THE MYTH OF ASIAN-STYLE DEMOCRACY

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In recent years, there has been significant scholarship and discussion devoted to the study of the so-called “Asian-style democracy” or “soft authoritarianism.” At the heart of this controversy is the claim that Asia is a different place from the West and therefore must construct political regimes that suit the unique conditions of its cultures. While it makes sense to nurture market economies by government and business working together, politics must reflect the group orientedness or communitarian concerns of Asia’s Confucian cultures. This means certain liberties such as freedom of speech, assembly, and competition for political office are sharply limited and government intervention in private interests may occur in an effort to preserve cultural attributes East Asians admire. Some leaders such as Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew argue that Asia’s communitarian values are superior to the values of the West and can keep Asia from having to deal with the problems the West faces such as economic stagnation and dislocation, violent crime, and general social malaise. For this reason, governments in East Asia—most notably Singapore and Malaysia—and some commentators in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the West have argued that a political system that is part-democratic, part-authoritarian is still highly developed. In fact, they say, it is an improvement on the typical liberal form of democracy found in the West.

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It is the purpose of this article to analyze these claims. In particular, I will consider several questions: What is the character of the so-called Asian-style democracies or soft authoritarian regimes? Is Asian-style democracy in fact democratic, authoritarian, or both? Is the liberal model of democracy ill-suited to East Asian conditions? I propose that the Asian-style democracies or soft authoritarian regimes of East Asia are really regimes that have failed to complete the transition to democracy. They have been liberalized to a significant degree and in some cases have held regular elections, but democracy has not evolved. These regimes are similar to the democradura/dictablanda regimes identified by Philippe Schmitter—having some pluralist aspects though they remain dominated by a single ruler or a ruling group. They are neither the unique democratic systems their proponents claim them to be nor are they improved hybrid regimes that are superior to the liberal regimes of the West. With the passage of time, some or most of these regimes will continue to develop democratic institutions until they become liberal democracies that make no special claim of being unique democratic systems.

Asian-Style Democracy

Asian-style democracy advocates focus heavily on the communitarian aspects of East Asian culture. It is suggested that Asian societies have always been more concerned with the welfare of the group over the individual than have Western societies. At the root of this argument is the claim that Confucianism teaches individuals that they are connected through human relationships to one another, and that the welfare of the family and community suffers if individuals focus on their own selfish interests. For this reason, it is argued that the concept of natural rights is alien to Asians and, in fact, unnatural. It goes against the sensibilities of Asians raised in a Confucian culture to think of themselves first. What is natural for Westerners is therefore something quite entirely different from what is natural for East Asians.

While some scholars have made attempts to show the liberal nature of Confucianism, I would agree with proponents of the Asian-style democracy that Confucianism is inherently anti-rights in its orientation. The concept of

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rights developed in the West and was precipitated by the discovery of nature. This discovery is essential in order to separate nature from human affairs. Leo Strauss reminds us that natural right and therefore political rights “must be unknown as long as the idea of nature is unknown. The discovery of nature is the work of philosophy.” If nature remains undiscovered, political thought continues to rest on ancestral tradition and thought. The ancestral is accepted as divine law. Thus, traditional societies often believe their ancestors were purer or superior to them. If authority is not doubted, philosophy cannot emerge and political life remains bound within nature. For this reason, “the emergence of the idea of natural right presupposes . . . the doubt of authority.”

For the concept of rights to be developed, philosophy had to discover nature first. Religious-based philosophies in the West led to but did not discover nature because of the premise that all living things were created by God and were subject to God’s will. Modern Western philosophers (and their ancient Greek forebears) broke philosophy and politics away from religion, thus making the development of the idea of rights possible. While classical Confucianism was skeptical of religion and discouraged religious worship, it nevertheless did not develop a concept of human beings as independent, free-thinking entities capable of discovering the good life on their own. The good life was prescribed for them. This claim to a natural authority above individuals is a denial of conditions necessary to realize and enjoy rights. To a certain extent, contemporary Confucianists challenge this view, but it is a vulgarized form of classical Confucianism that is practiced under that name today. Hence, certain democratic concepts as well as rights and rights language have been borrowed from the West, either from exposure to Western democratic practice or by borrowing from Western political philosophy.

Scholars who have found value in Confucian thought have read too much into selective passages in their hope to establish a space for human beings that is independent of the state. But while a few select passages in the Confucian canon may indicate that there is a possibility Confucian scholars thought about something resembling rights, their intent was to keep the Confucian tradition (an authoritarian one) intact. To profess otherwise is a distortion of Confucian principles. What is really being claimed by proponents of


6. Ibid., p. 84.
Asian-style democracy is that Confucianism is communitarian in nature. I am in general agreement with this assessment, though I believe there are key differences between the communitarianism of Confucianism and that which is found in the Western tradition. I shall address this later.

Proponents argue that in the East Asian communitarian tradition, government plays a special role in governance that their counterparts do not in the West. It is natural that patron-client relations exist in East Asian regimes, as leaders and people, tied together through a complex web of interdependencies and bonds of loyalty, perform reciprocal acts and duties. Leaders provide goods and services, and loyal clients provide political and economic support. Government leaders are respected for having greater information and insight into local and national conditions and are therefore trusted to “do the right thing.” Political authority, whether sanctioned by free elections or not, is respected and hierarchy is held to be natural and good. A strong state is not feared as it is in the West, but rather is considered to be the logical outcome of societies united in a common course for managing political and economic affairs and providing national security. Dominant political parties, such as Japan’s pre-1993 Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Singapore’s People’s Action Party (PAP), and Taiwan’s Kuomintang (KMT), are examples of politicians seeking consensus. Though all of these parties are factionalized, they provide a united front to collect and organize the interests of society into a workable package of economic and political policies. Thus, the Confucian virtues of harmony and cooperation are preserved. Lucien Pye argues that cultural traditions such as Confucianism are “decisive in determining the course of political development.” All of this contributes to the claim made by East Asian leaders and scholar-proponents of Asian-style democracy that the “prevailing values in Asia have been different enough from those in the West to make Western democracy unachievable [there].”

Some Western proponents recognize the hypocrisy of certain rationalizations for Asian over Western values, namely that Asian values are sometimes claimed to justify political repression. At the same time, they also find some validity to the fears East Asians have when looking to the model of democracy found in a West that is plagued by high levels of unemployment, rampant crime, and disorderly societies in general. Such scholars also harbor

hope that Asian-style democracy will evolve into a form of democracy more in keeping with that found in the West. After all, Confucianism, like other cultural systems, can "pick and choose those cultural elements that fit with the political order one is trying to build." Such claims are based on the assumption that East Asia puts the community first, thereby establishing economic and social rights, whereas the West has failed in this regard. They also argue Asians are not as likely to want to protest government policies and are neither as suspicious of government nor as jealous of their rights as are individualist Westerners.

Some Thoughts on Community and Individualism

Nearly all of the claims made by those sympathetic to the Asian-style democracy argument center on the idea of East Asians' desires to place the needs of the group above those of the individual. In too many cases, scholars have accepted this view without much qualification or explanation, yet there is substantial evidence that there are other views and practices in East Asia that contradict the assumption of collective over individual rights.

Not all scholars are in agreement that Confucianism leads to collectivism. In his study of social capital and trust in economic systems, Francis Fukuyama found that individuals in most countries in East Asia demonstrated little trust for people outside of their immediate families and patron-client business relations. Fukuyama believes Confucianism has taught the Chinese and other Asians to look first to the family and a few patrons and clients outside of it when seeking people with whom to do business. This has resulted in low levels of the trust needed for building small firms into larger ones and improving their ability to compete with the Japanese and the West in a more dynamic way. Other scholars have found the same thing and indicate that, culturally, business owners in Confucian societies tend not to be as willing to look out for the good of their companies and countries as they should because of their desire to keep control within the family. The Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong blames Confucianism for this lack of trust within society. He argues that rather than Confucianism building a family ethic for society, Confucianism actually encourages Chinese to look out for

themselves by relying on complex networks of relationships, rather than on well-organized private, civic, and government institutions similar to those Westerners create.\footnote{Fei Xiaotong, \textit{From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society}, trans. by Gary G. Hamilton and Wang Zheng (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).} In a networked society like China’s, Fei argues that individuals learn to use the system to acquire personal goods and services and rarely look out for the good of society.

Although some of Fei’s arguments lack careful analysis and elaboration, Confucianism does indeed teach loyalty over morality. In demonstrating this point, Confucius criticized a government official who boasted that in his country, a citizen would turn his father in to the authorities if his father had stolen a sheep. Confucius argued it was superior for the father to conceal the misconduct of the son, and the son the misconduct of his father—that this was the upright thing to do. Similarly, the Confucian scholar Mencius argued that a brother would never turn against his brother, even if his brother plotted against his life, nor would a son turn in his father for murder, even if it meant that the son was the emperor and had to give up the throne in order to protect his father from being arrested for such a crime. I do not believe East Asian governments are in current agreement with Confucius or Mencius in terms of looking out for the good when it comes to the examples used above. I am confident that, at face value, leaders would suggest it is necessary to turn in criminals from one’s family in order to protect the interests of society. Confucian filial piety, though, most often teaches parents and children to look out for one another, and it is the family—not the state, the local region, or the village—that is the most referred to group in most of the Confucian writings.

In this regard, the emphasis on family differs very little from the situation John Locke faced when trying to break down the way people thought about families in order to pave the way for a liberal regime. Locke sets out in his \textit{First and Second Treatise of Government} to break family authority and loyalty by trying to dispel the belief that natural law has given fathers all authority in family life and that this authority came from God. He furthermore wanted to explain away the role of the divine from public life in order to create rights to own property. These were necessary first steps in getting human beings to understand their natural rights. In this regard, proponents who argue for the unique group-oriented concern that East Asians supposedly hold on to would do well to consider that the roots of authoritarianism in the West also belong to a hierarchical structure where the authority of fathers and political leaders was unexamined.

Chinese leaders, in part following the lead of Lee Kuan Yew, have been some of the most vocal advocates of the collectivist claim, citing both traditional Chinese cultural concerns for community over individual and Marxist
justifications for the same. The Chinese government suggests Chinese people are different from Westerners in that they have different historical backgrounds, social systems, and cultural traditions, as well as a different tradition of human rights. For China this means that the focus must be on economic, cultural, and social rights above those of the individual. At one time, the KMT regime on Taiwan used to make similar comments in explaining why it was necessary for the party to maintain its monopoly of political power over the people. As liberalization eventually gave way to democracy, the party found itself seeking legitimacy through the ballot box and other conventional ways that political parties seek legitimacy in established democratic systems. Since its authoritarian days, the KMT has offered formal apologies for the denial of citizen’s rights during the period of martial law and admitted mistakes in usurping power.

The Meiji reformers who wrote Japan’s pre-war Constitution also made special claims that Japan did not need Western concepts of liberalism and could stand on traditional Japanese values. That very idea proved problematic for democratic reformers after the Second World War, and has continued during the period of LDP dominance up to the 1993 party split and even in part to today. Some observers openly wonder if the democratic experiment will continue in Japan unless the system transforms itself into a regime more like those found in the West. Former South Korean leaders, former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, and others have all pointed to special exceptions that prevented the realization of democracy in their respective countries, almost none of which are taken seriously now that democracy has taken hold in these countries. Furthermore, such claims are not unique to Asia. Current Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori advocated taking personal control of the political system in his country to guide it through a period of economic and political stalemate and uncertainty. Democracy, it has been claimed, cluttered the prospects for prosperity and security in Peru. Military officers in Chile decided the country’s situation by the early 1970s warranted overthrowing a democratically elected regime in order to save the country because Chile’s special conditions begged for strong government authority to prevent the democratically elected leaders from ruining the country. Similar arguments have been made in Eastern Europe, where former communists and nationalist leaders have pointed to unique situations that warrant authoritarian regimes, of whatever sort, rather than the confusion and messiness of democracy. Beyond individual leaders, single party states are generally a menace to democracy and constitute one of the major obstacles preventing democratiz-

ing regimes from becoming consolidated. In addition, with the exception of the PAP in Singapore, parties once dominant in East Asian states have become less so and increasingly corrupt. Broad-based government support has weakened and public cynicism has increased.

Government leaders who espouse Asian values often do so out of a fear of chaos. They envision democracy in new states to be volatile and established Western democracies to be in decline. This view is in part a reflection of these leaders’ distrust toward their own populations. Machiavelli advised the prince to always be on the alert against the people and those around him, and much the same ethic is at work in part-authoritarian and part-democratic societies. Montesquieu pointed out that what makes authoritarian regimes dangerous is not that the leader holds all power over the people; rather, they are dangerous because the people fear the leaders and the leaders the people, thus making the leaders suspicious of those around them, including even so-called loyal associates. This can be seen in the tight discipline inferiors are expected to demonstrate as authoritarian superiors keep a watchful eye. Lee Kuan Yew may not hold a formal government post, but he has the power to replace leaders who do not go by the rules he established within the Singaporean hierarchy. Similarly, Hu Yaobang may have been Deng Xiaoping’s close associate, as was Zhao Ziyang, but in an authoritarian regime, survival is the first principal superiors operate by. In a question of survival, therefore, Hu and Zhao were expendable.

Authoritarians use ideology to justify their rule just as a democratic regime relies on its own. There is a difference, however. A democracy generally relies on its philosophical foundations to teach patriotism and bolster the regime through means of support both active (voting, campaigning, voicing political opinions, seeking redress of grievances) and passive (belonging to civic organizations, obeying the law, teaching virtues of self-reliance, practicing tolerance). Authoritarian ideology may also have normative purposes, but in large measure propaganda is used to maintain and legitimize the regime’s monopoly on power over the people. For this reason, authoritarian ideologies are very similar in their approaches, pointing to the unique or special problems of a country, the resolution of which necessitates authoritarian control or the temporary suspension of democratic practices. When such problems start to lose their importance, regimes begin to rely on legal-rational justifications to legitimize their rule. This in turn results in calls to liberalize regimes. The governments of Singapore and China have reacted to their fear of chaos by claiming unique Asian values. In this way, they can put

off having to wrestle with democratization. Their arguments as to why they are culturally unique are intellectually weak and not supported by other states in the East Asian region that are already progressing along the democratic path. In short, East Asian authoritarians are really no different from leaders in other regions of the world who call for the suspension of democracy or claim to have found a better alternative that suits their individual countries.

In these pre-democratic societies, power configurations would have to be changed if rights of the people were recognized. In the most basic analysis, rights are what people want—not simply to gratify selfish interests, as some might claim, but because there is a sense of justice inherent in the concept of individual rights. Indeed, Hegel argued that it is this sense of freedom and justice that legitimizes and brings about the realization of political rights. If there is a people with a sense of justice, a sense of freedom, rights are the most logical outcome and the safest way of ensuring the dignity of individuals and the creation of civil society.

The question that needs to be asked, however, is would the establishment of individual political rights harm a society that did emphasize collective over individual rights? It is true that communitarian concerns can be eroded by too much reliance on rights. Tocqueville found in the early American republic a possible answer to this question. He believed the American system worked because Americans believed themselves to be completely equal in their rights and privileges to every other person. This was in part an outgrowth of Colonial America’s puritan past, but also because democracy had changed much about American society for the better. Instead of becoming a country of disinterested and selfish individuals, Americans had learned to organize themselves into all kinds of civic organizations, some with political purposes but most without an immediate one. The ethic within these organizations was democratic, and the general feeling was that no person should esteem him or herself above others.21 It is in this regard that one discovers two things. The first is that the West has come to pay too much attention to individual rights at the expense of virtues that enable societies to strengthen communitarianism. This would in part account for the social malaise in the West that Asian leaders find so disturbing. The second is that the establishment of democracy does not mean an end to meaningful family life, nor an end of concern for society’s needs. This point is reaffirmed by Bellah, Putnam, Bell, and others who argue that communitarian principles (democratic virtues) are what facilitate and protect community life.22 Asian political

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thought may not forward communitarian ideas in the same way that the West does, but the existence of some of these same virtues in Asian philosophy indicates that East Asians can be as receptive to democratic virtues as Westerners are held to be.23

Traditional Societies and Political Development

Is the soft authoritarianism or Asian-style democracy of East Asia in fact a hybrid regime model, or is it really a case of the passing of a traditional regime type? I have already suggested at the outset of this article that what is being considered here is really a handful of cases where regimes have not completed their transition to democracy. A few decades ago, few policy makers in the West paid much attention to rights violations committed by authoritarian regimes in East Asia. It was accepted that these regimes were not democratic but at some time may become so. This view was supported by the low level of economic development in East Asia that existed during the 1950s and 1960s. The economic miracles had not yet occurred, and little was said about political repression and the lack of political development in the region. Much the same situation obtains today in other parts of the world. Even though the West is more concerned with human rights violations and lagging development in the Third World than was the case in the 1950s, Westerners actually pay very little attention to countries whose level of development fails to command their respect in regards to economic might and regional power configurations. Prestige is gained today by having a strong, vibrant economy and a highly developed political system, namely, democracy.

China does command respect today for several reasons. Strategically, China is poised to become a superpower. It is already a regional power militarily and its economic strength has grown impressively since 1978. There have been fundamental economic and social reforms that have sparked the imagination of some in the West to think that China could be on the road to democratization. South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, and other East Asian states have also seen strong economic growth and evolution in their political systems. For these reasons, the West has taken a keen interest in the development of those states. When the U.S. becomes interested in other

countries' affairs, there is likely to be conflict when its norms of political rights clash with the norms authoritarian regimes employ to maintain political power. For this reason, South Korea and Taiwan were sharply criticized by Washington during the late 1980s for withholding political rights, while Washington paid relatively little attention to far grosser violations of rights in other countries of the world. Similarly, Singapore, China, North Korea, and others are now way out of step compared to other countries in the region who respect rights. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and others have either democratized or taken significant measures to liberalize their political systems. It is in the West's interest to keep the liberalization process going until democracies have consolidated and rights are respected throughout Asia. Here is where the problem lies for those who have accepted the Asian-style democracy model as an honorable domain for a regime to aspire to. Because the process of liberalization is a difficult one, leaders get caught between two worlds—one authoritarian, the other democratic. All of the countries in East Asia that claim to have different cultural needs than the West are coming from conditions shifting from scarcity to security in terms of socioeconomic well-being. But, as Ronald Inglehart suggests, the process of democratic socialization has not yet caught up with the forces of economic modernization. This has meant that the various aspects of traditional authority still in force will take perhaps another generation or more to change. Even then, those societies will have to learn a new culture of liberty and rights.24 Again, what Tocqueville observed on his visit to America is telling. He found that democracy, in terms of accepting a tradition of political rights and strong reliance on supportive virtues, created a democratic ethic that penetrated even churches and family life. For most of these East Asian countries, the process of liberalization is well underway, with policies in place to improve literacy and increase both access to information and participation in economic and—to a limited degree—political decision making. Modernization theorists have for some time pointed out that these are the very processes that encourage the passing of traditional society. Authoritarians introduce legal-rational social structures that eventually lead to elite conflict, compromise, and a democratic compact.

The view I am presenting here is not without controversy. Many if not most comparativists have tended to disregard the importance of the linear model of political development in lieu of the model of democratization introduced by Whitehead, Schmitter, O'Donnell, and others, who emphasize the

importance of short term negotiations and compromises. But political or economic "moments" are not likely to take place unless there is enough economic specialization, differences in opinion about social welfare, and political disagreement to encourage opposition leaders and critics within government to challenge traditional bases of power. What country in East Asia has not had to meet the demands of an opposition in the course of economic development? On their own, governments do not have enough information or ideas to be able to provide answers to all of a society's problems as a country develops. Singapore may eventually reach a point where the government will have to relent and seek the advice of opposition politicians and end their suppression of free speech and other policies. China is not going to be able to hold back the forces of modernization for long without having to accommodate some alternative governance views. It has already done so. But the Beijing leadership will have to compromise more or risk political disintegration. These are the lessons of South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines, and it is a lesson that is being learned anew as each country in East Asia continues to meet the demands of their modernizing societies.

Does all this mean that there is no Asian road to democracy? There is no doubt culture plays a significant role in how countries democratize. Scholars have shown that cultural differences have an effect on when, and in some respects how, a country democratizes. Countries with dominant Catholic populations generally democratize more slowly than do countries with dominant Protestant populations. Similarly, the patterns of both authoritarianism and political liberalization differ in Catholic and Protestant countries. So how might East Asian countries democratize? Will there be a wholesale rejection of Western-style liberalism with its reliance on rights and virtues?

In some respects, the East Asian suspicion of rights is good. The American founders hoped both that people would be jealous of their rights but at the same time that the new republic would rely more on Christian virtues to govern their own lives and their families than on political rights. Compromise, fair play, tolerance, and moderation are essential to the maintenance of a vibrant democracy. Hence, in some respects, Asia's slow acceptance of rights creates no need for alarm. As governments and people learn to work

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together and compromises are made, democracy is learned just as it is everywhere else in the world.

There are some areas where Asian-characteristics of the liberalization and democratization process can be anticipated:

- Political leaders, both conservatives clinging to power and reformers who want to liberalize the system, will practice a fair degree of Confucian paternalism. They will use language that sustains their authority as morally good, suggesting that they are better informed than the masses and have skills that make them uniquely qualified to lead the people.

- Like most authoritarian regimes, economic and political crises will test Confucian ways of running government. Moral appeals will continue to be made, but rights and legal language will find greater acceptance. Government leaders will be held individually responsible for specific policies. This will erode support for traditional leaders who previously paid little or no attention to democratic accountability.

- As authority is challenged, a new virtue based on compromise and the sharing of information among political and economic elites will penetrate society. Private organizations will take on democratic aspects and Confucian loyalties will come into question if they contradict democratic practices. Family relationships will retain Confucian characteristics, though the relationship between children and parents will be somewhat more akin to family life in the West, where the structure of the family is less hierarchical.

- Though rights will continue to be held in suspicion, confidence will be built upon the assumption that basic rights can usually be equated with moral living. Hence, popular claims will be made that “Asian rights” are unique and universal.

- The tension between liberal rights and communitarian principles will always be present in Asian democracies just as it is in the West. There will be greater discussion among scholars across the globe about this tension. Minor differences over how rights are viewed in East Asia and the rest of the world will continue to be pointed out, even though these differences will be insignificant.

Thus, the Asian path to democracy likely will follow the paths taken by other countries in other parts of the world, though there will be distinctive Asian characteristics. The important thing for Asians and non-Asians to remember is that the usurpation of rights by government leaders is neither a cultural right nor a communitarian virtue. There is a growing international consensus on rights language and democratic virtues. It is the commonality of this discussion that is crucial for the health of democratic societies.

Sharing a Liberal Heritage

Some Asian leaders and perhaps some scholars who study Asia feel uncomfortable in accepting the principles of liberalism in an Asian setting. Since liberalism has its roots in the intellectual and religious traditions of the West, it is deemed inappropriate for Asian countries. While it is true that liberalism was first developed in the West, this does not mean it is a tradition that is
exclusively owned by Westerners. Liberalism itself is a recognition of the inherent worth of individuals and free societies. Citizens in liberal societies readily point out that liberty and trust are missing in authoritarian regimes. Because they are missing, individual potential is thwarted, arbitrary rules are enforced from above, evil is not punished by established norms of justice, and civil society is not possible. Asian leaders are correct to point out the contradictions in Western states that have abandoned communitarian values and as a result have suffered in terms of rampant crime and social and familial decay. This is not the fault of liberalism, however. The existence of societies that esteem family values does not suggest that democracy or liberal rights are inappropriate. Similarly, societies claiming strong communitarian notions of cooperation, harmony, and consensus can adopt a rights tradition. Contemporary literature suggests all these ideals are important for the maintenance of democracy.28

Francis Fukuyama’s now famous suggestion that we are reaching the end of history and that democracy is a global phenomenon may be premature.29 But it is true that in East Asia and throughout the world authoritarian regimes are collapsing. A successful authoritarian regime is able to restrict power to a small ruling elite or single sovereign. That model of governance has been in decline for some time in East Asia. Authoritarianism leaves nothing for governments and people to aspire to. Even Chinese scholars who prior to the crisis at Tiananmen had discussed various kinds of authoritarianism as an alternative to communism have abandoned this notion. Their interests have turned directly to democratization.30 Democracy is much less limiting and ultimately more adept at fulfilling human needs and desires than authoritarianism. For this reason, in spite of the efforts of Lee Kuan Yew and Jiang Zemin, Tocqueville was correct when he proclaimed that any attempt to check democracy would be an attempt to resist an inevitability.31 While democracies may differ somewhat in structure and process, there is only the liberal model of democracy. All others claiming unique status are authoritarian regimes or regimes that have not yet completed the transition to democracy.