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The "politics of tradition" and related issues of culture and identity have been at the forefront of some very important debates throughout the Asia-Pacific region—and elsewhere—for several decades now. In the academic sphere it

is a debate that has been joined, in the main, by anthropologists, although there have also been some significant contributions by historians, legal scholars, geographers, and political scientists. It has also been joined by politicians, bureaucrats, journalists, intellectuals, church leaders, and activists of all stripes—dissident, conservative, moderate—but rarely simply neutral. It is a topic that is close to the hearts, and the vital interests, of many of the participants.

Academic commentators (including reviewers), of course, also bring their own intellectual and emotional baggage, personal quirks, predispositions, and interests to the study of the issues involved. And in a spirit of reflexivity, it's as well to acknowledge these. I hope that my own intellectual predispositions are not too rigid or fixed, but in my book (and in these pages here) I am prepared to state them clearly enough. Anyone who has read *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific* will find that I quite clearly favor democratic politics over authoritarian politics, and a liberal approach to a conservative one. Moreover, I hold quite clear views about what actually constitutes democratic politics—and more particularly about what does not—and am prepared to defend these views vigorously. I completely reject the notion that social scientists—of whatever discipline—should attempt or pretend to be either fence-sitters or "objective" observers and reporters of "the facts." Facts simply do not speak for themselves. Various people, from various positions, make them speak, often in very different ways. This does not necessarily mean that the act of interpretation is always mired in a completely self-interested form of subjectivity—but all speaking positions are inherently subjective in one way or another. There is no Archimedean vantage point and there is no final truth accessible to any one person or group of people whether these are so-called insiders or outsiders. I especially oppose the idea that there are "cultural truths" accessible only to a certain privileged few. The rejection of the possibility of objectivity, however, is by no means a license to simply indulge our subjective biases or only seek out evidence that supports our preferred positions. To do so would be an act of intellectual dishonesty.

My view of what my job is as a social scientist who is engaged specifically in the study of politics is to be, in one way or another, a critic in and of the public sphere. I take this public sphere to extend from within the bounds of any particular community (itself an unstable category) to the entire globe. There is no place that does not fall legitimately within this sphere, although some may dispute that and object strongly to the analyses and criticisms of "outsiders." To be a critical social scientist in this sense, and to argue for or against certain political positions and beliefs, such as those dealt with in my book, is not always an easy thing to do, and especially if one has the status of

an outsider. This has emerged as an issue, either explicitly or implicitly, in several criticisms of my book, and my previous book as well (Lawson 1991). I've given some thought to this problem and I shall say something briefly about the "politics of theorizing" later. This essay has been invited primarily as a response to the two reviews of the book printed above, and so I shall deal specifically with these first.

The review by Henry Rutz is basically a positive one, and that is at least partly because we seem to share some common critical ground in our respective studies of Pacific Islands politics. Rutz focuses on the principal themes of the book: the issue of political legitimacy and the key role played by the concept of "tradition." And he emphasizes the extent to which the book's analysis is highly critical of a strategy, employed largely by some political elites in the region, that pits "tradition" against "democracy." He is certainly right in identifying the most difficult conceptual issue with which I've dealt—and that is the attempt to steer a viable course between a relativistic approach to defining democracy, on the one hand, and what amounts to an equally problematic universalist approach, on the other. What I argue for is a pluralist approach that acknowledges diversity (whether we want to call that diversity "cultural" or not) but stops well short of an "anything goes" position. In other words, I do attempt to take a stand. But in taking a stand, it's never enough to simply say that if the term "democracy" can mean all things to all people, then it doesn't mean anything at all. If I want to make an effort to repudiate a radical relativist position, then I must be prepared to go on and be more specific about what democracy is, and what it is not. That is what I've attempted to do both in the general analysis and the case studies. I think this is what leads Rutz to remark that, at certain points in my case studies, I seem to move "easily from exposition to evaluation" to express my "approval or disapproval of efforts by Pacific Islanders to shape their own discourse of 'democracy.' " I'm not quite sure if this is meant to be criticism of my approach, but it seems implied. In any case, I acknowledge that the kind of critical approach I've taken in the book is bound to be seen as expressing approval or disapproval in one way or another. For instance, if I have argued that democratic practice entails *x* but definitely not *y* and raise what seems to me to be an apt example, then logically my analysis must implicitly express "approval" of *x* as a democratic practice and "disapproval" of *y* as one that is not. And I agree with Rutz that this is exactly what I do in the case study on Fiji. I describe the exclusion of Fiji Indians under the 1990 constitution from effective political power as a "form of political apartheid" and I clearly disapprove of this because it does not conform to my standards of what is democratic and what is not—although I think I am quite safe in saying that these are not merely "my" standards arbitrarily arrived at.

Rutz does not have a problem with my evaluation per se—because he largely agrees with it—but rather with the "methodological requirement to establish explicit criteria of 'democracy' that limit its elasticity and thereby reduce its co-optiontation by nondemocratic discourses." This interesting and important point raises the question not simply of standards but the foundations on which such standards rest. My first response, however, is how can Rutz—or anyone else—agree (or indeed disagree) with any evaluation in the absence of a methodological attempt to establish explicit criteria for democracy? As he points out, I've made a concerted effort to set out and defend some standards in chapter 1, and he seems to agree with the idea that although democracy has its own dogmatic truths, it also has an inbuilt means of overcoming them.

One of the sections of the book that I have been somewhat dissatisfied with myself, in that I dealt too briefly with a key issue, is in fact the question of what democracy is and how standards may be devised for adjudicating claims about what is democratic and what is not. Petersen is more critical on this point—but I'll come back to his concerns later. In a subsequent paper (Lawson 1998), I've set out some further arguments and analysis in more detail. That paper, incidentally, is also informed by reflection on contemporary political issues surrounding notions of culture and values in Southeast Asia, as exemplified by the "Asian values debate" (although it does not deal specifically with any case-study material). The 1998 paper discusses the common institutional forms and standards that have been set out by theorists such as Schumpeter and Dahl, as well as the relationship between institutional forms and actual democratic outcomes. But I then go on to argue that the institutions and expected outcomes also reflect a certain ethic of politic rule:

> "Democracy" is the name of a form of rule, meaning literally "rule or power of the people." In its modern representative form, people have ultimate political authority rather than engaging directly in daily governance. It is this meaning which animates, however imperfectly, the institutional structures and outcomes. . . . But, beyond the descriptive meaning of democracy, there is also a distinct normative dimension that provides democracy with its basic justification. Put simply, it is assumed that it is *right* that the people rule or have ultimate political authority. (Lawson 1998:259)

I go on to say, again, that there is no one institutional form that must be adopted in order to accommodate this normative principle and to produce substantive democratic outcomes, and that a variety of forms can adequately

accommodate democratic rule. As I emphasize in the book, this variety is an important element of a pluralist approach. My key point in the 1998 paper, however, is that "the normative principle remains *essentially* the same despite institutional, historical, cultural and other contextual differences" (ibid.). And on this basis, I reject some forms of rule that lay claim to being democratic—such as the form that keeps the ruling party in power in Singapore, or that which marginalized Fiji Indians after 1987. This formulation would not satisfy defenders of more relativistic approaches—especially since I (deliberately) use the word "essential," but I think it can accommodate a reasonably flexible pluralist approach that leaves space for cultural (and other) differences. This capacity is important when considering some of the other values that are now normally associated with democracy—values that may also be in tension with each other.

In developing some ideas about this tension, I again had in mind some important aspects of the Asian values debate where normative support for the value of "liberty" is often seen as a distinctively Western cultural inclination (and strongly associated with individualism) whereas support for the values of "equality" and "community" are claimed to be more in tune with Asian cultural approaches and value systems. Here, incidentally, is where I strongly object to the "essentializing" of something called "Western culture" or "Asian culture" by reference to cultural essences.

Nonetheless, I go on to say that varying cultural (or other) considerations and circumstances may result in differential emphasis being placed on certain secondary normative principles of contemporary democracy—such as liberty, equality, and community. Moreover, there are often tensions between these principles in both the theory and the practice of democracy. The value of liberty, especially, coexists in tension with both equality and community (see Lawson 1998, esp. pp. 260–261).

One of the main points that I have attempted to make is that "democracy" carries a strong normative load—and in more ways than one. The primary and secondary normative principles that I've identified above are but one aspect and are very relevant in considering the extent to which different practices and emphases on values can be accommodated within a framework that itself remains "democratic." But another, quite different normative aspect, discussed in the book, is the extent to which the universal acclaim that "democracy" now enjoys as "the appraisive political concept par excellence" has made its meaning so hotly contested—indeed, in W. B. Gallie's terms, "essentially" contested (1956).

What this means is that virtually any regime will try to claim to be a democracy, no matter how repressively it actually governs. (These claims, incidentally, are largely conditioned by an international political environment within

which it is virtually unacceptable to actually admit to being anything else.) But the main question raised by my analysis is not whether democracy as a form of rule can accommodate cultural difference or reflect different cultural norms and practices. It can. The question is whether some forms of rule that are claimed to be authenticated contextually by reference to certain local cultural traditions can be called democratic at all. This, I think, is worth arguing about, a debate I intended to provoke in my book.

I knew my book would be provocative—and Henry Rutz is certainly not alone among reviewers in describing it in such terms. But most have not meant this in a negative sense. As in Rutz's assessment, generally speaking most reviewers have seen the book as being thoughtful, well argued, and carefully documented, even if they may have done it differently. Rutz's review —and others that I've seen—stand in very marked contrast to Glenn Petersen's. Indeed, it almost seems that Petersen's review is about another book altogether. I shall have to spend most of the next section defending my book against many of Petersen's criticisms because I think that he has missed, or misinterpreted, many of the key points that I attempted to make.

Petersen's review begins by suggesting that my book is comparable to a certain newspaper photograph and caption that tells only half a story (and seems quite deliberately to omit the second, most telling part of the story). After I finished reading Petersen's review, however, I thought that was a more accurate description of his own essay. In any event, he goes on to make a point, which he emphasizes again later in his essay, that I find little in the sociopolitical precedents that have shaped Pacific Islanders' responses to European-imposed political institutions that might be described as receptive to democracy. My conclusion, according to Petersen, is that "shortcomings in the ways new island nation-states adopt Western-style political values and institutions are mainly the result of local predispositions to social relations less egalitarian and participatory than those of the powers that impose these institutions upon them." I must say, quite simply, that I conclude no such thing and have nowhere developed or argued or even implicitly supported any such line of thought.

Petersen's most basic error is in talking, in very generalized terms, about my interpretation of "Pacific Islanders' responses." The whole tenor of my argument is that there is no such thing as *a* "Pacific Islander response." What Petersen alludes to is what I refer to quite distinctly as a response by certain (not all) political elites in parts (not all) of the region who have invoked a discourse of traditionalism to defend their privileged positions.

Moreover, these elites have mounted their own arguments in opposition to movements for democratic reform that have come from *within* the societies concerned. This situation is most clearly and unambiguously shown in

my case study of Tonga, where page after page of description, discussion, and analysis is devoted to showing how the prodemocracy movement in Tonga (led by indigenous Tongan commoners) has arisen—against all the expectations that one may usually derive from a cultural determinist perspective—to challenge the traditionalist status quo. In other words, I have quite clearly *not* argued deterministically *for* the overriding importance and influence of preexisting sociopolitical arrangements or predispositions with respect to the population of Tonga. My arguments are quite emphatically ranged *against* any such cultural determinist position.

It is one thing to argue, as I have done (and along with most other writers on Tonga), that Tonga's traditional sociopolitical arrangements are basically authoritarian. It is another thing altogether to say that any such argument automatically implies that the proponent is therefore offering up a deterministic conclusion about the prospects—or lack of prospects—for change. While I have suggested that the beneficiaries of the present system in Tonga are very likely to resist change, this hardly amounts to a deterministic conclusion about the inherent nature of Tongan society per se.

The same paragraph of Petersen's review also contains a common but quite misleading assumption that formal democratic institutions are always "imposed" by colonial powers. As I set out in the book, the political institutions devised during the colonial period were indeed largely imposed by colonial powers, but often with the complicity and support of certain local elites who sometimes benefited substantially from their introduction. This was certainly the case in Fiji. Furthermore, these institutions were clearly not democratic—a point on which virtually all agree. With respect to the independence constitution, indigenous Fijians and Fiji Indians played a very active part in devising the constitution that Petersen implies was simply "imposed" (by the British) on the country in 1970—although it did not prove viable for various reasons in the longer term. Tonga, not being a colony, obviously never had a constitution "imposed" on it during decolonization at all, nor was the 1875 constitution an imposition strictly speaking, although there were important external influences. And chiefly indigenous leaders in Western Samoa, at the time of independence, clearly succeeded in not having universal suffrage—let alone universal eligibility to stand for elective office—thrust upon them by anyone, even though New Zealand had urged broader suffrage.

Petersen makes a common mistake in making generalizations about colonial impositions that deny the agency of local people—whether they are elites or not—in shaping or influencing their own institutions. Of course, departing colonial powers often left behind certain political structures, institutions, and practices. But they were not always "imposed" in the manner

suggested by Petersen. Moreover, the parliamentary and other Western democratic elements that they contained often had the strong support of some members of the local communities.

I provide a fairly detailed account of the history of constitutional development in the case studies that I think makes all of the above quite clear. Which brings me to another of Petersen's criticisms that is relevant to the question of institutions. He says that I overemphasize the place of institutions in political life. Perhaps, from the perspective of an anthropologist, I do. But I am, after all, a political scientist and not an anthropologist. On the other hand, the latter are often criticized for *under*emphasizing political institutions, or sometimes ignoring them completely. So perhaps our different emphases are simply differences in disciplinary approach. Even so, I can scarcely be accused of ignoring anthropological approaches and indeed many vital issues raised by anthropological studies. My book is deeply engaged with the anthropological issues and debates on the whole question of the invention of, and the politics of, tradition.

In some ways, I am very critical of some conventional anthropological approaches to the issues dealt with in the book. I'm not entirely surprised, therefore, that the book has provoked this kind of response from an anthropologist. But on Petersen's more specific point raised above, since the issues dealt with in the book are so closely tied to the development of political institutions—both national and local (whether these are recognized by some anthropologists or not)—I remain unapologetic about the extent to which the book deals with them while emphasizing that the book deals with much more besides.

Petersen goes on to make a further criticism in this context: that my approach to democracy is mostly about government. He quotes some brief extracts from various authors on the extent to which democracy is not merely about government or representative institutions. I couldn't agree more. Nor do I see how the overall analysis of the book could be interpreted as focusing almost exclusively on democracy as a form of government. But again, even given this, how can democracy not be vitally concerned with how—or by whom—we are governed? We can indeed describe democracy as "a way of life"—a point on which Petersen quotes another writer with approval—but that is hardly inconsistent with or unrelated to the manner in which we are governed.

More generally, Petersen says that he has two fundamental disagreements with my approach. First, he says that my perspective on the political dynamics of Pacific Islands societies does not capture their participatory character and it thus substantially exaggerates the authoritarian aspects of chieftainship. He goes on to elaborate, but does so on the basis of what he

says is his "own first-hand experience . . . in Micronesia." As I state in the preface, however, I am not dealing with the entire region, and certainly not with Micronesia—and had I looked at other areas (such as Melanesia or Micronesia) other perspectives would no doubt have emerged (p. ix). So my response is quite simply that my case studies concern three Pacific Islands states, more or less located within the Polynesian area, in which the authoritarian aspects of chiefly rule have in fact been stronger than in some other parts of the Pacific. Indeed, their hierarchical and authoritarian aspects have often been emphasized by chiefly leaders themselves, even if the word "authoritarian" is not necessarily used. Moreover, Petersen's claims about the participatory character of Pacific Islands societies may be true for the societies he has studied in Micronesia—the ones he refers to most explicitly—but are certainly not true of all South Pacific societies.

The formal traditional mode of Tongan politics, to take the clearest example, was simply not participatory at all. I cite Sione Latukefu to the effect that the Tongan *fono,* for example, was never more than a meeting where instructions were issued by chiefs to those below them. This contrasts somewhat with the *fono* in Western Samoa, where lengthy discussions did take place but excluded non-*matai* (see p. 85). This is not to deny *reciprocity* between chiefs and non-chiefs, but that is a different matter altogether. In any event, I am scarcely alone in asserting authoritarianism as the overriding feature of traditional Tongan political life: My argument draws on the various findings of most prominent Tongan scholars—and scholars of Tonga—that have written on the subject. These include Latukefu, Epeli Hau'ofa, Futa Helu, and Okusitino Mahina as well as anthropologists such as George Marcus and Adrienne Kaeppler. But as I said above, the assessment or acknowledgement of traditional sociopolitical structures in Tonga (or anywhere else) as being authoritarian by no means implies a deterministic conclusion about the present and future.

Petersen's second fundamental disagreement concerns my rendering of democratic theory, which he says "underestimate[s] the degree to which work in this area inherently and irresolvably contests the nature of democracy." I simply disagree with Petersen's assessment. A substantial part of my project is based squarely on—and indeed assumes—the contested nature of democracy. Democracy as an "essentially contested concept" is discussed specifically on pp. 31–32, as well as the problems it raises for relativistic understandings. Indeed the entire debate about relativism and democracy revolves around the contested nature of democracy.

Petersen goes on in the next section to make some points about ascriptive status that I don't think have much relevance or don't detract from points that I was making. For example, I don't necessarily disagree with Petersen's

point that "the most politically salient aspects of ascription are commonly seen in the manipulation (or selective reinterpretation) of genealogies after the fact of succession to a chiefly title." Nor do I have a problem with what some chiefs (in Western Samoa?) have evidently said to him concerning the notion that a "clanship's viability lies precisely in the broad net of men it makes eligible for titles" (although one could ask about women). He also points out that "a number of ethnographies describe situations in which . . . ascription—local claims to the contrary notwithstanding—is not the most salient factor in access to titles." In my case study of Fiji—not mentioned by Petersen as an important qualification to my earlier general point about ascription—I say myself (citing Nayacakalou) that genealogies may be avoided or varied in order "to facilitate the direct interplay of forces in selecting leaders on the basis of personal qualities, or of the political power of the groups which support them" (p. 53).

The next problem with Petersen's review arises from his observation that I tend to dismiss "as little more than instrumentalist maneuvering the claims put forward by elites about their rights to run things." He says that he sees several problems with this portrayal because, although "it is certainly accurate in some senses, it is also a basic truism of social life that is hardly peculiar to Pacific Islands politics." He goes on to quote Jeremy Bentham's diatribe against "malefactors in high places" who benefit from preserving things as they are.

This particular criticism of Petersen's I find quite remarkable, for he could as easily have quoted directly from my book to make exactly the same point. This is what I have to say about the matter: In the section on "tradition as ideology" (pp. 17–20), I note some of Bronwen Douglas's (1985) observations about the nature of ideology in that it provides "alternative strategies to be implemented selectively in action contexts and in the manipulation, negotiation and creation of social reality." I then go on to say:

> Traditionalist political ideology seeks to accommodate these wider dimensions primarily by preserving what is assumed to be a time-honoured structure of authority . . . [and which can therefore] be portrayed as the "natural" locus of authority. . . . This was a key element in much of the romantic backlash which followed the eighteenth-century revolution in European political thought, and which has been a persistent feature of Western conservative political ideology. (P. 17)

I proceed for another three pages comparing further important elements of European political thought with traditionalist discourses in the South

Pacific. One purpose in doing this comparison is to demonstrate precisely how similar the discourses are—thereby illustrating quite specifically the very point that Petersen accuses me of missing or ignoring. Indeed, one of the main reasons for my setting this out in so much detail in the book is to emphasize the similarities between the history of important aspects of political thought in the West and expressions of traditionalism in the South Pacific. This feeds directly into my rejection of so-called incommensurability theses.

Next, Petersen also misinterprets a point I make about the ideological character of traditionalism. He says, using a quote from Merkl, that it "echoes much too closely those classic political-science attitudes describing 'traditional society, in which vast masses live an unpolitical life, embedded in customs and usages they need not understand.' " If Petersen has read this into what I have set out then I can only say that it is quite mistaken. At this point as well, Petersen states that this and other shortcomings in the analysis are a consequence of a perspective that overemphasizes the place of institutions in political life. As I suggested before, some of the differences in our respective approaches to the key issues raised in my book may just simply be the result of different disciplinary approaches. But some of them, I think, are due to Petersen's simply missing relevant sections of my discussion or drawing inferences on the basis of what he thinks I've said rather than what I've actually said.

The next point Petersen makes, following on from the above, commits this and other errors. He says first, and quite rightly, that I acknowledge that the gap between the theory and practice of democracy in the West is problematic since "democratic institutions have largely failed to deliver on the promise of greater equality for the mass of ordinary people." He then says that if this is indeed the case (and he believes it is), then my entire case founders. As far as I can see, Petersen's claim here is a complete non sequitur. He also goes on to relate this to something he thinks I have argued, but which I most emphatically have not, that "it is the predisposition of Pacific Islands political cultures toward personalized and authoritarian government and the instrumentalist manipulations of modern-day elites that prevent these societies from reaping the fruits of democratic institutions introduced by their erstwhile colonial rulers."

Petersen takes issue with a number of other matters dealt with in the book, including the "democracy-as-alien" as well as the "democracy-as-indigenous" debates. With the latter, especially, again Petersen seems to have misunderstood the debates surrounding this matter and what I have drawn from them in my own analysis. He seems to think that my purpose is to deny that democratic forms have ever existed in non-Western societies. This is a complete misunderstanding of the particular democracy-as-indigenous debate

that I deal with in the book, which draws on the work of others on the topic, such as Goldsmith (1993).

What I have criticized in this very particular democracy-as-indigenous debate is an attempt by people like Asesela Ravuvu—a noted defender of the military coups in Fiji, of chiefly power and privilege, and of the relegation of Fiji Indians to political irrelevance—to describe certain traditional modes of politics as democratic when they are not. Ravuvu, for example, like many who have attempted to paint authoritarian practices in democratic colors, takes "consensus" to be a hallmark of his version of "democracy-as-indigenous."

Now, consensus is a key theme in the Asian values debate too. The term has often featured in justifications of all manner of authoritarian rule. In the South Pacific societies that I studied "consensus" has usually meant—and here I will use Rutz's succinct words—simply "going along with chiefly authority." My criticisms here, though, have nothing to do with other democratic forms and practices that have been identified, say, in the (precontact or precolonial) small-scale indigenous societies in Africa or North America or Australia, which may well be described as indigenous forms of democracy. Nor do I deny that the Micronesian societies with which Petersen is most familiar may have much more of an indigenous democratic character. In short, Petersen's points and claims about these examples may well be true, but they have little to do with the points that I was actually discussing.

But let me here acknowledge something in which I was, in a fit of pessimism, deeply mistaken about at the time I wrote the book. With respect to Fiji I wrote that "it remains highly unlikely that any significant constitutional reform will take place" (p. 74). Events in the meantime, I'm glad to say, have clearly proved me quite wrong. And yes, I am expressing approval of the change of political climate that has seen acceptance of a Fiji Indian as prime minister of the Fiji Islands—a country that has attempted to shed at a formal political level what did amount to a racist system of political apartheid that in the end benefited neither indigenous Fijians nor Fiji Indians.

A final issue that I will take up is Petersen's remark, following his acknowledgement that there are significant differences between Ifaluk and the substantially larger Polynesian societies that I deal with, that "[i]t nonetheless remains the case that the degree to which an outsider deems any of these polities democratic is closely related to the issue of whether the outsider believes substantial changes are necessary in order for that polity to achieve according to the standards of democratic theorists." I assume that I'm the ethnocentric "outsider" here (while Petersen is perhaps privileged as an honorary "insider"?). In any case, such remarks about "outsiders" are quite naive. The time has long passed (if it ever existed) when one could speak

unproblematically of insiders and outsiders in dichotomous terms. Such categories are not only superficial but also often grossly homogenized. This categorization is also directly related to the politics of theorizing that I mentioned at the beginning. I've dealt with this theorizing in the book to some extent and have also developed some thoughts more fully in subsequent papers (see especially Lawson 1999).

In the book I was at pains to emphasize the extent to which calls for democratization had come principally from *within* the societies concerned (see especially pp. ix, 9, 164) and had little if anything to do with outsiders—whether these were democratic theorists, journalists, politicians, or whatever. While external pressures were stronger on Fiji, the momentum for reform nonetheless came from within. And my discussion of the prodemocracy movement in Tonga and the pressures for extended suffrage in Western Samoa clearly demonstrate the extent to which these emerged from local social movements and were supported by local people who want more opportunities for participation—even if this consists simply of the right to vote.

Therefore it is by no means merely a matter of whether an outsider considers that any of these polities lives up to its own standards and expectations about what democracy is, it is more a matter of whether they live up to what local people—the ordinary people in these places—expect and want. This was a major focus of the final arguments in the book. It is also dealt with in the forthcoming follow-up essay that was written as a general critique of defenses of authoritarian political practices in parts of both Asia and the Pacific and the extent to which they are underscored by notions of "authentic" cultural traditions. The last section of this forthcoming essay is also an appropriate conclusion to the present discussion:

> [M]uch of the rhetoric about the Pacific Way and Asian values which has come from some political leaders and commentators in the region—and which is supported implicitly by conservative commentators in the West, including Samuel Huntington, is nothing short of an inverted form of orientalism. In other words, the dichotomization of the Pacific Way and the West, or Asia and the West, which has figured so prominently in much recent traditionalist/culturalist rhetoric simply replicates all the most obnoxious aspects of orientalism, but now in an occidental configuration. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, much of the practical action in support of this rhetoric by political leaders seems to have been directed most frequently against local oppositional figures and prodemocracy movements in the broad Asia-Pacific region rather than any "outsider" critics. This suggests that while the politics of iden-

tity and traditionalism certainly does have a great deal to do with fending off criticism of authoritarian practices as well as human rights abuses from external sources, especially those in "the West," it usually has at least as much to do with dealing with the more dangerous gadflies at home. (Lawson 1999; translated from the French)

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