

Reaction Paper

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r10a21037

To begin with, I believe that the modernization theory has a certain degree of validity concerning the factors influencing democratic development in East Asia. However, cultural background also plays a significant role in democratization. For instance, in the context of Chinese culture, Confucianism holds great importance. Over 2,000 years ago, Confucianism already incorporated the concept of "people-oriented," emphasizing the legitimacy of rulers derived from the people and the importance of considering the will of the people. However, Confucianism places less emphasis on expanding individual rights and instead focuses on establishing a harmonious and virtuous society. These differ from the Western context, which experienced the Age of Enlightenment, where concepts such as "natural rights" were prominent but foreign to the East. When there are such significant cultural disparities, it is not surprising to have different understandings of the concept of "democracy."

Furthermore, I do agree that certain concepts within Confucianism can complement the development of democracy. But it's important to acknowledge that Confucianism's impact on democratization is not entirely positive. Confucianism seems to place greater emphasis on virtuous gentlemen implementing benevolent governance to earn the trust of the people, while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining proper roles and responsibilities of different social positions. The legitimacy of political power appears to derive from a morally elevated status rather than the rule of law and electoral processes.

Last but not least, Taiwan has transitioned through successive authoritarian regimes without experiencing democracy. I believe several distinct factors have propelled Taiwan toward the path of democratization. The KMT government retreated to Taiwan under the banner of reconquering the mainland and then failed to make progress in its anti-communist efforts. Additionally, the loss of United Nations representation and the severance of diplomatic ties with the United States also gradually eroded the legitimacy of the KMT government, which led to the chance for people to challenge the government. The economic foundation laid in the past,

widespread education, and the return of overseas-educated students all contributed to the development of a conscious and progressive society. Such as the feminist movement that began in the 1970s, various environmental movements in response to pollution incidents in the 1980s, the agricultural movement directly challenged the government's agricultural policies in 1988, and the Wild Lily student movement in 1990—these movements demanded government responses or reforms. Although these social movements did not always specifically target political rights and elections, more and more people became concerned about social issues and pursued freedom and equality more concretely, still accelerating the process of democratic transition. Above all, these may represent a unique experience for Taiwan.