Political Change in China: Comparisons with Taiwan

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Comparing and Rethinking Political Change in China and Taiwan

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Political change in rapidly modernizing societies has been the bedrock concern of political science since World War II, when United Nations–led decolonization ushered 59 new states into being in the space of just 25 years. Two other states founded in this period have a special relevance to the field: Communist China and non-Communist Taiwan. China's 1949 Communist revolution was the biggest experiment in social engineering in the face of modernizing pressures that the world had ever seen, whereas Taiwan's rump status as the island not conquered by Communist forces would forever make it the symbol of the path not taken on the mainland, with all the implications this had for the study of China itself.

In the subsequent half century, history created an experimentally ideal comparison between the two states. Taiwan witnessed a dramatic economic transformation that was followed after 1986 by a phased and largely successful democratization. China experienced an equally dramatic economic transformation, but sustained growth did not begin until the early 1970s, following a quarter century of disastrous Maoist campaigns. Moreover, although economic growth in Taiwan was accompanied by a predictable and steady deterioration of authoritarian control, punctuated by periodic acts of repression, China's economic boom led instead to an apparent resurgence of authoritarian control following the repression of prodemocracy forces in 1989. Taiwan today is a liberal democracy that fulfills the presumptions of cultural universalists, whereas China is an illiberal autocracy that fulfills the presumptions of cultural particularists. Comparing the two Chinese republics remains irresistible, therefore, not just to scholars, politicians, and the general public but also to activists and politicians on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

This book is an attempt to rethink comparative political change in China and Taiwan. At present, there are several highly valuable comparative studies of particular aspects of politics in the two countries. These cover a range of

issues. Some deal with basic issues of political culture[1], national identity[2], and democratic norm diffusion[3] in the two societies. Others consider the politicization of the two societies as they developed, covering topics that include student protest,[4] civil society and elections,[5] urban politics,[6] and intellectuals in politics.[7] A final type of comparative works looks more closely at party adaptation[8] to this rising politicization. There are also, of course, dozens of volumes on the military, strategic, and diplomatic relations between the two states, which technically remain in a state of war. And a few make the link between domestic developments and their cross-Strait implications.[9] Yet there has been no sustained and systematic comparison of the causes and pathways of domestic political change in the two places, nor of the lessons this holds for theories of political change as a whole. This book intends to fill that void.

In particular, this book has three aims: to better understand the Taiwan and China cases individually, to contribute to debates on the theories of political and institutional change, and to use this knowledge to make predictions about China's evolutionary future. Each chapter was commissioned so that the volume as a whole would offer a comprehensive view of political change in the two places. Each chapter considers the theoretical literature relevant to its particular subject and asks how that theory travels when applied to the cases of China and Taiwan. The results lead to a reinterpretation of both places in many significant respects and to a reconsideration of several strands of political development theory.

Brief Histories

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949 following the defeat in civil war of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT), whose Republic of China had been created on the ruins of the Qing Dynasty in 1912. Measured by the Human Development Index (HDI) indicators of life expectancy, primary education enrollment, and income gains, the PRC did reasonably well: between 1950 and 1973, its historical HDI as calculated by Crafts improved by 50 percent, less than gains in Mexico, Brazil, and South Korea but well above gains in most other developing countries, such as India (32 percent) or Indonesia (24 percent).[10] Yet the costs of these gains were enormous. In the twenty years after 1956, the progressive ideals of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) were subverted by Mao Zedong's paranoid rule, leading to the deaths of tens of millions (estimates range from 40 to 70 million) from famine and persecution. Maoism became synonymous with the worst horrors of the twentieth century. The renunciation of Maoism by his Long March ally Deng Xiaoping, who came to power in 1977, cleared the way for a period of economic expansion and political liberalization in the 1980s that many believed was taking China in the direction of democracy. But something strange happened on the way to

the forum. The massacre of civilians in Beijing in June 1989 did not mark the last gasp of a regime collapsing amid the accumulating rubble of world Communism. Rather it marked the reassertion of state and party power. Nearly two decades since that event, with China's economy surging, its international role growing, and domestic political legitimacy intact, it is difficult to argue that the CCP regime is on its last legs. China's HDI score for 2004 surpassed that of the Philippines for the first time, marking the end of a half century closing of a material gap between what were Asia's poorest and richest nations after World War II.

The transfer of paramount power from Deng's post-1989 successor Jiang Zemin to the youngish Hu Jintao was achieved without major incident in 2002, and the party installed two cadres in their 50s, Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang, onto its Politburo Standing Committee in 2007, indicating that they will assume command for the decade beginning in 2012. Institutional innovations such as controlled local elections, greater legislative oversight by people's congresses, and a functioning legal system have been introduced since the 1980s without any notable erosion of party preeminence. China in the early twenty-first century is increasingly described as a form of authoritarianism with positive adjectives: soft, developmental, adaptive, institutionalizing, pluralistic, or resilient. Less flattering adjectives such as decaying, late, or sclerotic are used much less.

Taiwan's experience is often cited as the foil for the China case. The island of Taiwan lies off China's south coast and is geographically smaller than any of China's provinces or autonomous regions. Japan seized Taiwan after expelling the Qing dynasty from the Korean peninsula and seizing ports around Beijing in the first Sino-Japanese war of 1894–1895. Under Japanese sovereignty and then direct colonial rule from 1910 on, Taiwan's economic and administrative infrastructure improved markedly. Taiwan was turned over to the KMT in 1945 as part of the postwar agreement among the Allied Powers. Within a few short years, that minor possession took on life-and-death significance for the KMT. As Communist armies swept across China during the 1946–1950 civil war, KMT forces retreated to the island, which soon constituted the entire de facto territory of the Republic of China.

Under KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek, Taiwan was run as an authoritarian state. But private ownership and semicompetitive local elections made Taiwan a far more liberalized regime than the CCP regime on the mainland from the very start. Moreover, as KMT plans to retake China withered in the 1960s, it began to widen the scope and competitiveness of elections. In 1969, three years *before* the Sino-US rapprochement that followed Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations, the first in a series of national-level elections was held for a portion of the seats in the three branches of parliament (the Legislative Yuan that passes bills, the National Assembly that chooses the president, and the Control Yuan that monitors government corruption). The

Taipei City Council also elected new members for the first time in that year. This built upon a continuous expansion of local elections for mayors and city councillors that had been initiated in 1946, contests in which non-KMT candidates had consistently won between 20 and 30 percent of the votes.[11] Legitimate opposition to KMT rule, in other words, was seeded very early on Taiwan.

Credit for the final stage of liberalization is generally accorded to Chiang's son and successor Chiang Ching-kuo, who became deputy premier in 1969, rising to president by 1978. For a host of reasons—domestic and international pressures, and genuine personal beliefs—Chiang accelerated the liberalization begun in 1969 while keeping a careful grip on the pace of change. By 1986, roughly a fifth of seats in the Legislative Yuan and National Assembly were held by non-KMT figures. In that year, Chiang convinced the KMT leadership to complete the major political reforms by lifting martial law, legalizing opposition parties, and expanding direct elections.

From 1986 onward, Taiwan embarked on the final stages of a decisive if gradual democratic transition, culminating in the first free and fair election of the entire Legislative Yuan in 1992 and of the president in 1996. Some date the end of Taiwan's democratic transition to 2000, when the opposition Democratic Progressive Party won the presidency, breaking the symbolic link between the governance of Taiwan and the unification of China that the KMT had long represented. Taiwan's democratic transition sits squarely within the Third Wave transitions that began in the early 1970s in southern Europe and spread to Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe through the mid-1990s.

Can China and Taiwan Be Compared?

The conceit of the comparative method is that it is the *only* method by which to arrive at an understanding of any one place. By that precept, an understanding of either China or Taiwan must be couched in comparative research. Because of its apparently universalistic trajectory, studies of Taiwan have tended to be better at making such comparisons than those of China, with its pretensions to political if not cultural uniqueness. So can Taiwan and China be usefully compared?

For some, the structural differences between the two places make comparisons inapt. Taiwan had particular security concerns with respect to the mainland that accelerated its democratization in order to maintain US support, for example. In this sense, its democratization was externally driven. A host of domestic conditions also differ, it is argued: the particularity of Taiwan's ethnic politics, its colonial experience, China's size, China's more orthodox Leninist regime, and China's latecomer status. In addition, the KMT never

explicitly rejected democracy as a long-term goal, whereas the CCP rejects democracy, as commonly understood, as a future political model for China.

There are two possible responses to these claims. One is to argue that they are not, in fact, differences, that on all these points the countries actually look quite similar. China has its own ethnic tensions, faces international pressures to democratize, has moved in the direction of a universal understanding of democracy, and since 1989 has shifted to a developmental model that looks increasingly like right-wing authoritarianism. Although its commitment to "socialism" remains, the regime's emphasis on cultural nationalism, tutelary democracy, and capitalist accumulation echoes the KMT more than the Comintern. Reading accounts of the decades leading up to Taiwan's democratization is to be reminded of the strong parallels between the experiences of the postrevolutionary KMT and the postrevolutionary CCP.

Yet this argument misses the larger point that merely by making such claims we are engaging in comparison. Thus the more apt response is to say that these differences do not foreclose comparison but are rather comparison itself. Arguments about noncomparability are question-begging because they raise substantive issues that properly belong to the comparison itself. The assertion of noncomparability is a substantive claim whose analytic basis should serve to enlighten conditions in both countries.

For political scientists, comparability at a certain level is assumed across most states. Establishing comparability in any particular instance depends on the nature of the question being asked. In this book, we are asking about the comparability of political change in Taiwan and China, a broad and universal phenomenon that imposes no a priori conditions to establish comparability other than the existence of a functioning state. The basic facts of a state—a well-defined territorial boundary within which a self-identified political community exists—are all that is needed to establish comparability. These certainly exist in China and Taiwan. Beyond that, their similar cultural backgrounds, common histories in the modernizing influences born of the collapse of Qing dynasty rule, and shared regional setting make comparison particularly apt.

Comparability, however, does not mean similarity. To say that two places can be compared does not mean that the results of that comparison will be a finding that their actual experiences are the same: the finding may be instead that they are very different. One is bound to find in any comparison that the descriptive facts differ widely. Thus to take the chapters of this book, in some areas—value change, social modernization, and regime adaptations—the parallels between the China and Taiwan cases are striking. In other areas—intellectual pluralism, international pressures, and multiparty pluralism—the parallels are more strained. In all cases, the findings are only valid insofar as the premise of comparability is accepted in the first place. The China-Taiwan comparison is thus both apt and fruitful.

Periodization

A second methodological consideration concerns periodization: how to ensure we are comparing like periods. One approach, drawing on modernization theory, is to take levels of economic development as the basis of comparison. On this view, China and Taiwan can be most closely compared by imposing a 26-year lag on China (see Figure 1.1). Taiwan's 35-year period from 1951 leading up to its 1986 democratic breakthrough can be closely fitted to the period in China beginning in 1977 and ending in 2012 (which interestingly enough is when a new leadership will take command in China). (A recent World Bank recalculation has lopped about five years of growth off of China's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, implying a revised 31-year lag from Taiwan.)

Modernization theory's simple proposition is more descriptive than causal: societies experiencing sustained economic growth will be characterized by parallel social and political transformations that lead in the same direction: a democratic, constitutional, and nonideological state characterized addi-

Figure 1.1   Income Levels in Taiwan (1951–1986) and China (1977–2004)
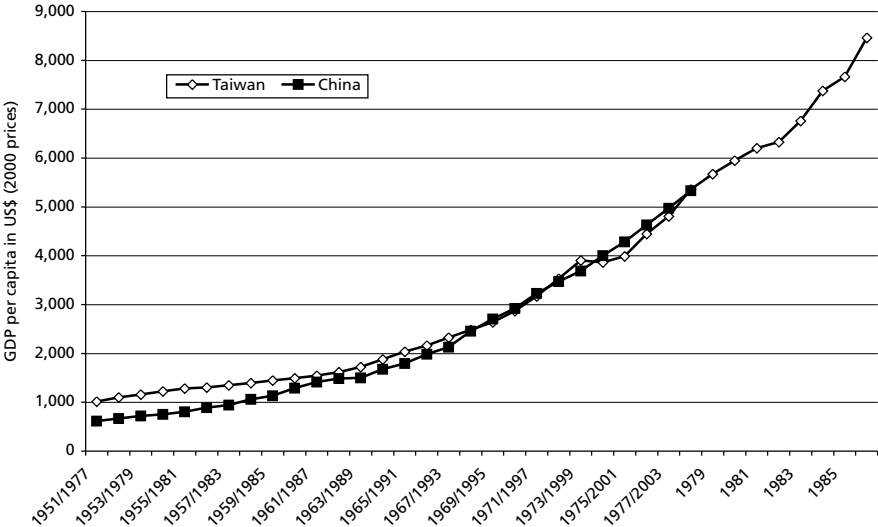
Source: Alan Heston, Robert Summers, and Bettina Aten, "Penn World Table Version 6.2," Center for International Comparisons of Production, Income, and Prices at the University of Pennsylvania, September 2006. Available at http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt_index.php.

Note: Real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, US$ purchasing power parity (PPP) in 2000 prices computed using the Laspreyres Index.

tionally by mass participation and an institutionalized state. There is a spirited debate among econometrians about whether a discrete, constant, and irrefutably independent causal influence on politics can be attributed to economic growth.[12] However, modernization theory has an enduring utility for a qualitative understanding of political change in places as diverse as Communist Bulgaria[13] and industrializing South Korea,[14] not to mention Taiwan itself.

One implication of the modernization-based periodization is that *China has not yet reached the income level at which a democratic transition would be expected.* If so, then the many explanations offered in recent years of why China has not transitioned to democracy are premature. As Wang has argued, China has not reached the inflection point where demands for strong rule are replaced by demands for fair rule.[15] It is therefore neither an outlier from modernization trends nor even a laggard. Inglehart and Welzel predicted in 2005, using cross-national data on value change, that "if socioeconomic development continues at the current pace (as it shows every sign of doing) . . . China will make a transition to a liberal democracy within the next two decades."[16] Plainly put, we cannot determine whether the CCP has outlasted modernization pressures until China reaches an income level at which those pressures would be expected to be most acute. As Zheng puts it: "By the East Asian clock . . . democratization is not delayed or 'late' in China. It has taken Taiwan and South Korea more than 30 years to accomplish the political transition from a developmental authoritarian state to an emerging democracy. . . . China needs at least another 20 years before enough empirical data can be gathered to confirm or disconfirm the validity of the modernization-developmentalism-democratization thesis."[17]

Authors in this book also point out several unique conditions—international pressures, a perspicacious leader, and legacies of elections begun on the mainland—that may have made Taiwan *particularly early* in its democratic transition. If so, we might consider the second decade of the twenty-first century as the "earliest" date for democratization in China. Moreover, if there are conditions in China that are likely to make it *particularly late,* a laggard in other words, then the predicted date of transition might be further off still. Strict parallels with Taiwan's pre-1986 political experiences are contestable for contemporary China. Therein lies the analytic richness of the Taiwan-China comparison and the reasons for the intensity of contemporary debates on China's political future.

The more that particularistic conditions need to be invoked to explain China's divergence from the modernization paradigm, the more we should look for other ways to periodize the China-Taiwan comparison. A second approach to periodization is to find the periods in which state-society relations look the most similar, where the stirrings of civil society activism and a state reluctant to repress it look most similar, irrespective of income levels. One

answer is to look for the point at which state-society relations were decisively fractured in the face of increasingly strong social forces such that limited accommodation, rather than total repression, became the new norm of authoritarian rule. At what point did ruling parties become governing parties in both states? Both countries have had well-known "massacres"—events that signaled a new accommodation or social contract as a result of the trauma they caused. In Taiwan, initially, KMT rule was seen as a liberation from Japanese colonialism. But rising tensions between a strongly authoritarian KMT with its mainland immigrants and the native Taiwanese population culminated in four days of unrest beginning on February 28, 1947, that left at least 10,000 dead. "2/28" forever changed KMT rule on Taiwan. It was the end of the honeymoon and the onset of an increasingly contentious state-society relationship in Taiwan.

The June 3–4, 1989, Tiananmen Massacre (known as "6/4" in China) is the closest parallel in China. The numbers dead are far smaller—perhaps 2,000. But the popular effect was just as great, since the movement had spread to some three-quarters of China's cities, and the official verdict on "6/4" would remain a highly volatile political subject thereafter. Both points mark the shift from totalitarian to authoritarian regimes, whence private business and incipient social movements first took root and then expanded in a linear fashion. By that measure, the period of liberalizing authoritarianism in Taiwan that began in the 1960s and 1970s in the lead-up to the 1986 breakthrough would not be expected to have a parallel until the 2000s and 2010s in China. Again, this suggests that given a proper periodization, it is too early to say whether China is following in the footsteps of Taiwan.

Civil Society and the State

Chapters 2 through 5 in this book deal with the question of socioeconomic development and change in Taiwan and China.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with two of the most important hypothesized mechanisms of modernization theory: value change and intellectual pluralism. Yunhan Chu is optimistic about liberalization in China, noting the steep changes in values evident on the mainland from the early 1990s to the early 2000s. There is little doubt, he finds, that socioeconomic development profoundly changes values, as evidenced in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, and that this is accelerated under democratic conditions. Value change is in a sense a refutation of culturalist theory insofar as cultural theory posits a relatively stable and distinctive set of social values that pervade a given society irrespective of its developmental level or institutional conditions. But Confucian views about pluralism and authority continue to exert a strong-level effect in all three places, Chu finds. There are limits to liberalism in Chinese societies. Chu

believes, however, that socioeconomic development and institutional effects are sufficient to create values in support of democracy. Chu finds educational levels in Taiwan and China were strong predictors of democratic orientations. Merle Goldman and Ashley Esarey are less sure about the transposition of the Taiwan experience to China. In both places, it was "establishment intellectuals" who were the most important sources of dissent. The nonparty movements grew out of these party movements. They also note how major crackdowns on dissidents in both places usually prefigured a period of regime adaptation. However, China's dissident intellectuals did not have the same media space and social support, and they were more likely to be either repressed or co-opted by the state than those in Taiwan. As with Chu's findings about culture, Goldman and Esarey find that Confucian literati traditions continue to bind in China as long as countervailing modernization or institutional trends do not unbind them.

Two further chapters—by Richard Madsen and Dorothy J. Solinger—deal with the question of organized social forces. Patterns of civil society and civil resistance form an intermediate link between socioeconomic development and political response. Both chapters question conventional approaches to civil society and resistance. For one, the notion of civil society as standing in an adversarial relationship to the state may be largely inaccurate. Civil society may flourish under authoritarianism through close cooperative ties to the state without losing its status as relatively autonomous of that same state. Second, both authors argue that civil society can often be highly illiberal in its orientations and behavior, particularly evident in contemporary China. This means that even though it may promote political liberalization, it will not necessarily promote liberal politics. And finally, growing civil society need not lead to democracy. Authoritarian regimes may often be strengthened by civil society or made more repressive. Civil society may be more a result of democratization than its cause. Although similar criticisms are now well established, even conventional, in the academic literature,[18] their applicability to civil society in China and Taiwan suggests that notions of civil society developed in Western countries may be the outliers. Indeed, given that Taiwan itself has often been portrayed as a classic case of Western-style civil society, these chapters imply that perhaps the role of civil society in the West itself has been misunderstood, a hypothesis that has generated much new debate in the field.

As Madsen notes, classical Western theories of civil society were ambivalent about whether or not it was a force for good. Both left-wing and right-wing critics of liberalism in the contemporary West, then, may be mistaken in arguing that liberalism is unique to the West. But the reason is not that liberalism is universally shared. Rather, it is that liberalism is universally miraculous, as unusual in the West as anywhere else. This is a reminder that the essentialization of the West is so often a mental stumbling block to understanding non-Western societies because it leads to a search for difference in

the non-Western world that is contrasted to a nonexistent and essentialized West.

Madsen notes that the states in Taiwan and China tended to adopt mixtures of Marxist, corporatist, and republican views of civil society—where its positive virtues depend on certain institutional or cultural contexts—rather than a liberal view—where its positive virtues are invariant to such contexts. Perhaps all authoritarian regimes do so similarly since they find a convenient correspondence between these illiberal approaches and their own survival. Taiwan's civil society eventually broke free of such constraints and since 1986 has tended to look more like the liberal view, on the whole a positive force for democratic consolidation. One question raised, then, is whether the increasingly popular academic view of "illiberal" civil society is merely a function of institutional context: authoritarian regimes make civil society illiberal in the first place.

Solinger also takes the Taiwan case as a stylized example of civil society, in this case private business, acting as an oppositional and largely liberalizing force. She finds that a similar story is not unfolding in China, where private business is co-opted by and supportive of the authoritarian regime, partly as a result of regime efforts and partly because of more fractured social networks among business groups on the mainland. As she notes, however, one must distinguish between two parts of the Taiwanese business community—the largely autonomous native community and the more state-dependent mainland community. The latter, which dominated the economy until the 1980s, was as co-opted and regime-supporting as that of today's China. Yang's data suggest that the broader middle class in late-authoritarian Taiwan was also fully co-opted by the regime.[19]

Solinger's chapter raises two questions, then. What is a "typical" or "normal" relationship between business and democratization? And what did that relationship look like in Taiwan? Although private business groups usually move to the side of reform once democratic transitions begin, their role in the prior liberalization process seems to vary widely. Indeed, several studies suggest that a co-opted business community is more the rule than the exception in the liberalization phase. In both Latin America and Europe, business classes were often regime supporters until very late in the game.[20] Indeed, the only region where business stood unambiguously in opposition to authoritarian regimes from the beginning was Africa.[21] The role of business as a liberalizing force in Latin America and Europe was more as an agent of within-regime rather than outside-of-regime transformation, arguing for greater transparency and inclusiveness in the policymaking process.[22] In China, a similar within-regime dynamic seems to be at work.[23] If so, then China is more typical of the typical Western model, and Taiwan is, if anything (even if we accept the standard account of its business and middle classes as regime opponents), an example of the relatively unusual African model. The debate on China and

Taiwan thus forces us to reconsider the conventional wisdom of a core issue in comparative politics itself.

Regime Responses

The chapters in Part 2 deal with the ways that regimes in China and Taiwan actively and consciously responded to the domestic and international pressures that they confronted. This section pays particular attention to the ways in which similar innovations have had dramatically different consequences for regime persistence in the two places.

Robert P. Weller's chapter makes two essential points linking Parts 1 and 2 of this book. First, civil society's importance to political change may lie in its emphasis on "difference" rather than its emphasis on "resistance." Merely by separating itself from the state, civil society's diverse forms of cultural activity can create the space that undermines regimes on the quiet, even if there are often uncivil aspects to that activity. Second, authoritarian regimes such as KMT-ruled Taiwan and CCP-ruled China can and did develop feedback mechanisms to prevent the emergence of political movements among this proliferating civil society. Those mechanisms may be nonelectoral and yet just as effective as elections in keeping apolitical groupings apolitical. Given a set of contingent circumstances that limit broader pressures on China, the CCP may live much longer off such "responsive authoritarianism" than did the KMT. Indeed, a new emphasis on reviving feedback mechanisms within the ruling CCP ("inner-party democracy" or *dangnei minzhu*) articulated by CCP general secretary Hu Jintao at the party's seventeenth congress of 2007 may herald an even more responsive party-state.

In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars adopted a bureaucratic-authoritarianism model in order to explain the reversal of democracy or the persistence of authoritarianism in Latin American states.[24] States that captured the gains of economic development could use those resources to strengthen their administrative and repressive capacities, averting the specter of democracy by a mixture of technocratic legitimation and brute coercion. Might a similar approach explain the longevity of KMT rule on Taiwan and the persistence of CCP rule in China? Might it be possible, in other words, for states to navigate the treacherous waters of the "transition zone" in which pressures for democratization rise through the implementation of governance reforms alone?

Chapter 7 by Randall Peerenboom and Weitseng Chen focuses on the ways in which regimes in China and Taiwan strengthened administrative and legal mechanisms in the face of rising governance challenges—ways that seem to mirror the bureaucratic-authoritarian model. For them, China and Taiwan's legal system developments were part of a broader sequencing of governance reforms prior to democratization. Institutional reforms aimed at estab-

lishing a thin or procedural rule of law, enhanced spheres of freedom, and nascent constitutionalism combined with tight restrictions on civil and political liberties when the exercise of such rights was perceived to threaten the state are common features of both countries at similar development levels. Peerenboom and Chen conclude that democratization in China is not late by Asian standards and may threaten some of the gains in the rule of law if introduced too early. Nonetheless, they suggest that some form of electoral democracy, although not inevitable, is likely in China's future because pressures for political participation are rising there, as they did in Taiwan.

Thus both feedback mechanisms and rights-protections mechanisms provided an extended lease-on-life for authoritarian regimes in Taiwan and China. In Chapter 8, Tun-jen Cheng and Gang Lin consider yet another type of regime response to modernization pressures: the institutionalization of local elections. Their chapter reminds us of how similar institutions may behave very differently depending upon the context. Bound by the promises of its inclusive ideology and democratic goals, the KMT in Taiwan allowed itself to be challenged and eventually transformed by the spread of local elections. The Taiwan experience was typical of broader comparative evidence: elections in authoritarian regimes create "unintended" openings that generate momentum for democratization.

The CCP, by contrast, has so far managed to contain, even subvert, local elections to its advantage. A key to this is that the CCP has maintained a distinction between local elections and future national political organization. Seeking a "third way" has ensured that local elections in China are *not* seen as a prelude to national-level democracy but merely as an adjunct to new forms of accountability.

As Cheng and Lin note, however, elections have a momentum that is very difficult to slow for a protracted period. Lindberg, for example, has argued that semicompetitive local elections provided the route to democratization throughout Africa.[25] The big question is how long the CCP can continue to limit the trickle-up effects of elections. Cheng and Lin believe that ultimately the democratic discourse is ineluctable, no matter how many adjectives precede the word. Even if the CCP can maintain a nonelectoral ideal type in the minds of China's citizens, the practical needs of governance, such as controlling corruption (also an argument made by Peerenboom and Chen) could force the party to embrace national elections despite its best intentions.

A key difference that Cheng and Lin cite to explain the different implications of local elections in Taiwan and China is the international pressures on the two states. The KMT was more vulnerable to domestic trickle-up pressures because it was simultaneously trying to respond to trickle-in pressures from abroad. China, they note, has used nationalism and a new discourse of global political diversity to limit such external pressures. This is the question taken

up by Jacques deLisle in his exploration in Chapter 9 of how the two regimes responded to differing international contexts.

DeLisle notes the window in which international pressures worked in favor of democratization in Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s. He finds those influences to be particularly important to Taiwan's democratization. Periodization in a global polity model is particularly difficult because global effects are, almost by definition, constantly evolving. There can be no strict parallels to the global effects felt by Taiwan in the lead-up to its democratic breakthrough of 1986. The question of noncomparability is a big one in this area. On the other hand, at a certain level of abstraction, one can delineate the main features of global effects on Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s: diplomatic pressures from the United States; an increasingly cosmopolitan middle class that felt embarrassed by its autocratic political system; and border effects from major liberalization in other Asian states, including the Philippines and South Korea.

It is easy enough to find parallel global effects being exerted on China in the 1990s and 2000s. Weller, for instance, wonders whether the prodemocracy environment that Taiwan found itself in during the 1980s is absent for today's China. Yet deLisle notes several ways in which it might be stronger. Moreover, several important democratizations took place in the 1990s (in Indonesia and Thailand, for example) and in the 2000s (in Ukraine and Georgia, for example). Thus, as deLisle shows, it is not so much the presence or absence of global pressures to democratize that matters so much as how those pressures interact with particular domestic conditions. What seems more important is why similar objective conditions have different actual impacts: Why do Chinese leaders and people not read these events as evidence of the need for democratic change? Or why did global democratic contagion engulf Taiwan in the 1980s but not China in the 1990s and 2000s?

DeLisle offers one answer: the KMT was unable to muster the kind of pushback against international pressures to democratize that the CCP could decades later. For most Taiwanese, democratization was a means of liberation from the state imposed upon them at the Cairo Conference of Allied leaders in 1943. For the people of China, by contrast, democratization was often portrayed as a threat to the freedoms they won after the death of Mao. And given China's enormous size and thus the comparative insularity of large parts of its population from global forces, the ability to muster pushback was all the greater.

The claim that global pressures were important to Taiwan's democratization is most often presented as an assertion. Yet global forces may have simply accelerated domestic trends well under way in Taiwan and done so without any notable pushback from the regime itself. In China, global forces are acting on a less momentous domestic trend, and they are moreover being resisted by the CCP tooth and nail. This dual contextualization is critical to explaining the impact of global pressures on political change in Taiwan and China.

What does the comparative study of these regime adaptations portend for China's political future? The writers here share a general view that the Taiwan comparison brings out the differences in China and by implication the different political future it faces. Although they all see the seeds of democracy lying in wait, most believe that in the immediate future, the CCP will successfully manage the political consequences of socioeconomic change.

Yet history is fond of playing tricks on predictions, and in any case it seems likely that at some point a CCP-ruled China will face a democratic transition. In Chapter 10, following a general theory of transitions and the experiences of Taiwan from 1986 to 1996 and China in 1989, I trace the likely implications for a future democratic transition in China. Would it succeed as in Taiwan or fail again as in 1989? I argue that it would likely succeed, given the dramatic changes in institutional and developmental conditions in China since 1989. How can we assess the likely nature of that transition as well as its consequences, if successful, for the democracy that follows? The answer here is more pessimistic: unless social forces gain much strength between now and the day of the next attempted transition, China risks falling into the category of feckless democracies, a "People's Republic of Chinastan," as I call it, where democratic freedoms advance barely at all, and the CCP remains dominant, if not hegemonic.

In Chapter 11, Larry Diamond stresses how the structural differences between the two states will likely bring about dramatically different denouements for authoritarian rule. China's large size, its different institutions, and its worsening inequalities and corruption, he believes, will make it harder for the CCP to engineer the sort of soft landing to democracy achieved in Taiwan. Given that pressures for democratization are unlikely to abate, this implies a tumultuous future for the world's biggest nation.

Intersubjective Comparisons, Intertwined Fates

These and other important *objective* comparisons between Taiwan and China should not overshadow the equal importance of the *subjective* comparisons made in China about the Taiwan experience. All human experience holds lessons for all humans, especially when humans choose to make it so. Some experiences may be more directly relevant to a given people at a given time and place. However, some experiences may become relevant through subjective perception, selection, interpretation, and application. There are few *objective* reasons, after all, why tiny Singapore—an ex-British microstate of four million people in Southeast Asia with a per capita GDP in price-equivalent (purchasing power parity, or PPP) terms of $45,000—should be considered to have lessons for China's political future. Yet this distant statelet is widely cited in domestic Chinese discourse (and by Peerenboom and Chen) as being rele-

vant to China. That discourse in turn has effects on actions. Subjective lessons are as important as objective lessons. In light of the importance of subjective perceptions to democratizations worldwide, much greater attention should be paid to the ways in which the Taiwan experience is exerting an influence on *subjective* perceptions in China. Like Singapore, Taiwan may be relevant to China because people in China decide to make it so, as either a negative or a positive example of their own menu of choices.

A brief glimpse at policy journals in China will reveal the interest with which China's elites study the Taiwan experience. For many writers in China, the Taiwan experience serves as a negative example.[26] Democratization may result in the ruling party's losing power, a rise in social discord, worsened ethnic divisions, and slower economic development, they believe.[27] Taiwan's resurgent ethnic politics is interpreted by China in light of its own unresolved national identity.[28]

For others, especially since the KMT's 2005 reconciliation with the CCP, the Taiwan experience is serving as a positive example.[29] Not only did democracy rein in endemic corruption, on these accounts, but it also gave Taiwan an international dignity that China itself lacks. Guo notes that six of his interviewees from officialdom in China voluntarily offered the opinion that Taiwan's transition is "a powerful indication that Chinese culture can transit to democracy."[30] Beijing University professor He Weifang was quoted in a Taiwan newspaper in 2006 praising the virtues of Taiwan democracy. "It has shown the Chinese people that they are not born with a saddle attached to them so that they can be ridden, driven, and whipped. . . . Taiwan's today is the mainland's tomorrow," he says.[31] Most notably, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences professor Zhang Boshu published a lengthy essay in 2007 arguing that Taiwan's democratization provided "valuable lessons" for China's own future transition across a range of areas, from social movements to political leadership.[32]

Moreover, Taiwan itself is generally cited as a successful example of the East Asian developmental model, not just by Peerenboom and Chen but also by domestic analysts in China, wherein political civil liberties are slowly expanded while the state remains an active agent in economic development.[33] Properly periodized, the CCP could subjectively imagine itself as a KMT of the 1960s and 1970s. Chao and Lee argue that "Taiwan has much to offer [to China] as to what a party-state structure should do to accommodate demands for more liberalization and participation."[34]

It is difficult to ascertain where the balance of opinion lies among politically salient groups in China, not least because identifying who the politically salient groups are is notoriously difficult in authoritarian regimes. At the very least, the ability of scholars and analysts in China to publish works suggesting the *positive* aspects of the Taiwan democratic experience shows that a counterhegemony is at work. As deLisle notes, it is all too easy to point to the "official" and "approved" opinion in China and to ignore the potentially much

more pervasive "unofficial" and "popular" opinions of Taiwan in China, views that censors cannot control and that continuously challenge official opprobrium of Taiwanese democracy. According to a Radio Free Asia report, one reason for the closure of the popular weekly *Bingdian* (*Freezing Point*) in 2006 was that it had published admiring reports on democratization in Taiwan that violated the party's proscription against anything but negative reports.[35] Indeed, the counterhegemonic view is often, perhaps most often, born of the hidden transcripts found in or decoded from the official view itself, just as salacious reporting on social and economic problems in West Germany by East German television stations during the Cold War tended instead to reinforce the virtues of the West German system in the minds of East German citizens. The balance of that debate, and how it is used in internal CCP debates, cannot be overestimated. The learning that takes place at the subjective level—informed perhaps by objective comparisons such as those contained in this book—may alter the course of political change in both places, transforming the objective comparisons themselves. Regime adaptations in China, for instance, have often been consciously grounded in perceived comparisons with Taiwan. Whatever the objective reality of electoral democracy in Taiwan, the *perception* among key political actors in China that it has *not* led to a more representative or well-considered system of rule has spurred the search for alternatives on the mainland. If so, what are the policy implications for Taiwan? Should it be more proactive in promoting the positive side of its democratic experience in order to counter negative views on the mainland?

Finally, Taiwan's experience is important to understanding China because the two are also *structurally* related. What makes this comparison particularly intriguing is that the two countries are causal factors in political developments in each other, not just through ideas but through a host of intertwined historical, economic, social, and political structures. At the most basic level, the origins of Taiwan's successful democratization were in China itself, where the KMT experimented with local democracy in the 1930s and held a national election in 1946. Taiwan's own democratization, based on a 1947 constitution written in China, was also in turn heavily driven by its anti-Communist stance and rhetorical adherence to the Three Principles of the People and then later accelerated by the US recognition of China. More recently, China's rise and its role in the livelihoods of increasing numbers of Taiwan citizens have generated greater support for the relatively pro-China political parties in Taiwan. China's diplomatic isolation of Taiwan, meanwhile, has retarded the growth of civil society in Taiwan by delinking it from its transnational counterparts.[36]

Taiwan has also structurally affected China in manifold ways. China's implementation of elections for village governments, passed into law in 1987, was based in part upon borrowing Taiwan's practice with its own village elections since the 1950s. Village elections in Fujian Province, meanwhile, have begun to mimic the electioneering styles of Taiwan. Taiwan's vast investments

in China ($100 billion worth), exports to China (its number one market), and social migration to China (one million citizens) are also bringing with them both the norms of a liberal society and the society-empowering forces of economic modernization. Economic and social interdependence is, after all, a two-way street. Taiwan may be exporting its democracy to China along with its people and capital, even as it feels constrained in its own domestic political development by those same factors. For some analysts, Taiwan's push for greater autonomy or even independence subverts the democratic project in China itself by strengthening chauvinistic nationalism in China. If so, should Taiwan rein in its domestic political change? In other ways, Taiwan's strengthening of democratic commitments in Asia has altered the regional landscape of which China itself wants to be a part.

The comparison of Taiwan and China then must always keep in mind not just objective analytic comparisons (the topic of this book) and subjective analytic comparisons, but also how both of these are shaped by the actual interdependencies across the Taiwan Strait. Reality, in this case, has a way of intruding upon scholarly analysis.

Lessons Learned

In answer to the first of the three aims of this book, this chapter forces us to rethink the Taiwan and China experiences in a fundamental way. Simply put, once one examines the Taiwan case in any detail, the simplifying assumptions of modernization theory begin to have less and less analytic power. Value change, socioeconomic development, and rising social forces were preconditions for democratization, to be sure. However, these only provided background conditions. The critical reasons why democratization, as opposed to some continually adapting form of authoritarianism, emerged in Taiwan lie elsewhere. One reason is the international environment and its subjective interpretation by Taiwanese leaders. Another has to do with the ideals and expectations set in motion by the Three Principles of the People and Taiwan's attempts to distinguish itself from China. Another concerns the shift of civil society from co-opted to oppositional, partly as a result of adaptations by the state itself.

If this "most typical" case of modernization cannot be explained except with reference to state actions, then the opposite might be true of China. Often set out as a foil to modernization theories, China may fit the broad contours of such a theory more than is widely assumed. The same value changes, socioeconomic development, and rising social forces are evident in China, and properly periodized it would not be expected to experience major political transformation until the 2020s. More to the point, the ability of the CCP regime to resist the pressures for political opening that the KMT eventually succumbed

to is not itself evidence that those pressures—the "modernization pressures" as we might call them—are not at work in China. China's ability to subjectively interpret the global environment as arguing in favor of continued authoritarian rule, and its ability to ensure that regime adaptations and a rising civil society do not unseat the party itself, are evidence of an ability to resist these pressures, not evidence that such pressures do not exist. Again, state actions are paramount in any explanation of regime outcomes.

This inversion of conventional wisdom about Taiwan and China bespeaks the importance of case histories in understanding political change in any place. The argument for case histories is not just that they lard simplified understandings with complex details but that they may change the simplified understandings themselves. The details provided on the China and Taiwan cases certainly afford the possibilities of such a rethink, as outlined above. Yet the cases also simultaneously attest to the relevance of one of the most enduring macrostructural theories of political change, once properly interpreted. It may be more accurate to describe modernization theory as a paradigm rather than a theory—a general model rather than a specific hypothesis about political change. These case studies illustrate the continued value of such paradigms for contextualizing and comparing case studies.

The analytical richness of the Taiwan-China comparison and the consciously theoretical way in which the comparison is tackled by the authors of these chapters yield several substantive lessons for political science as well. For one, as mentioned, modernization theory should be properly understood as a source of pressures for political changes but not as a cause of them. Developmental conditions are too far removed from the causes of political change. Moreover, they may operate in opposing directions. Delays and countervailing pressures brought about by authoritarian regimes are always possible. Regimes that continue to adapt to changing demands and that bottle up path-dependent expectations of democratization may endure the pains of rapid development without a grimace. To use Goodwin's terms, states that become more inclusive (as opposed to exclusive), more bureaucratic-rational (versus patrimonial), and more capacity rich (versus capacity starved) stand a good chance of averting revolutionary change.[37] The KMT could not sustain itself without a democratic transformation because its exclusiveness threatened a legitimacy crisis. China appears to have averted a similar fate by remaining sufficiently inclusive, empowered, and rational. But these variables are subjective, not objective. Necessary state action to avert democratic change in China is being constantly redefined in the face of changing social values and expectations.

Second, strong civil societies tend to go hand in hand with strong states.[38] The two may become oppositional, and it may remain analytically useful to compare their relative power—as I do in Chapter 10 to understand the implications for democratic consolidation. But in terms of absolute power, the two

tend to move in tandem. One cannot understand the rise of civil society in Taiwan or China except in the context of the rise of an institutionalized state in both places.

Closely related to this is that civil society changes regimes, usually from the inside, but the direction of those changes is uncertain. The role of civil society in promoting democratization may not be one of promoting liberal ideals but merely one of fomenting internal regime pluralism. A truly "civil" society is a result of democratization itself. The KMT's increased fissiparousness on how to deal with the nonparty candidates and media led eventually to a preemptive move to keep ahead of those forces through phased liberalization. The penetration of the CCP by groups as diverse (and illiberal) as the Falungong religious sect and private business may likewise be creating the internal regime pluralism that makes regime unity harder and harder to maintain. Democracy, in this sense, could arise as a "fortuitous byproduct" of regime decay.[39]

Finally, subjectivity matters, and it matters far more than political scientists have generally been willing to admit. Underlying the assumptions about "social pressures" and "regime adaptations," for example, is the central question of subjective legitimacy. Legitimacy is not a fixed function of certain objective attributes of regimes but a variable function of them with wide latitude for subjective interpretation. Subjectivity also matters in how regimes themselves perceive and act upon the domestic and international environment they face. It might seem "inevitable" today that Taiwan's leaders saw the Nixon visit to China in 1972 as a sign that they needed to embrace democratic change, but this was by no means obvious at the time. This was after all the high point of the Cold War, and the United States continued to support authoritarian regimes around the world (witness Augusto Pinochet's coup in Chile the same year) as part of its containment of Communism. Nixon gave Chiang mixed signals about his intentions from 1967 onward, but his vice president, Spiro Agnew, told the press in 1970 that rumors of decreased support for Chiang's regime were "bothering the hell out of me." As Tucker notes: "If officials in Taipei had reservations about the Agnew channel, none was made apparent."[40] Agnew and other US officials gave every indication that US support of Taiwan was nonnegotiable. To retrospectively see objective "facts" in the leadership's subjective interpretation of the world climate is to ignore this alternative possibility.

Indeed, that lesson is made clear from China. The contemporary global environment surely brings as much objective democratizing pressure to bear on China as did the Sino-US détente on Taiwan. It has nonetheless been interpreted, and propagated domestically, by the CCP as an environment in which democratization is inadvisable. Again, there is nothing objectively true in this view, which depends instead on the subjective perceptions of leaders and their ability to convince society they are right.

Last, subjectivity also arises in the Chinese understanding of Taiwan. As comparativists, we have argued that the China-Taiwan comparison is both valid and fruitful. Yet subjectively, that view may not be widely held on the mainland. Chinese see in Taiwan an ethnically divided society and in Singapore a homogenous Chinese one, even though non-Chinese account for 25 percent of Singapore's population but only 2 percent of Taiwan's. This subjective seeking of parallels with a state whose stability and wealth are seen as more attractive to some reflects the persistence of intersubjective views and their importance to concrete action.

China's Future

Given its population, a democratization of China would represent more than the proportion of world population that was included in any of the previous three waves of global democratization. The effects of such a transformation would extend far beyond China's borders, probably fatally undermining Communist regimes in North Korea, Myanmar, and Vietnam and fundamentally changing the security situation in East Asia. China's political future is thus arguably the single most important question in contemporary political science. What do the studies here tell us about this most important of questions?

For a start, it is far too early to be pessimistic about democratic prospects in China. Although there is evidence that China's administrative reforms have lessened the influence of democratic demands, a proper periodization of the China case from any of several perspectives leads to the conclusion that the country is not yet at the point at which democratization should occur.

Another reason for caution in being pessimistic is that a reconsideration of the Taiwan case itself—considered a classic case of both modernization as well as state-society approaches to democratization—shows more parallels than was previously known. From the perspective of the mid-1970s, for example, many observers believed that the Taiwanese state had effectively co-opted business, repressed dissent, and institutionalized good governance and non-electoral feedback mechanisms. The country's long economic boom was seen, as with Latin America at the time, to have strengthened the state's ability to justify its rule to Taiwanese.[41] It is only retrospectively that we see how all these factors were either weaker than supposed or else were working in precisely the opposite direction.

Still, as Diamond has noted, the problem with comparisons across time is that global conditions change.[42] And one of the most important conditions that may change on the question of democratization may be the subjective lessons that have been learned about previous democratizations by the Chinese themselves. China's regime and to some extent its people are determined to avoid being "de-centered" by the global force of democratic norms.[43] In response,

many fine minds, both Chinese and Western and working both in China and abroad, have been trying hard since Tiananmen to develop alternative conceptions of final resting places for modernity that look very different from contemporary liberal democracy. Various conceptions of a vaguely left-wing orientation such as "*xiaokang* socialism" and "decent democratic centralism" and others of a vaguely right-wing orientation such as "Confucian democracy," "traditional Chinese authoritarianism," and "consultative rule of law" have been proposed as alternatives to liberal democracy for China.[44] To some extent then, the field is wide open and everything is to play for.

Of course, caution is the byword when seeking new modernities in the experiences of authoritarian regimes. Some scholars found Yugoslavia to be on the forefront of political innovation in the 1960s and 1970s, only to be blindsided by that country's spectacular collapse, with the loss of half a million lives, in the 1990s. Latin American bureaucratic-authoritarianism and African socialism likewise had their brief moments in the social sciences sunshine before economic and political breakdown revealed them to be unsustainable bases of political order even for the places where they began.

Asian authoritarianism—delaying democratization until at least middle income levels have been reached—has been historically vindicated by the successful experiences of Taiwan and South Korea, but less so by those of Thailand and Indonesia. The record of countries that democratized at relatively low income levels is also mixed: India and Mongolia have sustained democracy and growth despite democratizing at low income levels, whereas Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Philippines have done less well after transitions at low income levels. In the contemporary period, continued authoritarianism has served Singapore and Malaysia well economically and may be starting to pay dividends in Vietnam. It has been an obstacle to growth in Burma and Laos and an unmitigated disaster for North Korea. China thus steps into the spotlight as a critical test case of whether delayed or wholly averted democratization serves the long-term interests of societies better than early democratization.[45]

Authors in this book are torn about the implications of China's delayed or wholly averted democratization. Premature democratization may lead to stronger ethnic alliances, rising protest, or an uncivil society, all of which may increase the clamor for a return to authoritarian rule in order to reestablish growth and good governance. A hybrid regime or an outright democratic failure may result. A failure to democratize, or a long delay in doing so, on the other hand, may lead to rising inequalities, festering minority grievances, and weaker democratic norms. Again a hybrid regime or democratic failure may result, not because the state is too weak but because it is too strong.[46]

Viewing China through the lens of Taiwan is a great vindication of the comparative method. For not only does this provide a useful prism for thinking about China, but we are also forced to rethink nostrums about the Taiwan

experience itself. Comparison, after all, goes both ways, and in this case it sends us back into history to conduct new research on what is often thought to be a closed case. There is already evidence of similar learning going on in China. The implications of that learning will shape China's future.

Notes

1. Ch'iu 1995; Weller 1999.
2. Lai 2008.
3. Lynch 2006.
4. Wright 2001.
5. Bellows 2000.
6. Tang and Parish 2000.
7. Ch'iu 1995.
8. Dickson 1997.
9. Herschensohn 2002.
10. Figures are the percentage gain in the log value of the HDI as calculated by Crafts. Logs are used because of the nonlinearity of the HDI function over time. Crafts 1997.
11. Huang 1996, 109, Table 5.1.
12. Those arguing against a causal link include Londregan and Poole 1996; Mainwaring and Perez-Linan 2003; Przeworski and Limongi 1997. Those arguing in favor of a causal link include Boix and Stokes 2003; Epstein et al. 2006; Kennedy 2004. Kennedy's conditional probability analysis—regime transitions are more likely to be democratic where there are higher levels of development—is perhaps the most intuitive and empirically robust statement of the relationship. Several authors, such as Diamond (Diamond 1992, 108–109), have argued that the relationship is nonlinear at points (development at a certain level will strengthen authoritarian regimes) and may change over time in light of global political conditions.
13. Vassilev 1999.
14. Han 2001.
15. Wang 2005.
16. Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 190. Inglehart's powers of prediction using World Values Survey data should not be underestimated. In a book published two months before the defeat of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico in July 2000, he wrote: "Mexico seems ripe for the transition to democracy." Inglehart 2000, 95.
17. Zheng 2003, 62.
18. Edwards, Foley, and Diani 2001; on China see, for example, Beja 2006.
19. Yang 2007.
20. Booth 1998, 146–147; Campero 1995; Huber and Stephens 1999; O'Donnell 1973; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992, 6.
21. Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, 88–89.
22. Silva 2002, 89–90.
23. Li, Meng, and Zhang 2006.
24. Collier and Cardoso 1979; O'Donnell 1973.
25. Lindberg 2006.
26. Ma 2005.
27. "The Taiwan model is unlikely to spread to China . . . [because] the performance of the Taiwanese democracy has not been attractive." Pan 2003, 40.

28. Dittmer 2006.
29. Wang 2006; Zhang 2007.
30. Guo 2003, 231.
31. Zhu 2006, 4.
32. Zhang 2007.
33. Lin 2005.
34. Chao and Lee 2006, 227.
35. Radio Free Asia, Investigation Report, January 10, 2007: "According to our research, *Freezing Point* magazine, which has been very well-received by readers, has published articles deviating from official propaganda requirements on the subjects of the Opium War, the War against Japan, *the democratization of Taiwan*, praising Hu Yaobang, and criticizing academic corruption." (italics added)
36. Chen 2006.
37. Goodwin 2001.
38. Shue 1994.
39. Waterbury 1999.
40. Tucker 2005, 120.
41. "These private justifications have been acknowledged and even to a growing degree accepted by the Taiwanese." Johnson 1987, 144.
42. Diamond 1992, 108–109.
43. Lynch 2006.
44. Angle 2005; Bell 2006; Ng-Quinn 2006; Pan 2003.
45. Feng 2003; Gerring et al. 2005; Halperin, Siegle, and Weinstein 2005.
46. Way 2006.