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Taiwan is a fascinating place with rich culture and the pursue of freedom. It also has a significant place in the global geopolitics. With it’s complex relation with China, the status of Taiwan is something important to the international society. Interestingly, as such an important country, Taiwan’s democracy is quite young as appose to other countries. The development of Taiwan’s democracy has greatly led to the current Chinese political view on Taiwan. In this literature review, we will be looking at four scholarly articles that all has deep conversation on the development of democracy in Taiwan, and discuss how these articles shaped the idea of democratization.

The first article is interestingly written by the same author in my Major Project 2, Łukasz Zamęcki. In "Why Did Taiwanese Youth Protest in 2014? Emergence of Protests from the Perspective of Mobilization Structures and Shared Grievances," Łukasz from the University of Warsaw and Wei-An Chen from National Taiwan University study Taiwan’s 2014 Sunflower Movement using Bert Klandermans’ theory of protest. Published in Przegląd Politologiczny in 2024, the article looks at interviews and social media to understand why young people protested. The authors say that unfair government actions, fear of China’s influence, and strong student networks led to the protests. The movement strengthened support for democracy and helped shape a stronger Taiwanese identity.

Similarly, In the article "What Makes Liberal Democracy Work? Comparing Taiwan and the United States" from The Geography Teacher, Ray Mikell explores how democratic systems function in Taiwan and the U.S. Mikell, a political science professor at Jackson State University, compares their political cultures, histories, and social trust. He argues that Taiwan’s strong civil society and low inequality may support its high democracy rankings. Although both nations have challenges, Taiwan’s group-oriented culture and healthcare system may strengthen its democracy. Mikell suggests that comparing the two helps students better understand what makes liberal democracy succeed in different places.

In the next article, Ming-sho Ho and Yun-Chung Ting study how democratization affects protests. In the "Contentious Institutionalization of Protests under Democracy: The Evidence from Taiwan, 1986–2016", using data from Ketagalan Boulevard in Taipei, they show that while protest violence declines as democracy grows, protests remain common and sometimes disruptive. They find that festive and performative tactics help reduce violence, and that opposition politicians often increase conflict. The study, published in Government and Opposition, supports the idea that protests become more normal and organized under democracy, but also stay contentious. Taiwan’s case shows how new democracies quickly develop active protest cultures like older ones.

Finally, in "The 2016 Election and Prospects for Taiwan’s Democracy," Richard C. Bush, from the Brookings Institution explores the Democratic Progressive Party’s major win in Taiwan’s 2016 election. Published in Orbis by the Foreign Policy Research Institute, the article explains how Tsai Ing-wen’s success came from public discontent with the Kuomintang and changing views on China. Bush also discusses the effects on Taiwan’s politics, cross-strait relations, and U.S. foreign policy. He suggests the election might show a lasting political shift, though it’s too early to tell. The article offers insights into Taiwan’s growing democratic identity.

In these frou academic articles, they dicuss the importance of the development of Taiwan’s democracy, witch enhanced my perception on this topipc. This literature review will diucss three main theme in these four articles and analyze it’s contribution to my project.

The first theme is the youth activism as democratic participation and identity formation in Taiwan. Youth activism in Taiwan, especially during the 2014 Sunflower Movement, shows how young people have become more involved in politics and have helped shape a strong Taiwanese identity. Rowen explains that students protested not just a trade deal with China, but also how the government made decisions without enough transparency. Ho and Rowen show how this activism led to new political groups like the New Power Party. Bush (2016) connects these movements to the DPP’s big win in the 2016 election.This helps my MP3 project by showing how young people have shaped Taiwan’s democratic development, linking to a major historical event (the 2014 Sunflower Movement) that my timeline feature. It also ties into cultural identity, which is key for explaining Taiwan’s political status and internal dynamics to unfamiliar audiences.

In addtion to the significance of the civil participation in Taiwan’s democracy, the institutional strengths and limitations is also diussed in these articles. Taiwan has a strong democracy, but it still has some problems. Mikell (2025) says that Taiwan ranks higher than the U.S. in some democracy reports because of trust among people and active communities. However, Bush (2016) explains that Taiwan’s legislature often doesn’t work well because of fighting between parties and lack of cooperation. Ho and Rowen also point out that sometimes protest movements don’t lead to real change. This theme is crucial for helping OSU students understand how Taiwan functions politically and what makes its democracy resilient yet vulnerable compared to others like the U.S.

Finally, and might be most importantly, China’s influence as a catalyst and constraint on Taiwan’s domestic politics is especially important to really understand Taiwan’s history and its relation to the current situation. China has a big influence on Taiwan’s politics, but it doesn’t always have the effect it wants. Bush (2016) shows that when China pressured Taiwan to accept the “one China” idea, voters turned away and supported Tsai Ing-wen instead. Rowen connects these tensions to student protests. Mikell (2025) suggests that facing threats from China may actually help Taiwan stay more united and democratic. This is important for the timeline because it helps explain why China matters so much in Taiwan’s history and why Taiwan’s political status is so complicated.

Throughout the research process, my understanding of Taiwan’s democracy deepened and my research questions evolved. Initially, I simply wanted to highlight important events in Taiwan’s political history, but as I read more scholarly work, I became interested in how youth activism, institutional challenges, and China’s influence have shaped Taiwan’s democratic identity. For example, Rowen’s and Ho’s discussions on the Sunflower Movement helped me see how activism connects with national identity, while Mikell’s comparison with the U.S. raised new questions about what makes democracy resilient. Bush’s insights also pushed me to consider how international pressure impacts domestic politics. These readings didn’t just give me content for my timeline—they helped shape the questions I now want to explore: How does Taiwan's democracy balance internal civic energy with external threats? How do young people and civil society redefine what democracy looks like in East Asia? This evolving curiosity now guides how I structure my project and choose what to emphasize for students unfamiliar with the topic.

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