hold[ing] the East ransom.”¹⁴ For Tan, then, the human rights debate over “Asian values,” exemplified by the Bangkok Conference, became a conceptual framework for Asian leaders. Moreover, it also became a framework for Asian scholars as well, to “take on the West in an intellectual exchange where the West does not have a clear and distinct advantage.”¹⁵

Interestingly enough, within the context of the Bangkok Conference, Tan also highlights many of the themes present in the more general clash literature. He refers to a hysteria among Western scholars and politicians concerning an ‘Asian Way’ and its position of strength, given Eastern economic success. Indeed, the author claims that the Asian Way debate has attracted more scholars, intellectuals, and politicians in the West than in Asia, perhaps because Western liberalism and ideals have been seen by some as facing fundamental threats, in the form of a post-Cold War “siege on the Western citadel,” or perhaps because Asian intellectuals have been too engaged with enjoying their new-found prominence to take the controversy seriously.

David Little presents another theoretical perspective on the Bangkok Conference in the journal of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs. His account is useful for outlining some of the prevailing critiques of ‘Asian Way’ perspectives, and for making important points regarding cultures. He contends that there is no special relationship between any Asian culture and the Asian state, and that other factors than culture, such as

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Tan remarks that a “noted Japanese academic” at the 1995 Hakone Workshop of the Human Rights Initiative told him “he was tired of the West setting the rules” and that “it was time to give them ‘a taste of their own medicine’,” as in, telling other societies how to conduct their internal affairs. The Japanese academic professed admiration of Lee Kuan Yew’s attitudes towards the West, but according to Tan, this scholar did not even agree with the “Asian viewpoint” as presented by states.

economic ones, should be emphasized in the debate. However, Little also falls back on a clash framework for his discussion of the Bangkok Conference, establishing a split between fractious Asian governments on the one hand, and an alliance between the West and Asian society on the other. The latter camp is presented as a unified front supporting universal principles of human rights and good governance.

Little clearly sets out an adversarial relationship between East and West regarding human rights and governance:

We are all, by now, familiar with the challenges posed by Asian governments and others to what are thought to be prevailing 'Western' interpretations of human rights. The Bangkok Declaration, issued in 1993 by forty or so Asian and Pacific states, summarizes some of the different features of 'Asia's different standard', as it has been called.¹⁶

Little uses the case of the Bangkok Conference to present some of the most common critiques levelled at Asian Way perspectives, outlined in previous chapters. Factually, Little points out that there is not likely to be any monolithic 'Asian Way', since the variety of cultures and religions found in the region is quite large, and each of these traditions is shaped by different social and political circumstances; according to the author, NGOs, intellectuals, middle classes, and religious and ethnic minorities offer alternative visions. Moreover, according to the author, there has been no certain connection between an Asian state, with its own policies and objectives, and an Asian culture, as embodied in certain values and ideals. That is, an Asian government may or may not "reflect unambiguously" some form of Asian culture. For example, it is debatable how particularly Confucian a

¹⁶ David Little, "Human Rights: East and West," *Behind the Headlines: Canadian Institute of International Affairs Quarterly* (Winter/Spring 1996) 15.

strictly regulated society, such as those of China or Singapore, genuinely is.¹⁷ He reiterates the school of thought explored in greater depth in Chapter Three: in economic life, structural or policy factors, it is argued, have been the principle influence in a society, and not the more amorphous variable of culture. As well, Little touches on a point explored in Chapter Two: culture, and interpretations of culture from outside, have not operated within a vacuum, but rather have been part of a dynamic process which creates change and experiences change itself. This has been particularly true in terms of supposedly Confucian values, since we need only look at the effect of political and economic liberalization on a society such as China to see this dynamic process, and how increased international economic links have been changing purportedly traditional culture.

Little considers the following to have been hallmarks of “Asia’s different standard” within the context of the Bangkok Conference and Declaration: (1)the declaration emphasizes “the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds”; (2)the declaration outlines “the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference,” and discourages “any attempts to use human rights as a conditionality for extending development assistance”; and (3)the declaration gives special weight to collective rights and the right to development.¹⁸ He contextualizes this alternative Asian approach as an expression of opposition to Western cultural imperialism; this imperialism is said to espouse a certain type of freedom, based on individualism and civil-political rights, as a mandatory, ahistorical standard for all peoples and nations, without reference to social differences.

Ultimately, Little rejects Asian Way perspectives as they operate within the context

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

of the Bangkok Conference and the Bangkok Declaration. Claims to cultural specificity in matters of human rights are incompatible with the logic and historical setting of international human rights: human rights became an important part of international law after World War II, when the actions of governments based on cultural-historical grounds and national sovereignty were revealed. Human rights, by their very definition, are supposed to apply to all peoples regardless of their race, sex, language, religion, or ethnicity.

Thus, Little does present some challenges to the monolithic idea of an 'Asian Way': he underlines the variegated cultural traditions in the region, the opposition of some non-state groups, and the unclear link between 'Asian' culture and regional governments. These points help to establish the importance of societal change to cultural perspectives, brought about by global economic, political, and social forces. Regional and global actors interact with each other on the basis of multiple forces: international banking; communications technology; transnational social movements; immigration; foreign capital and business; and so on. However, Little's analysis of the Bangkok Conference leads to another over-general viewpoint, and fails to capture the complexity of the debate. He emphasizes a clash between an imperialist 'West' and a rising 'East'. He describes recalcitrant governments acting in opposition to the people and civil society in general; these states use cultural particularity to flout universal standards and uphold non-universal rights such as the right to development. In this scenario, regional governments constitute a discrete immoral group and 'Asian' civil society, a discrete moral group; no distinctions are made among different attitudes, opinions, and behaviours within the two groupings.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

In Little's analysis, the job of the West is to create careful, corrective policies to address the shortcomings and malfeasance of regional governments. It is suggested that these non-Asian societies must be practicing normatively correct, universal version of human rights, and because of this acceptance of universal principles, they have an obligation to promote human rights in the Asia-Pacific with deliberate policies. Little's policy imperative glosses over the continuing and controversial struggle within and across borders, even in the 'West', to define human rights and social justice, and to craft the means to put these definitions into practice. This is often dramatically true in case of 'Western' policies towards China or Indonesia or Burma. In the final analysis, as necessary as it may be to condemn relativist smokescreens advanced by some regional leaders and governments, oversimplifying the players involved does not accurately represent the Conference or the debate surrounding it.

In conclusion, the theoretical literature examining the Bangkok Conference and Bangkok Declaration has introduced some initial challenges to the ideas of inevitable, static 'East-West' clash, as shown by Sen and Chan. Notably, these challenges have not necessarily involved a dismissal of the notion of 'Asian' cultural approaches, but rather, have encouraged more research in a localized setting – showing that the debate has continued relevance for some observers. However, in other cases, the literature has resorted to ideas of clash and confrontation as continuing points of reference. Ironically, as in the case of David Little, some literature has even attempted to break down old monoliths by building new ones.

If these theoretical sources have been insufficient in offering a deeper understanding of the Bangkok Conference, what factors have they missed, or failed to

emphasize adequately? What areas must be more closely explored to gain insight into the Conference and the debate around it? In the following sections, three issue-areas will be offered, giving a more diverse interpretation of the Bangkok Conference: first, the role of the media, and how mainstream media sources have represented the gathering; second, the diverse nature of state roles in the Bangkok Conference; and third, the similarly variegated roles of non-state actors at the Conference. These three topics demonstrate in detail the limitations of Asian Way perspectives, and their accompanying framework of clash.

Part II: Media Representations of the Bangkok Conference

As the Introduction pointed out, media accounts of the debate have been useful for shedding light on the Asian Way debate: these reports have pinpointed key issues and attitudes that have proved influential in policy and academic circles. The reinforcing role of the media, presenting the Bangkok Conference as a platform for civilizational clash, should be explicitly acknowledged, given its role in the “cottage industry” mentioned by Chan. Central points made by the media in reference to the Bangkok Conference include: the Bangkok Declaration was intended to undermine universal principles of human rights by abusive regional governments; civil society at the Bangkok Conference -- when it is actually mentioned -- was a homogenous and inherently legitimate entity usually allied with the ‘West’ in opposition to its own governments; regional governments were largely a single-minded group, with a few exceptions; and there has a clear opposition at the Conference between the ‘West’ and the ‘East’.

Coverage of the Bangkok Conference was not nearly so widespread as that of the

subsequent World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. In particular, American media coverage of the Conference was not extensive. But according to the media sources that did cover the story, the Bangkok Conference played out larger themes of an 'East-West' clash and 'Asian' recalcitrance on questions of human rights and social values. Regional human rights issues were defined largely in terms of governments who use culture as a smokescreen for abusive practices. There was a clash between the 'West', which upholds a universal vision of human rights, and the 'East', which criticizes this vision on cultural grounds, generally to achieve authoritarian goals.

Christine Loh's piece in *Far Eastern Economic Review* is fairly typical of media coverage of the Bangkok Conference: Loh contends that the conference and the subsequent Bangkok Declaration were failed attempts by Asian governments to undermine basic principles of universal human rights, outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in favour of more "limited" precepts.¹⁹ The Bangkok Declaration is said to take "national sovereignty rather than individual freedom as its starting point," and to argue that "the 'universality' of human rights should take a poor second place to the omnipotence of the State."²⁰ Loh's report also focuses on the subsequent World Conference on Human Rights; she states that at the Vienna conference, the Bangkok Declaration found little support among human rights activists or NGOs, highlighting the tendency of media accounts to treat social groups as homogenous, a trend reflected by coverage of the Bangkok Conference.

Along similar lines, much of the press surrounding the Bangkok Conference has emphasized the obdurate behaviour of regional governments on human rights matters;

¹⁹ Christine Loh, "The Rights Stuff," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (8 July, 1993) 15.

within the accounts, the opinions of state actors are largely treated as undifferentiated. The perspectives of regional states -- ostensibly placing other goals ahead of 'Western' individual rights and in some cases, regarding 'Western' rights as a cause of social disorder -- has been associated with selected statements from official representatives at the Bangkok Conference, some of which could be interpreted in any number of ways. The Burmese representative U Min Wra, for example, is quoted in another article in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, stating that "Asian countries with their own norms and standards of human rights should not be dictated to by a group of other countries who are far distant geographically, politically, economically and socially."²¹ Also quoted is Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, who stated that "[t]here is only one set of fundamental human rights for whatever part of the world," but that implementation of these rights should "vary because of differences in socio-economic, historical [and] cultural backgrounds." Likewise, the Indonesian delegate was quoted in the report as rejecting any form of individual rights, stating that "we do not hold an individualistic view of human rights for we cannot disregard the interests of society, state, and nation."²² By using such statements as evidence of state depravity, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* article on the Bangkok Conference establishes clear oppositions: between the aforementioned regional state representatives and the 'West', and elsewhere, between fundamentally different civilizations, as exemplified by the exclusion of Australia and New Zealand from the conference. It should also be noted that this article, written by Gordon Fairclough, also makes reference to the role of NGOs at the Bangkok Conference, even though NGO

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Gordon Fairclough, "Standing Firm: Asia Sticks to its View of Human Rights," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (15 April, 1993) 22.

activity was more widely examined by the media at the Vienna Conference. The piece states that more than 100 human rights groups attended the Bangkok Conference, though the NGO Bangkok Declaration, examined later in this chapter, is not mentioned, and details of NGO activity are not provided.

In another media article on the Vienna Conference, reference is made to the Bangkok Conference; the Bangkok Declaration is compared to the documents arising from the two other regional preparatory conferences in Latin America and Africa. The Asian document is presented as the most emphatic on issues of non-interference and state sovereignty. This article in *Far Eastern Economic Review* is very definite about how the declaration was greeted: “The Bangkok Declaration is seen in the West as retrogressive and reprehensible”; the article then quotes a “key passage” in the Bangkok Declaration concerning the importance of considering human rights in “the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting,” underlining how regional governments are supposed to be appealing to cultural difference in this global dialogue.²³

Elsewhere, newspaper coverage of the Bangkok Conference was similarly generalized, emphasizing a framework of clash and confrontation between competing blocs. The *Montreal Gazette* ran a story on the conference under the headline: “Asia [sic] states accuse West of imposing alien values: They say cultural differences shape rights.” The story refers mainly to the Bangkok Declaration, stating that “[r]epresentatives of 49 Asian countries...adopted a common position on human rights, accus[ed] the West of

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Susumu Awanohara, Michael Vatikiotis, and Shada Islam, “Vienna Showdown,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (17 June 1993) 17.

imposing its values when pointing to abuses in their countries.”²⁴ The notion of agreement among the ‘Asian’ state delegates is highlighted in this report, as is the idea of a single perspective among states: one that regards human rights as a function of cultural differences. Self-determination of political systems and the condemnation of human rights conditionalities are two particular points drawn from the Bangkok Declaration. It is clear that this article is critical of the ‘Asian Way’: criticisms by Amnesty International of regional authoritarian governments are referred to, as is the move by the US Clinton administration to express concern over human rights violations in East Timor through the UN Human Rights Commission. The article goes on to further establish a split between East and West by noting the dismay in Jakarta over the American decision to change its East Timor policy²⁵ -- “Indonesian diplomats were reported...to be stunned”²⁶ -- and the warnings of countries such as China and Malaysia that such human rights stances could cause retaliation in East Asia and the subsequent loss of American jobs. Moreover, the *Gazette* article also sets up an ‘Asian Way’ as something antithetical to universal UN principles of human rights: Indonesia, for example, is quoted as referring to UN charges of human rights violations in East Timor as “unwarranted sweeping allegations.”²⁷ It is also pointed out that Indonesia’s annexation of East Timor has not been accepted by the UN.

²⁴ “Asia States Accuse West of Imposing Alien Values: They Say Cultural Differences Shape Rights,” *Montreal Gazette* (3 April, 1993) H9.

²⁵ As the article points out, during the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush, American policy towards East Timor was characterized by an unwillingness to condemn Indonesia action in the former Portuguese colony. During the 1980s, the US helped to block United Nations resolutions condemning human rights abuses in East Timor. According to Amnesty International, this policy was rooted in a desire to protect economic and strategic interests, including the desire to have a regional anti-Communist political ally in General Suharto. For these reasons, human rights violations were glossed over in past decades, even those as serious as the killing or starving of 200,000 East Timorese, fully one third of the population. Amnesty International, *Power and Impunity: Human Rights Under the New Order* (New York: Amnesty International, 1994).

²⁶ “Asia States Accuse West of Imposing Alien Values,” H9.

These trends in media reporting on the Bangkok Conference have not been without variation, some of which do open the door for more detailed analysis. One article in the *Globe and Mail* is an interesting treatment of the Bangkok Conference in several ways. First, the main focus of the article is on non-state actors -- specifically, human rights activists in India. Second, this article portrays the Bangkok Conference and the Bangkok Declaration as a *positive sign* for human rights in the region, saying:

At the close of the week-long meeting in Bangkok, the Asian-Pacific governments, ranging from Indonesia to Iran, seemed willing to show some cooperation with the West on human rights. Most notably, they signed a declaration 'welcoming the increased attention being paid to human rights in the international community,' and called for more attention to women's and children's rights.²⁸

So instead of focusing on contradictions or controversies arising from the conference itself, this article concentrates on the failure of regional governments to live up to the promise of the Bangkok Declaration after the conference ended. Third, like Gordon Fairclough's piece in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, this report does mention policy differences among governments at the conference, notably between India and Pakistan on the question of the sovereignty of Kashmir. As well, Japan's dissension on some issues is mentioned, and varying responses to repression under the Burmese military government are also indicated. This at least makes reference to the lack of complete consensus among regional governments on social justice issues.

Despite the report's framework of analysis for the Bangkok Conference, however, the article quickly establishes old ideas of inevitable opposition between an 'Eastern Way'

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ John Stackhouse, "Locked in a Slow Dance for Change," *Globe and Mail* (April 5, 1993) A6.

and a 'Western/Universal Way'. In terms of the Bangkok Declaration, regional governments are represented as having made favourable steps towards harmony on human rights issues -- this being defined, notably, as "cooperation with the West." But the article quickly backs away from the idea of meaningful progress by regional states towards any co-operative spirit ("what Asian governments say abroad and what they do at home can be painfully different"). Once again, all regional governments are aggregated in their responses. In addition, the article makes clear that governments' version of human rights is irreconcilable with universal standards, associated with the 'West':

...[T]he most contentious issue for Asians [leading up to the Vienna conference] seems to be whether to adopt universal human rights or define them in an Asian context, where the needs of the community often are held above those of the individual.²⁹

In sum, then, this article is quick to point out the various ways in which regional governments have failed to live up to 'Western' expectations for human rights behaviour: East Asian countries such as China, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Burma have not signed the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, for example, and Asia is the only region in the world without a human rights charter and monitoring organization.

The article admits that Asian governments like China, which have expressed discontent at being unjustly criticized by Western criticisms on human rights, do "have something they want to say that's different from the West," in the words of the Canada-Asia Working Group. Moreover, says the group, "the NGO community doesn't necessarily have a problem with that." However, the NGO concern that Asian

governments have used separate definitions of rights to “camouflage” abuses is also strongly emphasized -- in such a way that the idea of a two easily-definable separate camps, state and non-state, emerges. The report closes by restating the seemingly irreconcilable differences between the ‘East’ and ‘West’ on this issue: a Thai official is quoted as calling human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch “agents of the West.”³⁰

Another article on the Bangkok Conference is Jonathan Mirsky’s report to the *Times* of London. This piece focuses on Christine Loh, cited earlier. Loh was an appointee of former Hong Kong governor Christopher Patten; she served on the Legislative Council, and was a strong advocate of human rights leading up to Chinese rule in Hong Kong. She also lead a delegation of NGOs to Vienna, strongly in favour of universal definitions of human rights. Mirsky’s report establishes a clash between ‘Asian’ and ‘Western’ nations arising from the Bangkok Conference; in this clash, Loh is identified with the universalist camp:

At odds are the view set out in the Bangkok Declaration, by a group of countries led by China, Indonesia, and Burma, that the right to subsistence and development is paramount, and that put forward by Ms. Loh, who said: “Do electric cattle prods hurt less, depending on the ‘historical, cultural, and religious background’ of the person to whose body they are applied?”³¹

In Mirsky’s analysis, entitled “Asians split on human rights,” we see the idea that there were two competing camps on human rights issues in the region, both represented at the conference: a monolithic state camp advocating cultural definitions to disguise abuses; and

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

a monolithic non-state camp allied against this state position. Once again, this has allowed and perhaps even encouraged observers outside the Asia-Pacific region to approach the problems in a simplistic manner.

Frank Ching, writing for *Far Eastern Economic Review*, is more clearly supportive of the Bangkok Conference and its statements. This piece regards the gathering as evidence of an emerging Asian view of human rights, a controversial position given criticisms of regional governments for poor human rights records. Once again, Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai is used as an example; his statements at the conference pertaining to economic and social goals are emphasized. According to the Prime Minister, the way to realize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "...lies through economic development, democratization, and social justice," and "[i]n this regard, I cannot stress enough the importance of the right of the peoples of the world to develop."³²

In this account, statements underlining the imperative of development and collective rights are seen to be one aspect of a rising, confident 'Asian Way'. Ching argues that while human rights abuses by governments should not be defended, there has indeed been "an Asian case which is not getting a proper hearing." He states that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was largely drafted by rich Western nations in 1948, and thus reflects these nations' social, political, and cultural values. This is shown though the emphasis on individual rights in the Universal Declaration. However, he contends, human beings cannot be seen only as individuals, but as particular individuals who belong to particular groups, and sometimes to nations in a state of privation. In this sense, it is only natural that the Bangkok Declaration arising from the conference

³¹ Jonathan Mirsky. "Asians Split on Human Rights," *London Times* (June 11, 1993) 10.

underlined the significance of economic development as a universal and inalienable right.

While this article differs in its evaluation of the Bangkok Conference and Bangkok Declaration, it establishes monolithic oppositions just the same. Even though the "emerging Asian view" is seen in a more positive light, it is still presented as an undifferentiated perspective. To say that all 'Asian' states and indeed, to suggest that all 'Asian' cultures as a block can be summed up in terms of group rights ignores many relevant forces: individual dissidents or protestors; the forces of free market policies; economic and political liberalizations; and the forces of social change that work to shape and alter traditions. One of the features of a world linked by communication and transportation technologies is the overlap of cultures and societies: if we must speak of an emerging 'Asian Way', it cannot be seen as a billiard ball -- to borrow an analogy from International Relations theory -- discretely knocking up against other cultures, impervious to any overlapping social forces. Moreover, Ching's analysis suggests the idea of inescapable antagonism between two single, easily discernible traditions.

In conclusion, most of the mainstream coverage of the Bangkok Conference and Bangkok Declaration has suggested that the dividing line on social issues is relatively straightforward when it comes to Asian Way perspectives: there has been a camp in favour of these principles, consisting of regional states, and there has been another camp against them, consisting of non-state actors and the 'West'. These latter, universalist ideals are antithetical to Asia Way perspectives. This difference has created an inevitable clash based on competing values.

However, the picture is much more complex than this. Because the Bangkok

³² Ching, 27.

Conference has been portrayed in such a simplistic manner, regional state perspectives has been established in reference to, and even as a reaction to, 'Western' principles of human rights. Moreover, as Sen suggests, the internal political and cultural content of the debate has been obscured. In this regard, the variation in human rights approaches as they vary from society to society in the Asia-Pacific has become lost in the shuffle: the variety in the pattern of actual human rights abuses; the differences in state responses; the variegated responses and interests of non-state actors; and the very nature of the cultural or political context all have been minimized in such a stylized debate. The Asia-Pacific region has been painted with one brush, and that brush has frequently been coloured with quotable soundbites from a leader like Lee Kuan Yew; the result has been a further mystification in the perception of 'Asian' societies.

The Bangkok Declaration itself, arising from the Bangkok Conference, is a useful tool to illustrate some of the complexities underlying the Asian Way debate. A reading of the document shows that regional state motives for advocating any culturally-specific view of human rights at the Bangkok Conference do not have to be attributed to an 'East-West' clash, nor do they have to be viewed in terms of 'Asian-Western' opposition. The culturally specific aspects of the Bangkok Declaration are intertwined with an overall themes of state primacy and sovereignty in the document; as such, any political-cultural dynamic is established on its own terms, without reference to some opposite outside of Asia. Furthermore, background details on the conference show that the idea of a single, unified 'Asian' state view is inaccurate, further challenging the idea of a monolithic clash between civilizations.

Part III: State Perspectives and The Bangkok Conference

In order to challenge the undifferentiated picture of states at the Bangkok Conference, I will present two arguments. First, I will argue that the Bangkok Declaration has been oversimplified: it is more than merely a document that attempts to undermine universal principles of human rights within a framework of ‘East-West’ confrontation. Rather, the document has its own goals, which do not need clashing civilizations as a reference point; these include state primacy, economic development, and political stability. This is not an apology for any actions performed by states present at the Bangkok Conference and party to the Bangkok Declaration – certainly, governments like Indonesia’s, for example, have used their signatures on the Bangkok Declaration to offset human rights criticisms by the international community³³ -- but rather, a challenge to the framework of deterministic clash. Certainly, appeals to sovereignty and development rights are not issues that are exclusive to ‘Asian values’ states, despite the academic and media reports that use the Asian Way debate as a principle point of reference for the Conference. Second, I will argue that while regional states have been implicitly or explicitly represented as a like-minded unit in many treatments of the Bangkok Conference, governments approached the gathering with diverse goals and motivations. Both these points call into question the idea that regional states at the Conference acted as

³³ In 1994, Indonesia used the Bangkok Declaration to defend itself against criticisms by Amnesty International: the government opposed an AI campaign for human rights in that country, citing its progress in human rights matters. One area of progress cited by the government was the fact that “Indonesia is a signatory to the Bangkok Declaration on Human Rights which is a commitment to the observance and protection of human rights.” “The Indonesian Government Comments on Amnesty International Human Rights Campaign,” Department of Foreign Affairs, The Republic of Indonesia, Internet, 21 Nov. 1996. Available: www.inovasi.com/deplu/amnes1.html.

a common front against the 'West' and a camp of non-state actors.

The Bangkok Declaration -- Context and Complexity

The Bangkok Declaration, issued by the representative states at the Bangkok Conference, is a 32 page, 30 point document. It contains a number of important focal points, clearly outlining priorities and interests of regional governments, and calling into question the framework of a clash-ridden 'East-West' dynamic.

It is difficult to pin down precisely what relationship the Bangkok Declaration has had with the Asian Way debate – far more difficult than media reports have suggested. In the Bangkok Declaration, there is an explicit call for a reaffirmation of the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. More ambiguously, the ideal of human rights universality is accepted in the text, but “in context.” The document states:

...[W]hile human rights are universal in nature, they must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds.³⁴

However, this contextual approach does not seem to dismiss any specific class of human rights, such as civil-political rights, as culturally alien; indeed, the document clearly “reaffirms the interdependence and indivisibility” of rights, and the “need to give equal

³⁴ *The Bangkok Declaration, a Declaration from an Asian Intergovernmental Meeting of the Ministers and Representatives of Asian States, Meeting at Bangkok from 29 March to 2 April 1993, Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 46/116 of 17 December 1991 in the Context of Preparations for the World Conference on Human Rights, Section 8.*

emphasis” to all categories of human rights.”³⁵

To cite a specific example, the Bangkok Declaration recognizes the rights of women and children in Sections 22 and 23 of the document, reaffirming a:

...strong commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of women through the guarantee of equal participation in the political, social, economic and cultural concerns of society, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence against women.³⁶

Likewise, it recognizes:

...the rights of the child to enjoy special protection and to be afforded the opportunities and facilities to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.³⁷

While there is no indication of how these ends are to be achieved – what, for example, “equal participation” might look like in a given society, or what a “normal manner” might be in terms of a child’s development – there is certainly some basic level of agreement here between, say, United Nations initiatives on women’s and children’s rights and the Bangkok Declaration.

At the same time, the document shows an emphasis on “the essential need to

³⁵ Bangkok Declaration, section 10. This touches on the generational model of human rights, outlined in the Introduction, one aspect of which is the proposed needs of developing nations in matters of rights. Unlike industrialized nations, developing nations are argued by some to require a greater emphasis on socio-economic or development rights. The question of classes of rights and economic development comes up again later in the Bangkok Declaration, as the aforementioned right to development is a part of the document in Section 17: “[T]he right to development, as established in the Declaration on the Right to Development, [is] a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, which must be realized through international cooperation, respect for fundamental human rights, the establishment of a monitoring mechanism and the creation of essential international conditions for the realization of such rights.”

³⁶ Bangkok Declaration, Section 22.

³⁷ Bangkok Declaration, Section 23.

create favourable conditions for enjoyment of human rights at both the national and international levels” and “the urgent need to democratize the United Nations system.” This democratization would be “based on principles of equality and mutual respect, and [would] ensure a positive, balanced and non-confrontational approach in addressing and realizing all aspects of human rights.”³⁸ This attention to United Nations reform can be seen to serve certain regional ends: possibly, the permanent addition to the Security Council of a power like Japan in future, or the guarantee that missions such as the 1992 UN-supervised elections in Cambodia would not be unchecked. But it should also be noted that a desire to democratize UN functioning, or to create favourable conditions for local and global human rights, can hardly be characterized exclusively as ‘Asian values’ rhetoric employed by regional states; these themes would seem equally, if not more, relevant to wider advocacy of *global* development and social justice, and not merely a supposed cultural expression of state interests.

On a related point, there is a clear emphasis on non-intervention in internal state affairs and on self-determination in the Bangkok Declaration. Specifically, sections 6 and 7 state that the parties involved:

...Emphasize the principles of respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of States, (and the non-use of human rights as an instrument of political pressure) [and r]eiterate that all countries, large and small, have the right to determine their political systems, control and freely utilize their resources, and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

A good example of the sovereignty issue in the document is the criticisms of human rights conditionalities on official development assistance (ODA). Notably, the document gives

³⁸ Bangkok Declaration, Sections 1-3.

attention to self-determination as a “universal right” and a “principle of international law,” and it is stated in the declaration that the denial of the right to self-determination “constitutes a grave violation of human rights.”³⁹ Self-determination is also brought out specifically within the framework of “colonial domination or foreign occupation.”⁴⁰

In this sense, then, it is misleading to establish the Bangkok Declaration as a product of ‘East-West’ clash, because as mentioned above, many of the issues highlighted in the document involve larger issues of global distribution and economic development. Of course, a given government could use or abuse these issues for any number of purposes; however, the pivotal point here is that these questions do not have to be framed by a mystified ‘Eastern’ culture, espoused by regional governments and at odds with the ‘West’. Ironically, if a clash had to be found within the context of the Bangkok Declaration, it would more likely be a ‘North-South’ than an ‘East-West’ one: in several of the sections, the document seems to identify the signatory states with the developing world, and not necessarily with the ‘Eastern’ world, with common struggles and a shared legacy of colonial exploitation.

We must also keep in mind that while academic debates and media accounts of the Conference focused almost exclusively on Asian Way themes, there were delegations

³⁹ Bangkok Declaration, Section 12.

⁴⁰ This promotion of the right to self-determination is not unconditional, and is informed by political and social issues in the region; self-determination is a right which, according to the document, only applies to “peoples under alien and colonial domination or foreign occupation.” As Section 13 states, this right cannot be used “to undermine the territorial integrity, national sovereignty and political independence of states.” That is, if the United States occupies the Philippines or France occupies Vietnam, the domination is contrary to human rights (whose human rights is not clarified), but presumably, if Indonesia occupies East Timor or Irian Jaya, or if China occupies Tibet, or if the Philippines occupies Mindanao, then protest is considered to undermine national sovereignty and political independence of the state. To these ends, terrorism has a very distinct definition in Section 21 of the Bangkok Declaration. Terrorism is distinguished from “the legitimate struggle of peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation,” and is referred to as “one of the most dangerous threats to territorial integrity and security of

presents from different geographic regions, less involved in the Asian Way debate, such as India and Pakistan. Once again, this provides a broader reading of the Bangkok Declaration beyond the framework of 'East-West' clash. Section 14, for example, turns the human rights spotlight on industrialized nations, condemning violations such as racism, apartheid, colonialism, foreign aggression, and the resurgence of neo-nazism, xenophobia, and ethnic cleansing. Section 16 takes on a specific issue beyond the scope of an 'East-West' split, expressing support for the "legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to restore their national and inalienable rights to self-determination and independence." Section 17 reaffirms the right to development, while Section 18 locates the obstacles to the realization of the right to development at "the international macroeconomic level, as reflected in the widening gap between the North and South, the rich and poor." Section 19 states that poverty is a major impediment to the full enjoyment of human rights.

The Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations, Shunji Maryama, later compared the Bangkok Declaration to the statements arising from the regional human rights preparatory conferences in Latin America and Africa and stated: "[i]t is clearly the Bangkok Declaration that insists most strongly on non-interference in internal affairs and on such objectives as economic development."⁴¹ However, an examination of the Bangkok Declaration reveals that the one area where an 'Asian Way' goal is most heavily emphasized is certainly not unique to the Asia-Pacific: the declaration stresses state-centred power and decision-making, shown through the emphasis on non-intervention and self-determination. The declaration asserts that the "primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights" is the state's, through "appropriate

States...destabilizing legitimately constituted governments."

infrastructure and mechanisms.”⁴² The document also declares that the states involved “[w]elcome the important role played by national institutions in the genuine and constructive promotion of human rights, and believe that the conceptualization of such institutions are best left for States to decide.”⁴³ There is nothing, however, inherently ‘Asian’ about the statements, and they do not have to be seen as evidence of a larger, inevitable clash. Once again, these points are not an apologia for statements or actions of any government; rather, they challenge the suggestion that the desired goal of state primacy is confined to repressive ‘Asian Way’ governments in the context of an ‘East-West’ clash.

State Differences and the Bangkok Conference

The Bangkok Conference reveals the limitations of an oversimplified ‘Asian Way’ concept in another key way: the state positions at the gathering were by no means identical, but rather, reflected political and economic differences among societies in the region. For example, in the official statement made by Ambassador Jin Yongjian, head of the Chinese delegation to the Bangkok Conference -- a surprising statement, perhaps, given the Asian Way debate’s emphasis on Beijing as a leading proponent of a regional, cultural path to social values -- it is pointed out that “great differences exist among Asian countries in terms of their political, economic, cultural and religious situations.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ “Vienna Showdown,” 17.

⁴² Bangkok Declaration, Section 9.

⁴³ Bangkok Declaration, Section 24.

⁴⁴ Jin Yongjian, “Asia’s Major Human Rights Concerns: Excerpts from the Speech Made by Ambassador Jin Yongjian, Head of the Chinese delegation, at the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World

The reaction of government delegations to the NGO contingent at the Bangkok Conference is an illustration of the varied positions among states: the Asian Way debate would suggest that states would be threatened by actors that advocate universal perspectives on social values, but some were more open than others to the presence of NGOs, given the make-up of their own societies. Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan received the non-state representatives well, though other countries were less amicable.⁴⁵ To cite another example, Japan was accused by other delegations of being too Western in its approach to human rights; the distinction between Japan and 'the rest of Asia' was clearly drawn in reference to delegations from China, Iran, and Burma.⁴⁶ It should also be noted that Japan, as well as Cyprus, felt the need to make additional statements clarifying their delegates' position on the final Bangkok Declaration. According to Asia Watch, the international human rights non-governmental organization, the Bangkok Declaration mostly reflected the position of the Chinese, Indonesian, Malaysian, and Singaporean governments. "Some of the Asian democracies, including Japan, managed to moderate the tone of some provisions," says Asia Watch. For example, the wording of the section condemning conditionalities on foreign aid and development assistance was changed from "reject" to "discourage." In addition, sections emphasizing the need to encourage states in

Conference on Human Rights in Bangkok on March 30, 1993," *Beijing Review* 36 no.16 (April 19-25, 1993) 11.

⁴⁵ Fairclough, "Standing Firm," 22.

⁴⁶ Fairclough, "Standing Firm," 22. The Japanese representative to the Bangkok Conference, Seichiro Otsuka, expressed concern over human rights violations in the region, and argued that human rights criticisms do not interfere with internal affairs. As the representative of the world's largest foreign aid donor, Otsuka was also unhappy with the clause criticizing conditionalities on development assistance. For these positions specifically, Japan was accused of being too Western in its approach to human rights.

⁴⁶ Susumu Awanohara, Michael Vatikiotis, and Shada Islam, "Vienna Showdown," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (17 June 1993) 17.

the region to ratify international covenants on human rights were included.⁴⁷

These examples should not be taken as evidence of new clashes – between, say, intransigent regional governments and internationalist regional governments -- but rather as an indication of the diversity of state policies and perspectives in the region. This diversity has reflected, as well, the different human rights contexts in the different countries in the region: how human rights are violated and what actions are taken to oppose those violations are framed by a societal context. In China and Indonesia, for example, civil-political human rights violations have been more widespread than in post-1992 Philippines, while in the Philippines, human rights abuses around labour and land have become increasingly relevant as economic policies increase divisions between the wealthy and the poor. In this sense, then, different societies come to the table with unique issues. This conforms with research shedding light on the push-and-pull among states in regional bodies such as ASEAN on matters of human rights; Carolina Hernandez, among others, has pointed out the different perspectives among ASEAN states regarding human rights issues.⁴⁸ The previously discussed tensions between Singapore and the Philippines in 1995 over the execution of Filipino foreign worker Flor Contemplacion is just one specific example.

In conclusion, while the media and academic accounts of the Bangkok Conference may have chosen themes of ‘East-West’ clash as a point of reference for examining the

⁴⁷ Asia Watch, “Human Rights in the APEC Region,” *Asia Watch* Vol. 5, no. 19 (November 1993) 2. Asia Watch points out that Asian governments’ attacks on the West at the Bangkok Conference concerning their neglect of socio-economic rights and the right to development had an impact; it led the American delegation to reverse its earlier stance and announce its intent to ratify relevant conventions at the Vienna Conference.

⁴⁸ Carolina Hernandez, “ASEAN Perspectives on Human Rights and Democracy in International Relations: Problems and Prospects.” (Centre for International Studies, Toronto: C. Hernandez, 1995) 12-19.

forum, this opposition is a misleading one. It obscures broader questions, such as those concerning development and self-determination, within the context of the Bangkok Declaration, and it suggests a natural alliance among regional states at the conference that did not exist.

Part IV: Non-State Actors and the Bangkok Conference

The previous chapter argued that the Asian Way debate was called into question not only by the variegated positions of states, but by those of non-state actors as well. The media in countries like Canada, the United States, and Great Britain tended not to focus on the non-state role in the Bangkok Conference, although there were a few notable exceptions in the media sources cited above. When non-state actors have been discussed, even in academic treatments of the Bangkok Conference, they have been frequently invoked as a like-minded bloc opposing Asian Way perspectives, united with the 'West' in championing universalist norms against cultural relativism; however, the diverse nature of non-state activity offers a more powerful critique of the Asian Way debate than a model of single-minded opposition, since it reveals more fully the varied approaches in the region.

The variegated nature of non-state actors was dramatic at the Bangkok Conference, and reflected manifold roles and interests of human rights activists in the region. Two points will be made in this section. First, the NGO Bangkok Declaration did not present as straightforward a case of opposition to state positions as one might think; rather, there were some significant overlaps between the state and the non-state documents, showing that the idea of two opposing camps has limited relevance to the

Conference. Second, the non-state camp was not necessarily a unified one, nor was it synonymous with the 'West' in a pro-universalist camp.

More than 100 NGOs gathered in Bangkok to add their input to the meeting, echoing the non-state influence at United Nations international conferences like the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and the 1996 Second UN Conference on Human Settlement in Istanbul. At the time, Gordon Fairclough stated that in the context of the Bangkok Conference, the "increasingly vocal role of non-governmental advocacy organizations in the international human rights debate may change the status quo."⁴⁹ One newsletter described non-state activity in terms of groups working to present their views to governments and reacting to certain state arguments that human rights were a club against the world's poor nations, used by rich and powerful countries in the West. Many expressed concern that states were using concepts of national sovereignty and state security to dilute internationally recognized human rights standards⁵⁰

The variety of NGOs at the Bangkok Conference -- ranging among the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the Red Cross, UNICEF, the All-Japan Federation of Buraku Liberation Movement, the Asian Women Human Rights Council, the Institute for Human Rights, Environment, and Development, and Women Living Under Muslim Laws -- must be kept in mind when human rights activity is discussed, further challenging the idea of monolithic camps. Moreover, the global forces which

⁴⁹ Fairclough, "Standing Firm," 22.

⁵⁰ "View Clash at Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Human Rights," *Indonesia Reports--Human Rights Supplement* nos.57-58 (April 20, 1993) 11-12.

impact upon these internal debates must also be recognized: at the Bangkok Conference, certain NGO officials pointed out that “the stress some Asian states place on the right to development is appealing to the Third World,” and that “Asian governments are credible in this respect because the region is leading the world in economic growth.”⁵¹ This speaks to previous arguments concerning economics: during the debate’s peak, prosperity may have equalled legitimacy when considering an ‘Asian Way’.

The activities of regional human rights NGOs culminated in the NGO Bangkok Declaration on Human Rights, a parallel document to the official Bangkok Declaration, expressing the non-state perspective. This document has been referred to as a means to articulate a vision of human rights that differed radically from that of their own governments and thus called into question the ability of the latter to define what is “Asian,”⁵² but this document is more than a simple counterpoint to the state Declaration.

The NGO Bangkok Declaration stresses universality and indivisibility of human rights, and the role of international solidarity in human rights issues, yet does not diminish the importance of cultures. The document states:

Universal human rights standards are rooted in many cultures. We affirm the basis of universality of human rights which afford protection to all of humanity, including special groups such as women, children, minorities and indigenous peoples, workers, refugees and displaced persons, the disabled and the elderly. While advocating cultural pluralism, those cultural practices which derogate from universally accepted human rights, including women’s rights, must not be tolerated. As human rights are of universal concern and are universal in value, the advocacy of human rights cannot be considered to be an encroachment upon national sovereignty.⁵³

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Asia Watch, “Human Rights in the APEC Region,” *Asia Watch* 5 no.19 (November, 1993) 1.

⁵³ *Bangkok NGO Declaration on Human Rights, A Declaration by Participants from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) Concerned with Issues of Human Rights and Democratic Development from the Asia-Pacific Region Meeting in Bangkok from 24-28 March 1993, Section I.*

This statement contrasts with the emphasis on national sovereignty and self-determination in the Bangkok Declaration. As well, issues of sustainable development, democracy and demilitarization are stressed in the NGO statement. The rights of human rights workers and other activists in civil society are recognized. It should be noted, however, that the recommendations of the NGO Declaration targeting the needs of children and women are also brought up in the state Declaration. As well, while this document is clearly a challenge to culture-based arguments for certain abusive practice, it is unclear whether the culture that violates human rights is advocated by abusive states.

It is inaccurate to suggest that these are two opposed camps. On other points, there is an overlap between the official and the NGO documents: the NGO Declaration is highly critical of the legacy of imperialism in the region, as is the state Declaration, and the region's historical context is identified as a major source of underdevelopment:

A major cause of maldevelopment and gross violations of human rights is the dominance and consequence of imperialism in the Asia-Pacific region. A pre-condition to genuine development is the attainment of national liberation and self-determination of the peoples in the region.⁵⁴

There is a shared critique, then, of the imperialist legacies, an ironic point, given that many commentaries associate regional non-state actors with a 'Western' bloc. As well, like the state declaration, the rights underlined in this document are civil-political (freedom of speech, freedom from torture) and socio-economic (education rights, labour rights), focussing on individuals and groups. The ongoing need for development is an important concept, as it is in the state Declaration. This challenges the idea of state/non-state camps.

Beyond the NGO Declaration, were non-state actors taking a common position in the case of the Bangkok Conference? Many press releases and media reports, after all, have emphasized such commonality, framing the conference as a very clear-cut, straightforward case of state versus non-state: indigenous groups, for example, were excluded from the conference because of fears of calls for self-determination⁵⁵; and the two Japan-based NGOs working for East Timorese independence were barred from the conference at the instigation of Indonesia.⁵⁶ However, there is evidence suggesting more diversity in perspectives, especially in light of the different types of NGOs represented at the conference. Some NGOs in attendance were not based in the geographic region, such as Asia Watch, which unequivocally condemned the idea of an ‘Asian Way’ as a tool of despotic regimes: such governments are determined to promote an “Asian concept of human rights” that downplays political and civil rights, highlights the importance of economic development, stresses the need to take cultural, historical, and religious factors into account when assessing human rights, and rejects aid conditionality and other forms of “interference in domestic affairs.”⁵⁷ There were also coalition actors, who were linked with activists in countries like Canada; the Canada-Asia Working Group, mentioned above, attempted to build a bridge between regional governments that have viewpoints “different from the West.”⁵⁸ So, even though Christine Loh argues that regional non-state actors waged a regional campaign against the Bangkok Declaration for taking “national

⁵⁴ Bangkok NGO Declaration, Section 5.

⁵⁵ “Asian Indigenous Groups Say They’re Being Ignored,” *Indonesia Reports - Human Right Supplement* nos. 57-58 (April 20, 1993) 10.

⁵⁶ “East Timor Independence Campaigners Barred from Human Rights Meet,” *Indonesia Reports - Human Rights Supplement* no. 57-58 (April 20, 1993) 10.

⁵⁷ Asia Watch, “Human Rights in the APEC Region,” 2.

⁵⁸ Stackhouse, “Locked in a Slow Dance for Change,” A6.

sovereignty rather than individual freedom as its starting point, argu[ing] that ‘universality’ of human rights should take a poor second place to the omnipotence of the State.”⁵⁹ she also must recognize their diversity. At forums like the subsequent Vienna Conference, Loh states that NGOs “reflected the disparities of the region, from the developed world preoccupations of Japan through the new democracies of South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, to the struggling poverty of Mongolia, India, and Nepal.”⁶⁰ In this regard, solidarity at a public forum, and in a resulting document, should not be mistaken for unanimity within the activist community.

Another important distinction must be made: indigenous activism may have entirely different goals and methods than international activism, even when certain agendas and functions overlap. Media reports on the Bangkok Conference have tended to portray Asia-Pacific NGOs, regardless of their origins or constituencies, as in the camp of ‘Western’ societies in the civilizations clash, since both are represented as upholding universal human rights, in contrast to regional governments. However, as Asia Watch states:

The [Asian] NGOs succeeded in blunting the efforts of some governments to accentuate North-South and East-West fissures. But it was clear, not only from their stance at Bangkok, but from NGO work more generally, that the Asian NGO agenda differed in some respects from that of the counterpart organizations in the West, particularly in honing in on the need to address the linkage between human rights and development.⁶¹

Furthermore, Loh states that the position of regional NGOs in Bangkok and Vienna represented a “new mood” which called for a more equitable relationship with the ‘West’,

⁵⁹ Loh, “The Rights Stuff.”

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

as opposed to articulating an undifferentiated common purpose:

...If the Bangkok Declaration found little or no support among Asian or other NGOs because of the restrictions it sought, there was certainly a feeling that Asian and other developing-world views should be heard more readily on human rights issues. The time had come, they agreed, for a more equal relationship with the West.⁶²

This calls into question the idea of a clear schism between state and non-state, where the dominant alliance has been between regional activists and 'the West'.⁶³ And like the range of non-state actors, and their overlaps of agenda, it also serves to challenge Asian Way perspectives.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the significance of the Bangkok Conference as a case study for challenging stereotyped roles within the Asian Way debate. Academic analysis of the Bangkok Conference has, in many cases, emphasized clash as the central frame of

⁶¹ Asia Watch, "Human Rights in the APEC Region," 2.

⁶² Loh, "The Rights Stuff," 15.

⁶³ Certainly, the Bangkok Conference is not the only example which challenges the idea of Asian society being allied with the 'West', particularly Western states, against oppressive Asian governments. An individual like Harry Wu, for example, the well-known Chinese human rights activist now living in the United States and working with a research foundation has stated in a CBC interview that Western governments are supporting "the lie" of the Chinese state. This lie posits that China is too large and potentially powerful to cross, and that the best way to address human rights issues is to encourage economic reforms. Wu contends that capitalism does not mean democracy and human rights, and that Western governments and Chinese businesses abroad are serving their own interests by justifying mutually beneficial economic ties. If states such as Canada are undermining human rights activism and human rights progress in countries such as China -- and there are indications which suggest that this indeed the case, given Canada's enthusiastic trade policy towards China in recent years -- then the idea of a common universalist front, in which 'the West' and Asian human rights activists are united in their support of universal human rights, must be questioned. Harry Wu was interviewed by David Grierson for Vicki Gabereau on CBC Radio on Wednesday, 6 November 1996, at 3.30 pm AST. On an interesting side note, Wu suggests that the 'culture' behind human rights abuses in China is not Asian, or Chinese, but

reference for the gathering – though critiques of Asian Way governments do not necessarily dismiss the need to explore Asian Way themes. The role of the media in reinforcing clash perspectives, as well as the variegated nature of state and societal perspectives, are crucial for analyzing the Conference. The continuing relevance of these issues, several years after the Bangkok Conference and the peak of the Asian Way debate, show their significance.

An intriguing paradox arises from this reassessment of the Bangkok Conference. The analysis and synthesis of these Asian Way themes is, according to Sen, primarily an indigenous task, without reference to an opposed entity called the West. Yet, Tan argues that ‘Asian Way’ hysteria has been the most marked among observers in the West, and in Bauer’s words, “the West is doing some searching itself.” As argued in the Introduction, there are compelling political reasons why such the debate continued at the global level, despite such marked shortcomings in Asian Way perspectives; these included the theme of new enemies and threats in the post-Cold War environment, and the goals of individual state leaders and governments within the Asia-Pacific. Certainly, though, it is remarkable that the ‘Asian’ task has been so closely scrutinized by the societies that would seem to have the least stake in the issue. This indicates how thoroughly the debate has transcended, and even obscured, borders. Asian Way perspectives have tried to suggest that the ‘East’ had spoken and the ‘West’ had listened -- that the ‘East’ experienced crisis and accomplishment, while the ‘West’ was an observer and a related player in the global political economy and global political forums. However, in the following conclusion, not only will guidelines for future research be offered, but it will be suggested that a key

lesson of the Asian Way debate is that societies are not separate and clashing; rather, they are experiencing ever greater levels of overlap and exchange.

Conclusion:
Clash or Convergence?:
Rudyard Kipling's Fallacies and the Future of the Asian Way Debate

The people of the Pacific Rim did not know they inhabited a bustling new sector of the world system until they were told – just as the “Indians” did not know they were in “West India” until Europeans informed them. “Rim” is an American construct, an invention exactly like the steam engine, incorporating the region’s peoples into a new inventory of the world: “Pacific” is itself a Euro-American name, measuring, delineating, and recognizing living space for the people who live there. That these are Western constructs does not mean the natives think them unimportant, or that they have their own confident definitions; indeed, well-known Rimsters have doors held open for them throughout East Asia.¹

The above statement by Bruce Cummings demonstrates the limitations of the picture drawn of ‘Asia’, in terms of analysis, policy, and theory, by the Asian Way debate. The debate shows that our current ideas of the Asia-Pacific as a *conceptual region* has led us to misunderstandings about cultures and practices there; in fundamental ways, we must rethink how we frame our discussions. Why, for example, were so many observers unprepared for the breakdown of the ‘Asian miracle’ in the late 1990s? Why did events such as currency crises and political unrest provoke surprise and dismay among commentators in Europe and North America? Part of the reason lies in stylized and stereotypical Asian Way perspectives, both controversial and compelling during much of the 1990s. The ‘Asian values’ framework offered a picture of the region as orderly, cohesive, disciplined and communitarian, and its superiority over the more chaotic, individualistic ‘Western Way’ was frequently argued by way of regional economic growth. In future, if conditions in the region are to be better understood -- without an appeal to

broad concepts such as clashing civilizations – then the flawed and over-general Asian Way debate must be thoroughly reassessed and challenged. This may help shape future responses to events and problems in the Asia-Pacific region, both in analysis and in policy. In this conclusion, the arguments of the thesis will be summarized, and specific directions and guidelines for future research will be outlined in five areas: states, societies, social change, cultures, and globalization processes.

Summary of Arguments

The preceding chapters demonstrate how the Asian Way debate has been framed by ideas of international clash; this has created a simplistic and deterministic picture of the ‘East’, bound by certain behaviours and cultural attitudes. However, the idea of Asian culture or cultures as disciplined, orderly, and harmonious cannot account for global changes that shape local contexts, or for the diversity in state policies and approaches to economic development, or for varying perspectives within East and Southeast Asian societies.

To summarize the arguments of this thesis: there exists a body of Asian Way literature, embedded in a broader, global clash literature, which features themes of confrontation between supposedly clashing civilizations. This conflict has played out against a backdrop of global political and economic change: the rise and relative fall in the economic profile of the Asia-Pacific region; the search for post-Cold War paradigms and agendas; and the attendant seeking of purportedly new enemies and threats internationally.

¹ Bruce Cummings, “What Is a Pacific Century – And How Will We Know When It Begins?” *Current*

In its desire to hold up Confucianism as the Asian inheritance for social order and harmony, the clash framework employed in the debate has presented Confucianism as static and anti-democratic. This does not account for increasing pressures of social change and liberalization, but instead, has further emphasized how the 'East' differs from the 'West'. In terms of economics, Asian Way perspectives have been predicated on faulty assumptions concerning success, in ecological and social respects, and on inaccurate reifications of an economically diverse region. Despite the 'Asian values' emphasis on cultural explanations for the region's period of economic growth, there is a rich literature stressing policy-based explanations and state management. Moreover, it is unclear whether an authoritarian state, so profoundly associated with Asian Way perspectives, is truly conducive to prosperity in general. In political and social terms, both state and societal responses to the debate have been frequently distorted in Asian Way perspectives, and interestingly enough, in critiques of 'Asian values' as well. Instead of constituting competing blocs – repressive states upholding Asian Way perspectives and non-state actors opposing them through democratic, altruistic social action – actors are distinct, and in some cases, even non-state actors have used the idea of an Asian Way for distinct purposes. The 1993 Bangkok Conference and its accompanying state and non-state declarations have provided a significant case study of the diverse approaches to 'Asian values' adopted in the region. While certain academic and media analyses have suggested that the Conference was marked by clash, an investigation into the forum and the documents it produced reveals the variegated roles played by state and non-state actors. Furthermore, it shows that the aims of the official declaration need not be framed in terms

of an East-West clash, and that there was even some overlap between the official and the NGO declarations. In light of these shortcomings, the issues and controversies raised by the Asian Way debate must be approached with new analytical frameworks, if the larger cycle of distortion and misapprehension is to end.

Continuing Controversies: Future Directions of the Asian Way Debate

Clearly, the backdrop of the Asian Way debate is increasingly uncertain. In the Asia-Pacific region, currency devaluations, rising unemployment, inflation and mounting prices – accompanied in some cases by social unrest, and even ‘un-Asian’ violent protest and unprecedented political openness in a country like Indonesia – have cast a new light on the notion of the Rising East. Governments worldwide that may have expressed admiration for aspects of the ‘Asian’ economic model have now blamed some of their own economic woes on the crisis. The set-back has been blamed, by various commentators, on failed economic management, political corruption, risky financial practices, and nepotism: an altered vision of the Asia-Pacific, certainly.

The former arguments that an ‘Asian Way’ could offer insights into the social ills of the ‘West’ – its supposed crime, indigence, and social/moral decay – would seem, suddenly, less relevant. Similarly, the idea that Asian leaders “at least deserve a hearing on how their odd mix of formally democratic politics with a one party-state, strict (indeed authoritarian) controls on freedom of expression and public behaviour, and small, anti-welfare and pro-business government, managed to produce what it did”² may also seem

² “Asian Values,” *Economist* 331 no.7865 (May 28-June 3, 1994) 13.

obsolete in many circles. In short, allegations that an ‘Asian Way’ is a superior path cannot carry the same weight as they did during the early 1990s. Consider Dupont’s synopsis of the debate:

...[t]he rhetoric of the Asian Way – admittedly contrived, flawed and misconceived in parts – is nevertheless a powerful expression of long-suppressed Asian feelings of inferiority and resentment flowing from centuries of colonisation by Western powers. It also reflects the understandable pride and self-confidence many Asians feel as a result of their region’s resurgence and obvious progress.³

Since the assumptions regarding resurgence and progress have been fundamentally called into question, the conventional Asian Way arguments appear all the more inadequate to explain current realities.

Likewise, it is also uncertain whether the Asian Way debate can continue on new, and genuinely less stereotyped, terms. As a chapter closes on the idea of the Asian Miracle, and with it the current version of the Asian Way debate, now is a crucial time to learn lessons from the debate as it has existed thus far; if it continues in another form, its content will necessarily be different, and may very well employ a new set of distortions and clashes. A review of the Asian Way debate’s past may provide key lessons for its future, and how observers can better react to political and economic developments.

Guidelines for Future Research

Critiques of Asian Way perspectives have frequently attacked them as nothing more than a smokescreen of repressive governments, and the Asian Way debate has been

frequently discredited and dismissed. However, for a debate without merit, it has been persistent, pervasive, and has had the most intriguing connections with global-level discussions. Its 1990s themes of East-West division, along cultural lines, have been deeply embedded in a post-cold war search for paradigms and ground rules, exemplified by observers like Huntington. As well, we must keep in mind that this debate was important enough to have been featured extensively in influential journals like *Foreign Affairs*, invoked repeatedly in pivotal policy discussions like US trade policy towards China, associated frequently with powerful world leaders, and contested heatedly throughout a range of scholarly topics, such as the use and abuse of the very idea of an 'Asian' identity. It has also, arguably, formed one of the most significant and sustained challenges to the post-WWII international human rights regime. It has overlapped with questions of policy and practice, as evidenced by the words of United Nations Chief Arms inspector and former Ambassador to Thailand, Richard Butler, who describes the importance of cultural modes of communication in negotiations with Thai officials.⁴ It has had significant impact in academic circles; as Woo-Cummings states, "a whole phalanx of Western political scientists" helped in "pulling the concept of 'culture' from the dustbin of history" and using it to explain phenomena like economic growth in East Asia.⁵ And, as upcoming discussion with show, the conditions may well exist for a renewed 'Asian values' debate in the future. So, while the political motivations of regional state actors must indeed be acknowledged, there remain more complex problems with Asian Way

³ Dupont, 27.

⁴ According to Butler, in Thailand, it is counter-productive to be angry or confrontational in discussions: rather, one's main point should be made with dignity, in a soft tone, and the quietest words will make the most profound impact. This, claims Butler, is "the opposite of what we in the West are taught." Kevin Gray, "Getting to Yes," *New York Times Magazine* (March 28, 1999) 22.

perspectives, as shown in the previous chapters. Instead of *dismissing* Asian Way perspectives as meaningless, we need to use these issues and problems to establish new ways of approaching issues of diversity, cultures, and change in the region. A revised, less stereotyped approach to the debates' themes is critical, given its past influence, and the potential ramifications of future misapprehensions.

The necessity, then, of developing a more complete reading of the debate, rather than a perfunctory dismissal of the idea of an 'Asian Way', must be stressed; as this conclusion will outline, this involves analytical guidelines that render a less generalized picture of the region and the related issues of cultural and social values. This task is imperative: the misreading of the 'Asian' circumstances behind the 1990s crisis is part of a well-established cycle. Controversies over some manner of an 'Asian Way' are not new, and the sweeping generalizations in this debate have been an enduring feature of thinking about Asia, and the so-called South in general, in the post-colonial era and even before. It is interesting to note, for example, that previous debates on modernization in regions like Asia employed extrapolated, ahistorical models, planning a development trajectory that proved to be misguided.⁶ And indeed, this particular model persists as a way of understanding and explaining economic life in the region – East Asia, for instance, is often still assessed in terms of modernization, where Asia has experienced a belated, albeit spectacular, version of Western development⁷ -- revealing how influential and tenacious

⁵ Woo-Cummings, 414.

⁶ Examples include: S.N. Eisenstadt, "Modernization and Conditions of Sustained Growth," *World Politics* 14 (July, 1964) 576-594; Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); and David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

⁷ Mark T. Berger, "The Triumph of the East: The East Asian Miracle and Post-Cold War Capitalism," *The Rise of East Asia: Critical Visions of the Pacific Century*, Mark T. Berger and Douglas A. Borer, eds. (London: Routledge, 1997) 262.

such ideas can be. A country as distinct as Indonesia, to cite one case, is still analyzed within a modernization framework, Berger argues.⁸ He states:

Throughout the Cold War, the most influential interpretation of what has come to be regarded as the East Asian model flowed from the dominant Anglo-American discourses. These interpretations were grounded in theories of modernization which often assumed that their descriptions and prescriptions were scientific and universally applicable, but flowed from the fixed cultural/racial assumptions about progress which emerged during the colonial era and were subsumed into ethnocentric Cold War discourse on economic development.⁹

Thus, economic misunderstandings have far-reaching and crucial consequences, shaping policy and debate for decades, despite persistent and serious shortcomings in the model.

Likewise, in the political realm, entire foreign policies have been built upon erroneous assumptions about societies in the Asia-Pacific. For example, as Jespersen argues, American foreign policy towards China during the 1930s and 1940s was founded on the faulty premise that the country was becoming ever more like the 'West', democratic and cooperative, with an emergent Christian, familiar culture. This picture was advantageous for US interests – bolstering the parallel demonization of Japan during the war, among other things -- and shaped American foreign policy for some time.¹⁰ And this cycle continues: increasingly, some point to a new Cold War between China and the United States, given events such as the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by US-led NATO forces, rocky trade talks and obstacles for Beijing's entry to the WTO, and allegations of Chinese espionage by a US Special House Committee. In many cases, this

⁸ Mark T. Berger, "Post Cold War Indonesia and the Revenge of History: The Colonial Legacy, National Visions, and Global Capitalism," The Rise of East Asia.

⁹ Berger, "The Triumph of the East," 282.

is based on a caricature of China as the latest evil empire. So, if observers in a country like the United States are looking for an adversary and finding it in the mystified 'East', and if economic and political turmoil in an already heavily indebted country like Indonesia is being met with controversial structural adjustment policies, then it appears that the pattern of misapprehension remains alive and well.

The Asian Way debate was based largely on faulty pictures of the region, and we continue to draw them. Yet, this is hardly new: indeed, the concept of the 'East' as Said's Other – Asia existing, in Francois Godement's words, as a "mirror image based on the idea of Europe," or, "the East as conceived by the West"¹¹ -- is well-trodden ground. Certainly, the attention given to 'Asian' identity by regional actors themselves adds other dimensions to the controversy. But the most pressing issue is the need to end this pattern before a renewed set of stereotypes emanates from the shake-ups of the late 1990s. A new synthesis is emerging, one that no longer takes for granted the benefits of 'Asian values'. Now, we are beginning to take for granted that crony capitalism has been the real 'Asian' context and the real problem all along, for which one influential solution is a revisiting of structural adjustment and neo-liberalism.

This rising picture of 'Asia' has profound implications. Observers are asserting that the once-favoured Asian miracle development model is no longer appropriate for other societies, such as those in South Asia, because of the model's corruption and lack of

¹⁰ T. Christopher Jespersen, American Images of China 1931-1949 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Francois Godement, The New Asian Renaissance: From Colonialism to the Post-Cold War, trans. Elizabeth J. Parcell (London: Routledge, 1997) 4.

durable democratic traditions: South Asia, some have argued, can do better than this.¹² Others, like Christopher Johnstone, have pointed to the influential idea that 'Asians' brought the crisis on themselves, with "the unhealthy features of the so-called Asian model," including "close ties between business and government, corruption and nepotism, banks that have extended loans based on political connections": according to Johnstone, "Asia, mainstream US opinion believed, was suffering the consequences of 'crony capitalism'."¹³ Much was made of 'Asian' discipline, respect, and order; now, the June 1999 issue of *Third World Quarterly* puts the whole of East Asia in a special issue on the "New Politics of Corruption," alongside Mozambique, Uganda, and Mexico, and Angola. There was much talk about cultures of hard work, high savings, family closeness and education contributing to prosperity; now, economists like MIT's Paul Krugman announce on the *Jim Lehrer News Hour* and say that it was difficult to see this crisis coming, because in Asian culture, the line between what is private and what is public is not well drawn, and Westerners are not used to that.

Most of all, this emergent view of 'Asia's' faulty model has profound human effects. In the midst of the cronyism and nepotism and chaos, the IMF has put itself deeply at the heart of this crisis, with bail outs for Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea. Structural adjustment have been imposed, resulting in rising unemployment in communities in Indonesia that have already been hard hit already. These are standard IMF

¹² Moazzem Hossain, Iyanatul Islam, Reza Kibria, eds., South Asian Economic Development : Transformation, Opportunities and Challenges (London: Routledge, 1999). This is a particularly striking contrast to the Shalendra Sharma article cited in Chapter Three, since Sharma does extrapolate some potential lessons for India from the Asian model, and his hesitation arises more from the distinctiveness of India and the need to present a more detailed picture of state management in East Asia. It does not arise from the assertion that South Asia has, potentially, a superior development trajectory.

¹³ Christopher B. Johnstone, "Strained Alliance: US-Japan Diplomacy in the Asian Financial Crisis," *Survival* 41 no.2 (Summer 1999) 121-138.

policies, like cuts in social and public sector spending, without enough attention to context. International organizations like Oxfam and Human Rights Watch have expressed grave concerns about the effects of such IMF packages, arguing that they only exacerbate unemployment, poverty, social decay, and human rights violations for migrant workers.¹⁴

And, in a final, disturbing irony, there are those who point to cultural identities and frictions as central to this new cycle of 'damaged economies, damaged societies': the ethnic Chinese are scapegoats for economic hardship in Indonesia; Malaysia is hostile to Western capital and domination; there are ethnic clashes and fissure all over Indonesia, in a process of Balkanization, with Christian versus Muslim in Jakarta and West Timor and Ambon, and separatist movements in Aceh and Irian Jaya. Clearly, these clashes and cleavages are still relevant in discussions surrounding the crisis, as a set of themes and practical issues.

With this emerging hypothesis, we are in danger, once again, of replacing one simple-minded consensus with another. How can we end the cycle? Clearly, events in the Asia-Pacific, and our interpretation of the circumstances there, have undergone fundamental change in the past couple of years. It would seem that the Asian Miracle is less than miraculous, and the success of Asian success has lost a fair amount of its sheen. Not only does this present a significant time for the reassessment of any related debates about development and modernization in the Asia-Pacific, but it also introduces a specific opportunity in the case of the Asian Way debate. If our mystifications and stereotypes of Asian culture, of civilizations in the 'East' are part of an

ongoing pattern, and the fascination with 'Asian values' in the international context is shaped by this pattern, it is a crucial time to learn the lessons from the Asian Way debate in what could be its final chapter. The question, then, is this: how can we approach the region analytically to avoid such pitfalls at this important juncture?

A good starting point would be to develop guidelines for analyzing regional questions of culture and change, in light of the issues and problems arising from this thesis. Certain key points for researching 'Asia' differently flow from the previous discussions. It must be noted that many potential areas of inquiry arise from the shortcomings of the Asian Way debate, and that there is significant work to be done in terms of the 'West' as well: disaggregation of actors, for example, and the investigation of cultural traditions and biases that influence political and economic life in Europe and North America. For the purposes of this discussion, however, analytical approaches for societies in the Asia-Pacific are emphasized.

Implications for the Study of States in the Asia-Pacific

First, the Asian Way case shows that the concept of a monolithic Asian region – a region in terms of an integrated culture, society, politics or economics -- is inadequate for policy or analysis. It has been noted that if the Asia-Pacific had not existed, "it would have to be invented by policy planners and social scientists along the East-West axis" in order to create an "integrated source of boundless markets, wondrous raw materials, and

¹⁴ See, for example, "Oxfam International Briefing: The Real Crisis in East Asia," Community Aid Abroad Website, Internet, April 1998, Available: www.caa.org.au/pr/1998/equity.html.

ever expanding investments.”¹⁵ As such, the notion of an integrated Asia-Pacific region is a “discursive fantasy,” in the words of Yao Sanchou; similarly, Francois Godement states that the “words ‘Asia’ and ‘the East’ are loaded terms from a fantasy seemingly woven from a Baudelaire poem, a melody by Ravel, a short story by Somerset Maugham and a James Ivory film.”¹⁶ Yao further points out that the idea of the Asia-Pacific as a fixed entity “belittles the region’s staggering complexity, discrepant hybridity, and nomadic flux.” The Asia-Pacific, he states, “is anything to anyone”: it is the West’s newfound land of markets, source of cheap, ‘disciplined’ labour; it is a rising entity in a globalized world, confident politically and economically; it is a disaster zone, along the lines of Huntington’s clashing civilizations, where governments fall and currencies plummet; it is a Confucian area, imbued with values of hard work and family.¹⁷ Yao’s words indicate the severe shortcomings of approaching diverse regions as civilizations – and show how the Asian Way debate has overlapped with wider academic explorations of identities and cultures in ‘Asia’.

Certainly, the geographical grouping of the Asia-Pacific region may be a useful tool for certain identification purposes: distinguishing particular organizations, such as ASEAN or the Asian members of APEC, for example, or localized issues like the Spratleys or deforestation in Southeast Asia. It may also be advantageous to talk about a geographic Asia-Pacific entity in terms of particular regional meetings or agreements, such as the previously discussed Bangkok Conference and Declaration, or the Japan-South Korea fishing accords currently being renegotiated. However, assumptions about ‘Asia’

¹⁵ Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik in Yao Sanchou, “The Romance of Asian Capitalism: Geography, Desire, and Chinese Business,” *The Rise of East Asia*, 221.

¹⁶ Godement, 4.

embedded in the Asian Way debate – particularly, that states act as a common cultural front with shared values and interests, distinct from those of the ‘West’ – are deficient, and the previous chapters demonstrate that state actions and policies must be explicitly differentiated when we analyze the region. At it stands, this imperative is not being incorporated into many existing treatments of the Asia-Pacific, including analysis of the currency crisis. In spring 1999, for example, Bird and Milne were speaking of “Asian inflation” and “East Asian economies,” and saying that “in Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, an important element of the crisis was the contagion effect from Thailand.” This does not pay enough attention to the significant differentiation among these societies, and how they were affected differently by the crisis.¹⁸

Even the most cursory examination of the Asia-Pacific reveals how problematic it is to aggregate regional states: in addition to wide variations in economy, society, and political systems, there is also “tremendous diversity” in religions, ethnicities and cultures. Kenneth Christie estimates, for example, that there are at least nine types of political systems present in the sub-region of Southeast Asia:

...including an unconstitutional military dictatorship (Burma), an absolute monarchy without elections or political parties (Brunei), a one party, parliamentary democracy (Singapore), an American style Presidential democracy (the Philippines) and two communist, one party states (Vietnam and Laos) among others.

In addition, economic circumstance cover the widest possible spectrum, from a small city-state with no natural resources and a service economy, like Singapore, to the world’s

¹⁷ Yao Sanchou, 222.

¹⁸ Graham Bird and Alistaire Milne, “Miracle to Meltdown: A Pathology of the East Asian Financial Crisis.” *Third World Quarterly* 20 no.2 (April 1999) 421-437.

fourth most populated country, the highly indebted Indonesia, to the extremely poor Laos.¹⁹ Thus, just like any class of actors in the region, states must be disaggregated as a precursor to meaningful analysis of the Asia-Pacific. This helps keep in mind who is inside and outside the much-discussed “Pacific Rim”: Vietnam and Cambodia, as “peasant Asia,” in Bruce Cummings’ words, are out, as are South Korea and interior China, while the more prosperous coastal areas of China are in, as are wealthy city-states like Hong Kong and Singapore.²⁰ It would appear from this argument that some states are more “Asian” than others.

The need to form global responses to regional economic lags at the end of the 1990s, in particular, shows the importance of disaggregating states. The economic life of the Asia-Pacific must be approached in terms of individual situations; each economy in the region has its own characteristics, and is not even necessarily confined within state borders. In this regard, the concept of a general “Asian flu” is unhelpful in describing markedly diverse contexts. For example, in the case of China – with its increasing predicted growth rates but underlying structural problems, especially with state-owned enterprises and tottering banks -- economic recovery is argued by some to require technologically-intensive public spending and a more emphatic role for emergent private interests. In Japan, however, the extent of economic bureaucracy and red tape is often pointed to as a limiting factor. But in both instances, these economies have been advised

¹⁹ Kenneth Christie, “Liberal vs. Illiberal Democratization: The Case of Southeast Asia,” PROSEA Occasional Paper No. 9, Internet, Oct. 1997, Available: 140.109.14.2/~isear/publication/publication/paper9/paper9-2.htm#VI. Conclusion.

²⁰ Cummings, 402.

to increase value-added services and lessen the stress on manufacturing.²¹ Clearly, such conditions are variable from society to society: one fundamental economic issue facing Indonesia is stability; Malaysia, crises of leadership; South Korea, labour unrest and the openness of markets. In the relatively free-market Hong Kong, issues concerning the extent of mainland Chinese authority, investment, and ownership remain key. So, as argued previously, the cycle of reification of the Asian region must end if its economic problems and challenges are to be addressed. An international body like the IMF may have a “typical” set of programs for Asia – closure of weak financial institutions, cuts in public spending, reduced budget deficits, and increased interest rates to make local currencies more attractive²² – but these policies face very different circumstances in countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea.

In the same manner, the region should not be approached in terms of ‘Asian state’ policies, but rather, with attention to political commonalities and divergences among different governments. China-Taiwan relations, for example, are framed by political circumstances distinct from those of, say, Chinese-Hong Kong relations. There are certainly some tensions between Hong Kong and the mainland over questions of immigration, independence of the former British colony’s courts, and the increasing presence of Chinese economic bureaucracy. However, there is none of the persistent hostility that has endured between Beijing and Taipei over questions like the rumoured missile defense system protecting Taiwan, or the thorny issue of international diplomatic

²¹ Murray Hiebert, “Wired to Learn – Malaysian Students Pioneer On-line Education,” *Far Eastern Economic Review Interactive*, Internet, 3 Jun. 1999, Available: www.feer.com/Restricted/index_b2.html.

²² David E. Sanger and Richard W. Stevenson, “Second Guessing the Economic Doctor,” *New York Times Online*, Internet, 1 Feb. 1998, Available: www.nytimes.com/library/financial/020198imf-loans.html.

recognition. The inclusion of this diversity is key for analysis, since state policies may also vary across issue-areas. The governments of Malaysia and the Philippines, for instance, may have common membership in organizations such as ASEAN, but they have disagreed on the entry of Myanmar to the group, and Filipino president Joseph Estrada has been an outspoken critic of the arrest of former Malaysian deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. Likewise, changing administrations can take various stances on questions such as 'Asian values'. It has been argued, for example, that advisors to former President B.J. Habibie in Indonesia were critical of the entire 'Singapore School' and Asian values in general, as were those close to Ibrahim in Malaysia.²³

Another point that must be central to analysis of the region is the activity within and across state borders. States are necessary actors to examine, and declarations concerning the obsolescence of states in the post-Cold War world were premature, but this does not diminish the importance of intranational or transnational ties. Even within a single country, internal groups or regions can have very different policies and circumstances, further challenging the notion of a monolithic Asian civilization. An immense nation like China has well-established internal divisions among its provinces and regions, and evidence points to dramatic diversity in economic and political ties during the 1990s. This encompasses an increasing tendency for provinces to develop individual trade and foreign policies, highlighting an auxiliary layer of IR and IPE orientations, and providing the means to "recast [our] image of China's political economy."²⁴ Specifically,

²³ "Asian Values Revisited: What Would Confucius Say Now?," *Economist Online*, Internet, 25 July 1998, Available: www.economist.com/editorial/freeforall/19980725/as5207.html.

²⁴ Brantly Womack and Guangzhi Zhao, "The Many Worlds of China's Provinces: Foreign Trade and Diversification," *China Deconstructs: Politics, Trade and Regionalism*, David S.G. Goodman and Gerald Segal, eds. (London: Routledge, 1994) 133.

the trading patterns of individual Chinese provinces with other nations vary greatly in terms of openness, exports, and number of international partners. In this case, it is generally held that the coastal provinces in the South are more poised to take advantage of international, semi-autonomous action – also contributing to a more internationalist, cosmopolitan culture. This illustrates how analysis of ‘Asia’ focussing almost exclusively on traditional states cannot sufficiently address the range of forces and actors at work.

When analyzing the region, state policies must also be differentiated in terms of varying periods in a community’s history. This speaks to the shortcomings of including a society like China in a broad ‘Asian’ economic policy approach, since Chinese economic approaches have shifted with the political and ideological landscape. With increasing political and economic liberalization, a prime example of change is the growing profile of a burgeoning Chinese middle class and expanding private enterprise in urban centres. The mixed liberalized/state-managed approach is just one of many points on a continuous spectrum of political thought – quite distinct from the policies initially behind the liberalizations of the Hundred Flowers Campaign of the 1950s, for example.

As a final note, it must be recognized that these points apply to policy matters, as well as to analytical ones: Little advises a cautious and critical approach towards policy proposals involving complex regional issues like human rights conditionalities, given the fragmented and diffused character of any “Asian perspective.”²⁵

In sum, the case of the Asian Way debate demonstrates that ideas about ‘Asia’ must account for state differences, which need to be explicitly incorporated into analysis.

²⁵ Specifically, Little highlights the unclear relationship between human rights and economic development in this diverse region, stating that issues such as Most Favoured Nation status for China must be handled

So, while the complex roles of states within the Asian Way debate is an area demanding further inquiry, a more specific, case-by-case examination is key to challenging generalizations at the heart of the debate. Ultimately, the characterization of 'Asian Way' states as united in a common motivation to use culture as a despotic tool is as broad and stereotypical as the notion of 'Asian values' itself. It sheds no light on the range of processes and actors involved in the debate: if the debate is closed with such a broad statement – Asian governments are corrupt and play the culture card as a way of repressing dissent – then the imperative to closely examine 'Asian Way' assertions is minimized. There is less of a need to, say, examine the arguments about the Confucian state, and less of an emphasis on the subsequent lessons these arguments can provide, in terms of social change and mixed individualist-communitarian themes in a society. The Asian despotism critique offers few solutions, other than the ignoring or the dissolution of Asia-Pacific regimes, which become the beginning, middle, and end of the Asian Way debate; without them, we must assume, any talk of cultural approaches to human rights or democracy would surely collapse. This critique also suggests, in some cases, a stereotype as potentially harmful as an 'Asian Way', and one that is perhaps not so different: Asian governments are always eager to play the repressive, despotic role, and inclined to use culture as a smokescreen, invoking Orientalist images of the exotic, tyrannical kingdoms to the East. The critique also ignores any other actors or commentators who are exploring the role of culture in a society's political and economic life, because Asian Way perspectives become the exclusive playthings of repressive governments. As necessary as it is to highlight the potential political uses of the debate, to summon them as the main

carefully, since the human rights situation could worsen with increased trade and industrialization. Little,

source of criticism against 'Asian values' is singularly unsatisfying. Instead of asserting that Indonesia, China, and Singapore constitute an autocratic, relativist Asian block, we need to examine policy differences and policy-makers, as well as political processes of change. If state motives continue to be presented in simplified terms, then a context of inevitable clash and facile government motives can continue.

Implications for the Study of Society in the Asia-Pacific

Second, the Asian Way debate shows that we must listen to society as well as the state, while keeping in mind that 'Asian society' is no more of a single-interest group than 'Asian states'. It is inaccurate to suggest that non-state actors comprise a cohesive and single-minded anti-'Asian Way' block, even though the debate has tended to present NGOs and other non-state actors as the challengers of repressive states and the source of legitimate viewpoints. Certainly, various NGOs in the Asia-Pacific have been involved with conferences and declarations opposing Asian Way perspectives: one example was the Asia Pacific NGO Human Rights Congress, held in New Delhi in December 1996, including 117 participants. This forum was aimed at realizing the principles of the 1993 Bangkok NGO Declaration on Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, which encompassed the universality of human rights and opposed "the often cited argument by governments that cultural specificity precludes the universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms."²⁶ However, despite the tendency to use the work of

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²⁶ "Introduction: The Asia Pacific NGO Human Rights Congress," Human Rights Alliance Website, Internet, 6-8 Dec. 1996, Available: www.hr-alliance.org/aphr-ft/delhi.htm#intro.

NGOs or the concept of civil society as a wholesale panacea for social injustice, there are a multitude of groups and interests in 'Asian society', and it is misleading to propose that all organizations are unified against a state-controlled, pro-Asian values campaign. The issues raised in this thesis, particularly in Chapters Four and Five, indicate that future analysis must reconsider the roles of non-state actors, and challenge the highly problematic assumption that they act as a common front.

NGOs are not easily classified in terms of their goals or actions; nor are they contained within the borders of the 'Asian' region. In some cases, they may have interests that run counter to those of social justice groups at forums like the New Delhi Congress. Analysis of regional non-state actors must identify such varied interests: if the authentic measure of cultures in the region is supposed to be an entity called 'the people', or civil society, then who precisely are we speaking of? The Asia Foundation, for example, is a non-profit NGO, but it is based in San Francisco and promotes both American and Asia-Pacific concerns; it cites an interest in increased peace, gender equality, and good governance, but also in stable, open markets, prosperity, and NGO-Business partnerships. Furthermore, some of its funding comes from government agencies in the United States and Asia, and its grantees include political and economic elites throughout the Asia-Pacific. This is just one example, but there are many others, from the Washington-based Counterpart International – with aims of self-sufficiency and sustainable development in countries like Cambodia and Vietnam, but with a self-proclaimed interest in NGO partnership development, frequently involving regional governments – to the South Korea-based Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific – an NGO supporting the regional democratic process but cultivating strong connections with politicians and

statesmen. It is not so easy to identify such actors with a superficial, anti-‘Asian Way’ group; non-state actors are never so clear-cut in their identities, goals or actions, and cannot readily fit into clashes between East and West or state and society.

An examination of specific groups can reveal how questionable it is to classify groups together as anti-‘Asian values’ and part of a united, pro-universalist camp. In the Philippines, Karapatan, the Alliance for the Advancement of People’s Rights, is one organization shaped by the previously discussed split in the Filipino NGO community. It declares itself militant and in favour of the masses, while critical of state-run “fascism” and the “bondage” imposed by capitalist organizations like the WTO and the IMF.²⁷ The group also identifies itself with pro-nationalist and pro-sovereignist causes that make reference to specific Filipino and regional structural injustices. Other groups are, by virtue of their constituency, very much centred on cultural identities and values, expressed according to their own goals, such as Malaysia’s non-profit group, Sarawak People’s Campaign, aimed at preserving the traditional environment and culture of Borneo’s Penan indigenous community. In this regard, the Asian debate shows that non-state actors require more specific attention before they are labelled as a cohesive, anti-state force. At the very least, when terms such as “the people,” “civil society,” “non-state actors,” or “NGOs” are used to demonstrate such broad anti-government or anti-Asian values perspectives, an explicit and careful description, even classification, of these groups should be employed.

Future analysis must also keep in mind that the separation between state and society in discussions of ‘Asian values’ is quite artificial. Not only is this demonstrated

through the specific cases of NGOs cited above – organizations like the Asia Foundation that have links with the state on a variety of informal levels, for example – but also in specific societies. As Garon argues, in a country like Japan, ideas like communitarianism and social order are not necessarily imposed by the state. Rather, Japanese social management is a complex negotiation between the state and its citizens: citizens cooperate with the government in areas like welfare and women’s participation to create a set of collective values. Indeed, argues the author, non-state actors frequently have a pivotal role in the process – religious groups, for example, may encourage a collective philosophy that coincides with their interests in order to downplay competing denominations, or women’s groups may actively contribute to ideas concerning “appropriate” roles for Japanese women. Thus, even though ‘the people’ are often invoked as the source of legitimate, non-Asian Way beliefs, this case suggests that the Japanese people are not necessarily victims or opponents of state philosophy; rather, they may have been deliberately drawn into, and participated freely in, decision-making about community ideals.²⁸ This is precisely the type of overlap and exchange we must stress when establishing how state and society interact in the Asian Way case.

Given all these factors, a key guideline for establishing ideas about ‘Asia’, then, must be specificity when discussing non-state actors. The interests, constituencies, and partnerships of an organization are all aspects that can help distinguish actors, in order to avoid the generalizations so prevalent in the Asian Way debate. This is a particularly dramatic lesson provided by the ‘Asian values’ debacle: throughout the debate, states have

²⁷ “Karapatan, Alliance for the Advancement of People’s Rights,” CyberDyaryo, Internet, 28 May 1998. Available: www.codewan.com.ph/CyberDyaryo/archives/profile017.htm.

been condemned for ignoring, and in some cases, silencing, alternative viewpoints and interests, but ironically, the assumption that non-state actors are a unified, anti-Asian Way force can be equally distorting.

The Process of Change in the 'Asian Way' Case

Third, the Asian Way debate demonstrates the need to pay explicit attention to social change and continuity in analysis of the Asia-Pacific. A static view of social values or traditions plays into a framework of clash and ancient animosities, and obscures some of the most critical developments states and societies face as the century draws to a close. The impact of ongoing liberalizations in societies in the region, and their encouragement of individualism in economic and political spheres, needs to be emphasized. In order to understand such developments as the shifting balance between individualism and communitarianism in supposedly Confucian and collectivist societies, change and transformation require emphasis. As well, since the Asian Way debate examined in this thesis focuses on 'Western' observers – American observers in particular – the role of ongoing changes in the global environment are paramount. That is, the casting of China as a rising enemy is framed by the search for global threats, outlined in Chapter One, and unfolding factors like the related military build-up occurring in the US, with the Clinton administration initiating large Pentagon spending hikes and increasing foreign military aid.

As Chapter Two demonstrated, social change modifies established traditions, making it difficult to speak of static or discrete values in any society. This is not only true

²⁸ Sheldon Garon, Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life (Princeton: Princeton University

of Confucian traditions, so central to articulations of Asian Way perspectives; examples of shifting and melding customs in East and Southeast Asia are found in many contemporary examples, encompassing a range of traditions. Both American novelist Alan Brown and Japanese novelist Banana Yoshimoto talk of contemporary Japan: the young people who watch game shows, wear American jeans, and listen to American alternative bands. In Amy Tan's "The Joy Luck Club," first- and second-generation Chinese women attempt to survive the blending of traditions from their parents' upbringing and their own lives in America. In the Chinese movie, "Eat Man Drink Woman," the youngest daughter of a conservative father works in an American fast food restaurant; Spike Lee's film "Do the Right Thing" features, among other things, tensions between African-American residents and Korean shopkeepers in a New York neighbourhood. Gaining in popularity in North America is Japanese anime, a form of animation combining elements of Disney-style cartoons with traditional Japanese storytelling. In Manila, it is fashionable for young people to visit the five floor Shoemart Mega-Mall, replete with donut shops and hamburger joints; many young people I met in the Philippines, far removed from the politicized NGO community, seemed largely untroubled by combining local customs for marriage or holidays and shopping for American rap music.²⁹

Press, 1997).

²⁹ It can be illuminating to look to fiction or music as a reflector of social or political ideas; on the specific topic of East-West analysis, for example, Edward Said, among others, has explored the role of literature in the formation of perceptions. In Said's Culture and Imperialism, the author explores books and culture which reflected and encouraged imperialism at the turn of the century, as well as the works which challenged it. Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Knopf, 1993). See also Fouad Ajami, "The Summoning," *Foreign Affairs* 72 no.4 (September/October 1993) 2-9. Elsewhere,

In this regard, a tradition such as Confucianism cannot be seen as immutable, lending its communitarian values to a ready-made 'Asian' civilization. Not only does this viewpoint disregard vast philosophical and religious diversity in supposedly Confucian societies, but it overlooks other forces at work: underlying changes argued by some to be a source of potential instability, and a threat to national and regional unity – despite an 'Asian Way' emphasis on communitarian values or social harmony. Martin Farrell speaks of "fault lines" in Chinese society resulting from its accelerated development: the prosperous South coast could break away; there is widespread and rebellious resentment against Beijing bureaucracy; there are growing groups of disenfranchised in urban areas, involved in drugs and crime; there even exists the possibility of unrest among alienated peasants drifting towards crowded cities and unemployed workers.³⁰ In a case like China, then -- a prime example of a society labelled 'Confucian' in the Asian Way debate -- we must consider not only the impact of ongoing liberalization policies, but how these policies are linked to ongoing developments in the larger post-Cold War global community.

The role of social change is central to many issues. Institutions that are said to support Asian Way perspectives may have been transformed, as in the case of the purportedly Asian emphasis on the family. Increasing liberalization, for instance, has posed a challenge to family structure in China, in light of heightened industrialization, mobility, and urbanization; given these developments, any examination of family life will have to clarify differences between patterns in cities and in the countryside. In addition to social institutions, policies must be examined: Beijing's ongoing family planning measures in the post-1949 era could help explain how the idea of family values is subject to

³⁰ Martin F. Farrell, "Global Power Or East Asian Tinderbox?: China in the Post-Deng, Post-Cold War

change.³¹ Moreover, this guideline applies to a range of traditions, beyond the Asian Way stress on Confucian philosophy: the changing role of state-dominated Buddhism in Thailand is a good example. Official control of Buddhism – through the government-regulated *sampha*, or Buddhist monkhood – was an instance of religious philosophy acting as a source of legitimization for state authority. However, this situation has changed dramatically in the 1990s. Not only is the contemporary Thai state seemingly less interested in regulating the institution, but there is increasingly open media criticism of corruption in the *sampha*; as well, nascent fringe Buddhist movements have flourished, resulting in “a flowering of religious expression at the margins of state control.”³² This has given rise to new Buddhist movements like Dhammakaya, aimed at Thailand’s newly affluent middle class, described as reeling and insecure after the country’s economic crisis. Such a class, it is argued, want to enjoy a consumer-driven lifestyle along with traditional spirituality: to make money from Monday to Friday, and pray on the weekends at a modern, well-equipped temple. Whether these aims are desirable or not, Suwanna Satha-Anand refers to this as an emerging way “to transform Buddhism to make it comfortable with both capitalism and consumer culture.”³³

As well, guidelines for including social change into analyses can be extended to other geographic areas or case-studies. Commentators on societies such as India, for example, have emphasized the idea of culture as neither homogenous nor static in its

Era,” *The Rise of East Asia*, 64, 70-74.

³¹ Myron L. Cohen, “Family Organization in China,” *Columbia Project on Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences*, Myron L. Cohen, ed. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1992).

³² Peter A. Jackson, “Withering Centre, Flourishing Margins: Buddhism’s Changing Political Roles,” *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*, Kevin Hewison, ed. (London: Routledge, 1997) 75.

³³ “Most Serene of Sects Creates Uproar in Buddhism,” *New York Times*, Internet, 13 August 1999, Available://www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/081399thailand-sect.html.

present global context. Rather, as one author argues, India's cultures are vastly diversified – not surprising since it is the home of one-sixth of the world's population. The images received by the rest of the world -- featuring India as a homogenous community, home to teeming, poor masses – do not begin to represent Indian life. Moreover, values are dynamic, because traditions change as society changes. For example, the custom of arranged marriages is declining among certain classes, since India's economic profile has changed, and women may no longer need the security of a husband. It is said that India is witnessing an overlap and convergence of cultures, one aspect of which is the meeting of Indian and American influences (the "Big Mac debate"), a phenomenon which has its supporters and detractors.³⁴

Without explicit attention to a context of social changes, pivotal issues and themes in the Asian Way debate cannot be adequately addressed. In this sense, the Asian Way debate leaves us with a compelling set of case-studies, stressing the ongoing transformations in and across societies. This contributes to a fundamental challenging of clash perspectives – by refuting static, deterministic concepts such as a dichotomy between individualist and communitarian civilizations – and shows that analysis need not be filtered through concepts of unchanging, inevitable rivalries.

³⁴ Gita Mehta, Snakes and Ladders: Glimpses of Modern India (New York: Doubleday, 1998). Mehta is also the author of the 1994 book, Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East, which recounts the troubles

Cultural Approaches and the 'Asian Way' Case

A fourth guideline for research raised by the Asian Way debate concerns the role of cultures. One of the chief tensions throughout the debate has been treatment of cultures: given the conspicuous shortcomings of Asian Way perspectives, there may be a temptation to abandon the concept of culture as helpful for analysis. After all, critiques of 'Asian values' have highlighted, time and time again, the manipulation of cultures for authoritarian state goals. Certainly, Asian Way perspectives demonstrate the many pitfalls of connecting political and economic life with social values or cultures, especially when those cultures are painted in a deterministic fashion. In addition, an enduring lesson of the Asian Way debate is the deficiency of cultural stereotypes, and the related drawbacks to portrayals of artificial clashes between societies: China versus the United States, for example, or the West versus Islam, in a Huntington-like manner. Whether it is an Orientalism that may assert power over 'Eastern' societies, or a reverse Orientalism which proposes a superior set of 'Eastern' values, this framework of cultural clash obscures a deeper understanding of, say, processes of development, or state policies, as argued throughout this thesis. So, given these potential problems, it is understandable that questions of cultures or values become uncertain and uneasy territory.

However, despite the hazards associated with discussions of cultures, and despite genuine abuses of cultural relativism – what Rhoda Howard has referred to as the “cultural absolutist perspective,” in which culture is an absolute social value superseding other

brought to a society like India when outsiders become fascinated by its mystical or spiritual culture – the results being a diminishing of tradition and the introduction of new social problems.

norms³⁵ -- we must not discard altogether the potential relevance of social values or cultural explanations. Unquestionably, the need to consider social values, traditions, or cultures, and the imperative not to stereotype them, provide a constant challenge. But if we hope to understand the issues and controversies arising from the Asian Way debate, then the potential role of cultures to shape politics or economics cannot be discounted; if such factors are eliminated, an incomplete picture emerges, stripped of details that profoundly affect people's lives. So, the task is to develop ways of looking at cultures that do not appeal to ideas of static, inevitable clash or glib stereotypes.

It must be kept in mind that in a global sense, we are seeing cultural identities as an increasingly legitimate tool of international inquiry, and hence, the task of finding more constructive approaches is all the more imperative. As Sashi Tharoor states, "the notion that we live in a period of ethnic clash has become commonplace, even though there is plenty of evidence to reject it." Misused images and symbols of nationalism, invented and reinvented, are still potent and can serve to mobilize action even when the original problem has nothing to do with ethnicity. Even the language of human rights is used to promote ethnic causes and separatism, argues Tharoor: ethnic identities are seen as a way of increasing socio-economic advancement of an oppressed group, because they could gain power over wealth and resources.³⁶ This legitimacy of cultural clash is demonstrated by such trends as the attempt to establish international norms for dealing with ethnic conflicts. James Terry speaks to the need to find legal and policy rules within NATO for dealing with ethnic violence. "Ethnic violence in Europe is not new," he asserts, but

³⁵ Rhoda E. Howard, "Occidentalism, Human Rights, and the Obligations of Western Scholars," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 29 no.1 (1995) 112.

³⁶ Sashi Tharoor, "The Future of Civil Conflict," *World Policy Journal* XVI, no.1 (Spring 1999) 1-18.

“[w]hat is new is the willingness and capability of the international community to address ethnic conflict in a timely manner.” This is necessary in cases like Yugoslavia, because “Balkans history is rich and complex, and the centuries old tradition of ethnic strife in Kosovo is no exception.”³⁷ Moreover, such cultural concerns are legitimate areas of publicly policy debate. In the 1999 Congress debate on extending normal trade relations to China, Texas Republican Bill Archer, Chair of Ways and Means Committee and a supporter of normal trade relations, remarked that the most valuable American export to China is American ideals.

In one sense, a revised discussion of cultures flows from the previous point: the relationship between cultures and ongoing change, in its local and global contexts, must be considered. The fluidity of borders in today’s world must be included as a crucial component of any analysis of cultures or traditions, as the aforementioned examples of art and literature, reflecting current exchanges and overlaps, demonstrate. So, a newspaper article may refer to young Iranians as being trapped in a clash of cultures, and confrontation between rival civilizations may be forecast as a potential global menace; however, the incorporation of cultural interchange into analysis provides a principal challenge to notions of self-contained cultural blocks on a collision course. Such an inclusion not only makes space for a more in-depth analysis of particular beliefs or customs, but it also helps discourage a mystified picture of competing ‘civilizations’.

More specifically, the shortcomings of the Asian Way debate show that cultures must be underlined as fluid and dynamic – not simply a variation of Confucianism that is portrayed as an unchanging inheritance from centuries before. It has been argued, for

³⁷ James P. Terry, “Response to Ethnic Violence: The Kosovo Model,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs* VI

example, that the idea of ‘Chineseness’ is broad and changeable, encompassing issues of language, history, politics, and geography; thus, people will select a Chinese identity based on different internal cleavages and personal interests within their state. This echoes the words of anthropologist Nigel Harris: “culture is not some external straightjacket, but rather multiple suits of clothes, some of which we can and do discard because they impede our movements.”³⁸

The aim, then, is to incorporate the exchange and dynamics of cultures, in order to add to the richness of explanation, not to diminish it. How should we approach this in practical terms? Gayatri Spivak argues that it is possible to have a “strategic use of positive essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest,”³⁹ and to use specific images of certain cultures to disrupt a mainstream discourse that excludes them, while acknowledging differences within cultures. To accomplish this, specific case studies involving practices that “exhibit sufficient commonalty to permit generalizations in relation to other traditions”⁴⁰ offer the most promise. For example, there is much work to be done regarding the question of environmental activism in areas like Southeast Asia, affected by transnational problems like pollution, over-fishing, and deforestation – is environmental activism culturally neutral, or are there any cultural factors that could shape action? It has

no.1 (Winter/Spring 1999) 233-234.

³⁸ Nigel Harris in Richard E. Rubenstein and Jarle Crocker, “Challenging Huntington,” *Foreign Policy* no.96 (Fall 1994) 118.

³⁹ Lisa Lowe makes use of Gayatri Spivak’s concept of strategic essentialism, from Spivak’s 1988 book, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Lisa Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences,” *Diaspora* (Spring 1991) 39.

⁴⁰ This phrase is used by Virginia Leary to explain how countries as different as the United States and Canada could be grouped into the same human rights category, ‘the West’. Leary states the a Western view of human rights is hardly monolithic, but also suggests that certain traditions have more in common with each other than with other traditions. Virginia A. Leary, “The Effect of Western Perspectives on International Human Rights,” Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im and Francis M. Deng, eds. *Human Rights in Africa: Cross Cultural Perspectives* (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1990).

been proposed by Clad and Siy that in the environmental issue-area, there is “a broad spread of Southeast Asian constituencies to emerge, urban and rural, traditional and cosmopolitan.” It is further argued that such activism cannot be seen as identical to, or a reproduction of, “Western environmentalism.” Rather, the varying pro-environment activities reflect specific circumstances in particular societies, such as certain eco-resistant political cultures of patronage, or a reaction of local NGOs against ‘Western’, foreign advocacy.⁴¹

Such an examination of specific problems and issues speaks to Patten’s complaint that “claims about Asianness and the Asian way, and about the contrasts between Asia and other societies, are customarily rhetorical and anecdotal.” Moreover, “not very much has been done to establish with any modest degree of social science measurement exactly what the differences may be.”⁴² While many of the pertinent issues resist efforts at “social science measurement,” there is undoubtedly a need to take the controversial questions flowing from the Asian Way debate beyond their rhetorical level. On a case-by-case basis, then, we can re-examine concepts associated with the debate, such as political and social freedoms, and how they have been shaped by local contexts.⁴³ As Chapter Four showed, Filipino activists and groups provide varied examples of actors framing their political and social rights in terms of their particular cultures. Karapatan, to cite one

⁴¹ James Clad and Aurora Medina Siy, “The Emergence of Ecological Issues in Southeast Asia,” *Southeast Asia in the New World Order: The Political Economy of a Dynamic Region*, David Wurfel and Bruce Burton, eds. (London: Macmillan, 1996) 70. Interestingly, the authors indicate that the Asian Way debate may have helped encourage environmental action by Southeast Asian governments. While “Asian divergences from Western values” are dismissed as “elegant elaborations,” it is suggested that government statements against ecologically destructive foreign firms undermining ‘Asian’ sovereignty have contributed to an atmosphere of progress. The authors see this as part of an increasing – if incrementally increasing – state commitment to environmental protection and attention to local complaints.

⁴² Patten, *East and West*, 143.

previously discussed group, defines its values and its goals in part through a Filipino culture threatened by capitalist exploitation and polluted by ‘Western’ interests. Some indigenous groups in Luzon spoke of maintaining their culture – their traditional forms of dress, customs for marriage and healing, and family-community structures – especially in the face of American foods, music, and television programs. These groups’ attention to their culture and community cannot be examined in the same light as that of a state leader like Kishore Mahbubani, giving an interview with *Foreign Affairs*. In the latter case, specific statements, interviews, or speeches are useful in exploring how cultures are defined.

In this area, pressing cases flowing from the Asian Way debate also include pivotal issues in a globalizing economy. As Chapter Three indicated, a significant drawback to the argument that ‘Asian’ success was truly successful has been ecological degradation caused by rapid economic development. This remains one of the most serious issues when debating the so-called Asian miracle, and one case where cultural stereotypes must be challenged by more detailed analysis. Often associated with ‘Asian’ cultures – indeed, with many non-‘Western’ cultures in general – is a special relationship with and respect for nature, supposedly lost in the Western process of rational industrialization and secularization. However, studies like those of Bruun or Boomgaard draw specific examples from these sweeping claims based on a common regional culture. Bruun explores how the concept of *fengshui* – “a system of statements on the man-nature relationship in an environment of holistic thought” – has social uses in Chinese languages, which feed into particular attitudes and beliefs. Not only has *fengshui* language produced

⁴³ See Anthony Reid and David Kelly, Asian Freedoms: The Idea of Freedom in East and Southeast Asia.

metaphors for expressing hierarchy and images of social success, but this language of nature has also been important to expressions of deference and respect. The author states that through *fengshui*, Chinese speech has “allow[ed] strong anti-authoritarian political statements to be dressed up in a metaphorical language.”⁴⁴ Such individual cases can help us to evaluate an influential stereotype – that Asians, for example, are more spiritual, community-minded, and attuned to nature than Westerners – by applying it to a specific community’s beliefs. Boomgaard, as well, examines the assumption that there was a cultural respect for nature and trees during a particular period in Javanese history.⁴⁵ From myths and folklore, he concludes that respect for the environment and tree-spirits did indeed give some degree of protection to forests in the 19th and 20th centuries, but it was not all-encompassing. While deforestation was certainly stepped up by the Dutch colonists, specific forests were heavily traded by the Javanese themselves. It is only with this more detailed information that we can question over-simplified stereotypes, and clarify the issues and forces surrounding ecological destruction.

Given such developments, we discard cultural elements at great risk. These are ongoing concerns, as previously mentioned points show: Asia-Pacific societies are being framed as damaged, broken, and corrupt, and a large element of the picture is rooted in cultural factors, with themes like the Balkanization of Indonesia. And indeed, entire research projects have been built around the importance of specifying cultural factors in societies in the area, such as the Asia-Pacific Centre for Human Rights and the Prevention

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴⁴ Ole Bruun, “*Fengshui* and the Chinese Perception of Nature,” *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*, Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland, eds. (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995) 173.

⁴⁵ Peter Boomgaard, “Sacred Trees and Haunted Forests in Indonesia: Particularly Java, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*.

of Ethnic Conflict, a legal research centre at Murdoch University in Perth, Australia; this centre attempts to understand the connections between human rights and ethnic conflicts in Asia-Pacific states.

Ultimately, this approach can help accommodate different viewpoints on and expressions of cultural values – and can also feed into Amartya Sen’s recommendation for a deeper, more meaningful exploration of individual texts or beliefs in the Asia-Pacific region, as a way of shedding light on actual cultural practices behind the Asian Way debate. Furthermore, such elucidations may mean that this crossroads in the Asian Way debate could lead to a more fruitful and meaningful discussion, instead of establishing yet another set of sweeping stereotypes. This is a necessary step for ending clash perspectives, pitting ‘Asian’ against ‘Western’ in a cultural war – a war that only serves what Berger calls “cultural/racial discourses,” and casts doubt on any possible “East-West synthesis.”⁴⁶

Globalization and the Lessons of the Asian Way Debate

A fifth and final guideline for approaching research in the Asia-Pacific involves the context of globalization for the Asian Way debate. As argued throughout this thesis, the global context for discussions of case studies is crucial. International factors must be seen as interacting with regional and national ones, and hence, the Asia-Pacific should not be framed as self-contained and cut off from the world. For example, no matter how deep the current economic or political problems are in certain countries, international influences

⁴⁶ Thomas Berger, “A New East-West Synthesis?” *Alternatives* 23 no.1 (January-March 1998) 17.

such as trade and business will only penetrate ever deeper into countries like China, Indonesia, and Thailand. This thesis has argued that Asian Way literature is a subset of a more general, global clash literature.

There are those who portray globalization and clash as opposites on a spectrum. When the *National Interest* ran a ten-year anniversary section on Francis Fukuyama's original "End of History" article, the author reiterated that nothing significant has changed, and the only option is still liberal democracy and a market economy. Economic development still leads to Western values. This vision of a global set of political values and a globally integrated market is a far superior alternative, argues Fukuyama, to regional cultural differences at odds with the liberalized West: there is no alternative to liberal democracy even for "culturally distinctive countries in Asia."⁴⁷ Here, Fukuyama's argument emphasizes that a globalizing (and largely Western) economic and political system is the counter to cultural blocs. Others still anticipate the benefits of a globalizing world: the 1999 UNDP Report, Globalization with a Human Face, argues that globalization could solve many problems of conflict and poverty, if accompanied by strong governance and organization.⁴⁸

Admittedly, in one sense, ongoing processes of globalization may help reinforce the notion of exchange and overlap in an international context, belying the notion of separate, clashing civilizations. However, analysis of the Asia-Pacific must *not* establish processes of globalization as the antidote to frameworks of clash. Rather, a more interdependent global economic and political setting provides one possible set of factors,

⁴⁷ Francis Fukuyama, "Second Thoughts," *National Interest* no.56 (Summer 1999) 22.

⁴⁸ United Nations Development Program, Human Development Report 1999 (London: Oxford University Press, 1999).

positive and negative, that challenge the enduring notion of clashing civilizations. For instance, given the integrative forces of globalization processes, policy-makers in countries like the US may tend to frame economic developments in terms of, “what is good for Japan can ultimately be good for America” -- as evidenced by US President Clinton’s November 1998 statements in Tokyo, when he spoke of troubled regional economies. The instability or problems of one society, it would seem, have potentially grave consequences for others, making the concept of clash seem more remote. To take another page from recent Sino-American relations, the concern of some US legislators at missing the inviting promise of China as a vast ally, with its markets, resources, and labour, is a mitigating factor in bumpy bilateral relations and the labelling of China as an overarching enemy. Some argue for engagement and cooperation with China in order to serve US economic interests and, at least rhetorically, human rights and social justice. So, the pressures of globalization have been one alleviating element amongst emerging themes of Chinese-American clash.

But this appeal to globalization, with its concomitant positive/negative interdependence of societies, is insufficient to mount a genuine critique of clashing civilizations. As such, analysis should not depend of processes of globalization as an counter-balance to clash. First, themes clash and globalization are not distinct, and can involve significant overlap; as Chapter One argued, authors like Barber point to globalization as a force identified with “Westernization” and American commercial forces invading the world. This is also reminiscent of assertions by Vincent Cable and Alan Dupont, referred to in Chapter Two, that globalization may threaten *all* traditional values, no matter how benign or highly-prized. As well, globalization processes have been

portrayed as encouraging nationalist and particularist reassertions: in many cases, movements around issues such as ecology, women, or debt have been encouraged by the environmental and social pressures of globalizations -- as the Taiwanese environmental example in Chapter Three pointed out. As well, much has made of resurgent irredentism, emphasis on cultures/ethnicities, and nationalisms in recent years; examples like the Balkans, Central Africa, and Central Asia are often cited, as well as societies like the former Soviet Union, said to be more vulnerable in an unstable post-Cold War world to 'breakdown' and supposedly ancient animosities or identities.

Second, 'Asia' is still frequently presented as a monolithic entity when discussing forces of globalization – not surprisingly, since it might be convenient for certain policy-makers in Europe and North America if there were in fact a single 'Asian Way' or a monolithic Asian region in the post-Cold War world. The United States, for example, tried to encourage the concept of a stable, prosperous Asian block during the early 1990s; American President Clinton put forth a vision of a "new Pacific community" in 1993, and at the time, many leaders in the Asia-Pacific appeared to look favourably on this perceived shift in Washington's Europe-based focus.⁴⁹ However, no matter how desirable any one administration may find the idea of a cohesive, convenient Asia-Pacific community, an examination of Asian Way themes must remain wary of over-generalized frameworks, be they clash- or globalization-centered.

⁴⁹ David E. Sanger, "Clinton's Call for Pacific Harmony Meets a Chorus of Criticism From Asians," *New York Times* (May 2, 1994) A10. Indeed, this specific "new Pacific community" approach is evidence of the inadequacy of over-general analysis in the policy realm, as well as indicative of the divergent government stances in the region. Despite the fact that some governments expressed approval at a less Eurocentric focus for the US, officials in Singapore and Hong Kong were, predictably, highly critical of any resulting focus on human rights, especially threats of conditionalities on trade.

In conclusion, the themes and controversies generated by the Asian Way debate must give rise to a more specific, less stereotyped discussion, if future misunderstandings surrounding 'Asian' identity are to be avoided. The points above highlight issues overlooked when 'Asia' is presented as a coherent, mystified entity, clashing with other civilizations. In order to make progress in the global dialogues raised throughout the Asian Way debate, the idea of grand clashes must be abandoned, and factors such as diversity among actors, global interactions, and social changes must be made central to future analyses. This is important not only to the Asian Way debate; rather, it is applicable to the varied discussions – those involving Rwanda and Central Africa, India-Pakistan, and Yugoslavia and the Balkans, among others – where the idea of inevitable cultural clash is emphasized.

Undoubtedly, specific studies of texts and traditions may force us to discard many existing notions of region identity, of approaching the Asia-Pacific as a conceptual region. However, this may be a positive step. When the unique viewpoints behind the Asian Way debate come into focus, the broader regional view is less likely to be a contributor to notions of clash and confrontation between civilizations or regions, between 'East' and 'West' -- a view that only encourages destructive policies like the standardized IMF solutions to the crisis. The more we use thoughtful critiques of discussions like the Asian Way debate to challenge generalized responses to a region, the less we are able to justify a blanket response based on a long and entrenched cycle. In the end, the Asian Way may be more useful than one would think: its very shortcomings can give us the springboard for creating more effective and more detailed approaches to the societies we have continued to force into frameworks of global clash.

A Final Word: Rudyard Kipling's Fallacies

It is only natural to think in terms of the end of the Asian Way debate. The principal Asian Way themes identified and assessed here -- social, economic, and political factors such as Confucianism, development, economic prosperity, and state/society relations -- have undergone widespread change at the end of the 1990s, so an appeal to notions of a disciplined, harmonious, unified 'Asian' cultural context seems even less plausible. In particular, given the central role of sustained and ascendant 'Asian' style economic growth in the presentation of the Asia-Pacific as confident, distinct, and assiduous, the fact that the Asian Miracle is no longer sacred has dealt a fundamental blow to Asian Way perspectives. At the same time, however, it may be that this decline in the current 'Asian values' controversy is only temporary: the ending of a chapter of the Asian Way debate, but the beginning of another. If this is the case, and new circumstances create a resurgent interest in the debate's themes, we must be prepared to address the issues differently, using less stylized and distorted approaches.

Certainly, the Asia-Pacific will not be written off as a valuable ally in the global marketplace or political arena. Even if the 'Asian miracle' has a difficult time regaining its miraculous sheen, other aspects of the debate remain. As Bauer and Bell point out, many scholars in the Asia-Pacific are examining beliefs and areas of difference in their societies. And of course, the debate continues, even in the 'Western' societies now quick to brand the 'East' as a failed miracle. In his 1999 book, Confucius Lives Next Door: What Living

in the East Teaches Us About Living in the West⁵⁰, American journalist T.R. Reid expounds on the continued relevance of social values in Japan, Taiwan, China, and elsewhere in East Asia. He states that Confucian, East Asian values have promoted a low-crime, family-centred, stable community – evidenced, for the author, by his daughters' group-oriented Japanese school and its stress on rote learning, and the outcry over Tokyo youths kissing in public. For some, then, the issues of 'Asian' social and political values remain alive.

Furthermore, even as some observers have predicted the end of the regional slump of the 1990s, it is evident that the economic influence of Asia-Pacific societies remains substantial, especially considering that some countries, such as Taiwan and China, weathered the storm better than others. As well, societies with population and resource bases as large as, say, China's are still formidable influences, so Lee Kuan Yew's advice not to bait or provoke such a country is not ill-advised, regardless of any short-term regional economic or political woes. China may be part of a region that has experienced an economic downturn, but it is still the target of vigorous economic diplomacy⁵¹, and it still has the political power to veto an international decision like a continued UN peacekeeping mission in Macedonia, if the latter decides to recognize Taiwan.

But ultimately, perhaps the acute global concern prompted by the Asian flu best underscores that the Asia-Pacific is consistently seen as influential; as such, any future

⁵⁰ T.R. Reid, Confucius Lives Next Door: What Living in the East Teaches Us About Living in the West (New York: Random House, 1999).

⁵¹ An example is Canada's leader of the Official Opposition journeying to East Asia on a trade mission at a high point of the 'crisis' in July 1998. Similarly, the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, went to China in February 1999 to encourage economic and political ties, and the nation prepared for Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's visit, despite the fact that the US Senate and the State Department had launched a fresh round of attacks on Beijing's human rights abuses. The visit also occurred in spite of

articulations of 'Asian values' will still have resonance in certain circles in 'East' and 'West'. Already, some discontent has been expressed by governments in the Asia-Pacific with the way IMF bail-outs have compromised sovereignty and development, given the attendant austerity programs. Mahathir of Malaysia has been outspoken against IMF conditionalities, and there has been an initiative on the part of some governments to form an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF), made up of and managed by regional states, free from the control of the IMF and the United States. Mahathir has been enthusiastic, even in the face of obvious discomfort on the part of Michael Camdessus, managing director of the IMF. Official word from Thailand has also been positive. The Japanese government has been more circumspect, given its reliance on export markets in the US, but in February 1999, Prime Minister Obuchi announced it would study the proposal for the AMF. Japanese newspapers reported that the initiative came from the ineffectiveness of the IMF during the crisis, and its imposition of harsh conditionalities on the region. A foreign ministry official states that the idea of an AMF "takes into account perspectives of Asian nations and developing nations."⁵² Kozo Kamimune, of the Institute of Developing Economies, talks of "an Asian perspective" in matters of aid and finance, and Professor Toshio Watanabe of the Tokyo Institute of Technology speaks of Mahathir's regional framework, as well as the questioning of "American capitalism and American standards."⁵³ There is talk of a free-trade pact between South Korea and Japan, that could possibly

clear tensions concerning previously discussed issues like WTO membership, China's trade surplus, the suppression of dissidents, the China-Taiwan relationship, and US missile defense systems in East Asia.

⁵² Suvendrini Kakuchi, "Asian Crisis: Japan Serious about Setting up 'Asian IMF'," *Asia Times*, Internet, February 19 1999, Available://www.atimes.com/asia-crisis/AB19Db03.html. On a hopeful note, the same official remarks that "Japan wants the new AMF to take into account political and socio-economic differences in each country before conditions for lending are introduced," particularly those countries dependent on aid.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

include other neighbouring countries. In light of such developments, some might be tempted to see this as a reemerging 'Asian confidence' – a backlash of sorts, after the economic and social woes.

However, despite the ambiguous future facing the Asian Way debate, with all its attendant pitfalls and cautionary notes, the issues raised concerning cultures, clash, and change remain key. We can only deal with these issues if we recognize that, as Donald Emmerson states, “[g]etting beyond polemics over Asian values means demolishing two straw men.” The first is Rudyard Kipling’s Fallacy: the spurious notion that East is East and West is West, and that there can be no meeting between the two worlds. Obviously, the size and diversity of any region, including the Asia-Pacific, belies this notion, as does the tendency “to contrast that set [of Asian values] with an altogether different list of Western values supposedly held by nearly a billion also diverse humans.” However, as dangerous as this trap is, there is also a second straw man, the “equally romantic” Rudyard Kipling’s Other Fallacy: that all peoples on the planet hold a common set of moral values which transcend all national or cultural variations. Emmerson points out that these two viewpoints – ultra-Orientalism and ultra-universalism – are “the least plausible ends of a spectrum of possibilities.”⁵⁴ Instead of being a springboard for ideas of clash and confrontation, then, the Asian Way debate may have its greatest potential as an intriguing exploration of Emmerson’s spectrum, and not as an argument for an equally rigid antithesis of ‘Asian values’, or for yet another cycle of stereotypes. Moreover, when the extremes of ultra-Orientalism and ultra-universalism are discarded, we can show how

⁵⁴ Emmerson, 100. An example of ultra-universalism in the Asian Way literature is Ng’s assertion that the ‘Asian values’ perspective obscures the universality of democracy, no matter what the context. Margaret Ng, “Why Asia Needs Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 8 no.2 (April 1997) 10-23.

particular societies may overlap and interact, and not merely how they stand, eternally and inevitably, apart.

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