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## **A Century of Quest: Taiwan's Democratic Change in Historical Perspective**

*Tun-jen Cheng*

### **Introduction**

The political history of the Republic of China (ROC) in the past one hundred years began with the collapse of dynasty China and ended with democratization on Taiwan. During its mainland years, the ROC, established after the 1911 nationalist revolution (and which has continued to exist on Taiwan since the Kuomintang or the Nationalist regime retreat to the island in 1949), constitutional democracy was often regarded as an unfinished enterprise.<sup>1</sup> Democratization, as part of the effort to build a rich and strong nation, was attempted but typically aborted until the final quarter of the century. Democratic transition—unfolding in Taiwan since 1986—has been a strenuous, extended, and episodically melodramatic process, and many challenges to it remain. But by most yardsticks, democracy on Taiwan is quite well established, an accomplishment in which Sun Yat-sen would have taken pride. While still facing challenges, Taiwan scoring high in Freedom House's liberty indexes and with a dynamic but fairly institutionalized political party system, is well on its way to completing the transitional path to democracy, fulfilling one of Sun's goals.<sup>2</sup>

In reflecting on the advent of democracy on Taiwan, this essay aims to answer two questions that are often overlooked in the literature of Taiwan's democratization. The first question posed in this essay is: Has Sun Yat-sen's idea or doctrine been guiding democratization in the ROC on the mainland and then on Taiwan all along? In scholarly writings on Taiwan's democratic change, Sun Yat-sen's ideas were rarely identified as an influence, not to mention, a driving force. If anything, Sun Yat-sen's political doctrine was seen as a legacy that political actors on both sides of the political aisle in Taiwan were keen to either neutralize or finesse. The marginality of Sun's ideas to the analysis of democratic change in the ROC/Taiwan is

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Tun-jen Cheng is Class of 1935 Professor in the Department of Government at the College of William and Mary <[tjchen@wm.edu](mailto:tjchen@wm.edu)>. Thanks are due to Richard Bush, Roderick MacFarquhar, Byren Weng, and Naiteh Wu for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> For example, see David Strand, *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Early Twentieth Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Freedom House scores are readily available online; for Taiwan's party system institutionalization in comparative perspective, see Allen Hicken and Erik Martinez Kuhonta, "Introduction: Rethinking Party System Institutionalization in Asia," in their eds., *Party System Institutionalization in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Allen Hicken and Rachel Beatty Riedl, "From the Outside Looking in: Latin American Parties in Comparative Perspective," in Scott Mainwaring ed., *Party System in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). For assessment of Taiwan's democratic accomplishments and challenges, see Yun-han Chua and Yu-tzung Chang, "Taiwan's challenged democracy in the twenty-first century," in Tun-jen Cheng and Yun-han Chu, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Democratization in East Asia* (London: Routledge 2017).

astonishing when compared to the pivotal position that the *Federalist Papers* have occupied in any discourse on the making and functioning of American democracy. The political thinking of the founding fathers of the United States has been meticulously analyzed, perennially relished, and constantly referenced, but Sun's political thought has been largely left out in the cold in discussions of democratic Taiwan.

The second question pertains to the timing of democratic transition. Why did the successful democratic transition in the ROC/Taiwan come only at the tail end of the long century of political change? Throughout the history of the ROC/Taiwan, democratic transition seemed conceivable, if not likely, at three historical critical junctures, namely, in 1946-1947 (when the Kuomintang, Nationalist, or KMT and the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, were engaged in a series of political negotiations hoping to forge a democratic political framework with which all parties could live); in 1960 (when a coterie of liberal intellectuals and political dissidents openly pushed for a democratic opening); and in the early 1970s (when the KMT regime instituted a number of political reforms). Could democratic transition have begun in any one of these three episodes of democratic fermentation? Why did the transition come only in the late 1980s?

This essay places Taiwan's democratic change into historical perspective. Part I, centering on the first question, assesses the ideational sources of Taiwan's democratic change. It contends that Sun Yat-sen's political doctrine obliged the authoritarian KMT regime to inch toward democracy, but by no means served as a detailed script for the regime to faithfully deliver the democracy that we know of today.

Part II, taking on the second question, dwells on the trends, antecedents, and events that led Taiwan to eventually turn a major political page to join the club of democratic nations. This essay contends that, while a few democratic groundings were laid during the KMT regime's mainland years and much of the postwar period in Taiwan, democratic transition in the ROC/Taiwan could not have occurred earlier. The transition took place in the 1980s because the KMT regime, on the one hand, was compelled by an international geostrategic environment to conscientiously embark on democratization, and, on the other hand, was sufficiently confident about its ability to manage democratic change.

The concluding note teases out some theoretical implications from the Taiwan case. The experience of Taiwan's democratic change suggests that ideology matters, and external expectation or pressure matters as well, but what matters even more is the confidence possessed by authoritarian leadership with respect to its ability to function and do well in a condition of institutionalized uncertainty.

## **Sun Yat-sen and Democratization**

Students of Taiwan's democratization typically examine how political reform in 1986 ignited the process of transition to democracy. Given that the pursuit of a democratic regime had been a century old, it follows that the making of Taiwan's democracy should be somewhat related to, if not deeply grounded in, the vision announced in Sun Yat-sen's doctrine on democracy. Sun's doctrine was elevated to the status of official political ideology in the 1920s, when the KMT regime began to exercise power on the national level. And yet, Sun's ideas and vision—so canonized in the official realm—has not loomed large, if at all, in the literature on Taiwan's democratization. Much of this literature has focused on Taiwan's socioeconomic development that spawned the new middle class, the carriers of liberal ideals and the mainstay of the

democratic movement in the 1980s;<sup>3</sup> on the strategic interaction between authoritarian elites (reformers and conservatives) and democratic activists;<sup>4</sup> and on the interplay between international pressure and domestic leadership responses.<sup>5</sup> It is as if Sun's ideas and vision on democracy were irrelevant to the *fin de siècle* democratic transition in Taiwan.<sup>6</sup>

Sun Yat-sen was, first and foremost, a revolutionary leader. He innovatively leveraged underground society, students studying abroad, overseas Chinese, and foreign powers to overthrow the Manchu; established the ROC—the first republic in modern China; and engineered this regime change without any reign of terror, as seen in the French and Russian revolutions.<sup>7</sup> Thanks to his legendary oratory and fund-raising skills and his complete devotion to the revolutionary cause, disparate groups coalesced to overcome adversity at numerous historical junctures. Sun was revered as the founding father and featured most prominently in all political rituals of the ROC. He had laid out a detailed plan for national economic, especially infrastructure-related, development, including transportation grids, harbors, and dams, a grand plan that was adored in both the ROC (in its mainland days) and the People's Republic of China (PRC), and arguably thoroughly carried out by the latter in recent decades.

Sun was also a political visionary for nation-building. As early as on the founding of the Revive China Society in Hawaii in 1894, he introduced nationalism and democracy as two of his Three Principles of the People, and added the third one, “equalization of land rights” (the predecessor of the principle of “people's livelihood”), to his political doctrine in 1906, on the occasion of establishing the Revolutionary League. In 1906, he also advanced the three-stage thesis of political development, urging his followers to begin with military rule and then experience political tutelage, in order to finally reach a constitutional democracy.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the 1910s, Sun explored democratic institutions, designed a constitution that would have five branches of government and a national assembly supervising the government from above, and refined his view on political parties which, he insisted, should be highly centralized, internally cohesive, and tightly disciplined. His entire political thought was delivered in a series of lectures in 1924, the year the first national convention was held. After the Nationalist Government completed its 1926-1927 Northern Expedition to neutralize the warlords, the five-yuan constitutional design was adopted in the 1928 Organic Law of the KMT regime and Sun's political thought became the official ideology.

Democracy being one of the three goals for national development in Sun's view, it might seem that, from day one, democratization was on the road map for the KMT regime to follow. It could be argued that the experiment with parliamentary democracy in the 1910s, the attempted democratic tutelage of the 1930s, the making of a liberal constitution in 1947, and four decades of local self-government and local elections in postwar Taiwan all marked the KMT regime's

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Hung-mao Tien, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Tun-jen Cheng, “Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan,” *World Politics* (July 1989): 471-499.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Yangsan Chou and Andrew Nathan, “Democratic Transition in Taiwan,” *Asian Survey* (March 1987): 277-299; Jacques deLisle, “International Pressures and Domestic Pushback,” in Bruce Gilley and Larry Diamond, eds., *Political Change in China: Comparisons with Taiwan*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> A notable exception is David J. Lorenzo, *Conceptions of Chinese Democracy: Reading Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Marie-Claire Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Fei-lung Lei, “Zheng-zhi si-chao” [Political ideologies], in *Zhong-hua min-guo qi-shi nan-lai de zheng-zhi* [Politics in the first seven decades of the Republic of China], ed. Fei-lung Lei (Taipei: Guangwen 1981), 248.

successive attempts to follow this road map. Indeed, to KMT ideologues, political change in Taiwan since the 1980s could even be construed as the inevitable consummation of a preconceived long march, haltingly as it might have been, toward democracy. To those who are faithful to Sun's teaching, the advent of democracy on Taiwan has validated Sun's vision.<sup>9</sup>

There may be some element of truth to this "original intent" thesis. To begin with, the KMT regime was committed to creating a polity that was a constitutional democracy in the form of a republic rather than a constitutional monarchy as endorsed by Sun's ideological rivals, such as Kang Yu-wei and Liang Qi-chao. Second, the 1947 constitution of the ROC, shelved (or "frozen" in Taiwan's political lexicon) at the turn of the 1950s, and restored albeit revised in the midst of Taiwan's democratic transition, clearly specifies a five-yuan (i.e., branch) government—the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary Yuans, as well as the Examination and Control Yuans—in line with Sun Yat-sen's teaching for creating a government that was said by some to be more functionally specialized, administratively competent, and ethically cleaner than ones in the West.<sup>10</sup> Until recently, the ROC constitution also had permitted a very active and powerful National Assembly, which according to Sun, should embody people's power to choose and remove the head of the republic, to initiate propositions, and exercise referenda.

Third, and most significantly, the political trajectory in the ROC seems to be largely in line with a pathway to democracy that Sun had envisioned. Sun's three-stage thesis of political development was a strategy for democratic transition for the ROC. To him, military rule was a necessary first step to build a new polity, as the formidable military commander of the ancient regime and numerous other strongmen on horseback in various regions would have to be neutralized before a nation could be built.<sup>11</sup> The KMT regime went through this initial stage of development in the 1920s, either defeating or converting all the warlords. The next or intermediate stage was political tutelage, one that would train and educate people to eventually exercise their political rights. This second stage was also indispensable to democratic development, considering that preconditions for democracy were poor (viz., low literacy rate, low income, primitive infrastructure for transportation and communication, and ignorance about the purpose, institutions, and processes of democracy). It was only after going through the phase of political tutelage that constitutional democracy could be introduced. Indeed, political tutelage was regarded as the prime political project during the Nanking decade (1928-1937), which began after the Manchurian warlord, Zhang Xueliang, swore loyalty to the KMT national government, and ended after the Japanese invasion went into full swing. Soon after the anti-Japanese war (1937-1945) was concluded, the KMT regime convened a constitutional assembly and promulgated the first formal constitution for the ROC in early 1947, according to which national direct elections for the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan, as well as an indirect election for the Control Yuan, were held. However, the constitutional order thus created was quickly subverted by the civil war with the communists, and subsequently upon the KMT

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<sup>9</sup> Linda Chao and Ramon Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> The Examination Yuan is vested with power to hold examinations for public services, validate their statuses, and assess their rights, obligations, and compensations. The Control Yuan is an oversight chamber of presumably nonpartisan independent investigators who audit and adjudicate. These two branches mimic civil service and censure systems found in dynasty China. Democratic institutions vary from polity to polity. Arend Lijphart, for example, shows that some are majoritarian and some are consensual. See Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> As Sun put it, 'state building is based on force, nation-building is on culture.' The first stage of political development is to use force to establish state authority, the main task of the military rule discussed here.

regime's retreat to Taiwan in 1949, most clauses of this constitution were "temporarily" placed on hold for almost four decades until the late 1980s.

The "original intent" thesis, however, cannot be accepted at its face value as it tends to oversimplify and idealize the effects of Sun's thinking on political development in the ROC. First, some of Sun's ideas have been disputed from the vantage point of democratic development. Sun's thinking about political development is most influential in three issue areas: a dominant political party, the constitutional form of government, and a pathway to democracy. Of the three, the concept of one dominant political party has been most controversial, but also most closely followed by the KMT regime. Sun prescribed a highly disciplined, cadre-based, and ideologically committed party to lead all efforts for nation-building, in particular, assuming the critical task of political tutelage. This prescription is understandable, given the situational imperative at the time of the 1911 revolution. As Chu Lien-pin put it, nearly all political parties in the early period of the ROC owed their existence to national crises rather than to socioeconomic development, and were primarily conglomerates of factions, overloaded with feudal social forces (bureaucrats, warlords, and political brokers) and attached to vested interests and classes. They did not represent new social forces.<sup>12</sup> Progressive forces aware of the need to modernize and remold China did flock to the KMT and its predecessors. But before its reorganization in 1914, the KMT remained a loosely coalesced, all-inclusive alliance. Frustrated by Yuan Shi-kai's imperial ambition and usurpation of power, Sun turned to the idea of Robert Michels (a European political thinker and author of *The Iron Law of Oligarchy*) to envision a highly centralized and disciplined nation-building party. It is from here a very short leap to a Leninist type of party organization with cells of devoted cadres in the government and society. In the Nanking decade, party discipline tightened, Leninist organization further developed, and the revolutionary messianic element drained away. As discussed below, it was only after the KMT transformed itself from a revolutionary party of the Leninist genre into an election-oriented, managerial-type of party that democratic transition became a palatable political proposition for the regime.<sup>13</sup>

Sun's view of the constitutional design also has had a checkered record. Sun Yat-sen favored the American-style presidential system, thanks to his American experience and perhaps the convoluted persuasion of Professor Frank Goodnow, the inaugural president of the American Political Science Association. The post-1911 provisional government adopted the American-style presidential system, one that Sun favored. Sung Jiao-ren, however, then chairman of the KMT, preferred the British-style cabinet system, one that quickly gained currency after Yuan Shi-kai dishonorably abused presidential power to serve his ill-fated imperial ambition. The 1947 constitution—drafted by Zhang Junmai—was more parliamentary than presidential. The organization layout of this constitution—a five-branch government supervised by a national assembly—was indeed faithfully based on Sun's blueprint.<sup>14</sup>

The spirit of this design was that the national assembly embodying the *vox populi* should be powerful, while the five branches serving the people should be managerially competent,

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<sup>12</sup> Chu Lien-pin, *Chung-guo jin-dai zheng-dang jien-du si-hsiang yan-jiu 1900-1927* [A study of the idea of political party oversight over state power in modern China, 1900-1927] (Shanghai: Renmin, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See Cheng, "Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan," and Bruce Dickson, *Democratization in China and Taiwan* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Lei Chen, *Zhong-guo-zhi-hsien-shih* [A history of constitution-making in the Republic of China] (Taipei: Dausian publisher, and the Liberal Thought Academic Foundation, 2011).

functionally differentiated, and ideally cooperative.<sup>15</sup> With such a distinct structure, the governing capacity of the ROC would not be unnecessarily constrained or strangled by Montesquieu-styled checks and balances. One certainly cannot fault Sun for this peculiar design. Democratic government as the agent of people can be constructed in different styles and with distinct organizational set-ups.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, a few scholars have argued that democratic institutions are culturally relevant entities formed and refined over time, and each democracy has crafted its institutions in its own way.<sup>17</sup> But, by the same logic, each design also develops its own problems. As the 1947 constitution was adjusted and (re)interpreted, the institutional design of the ROC government turned out to have even more built-in checks and balances and more problems of shared jurisdiction and organizational redundancy than those found in the United States. Many rounds of constitutional reform in newly democratized Taiwan were launched to rationalize and simplify Sun's constitutional framework. Thus, Sun's ideas in this regard have been seen more as a problem than an assistance to democratic development.

A second reason for discounting the value of the original intent thesis lies in the difficulty in proving that Sun's ideas really guided the KMT regime's pursuit of democracy. A lofty goal can remain merely a goal for an extended period of time, and verbal commitment to it without a timetable can be a good device for perpetuating the status quo and deferring change indefinitely. When democratic change eventually occurred, it is also hard to know whether it happened out of necessity or as a result of ideological commitment.

We submit that the implementation of political tutelage and transition to constitutional democracy provided the litmus test to the KMT regime's sincerity in following Sun's political teaching on democratic change. We will discuss tutelage here and leave the issue of transition to the next section. Political tutelage is a stage of preparation and training for democracy, a stage a few other democracies also have experienced (e.g., the Philippines between 1904 and 1946, and indeed the self-rule period of colonial America).<sup>18</sup> During the stage of tutelage, per Sun's instruction, seven programs were to be launched, including conducting censuses stipulating land prices, building roads, establishing schools, creating cooperatives, and widening revenue, all for the purpose of laying socioeconomic conditions for democracy. But the central task for Sun's political tutelage was local self-governance by the people via local elections held at the village and township levels, then county- and finally provincial-level elections to train voters to exercise their political rights. In Sun's *Outline for Nation-building* [Jian-guo-da-gang], eleven of twenty-five articles were devoted to local self-government and elections.

Political tutelage was an eminent political project for the KMT regime during the Nanking decade. Many regulations on local autonomy and elections were drafted, debated, and issued, but remained mostly unenforced, as the KMT regime was quickly side-tracked by a series of counter-insurgency projects. The earlier speedy victory of the Northern Expedition meant that quite a few regions remained under *de facto* control of the remnant warlords, even after the Nationalist Government was established in Nanking in 1927. But before the KMT regime was able to extend its political administrative arms into all regions, the CCP most innovatively

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<sup>15</sup> Lei, "Zheng-zhi si-chao," 257.

<sup>16</sup> Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *How People View Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), and Guillermo O'Donnell, *Democracy, Agency and the State: Theory with Comparative Intent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, eds., *Democracy, Accountability and Representation* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Lei, "Zheng-zhi si-chao," 258-59.

revamped its subversive strategy, abandoning its highly constricted and debilitated urban bases in coastal areas, and instead aggressively penetrated the impoverished, rural, inland areas. The insurgency of the resilient and elusive CCP drained many of the resources of the KMT regime. Worse, as the KMT regime was being cornered, the Japanese invasion gained momentum, compelling the KMT to suspend its operations against the CCP in order to deny Japanese conquest of the entire continent. The achievements during the Nanking decade—often dubbed “the golden ten years”—were by no means insignificant, as seen from the improvement of transportation infrastructure, education, and administrative apparatus, the recovery of tariff and trade concession to Western imperialists, as well as the elevation of the ROC’s international reputation.<sup>19</sup> But with respect to the task of political tutelage, the KMT regime often drew more criticism than praise. Even in the core regions quite well under the regime’s direct management, local self-governance was more apparent than real, while local elections were practiced only sporadically. The KMT regime seemed to be keener to build state capacity than to nurture political participation. It might well have been for preparation for the anti-Japanese war that the regime finally convened a national conference to encourage all social forces from all quarters to consider urgent national affairs. Representation for this convention was based more on selection than on election.

Paradoxically, upon the ending of the anti-Japanese war in 1945, and with a lackluster record in political tutelage, the KMT regime set forth to transit to the stage of constitutional democracy by holding a national election to convene a constitutional assembly, promulgating the constitution in 1947, and ushering in a would-be era of periodic and regular elections at all levels.<sup>20</sup> As the civil war between the CCP and the KMT regime loomed larger and larger, however, the first national election became the only national election held under the KMT for the next four decades, and only in Taiwan were local elections and local self-government institutionalized from day one of the new 1947 constitutional order. Local elections in Taiwan, as discussed in the next section, were competitive, regularized, and comprehensive, ranging from village head and council elections to provincial assembly elections. Local governance in Taiwan was real; Taipei city, for example, had been under non-KMT mayoralty for once. Whatever the KMT regime failed to do on the mainland during the stage of political tutelage, it succeeded in doing in postwar Taiwan. The track record of local self-government and local elections in postwar Taiwan arguably exceeded what Sun had envisioned. It was in vivid contrast with the proletarian dictatorship that was relentlessly practiced in the PRC.

Were local self-government and elections in postwar Taiwan attributable to the KMT’s ideological commitment to democratic development? Retreating to Taiwan and facing imminent threat from the CCP, the KMT regime could have either delayed or suspended all together Taiwan’s local self-government and elections when the 1947 constitution was declared “frozen.” And yet, not only were limited local elections permitted, but also they were promoted and expanded. Given the KMT regime’s determination to attempt to return to the mainland and use Taiwan as a model to rebuild China as a strong and democratic nation, the regime’s promotion of

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<sup>19</sup> Hung-mao Tien, *Government and Politics in Kuomintang China 1927-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972).

<sup>20</sup> Note that the U.S. had called upon the KMT regime to convene a constitutional convention to avert the outbreak of the civil war between the KMT and the CCP. See Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

democratic development in Taiwan seemed genuine and sincere.<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that many post-colonial democracies (Pakistan, for example) degenerated into military rule, and the constitution was declared null and void. But in postwar Taiwan, the ROC constitutional framework was not scrapped, but rather “temporarily” suspended. Martial law was decreed, national elections were postponed, temporary provisions were enacted to override the constitution, and extraordinary power was given to the president, all this for a borrowed time only. The promissory note for delivering a full constitutional democracy was rescheduled, not in default. Return to either military rule or political tutelage was ideologically not permissible or justifiable per Sun Yat-sen’s political doctrine that established a pathway to democracy; albeit lacking a timetable or benchmarks, the trajectory was unidirectional and nonreversible.

Local self-government and elections in postwar Taiwan might well have been a situational imperative as well, or at least a clever political device. First, they were a cost-effective way for an émigré regime to run an unfamiliar and initially alienated society.<sup>22</sup> Surely, blatant patronage (business privileges and appointive positions) alone might have sufficed to co-opt and divide and rule local elites. But local self-governance and elections were arguably a superior mechanism for the KMT to co-opt them. Local self-government gave local elites a stake in the system. Elections provided an arena in which local elites could compete among themselves, indeed, a safety valve to vent whatever grievances they might have harbored after highly redistributive land reform. The Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) electoral system was adopted, which was a perfect design through which the party organization could serve as coordinator among competing local elites.<sup>23</sup> Capped at the provincial assembly level, local elections could not possibly dislodge the KMT from the provincial government, not to mention from the national government. Non-KMT elite could govern only city or county governments. It is also important not to idealize local self-government and elections in Taiwan. They were tainted by coercion and suppression, especially in the 1950s, and hamstrung by the martial law decree and restrictions on civil and political liberties (such as the long-term ban on the formation of new parties and a free press) until the late 1980s.

Second, local self-government and elections in Taiwan allowed the KMT party regime to establish a democratic façade, helping to keep Taiwan’s affiliation with the liberal democratic camp and secure the support of the United States, especially during the first two decades of the Cold War era. Had local self-government and elections been abolished, the KMT regime probably would still have had political, economic, and military support from the United States. The 1961 military coup trashed the fledgling democracy and suspended local elections all together in South Korea, a country that, like the ROC on Taiwan, was a front-line state for the

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<sup>21</sup> See Taylor, *The Generalissimo* and Hung-chao Tai, “China Kai-shek’s Rise to Power: Reflections from his Recently Released Diaries,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, Vol.16, No.1, April 2009, 49-64. New sources, including Chiang’s diaries, show that Chiang could be brutal, impatient, and imprudent, but could be faithful, self-reflecting, self-admonishing, and truly repentant about what went wrong with the KMT on the mainland, and what he should be doing in Taiwan to make up for this.

<sup>22</sup> Alienation stemmed from the unfortunate February 28, 1947 incident that decimated the local elite. See Ramon Myers and Tse-han Lai, *A Tragic Beginning*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Under the SNTV system, a voter can cast only one ballot but a candidate cannot transfer any votes to help fellow party candidates to be elected. Nomination of an optimal number of candidates and an extremely even allocation of votes among fellow party candidates are utterly essential to a party’s fate in this kind of race. This system helped a highly organized KMT to win many bonus seats, while preventing opposition from proportionally securing all the seats that its voting share could have produced. See Hung-mao Tien and Tun-jen Cheng, “Crafting Democratic Institutions in Taiwan,” *China Journal* 37 (1977): 1-28.



Western camp. Aid and security commitments from the United States were not compromised in South Korea. But anything that helped Taiwan's security ties was probably on the mind of its leadership, as the security environment always has been more treacherous for Taiwan than for South Korea. Thanks to North Korea's invasion in 1950, South Korea's security has had the support of the United Nations, a blessing that Taiwan can only dream of.

### **Transition to (or Back to) Democracy**

Prior to democratic transition in 1986, the KMT regime seemed to have been given three windows of opportunity for early democratization. The first appeared to pop open in 1946-1947, when the KMT and CCP were locked in a series of negotiations for political reconciliation, a process that, if it had worked out well, could have kept both parties in the electoral arena and given rise to a two-party democracy, *à la* postwar Italy, where the Christian Democratic Party rivaled the Italian Socialist-cum-Communist Parties for four decades. A few liberal scholars in today's China have regarded this 1946-1947 episode as a missed opportunity for instant democratization in China. Liu Xue-wei, for example, has recently contended that China at that time had poor preconditions for democracy (*viz.*, low per capita income, low literacy rates, and a low level of urbanization), but that a rudimentary democracy would have been possible if the KMT had been more accommodating.<sup>24</sup> This counterfactual argument does not seem to be plausible, however. First, if the KMT was recalcitrant, the CCP was even more so, making a negotiated outcome unlikely. Liu himself acknowledged that the KMT was more sincere than the CCP in endorsing transition to liberal democracy. But given the unhappy "cooperative" experience in the recent past, it would have been unlikely for both sides to team up again to draft a constitution that was acceptable to both. Second, considering the CCP's ideological commitment to one-party dictatorship, it seems unlikely that the KMT would have accommodated the CCP's demand (reserved domain, People's Liberation Army, and so on), and the CCP would have been content with such an offer. Third, the KMT and its minor allies hammered out a constitution alone without the CCP's participation, but this constitution was adopted to usher in a liberal democracy that would allow new political forces to grow and potentially dislodge the KMT. Indeed, we can reformulate Liu Xue-wei's counterfactual argument to submit that, had it not been for the civil war, democratic transition probably would have been completed on the mainland.

The second window for possible democratic change was forced open from below in 1960, when Lei Chen and a small number of other political elites boldly proposed to form a genuine new political party. Lei, a former senior KMT official, and his colleagues in a journal that he founded, were liberal-minded intellectuals, while a small number of Taiwanese political dissidents who joined his effort were gentry-type, educated under Japanese colonial rule, and well-entrenched in postwar Taiwan society. This would-be party was poised to organize political opposition in Taiwan's local elections, challenge the legitimacy of the KMT regime that was indefinitely applying the temporary provisions of the constitution, and perhaps demand the resumption of national elections. Lei Chen and his cohort could not have dislodged the KMT from power. Yet, the KMT regime dished out a prompt crackdown, clearly revealing a red line

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<sup>24</sup> For the latest writing on this, see Liu Xue-wei, "Zhong-guo di-san-tsu gong-he bi-you zhi lu" [The pathway to the third republic in modern China], April 22, 2011, [www.chinaelections.org](http://www.chinaelections.org) (accessed April 22, 2011).

for Taiwan's local self-government and elections on the KMT's watch: political opposition would be tolerated only if it were individual-based, localized, and not questioning the temporary provisions framework of the constitution. At the height of the Cold War confrontation between the two international blocs, political crackdown in Taiwan did not impose a stiff diplomatic price on the KMT regime.<sup>25</sup> The short-lived democratic fermentation in 1960 soon gave way to the first decade of spectacular economic growth in postwar Taiwan that soon turned Taiwan into one of the two most admired East Asian newly industrializing nations (South Korea being the other). Once Lei was imprisoned and his cohorts intimidated, very few stepped in to again hoist the democratic banner against the KMT regime. The very few who did either were quickly rounded up or had to flee abroad for survival. For the majority of people in Taiwan, political fear was too strong to wrestle with and, as economy began to take off, the improving living standard without political liberalization was worthwhile longing for.

While the KMT regime slammed shut the second window for possible democratic change in 1960, its action helped to open the third window of opportunity in the early 1970s, when newly appointed premier Chiang Ching-kuo introduced a series of modest political reforms to expand and rejuvenate political recruitment and bring forth good governance. These reforms were a response to societal demand for change, a demand made by the emerging new middle class in an international environment in which Taiwan found itself more and more isolated. The new and young social force came of age during the years of economic prosperity. Having little memory of wartime and postwar hardships, its attention and thought were geared toward the future, not the past. At the time that this social force was taking shape, Taiwan's diplomatic front had begun to erode. At the turn of the 1970s following Nixon's visit to China, more and more Western allies of the United States switched their diplomatic ties from Taipei to Beijing, and in 1971, the ROC lost its seat in the United Nations without being given any compensatory arrangement. Numerous activists of this growing and maturing social force cleverly aired their demand for political change in a patriotic tone, advancing propositions (such as "To reform is to save the country") that the regime hardly could denounce.

The demand for political reform initially was centered on the renewal of national representative organs (the National Assembly, the Legislative Yuan, and the Control Yuan). The regime responded by introducing supplementary elections in the Taiwan region to inject new blood into these three organs whose existing members, elected in 1947, were rapidly aging. The regime also preemptively drafted quite a number of young political activists into the KMT or the government. However, as the patriotic movement morphed into a democratic movement, public discourse covered more and more taboo topics, and as the newly recruited cadres bolted from the party to lead the democratic movement, the regime paused, placing already slow-moving political reform on hold, mobilizing conservative ideologues to preach the virtue of maintaining the status quo (viz., political stability is essential to economic prosperity), and pressing libel suits, even arresting democracy activists. The slowdown in reform and the resort to a crackdown, however, only led the opposition to grow larger and to become more motivated and innovative in

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Bush, *At Cross Purposes*, Amonk, NY: Sharpe 2004, ch 3. The U.S. was initially thinking of 'advising' late President Chiang Kai-shek not to crack down Lei Chen, but at the height of the Cold War, Ambassador E. Drumright urged not to exert pressure on the KMT regime.

pushing its cause,<sup>26</sup> As the opposition grew and changed tacts, the regime would then accommodate some demand from the opposition and resume the pace of reform. As the opposition continued to grow, the regime shifted gears to contain and suppress. The crackdown sometimes was brutal, as seen in the Kaoshiung incident of 1979, but concession was always modest and incremental. Between 1972 and 1986, there were a number of cycles of concession and suppression. The number of arrests and journal confiscations can be used to denote these cycles. The best numeric indicator is the number of legislative seats opened for reelection. It expanded drastically in 1972, minimally grew in 1975, almost doubled in 1980, and held steady in 1983, as shown in table 2.

Manifested in the ascent and descent of the soft-liners and the hard-liners within the KMT regime, the cycles reveal the KMT regime's hesitancy to move from political authoritarianism to democracy. In 1986, the regime finally decided to embrace democratic transition unequivocally and irreversibly, launching the six-point political reform, a package that surprised even the leadership of the opposition. What drove the regime to cross the Rubicon?<sup>27</sup> This essay highlights two factors that weighed heavily in the KMT's decision to transcend the concession-repression cycle and move Taiwan into democratic transition: first, Taiwan's deteriorating international environment, and second, and most decisively, the KMT's self-confidence in its ability to compete favorably with the main opposition in a democratized Taiwan.

The international security environment had been benign for the KMT in the 1950s, allowing the party to be an Asian champion of the anti-communist camp, even while under a martial law decree. Once détente between Western powers and China was established, however, Taiwan's international political capital declined. As China pursued economic reform and adroitly turned outward, Taiwan quickly lost its presence in major international organizations and its diplomatic voice regarding China—as just discussed, a critical factor triggering a patriotic-democratic movement and political reform in Taiwan in the 1970s. The deterioration of Taiwan's strategic environment reached its nadir in the 1980s, as the American-Soviet bipolar confrontation was reignited, and China (the main source of threat to Taiwan) and the United States (Taiwan's security provider) were developing parallel interests vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, a development that had serious fallout for Taiwan.<sup>28</sup> One way to prevent Taiwan from becoming totally isolated by the Western community and from being victimized by Sino-American rapprochement was for Taiwan to become a full liberal democracy.<sup>29</sup> Deep commitment to

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<sup>26</sup> Naiteh Wu and this author have argued that, with the advent of this social force, politics of fear gave way to politics of commitment. See Naiteh Wu and Tun-jen Cheng, "Democracy as a Legitimacy Formula: KMT and Political Change in Taiwan" in *Political Legitimacy in Asia*, ed. John Kane, Huichih Loy, and Haig Patnpan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Taiwan's socioeconomic conditions were certainly ripe for democratic change at this point in its history. This essay does not dispute the thesis that development and democratization are surely correlated, a thesis convincingly advanced in Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy* (New York: Times Books, Holt & Co., 2008), esp., ch. 4, and Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003); cf., Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> James Mann, *About Face* (New York: Vintage, 2000). Mann most insightfully points out that, given the global strategic environment, Taiwan's interest was hurt even more in the 1980s under the Republican administration than in the second half of the 1970s under a Democratic administration in the United States.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques deLisle, "International Pressures and Domestic Pushback," in *Political Change in China: Comparisons with Taiwan*, ed. Bruce Giley and Larry Diamond (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008).

democratic reform would make it harder for a human rights-touting and democracy-promoting United States to sacrifice Taiwan's interests while partnering with China to rein in the soon-to-be defunct Soviet Union.

Here, it is important to point out that the United States Congress was the fulcrum of Taiwan's democratization-to-safeguard-security strategy. In 1979, with Sino-American normalization of formal relations, the termination of the ROC-US security pact, and the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States Congress became the most important support base for Taiwan's security. Having to negotiate with China, any U.S. president, irrespective of party label, has tended to renounce his critical stand toward China that was taken during the electoral campaign, and to get down to the business of working closely with China, perhaps at the expense of Taiwan's interest, as seen from the cases of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.<sup>30</sup> The United States Congress is the institution that has applied the brake to the Beijing train, lent ears to Taiwan, and overseen the implementation of the TRA. But it is also an institution that hears cases of human rights abuse and deficits in democracy and gives audience to political liberty and democracy-promoting groups. The intensity of Congressional expectations for Taiwan's (for that matter, Korea's and the Philippines') democratic reform and its improvement of human rights conditions reached the highest point during the 1980s. Led by late Congressman Stephen Solarz, Congress assiduously looked into the death of a number of Taiwanese-Americans and continually expressed concerns about the fate of Taiwanese (and Korean and Filipino) democracy activists. Democratic breakthrough in Taiwan in October 1986 (and in the Philippines in February 1985 and South Korea in June 1987, both as dependent on U.S. security protection as Taiwan) seems to be less due to regional demonstration effects than to Capitol Hill effects.

External pressure might have been deflected and external expectation, even though it was from a security provider, could have been deferred. For the regime to embrace democratic transition, the KMT under the leadership of Chiang Ching-kuo had to feel confident that it would not lose its ruling position through the implementation of democratic reforms.<sup>31</sup> As already argued above, transiting to democracy for a well-developed one-party authoritarian regime is moving out of a domain of political sweep into a zone of institutionalized uncertainty. The opportunity cost of democratic transition would be high if the ruling party could be easily defeated or even routed in the newly created electoral arena. Where did the KMT regime find confidence in its own ability to do well after the transition?

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<sup>30</sup> Tun-jen Cheng, "Washington's Policies toward North Korea and the Taiwan Strait: The Role of Domestic Politics," in *Regional Cooperation and Its Enemies in Northeast Asia: The Impacts of Domestic Forces*, ed. Edward Friedman and Sung Chull Kim (London: Routledge, 2006), 61-84.

<sup>31</sup> Huntington submits that for authoritarian regimes to accept democratization, the regime reformers must believe, among other things, that not only can they enhance their legitimacy by transiting to democracy but also they can win election in the newly created democracy. See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 128. In riding on Huntington's observation, this essay by no means rejects the great man theory of democratic change. That Chiang Ching-kuo admonished his family members and the military not to inject in political succession to him literally ended the Chiang political dynasty. His decision not to crack down the newly formed Democratic Progressive Party and instead bless Taiwan with the famous six-point political reform in 1986, kicking off democratic transition was to Taiwan as important as Gorbachev's choice not to send the red army to quench democratic forces in East Europe, was to the communist world. It is, however, important to tease out socioeconomic settings, international environments, and political dynamics that led the great man to recalibrate his thinking and constrained, if not shaped, his decisions. A great man may affect the mode of political change more than the direction of political change.

First, thanks to local self-government and elections, the KMT had reliable information about its level of public support. Elections in authoritarian regimes, if there are any, are often not free and equal, so the rulers generally do not have accurate knowledge of their level of popularity. And as the mass media are usually controlled and the opposition repressed or harassed in elections, authorities have no way of telling how strong the opposition might become if authoritarian control is loosened. Not knowing if they will survive democratic reform, authorities are likely to resist democratic transition. There are many cases where the confidence of ruling elites has proved to be unfounded (Nicaragua under the Sandanistas and Poland under Wojciech Jaruzelski were prime examples). But in Taiwan, the confidence was robust, thanks to age old local elections.

Local elections in Taiwan were comprehensive, institutionalized, and quite competitive. They had been held regularly for both executive and representative elections at the township and county levels since 1950, and for the provincial assembly beginning in 1951. They were real in that they were fairly competitive, and non-KMT candidates could and did win. As table 1 and table 2 show, the candidate-to-seat ratio was a consistent ratio of 2:1 for the county councilor election and the provincial assembly elections, and about 3.5:1 for the contested seats for county magistrates and city mayors; the uncontested seats for these types of executive elections had decreased significantly. Prior to 1986, political opposition quite consistently had won only between 30 to 40 percent of the votes in all local elections, and between 10 to 30 percent of the seats.<sup>32</sup> These figures strongly suggested the KMT's ability to consistently garner votes and adroitly organize its supporters to collect seat-bonuses, an observation that was corroborated by post-1986 electoral outcomes for more than a decade.

Second, Taiwan's good economic performance, especially with respect to equitable income distribution, suggested to the KMT leadership that the process of democratic change would not be radicalized and would not sink into a whirlpool of class politics. Taiwan's economic development under the watch, if not the guidance, of the KMT regime was real, impressive, and universally praised. Nearly all good things came together. For more than two decades since the turn of the 1960s, Taiwan had been a close second to the top newly industrializing South Korea in economic, industrial output, and export growth rates. But Taiwan outperformed South Korea in price stability, external savings, and income distribution.<sup>33</sup> South Korea and Taiwan were easily the leading two newly industrializing nations. In their comparative study of democratization in Latin America and East Asia, Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman highlight economic conditions as a key variable determining the processes and consequences of democratic transition. Under the shadow of economic hardship, many nations experience rupture and disturbance in the process of democratization, but Taiwan, and to some extent South Korea as well, embarked on democratic change with the blessing of prosperity and seemed to have been able to smoothly and gradually transform their authoritarian structures into democracies based on negotiated transactions between the regime and the democratic opposition. One unique aspect of Taiwan's democratic transition is that the authoritarian regime had been insulated from working-class mobilization, thanks to the equity that accompanied Taiwan's

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<sup>32</sup> Fei-long Lei, "The Electoral System and Voting Behavior in Taiwan," in *Political Change in Taiwan*, ed. Tun-jen Cheng and Stephan Haggard (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 149-176.

<sup>33</sup> For differences between Korean and Taiwanese development and class politics implications, see Tun-jen Cheng, "Political Regimes and Development Strategies: South Korea and Taiwan," in *Manufacturing Miracles*, ed. Gary Gereffi and Don Wyman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 139-178.

economic growth. Labor unions were instrumental to democratic transition in a few Latin American countries and, owed to the student-worker alliance, in South Korea as well.<sup>34</sup> As a result of good income distribution (and the proliferation of small- and medium-size enterprises), labor unions, however, were less a contributor to, than a beneficiary of, Taiwan's democratization, becoming politically active after democratic change but staying active only briefly.<sup>35</sup> Political parties that acted on behalf of the working class came into being after 1986, but quickly evaporated like flashes in a pan. The KMT's good old apple cart and, indeed, the DPP's, both as a result of the consumption of the middle class, were not upset.

Third, again, thanks to age old local elections, the KMT as a party was actually relatively well prepared for multiparty electoral competition. As mentioned, the KMT was born as a nation-building party, akin to the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico and the Republican People's Party (RPP) in Turkey, following a nationalist revolution, but it was initially organized as a quasi-Leninist party.<sup>36</sup> The KMT's defeat by the CCP on the mainland during the civil war convinced its leaders of the necessity for keeping Leninist features, such as cell-like organization, vanguard party membership, and democratic centralism. However, local elections had subtly but steadily transformed the KMT into a managerial and electoral-oriented party. To begin with, by institutionalizing local elections, KMT leaders came to rely more and more on voters' voices rather than on the party's internal disciplinary and auditing units to monitor and assess their cadres.<sup>37</sup> Voters' choices became a useful feedback mechanism for party leaders. In addition, local elections nurtured the managerial types of cadres within the party and gave them political clout. The more competitive the KMT candidates, the better the election results that the KMT could achieve, and the better off these managerial cadres would be. Furthermore, local elections eventually made interparty competition more imaginable and less repulsive to the KMT leaders. The KMT regime initially allowed only individual-based, unorganized dissent, and the party indeed used coercion to prevent the formation of an opposition party. But, of course, it did not take too much effort for various dissidents to find a way to coalesce. At some point, the opposition functioned like a party, except in name, taking concerted action all of the time. KMT election managers, for their part, also treated the opposition as a *de facto* rival political party, fine-tuning nomination and campaign strategies as if functioning under a two-party system. In due course, the election tally also listed the democracy movement activists as a separate group, right next to the KMT, rather than as part of an unorganized nonpartisan category. Its separate listing on par with the KMT gave the opposition a distinct identity. Thus, before lifting the ban on the formation of a new political party in 1987, the KMT already was facing the reality of organized opposition and *de facto* interparty competition. To paraphrase Dankwart Rustow, the KMT and the DPP's predecessor had experienced "habituation" in norms, procedures, and expectations of "partisan" competition in an incrementally expanding electoral space that was gradually internalized.<sup>38</sup> With the competitive

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<sup>34</sup> See Ruth Collier, *Paths toward Democracy: Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Ming-sho Ho, "Challenging State Corporatism: The Politics of Taiwan's Labor Federation Movement," *China Journal*, no.56, (July 2006): 107-127.

<sup>36</sup> Tun-jen Cheng, "Embracing Defeat: The PRI and the KMT after 2000," in *Political Transitions in Dominant Party Systems: Learning to Lose*, ed. Edward Friedman and Joseph Wong (London: Routledge, 2008), 127-147

<sup>37</sup> Bruce Dickson, *Democratization in China and Taiwan* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 23-35.

<sup>38</sup> Dankwart Rustow, "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2, no.2 (1970): 337-363.

elections' *de facto* institutionalization, the KMT set out to further indigenize and pluralize itself, as reflected in the changing composition of party members and the leadership ranks. By 1986, the year that the KMT leadership agreed to let Taiwan embark on its democratic transition by lifting the bans on new parties, new press, and full scale, competitive election, the KMT had long become an essentially Taiwanese party, with two-thirds of its rank-and-file members recruited from local society, although its leadership stratum was not yet localized. By 1986, the KMT had had thirty-four years of experience in running local elections and eleven years of experience in running limited, but increasingly competitive and continually widened, central elections.

Fourth, confidence was also based on the KMT's assumption of its ability to sequence and pace democratic change in such a way as to provide breathing space to transform itself into the dominant party, *à la* the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan, thereby continually staying in control of power. For a short while, this transformation appeared to be proceeding according to the script. The KMT government opened one-third of the legislative seats for electoral competition in 1986, pensioned off the lifetime legislators—predominantly KMT members—in 1990, phased out the “functional constituencies” (in which the KMT had built-in advantages) in the mid-1990s, and permitted direct presidential elections beginning in 1996. While taking time to liberalize the polity, the KMT lost no time in reinventing itself. Throughout the second half of the 1980s, the KMT further promoted indigenous, local elites to its leadership ranks. Its new leadership outmaneuvered the KMT's conservative wing to endorse various agenda for Taiwan's democratic change, permitting the party to present itself as a reformist, all-inclusive political force rather than as a conservative and exclusive political force, as depicted by the DPP.

## Conclusion

The year 1986 was often seen as the start of democratic change in the ROC, which in turn was part of the Third Wave of democratization in the modern world.<sup>39</sup> It seems that we can also historicize and construe Taiwan's democratic change differently. While certainly becoming more visible upon the advent of third-wave democracy, Taiwan's democratization can be understood as long in the making, embedded in the century-old pursuit of democracy under the KMT regime that began the journey with Sun Yat-sen's ideological teaching in mind. Sun's ideas and thought were neither strictly adhered to, nor always found applicable, but they have always been either a guide or constraint, helping to keep the program aimed in the direction of democracy. A proposition of democratic transition indeed is embodied in Sun's thesis of three stages of political development: with state power consolidated first, civil society politically tutored subsequently, constitutional democracy should then be established. Sun did not and could not stipulate a timetable for the sequential development. But it took the KMT regime six decades (from 1927 to 1986) to finally decide to execute democratic transition.<sup>40</sup> The necessity to transit to democracy was less related to Sun's ideological injunction than to situational imperative, i.e.,

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<sup>39</sup> Taiwan was well referenced to in Samuel Huntington's *The Third Wave* and Larry Diamond's *The Spirits of Democracy*.

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, this echoes well with Barbara Geddes' observation that hegemonic party regimes have been more enduring than other types of authoritarian regimes, such as personal dictatorships and military dictatorships. Her data base shows that personal dictatorship has an average life span of eighteen years, the average military junta lasts twelve years, while authoritarian party regimes persist for about thirty-four years. Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

expectation and pressure from the U.S. Congress. And what really explains the KMT regime's willingness to leap up to the democratic plateau is its self-confidence in electoral competition, which it had slowly but steadily built up in postwar era, thanks to spectacular and well-balanced economic development as well as the institutionalization of relatively competitive local elections in postwar Taiwan. Taiwanese experience of democratic transition suggests that psychology seems to hold the key to the putsch for democratization, but psychology is in turn a function of institutional arrangement and socioeconomic condition.



Table 1: Direct Local Elections and KMT's Performance

Year	County and City Councillors				County Magistrates and City Mayors					Members of Provincial Assembly				
	Seats	Candidates	K Seat%	Seats Contested	Candidates	Seats Uncontested	K Seat %	K Vote %	Seat Bonus	Seats	Candidates	K Seat %	K Vote %	Seat Bonus
1950	814	1,827	63.02	21	90		85.9	N.A.						
1951									55	140	76.9			
1952	860	1,844	60											
1953														
1954	928	1,579	70.8	13	38	8	90.5	71.8	18.7	57	110	84.2	68.8	15.4
1957				18	40	2	95.2	65	30.2	66	118	80.3	67.8	12.5
1958	1,025	1,621	64.1											
1960				13	35	8	90.5	72	18.5	73	126	79.5	65.4	14.1
1961	929	1,629	62.32											
1964	907	1,563	73.87	15	47	6	81	73.1	7.9	74	137	82.4	63	19.4
1968	847	1,262	73.9	15	43	5	85	72.4	12.6	71	129	84.5	75.5	9
1972				11	39	9	100	78.6	21.4	73	121	79.5	68.9	10.6
1973	850	1,480	73.53											
1977	857	1,271	83.66	13	36	7	80	70.4	9.6	77	125	72.7	64.1	8.6
1981				17	56	2	78.9	59.4	19.5	77	189	76.6	70.3	6.3
1982	799	1,683	80.1											
1985				18	54	3	81	62.6	18.4	77	158	76	69.8	6.2
1986	837	1,472	78.73											
1989				19	69	2	66.6	52.7	13.9	77	157	70.1	62.1	8
1990	842	1,743	77.2											
1997				23	80	0	34.8	42.1	- 7.3					
1998	891	1952	58.5											
2001				23	88	0	39.1	35.1	4					
2002	897	2057	44.1											

2005 901 1689 45.4 23 76 0 60.9 50.9 10

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Sources: adapted from Fei-lung Lei, "The Electoral System and Voting Behavior in Taiwan," in T.J.Cheng and Stephan Haggard, eds., Political Change in Taiwan, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992, pp.169-171.

Notes: Provincial assembly persons were indirectly elected by the county and city councillors in 1951.

Table 2: Direct Elections at National Level and KMT's Performance

Year	The Legislative Yuan						National Assembly					
	Senior members	Seats up for grab	Candidates	Seats won by KMT (%)	Votes won by KMT (%)	Seat Bonus	Senior members	Seats up for grab	Candidates	Seats won by KMT (%)	Votes won by KMT (%)	Seat Bonus
1969	468	11	25	72.7	76	-3.3	1,399	15	29	100	79.7	20.3
1972	419	30	55	83.3	70.2	13.1	1,344	53	78	81.13	72	9.13
1975	337	37	61	81.1	78.7	2.4						
1980	309	70	218	80	72.1	7.9	1,152	76	185	80.26	66.4	13.86
1983	270	71	171	87.2	70.7	16.5						
1986	224	73	137	80.8	69.9	10.9	880	84	169	80.95	68.3	12.65
1989	150	101	302	71.3	60.1	11.2						
1991							none	219	627	78.9	69.1	9.8
1992	none	119	403	56.3	53	3.3						
1995	none	122	314	50	45.6	4.4						
1996							none	228	420	53.9	49.2	4.7
1998	none	168	382	53.6	46.1	7.5						
2001	none	168	434	29.2	28	1.2						
2004	none	168	368	33.9	32.7	1.2						
2005							none	300	686	39	38.9	0.1
2008	none	73	283	78.1	53.5	24.6						

Sources: adapted from Fei-lung Lei, "The Electoral System and Voting Behavior in Taiwan," in T.J.Cheng and Stephan Haggard, eds., *Political Change in Taiwan*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992, pp.167-168.

Notes: senior members were those elected in 1947 before the KMT regime retreated to Taiwan or their non-elective replacements. They needed not run for re-election; these life time members were pensioned off in 1991.