

WHAT FACTORS FACILITATED THE DEMOCRATIZATION IN TAIWAN?

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Introduction

The current regime on the island of Taiwan, formally known as the Republic of China (ROC), is increasingly becoming acknowledged for its recent flourishing in democratic development and its accepting stance on progressive liberal values. For instance, as of the 17th of May 2019, after the proposed bill was approved by the Legislative Yuan (the ‘parliament’), same-sex marriage was legalized in Taiwan,¹ and thus made the island the first place in Asia where this is approved by the ruling regime.² Furthermore, over the years, various indexes have illustrated the ROC’s democratic achievements comparatively with its neighboring countries. For example, in 2018, the Freedom House ranked Taiwan second among the East and Southeast Asian states, with only Japan leading in front.³ Two years later, in 2020, the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index awarded Taiwan as ‘the winner of the year’ with it leaping up in the ranking from its 31st place in 2019 to ranking 11th in 2020, scoring 8.94 on a scale from 1 – 10. In doing so, Taiwan went from the “flawed democracy” category to become a “full democracy” according to this index, even surpassing Switzerland, which was ranked behind at 12th place in 2020. Currently, Taiwan is only competing for the top spot among the several leading western European democracies along with Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.⁴ However, it is worth noting that all the other 13 highest ranking democracies, in this index, decreased in a couple of points mainly due to freedom restrictions caused by COVID-19 regulations and measures.⁵ On the other hand, Taiwan, as an island, arguably managed to put less strain on personal freedoms in connection to fight COVID-19 possibly due to it being detached from continental Asia, as well as its early alarming of

¹ Amber Wang, “#LoveWon: Taiwan legalizes same-sex marriage in landmark first for Asia,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, Hong Kong News, May 17, 2019, <https://hongkongfp.com/2019/05/17/breaking-taiwan-legalises-sex-marriage-landmark-first-asia/>; Kharis Templeman, “After Hegemony: State Capacity, the Quality of Democracy and the Legacies of the Party-State in Democratic Taiwan,” In *Stateness and Democracy in East Asia*, ed. Aurel Croissant and Olli Hellmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 75, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108862783.004>.

² Isabella Stenger, “In a first for Asia, Taiwan legalized same-sex marriage—with caveats,” *QUARTZ*, Quartz Media, Inc., May 17, 2019, <https://qz.com/1621783/taiwan-becomes-first-country-in-asia-to-legalize-same-sex-marriage/>.

³ Templeman, “After Hegemony...,” 71.

⁴ The Economist Intelligence Unit, “Democracy Index 2020: In sickness and in health?” *Economist Intelligence*, The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2021, 9–11, <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/>.

⁵ *Ibid* at 10, 16.

the pandemic,⁶ and thus managed, along with various other improvements, to increase substantially in points.

Now, as the title suggests, one could ask: what make Taiwan's democratization so particularly compelling to explore? Arguably, the island's history shows an interesting development on how it transitioned from a one-party hegemonic authoritarian regime to a full multi-party democracy. The reports showcasing Taiwan's continuing rapid democratic growth and acceptance of liberal values comparatively to other nations, alongside its competing among those estimated to have the highest democratic quality, makes it a good candidate for analyzing factors that may lead to facilitate democratic transitions. Thus, I chose to aim the scope towards Taiwan and seek to discuss; *what factors facilitated the democratization in Taiwan?* Nevertheless, it is worth noting that other factors and key figures, that may have had significant importance, concomitantly as those presented in this essay for facilitating Taiwan's democratization, may not be discussed due to the restraints on the amount of content that is possible to fit from the vast timeframe of this longitudinal study.

The approach of this paper will be referring to earlier study material on democratization theory, specifically Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens' *The Impact of Economic Development on Democracy*, and utilize their theory comparatively along with the data provided by the several peer-reviewed contributions and other sources which have specifically aimed at explaining Taiwan's democratization process. The following sections will therefore include: I) a presentation of Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens' theoretical framework presented in their article, and why it is applicable when analyzing a state's democratization processes, II) the precursor of a modern Taiwanese state: modernization under Japan's colonialization, Chinese civil war and the one-party oppressive rule established under the Kuomintang, III) the socioeconomic development; economic and industrial policy developments' tie to Taiwan's transition to democracy by comparing it with South Korea, IV) a growth of a literary public in Taiwan and how public communication impacted the regime's allowance for an opposition party to be founded, and V) the extent of which historical geopolitical factors have had an impact on Taiwan's transformation to a democracy.

Theoretical Framework

When analyzing and discussing which variables have facilitated democratic flourishing, such as the ties to economic development, it can be helpful to look at other 'hidden' variables which might have had a decisive effect on the outcome of regime type. Of course, one could argue that economic improvement is correlated with democratization by referring to numbers provided by indexes, which may show higher democratic scores in states with bigger and more robust economies per capita. After all, it is largely accepted that economic development causes the population size of

⁶ Louise Watt, "What Taiwan Told the WHO About Coronavirus," *TIME*, TIME USA, LLC., May 19, 2020, <https://time.com/5826025/taiwan-who-trump-coronavirus-covid19/>.

middle-class citizens to grow, who, among other things, are more likely to utilize its expansive numbers to compete for political influence with the compact elite who have “exercised a monopoly of power” over them, thus ultimately leading to democratization.⁷ However, it gives little guidance to explain why some stronger economies appear to be less democratic than others. For instance, how come the economic powerhouse of Singapore has an estimated gross domestic product per capita that is double than that of Taiwan’s estimation (66,263 USD for Singapore vs. 33,401 USD for Taiwan),⁸ yet remains as a “flawed democracy”, by having worse results in “I Electoral process and pluralism, II Functioning of government, III Political participation, IV Political culture, and V Civil liberties” according to the Economist Intelligence Unit’s research, ultimately granting Singapore a score of 6.03 (ranged from 0 – worst, to 10 – best), while Taiwan, on the other hand, scored 8.94 in 2020?⁹ How can this lack of democratic function in stronger economies be explained? Clarifications to this issue can arguably be discovered by checking factors which facilitate specific behavior and political engagement from citizens, as well as whether capital is concentrated or not. These issues are raised and discussed in the article *The Impact of Economic Development on Democracy*, written by Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens. The authors here argue that there are ‘cross-sectional’ correlations which might heavily influence a regime’s democratic status. They claim that the issue of not detecting factors which have been decisive for the regime outcome can be countered by “a strategy for analytic induction based on comparative historical research.”¹⁰ What the authors attempt to convey here is a theoretical framework which is a case to case-based analysis where each countries’ individual history and past research are taken into consideration. By doing so, one may thereafter implement successive historical developments in the analysis. With each case opens the availability to modify the hypothesis utilized in the previous research. Ultimately, they argue that one can consistently stick to this theoretical framework due to its capabilities to be progressively adjusted to fit the needs of the topic being studied. Among the findings presented in their paper is that increasing free market capitalism in a state will in fact lead towards democracy. This is due to the instinctive consequence of free markets’ impact to shift the balance of power through the strengthening of the middle- and lower-class citizens, relatively to the upper-class and the influential elite. Thus, as

⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay* (London: Profile Books, 2014), 399; He Tian, “Towards a Theory of Transformation of the Developmental State: Political Elites, Social Actors and State Policy Constraints in South Korea and Taiwan,” *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, no. 21 (2019): 48, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1468109919000197>.

⁸ “Report for Selected Countries and Subjects: October 2021,” World Economic Outlook Database, International Monetary Fund, October 2021, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2021/October>.

⁹ The Economist Intelligence Unit, “Democracy Index 2020: In sickness and in health?” Economist Intelligence, The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2021, 8, 31, <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/>.

¹⁰ Evelyn Huber, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and John D. Stephens, “The Impact of Economic Development on Democracy,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 7, no. 3 (1993): 71.

aforementioned, it is noteworthy to analyze whether capital is concentrated or spread. However, Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens' paramount argument is that the order of causality is explained as follows: the economic improvements that capitalist societies experience will set in motion a broad development – such as urbanization, education, transportation, communication – consequently causing increased deliberation among fellow class citizens and alliance forming between different levels of classes. Therefore, the authors neglect the oversimplified causal explanation that capitalism leads to democratization. Their case study, as well as past studies on democratization in Europe, reveals that democratizing processes have largely been caused by upper-class citizens' will to form an alliance with the rising bourgeoisie's demand for political influence on the condition that this would also lead to protecting the elites' interests.¹¹ The following paragraphs will illustrate that a similar causality-chain occurred and led to the democratization process in Taiwan.

The Precursor of a Modern Taiwanese State

The island of Taiwan has long been inhabited but ruled by regimes stationed elsewhere than on the island itself. However, it is desirable to set a clear limit of what is necessary for the longitudinal study in an effort to avoid the inclusion of any other than that which has relevance or significant causality to Taiwan's democratization. Today, the island has an indigenous population of about half a million, which only make up for about 1/50th of the total population.¹² Most of the migration to the island occurred over the past two centuries however, mainly from China, and have had a strong causal connection with historical events that shaped Taiwan's future. Therefore, this essay will only go as far back as 1895. This was the time shortly after the Chinese Qing Dynasty refused to hand over Taiwan to the Imperial Japanese following the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which ultimately led to the conquering of Taiwan by the Japanese,¹³ thus emerged the era of Japanese colonial rule over Taiwan, which lasted until the end of the second world war. Throughout this time, the island underwent rapid changes as the Japanese, among other things, implemented technological improvements such as telephone service, the building of railroad systems, economic aid to develop new schools and strengthening the existing educational service, i.e., generally boosting urban infrastructure development with the construction of various facilities, increasingly modernizing the island towards post-industrial revolution standards. This would lay the foundation for a strong middle-class to later emerge.¹⁴ Although this seem like positive chains of events, it is noteworthy to point out that numerous research has shown that Japan's colonial rule over Taiwan more resembled one that sought to gain economic prosperity for Japan itself rather than increasing

¹¹ Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens, "The Impact of..." 71–72.

¹² Jason Pan Adawai, "Indigenous world 2020: Taiwan," *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs*, May 11, 2020, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/taiwan/3609-iw-2020-taiwan.html>.

¹³ Marius Jansen, *Japan and China: From War to Peace, 1894 – 1972* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1975).

¹⁴ Templeman, "After Hegemony..." 78; Tian, "Towards a Theory..." 47.

welfare for their colony. Additionally, Japan put in motion policies to assimilate the people of the island through various means such as through its restrictive education system, all to validate the holy status of the Japanese Emperor, which was something irreconcilable with the already existing culture and Confucian beliefs among the people with Chinese roots, i.e., the majority, residing in Taiwan.¹⁵ Nonetheless, notably from 1898, the Japanese' presence in Taiwan did lead to modernization as structural changes were made of the colonial rule over Taiwan. More specifically, Gotō Shimpei, chief of civil administration at that time, was assigned jurisdiction over domestic affairs in Taiwan. This authority had previously been concentrated in Tokyo, but this reform enabled the governing general considerable latitude in planning and policymaking. In short, among the economic improvements and general development was an expansion of the harbor in Keelung, connecting it with railways reaching both Taipei to the west, and Kaohsiung in the south, expeditious road constructions, developing telegraph facilities, establishing newspaper agencies and telephone services, as well as the opening of a hydropower plant meant to power the Keelung Port and administrative buildings in Taipei. These developments, by facilitating rapid technological infrastructure and economic modernization, made sense for Japan at that time with its policy goals to turn Taiwan into a supplier of agricultural goods.¹⁶

After the end of the second world war, which terminated Japanese imperialism, Taiwan was promised to be handed back to China. Up until that time, China had undergone a civil- and a world war which had changed regimes and shaken the stability of the state. However, the current *de jure* state was the ROC, ruled by the nationalist political party, the Kuomintang (KMT), led by Chiang Kai-shek. Nevertheless, the ROC would ultimately lose its territory on mainland China to the rapid uprising of the Chinese communist party, leading to KMT's retreat to Taiwan in 1949, parallel to the establishment of the new People's Republic of China (PRC) under the communist leader, Mao Zedong, on mainland China.¹⁷ These two polities, the ROC, and the PRC, have remained as the *de facto* ruling bodies over the separate locations, however both have claimed the right to rule over the same area they deem as Chinese territory, thus having heavy territorial disputes until this day.¹⁸ However, prior to KMT's retreat, the island was already under their rule, as the island was handed over by the Japanese in 1945 to the ROC. Chiang Kai-shek's rule was strictly authoritarian, fallen within the

¹⁵ Komagome Takeshi and J. A. Mangan, "Japanese colonial education in Taiwan 1895-1922: precepts and practices of control," *HISTORY OF EDUCATION* 26, no. 3 (1997): 308, 314-315.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760970260304>; Shiaw-Chian Fong, "Hegemony and Identity in the Colonial Experience of Taiwan, 1895-1945," *TAIWAN UNDER JAPANESE COLONIAL RULE, 1895-1945*, ed. Liao Ping-Hui and David Der-Wei Wang (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 168.

¹⁶ Murray A. Rubinstein, *TAIWAN – A New History – Expanded Edition* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 209.

¹⁷ Templeman, "After Hegemony...", 78-79; Michael Dillon, *China: A Modern History* (Second Edition) (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 268–284.

¹⁸ Hung Mao Tien and Yun-han Chu, "Building Democracy in Taiwan," *The China Quarterly* 148 (1996): 1170. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S030574100005058X>.

category of Martial Law, and thus began a legacy of oppression of the people residing in Taiwan, especially the aboriginals who were stripped from the rights to real estate, including farmlands.¹⁹ This oppression, as well as corruption within the leadership of the KMT, led to riots occurring all over the island as early as 1947, leading to a multitude of casualties ranging between 6,000 and 13,000 that year, as well as 20,000 to 30,000 killed or imprisoned the following months.²⁰ Templeman, as well as other scholars he refers to, argue that these events fueled the democratic transition in the 1990s.²¹ As this inequality was increasingly deliberated in the coming years, the *Tangwai* (also known as ‘*Dangwai*’) movement was born,²² which eventually led to the formation of the political party, the *Democratic Progressive Party* (DPP), in 1986. The foundation of the movement and the DPP were seeking to form a new type of governance in Taiwan which would be based on democratic values and equal civil liberties.²³

Socioeconomic Development

KMT’s presence in Taiwan, as mentioned above, did not only begin by an oppression of liberties for the inhabitants, but the regime also monopolized a magnitude of businesses on the island, and policy-agencies under control by the state would administer the economic development. Besides the land reform which eliminated indigenous businesses due to the perceived threat that they could develop to pressurize the regime’s legitimacy, the regime also implemented severe restraints to businesses in general. More specifically, in the 1950s, the KMT shaped a policy that would intercept domestic private capital concentration (DPCC), i.e., to prevent any private firms to gain a high enough degree of financial resources to get anywhere near to obtain a monopoly within an industry, which, without prevention, could have been utilized by firms as an immense influential bargaining strength to steer state politics. Instead, the KMT sought to promote a high number of state-owned enterprises (SOE) in an attempt to restrict the expansion of the private sector.²⁴ These early policies within political economy mirrored KMT’s viewpoint since their rule on mainland China; although hostile towards communism, they neither sought to establish a pure capitalistic system. Instead, they aimed for a state with full control over the industrial market, including a protectionist approach towards market interventions from international trade, i.e., a Leninist inspired model – aimed to establish state

¹⁹ Templeman, “After Hegemony...,” 75; He Tian, “Towards a Theory...,” 52.

²⁰ Templeman, “After Hegemony...,” 78–79; Shirley A. Kan, “Democratic Reforms in Taiwan: Issues for Congress,” *Democratic Reforms in Taiwan: Issue for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, May 26, 2010, 4,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160303234655/https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41263.pdf>.

²¹ Templeman, “After Hegemony...,” 78–79.

²² Tian, “Towards a Theory...,” 58.

²³ Anson Au, “Networks, Politics, and the Literary Public Sphere: The Foundation of Modern Democracy in Taiwan (1970s–1990s),” *SAGE Open*, (April 2020), 7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020927414>.

²⁴ Tian, “Towards a Theory...,” 49, 52–53.

monopoly.²⁵ However, Chiang Kai-shek would later realize that this approach relying on SOE was not sufficient to grow the economy, thus economic liberalization and foreign investments would ultimately be encouraged in 1958, although still retaining the constraints for DPCC to occur,²⁶ which turned out successful with its following economic boom, commonly referred to as the “Taiwan Miracle.”²⁷

But what does this policy have to do with the democratization in Taiwan? Further in Tian’s article, ‘*Towards a theory of the transformation of the developmental state: political elites, social actors and state policy constraints in South Korea and Taiwan*’, he points out how the rich industrial families in South Korea, known as the *chaebols*, had immense impacts on the state’s economic policy processes. This had a simple explanation: because the current military regime of South Korea specifically invited the chaebols to participate at the Economic Planning Board (EPB), established in the 1970s. The South Korean regime deemed this as a necessity to stimulate the much-needed economic growth as a means to maintain the survival of the regime, thus informally granting the chaebols’ roles to function as technocrats. This led to a concentration of both economic capacities, as well as labor and industrial interests in South Korea, i.e., a promotion of DPCC.²⁸ In Taiwan, however, as argued by Lee mentioned above, the SOE was unable to promote enough growth by itself. Building upon the KMT’s encouragement for market liberalization and foreign investments in 1958, the policy solution, which was set in motion in the 1970s in response to the need to generate further economic development, would support small- and medium enterprises (SME).²⁹ However, their low capability to influence the state politics, due to the prevention of DPCC to emerge, led to a decentralization among the business elite’s interests. In response to this issue, the KMT would invite many of the SME to participate in a ‘joint project’ with an aim to emerge an industrial sector within high-tech production, which would, in addition to its long-term success, lead to some increase in KMT’s political support from these enterprises.³⁰ Nevertheless, due to Taiwan’s extensive amount of similarly sized businesses, many were able to resist bribery by the KMT.³¹ Additionally, a magnitude of the SME owners in the 1970s were increasingly Taiwanese born citizens, not mainland Chinese, and thusly began questioning KMT’s policies concerning national identity. This stimulated a discourse which would eventually become a precursing factor for mobilizing these business elites together with the underlying classes to arrange democratic mobilization, consequently

²⁵ Templeman, “After Hegemony...,” 81; Hung Mao Tien and Yun-han Chu, “Building Democracy...,” 1143.

²⁶ James Lee, “AMERICAN DIPLOMACY AND EXPORT-ORIENTED INDUSTRIALIZATION ON TAIWAN,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (2020): 464–465, <http://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2020.9>.

²⁷ Au, “Networks, Politics, and the Literary Public Sphere...,” 4.

²⁸ Tian, “Towards a Theory...,” 52–54.

²⁹ Lee, “AMERICAN DIPLOMACY...”.

³⁰ Tian, “Towards a Theory...,” 54–55.

³¹ Templeman, “After Hegemony...,” 83.

forming the Tangwai movement in the mid-1970s, and ultimately the founding of the political opposition party, the DPP in 1986. Contrastingly, in South Korea, the promotion of DPCC had created a greater working class as well as a smaller, but more powerful elite than that of Taiwan.³² The South Korean working class initiated a will to transform the regime into a democracy as early as 1979, but without a strong presence from the middle class who could persuade the elite ‘technocrats’ to join the cause.³³ The regime responded in violent repression of protestors by utilizing military force.³⁴ According to Tian, democratic transition only took a step further once the middle class’ mobilization occurred which would prompt the ruling elites to initiate a change of their legitimacy formula towards the regime. This would occur in the mid-1980s in South Korea, where two elites from the chaebols signified an opposition to the martial law regime, mobilizing the middle class and ultimately led to further support from ruling elites to steer South Korea towards a democratic transition, which was finally reached in 1987.³⁵

A Growth of a Taiwanese Literary Public

As a possible reaction to the founding of the DPP in 1986, one may ask; what constituted the KMT to allow an opposing political party to emerge? A response to this question can be found by diving into Au’s article, *Networks, Politics, and the Literary Public Sphere: The Foundation of Modern Democracy in Taiwan (1970s-1990s)*, where he examines how a rise in the literary public sphere generated a rational-critical thought. Au explains the conditions of rational-critical thought to be a “generalization of knowledge and exposure to dissonant perspectives,”³⁶ which would then lead to create the often-mentioned term *intelligentsia* among the citizens of Taiwan, ultimately facilitating civil society to grow towards deliberative democracy. In this article, Au utilizes the framework for explaining the structural transformation of the public sphere, presented in Jürgen Habermas’ earlier research contributions, which focus on the rise of rational-critical thought and how it led to facilitate transitions to deliberative democracies in England, France and Germany during the 18th and 19th-centuries.³⁷ Habermas elaborates that it was no coincidence that the public sphere, which generated the more commonly used term *public opinion*, would occur in the late 18th century. In short, he explains that at this time of history, the division of the feudal estates, i.e., the church, monarchs, and nobility, split into a polarized formation which would form a chain reaction to divide the public authorities and the actors occupying themselves within production and trading, e.g., corporations and organizations, who would form a ‘bourgeois sphere’ which would lay the foundation of public opinion

³² Tian, “Towards a Theory...,” 54, 58.

³³ Ibid at 57.

³⁴ Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: a Modern History* (New York: Norton, 2005), 381.

³⁵ Tian, “Towards a Theory...,” 58.

³⁶ Au, “Networks, Politics, and the Literary Public Sphere...,” 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

forming within the public sphere. He continues by arguing that this heavily impacted democratic transition in both France and England.³⁸ Au argues that the same occurred in Taiwan once its civil society generated a rational-critical thought and the elite reached intelligentsia, which ultimately led to the birth of the aforementioned Tangwai movement.

The emergence of Taiwan's literary public sphere would begin its notable impact on the civil society during the 1970s and 1980s,³⁹ parallel to the increasing shift surrounding discussions about national identity by the younger Taiwanese population, both enterprise owners and citizens in general.⁴⁰ Taiwanese literature would increasingly communicate discontent with the continuation of Chiang Kai-shek's policies, especially after his death in 1975, as well as the political aim for the ROC to reclaim the Chinese mainland. This would cause a disturbance for KMT's foreign policy goal to recuperate the divided Chinese nation. Relatedly, in response to increased questioning regarding identity, which conveyed a distinct Taiwanese identity that was not to be mistaken as Chinese, gave rise to what became known as *Taiwanization*. Aside from partaking in the formation of a new discourse of national identity connected to the Tangwai movement, the Taiwanese media would gradually increase to express criticism in their newspaper-prints and radio broadcastings, including criticizing the regime's rule. In addition to Kai-shek's death, two particularly discomfiting events would heavily influence the media's discussions: Taiwan's expulsion at the United Nations in 1971 when the ROC lost its permanent seat at the Security Council, which would consequently be appointed to the PRC of mainland China instead, and further gradually lead the ROC to lose recognition as an independent state by members of the United Nations, as well as the United States' threat to cut relations with the ROC during 1978 to 1979. This ultimately did not happen though. However, these humiliating events, as well as the passing of the former president Chiang Kai-shek, would generate a favorable moment for the opposition to deliberate the need for Taiwan's independence to the public. *Formosa Magazine* is one actor within the Taiwanese media which heavily criticized the regime's policies, martial law, definition of national identity, and the inequalities and discriminatory handling of the indigenous population of the island. This led to an event remembered as the *Kaohsiung incident* in 1979, where as many as 50 journalists from Formosa Magazine was arrested and imprisoned, in connection to a protest by the opposition in the southern city, Kaohsiung, without first being put on trial. However ephemeral due to pressure from the U.S.,⁴¹ this would further fuel the growth of the movement against KMT's *resinicization*, i.e., to merge the ROC and the PRC to become one Chinese state.⁴²

³⁸ Jürgen Habermas, Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)," *New German Critique*, no. 3 (1974): 51, 53-54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/487737>.

³⁹ Au, "Networks, Politics, and the Literary Public Sphere..." 1, 4-5.

⁴⁰ Tian, "Towards a Theory..." 54.

⁴¹ Kan, "Democratic Reforms in Taiwan..." 4.

⁴² Au, "Networks, Politics, and the Literary Public Sphere..." 4-6.

Finally, if the civil unrest would continue this path, the current regime could face chaotic consequences. Therefore, as a response to this paragraph's question, this continuously developing situation by the opposition movement, caused by the increase of citizens achieving rational-critical thought, gave the KMT no other rational solution than to allow the opposition to organize politically with the founding the DPP in 1986, finally realizing the Taiwanese transition to become a deliberative democracy.⁴³ Furthermore, the president, Lee Teng-hui, who would be the last president to be appointed by political officials, but also the first directly elected by the public in 1996⁴⁴ – and later be commonly remembered as 'the father of Taiwan's democracy',⁴⁵ agreed with the opposition movement and DPP's demands to start eradicating the KMT's oppressive policies and martial law in 1988.⁴⁶ Additionally, Lee Teng-hui would develop an increased compassion towards the pro-independence movement which led to some KMT officials questioning his loyalty to the party.⁴⁷ This would ultimately steer to yet another political party to be founded in 1995, the *New Party*, which mainly derived from former KMT officials who opposed formal Taiwanese independence.⁴⁸

Geopolitical Factors

Another factor which one could argue has contributed Taiwan to transition from an autocracy to a democracy is its geopolitics, specifically its foreign relations. The previous paragraphs' discussions have given a brief overview among the crucial geopolitical factors for Taiwan, such as its relations with mainland China, the US, and the United Nations, which arguably influenced Taiwan's transition into a democracy. As for now, the discussion has not directly focused on this variable, but instead on how foreign relations have impacted another, such as media discourse and the economy policy as discussed in the previous paragraphs, and then how these facilitated democratic transition. But how has the regime reacted to its foreign relations exclusively regarding its democratic transition? This is a tricky question. For instance, due to the common heritage, culture, and language as people from mainland China, public cross-strait relations increased, as one would naturally expect, once Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT liberalized the private market and encouraged foreign investments and international trade.⁴⁹ However, politically, the territorial disputes between the two

⁴³ Tian, "Towards a Theory...", 58.

⁴⁴ Kan, "Democratic Reforms in Taiwan...".

⁴⁵ Lily Kuo, "Lee Teng-hui, Taiwan's 'father of democracy', dies aged 97," *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media Limited, July 30, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/30/lee-teng-hui-taiwan-father-of-democracy-first-president-dies-aged-97>.

⁴⁶ Au, "Networks, Politics, and the Literary Public Sphere...", 7.

⁴⁷ Tien and Chu, "Building Democracy...", 1145-1146.

⁴⁸ Ibid at 1159-1160.

⁴⁹ Tian, "Towards a Theory...", 55.

de facto states still held both to take security measures for possible military interventions.⁵⁰

A key point in time for Taiwan's geopolitics was in 1950 in connection to the outbreak of the Korean War. During this time, the U.S. would alter their foreign policy approach towards Chiang Kai-shek as close partnership with Taiwan, as well as Japan,⁵¹ would aid in US' mobilization logistically during the war, thus leaving room for the ROC to deal with its domestic affairs.⁵² Additionally, US' policy approach towards Taiwan was to formalize an alliance against a possible threat from military interventions with the communist mainland under the PRC, which led the U.S.' and the ROC's creation of the Military Assistance Agreement, and the Mutual Defense Treaty, lasting for a duration since 1954 until 1979.⁵³ Although being closely tied to the U.S. since the 1950s, one could argue that the Americans would have had a large impact on Taiwan's democratic transition. However, Kan argues that the U.S.' presence in Taiwan during the 1950s to the late 1970s did not pressurize the Taiwanese regime to abandon martial law for the benefit for a transition into a democracy, as there is no clear evidence which suggests just that. On the contrary, U.S.' representatives stationed in Taiwan during the 1950s would express that the justice system seemed fair.⁵⁴ However, even though Taiwan and U.S.' relations were reassured with the Taiwan Relations Act (1979), after the U.S. dismissed proposal to cut relations with Taiwan the year prior, the fact that this discussion occurred as well as the ROC's losing its seat at the United Nations Security Council in 1971, could have sent some signals to the regime which increased its discussions on how to maintain outside support to preserve its legitimacy. Therefore, Tien and Chu, suggests that the motivation for the regime to allow the transition to democracy could have come from within, i.e., that Taiwan's democratic transition was allowed in response to the foreign threat to lose its sovereignty. However, the allowance for the democratic transition could just have been to reassure the survival of the KMT as well. Nonetheless, they argue that democracy in Taiwan today is a necessary ingredient for the island's security as they stated:

These recent developments suggest that the extent to which Taiwan can consolidate its new democracy and preclude the dire possibility of becoming another Hong Kong depends on, among other things, the willingness of the international community to safeguard the right of self-rule and furtherance of democracy. In this sense, democratization has created an acute security dilemma for Taiwan. ... democracy

⁵⁰ Tien and Chu, "Building Democracy..." 1170; Kan, "Democratic Reforms in Taiwan..." 3; "Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8, 22 U.S.C. 3301 et seq.)," American Institute in Taiwan, January 1, 1979, <https://www.ait.org.tw/our-relationship/policy-history/key-u-s-foreign-policy-documents-region/taiwan-relations-act/>.

⁵¹ Kan, "Democratic Reforms in Taiwan..." 3.

⁵² Templeman, "After Hegemony..." 78-79.

⁵³ Kan, "Democratic Reforms in Taiwan..." 3.

⁵⁴ Ibid at 3.

now becomes an essential ingredient of Taiwan's national security [as] it helps enhance its international legitimacy, nullifying Beijing's peaceful reunification campaign, and discredit the PRC's sovereign claim over the island.⁵⁵

As such, it seems that if Taiwan's democratization did get facilitated by its foreign relations, it seemed to have been just partly so in contrast to the chain reactions following its socioeconomic development from free market capitalism. In other words, Tien and Chu suggest that facilitating democratic transition due to foreign relations would have been done to regain international recognition in the world, although, after being cast out of the United Nations, not recognized by the majority of the international community as an independent sovereign state. Furthermore, He argues similarly regarding the democratic transition in South Korea. He rejects the arguments stating that South Korea's democratization could be of geopolitical pressures from, e.g., the U.S., and other external factors such as the hosting of the Olympics in 1988 by pointing towards China, where similar 'pressures' occurred, but did not lead to democratization.⁵⁶

Conclusion

Taiwan's democratic transition has, as seen throughout this essay, been facilitated by multiple factors. Following the framework of Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, one can safely argue that Taiwan's democracy is neither a result of the variable of economic progress – as seen with the comparison with Singapore, or U.S.' allegiance, exclusively. The previous research contributions concerning Taiwan's regime evolution, economic development and media deliberations illustrate a combination of factors that have facilitated its transition. Japanese imperialism boosted the Taiwan's development in various areas, most notably in technology, communication, and transportation, and as Templeman's and He's findings suggests, facilitated a strong middle class to emerge in the following years, i.e., confirming Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens' framework. Interestingly for the case of Taiwan though, the KMT's economic policy to prevent DPCC, i.e., to prevent the private market to be steered by a small and powerful elite of actors, as with the chaebols in South Korea, prevented a big gap of common interest between the elites and the citizens of lower classes. Although both regimes ruled under martial law, South Korea's first democratic movements were without allegiance from other classes of citizens, and thus had a 'less soft' transition as the one of Taiwan. An interesting ingredient to the ease of alliance forming between different economic classes of citizens in Taiwan was the raise in questions concerning national identity, which especially gained motion in the 1970s. This is arguably an even more distinct trait of Taiwan's democratization than the DPCC prevention and SME promotion in

⁵⁵ Tien and Chu, "Building Democracy...", 117.

⁵⁶ Tian, "Towards a Theory...", 56.

economic policy, as the relationship between the ROC and PRC, with its vast political and territorial disputes, and the KMT's initial political aim for Sinicization, is an identical one, and therefore hard to 'recreate' in a comparison with other case studies. However, one factor which is uncomplicated to compare with other cases is the rise of rational-critical thought as discussed by Habermas' research contribution concerning its connection to democratization in England and France. The rise of communication is more simply facilitated through the expansion of the media, such as through mass-printed newspapers and magazines, as well as through radio broadcastings, and as such, is a result of general development. Therefore, the paramount argument by Huber, Reuschmeyer and Stephens that the order of causality from capitalist societies to the emergence of democracy starts with economic improvements and broad development in general can in Taiwan's case be approved as a theoretical explanation. In Taiwan's case, technological development was observed with early Japanese imperialism, which then incidentally, through greater transportation and communication networks, facilitated increased deliberation among citizens who sought political influence mainly as a result of oppression such as the inequality of aboriginals, martial law, and corruption in Taiwan. This ultimately mobilized citizens of different classes, leading to the Tangwai movement and finally the DPP and the transition from a one-party hegemonic autocracy to a multi-party deliberative democracy.

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