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**Law, Democracy and Development in East Asia**

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**Reaction Paper to the assigned reading for 5/24**

***Min-Hua Huang, Cognitive Involvement and Democratic Understanding***

I agree with the author that the theories of “Asian Exeptionalism” “Modernization Theory” and the “Eclectic Perspective” are all not very convincing. They seem to be reductionistic explanations of complex developments with a multitude of influence factors.   
But part of the reasons for different developments I am missing the kind of oppressive regimes in place. Because in this paper, democratization seems to be burdened mostly to “the people”, disregarding that it is not only up to the people if democratization progresses. E.g. as mentioned Tiananmen Square but also North Korea  
I disagree with the notion of Chu and Huang that “Democracy” has lost its distinctive semantic meaning (p. 301). Firstly I believe that it never had a distinctive semantic meaning. It is not the case that in any given point in time there was only one understanding of what a Democracy or a democratic system is. Maybe democracy might have been misused as a guise to achieve something different. Even if people believe it. This kind of propaganda does not change the actual meaning of something, because it is not meant as that thing. The same way calling something by a different name doesn’t really change what it is (e.g. Special Military Operation vs. War). I think the “Heap Paradox” (one cannot precisely say when a number of things becomes a heap) is applicable: there is no distinctive semantic meaning of democracy or democratic, but it still serves an important definitory function in evaluating political systems and processes.   
The same thing would apply to “Freedom” and “Equality”.

***Thomas B. Gold, Taiwan: Still Defying the Odds***

Therefore I am in disagreement with Samuel Huntingtons understanding. But I do understand the necessity for an on-off view in this analysis.

Commenting on “There is no immanent tendency to democracy in Chinese tradition” I find it important to note, that there is no “immanent tendency to democracy” in western tradition as well. Historically western/european tradition is one of absolutist, god-given rulers (Emperors, Kings and so forth) Feudalism, protestant work and suffering ethics and christian patriarchy. These traditions are in my opinion no more tending towards democracy than the discussed traits of Chinese tradition.   
One could therefore say, that “Europe’s experience has demonstrated, that nondemocratic political traditions do not pose an insurmountable obstacle to (…) democratization”.

I find it interesting how the role of the KMT changed throughout Taiwanese history. In this instance I want to mention a personal experience I had at a podium discussion only a few weeks ago. At this podium, the overwhelming views expressed where, that unfortunately right now Taiwan only has two main political parties who are not actually that different (similar to the US) and that the KMT, with dominant China-orientated politicians, has lost all grounds for existing and should best be dismantled. Interestingly this view does not seem to necessarily correspond with the thoughts or conviction of the general population who still continue to give them a huge amount of votes. Maybe this is because of the lack of viable alternatives. I wonder why there don’t seem to be viable smaller parties.

***Teng-Hui Lee: Confucian Democracy***

I must admit that my knowledge of Confucian Philosophy or Theory is and still seems to be very limited. But the reasoning brought forward how Confucianism and Democracy interplay and support seems compelling. Interestingly in reading I was very much reminded of socialist ideals and philosophy. I do fully agree with the author on the shortcomings of neo-liberal culture and philosophy and would be very much inclined to learn more about Confucianism.

*Adrian Leonhard Klein*