Modulations of Nationalism Across the Taiwan Strait

CARL K. Y. SHAW

This paper provides a historical overview and theoretical interpretation of the issue of national identity in Taiwan. The author demonstrates how the idea of "orthodoxy" in the dynastic tradition has shaped various projects of Chinese nationalism in the twentieth century. Taiwan has surpassed this dynastic mind-set by transforming cultural nationalism into civic nationalism. Taiwan's new political order, which is centered on popular elections of the president, is interpreted as the institutionalization of plebiscites which has forged a new national identity. Theoretical reflection on the relationship between the civic nationalism of Taiwan and the cultural nationalism of China is also provided. The author contends that a mode of heterocentric self-understanding is needed to resolve the ideological conflict between China and Taiwan.

KEYWORDS: **civic nationalism; cultural nationalism; democratization; Taiwan; Lee Teng-hui.**

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In the late 1980s, Taiwan began a great transformation from authoritarianism to democracy. During this process, national identity has con-

stantly been a keen and controversial issue in electoral politics. The uneasy relationship between democracy and national identity has also been an area of academic debate. According to political scientists Hung-mao Tien (　　) and Yun-han Chu (　　), "national identity became the most unsettling factor because this issue, much like ethnic conflicts, revolves around the exclusive concept of legitimacy and symbol of worth. Thus, it yields competing demands that cannot easily be broken down to negotiable increments."[1] Anthropologist Ming-cheng Lo holds an opposing opinion:

> Democracy is limited in its potential for answering the identity question. Having engaged in the discourse of rationality and progress, the Taiwanese nationalists found it necessary to justify their struggle in scientific terms.... In translating political and cultural quest into this new language, there seems to be the danger of losing the particularistic qualities of nationalist struggle. The irony is that the very context of democracy seems to be exactly its contentlessness.[2]

These two contrasting perspectives reflect an unsettling fact of Taiwan politics. For proponents of liberal democracy, the issue of national identity is disturbing because it cannot be mediated by democratic deliberation. For proponents of nationalism, on the contrary, democratization will loosen the particularistic solidarity.

This paper attempts to provide a historical overview and an alternative interpretation of the issue of national identity in Taiwan. The author contends that democratization goes hand in hand with nation-building. During Lee Teng-hui's (　　) presidency (1988-2000), a civic nation was crafted in Taiwan. As the process of democratization in Taiwan has been studied by competent political scientists,[3] this paper will concentrate on interpreting the underlying meaning of the various ideologies which emerged during this process.

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[1] Hung-mao Tien and Yun-han Chu, "Building Democracy in Taiwan," *The China Quarterly*, no. 148 (December 1996): 1141-70, at 1144.

[2] Ming-cheng Lo, "Crafting the Collective Identity: The Origin and Transformation of Taiwanese Nationalism," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 7, no. 2 (1994): 198-233, at 218-19.

[3] See the excellent works by Christopher Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society* (London: Routledge, 1997) and Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

The methodology is a discourse analysis of various modulations of nationalism in Taiwan. The German historian Reinhart Koselleck reminds us that "each word, even each name, displays a linguistic potentiality beyond the individual phenomenon that it characterizes or names at a given moment."[4] The ostensible nationalist slogans would thus be interpreted once the underlying intentions and semantic matrix are reconstructed. The historical methodology of contextualism established by the Cambridge School identifies two relevant contexts. The historian Quentin Skinner points out the importance of author intention and audience reception,[5] while John Pocock emphasizes the importance of reconstructing enduring patterns of political language from particular utterances, and the "creation and diffusion of languages."[6] The author would adopt this type of analysis to reconstruct the semantic matrix of nationalist discourses in Taiwan to provide additional insights that could complement the existing literature of democratization and nationalism.

The paper is organized as follows. In the first section, the discursive structures of the official nationalism of the Kuomintang (KMT, or the Nationalist Party,   ) and the Taiwanese nationalists are analyzed. The following section discusses Lee Teng-hui's rise to power and its impact

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[4]Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1985), 89.

[5]According to Skinner, "The essential question which we therefore confront, in studying any given text, is what its author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance. It follows that the essential aim, in any attempt to understand the utterances themselves, must be to recover this complex intention on the part of the author." See Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," in *Meaning in Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 29-67, at 63.

[6]Pocock points out that, "Our historian, engaged in identifying the language contexts in which speech acts are conducted, must be able to study the creation of languages anywhere in the social context and their diffusion into the activity of political discourse; but he must also be equipped with means of showing how the performance of speech acts not merely modifies language, but leads to the creation and diffusion of languages in our sense of term." See John Pocock, "The Concept of a Language and the *métier d'historien*: Some Considerations on Practice," in *The Language of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19-38, at 29. Cf. John Pocock, "The Reconstruction of Discourse: Towards the Historiography of Historical Thought," *Modern Language Note* 96, no. 5 (December 1981): 959-80, esp. 965.

on previous conceptions of nationalism. In section three, Taiwan's new political order, which is centered on popular presidential elections, is interpreted as the institutionalization of political plebiscites that could forge a new national identity. Next is a theoretical reflection on the relationship between the civic nationalism of Taiwan and the ecumenical, cultural nationalism of China. A final section concludes the article by urging Taiwan to transcend autocentric nationalism.

The KMT's Official Nationalism vs. Taiwanese Nationalism

Japan returned Taiwan to the KMT regime after World War II ended in 1945. The KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949, after being defeated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in a prolonged civil war. Chiang Kai-shek (   ) took as his primary political task the rescuing of the KMT regime from the precarious status of defeat. The fact that he was governing an island that had been separated from China for more than fifty years was not his primary consideration. Chiang believed that the retreat was a temporary setback and that he would lead the KMT to "retake the mainland" (   ) soon. From his perspective, Taiwan was the "the island for regeneration" (   ) where the bugle would blow for the recovery of the mainland, and the mission to repel the communists would be carried out. The KMT's fundamental need was to *re*legitimize after the party's defeat. Chiang Kai-shek utilized the mind-set of dynastic change to understand his situation. Although defeated, he still represented the "orthodoxy" in the Chinese dynastic tradition because he had led the Chinese people to victory in the national war against Japan. The political image often invoked by Chiang was the legend of the regeneration of the Zhou dynasty Emperor Shaokang (   ), who was defeated temporarily but eventually recovered his *imperium* by adopting a policy of reform.[7]

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[7]See Wachman, *Taiwan*, 23. A comprehensive historical account of the Taiwan problem in the context of Chinese nationalism can be found in Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 1-20.

The KMT's official nationalism, consequently, was a metamorphosis of the idea of "orthodoxy" in Chinese dynastic tradition. This orthodoxy consisted of three elements. *Culturally*, the KMT was the defender of orthodox Confucian values as contrasted with the communist destruction of these values. The cultural mission of the KMT regime was to revive Chinese culture. This echoed the idea of "*daotong*" (　　, the cultural orthodoxy) in the Chinese tradition. Some well-respected intellectuals, who were deeply alienated by the CCP's radical movements against Chinese culture in the 1950s, endorsed the KMT's cultural self-identification.

Politically, the KMT regime represented the whole of China because the KMT held the last nationwide elections of the National Assembly (　　) and Legislative Yuan (　　) in 1947, before the communist takeover. These representatives moved with the KMT regime to Taiwan and became the symbols of *fatong* (　　, the legitimate succession). There would be no reelections for these representatives until the KMT retakes China. Both *daotong* and *fatong* constituted the KMT's self-proclaimed legitimacy (　　, *zhengtong*, or orthodoxy *per se* in the dynastic tradition).

The Cold War consolidated U.S. support for Taiwan. The final element of the KMT's claim to legitimacy could be invented: that *ideologically* the KMT regime belonged to the "free world," whereas mainland China was part of the communist bloc behind the "iron curtain." These three elements relegitimized the KMT regime and laid the ground for the policy of "unification," which resonated with the Chinese value of unity (　, *yitong*).

The implementations of KMT official nationalism resulted in cultural hegemony. A large-scale reshaping of the spaces of daily life took place to establish an exemplary Chinese culture in Taiwan. Streets were renamed after Chinese cities, or were given names with political significance in the KMT revolutionary tradition. Chinese-style buildings and museums were constructed in conspicuous landscapes. Educational curriculums were redesigned to emphasize the development of China as the center and Taiwan as a peripheral part in the evolution of Chinese history. Speaking Mandarin was strongly encouraged in the public sphere. These policies alienated native Taiwanese as much as the KMT's political domination.

Under such circumstances, contentious Taiwanese nationalism would naturally be invented to fight against this China-oriented official nationalism. Various anthropological, historical, and political arguments were advocated to justify Taiwanese nationalism. For example, some scholars introduced anthropological evidence demonstrating that, ethnically, Taiwanese were not Chinese, while others constructed historical genealogies to subvert the China-centered historiography.[8]

The most influential discourse, however, was the cultural-political argument that ultimately shaped the modulation of Taiwanese nationalism. Beginning from the "Declaration of Taiwanese Self-Salvation" (   ) drafted by Peng Ming-min (   ) in 1964, Taiwan nationalists advanced the argument that the KMT's official nationalism is merely a pretext for the fact that the KMT was actually a "foreign" or "outside" political force that did not have jurisdiction over Taiwan until 1945. The Nationalist Party was an authoritarian usurper without genuine institutions of liberal democracy despite its claim to be part of the free world. The original modulation of Taiwanese nationalism was thus a *convergence of national and democratic discourses*. This counter-ideology explained the KMT's reluctance to proceed with democratic reform by the very fact that the regime was a foreign domination, which did not really care about the welfare of the Taiwanese people. The subtle discursive convergence accounted for the immense emotive power and momentum of mobilization of Taiwanese nationalism under the KMT's authoritarian rule. As sociologist Chang Mau-kuei (   ) points out,

> The nature of Taiwan's political opposition can be said to carry two banners: democratization and Taiwanization. Though they are sometimes undifferentiated in political rhetoric, they do possess different meanings. Democratization implies representative government and promotion of human rights, while Taiwanization implies equal political and economic participation by Taiwanese, including advancing Taiwanese pride and Taiwan independence.... Because of

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[8]See Mau-kuei Chang, "Political Transformation and the 'Ethnization' of Politics in Taiwan," in *Taiwan an der Schwelle zum 21 Jahrhundert—Gesellschaftlichen Wandel, Problem und Perspektiven eines Asiatischen Schwellenlandes*, ed. Gunther Schubert and Axel Schneider (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1996), 135-52, at 137.

these two characteristics (i.e., [*sic*] mainlander KMT political domination and exclusivity plus the State's suppression of human rights and democracy in the name of the Republic China), the opposition perceives the mainlanders' domination as the source for political mobilization.[9]

The KMT 's official nationalism revealed the first sign of decline when the Republic of China (ROC) lost its seat in the United Nations to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1971. When the United States established an official relationship with Beijing in 1979, the ideology of retaking China with the support of the free world could no longer hold ground. The KMT had to build other bases of legitimacy. Rapid economic development became the substitute. A policy of "nativization" (   ) was implemented by Chiang Ching-kuo (   ) to recruit more Taiwanese elites into the KMT in 1971. "Supplementary" elections were held so that some local politicians could enter the parliamentary organizations. Although the numbers of these elected representatives were only a fraction of those old veterans who represented their Chinese constituencies for several decades, these elections became pivotal venues for liberalization and democratization. The opposition force formed an unofficial alliance of "outside party" or *dangwai* (   ) movement in the 1970s to fight against the party-state of the KMT. Although forming new parties was banned under martial law, the first opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP,   ), was formed in 1986. The decisive move toward liberalization occurred in 1987, when martial law was lifted and the ban on new newspapers was eased. Following these changes, Taiwan's civil society blossomed rapidly in the late 1980s with the loosening of authoritarian rule.[10]

The original discursive convergence of Taiwan nationalism evaded the need to distinguish nationalist appeal from democratization. However, if ever this convergence is uncoupled, a decision about the priority between

[9]Mau-kuei Chang, "Toward an Understanding of the *Sheng-chi Wen-ti* in Taiwan: Focusing on the Changes after Political Liberation," in *Ethnicity in Taiwan: Social, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Chen Chung-min et al. (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1994), 93-150, at 115.

[10]Yun-han Chu, *Crafting Democracy in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1992), 99-125.

nationalism and democracy must be made, as one demand may well "trump" the other. *Paradoxically, liberalization facilitates the appeal of nationalism over that of liberal democracy.* Between 1978 and 1986, the opposition force avoided the direct appeal of national self-determination and created a more elusive ideal of "self-determination by the whole body of the residents of Taiwan" (   ). This expression was adopted by the first DPP party congress. Between 1986 and 1991, however, there was a swift radicalization of the opposition party and "ethnization" (   ) of Taiwanese politics.[11] Politicians from the opposition force found it easier to mobilize popular support by adopting the nationalist slogan of inde-pendence due to the emotional appeal of identity politics. The discursive convergence of Taiwan nationalism thus needed modifications after liber-alization.

　　Chiang Ching-kuo died before he could reconstruct a new ideological basis for the KMT regime to solve the ideological challenge. This task was left to his successor, Lee Teng-hui, to carry out. As we shall see, Lee's po-litical strategy fundamentally undermined the KMT official ideology and uncoupled the "convergent discourses" of the opposition party. The next two sections examine this process, focusing first on Lee's consolidation of power and then his political project.

Lee Teng-hui's Consolidation of Power and the Politics of Delegitimization

　　When Chiang Ching-kuo died in January 1988, most political an-alysts predicted a collective leadership in the post-Chiang era because there would no longer be any single "strongman" in the KMT. Few observers anticipated that Lee Teng-hui would have the Machiavellian prudence and will to oust the KMT old guard from political power. Even fewer foresaw that he would be able to tackle the difficult task of reconstructing the nation

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[11]The term "ethnization" is borrowed from Chang, "Political Transformation and the 'Ethni-zation' of Politics in Taiwan" (cited in note 8 above).

as an imagined community beyond the dichotomy of Chinese and Taiwanese nationalism.

Lee's position as the successor to Chiang was precarious in the beginning. Indeed, he encountered a series of challenges between 1988 and 1990. He had to maintain his position as the interim KMT party chairman, against the intervention of Madame Chiang, the venerable wife of Chiang Kai-shek.

The most dramatic incident in Lee's career, sometimes designated as a failed *coup d'etat*, occurred in early 1990, when the president needed to be reappointed by the National Assembly, then dominated by veteran Chinese representatives. The hard-liners (later known as the non-mainstream faction,   ) backed a rival candidate, Lin Yang-kang (   ), a Taiwanese who enjoyed the same seniority as Lee in the KMT, for the presidency. Lee made compromises with his rivals. A series of resolutions to expand powers and privileges by the fading National Assembly provoked an eruption of massive student movement in a Tiananmen-style sit-in and hunger strike at Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (   ). Lee quickly sided with the demonstrators, as did most locally elected members of the Legislative Yuan and county magistrates/city mayors. The hard-liners retreated, and Lee was finally appointed the eighth president of the Republic of China.

After assuming the presidency, Lee practiced the art of dissimulation and made strategic alliances with both the KMT hard-liners and the opposition party. He appointed Hau Pei-tsun (, then Minister of Defense), one of the leaders of the non-mainstream faction, as the premier, amid strong protests from intellectuals. This move successfully disintegrated the solidarity among the hard-liners. On the other hand, Lee convened the National Affairs Conference (NAC,   ) in July 1990 to fulfill the promises he made during the student protest. The original idea was vaguely defined as "laying down the guiding principle for a national reconstruction." Some radical scholars advocated that the NAC should become a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. Lee avoided the approach of *pouvoir constituant*, and defined the function of NAC as his personal consultation meeting for the direction of constitu-

tional reform.[12] One of the critical issues debated was in regard to the presidential election. The DPP insisted that the entire population must be able to elect the president directly, and threatened to withdraw if no such kind of resolution was achieved. The final decision was both a compromise ("the president should be produced by election from the whole body of citizens") and a postponement ("the method and implementation of this will be discussed by all circles and fixed according to laws"). This critical issue was to become the locus of fierce political struggles.[13]

Lee seemed to be aloof from the NAC debates. He did not express his preference even during the following intra-party discussion, so much so that the party workers were drafting according to the position of the non-mainstream faction for an indirect "proxy" vote: "The KMT Constitutional Reform Working Group had all along promoted the 'proxy vote' method under the false assumption that it was also the favored system of President Lee, who did not reveal his preference until the concluding stage of the Working Group, less than a month before the third plenary session."[14] The construction of a new constitutional order was under Lee's control once he forcefully endorsed the principle of the popular election of the president at the last moment.

The final stage of Lee's consolidation of power was to oust the non-mainstream faction. Hau's tenure as premier put him in continuous conflict with the DPP and the mainstream faction (   ) in the Legislative Yuan. The momentum continued to mount during the reelection of the Legislative Yuan at the end of 1992. The mainstream-faction candidates of both the DPP and the KMT campaigned on a popular "anti-Hau" platform. Hau stepped down as premier in February 1993, signifying the demise of the non-mainstream faction. Lee's consolidation of power was completed at the KMT's 14th party congress. The "New KMT Alliance" (

), comprising the younger members of the non-mainstream faction, quit

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[12]Chang, "Toward an Understanding of the *Sheng-chi Wen-ti* in Taiwan," 101-2; Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 62-64.

[13]Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 64.

[14]Tien and Chu, "Building Democracy in Taiwan," 1147 n. 26.

the KMT and formed the "New Party" (   ). The older generation of the non-mainstream faction did not quit, but was completely removed from power.

This brief narrative can hardly do justice to the fascinating details of the Machiavellian maneuvers and use of politically charged language that characterized this fierce political struggle. Yet we only need to note the important structural changes. There is no doubt that this period represents a typical power struggle for succession.[15] The importance of the result, however, far exceeds the issue of succession, as the political map was completely transformed.

President Lee faced two political tasks at this critical moment. He had to fight against the old guard of the KMT who viewed him as an outsider and did not trust him to carry on Chiang Ching-kuo's policies. On the other hand, he needed to construct a political agenda that could differentiate him from the convergent discourses of the opposition party. His strategy was a mode of politics of delegitimization,[16] maneuvering to undermine the bases of legitimacy of his rivals both inside and outside the KMT.

Inside the KMT, he continued to hold tightly to power within the party like his predecessors, but he made no attempt to revise the old official nationalism of the Nationalist Party. Unlike Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, his leadership was not based on governing the state through the party. He regarded the party mainly as a machine for winning elections for the continuation of the KMT regime. He let the non-mainstream faction and later the New Party fight for the survival of the old ideology. The existence of the non-mainstream faction and New Party shifted the burden of proof. The more Lee was criticized as departing from the original spirit of the KMT, the more he was immune from the task of reconstructing a new KMT ideology.

An even more important change took place in the opposition party.

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[15]Ibid., 1141.

[16]For a discussion on this theme, see J. G. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 163.

The convergent discourses of Taiwan nationalism and democratization were suddenly deconstructed by the rise of Lee Teng-hui. After Lee became the first Taiwanese president and party chairman, the KMT's enduring image of "foreignness" could no longer be seriously sustained. The DPP tried hard to draw attention to the fact that the asymmetric structures like state- and party-owned enterprises and the KMT's media monopoly had not changed under Lee's leadership, but was unable to influence public opinion in this regard. Moreover, Lee skillfully appropriated the political agenda of the opposition party. Many of his policies were originally proposed by the opposition movement, but Lee, as president, was able not only to carry out their agenda but also to take the credit for its success. Needless to say, this feat was greatly resented by DPP leaders.

The DPP had to seek other resources of political mobilization. The opposition party's initial response was to distinguish itself by an even more radical agenda of secessionism. This resulted in the major setback in the 1991 election of the National Assembly that deprived the DPP of the power to veto Lee's constitutional reforms. Later on, the DPP adjusted the radical rhetoric into more elusive expressions, but still found itself in a position undistinguishable from Lee's. Moreover, during the fierce power struggle with the non-mainstream faction, Lee initiated a tacit coalition with the DPP, whereby he mobilized popular support to consolidate his power and oust the hard-liners. The DPP backed Lee in the effort to oust Hau as premier. The underlying reasoning was ethnic politics: the in-group members should unite for the struggle against out-group rivals. In the end, however, "the DPP thus lionized the president, giving him the role of a charismatic leader championing Taiwan's interests in a realm beyond party politics, and so fostering what was to become known as the 'Lee Teng-hui syndrome' in Taiwan's electoral politics."[17]

Indeed, Lee appeared in the public more often as the president of Taiwan rather than chairman of the KMT, as a *pouvoir neutral* above partisan conflicts even when the conflicts were directed against him. His skillful

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[17]Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 82.

appropriation of the extra-constitutional National Affairs Conference increased the sources of power at his disposal. He resisted the radical suggestion to define the NAC as a constituent assembly, which would lead to results beyond his control. During the process of consolidating his power, Lee followed the Machiavellian approach of first maintaining his own *stato* rather than reconstructing a new *stato*. He was able to mobilize popular support and the opposition party to engage in intra-party conflicts. The delegitimized politics undermined the rivals' political agenda while consolidating his own power. With both the KMT's official nationalism and the convergent discourses of Taiwan nationalism and democratization unraveled, the ground was laid for a new political order.

The Emergence of Civic Nationalism

Political activity to maintain one's own power status is only a preliminary for true achievement in politics. Chinese political tradition, just as the Western civic republican tradition, holds that genuine statesmen desire to be remembered by posterity for their great deeds, moral example, and wise speeches. To be remembered as a great statesman, it was therefore necessary for Lee eventually to move from a delegitimized politics to institutionalization.

Under bipartisan pressure, the Clinton administration granted Lee a visa for a private visit to his alma mater, Cornell University. This was a privilege that had not been accorded to Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo during their own tenure of the presidency. While certainly a glorious moment for Lee, this visit provoked Beijing, which was determined to block his "hidden agenda" seeking the independence of Taiwan.

The first popular election of the president was held in 1996. The event was described as an "election under missiles" by the local newspapers. China launched a series of military exercises from mid-1995 and continued to intimidate Taiwan throughout the election campaign, concluding with the test firing of missiles across the Taiwan Strait. Tension between China and Taiwan rose to its highest level since the 1950s. Al-

though affecting the financial markets in Taiwan, Beijing's strategy ultimately backfired, producing a wave of popular support for Lee. Lee and his running mate Lien Chan (   ) won a landslide victory with 54 percent of the vote.

Lee's political vocabulary became remote from the KMT's official nationalism once his power was consolidated. Lee did not provide a systematic agenda for national reconstruction, but advocated four interrelated ideas—"community of lives" (   ) or *Gemeinschaft* (1991), "sovereignty in the people" (   ) or popular sovereignty (1994), a novel slogan "Manage the great Taiwan, establish the new Central Plains"[18] (   ) (1995), and most importantly, his effort to redefine the relationship between Taiwan and China as a mode of "special state-to-state relationship"[19] (   ) (1999).

These ideas may well be repudiated as mere ideology or wishful thinking. However, this author believes they are representative *political concepts*, which are symptomatic of the Taiwanese political consciousness that was emerging from the collective experience of the past five decades. These ideas relate to four issues—reestablishing the communal solidarity in Taiwan, forging a national identity through democratic participation, reconstructing a historical self-understanding, and juristically redefining Taiwan's status.

The policy goal of the idea of *Gemeinschaft* is cultivating and enriching local culture. Due to the autonomous efforts from civil society, the asymmetrical relationship between the Chinese and Taiwanese cultures has been gradually reversed of late.

Politically, Lee's most important idea has been that of "sovereignty in the people." In addition to reshaping civic consciousness by the changing vocabulary and discourse, Lee initiated a series of constitutional reforms that represented a radical departure from the practice of the old KMT regime in the previous four decades. His project for forging Taiwan's new

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[18]See Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 96-99, 161, for discussions of these ideas.
[19]See *Free China Journal*, July 16, 1999, 1, 6.

national identity was clearly centered on the political mobilization in the popular election of the president. The effects of this mobilization can be seen in the 1996 election. A direct and strong solidarity was established between the citizens and the political community via the concrete embodiment of a national leader.

Periodic direct elections of the president can be regarded as the institutional realization of Renan's idea that a nation's existence consists in the "daily plebiscite." Indeed, articulating *Gemeinschaft* and popular sovereignty provides a dynamic force to forge a civic nation in Renan's famous characterization:

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form.[20]

With his second term of presidency coming to a close, Lee launched a major attempt to redefine the juristic status of Taiwan in international politics by claiming a "special state-to-state relationship" between China and Taiwan. As this formulation directly challenged Beijing's "one-China" principle, the claim resulted in a major crisis. As the Clinton administration did not support Lee's proclamation, he was forced to retreat somewhat from the original formulation. However, Taipei has never officially "taken back" this position. More importantly, most public opinion polls conducted during this period of time showed that the Taiwanese people took Lee's statement to be a factual description of the current status quo.[21]

During Taiwan's fiercely fought 2000 presidential election, Beijing launched a major statement by issuing a white paper, "The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue."[22] The DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian

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[20]Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. H. K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 8-22, at 19.

[21]Based on opinion poll data collected by the Mainland Affairs Council (   ). These data can be found in the following website: <http://www.mac.gov.tw/mlpolicy/pos/890131/88tab14.htm>.

[22]The full text of the white paper was reprinted in *Issues & Studies* 36, no. 1 (January/February 2000): 161-81.
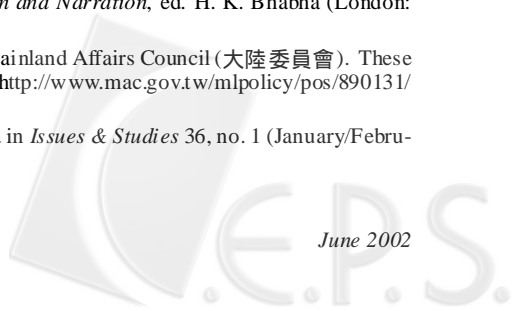
(   ) still won by a narrow margin. So far Chen's mainland policy has not gone beyond Lee's framework. The relationship between China and Taiwan will be certainly changed due to the regime change in Taiwan. The direction is still unclear as both sides are still probing each other's bottom line. However, there are some underlying cultural-political sources for potential conflicts across the Taiwan Strait, which need further exploration.

Taiwan's Civic Nationalism and China's Cultural Nationalism

Recent studies in democratization and nationalism are beginning to recognize the importance of nation-building for democratic politics. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan point out that "nationalism provides one possible definition of the demos, which may or may not coincide with the demos of the state."[23] Political theorists also suggest that the rational deliberations in democratic polities rest "unavoidably on a nonrational foundation," because "a nonrational act of political definition (determining who belongs to 'We the People') is a necessary precondition of rational political behavior."[24]

Although Taiwan's efforts toward nation-building have been fundamentally to redefine an operational "demos" through political decisions, this political change would inevitably encounter strong reaction from China. The reason is obvious. The process of forming a political identity is essentially "the creation of a political interior which is shielded from the entirety of the outside world."[25] The concepts and discourses examined above do not merely denote the agency or demos of a democratic community; they mark and create the political unity and are a crucial factor in po-

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[23]Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 16.

[24]Ghia Nodia, "Nationalism and Democracy," in *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond and Mark Plattner (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 8.

[25]Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 160.

litical groupings. Linz and Stepan have pointed out the difficulties for divided states to handle democratization in one state.[26] A new mode of thinking is required to overcome the "destiny" nationalism has created in the past three centuries.

Taiwanese people cherish their autonomy and economic prosperity. Unlike some intellectuals and politicians, they are less concerned with boundary and jurisdictional issues. Boundary and jurisdiction are the fateful imperatives for nation-states that lead to fights for the exhaustive and exclusive divisions of the earth. A free way of life and autonomy are *not* necessarily related to this nationalist obsession about division. Instead, the ideal of autonomy originated from the civic republican tradition, a tradition in longer standing than modern nationalism. Autonomy in civic republicanism means the practice of citizens' self-government for the realization of the common good of the political community.[27]

Modern nationalism justifies the principle of self-determination either as the condition for self-government (thereby appropriating the civic republican tradition) or for politics of cultural recognition (a legacy of romanticism).[28] The former justification is not applicable for Taiwan because Taiwan's current status quo is an autonomous political entity. There is no ground to claim that self-determination is an indispensable precondition for democratic self-government. The latter justification is a more complicated issue. Taiwanese people have experienced the stressful psychological effects of non-recognition for a long time. However, cultural nationalism, as a striving for recognition, cannot solve Taiwan's identity crisis. The reason

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[26]Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 19 n. 8.

[27]J. G. A. Pocock, "The Ideal of Citizenship since Classical Times," in *Theorizing Nationalism*, ed. Ronald Beiner (New York: SUNY Press, 1999), 29-52.

[28]For an analysis, see Charles Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 53-54. Taylor is the most famous proponent for the politics of recognition; see Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25-73. The relationship between recognition and nationalism is explored in Charles Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity," in *The Morality of Nationalism*, ed. Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 31-55.

is obvious: Chinese nationalism is also a striving for recognition and dignity. If the two incompatible nationalisms ever confront one another, the two sides will become engaged in a life-and-death struggle. There would be no exit out of this existential impasse except domination and servitude, which is the very negation of recognition and autonomy.

Christopher Hughes points out the inescapable destiny that "the future of the Taiwan problem must be intimately tied up with the future of Chinese nationalism on the mainland."[29] Beijing's current nationalist ideology is deeply ingrained in the Chinese consciousness, because the historical memory of China's degradation between 1840 and 1949 had greatly hurt China's national dignity.[30] As a result, the present leadership in Beijing believes that China must never again fall into the shameful sub-colonial position it was reduced to in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[31] The incontrovertible imperative is therefore to defend the unity and territorial integrity of China. This nationalist ideology is backed by a realist vision of international relationship, with the idea of sovereignty at the core:

> Beijing's realist vision of international politics must be understood as having its root in the understanding of world politics that arose as nationalism was generated by the Qing dynasty's entry into international society. Central to this is a hard conception of sovereignty as absolute and indivisible that mainland sources trace back to Bodin and Vattel.... Hand in hand with this understanding of sovereignty goes the belief that its worth must be understood in terms of configuration of power in international relations at any given moment.[32]

This "strong state complex" is endemic in Chinese nationalist discourse, so much so that national sovereignty was separated from popular

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[29]Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 156.

[30]For an elaboration on the importance of the sentiment of "dignity" in nationalist discourses, see Liah Greenfeld, "Transcending the Nation's Worth," *Daedalus* 122, no. 3 (1993): 47-62.

[31]See Michael H. Hunt, "Chinese National Identity and the Strong State: The Late Qing-Republican Crisis," in *China's Quest for National Identity*, ed. Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 62-79, for a review of Chinese nationalism in its earlier modulation.

[32]Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 159.

sovereignty, and the former was given the highest priority while the latter was replaced by state sovereignty. National freedom thus "trumps" individual freedom.[33]

This political nationalism has a deeper cultural background. The core of Chinese nationalism is always a self-understanding as the ecumenical culture in East Asia. The categorizations of ecumenism are *center* and *periphery*. It is not a horizontal metaphor, but an asymmetrical as well as hierarchical principle of cultural-political organization.[34] China is the "Central Kingdom" because the Han nation (   ) originated from the "Central Plains" (   ). All national myths were constructed around this core belief. In the dynastic tradition, the metaphor of "chasing the deer in the Central Plains" (   ) meant to pursue the crown and become the new emperor and to rule China from the center.

Chinese nationalism underwent an interesting metamorphosis around categorizations of center and periphery in the last century. The paradigm of nationalist discourse was developed by Sun Yat-sen (   ) on the eve of the 1911 Chinese revolution. The backgrounds were a "convergence" of ethnic and political nationalisms: the Manchu Qing (   ) dynasty was an ethnically foreign usurper and its usurpation ultimately resulted in the invasion of China by imperialist forces.[35] The center must be restored by the Han nation. After the downfall of the Qing dynasty and the restoration of the hegemonic position of the Han, the Chinese imagined community needed to be transformed into an inclusive modulation. An imagination of "*concentric circles*" is invented: Han is located at the center because it has the most ecumenical culture, with other ethnic groups descending from the core as well as participating in the center, almost like a neo-Platonic cosmic

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[33]Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22. Zheng's book is the most comprehensive treatment of China's rising nationalism in the 1990s.

[34]For a comparative analysis of this traditional type of cultural-political organization, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 12-21.

[35]The first chapter of Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, is a detailed discussion on this issue.

order of illumination and participation.[36] This ecumenical modulation is a fertile ground for cultural nationalism.

Taiwan is located at the periphery in this world-picture. However, its peripheral position raises the fundamental issue of China's boundaries, an issue that was less important in the traditional dynastic period but is vital for the modern nation-state.[37] In the Chinese historical self-understanding, Taiwan is the last remaining piece of unredeemed Chinese territory, and will one day be recovered, as Hong Kong and Macau have been. In Chinese eyes, Taiwan's current autonomous status is the result firstly of Japanese colonialism, and secondly of American imperialism, which has sought to invade or "check" China. Consequently, Beijing must effectively block any relationship that implies the recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state, because this will be a reiteration of the imperialist intervention in the Chinese domestic affairs.

We have seen that the KMT used to legitimize itself by calling for the retaking of China. Ironically, this rivalry implied a positive willingness to be part of the Central Plains. The CCP felt more comfortable with the old KMT official nationalism which was comprehensible from the Chinese mind-set. Lee's decision to give up the political myth of "retaking the mainland" was not interpreted by Beijing as an indication of a wish for peaceful coexistence. Instead, Beijing has ever since harbored the suspicion that Taiwan's government has adopted either an overt or a hidden agenda of independence.

Any discussion about the national identity issue in Taiwan, therefore, is bound to be correlated with the Chinese cultural-political ecumenism. It is in this context that Lee's advocacy of "Manage the great Taiwan, establish the new Central Plains" becomes an interesting political slogan. This

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[36]See anthropologist Fei Xiaotong's (   ) theory of Chinese ethnicity as a "pluralist unity," which has to establish the centrality of the Han nation to form the unity. See Fei Xiaotong, "Lun Zhonghua minzu de 'duoyuan yiti' geju" (On the "pluralist unity" of the Chinese nation), in *Zhonghua minzu "duoyuan yiti" geju* (The "plural unity" of the Chinese nation), ed. Fei Xiaotong et al. (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu xueyuan chubanshe, 1989), 1-37, at 29-31.

[37]Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 19.

articulation adopts, reverses, but does not abandon the Chinese ecumenical framework. Taiwan is characterized as "great," a reversion of its peripheral status in the Chinese framework, and justified by Taiwan's superior political and economic performance in the past five decades. Even more intriguing is that the new Central Plains are relocated to Taiwan. The Taiwanese people are not interested in "chasing the deer in the Central Plains" because they have no intention of retaking mainland China, the formal goal of the KMT's old official nationalism. The Taiwanese people cherish their current life here in Taiwan, the "new Central Plains."

Given that there have already been *pluralities* of the "centers," a problem naturally arises: Are the conflicts between these two ideas of "Central Plains" unavoidable? Both modern nationalism and Chinese dynastic tradition would point to an unavoidable struggle for the position of center/ orthodoxy. However, this conflict is inevitable only in the ethnocentric framework of an "autocentric history," as a history of a "central self" so far as it has succeeded in maintaining itself.[38] The problem is that others" will appear in the narrative only as alien beings who act and suffer in the history of the central self. The imperative of autocentric history is negation. To overcome the peril of autocentric history, one must be genuinely engaged in constructing historical self-understanding that can incorporate the understanding of others.

Both China and Taiwan need to establish alternative historical self-understandings. If a hermeneutic "fusion of horizons" is not currently viable, one must avoid the existential dilemma of the struggle for recognition. China's ecumenical cultural identity has formed over two millennia, and the transformation from dynastic consciousness to civic consciousness is an extremely difficult task.

The case of Taiwan is different. Democratic elections are about to establish a new mode of collective identity. The involved elites must know exactly what identity they will forge in order to overcome the old auto-

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[38]For the distinction between autocentric and heterocentric histories, see J. G. A. Pocock, "The Politics of History: The Subaltern and the Subversive," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 6, no. 3 (1998): 219-34, at 220-21.
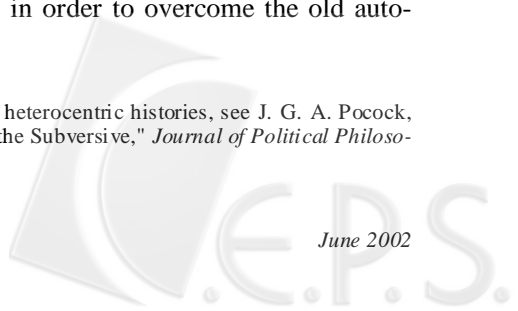
centric history. Both the old KMT official nationalism and the original contending mode of Taiwanese nationalism discussed earlier are no longer adequate in Taiwan's current situation. Civic nationalism seems to be the more viable mode in this regard. Civic nationalism can pave the ground for the establishment of a self-sufficient subjectivity through democratic participation in Taiwan, thus partially easing Taiwan's identity crisis from the dilemma of recognition.[39] A further task remains, namely to direct Taiwan's national identity toward the civic dimension in order to avoid the mischief of cultural nationalism. The task is to establish a historical self-understanding of an *autonomous* people, rather than a *uniquely* autonomous people.[40]

Civic republicanism, the original paradigm of autonomy and political democracy, is a better moral and intellectual resource for our historical self-understanding than nationalism. The ideal of autonomy far preceded civic nationalism; the term was invented when a self-governing political community faced an empire. The civic community and ecumenical empire have different *raisons d'être*. As opposed to the naturalism of hierarchy of the ecumenical empire,

> The republic was not timeless, because it did not reflect by simple correspondence the eternal order of nature; it was differently organized, and a mind which accepted republic and citizenship as prime realities might be committed to implicitly separating the political from the natural order. The republic was more political than it was hierarchical; it was so organized as to assert its sovereignty and autonomy, and therefore its individuality and particularity.[41]

The *civitas* can be sustained only by the continual commitment and participation of its members. This, in turn, requires an intense conscious-

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[39]It is not surprising that scholars of the younger generation advocate civic nationalism as the most adequate ideology for Taiwan's political culture. See, for instance, Chia-lung Lin (　　), "Taiwan minzhuhua yu guozu xingcheng" (Taiwan's democratization and nation formation), in *Minzu zhuyi yu liang'an guanxi* (Nationalism and cross-Strait relationship), ed. Chia-lung Lin and Yongnian Zheng (　　) (Taipei: Xin ziran zhuyi, 2001), 217-66, at 219, 260-61.

[40]See Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 8-9, for a discussion of this important distinction.

[41]Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 53.

ness about *the inherent frailty of their liberty and autonomy.* Unlike civic nationalism, which tends to universalize the idea of citizenship,[42] civic republicanism emphasizes the particularistic and exceptional nature of self-governing polities. This is the political consciousness of *self-limitation* that is vital for Taiwan's continual prosperity.

Civic republican tradition emphasizes that corruption originates more often from inside the community rather than from the outside enemy. From this perspective, the important political issues are empowering citizen participation, reducing inequality, checking ambitious politicians and powerful factions, and preventing political struggles from degenerating into private duels.[43] All of these are indeed urgent issues for Taiwan. Eliciting the moral resources from the paradigm of civic republicanism, therefore, is not a naive, self-congratulatory euphoria of Taiwan's political democracy. Rather, the movement calls for continual reform of the political order to overcome corruption. A *civitas* is bound to be in perpetual flux, the very reverse of the stable hierarchy of ecumenical empire.

Conclusion: Beyond Autocentric Nationalism

This paper has provided a historical overview on the modulations of national identity and democracy in Taiwan. The analysis has demonstrated how the KMT's official nationalism and the DPP's convergent discourses of Taiwan nationalism and democratization lost ground as a result of Lee Teng-hui's politics of delegitimization. An interpretation of the emerging political reality as exemplifying civic nationalism is provided. The core institution is the periodical and popular elections of the president. This new mechanism has forged a new national consciousness in Taiwan.

The original modulation of the KMT's nationalist slogans originating

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[42]Dominique Schnapper, "Beyond the Opposition: Civic Nation versus Ethnic Nation," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume 22 (1996): 219-34, at 229-30.

[43]For the contemporary relevance of republicanism in this regard, see Quentin Skinner, "Machiavelli on the Maintenance of Liberty," *Politics* 18, no. 2 (November 1983): 3-15.

from the idea of orthodoxy in the dynastic tradition has shaped various projects of Chinese nationalism in this century. This mode of nationalism represents an interesting case of official nationalism in Benedict Anderson's typology.[44] As he points out, "The 'official nationalism' can best be understood as a means for combining naturalization with retention of dynastic power, in particular over the huge polyglot domains ... or, to put it in another way, for stretching the short, tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire."[45] Taiwan has surpassed this dynastic mindset by transforming from cultural nationalism to civic nationalism by way of institutional changes in the past decades. Lee successfully pushed the discourse over the self-identity of Taiwanese people toward a distinct state consciousness. An articulated national consciousness was crafted during Lee's two terms as president. This will be his major legacy for Taiwanese politics, although the effects of this legacy will undoubtedly be debated.

The liberal critics in Taiwan suspect that Lee's project represents Taiwan's recent effort to reconstruct a new nation-state rather than to consolidate liberal democracy.[46] The result, they contend, is a "populist authoritarianism" that invents a fictitious idea of a homogenized "peoplehood" in order to mobilize popular accolades. The diversity of civil society is subdued to the interest of the ruler. The theoretical backgrounds of this critique are Wolfgang Mommsen's criticisms of Weberian "plebiscitary leadership democracy,"[47] as well as the breakdown of the Weimer Republic in the fanfare of acclamation for the *Führer*. Liberals prefer constitutional patriotism and respect for procedural justice, which is closer to Weber's legal-rational mode of legitimacy rather than a charismatic approach in constructing political identity.

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[44]Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 83-111.

[45]Ibid., 86.

[46]For a major critique of Lee's project in Chinese, see Wang Jen-hwan (　　　) and Sechin Y. S. Chien (　　　), "Maixiang xin guojia? Mincui weiquan zhuyi de xingcheng yu minzhu wenti" (March towards a new nation-state? The rise of populist authoritarianism in Taiwan and its implications for democracy), *Taiwan shehui yanjiu jikan* (Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies), no. 20 (1995): 17-55.

[47]Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 390-414.

There are grounds for these concerns. The two crucial issues are: first, whether popular democracy will lead to the radical abolishment of liberal constitutionalism; second, whether the presidential election will be deployed as a venue for a secessionist referendum, to the very great peril of the country. There are no *a priori* answers as these are empirical questions. The first direction seems unlikely given the vitality of civil society in Taiwan and the importance of liberal legitimacy in sustaining support from major liberal-constitutional states. However, a more populist type of politics is indeed developing quickly as democratization proceeds in Taiwan.

The second issue is more vexed. Neither the 1996 election (when confrontation with Beijing was intense) nor the 2000 election (which resulted in regime change) produced significant pressure for a secessionist plebiscite. However, China would interpret Taiwan's nation-building as a centrifugal move from China's ecumenical culture. Beijing is greatly puzzled and irritated by Taiwan's political development over the past decade. However, it is not really surprising that Taiwan will move toward this direction. Civic ideology is most likely to emerge when a small community confronts an immense empire—the paradigmatic situation of asymmetrical relationship.[48] The practice of self-government, which is less viable for a vast empire, is the venue to foster collective self-understanding and solidarity of *civitas*. Of course, *civitas* will never have the extensive power comparable with the empire. The idea nevertheless will have an indelible impact on the civic consciousness of its members.[49] The aspiration for freedom may be subdued; however, it is not removable and always erupts at unexpected moments. *Civitas* lies beyond the binary categorization of center and periphery. It is simply an exceptional moment in the natural history of empires, one that will eventually decline if not maintained by con-

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[48]Asymmetrical relationships are oftentimes constitutive of the human condition that leads to political-ideological grouping and conflicts. See Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 159-97, for a penetrating analysis.

[49]According to Machiavelli (*The Prince*, chap. 5), "In republic, there is greater life, greater hatred, more desire for revenge; the memory of their ancient liberty does not and cannot let them rest." The reason is that the human spirit (*anima*) will be transformed by the experience of democratic participation.

tinual reforms. This is its inherent limit.

By contrast, the self-proclaimed universalism of *ecumene* is often merely an appearance. Under the veil of stability, the histories of ecumenical empires underwent endless dynastic changes and redefinitions of orthodoxy. Similarly, despite the solemn proclamation of *raison d'état* by the modern sovereign nation-states, revolutionary moments continue to explode.

Hughes expresses a general opinion that "it may be something of an exaggeration to suggest that Taiwan can serve as a model for the mainland's development, due to disparity in size alone."[50] Indeed, it is not viable for Taiwan to realize the "telos of freedom" over China under normal circumstances. However, the fact may be that Taiwan does not aim at being a "model" at all. *Civitas* and *ecumene* are simply different and heterogeneous political modules. Both are particular and finite cultural-political entities in human history. Their own very existences cannot, and should not, be "assimilated" by the ideological constructions of the other side. Since autocentric history leads to domination and forced assimilation, there is an urgent need for a *heterocentric history*, a mode of political genesis in which others will appear as constructing and narrating, erecting and criticizing histories of their own and of themselves.[51] In the struggles for recognition, we *are* others and others *are* "we."

This is an issue that calls for the utmost prudence on the part of the political elites involved if a satisfactory settlement, which is viable in neither the state-centric realism nor rigid nationalistic framework, is to be achieved.

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[50]Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 161.
[51]Pocock, "The Politics of History," 221.