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Liberalist Variation in Taiwan: Four Democratization Orientations

WANG Hung-jen

Abstract: In this paper I analyse how Taiwanese liberalist scholars have discursively and operationally shaped the meanings of Taiwanese democratization via a mix of liberal values and nationalist concerns. I will argue that a valid understanding of democratization in Taiwan has never emerged in a way that adequately responds to a liberalist perspective of the country's ongoing political development. Instead, such an understanding has been subjectively influenced by liberal intellectuals writing on the subject. In other words, current discourses in Taiwan represent efforts on the part of scholars to manage connections between liberalist values and nationalist concerns rather than shared views regarding facts emerging from Taiwanese democratization. In this paper I discuss four types of liberalist orientations to Taiwanese democratization – universal, moderate, pragmatic and nationalist – in the contexts of national-identity constraints, a balance between liberal values and national identity, and flexibility regarding liberalist and nationalist concerns. I conclude that democratization research in Taiwan reflects an aspect of knowledge production formulated by the relationship between the researcher and the subject under study.

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Keywords: Taiwan, democratization, liberalism, national identity, orientation

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Introduction

Since the 1950s, the imported concept of liberalism has provided Taiwanese intellectuals with a foundation for political, social and economic discourses on local issues (Zhang 2001), including a theoretical context for analysing nation-building processes that aim to achieve liberal and democratic societal goals. However, analysts have long been divided about how to use liberal ideas to address a "free China" image for Taiwan, either by appealing to the Kuomintang (KMT, Guomindang) government's political reforms in contrast to Chinese communism or by emphasizing democratic goals while establishing a Chinese identity "made in Taiwan". Among the scholars in the first group, Hu Shi admitted to being strongly influenced by the May Fourth Movement, and Lei Zhen consistently maintained a strong anti-communist position. Both Hu's and Lei's liberal ideas were aimed at resisting KMT oppression in the 1950s and 1960s; in the late 1970s, a growing number of Taiwanese intellectuals used liberal discourses to promote the establishment of a free and liberal China, as well as to call for a new national identity and independence. The democratization concept gained broad support in the 1990s as the KMT relinquished some of its control, accepted a limited number of constitutional reforms, and agreed to direct presidential elections (Gilley and Diamond 2008). Although it remains the primary political discourse for framing Taiwanese democratization, liberalism must make room for competing concepts such as nationalism, multiculturalism, communitarianism, postmodernism and feminism, among others. Of these, Taiwanese nationalist concerns have gained the same level of importance as liberalism. During the past two decades, some Taiwanese liberals have described nationalism as a threat due to its emphasis on a collective political community as opposed to individual rights (Chao 1996; Chien 1999).

My goal in this paper is to analyse four possible combinations of liberalist values and nationalist concerns in order to clarify the ways that liberal researchers approach the subject of Taiwanese democratization. I will also address the question of how Taiwanese researchers establish their agendas and occasionally shift from position to position, which raises concerns over scholarly inconsistency and ethics. I will purposefully avoid conventional approaches that focus on supporting liberalism in countries that lack liberal traditions (e.g. Chao 1996; Chien and Wang 1995; Chu 2006; Lin et al. 2005) or that suggest connections between Taiwan's experience with liberalism and the future development of dem-

ocratization in China (e.g. Gilley and Diamond 2008). In conventional research approaches, liberalism tends to occupy a central position; therefore, a country such as Taiwan can serve as a case study to explain liberal democratic prerequisites and non-liberalist pasts – in other words, to compare and contrast liberalism with concepts such as Confucianism. I believe that scholarly analyses of Taiwan's political development are determined less often by "liberal facts" associated with democratization as they are by relationships between a liberal research community and its observed subject.

The liberal research community that is the focus of this paper consists of scholars who claim to believe or who are perceived as believing the current and widely accepted teleology of Taiwanese democratization. For the purposes of this article I will exclude two types of individuals who have influenced Taiwanese democratization orientations. The first consists of politicians such as Lee Teng-hui (Li Denghui), Peng Mingmin (Peng Mingmin) and Hsu Hsin-liang (Xu Xinliang). While acknowledging their respective abilities to shape views regarding the development of democratization in Taiwan, I believe the discursive power of those politicians encourages a search for alternative analyses of efforts to theorize, substantiate and neutralize discussions of Taiwan's current and future democratization efforts. The second group of individuals I will exclude consists of those who disparage liberal values and refuse to accept any kind of teleogical thinking concerning Taiwan's democratization. I am not denying the influences of postcolonialist, postmodernist, or any other type of non-liberal scholarship on knowledge construction in this area – in fact, this attempt to analyse the self-discovery processes taking place in Taiwan was inspired by theorists such as Lily Ling, Ginger Hwang, and Chihyu Shih, among others. However, I will not review their positions in detail due to the scope and length of this paper.

My primary assumption is that in the Taiwanese context, the concerns of liberals regarding democratization have a dual focus: 1) the achievements and practices of Western-based liberal values in Taiwan, and 2) a mix of Chinese and Taiwanese nationalist concerns. Based on this assumption, the Taiwanese context differs from others that lack a national-identity crisis – that is, countries that lack the need to present an image as an independent and autonomous nation-state. As mentioned above, since the early 1950s liberalism has been discussed by Taiwanese intellectuals as a strategy for freeing China from communist rule, to support resistance among both mainland migrants and Taiwanese against

KMT oppression, and to support Taiwan's aspirations to become an independent nation-state. In short, Taiwanese liberals have always mixed liberal ideas with national-identity concerns.

If this assumption is valid, then local liberal scholars should not be perceived merely as pushing Taiwan toward universal liberal democratization, but as being sensitive to nationalism and national-identity issues in their attempts to define Taiwanese democratization. I will therefore operationalize the efforts of Taiwanese liberals to manage the relationship between liberal values and national-identity concerns by defining the relationship between the two as an end–means association from which four possible orientations emerge. I believe this operationalization will better support an understanding of how a liberal research community in Taiwan can work with the observed subject (Taiwanese democratization) via discursive orientations. I will address four combinations (orientations) of liberalist values and national-identity concerns that articulate Taiwan's unique route to democratization. The four orientations are

- universal, implying a representation of Taiwanese democratization as a particular example of local development within a universal framework;
- moderate, indicating an attempt to balance liberal values and national-identity concerns through compromise or multicultural arrangement;
- pragmatic, suggesting a focus on solutions to societal and political issues (for example, stability); and
- nationalist, emphasizing a need to present a national identity in terms of particularity, sovereignty, or cultural values.

The categories shown in Table 1 are based on the assumption of two social actor dimensions (instrumental use, or "means", and goal pursuit, or "ends") intersecting with two types of concerns: nationalist (defined as collective solidarity or identification with a nation) and liberalist (defined as political participation, freedom of speech, civil liberties, and other individual rights). I chose these dimensions because of the strong focus on Taiwanese consciousness and the development of liberal values in the Taiwanese democratization literature since the early 1990s. The status of nationalist concerns or liberal values as means or goals is narrator-dependent: For those who fluctuate between the confrontational values of collective solidarity and individual rights, the choice is between viewing liberalism as transcending national identity and prioritizing na-

tional identity while selectively using liberalist principles; for those who do not perceive collectivism and individualism as contradictory, the pursuit of liberalism is equivalent to the pursuit of a Taiwanese consciousness. The four orientations do not necessarily adhere to the teleological approach described in Fukuyama's (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man* drama, which underscores the global consensus that has been achieved regarding liberal democratic goals. The victory of liberal democracy over other systems suggests no additional progress in underlying principles and institutions during this century.

Table 1: Four Taiwan Liberalist Orientations

	Liberalism as an end	Liberalism as a means
Nationalism as a means	Universal	Pragmatic
Nationalism as an end	Moderate	Nationalist

Source: Author's compilation.

The likely result in countries that experience democratization will be a hybrid of societal and local actor insensitivity to struggles between liberal values and other concerns. Research on postcolonial societies has shown how such hybridity and insensitivity characterize local knowledge production – see Tickner's (2008) observation of how Latin American IR studies reflect tension between American IR discourses and local concerns regarding national development. To a certain degree, this tension is mitigated by the selective integration of American IR theory into nationalist-developmentalist and dependency discourses. Combinations of these ideas reflect normative concerns regarding issues such as autonomy, identify all possible sources of internal, external, political and economic theories, and enact responses that reflect the instrumental purposes of local actors. Since these combinations have symbolic meaning while serving pragmatic purposes, they are best viewed as strategies for achieving local goals rather than as sources of potential theoretical confrontations. This strategic view of seeing no fundamental conflicts between the global and local values can also be applied to Taiwan; some postcolonial scholars see this view as creating opportunities to express local traditional values (see, for example, Ling, Hwang, and Chen 2010; Ling and Shih 1998; Shih 2006), or as underscoring how a dominant liberal discourse has been employed in support of the status quo (Chen and Chien 2009).

Pursuing Universality by Overcoming National-Identity Concerns

According to the first orientation, Taiwanese democratization represents a pursuit of universality that supports efforts to transform illiberal elements into liberal ones. This orientation emerges from a view of liberalism as an ultimate goal, while a shared national-institutional identity facilitates the formation of a civic culture in which individuals participate in public affairs as citizens and not as members of ethnic groups (Almond and Verba 1963; Greenfeld 1992). Taiwan is perceived as being capable of moving away from an ethnic focus and toward a unified society similar to those found in the West. Chang (1993), Jiang (2005) and Wu (1996) are among scholars who view the emergence in the 1990s of a nation-state form of nationalism along with a Taiwanese ethnic identity as a major challenge to liberal development. According to Jiang, "Since 1992, liberals have found themselves entrapped in a difficult situation in which Taiwanese nationalism [...] has become the predominant force in society" (Jiang 2005: 8). In the same article he concludes the following:

> More important is that, although liberal democracy has always remained the only legitimate goal for Taiwanese, liberalism is never a dominant and consolidated intellectual resource. It is weak in the face of traditional values, fragile in the face of nationalism, ambiguous in the face of socialism, and suspicious in the face of postmodernism (Jiang 2005: 21).

According to this observation, there are three aspects of liberal development in countries such as Taiwan.

- First, liberalism must compete with the other schools mentioned by Jiang – in other words, despite its status in the West (Macpherson 1977), democracy in Taiwan does not guarantee full acceptance of liberalism by Taiwanese.
- Second, while local values are not necessarily incompatible with liberalism, Jiang views Taiwan's emerging national identity and associated nationalist discourse as challenges to the development of liberal values.
- Third, he believes that Taiwanese have not yet achieved a consensus on the place of liberal values in democratization or on the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a goal.

If liberalism is a legitimate goal for a democratic society, then national identity and nationalist arguments can facilitate its establishment by shifting one's identification from nation or ethnicity to institutions such as constitutions. Accordingly, the task of local scholars who believe in the pursuit of liberalism as an ultimate goal is to accept a Taiwanese democratization as requiring the accommodation of rational institutions by those who hold onto emotional factors such as national or ethnic identity.

In an earlier article, Jiang Yihuah (1997) addresses the need to overcome national-identity concerns for the sake of this illiberal-to-liberal transformation. He sees potential for liberalist theory to accommodate national identity by treating it as a multidimensional concept involving ethnic, cultural and institutional identification. According to Jiang, since liberalism is not incompatible with ethnic or cultural identification, a more appropriate focus is on institutions. This explains his concern regarding confrontations among various national-identity goals – especially independence versus unification – starting in the early 1990s and holding a central position in the 1996 presidential election. In short, Jiang believes that a liberal democracy must transcend efforts to build a national identity based on ethnic or cultural relationships because they contradict basic liberalist principles. He lists six principles worth pursuing: individual rights, tolerance of plurality, a constitutional government, a neutral position for the state, respect for private property, and a market economy. While different in content, they all emphasize individual rights over community-based ethnic or cultural rights. When comparing identification with institutions rather than with an ethnic group or culture, Jiang asserts that the first is the best way to satisfy the six principles; he is mainly concerned with the idea that a liberal and democratic society must purposefully build such institutions in order to maintain a national identity not based on emotional, primitive ways of thinking. From my perspective, dividing national identity into ethnic, cultural and institutional identification categories not only is helpful in determining which factors should be included or excluded in a liberal democracy, but also underscores the required transformation for enacting democratization in a country such as Taiwan.

Hu Fu (1998), who shares many of Jiang's views, considers Taiwan's current national-identity conflict the equivalent of a constitutional crisis in democratization. He describes Taiwan as experiencing a transition from authoritarianism to democratic consolidation, and depicts national-

identity issues as undermining transitional stability. Unlike Jiang, Hu refrains from examining this democratic development from an uncritical liberalist perspective, preferring instead to identify Taiwan-specific explanations for emerging problems. Though trained as a political scientist in the US, he refrains from directly applying Western theories to current trends in China or Taiwan, and describes the work of David Easton, Gabriel Almond, and Sydney Verba as limited in that they describe government decision-making processes in structural and/ or functional terms that do not accurately reflect identity issues tied to the legitimacy of central political authority. In reminding us that Taiwan and China have non-democratic characteristics, Hu also notes that power has symbolic and legitimate meaning outside of government decision-making, and that it wields great influence on all individuals regardless of political system. He argues that the key difference between a democratic and authoritarian regime is a psychological orientation among citizens that reflects a sense of obligation, a willingness to participate in policymaking, and a "self-consciousness" that supports the rejection of an illegitimate political system. Regarding national-identity problems, Hu believes that they become constitutional or institutional crises when citizens stop viewing the state as legitimate, subsequently refusing to participate in a national community. His solution resembles Jiang Yihuah's concept of institutional identification, but Jiang places national-identity issues into ethnic, cultural and institutional categories and focuses on six specific principles, while Hu (1998) calls for "a return to the Republic of China Constitution" in order to unify and integrate the identities of Taiwanese citizens. However, Jiang and Hu agree that liberal values are desirable for Taiwanese democratization, and that national-identity issues must be transcended to facilitate that goal.

Moderate Liberalism: Domestic Multicultural Arrangements

The second orientation is associated with the idea that the dual goals of reason-based liberalism and emotion-based national identity can be achieved through careful management (Wu 1996). I view this "careful management" as characteristic of a moderate liberalist discourse designed to concurrently address liberal values and national-identity concerns. I believe that "management" should be emphasized over "transformation" because the task for this second group of thinkers is to strike

a balance rather than promote one idea over the other. However, the idea of management has been criticized by Chao Kang (1996) and other Taiwanese liberalists as an excuse for liberalists and nationalists to avoid serious debate. Whereas the first orientation emphasizes changes in values, the second emphasizes a compromise between addressing national development as a socialization process without forcing individuals to give up their primitive identification. Thus, relationships between individuals and groups warrant attention in any study of democratization in a country such as Taiwan, where relations were established as part of the indigenization-democratization process launched by President Chiang Ching-kuo (Jiang Jingguo) in the late 1980s (Wang 1989).

Sociologist Chang Maukuei (2006), an example of a moderate liberalist thinker, describes recent research on Taiwanese democratization as fluctuating between political studies of individual-interest conflicts and sociological studies of reconciliation among ethnic groups. He describes as unfortunate the tendency among reconciliation discourses (for example, "four ethnic groups", "life community", "new Taiwanese", "reconciliation and coalition", "new middle way" and "multicultural") to focus on political interests and mobilization rather than sociological considerations. He has issued a call for greater sensitivity regarding the impacts of democratization and indigenization on local ethnic groups, believing that only through such sensitivity can Taiwanese achieve liberal values such as freedom and respect.

In an earlier article on ethnicity and nationalism, Chang (1993) encouraged liberalists to take a more holistic, social and moral approach to the issues, as opposed to emphasizing individual, political and economic calculations. He believes that Taiwan's ethnic- and/ or national-identity issues are not so much about racism as about perceived divisions between local/ alien, Chinese/ Taiwanese, and the People's Republic/ Republic of China, with democratization and indigenization contributing to identity issues. Chang does not use the concept of transforming an authoritarian regime to explain the emergence of an indigenous identity or consciousness; instead, he uses Benedict Anderson's (1991) concept of imagined communities to explain the collective need for identity symbols or feelings of belonging in Taiwanese democratization. Chang's liberalist preferences are clear in his view that ethnic relations in Taiwan must be based on multicultural respect and tolerance leading to equal status and rights among ethnic groups (Chang 2004). However, by sympathizing with the idea of collectivism over individualism, he disagrees

with liberalists who emphasize citizenship over community. Chang apparently believes that Taiwanese democratization, understood in the context of indigenization, cannot be blamed for creating current conflicts, but it does represent a call for sensitivity to collective feelings and their psychological and social roots.

Shih Chengfeng[1] (2007) is another Taiwanese scholar who emphasizes ethnicity when analysing the country's democratization as an indigenization movement. Unlike many liberalists who emphasize individual constitutional rights, Shih believes it is necessary to institutionalize ethnic relations in any new constitution so as to protect the rights of all minority groups. He rejects as simplistic the argument that liberal democratic institutions will solve all ethnic conflicts or any other problem derived from the pursuit of a liberal democracy, since that pursuit is also associated with issues of party identity, national identity, and national status. Shih lists four types of democracies, each with its own approach to issues involving ethnicity:

- ethnic, with one dominant group in control (for instance, Malaysia);
- republican, with a focused effort on transforming a country's residents into responsible citizens (for example, France);
- liberal, which emphasizes individual freedom and rights, often using ethnic groups as democratic decorations (for example, the United States); and
- true multicultural, in which there is a willingness to recognize and protect the constitutional rights of ethnic groups and to include them in policymaking processes (for instance, Canada and Switzerland).

Shih wants Taiwan to pursue a multicultural democracy, which he believes can satisfy both liberalist and nationalist interests.

Shih acknowledges logical contradictions between democracy and the needs of ethnic groups. However, he asserts that in the Taiwanese context, democratization involves an indigenization process that repre-

1 According to one reviewer of this paper, Shih Chengfeng describes himself as a postcolonial writer. Although I have yet to find the source of this assertion, I am aware of Shih's application of the idea of "internal colonialism" to problems tied to exploitation during Taiwan's nation-state-building process. However, if viewed as a short-term strategy for resisting the problem of exploitation, Shih's application of this idea can be understood as an attempt to explain the concepts of inclusive nationalism and deliberative democracy according to principles of multiculturalism (Shih 2004).

sents an attempt to promote nation-state-building by replacing a KMT-imposed Chinese consciousness with a Taiwanese consciousness or alternative form of nationalism. He views Lee Teng-hui, former president of Taiwan, as playing a pivotal role in promoting indigenization, especially his late-1990s "New Taiwanese" policy, which aimed to accommodate both local ethnic groups and those who moved from the mainland in 1949 (Shih 2003). In addition to analysing Taiwanese democratization in terms of liberalization, democratic transition, and consolidation, Shih believes it is also important to examine it as a local pursuit of Taiwanese nationalism, and to determine how that pursuit has been supported by an indigenization process. Whereas Chang Maukuei (2006) stresses harmony and group/ collective feelings, Shih Chengfeng (2007) pays greater attention to the question of whether the mix of indigenization and ethnic/ national identities can produce a true multicultural democracy.

Pragmatic Liberalist: Balancing versus Enhancing State Power

In the third orientation, the democratization discourse can be analysed in a manner that is not predetermined – in other words, the question of democratization is not about advancing the universality of local values or enhancing the rights of ethnic groups in the context of universality, but about the use of state power to achieve specific goals. Despite the claims of Taiwanese politicians, liberalism or national integration should not be considered ultimate goals. More important for this third group is to employ liberalist ideas and promote national integration for the sake of political stability within a context of uncertainty as perceived by pragmatic liberalists. Chien Sechin and Wang Jennhwan (1995) have commented on what they view as Taiwan's top-down political construction and the manipulation of concepts such as "the people" (人民, *renmin*) and "Taiwanese consciousness" in support of a populist authoritarian regime that contradicts the spirit of liberal democracy. They argue that the main characteristic of such a regime is the use of liberal democratic institutions by political leaders for purposes of legitimization, with policy decisions conceived and executed in support of nation-state construction and the accumulation of political power. Similar to Chien and Wang's observations regarding a populist regime in Taiwan in the mid-1990s, psychologist Hwang Kwangkuo (1995) went so far as to predict the loss of Taiwan in a hypothetical war with China over nationalist concerns.

Discussions of populist authoritarianism reflect a broad range of attitudes, with some authors conditionally supporting the idea of expanded presidential power in the interest of political stability. There were many vocal critics of six constitutional revisions enacted between 1991 and 2000 during the Lee Teng-hui administration, a period in which the country's governance evolved from being parliamentary with a symbolic presidential post to being characterized by shared executive power (president and premier) with little accountability to the legislature. The constitutional amendment passed in 1994 strengthened the presidential office via direct elections and reduced the premier's countersigning power, and three years later the president was given the power to appoint the premier. The election of Chen Shui-bian (Chen Shuibian) is viewed by some as the ultimate accomplishment of a president-centred, constitution-based political system (for a discussion of constitutional development in Taiwan, see Su 2010). According to Kuo Jengliang (1996), part of Lee Teng-hui's motivation to push for these reforms was to preserve his self-image as a leader with "a strong historical mission" to enact them (Kuo 1996: 59). Expressing support for presidential reforms following Lee's 1996 re-election, Kuo argues that they fit well with Taiwan's specific political and social needs for stability prior to achieving democratic consolidation. He describes Lee as a positive example of a president willing to use power to promote political reforms, nation-state-building, and national unity. Kuo also describes a need for parliamentary mechanisms to block the re-emergence of a dictatorial regime, but not at the expense of a popularly elected president who possesses real rather than symbolic power.

Critics of a semi-presidential system rely on similar arguments regarding political stability and national integration, expressing concern that expanded presidential power might negatively impact Taiwan's multi-party system. In an article comparing parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential systems, Chou Yangshan (1996) describes the first as the most stable and the second as the least stable. He points to Finland as an example of how political and social institutions can maintain stability under a semi-presidential system, as long as the president remains non-partisan and selfless. However, Chou argues that such a leader is difficult to find in a country such as Taiwan, whose society is characterized by factionalism as well as by ethnic and identity conflicts; therefore, focusing on self-constraint and non-partisanship might be more important than expanding presidential power. However, according to this

perspective, support for self-constraint or limiting state power is not motivated by concerns for individual rights, but rather for overall community stability.

The details of executing a minority-party government emerged when Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Chen Shui-bian was elected as the country's first non-KMT president in 2000. Following the election, the national focus changed from the potential for too much presidential power to addressing divisions between political parties and among various groups in Taiwanese society – divisions with deep roots in past national-identity and social issues (Lin Chialung 2000; Lin Jihwen 2000; Wu 2001). In their analyses, some scholars focused on how Chen and his party adhered to established constitutional processes, attempted to mitigate power conflicts with other political parties, and created political coalitions. For Huang Tehfu (2000), Chen's refusal to share power in making appointments and controlling all aspects of government personnel, plus his lack of respect for opposition input in policymaking, contributed to Taiwan's political instability. Huang argues that a successful administration requires good working relations with other political parties and a genuine effort to facilitate political trust, social harmony and effective policymaking. In a separate study of DPP control between 2000 and 2004, Chen Hongming (2007) notes how decisions made by political actors (for example, President Chen's lack of effort to create a coalition-based political system, the attempts of various politicians to maintain political stability, and opportunity-cost calculations on the part of opposition parties) influence minority-government success or failure under a semi-presidential system. While acknowledging that expanded presidential power represents a potential threat to political stability, Huang Tehfu and Chen Hongming also recognize the potential for presidential self-constraint leading to stability, reduced party competition, and cooperation.

When the KMT won control of both the presidency and the legislature in 2008, new questions about power redistribution were raised – especially about the potential for Taiwan to revert to KMT authoritarianism (Chen 2008; Fan 2008; Qianlin 2008; *United Daily* 2008a, 2008b). Thus, DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh (Xie Changting) repeatedly argued against single-party dominance during his 2008 campaign, but a large number of Taiwanese argued that political stability must take priority, especially in a young democracy. As political scientist Yang Taishuenn (2008) wrote, "If politics cannot be stable, who cares if power is effec-

tively checked or not?" (Yang 2008: 178). Yang described the country's party competition as driven by national-identity concerns that conflict with the application of checks and balances, and argued that political stability requires the careful management of national identity and liberalist principles within a constitutional framework. He believes it is possible to combine the two, although doing so may require national tolerance of concentrated power in a single party. Philip Yang (2008) concurs, arguing that the party system that emerged from the 2008 presidential election is very different from that of the preceding two decades, with democratization reverting to a lesser degree of KMT-controlled authoritarianism. He also cites stability as his primary reason for supporting KMT party control of both the executive and legislative branches.

Yang Taishuenn (2008) goes on to argue that criticisms of KMT power in the weeks following the 2008 election were overstated, and that conventional ideas about checks and balances as necessary for democratic development require re-evaluation in the Taiwan context. Meant to prevent abuses of power by a branch of government, a checks-and-balances system can result in confrontation, resistance and boycotts – especially in Taiwan, where parties are not divided along lines of social or economic policy, but along lines of emotional identity concerns. Yang believes that the system in the US is more successful due to its characteristic of social pluralism, which Taiwan lacks. For Yang Taishuenn and Philip Yang, national-identity divisions justify a relativization of liberalist principles and support for concentrated power in Taiwan's nascent democratic society.

Nationalist Liberalist: Re-presenting Taiwanese Identity in a Liberal Discourse

In the last orientation, liberalism is viewed as a means, nationalism as an ultimate goal, and democratization as a political statement on national identity, one that reflects constraints imposed by a "great China" consciousness. While there is no logical connection between democratization and local support for a Taiwanese identity or Taiwanese independence, scholars who adhere to this orientation argue that democratization emerged from societal opposition to KMT authoritarianism and its "outsider" or "alien" (外來, *wailai*) status, resulting in the acquisition of a new Taiwanese identity over the course of several election cycles. In this context, the concept of a liberal democracy holds importance in that it al-

lows Taiwanese to express their wishes, state their preferences on how their country should be presented in a universal (liberal) language, and pursue a national identity previously suppressed by the KMT. The goal is not to reform a system of values to make it adhere to liberalist principles, but to apply liberal institutions such as free elections in support of citizens' concerns about the land they inhabit, as opposed to an ideal that might be found across the Taiwan Strait.

According to Lin Chialung (1989, 2000) and Hsu Yungming and Fan Yun (2001), Taiwan's national-identity concerns should not be interpreted as outdated expressions of nationalist or ethnic priorities, but as issues to be addressed in step with a democratization process that facilitates multiparty competition, frees Taiwanese from the influences of authoritarianism, adjusts outmoded constitutional structures, and redefines territorial borders – eliminating the constitutional claim that the Republic of China includes all of mainland China. According to this view, liberalist principles such as constitutions and democratic development are required for nation-state-building and national-identity formation, with the achievement of liberal principles and democratic values confirming Taiwan's international status.

Lin Chialung (2000) describes Taiwanese democratization as being driven by elections through which political elites organize and mobilize the population and the population shapes the preferences and strategies of political elites. He believes that a shared national identity is a product of this process. In an earlier paper on resistance to KMT authoritarianism, Lin (1989) suggests that oppositional activity can be interpreted as a "democratization movement that comes with a strong local Taiwanese sense of opposition to a KMT regime" (Lin 1989: 126). Two KMT characteristics that triggered Taiwanese identity formation and a push for democratization are associated with self-determination: control by a minority of residents who moved to Taiwan from mainland China in 1949, and a "great China" identity imposed on locals. Thus, early oppositional efforts consisted of emotional (nationalism) and rational (institutional reform) aspects that encouraged participation on the part of both nationalists and liberalists (see also Shaw 1997). In his earlier paper, Lin Chialung did not treat confrontations between the KMT and opposition groups as serious threats to liberal institutions or democratization, preferring instead to describe them as part of a conflict-displacement strategy leading to a new balance of power. Lin's national-identity argument focused on the efforts (conscious or not) of local Taiwanese elites and

ethnic groups to 1) respond to issues such as the KMT's alien-regime image, minority-controlled governance, and authoritarian clientelism, and 2) express their identification with the island of Taiwan rather than the KMT, China, or abstract liberalist values.

Hsu Yungming and Fan Yun (2001) describe democratization as a process of "learning to be Taiwanese", and view social actors in Taiwan as making strategic national-identity preferences within a process of power redistribution. Hsu and Fan use the concept of "prospective rationality" to explain a type of national-identity formation that has not been constrained by history or collective memory, and has therefore developed into a learning process involving rational calculations regarding the future. This rational learning process has not produced what Jiang Yihuah (1997) describes as liberal institutional identification. Hsu and Fan do not reject the influences of objective factors such as migration history and original ethnicity, but argue that national identity is a continually changing process of learning and selection rather than an inheritance of factors such as ethnicity. According to results from a survey that Hsu and Fan conducted, both "mainlander" and "local" Taiwanese have been consistently moving toward a Taiwanese identity and away from a Chinese identity – evidence that an ethnic group does not have to be constrained by primordial identification, but is free to join with others to form new groups such as "the rising people" (新兴民族, *xinxin minzu*) identified by Hsu Hsinliang (1995) or the "New Taiwanese" as discussed by Lee Teng-hui (1998).

Hsu Yungming, Tsai Chiahung, and Huang Hsiutin (2005) used Hsu and Fan's finding (2001) to support their argument that referendums, if they become the preferred institutional procedure in future elections, will exert great influence on Taiwanese national identity, especially among "dual-identity" Chinese/ Taiwanese. They believe that while movement toward a liberal democracy contributed to the establishment of a Taiwanese national identity in the early 1990s, it was threats made by China following the first direct presidential election in 1996 that significantly reduced the sense of ambiguity tied to that identity. Hsu and his coauthors conclude that Taiwan's open elections and democratization process are two major factors strengthening that identity, and that referendums represent the most "legitimate" method for consolidating it. In an edited collection of articles entitled *Democracy All The Way: The Referendum Movement in Taiwan* (2007a), Lin Chialung, Hsu Yungming and others also

express strong support for the referendum process, regardless of local opposition or threats from China. According to Lin et al. (2007b),

> referendums can play a role in US–China–Taiwan relations [… and] can be used as a Taiwanese democracy card that changes the structure of its relations within international society. In other words, referendums are Taiwan's way of moving toward international society; if Taiwan wants to become a normal country, the solution is to hold referendums (Lin et al. 2007b: 215).

In a round-table discussion marking the release of the edited volume, Hsu Yungming expressed a similar belief in referendums as a useful tool for connecting the ideas of democracy and sovereignty (cited in Lin et al. 2007b). He believes that as long as Taiwan holds regular elections, countries such as the United States will feel compelled to defend Taiwan's sovereign status, lest they appear critical of newly emerging democratic functions.

In summary, some Taiwanese scholars are appropriating ideas associated with liberal democracies (for instance, anti-authoritarianism, election mechanisms, referendums) and using them in support of Taiwanese identity or sovereignty-related goals. In addition to claiming that Taiwan's liberal democracy justifies the emergence of a national identity (as well as accusing opponents of being anti-democratic or favouring KMT authoritarianism), these scholars are making a political statement that emphasizes independence and sovereignty. Their discourses also present democratization as part of a de-Sinicization process that rejects a "great China" consciousness in favour of building a Taiwanese national identity.

Conclusions

Using four orientations to explain the responses of Taiwanese liberalist scholars to Western liberalism and to national-identity issues beginning in the early 1990s, I discussed in this paper how Taiwanese scholars are using a mix of liberalist values and nationalist concerns to analyse their country's democratization process. Against this backdrop, the meanings of Taiwanese democratization to local liberal scholars perhaps should not be viewed as a case of Western democracy-watchers discovering liberalist values that verify Western experiences – a perspective found in many comparative political studies. Instead, I argue that Taiwanese liberalists are either purpose- or value-laden. This is not to say that those liberalists should refrain from sharing the same research concerns as

their Western counterparts – scholars in the first orientation category will naturally share ideas with Westerners who pursue a universally focused epistemology. In contrast, nationalist liberalist scholars tend to use locality- or nation-centric epistemologies to develop their democratization discourses. What is important in my attempt to categorize these discourses is that liberalist understandings of Taiwanese democratization may not be self-evident if they do not share the same Western/ universal agenda based on established liberal values or conditions. Instead of simply presenting a conceptualization framework, I showed that researcher intervention in re-presenting the subject under study must be carefully considered in a context such as Taiwan's. What makes this context special is the inability of Taiwanese to determine their collective identity.

A second conclusion is that local liberalist scholars studying Taiwanese democratization are occasionally inconsistent. They sometimes shift their positions among the four orientations, depending on how they want to address liberalism and nationalism in specific contexts. One quick example is Chu Yunhan's position on democratization, which has shifted among the first, second and fourth orientations. In the late 1990s, Chu and Huang (1997) used the historical experience of Western democracy as a reference point for his analysis of comparative democratization (universal liberalist), but in the early part of the following decade he was one of several Taiwanese social scientists to address the topic of "indigenization", which emphasizes greater sensitivity to Taiwan's specific historical and social contexts (moderate liberalist) (Chu, Wang, and Zhao 2002). When discussing the 2000 presidential election, he focused on its implications for enhancing the "consciousness of subjectivity in Taiwan['s] society" and for consolidating "democratic values" (a mix of universal and nationalist) (Chu 2000). Future researchers may be interested in analysing how other liberalist scholars in Taiwan have addressed or used liberalism across time periods and conditions.

In summary, when research design overtly reflects a researcher's relationship with the subject under study, the assumption of a universally shared research agenda or concern is weakened and conditioned by contexts, concerns and choices. Further consideration needs to be given to how scholarly efforts in democratization research do not necessarily reflect corresponding factors between liberalist theory and local reality. The four orientations discussed in this paper underscore an important aspect of knowledge production: that the presumed objectivity of Tai-

wanese knowledge regarding the country's democratization process is actually a product of an author's subjective political beliefs and concerns. As a result, democratization studies by Taiwanese scholars represent knowledge formation based on individual concerns, purposes and emotions. The same seems to be true for Western Taiwan analysts, whose knowledge is tied, at least in part, to their identification with liberalist traditions.

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