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THESIS

CHINA'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROSPECTS:
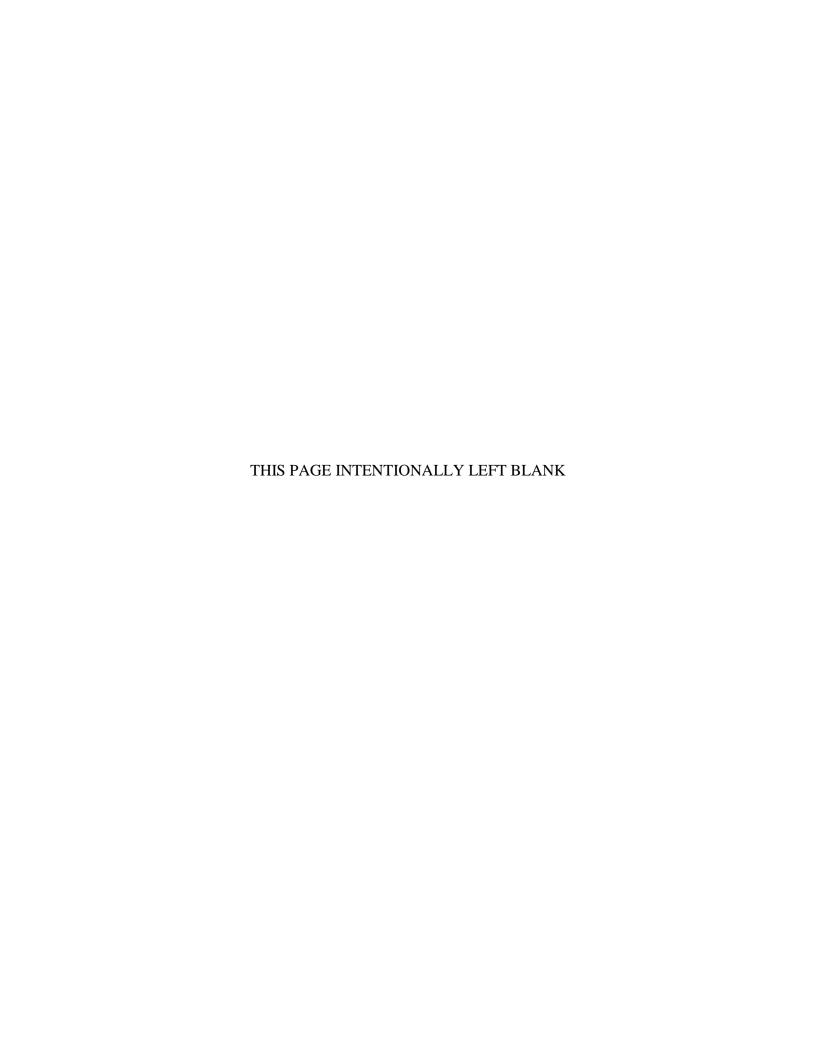**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

by

Serene Khoo

March 2014

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13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

The prospects of China democratizing have garnered much interest and assessment. The increased interest is attributed to an increasing Chinese impact not only on the region, but globally as well. While China has experienced three decades of fast economic growth, political reforms continue to lag behind economic reforms. With its legitimacy weakening progressively, a transition in political systems in the largest country in the world would have wide ranging implications in the political, economic and social spheres. Many have argued that economic growth is the main precursor to democratization. However, it is suggested, neither growth nor the resulting social phenomena are sufficient to bring about a democratic change in China. Drawing inferences from Taiwan and South Korea, this study seeks to examine the democratic transitions of both countries to shed light on China's prospects for democratization. It further concludes that China's prospects for democratization is bleak due to the resiliency of the regime, and any democratic transition would have to be elite-driven.

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**CHINA'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROSPECTS:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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The prospects of China democratizing have garnered much interest and assessment. The increased interest is attributed to an increasing Chinese impact not only on the region, but globally as well. While China has experienced three decades of rapid economic growth, political reforms continue to lag behind economic reforms. With its legitimacy weakening progressively, a transition in political systems in the largest country in the world would have wide ranging implications in the political, economic and social spheres.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CMC	Central Military Commission
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPD	Central Propaganda Department
DJP	Democratic Justice Party
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
KMT	Kuomintang
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NKDP	New Korea Democratic Party
NPC	National People's Congress
PPCC	People's Political Consultation Conference
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSC	Politburo Standing Committee
ROC	Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
WUFI	World United Formosans for Independence

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Without the help of the department, my advisors, and my loved ones, the thesis would not have been completed.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The prospects of China democratizing amidst three decades of rapid economic growth have garnered much interest and assessment. The increased interest is attributed to not only the size of the country, but also its burgeoning economy and population. China overtook Japan in 2010 as the world's second largest economy. Its population of 1.3 billion people is also the world's largest population. These attributes translate to an increasing Chinese impact not only on the region, but globally as well.[1]

Presently, the CCP continues to be resilient in maintaining its authoritarian rule in China. However, the country has been plagued by corruption, slow down in growth, social inequality, an aging population and decreasing competitiveness due to rising domestic costs. These factors severely threaten the CCP's legitimacy that is built on economic growth and an all-inclusive society. Political reforms have continued to lag behind economic reforms. With its legitimacy weakening progressively, a transition in political systems in the largest country in the world would have wide ranging implications in the political, economic and social spheres.

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The thesis aims to assess the democratization prospects for China, taking into account current trends as well as the changes that have transpired economically, socially and politically, through a comparative analysis of the factors that have contributed to Taiwan's and South Korea's road to democracy. The factors that promote or impede democratization in China will also be examined critically.

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[1] "Report for Selected Countries and Subjects," International Monetary Fund, accessed September 1, 2013, http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=42&pr.y =14&sy=2009&ey=2012&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=924&s=NGDPD,NGDPDPC,PP PGDP,PPPPC,LP&grp=0&a=.

B.   IMPORTANCE

China's democratization prospects have been the subject of much analysis because of the potential implications at the international level. Based on Kant's democratic peace theory, a democratic China would have a lower probability of going to war with another democracy.[2] A democratic China would be manifested in more moderate foreign policies that would be less antagonistic in nature. This would also bode well for peaceful resolution of China's maritime disputes in the East and South China Sea, and it could also translate to a peaceful reunification with Taiwan. As a democratic China is considered one of the main prerequisites for unification, it may result in less resistance from Taiwan.

In terms of human rights issues, a democracy may also be expected to prevent human rights abuses and pursue a more measured approach to separatist ambitions in regions in the PRC such as Xinjiang and Tibet. A democratic China would also have a significant impact on totalitarian states such as North Korea, shaping Beijing's diplomatic relations with Pyongyang and place China on the side of the international community in helping to arrest the volatile situation in North Korea. As a democracy, China would be expected to behave as a responsible power, being more open and accountable with regard to controversial issues such as the selling of arms and missile technology to rogue states and conservation of the environment. Hence, the resultant foreign policies would instill greater confidence in China among other countries. At the same time, there are potential downsides to China's democratization. A democratic China may be more susceptible to domestic pressure, especially nationalistic sentiments that could have an adverse impact on its foreign policies as well.[3]

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[2] Russett, Bruce M. and John R. Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001), 114–24.

[3] Bruce Gilley, *China's Democratic Future: How it Will Happen and Where it Will Lead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 227–30.

C.   PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESIS

Democratization is a complex process, regarding which few scholars can agree on the factors that cause or contribute to such a transition in the first place. Similarly, pegging a weight or importance to each of the factors is also seemingly impossible. While some factors strongly correlate with democratization, proving a causal relation remains challenging. It is also important to note that each country's democratization process is unique because the conditions inherent in each country are distinct. To apply a single theory to gauge the prospects of democratization runs the risk of oversimplification and will result in incorrect assessments. Most theories also are explanatory rather than deterministic. Therefore, it is critical to examine the situation in China through the lenses of various theories to assess the prospects for democratization.[4]

While China has experienced three decades of fast economic growth, political reforms continue to lag behind economic reforms. Many have argued that economic growth is the main precursor to democratization. However, it is suggested, neither growth nor the resulting social phenomena are sufficient to bring about a democratic change in China. Drawing inferences from Taiwan and South Korea, this thesis seeks to examine the democratic transitions of both countries to shed light on China's prospects for democratization. It further concludes that the main driving factor would have to come through the top leadership.

D.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The prospects of China democratizing have garnered many contentious assessments. While some scholars maintain that China may prove that authoritarian regimes can be flexible and resilient without democratizing, others believe that the economic reforms in China for the past three decades have propelled China in the direction of becoming a democracy, albeit gradually.

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[4] Carles Boix and Susan Carol Stokes, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 317–9.

1.   Factors Contributing to Democratization

Among proponents of the argument that China is moving toward democratization, there is no agreement on which factors are the most significant. Advocates of modernization theory argue that economic development leads to democratization. Empirical studies often showed that democratization occurs when countries per capita GDP is approximately U.S. $5,000 to $6000.[5] According to World Bank data, China has already reached that level since mid-2006.[6] Hence, this meant that China's economic conditions are ripe for democratization; however, the lack of progress for the past seven years is an indication that economic success alone is insufficient.

The various factors arising from economic development such as the emergence of a middle class, higher educational levels, an increased standard of living, and urbanization have also been postulated as aiding democratization.[7] However, others have countered that economic success lends legitimacy to the authoritarian regime and further entrenches it instead.[8] Those who emphasize the emergence of a middle class as a factor in democratization point to the impact of increasing economic affluence in Taiwan and South Korea. Higher literacy rates and the shift in the social structure in each country produced a civil society that was more political conscious and that desired more political involvement, thereby triggering calls for democracy.[9]

In comparison, the impact of the rise of the middle class in China has been controversial with studies contending that the situation in China is unique in that the middle class is usually a recipient of the benefits from the CCP. Consequently, scholars have also attempted to prove that despite China's economic growth, public cry for

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[5] Kai He and Huiyun Feng, "A Path to Democracy: In Search of China's Democratization Model," *Asian Perspective* 32, no. 3 (2008): 148.

[6] The World Bank, accessed May 2, 2013, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx.

[7] Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man; The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), 31–41.

[8] He and Feng, "A Path to Democracy," 148.

[9] J. Bruce Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea: Comparing East Asia's Two "Third-Wave" Democracies," *Issues & Studies* 43, no. 4 (Dec 2007): 246.

democracy has not increased correspondingly. Since the Tiananmen incident in 1989, demonstrations in China have largely been confined to isolated incidents or nationalistic sentiments instead of pro-democracy movements. The phenomenon is both a result of the crack down by the regime and the occupation with economic growth and the pursuit of financial success by the population. Therefore, those who justify based on the social mobilization theory that the working class or the middle class are the ones that campaign for democracy fail to take into account the tight control that the regime exerts over the population and the economic ties of the middle class to the ruling regime.[10]

2.   Leadership Factor

The former authoritarian regimes of Taiwan and South Korea clamped down hard on dissidents and demonstrators since the 1940s sometimes culminating in extreme bloodshed such as the White Terror of the 1950s in Taiwan and the Kwangju crackdown in 1980 in South Korea. While social movements certainly exerted pressure on both governments, the democratic transitions were initiated more by the top leadership, Chiang Ching-kuo and Roh Tae-woo.[11]

Taking a leaf from the Taiwan and South Korea examples, the leap towards democracy was triggered by decisions made by the top leadership in each country. Chiang Ching-kuo effectively orchestrated democratization in Taiwan when he allowed the opposition to form the DPP and contest in the 1986 elections although it was technically illegal do so. He subsequently ended martial law in July 1987, which restored rights to form political parties.[12]

In South Korea, President Roh Tae-woo also chose to lean towards democratization, unlike his predecessor Chun Doo-hwan, who clamped down harshly on

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[10] Suisheng Zhao, *China and Democracy: Reconsidering the Prospects for a Democratic China* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 189.

[11] Jacobs, *Taiwan and South Korea*, 236–7.

[12] Ibid., 239.

protesters during the Kwangju uprising. As a result, political freedom, a free press, civil rights, and presidential elections were instituted.[13]

In comparison, the leadership context in China is very different from that of Taiwan or South Korea. Strongman politics are unlikely due to the leadership structure in China. The current political structure in China emphasizes that the CCP general secretary is only the first among equals. On top of that, the current fifth generation leadership lacks the revolutionary credentials of previous generations. The CCP leadership's consensus-based decision making also prevents a single leader from dominating the political agenda. In view of this, decisions tend toward maintenance of the party's interests, and reform initiatives toward democratization are muted. Increased institutionalization has also prevented factions from dominating through the balancing of powers between the different factions. Therefore, decisions are consensus based.[14]

In regimes without the prestige that a cult of personality politician can command, an alternative may be that democratization results from fractional politics, whereby certain individuals resort to mass public support. As articulated previously, some scholars assess that conditions in society are not ready to support such calls for democratization, hence making such an avenue challenging.[15]

While the leadership in Taiwan and South Korea had the political impetus to change to hold on to power, the CCP does not face similar pressure both internally and externally. Hence, it is postulated that democratization will require a gradual shift in values, which may take years to evolve. In the event that domestic pressure to democratize mounts and the risks of losing power increases, there is a possibility that the CCP as a whole may resort to more significant political liberalization to extend its grip on power, much like the KMT did in Taiwan. However, the current situation still sees a CCP

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[13] Ibid., 241.

[14] Young Nam Cho, "Elite Politics and the 17th Party Congress in China: Changing Norms Amid Continuing Questions," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 20, no. 2 (Jun 2008): 157–8.

[15] Yu Liu and Dingding Chen, "Why China Will Democratize," *Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Jan 2012): 55.

that is firmly in power. Hence, there is no clear impetus for the CCP to embark on democratization at the moment.[16]

3.   Internal Factors

Confucian societies have typically been stereotyped as anti-democratic. Some argue that Confucian teachings are not conducive to democratization because of its emphasis on adhering to a hierarchical structure, recognition of one's role in society, and its focus on that group rather than individuals and consensus over individuality. However, the experience of Taiwan and South Korea, both Confucian-based societies, refute this theory of cultural effects as an obstacle to democratization.[17]

All three countries experienced rapid growth under an authoritarian government and have transited to an export-led economy. Coupled with high levels of education, increased social mobility and the rise of the middle class have been contended by many to be positively related to a democratic transition.

4.   External Factors

External context is another factor that may promote or hinder democratization. Both Taiwan and South Korea democratized in part due to pressure from the United States. Since both were highly dependent on the United States for national security against external threats and monetary aid, there was pressure to accede to U.S. pressure to adopt democratic ideals in order for the continued support of the United States.[18] China, however, does not face similar constraints. Hence, while it can be expected to want a better international standing, it is less constrained externally to conform.[19]

It may be further argued that the close links between Taiwan and South Korea to the West and especially to the United States for trade, cultural exchanges and tourism

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[16] Ibid.

[17] John Fuh-sheng Hsieh, "Democratizing China," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 38, no. 4–5 (Oct 2003): 380.

[18] N. Eberstadt, "Taiwan and South Korea: The Democratization of Outlier States," *World Affairs* 155, no. 2 (1992): 80.

[19] Hsieh, "Democratizing China," 384.

contributed to the diffusion of ideas and values that promote democracy. With the boom in China's trade, tourism, technology and media, the contact between China and the West is even closer in view of globalization. The advent of the Internet also aids in the spread of Western democratic ideals. Technology has enabled Chinese to compare the Western way of life with their own and promotes the merits of democracy as well.

E.   CURRENT STRATEGIES

Looking back at China, the Tiananmen crisis in 1989 did not topple the CCP, instead the regime has continued to leverage on economic growth and an inclusive society strategy to boost its legitimacy. This was achieved through the cracking down on corruption, improving the pension and healthcare system, and increasing civil liberties and political reforms. Simultaneously, the CCP has also used cooptation of the working class and the capitalists to increase its political base. The multi-pronged approaches could explain why societal pressures have remained low.[20]

In terms of political reforms, there are also dissenting views on how significant are the limited elections currently held at the local people's congresses and village committees. The elections have been mainly limited to village committees, which some have argued is still being controlled by the CCP through the party secretaries. Instead of a meaningful attempt at democratizing, it is viewed as a token of appeasement by the CCP without any real intention of loosening control. However, others believed that these elections helped to expose the population to the concept of democracy, and are an essential first step towards increased political consciousness and liberalization.[21]

The CCP has also used a combination of approaches to discourage calls for democracy. It has used Russia as an example to illustrate how political reforms could be detrimental to the growth and stability of the country, increased political participation of the people at the local levels, provide avenues for the population to redress their

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[20] Yang Yao, "A Chinese Way of Democratisation?" *China: An International Journal* 8, no. 2 (Sep 2010): 332–4.

[21] Hsieh, "Democratizing China," 379.

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grievances through the Administrative Litigation Act of 1989 and the use of coercive methods as well.[22]

Many scholars seemed to agree that the current social conditions in China is still not cohesive or strong enough to push for democratic reforms. With increasing economic reforms and also shifts in the social fabric of society, this may change gradually. Thus, far, the local population has been focused at the local levels instead of the central government at Beijing. As the nation progress, it is expected to see more calls for political reforms and democratization, but in the near term, the CCP continues to be resilient. Therefore, any transitions to democracy will have to be elite-driven.

F.   THESIS

There remains much debate on the factors that will tip China towards democratization. The various economic, social and political changes also occupy different levels of significance depending on the argument made. This has led some to contend that China will continue to be as entrenched as ever while optimists believed that these changes are gradually moving towards democratizing albeit in a gradual manner. The thesis argues that while the various changes possess different significance, the leadership remains the most crucial factor for democratizing.

Previous studies have not considered the differences between the fifth generation of CCP leadership with the old authoritarian regimes of Taiwan and South Korea. Therefore, the thesis will analyze the systematic differences between the authoritarian leadership of China, Taiwan and South Korea, and account for China's prospects for democratization as a result of these differences.

G.   METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

Asia's "third wave" democracies in Taiwan and South Korea provide a good comparison to assess China democratization prospects due to the similar features that the three countries possess. Each country has experienced rapid economic growth, possesses

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[22] Andrew J. Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003): 13–5.

similar Confucian societies, largely homogenous populations and a military role in politics. Therefore, the similarities invite a comparative study of the democratization process in both Taiwan and South Korea and an assessment of their implications for China's prospects for democratization. The examples of Taiwan and South Korea also illustrate the possibilities that authoritarianism can transit into successful democracies. The sources of the thesis will be based on scholarly articles that examined the democratization process in Taiwan and South Korea. Coupled with the comparative politics literature posing various theories on democratization, the thesis aims to highlight the conditions in China that mirror those in Taiwan and South Korea that will aid or impede democratization. In addition, the thesis will also take into account conditions that are unique to China and assess their implications for China's democratization.

H.   SYNOPSIS

The thesis will provide an overview of democratization in Asia and the implications of a democratic China on the world and Asia. In order to provide a reasonable benchmark to assess the prospects of democratization in China, it is essential to clarify democracy in the Chinese context. A discussion of liberal democracy and the levels of democracy in Taiwan and South Korea will also be included. Next, Taiwan and South Korea's transition to democracy will be touched on to provide the reader an overview of the process. The prospects of democratization will include a discussion on the different democratization theories including modernization, social mobilization, cultural and negotiation pact theories. The examples of Taiwan and South Korea will be used to relate the conditions and factors to these theories to explain China's prospects for democratization. In addition, factors unique to China will also be scrutinized to assess their impact.

II.   DEMOCRATIZATION

A.   INTRODUCTION

The first wave of democratization took off in the nineteenth century starting with the United States and France. This soon spread to other countries, such as Great Britain, Switzerland, Italy, Argentina, Ireland and Iceland. Democratic institutions and norms slowly took shape including extending the right to vote to the majority of the population. The second wave started in the 1940s and lasted approximately twenty years. During this period, West Germany, Austria, Japan, Brazil, Turkey and Greece were democratized. The third tide of democratization resumed in the 1970s and swept thirty countries, including Spain, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Ecuador and Peru into its democratizing wave.[23]

This global phenomenon has sparked off substantial scholarly research because out of the vast number of change in government, less than half transited to democracies. Specifically, research by Freund and Jaud indicated that only 46 percent of regime transitions became democratic, 39 percent were unsuccessful and another 15 percent only shifted into democratic rule slowly.[24] This difference in success rates has piqued scholars' interest and spurred significant research into examining the process of democratization to find the underlying factors that leads countries to democratize. Methods have also evolved over time leading to an increasing use of statistics and modeling to analyze these factors. The proliferation of quantitative methods has not added to the conclusiveness of the arguments; instead, much contention continues to persist on the driving factors that cause countries to democratize. Various social, economic and cultural influences were assessed to be linked to the propensity of countries to democratize. Similarly, Samuel Huntington identified a list of factors that aid democratization such as increasing wealth, a strong middle class, more equitable income

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[23] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 16–23.

[24] Caroline Freund and Melise Jaud, "On the Determinants of Democratic Transitions," *Middle East Development Journal* 5, no. 1 (Mar 2013): 1.

distribution, political leaders' commitment to democracy, and countries' prior colonial experience. The democratization hypothesis put forth thus far can be broadly categorized into four main categories namely economic, social, cultural, exogenous and leadership factors.[25]

B.   ECONOMIC FACTORS

Advocates of the modernization theory argue that economic development leads to democratization. Seymour M. Lipset's used the various indicators of economic development—that is, wealth, industrialization, urbanization, and education levels in a country—to compare against its level of democracy. The results revealed that higher levels of these indicators are associated with higher levels of democracy.[26] In his study of more than 100 countries from 1960 to 1995, Robert J. Barro similarly echoed Lipset's view that affluent countries are more likely to be democratic.[27] The third wave of democratic transitions that occurred in countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan showed off one similarity between these countries. All of them enjoy high economic growth prior to becoming a democracy. Hence, many scholars contend that the evidence supports the modernization theory that economic achievements contribute to democratization.

On the contrary, Przeworski argued that the impact of economic development has been misinterpreted. Rather than modernization leading to democratization, he opined that wealthy democracies tend to be more sustainable while poor democracies are more fragile. Hence, economic development do not help countries to transition to democracies, it is only a relevant factor in maintaining the democracy once it has been achieved.[28]

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[25] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 37.

[26] Lipset, *Political Man*, 31–2.

[27] Robert J. Barro, "Determinants of Democracy," *Journal of Political Economy* 107, no. 6 (Dec 1999): 166.

[28] Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49, no. 2 (Jan 1997): 166.

The theory has been criticized for being too simplistic. High correlation levels as shown in Lipset study do not necessarily imply that development causes democratization. Many scholars also cite numerous outliers such as non-democratic oil-rich countries to dispute the validity of the theory. The phenomenon is often explained as the ability of the dictator to buy the support of the population through proceeds generated from energy sales. Since the government pacifies the people, there is less accountability required of the regime. This usually results in regime stability and less calls for the government to be brought down. However, these kinds of stability can only be sustained as long as the regime continues to dish out benefits. When the resources become scarce or these benefits are reduced, the very source of stability will turn against the ruling elite.[29]

In addition, the modernization theory fails to account why low-income countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan democratized during the 1980s and 1990s while other countries with much higher GNP per capita such as Hong Kong and Malaysia did not.[30]

C.   SOCIAL FACTORS

Freund and Jaud statistical study supports the long-standing research by other scholars that the more urbanized a country is, the higher the possibility of it democratizing. It is assessed that an urban population possesses characteristics of individuals who are better educated and more conversant with technology. These people are also the ones who form the middle class in society, which proponents of the social mobilization theory argue is the necessary pre-requisite for a successful democratic transition.[31]

The social mobilization theory emphasizes the need for the rise of a credible civil society and middle class to bring about democratic change. Proponents of this theory argue that as economic development brings more wealth to the population, this results in

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[29] Boix and Stokes, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, 318.

[30] Junhan Lee, "Primary Causes of Asian Democratization: Dispelling Conventional Myths," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 2002): 823–4.

[31] Freund and Jaud, "On the Determinants of Democratic Transitions," 11.

the emergence of a middle class who is more affluent and well to do. With their basic needs fulfilled, the middle class aims to seek a more active role in the running of the country. This often leads to more calls for a political system that is more participative instead of authoritative. Moreover, this segment of society is also most apt at organizing itself on a common cause and initiate regime change. Some scholars also contend that the working class instead of the middle class is the ones that spur democratization.[32]

Gender equality is another factor that is highly correlated with democratization. It is argued that societies that promote gender equality are usually those that respects citizens' rights. Hence, this creates a more conducive environment for democratic transitions. In addition, gender equality also contributes to higher economic growth with the participation of females in the workforce. This in turns generates the economic condition that is frequently associated with democratization as well.[33]

D.   CULTURAL FACTORS

Cultural theory purports to explain the impact of specific culture on the tendency for countries to democratize. Christianity, in particular Protestantism is believed to aid democratization while Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism are thought to be anti-democratic. Christians advocate equality, which is consistent with democratic values, but the other religions tend to emphasize hierarchy, uniformity and respect for authority, which is considered antithetical to democracy.[34]

Confucianism in particular has often been cited as an impediment to democracy. However, Fukuyama contends that Confucianism stresses the importance of education, which is the basic foundation of building a democracy. High literacy enables people to break out of the poverty trap. With a higher standard of living, people will also look to other non-material aspects to enhance quality of life including self-actualization needs such as political participation. High levels of education also allow the population to be

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[32] He and Feng, "A Path to Democracy," 147.

[33] Freund and Jaud, "On the Determinants of Democratic Transitions," 11–2.

[34] Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53 (1959): 70.

engaged in building democratic institutions. He further argues that though Confucianism emphasizes respect for authority, commitment to family relationships supersedes political authority. Moreover, Chinese society is inherently distrustful of authority and individual's interests' takes precedence. Therefore, it is rationalized that in such Confucian societies, it will be difficult to rally the people against a common cause.[35]

E.   EXOGENEOUS FACTORS

While some scholars have focused on internal pre-conditions for democratization to take place, others highlight the significance of external conditions that contribute to democratization. A country that is situated in an environment whereby its neighbors are mainly democracies will be inclined to democratize for economic or political reasons. This is especially so if the democracies are prosperous, the people enjoy considerable freedom, and maintain a high standard of living. Alternatively, when one country democratizes, others are inspired to follow suit if democracy is perceived to be able to achieve the economic, social or political needs of the country. The success of one country in democratizing provides hope for another.[36]

Although not all democratization has occurred in waves, Samuel Huntington identifies three distinct waves in which a tide of democratization swept through the various countries. During the first wave, from 1828 to 1926, countries that neighbored each other—such as United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, Ireland, and a number of European countries—democratized. In the second wave, from 1943 to 1962, countries in the same region, such as West Germany, Italy, Austria, Japan and Korea also transited into democracies. The third and most recent wave, from 1974 to the early 1990s, saw Greece, Portugal, Spain, India and Pakistan turning into democracies. Notwithstanding the fact that some of the democracies in the three waves either reverted or changed to authoritarian, autocratic or military rule subsequently, these waves demonstrate that democratic transitions in one country can have a contagion effect on other countries in

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[35] Francis Fukuyama, "Confucianism and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 2 (Apr 1995): 28–31.

[36] Boix and Stokes, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, 329.

the region. Huntington postulated that one country's democratization gives inspiration to the disgruntled citizens of another country. On top of that, these emulators from a neighboring state can observe how they should act and what pitfalls to avoid to initiate a regime change. Whether the democracy is able to consolidate itself is, however, another ball game altogether.[37]

Freund and Jaud similarly echo this regional effect on democratic transitions. Their statistical studies proved that this "neighborhood effect" is significant such that if there are any countries that tried to democratize within the past two years, other countries situated near it would also be more likely to undergo a democratic transition.[38]

This diffusion of democratic ideals is further aided by the improvements in technology, communications and the advent of social media. Technology has invariably shortened the distances between countries and information gets transmitted also instantaneously. The ability to enforce information control and access is also increasingly difficult and costly, as the population gets more literate and savvy.[39]

During the debt crisis in the 1980s, countries that were burdened with trade and budgets deficits were compelled to restructure and liberalize their financial sector to attract foreign direct investments. These changes aimed to increase investors' confidence. As a result, such economic reforms were aligned with democratic institutions thereby setting the conditions for democratization to take place. As democracy, economic interdependence and technology spreads, the effect of exogenous factors will be strongly marked.[40]

States that received massive foreign aid from democratic or communist countries also tend to face a certain level of pressure to adopt similar institutions so as to ensure continued aids from its patron. The aid enables rulers to buy off the loyalty of the elites, garner mass support by distributing to the population or to maintain security forces to

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[37] Huntington, *The Third Wave,* 15–24, 100–1.

[38] Freund and Jaud, "On the Determinants of Democratic Transitions," 14.

[39] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 101–2.

[40] Boix and Stokes, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, 331.

repress any uprising against the existing regime. Hence, the end of the Cold War saw a flourish of democratic transitions, was attributed in part to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. On top of that, United States provision of aid to Japan, Philippines, Taiwan and South Korea exerted pressure on these countries to democratize to varying degrees.[41]

F.   POLITICAL LEADERSHIP FACTOR

Many scholars have supported the theory that while some external, economic and social conditions are found to aid democracy, people must be the main drivers democracy. Besides the rise of the middle or working class to spearhead democratic movements, political leadership is another crucial factor that can change the political destiny of the country. Huntington argued that leaders may choose the democracy path because of personal belief, personal gains, or it could just be a lesser evil of two undesirable options.[42]

The type of leadership also determines the way democracy may be adopted. Barbara Geddes categorized the leadership as military, hegemonic party or personalistic. Geddes observed that authoritarian military regimes tend to be weaker and is most affected by poor economic performance. Military rulers usually opt to participate in democratic elections or return to the military; hence transitions tend to be based on meeting the terms of the people rather than through revolutions. Hegemonic party authoritarian regimes tend to survive the longest. When their power is threatened, hegemonic party regimes usually adopt incremental liberalization to extend their legitimacy. As a last resort, such regimes also tend to resort to manipulations of democratic elections to maintain their hold on power. Of the three types of regimes, personalistic regimes are usually the least likely to transit to democracies. Dictators have no incentives to democratize. Instead, they are faced with threats of persecution at the very least and assassinations at the other extreme when they lose their power. Hence, if democratization does take place, it is usually precipitated by violence. More often than

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[41] Ibid., 331.

[42] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 107–8.

not, the regime is replaced by yet another dictatorship instead of democracy. In such countries, democratization is highly unlikely to be spearheaded by the ruler himself.[43]

Democratization driven by the ruling elite can be either be spearheaded by the dominant factions or occur due to a split in the leadership. It is not unfathomable for the dominant faction of the political elite to initiate regime change. The leaders may see a need for the country to adopt democratic institutions, either to prolong its dominance or for the general welfare of the population. For the former, political leaders would weigh the potential costs and rates of success of overcoming current economic problems, maintaining their legitimacy, strengthening repressive forces, deterring opposition, and restricting the population access to information. Where such costs are increasingly insurmountable or the leadership is confident of retaining its dominance after a democratic transition, the elite would drive the change. For the latter, the leaders could believe that becoming a democracy will improve well being of its citizens or it is a form of government that will invite international acceptance. Alternatively, a leader that possessed more liberal values and see the potential benefits for the country to liberalize could replace the existing one, resulting in a change of strategic direction.[44]

On the other spectrum, splits within the existing leadership could manifest itself or be magnified over time. This could be due to differences in values, how the country is run, or how the political benefits are distributed. The opposition, being the weaker faction in this case can have the opportunity to initiate regime change if they garner sufficient support from the masses. By getting increasing popular support, it increases the costs for the dominant faction to continue to exert control over the people. Hence, when that happens, the dominant faction may choose to negotiate with the opposition in return for a slice of the pie after regime change or be overthrown altogether.

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[43] Boix and Stokes, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, 333–5.

[44] Huntington, *The Third Wave,* 124–9.

G.   CONCLUSION

Thus, far, the theories are categorized generally between internal and external conditions as well as elites versus the general population. It is presumptuous to assume that a single theory is sufficient to account for the myriad democratizations that have taken place since the nineteenth century. While identifying preconditions are important to gauge the probability of democratization, the underlying interplay between elites and the citizens should be factored into the equation as well. Many has argued that conditions itself does not lead to democratizations. Actions on the part of the ruling elite or the people have to be the driving factor as well.

Empirical data have substantiated the relationship between different elements with democratization; however, interpretation of the relationship continues to be disputed by different scholars. Even though the statistical tests conducted may not be comprehensive, it has helped to identify some of the causal factors for democratization. However, it should be recognized that there are distinct differences in the democratization process. Therefore, any analysis should take into account these systematic differences and caution should be exercised to avoid broad-based theory that oversimplifies the process of democratization without taking into account the different underlying circumstances.

As highlighted by Lipset, focusing on variables with a strong linkage to democracy to explain the causes of democratization fails to address the issue holistically. There are inherent unique conditions in each country's transition that needs to be taken into account.[45] There is no universal path to democratization that can be easily explained by a single theory.

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[45] Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," 72.

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III. TAIWAN CASE STUDY

A. INTRODUCTION

After being defeated by the Communists on the Mainland, Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan. Since 1949, the KMT exerted control over the island of Taiwan. Using the pretext of the revolution on the mainland, Chiang implemented martial law in Taiwan in 1949 as well. The democratic constitution that the KMT came up with was also never implemented, and the central government did not hold a single election until years after martial law was lifted in 1987. From the onset, KMT's members from the mainland dominated the National Assembly, the Legislative Yuan and the Control Yuan. Chiang controlled Taiwan with an iron fist and clamped down hard on political dissenters throughout his rule. The Taiwanese government was highly repressive and violent. Notably, the February 28, 1947, incident and the White Terror in the 1950s led to numerous executions and imprisonment. During the martial law period, it was assessed that a total of 140,000 were imprisoned while three to four thousand people were executed.[46] Taiwan was a pseudo-democracy, for in reality it was being operated as an authoritarian state under Chiang Kai-shek. However, Chiang's death in 1975 paved the way for the democratization of Taiwan through his son, Chiang Ching-kuo.[47]

B. DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

Democratization did not take place immediately upon the elder Chiang's death. Although Chiang Ching-kuo adopted a more liberal approach compared to his father, signs of democratization were slow in the 1970s and the authoritarian style of government persisted. The government was not any more tolerant of dissenters and continued to clamp down hard on them. Case in point was the December 1979 riot in

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[46] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 236–7.

[47] Eberstadt, "Taiwan and South Korea," 83.

Kaohsiung, which resulted in mass arrests of the opposition leaders and their supporters.[48]

Several phenomenon in the 1970s and 1980s added pressure on Taiwan to democratize. In the 1970s, Taiwan started to face a legitimacy crisis when it was expelled from the United Nations in 1971. In view of the threat of Communism, the United States turned its interest towards China and reestablished diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1979. As more and more countries switched sides and recognized the PRC, Taiwan faced a legitimacy crisis.[49]

Taiwan's booming economy especially in the 1980s also saw significant socioeconomic change such as growing industrialization, prosperity, wealth, rise of the middle class, and emergence of civil society. These changes resulted in various social movements that encompassed agriculture, religious, labor, environmental, women's rights, consumer and student issues. At the same time, there was also an increasing opposition presence advocating democratic rule and independence.[50]

In the midst of these massive changes, Chiang Ching-kuo was reelected as the president of the ROC in May 1978. In actual fact, it was akin to a hereditary succession. Despite the manner in which he took over the reins of power in Taiwan, he made a surprising public announcement in 1985 that precluded his position from being handed over to his son or to a military officer. On top of that, he transferred both his son and a potential contender, Wang Sheng, a prominent politician with military background, overseas to prevent an internal conflict from taking place due to his announcement.[51]

Chiang Ching-kuo then embarked on moves to liberalize Taiwan by setting up a task force in April 1986 to look into avenues for political reforms.[52] Subsequently, he

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[48] Jaushieh J. Wu, *Taiwan's Democratization: Forces Behind the New Momentum* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995): 35.

[49] Muthiah Alagappa, *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia: Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 165.

[50] Ibid., 166.

[51] Eberstadt, "Taiwan and South Korea," 84.

[52] Ibid.

also started a series of dialogues with the opposition in May 1986 that culminated in a number of significant political reforms. He tacitly allowed the "Dangwai" opposition to form the DPP in September 1986, ended martial law in 1987, and allowed the DPP to participate in the December elections in the same year.[53] Of note, he also reinstated freedom of speech, publication, assembly and association.[54]

When Chiang died in January 1988, there was much controversy over the choice of successor. It was only six months later at the KMT's Thirteenth Congress that Lee Teng-hui, a liberal, was appointed as the actual chairman of KMT, and reelected as the ROC president in March 1990. Although Lee's position was challenged constantly within the party, he was able to consolidate his position effectively. Lee also continued the democratizing transformation and continued to co-opt the local Taiwanese, released political dissenters from prison, and negotiated with the opposition to gain their cooperation. To further facilitate democratization, he also implemented forced retirement of the mainland parliamentarians and allowed for the inaugural elections of the National Assembly and Legislative Yuan in 1991 and 1992, respectively.[55]

Taiwan's democratic transformation was marked by several breakthroughs. Firstly, Lee separated the military from the ruling party, abolished the Temporary Provisions Act, officially terminated the "Period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion" in 1990, and amended the constitution in 1992. Most significant of all was the first election since 1946 of the Legislative Yuan in December 1991 whereby the KMT won 70 percent of the votes while the DPP only managed to get 23 percent. The first ever competitive presidential election was also held on March 23, 1996, whereby Lee Teng-hui won by a huge margin over the DPP's candidate.[56] It was a watershed in Taiwan's political history and marked the beginning of

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[53] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 238–9.

[54] Inoguchi Takashi et al., *The Changing Nature of Democracy* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press), 120.

[55] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 239–40.

[56] Eberstadt, "Taiwan and South Korea," 85.

Taiwan's democratic politics.[57] The democratization in Taiwan was considered to be relatively peaceful compared to South Korea. Several factors contributed to the transition.

C.   FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO DEMOCRATIZATION

1.   Economic Factors

Taiwan came under Japanese colonization in 1895 when the Qing Dynasty relinquished its control after being defeated in the Sino-Japanese War. The Taiwanese population suffered brutal repression under the Japanese for fifty years and only gained its independence in 1945, when Japan surrendered after World War II. Nonetheless, part of the legacy of the Japanese occupation did leave behind sound bureaucratic practices and sparked Taiwanese nationalism, both of which contributed to Taiwan's economic expansion. During the postwar era, Taiwan was able to leverage on these aspects, which helped to develop a robust economy, maintain bureaucratic effectiveness and rally the people in building the nation, thus enabling it to prosper.[58]

After the Japanese occupation, Taiwan gradually changed its economic strategy to export-oriented industrialization in the 1960s resulting in phenomenal economic growth. Urban areas started to sprout up and workers migrated from the rural areas to the cities in droves. While previously Taiwan was mainly agriculture based, its industries turned to manufacturing instead. The KMT-led government achieved years of sustained rapid economic growth since the 1950s. The GDP growth rate hit as high as 13.49 percent in 1978. In 1952, per capita GDP was only US$158; however, by 1996, per capita GDP had increased by 85 times to US$13,428. The export-led economy also saw a huge jump in exports from US$2.26 billion in 1970 to US$151 billion in 1996.[59] Taiwan is a shining success of a developmental state characterized by strong state intervention. The market continued to be capitalist in nature but there were extensive regulations and planning.[60]

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[57] Inoguchi, *The Changing Nature of Democracy*, 120–1.

[58] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 232–2.

[59] National Statistics, Republic of China, accessed November 30, 2013, http://eng.stat.gov.tw/mp.asp?mp=5.

[60] Inoguchi, *The Changing Nature of Democracy*, 119–20.

The robust economic growth led to changes in the social fabric of the society on one hand, which was assessed to be conducive towards democratization. On the other hand, it also increased the KMT's confidence in undertaking liberalizing moves.

On top economic growth, an equitable income distribution also creates a population with fewer grievances against the government and hence promotes a smoother transition to a democratic order. The ratio between the income of the highest 20 percent of households and the lowest 20 percent was 4.97 in 1991, which was considered relatively well distributed compared to other developed countries like Sweden and Norway whose ration stands at 4.61 and 6.37, respectively.[61]

2.   Social Factors

Even though KMT's control of Taiwan was repressive in nature, the government promoted education. A census taken in 1966 showed that more than 97 percent of children attended primary school. There was also a distinct increase in the percentage of children that attended junior secondary school from 59 percent in 1966 to 95 percent in 1977. The emphasis on education led to an increasingly educated population in the 1980s, which began to form the basis for the rise of the middle class.[62]

Higher educational levels coupled with affluence also meant better access to information. These people are correspondingly better-informed and possessed better awareness of national and political issues. The socioeconomic changes have transformed the population to one that demands more participation in the running of the country.[63] Social ideals such as human rights, environmental consciousness, gender equality, universal suffrage and labor entitlements permeated the society.[64]

Taiwanese immigrants since the 1970s also helped to garner international support for democratization and leverage on these support to apply pressure on the KMT. They

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[61] Wu, "Taiwan's Democratization," 51–2.

[62] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 244–5.

[63] Ibid., 233.

[64] Alagappa, *Civil Society and Political Change*, 173.

formed various organizations advocating for Taiwan's independence including democracy with the WUFI being the most prominent organization in the United States. Their overseas activities include enhancing overseas Taiwanese political consciousness, aiding understanding of the Taiwan's opposition fight for democracy overseas, and lobbying for support of their cause. As a result, there was international mobilization to support Taiwan's domestic opposition, thereby fuelling the expansion of political forces in Taiwan.[65]

Although Taiwan is considered a highly homogeneous society, there are striking ethnic and national identity cleavages. Chinese mainlanders controlled the ruling KMT as early as 1949. Even after Chiang Ching-kuo encouraged recruitment of native Taiwanese, the party continued to be dominated by the mainlanders. Furthermore, the gap in opinions was very much more pronounced when it came to national identity. While the natives favored independence, mainlanders advocated reunification with China. The opposition leveraged on the divisive identity issue to garner support from the people especially the natives. Hence, the push for democracy is arguably reinforced by the dissatisfaction of the natives for being ruled by the mainlander minorities.[66]

Separately, Taiwan has had local elections since the 1950s but had never implemented elections at the central level. Direct elections in the provincial assembly were conducted in the 1970s, and regular supplementary elections for the National Assembly and Legislative Yuan were also instituted. These periodic local elections exposed the people at the various levels to the electoral process and the merits of participation. It also engendered the growth of opposition within the ranks of the political elites, propelled the rise of the opposition, and aided the rise in opposition strength and movements.[67]

Although the opposition was insignificant in the beginning, it became more assertive in the 1980s as liberalization of the country got underway. The "Dangwai"

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[65] Ibid., 174–6.

[66] Hsieh, "Democratizing China," 383–4.

[67] Alagappa, *Civil Society and Political Change*, 168.

opposition was actively calling for democratization and even formed the DPP in 1986 when martial law had yet to be lifted, and when they were run the risk of being persecuted. While not the main driving factor, the increasing daring opposition coupled with the rising social movements aligned towards a common goal of democratizing the country certainly added momentum to the transition.[68]

3. Cultural Factors

Taiwan is a largely Confucian society; however, globalization, commercial linkages, close relationships with the West, and increasing numbers of Taiwanese elites being educated overseas, especially in Japan and the United States exposed the people to Western ideals and thinking. This had the effect of diluting the traditional Confucian beliefs of the younger generations over the years. In turn, it has changed Taiwanese culture to a more liberalized outlook, which contributed to its democratization.[69]

Furthermore, Sun Yat-sen's three principles of nationalism, democracy and people's welfare espoused democratic values. His ideas centered on creating an independent China with a strong sense of unity and identity to resist the imperialists' coercion, he believed in the equality of men, and the responsibility of the state in taking care of its people. The principles formed the backbone of the KMT's ideology. While impact on the ruling elites may differ; however, Sun's revolutionary ideas inspired liberals Taiwanese and the population to aspire towards a more democratic form of government.[70]

4. Exogenous Factors

With the retreat to Taiwan in 1949, the ROC became even more dependent on the United States for external aid. U.S. arms sales were also an important avenue to build up its defense force. In addition, U.S. presence in the Asia Pacific region and security

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[68] Ibid., 166.

[69] Hsieh, "Democratizing China," 384.

[70] Yu-long Ling, "Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's Doctrine and Impact on the Modern World," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 19, no. 1 (Apr 2012): 2–7, 11.

guarantees acts as a deterrent against any aggression by China. Incidents in the 1970s namely the Chung Li incident in 1977 and the Kaohsiung incident in 1979 shed unwanted limelight on Taiwan's human rights abuses and the repressive techniques employed against dissidents. In view of Taiwan's authoritarian style of government, poor human rights records of suppressing personal liberties and crushing of the opposition, the United States played a role in pressurizing the leadership to adopt democratic governance.[71]

It was also in the 1970s that Taiwan progressively lost international recognition. The Cold War saw a shift in U.S. policies towards the PRC in order to curtail Soviet Union influence. In 1971, Henry Kissinger made a secret trip to Beijing in the hope of reestablishing communications. Japan was quick to catch on the winds of change, and in 1972 established diplomatic relations with the PRC. In 1979, the United States normalized diplomatic relations with Beijing as well. As a result, Taiwan faced an increasing legitimacy crisis as the international community gradually leaned towards and accord recognition to the PRC. Under these circumstances, democratization would be an avenue to reclaim its status as an independent country.[72] The KMT's legitimacy was further threatened when Beijing began to emphasize reunification with Taiwan in 1979. The CCP proposed that Taiwan function independently as a special administrative region akin to the Hong Kong arrangement.[73]

As Huntington argued, democratization in one country tends to have a contagion effect on other countries in the region. Taiwan's democratic transition took place in the 1980s when a third wave of democratization was sweeping through Asia involving the Philippines and South Korea as well. Regardless of the nature of the regime, transitions in nearby countries provided inspiration to the Taiwanese towards a more open political system. Furthermore, the experience allows one to emulate the other. The street protests

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[71] Alan Wachman, *Taiwan : National Identity and Democratization* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 225.

[72] Robert A. Scalapino, "Democratizing Dragons: South Korea and Taiwan," *Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 3 (Jul 1993): 78.

[73] Alvin Y. So and Sai-Hsin May, "Democratization in East Asia in the Late 1980s: Taiwan Breakthrough, Hong Kong Frustration," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 69.

and rallies observed in the Philippines and South Korea was also seen in Taiwan during the same period. However, outcomes and timings may differ dependent on the economic, social and political conditions in the country involved.[74]

Social media were not prevalent then in the 1980s. Nonetheless, Taiwanese had good access to the media with approximately 70.1 percent and 83.2 percent of the population who read the papers and watched television programs respectively. With political liberalization, media control by the government was also relaxed. This helped to expose the population to democratic ideas and increased their political consciousness. It also enabled comparison of the material benefits and liberties that citizens in democratic countries enjoy. This in turn propelled discontent among citizens in non-democratic countries, causing some to aspire towards a similar kind of openness in their own government.[75]

5.   Political Leadership Factors

Democratization can be initiated by mass protests and demonstrations. Similarly, the ruling elites can choose to suppress it, condone it or go along with it. Hence, the role of the ruling elite cannot be understated when it comes to the timing and nature of an authoritarian state evolving into a democracy. Democratization is thus dependent on the power and will of the political masters as well.

Chiang Ching-kuo was more receptive to loosening control than was his father, Chiang Kai-shek. After Chiang Ching-kuo took over as premier in 1972, supplementary elections were held consistently and involved more politicians that advocated a different view from the conservative ruling elites. In particular, more Taiwanese were also recruited into the KMT, infusing the party with more liberal views.[76]

Even as the opposition outside the party was getting more vocal and demanded for increasing political reforms, the government was not in danger of losing control.

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[74] Wachman, *Taiwan : National Identity and Democratization*, 226–7.

[75] Wu, "Taiwan's Democratization," 56.

[76] Ibid., 34.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the KMT controlled the pace of the reforms. Even though suppression was an option, which the regime was well capable of, Chiang Ching-kuo and later Lee Teng-hui, continuously implemented democratic reforms.[77]

Nonetheless, it should be noted that in the initial period when he first took over as President, Chiang Ching-kuo continued to rule Taiwan akin to a dictator whereby he made all critical policies. However, it was also because of this same charisma and strongman tactics that he was able to enforce the political reforms subsequently, and successfully suppressed the conservatives' opposition within the KMT.[78]

Chiang Ching-kuo's role in setting Taiwan's course towards a democracy cannot be understated. He not only initiated political reforms, but also refrained from crushing the "Dangwai" opposition despite the formation of the DPP when it was illegal with martial law still in force. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Chiang Ching-kuo also indicated his inclination to facilitate opposition parties. His actions not only rewrote Taiwan's democratic destiny but also ensured a peaceful transition.[79] It was also his conscious decision to prevent hereditary succession. Instead, he selected a liberal and a reformer, Lee Teng-hui as his vice-president who eventually succeeded him.[80] While external factors as much as internal beliefs could be Chiang's reason for choosing reform over repression, his role is without a doubt the driving force for democratization in Taiwan.

Moreover, more than half of the politicians that made up the inaugural cabinet set up by Chiang Ching-kuo had studied overseas especially in the United States, United Kingdom and Japan. The exposure to the West no doubt infused some with a more liberal worldview. Out of the twenty personnel, only two possessed military education.[81] The

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[77] Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, 157–8.

[78] Wu, "Taiwan's Democratization," 43.

[79] Ibid., 37–8.

[80] Scalapino, "Democratizing Dragons," 78.

[81] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 233.

progressive relaxation of control and support for democracy could also be reflective of the changing attitudes and views of the political elites.

D.   CONCLUSION

The transition to democracy has been comparatively smooth for Taiwan. The country now practices free and fair elections and a multi-party system. As a result of the robust economic growth under the KMT's stewardship in the 1970s to 1990s, Taiwan's growing affluence, coupled with higher levels of education, urbanization and expansion of the middle class led to a society that demanded increasing social and political freedom.

At the time of transition, while favorable socio-economic preconditions that aid democratization were present, there were also considerable external influences that further pushed the regime towards a democratic choice. However, the KMT was still a powerful force in the country with both the economic resources and coercive apparatus to keep the population in place. Hence, it was a deliberate and conscious decision by the ruling elites especially Chiang Ching-kuo to adopt political reforms and eventually democratize Taiwan. If Chiang had not initiated the changes, democratization might not have been as smooth for Taiwan or even took place in the 1990s at all.

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IV. SOUTH KOREA CASE STUDY

A. INTRODUCTION

When the Japanese were defeated in 1945, Korea was finally liberated after thirty-five years of brutal Japanese colonial rule. The Cold War rivalry subsequently split the peninsula at the 38th parallel in 1948, with the north being a communist state, and the south a democracy. Hence, South Korea started out as a liberal democracy as early as 1948. Even though there were supposed to be a democratic constitution, nothing could be further from the truth. Instead of universal suffrage, political parties participating in free and fair elections, and freedom of press and media, South Korea was characterized by four decades of authoritarian rule whereby elections were often rigged, opposition parties were volatile, dissenters were harshly cracked down, press censorship was common, and the constitution was changed frequently to enable presidents to continue beyond the stated term limit.[82]

B. DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

If Taiwan's democratization process was relatively peaceful, South Korea's transition was marked by multiple coups and violent demonstrations. Sunhyuk Kim argues that South Korea experienced three opportunities to democratize but only succeeded on the third try.[83]

The first opportunity was in the late 1950s to the early 1960s whereby pro-democracy students and opposition parties protested against the corrupt Syngman Rhee regime and advocated democracy and reunification of the peninsula. The student-led protests originated from Masan initially and expanded to many cities including Seoul. It ultimately culminated in bloodshed whereby 186 people died and 6,026 people were injured. This was termed as the "April Revolution." Although this social movement

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[82] Alagappa, *Civil Society and Political Change*, 138.

[83] Ibid., 143.

overthrew the Syngman Rhee's regime, the optimism for a democratic beginning was short-lived when Park Chung-hee seized power through a military coup in 1961.[84]

The second democratic junction occurred during the period of anti-Yusin movements from 1973 to 1980. These prodemocracy movements started when Park Chung-hee superseded the 1963 constitution with his Yusin constitution in October 1972 under the guise of reforming the country. In actual fact, the new Yusin constitution was meant to justify his authoritarian stewardship. The prodemocracy movements led by students gained momentum despite arrests by the regime. Before any change could take place, Park Chung-hee was assassinated on October 26, 1979. Shortly after, Chun Doo-hwan, an Army general staged a coup three months later in December 1979. Instead of instituting political reforms, Chun Doo-hwan suppressed the dissenters harshly culminating in the May 1980 Kwangju massacre in South Cholla Province. Chun Doo-hwan was elected president by the rubber-stamp Electoral College. Democracy took a further step backwards when the Legislative Council for National Security subsequently passed antidemocratic laws to restrict anti-regime opposition, movements and increased media censorship.[85]

As the saying goes that the third time's the charm, this is indeed true in South Korea's case. The third juncture in the mid-1980s resulted in a democratic breakthrough. Over the years, the prodemocracy movements gained in scale and momentum, involving a growing number of supporters. Three events galvanized the population further that brought about increased involvement beyond the usual students to include the middle and working class. The first event was when Chun Doo-hwan initiated the suppression of all talks on constitution revision, which generated a public outcry. The second event in May 1987 was the attempted cover up of the death of a university student, who was tortured while undergoing police interrogation. The third event was the death of yet another university student by a tear gas bomb fragment in June 1987 during one of the street

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[84] Choe Chong Dae, "April 19 Student Revolution," *The Korea Times*, April 18, 2012, http://lfcltdv.ktimes.co.kr/www/news/opinon/2013/12/162_109229.html.

[85] Alagappa, *Civil Society and Political Change*, 143–4.

protests. These events riled the population, and triggered mass mobilization against the authoritarian regime. The June 1987 protests involved approximately one million people across the country, and were on a scale never seen before in South Korea's history.[86]

In the three democratic junctures, civil society was a consistent factor in exerting tremendous pressure on the authoritarian regime; however, what was decidedly different was the role of the political elites, notably Roh Tae-woo, in transforming the political structure of the country. June 1987 was a critical point in South Korea's history whereby it transitioned to a democracy and Roh was instrumental in putting forward the democratic policies. Several factors contributed to the transition.

C.   FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO DEMOCRATIZATION

1.   Economic Factors

Japan colonized Korea in 1910. It was not until the Japanese was defeated in 1945 that Korea became independent. Similar to Taiwan, the Japanese style of occupation also imparted bureaucratic effectiveness and rising nationalism in South Korea, which contributed to subsequent economic growth.[87]

After the Korean War, South Korea changed its economic strategy to focus on export-oriented industrialization instead of imports substitution. As a result of Park Chung-hee's industrialization drive, South Korea experienced rapid economic growth. From 1961 to 1979, Seoul's GDP growth averaged 8.3 percent with the highest growth of 14.1 percent registered in 1969. In 1961, per capita GDP was only US$97, which was even lower than North Korea. However, by 1979, per capita GDP had ballooned to US$1,747. When South Korea democratized in 1987, per capita GDP had increased by thirty-five times since its 1961 level to US$3,368. The export-led economy also saw a

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[86] Ibid., 146–7.

[87] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 231–2.

huge jump in exports from US$124 million in 1961 to US$53.6 billion in 1987.[88] These economic achievements provided the necessary preconditions that advocates of the modernization theory argued are conducive to democratization. In addition, increased wealth also changed the societal makeup of South Korea.

2. Social Factors

Similar to Taiwan, South Korea's income distribution is fairly good considering that the ratio between the income of the highest twenty percent of households and the lowest twenty percent was 5.70 in 1991. In comparison, other developed countries like Netherlands and France registered a ratio of 5.55 and 6.48, respectively.[89] While this social phenomenon may mean fewer grievances against the regime as with the Taiwan's case, South Korea's demonstrations are remembered as particularly violent. This could be attributed to the colonization by Japan from 1910 until the end of World War II. Due to the Japanese colonial legacy and the harsh treatments inflicted on them, civil society in Korea was considerably aggressive against Japanese rule. Although the Japanese were able to suppress these opposition, Korean civil society was marked by fierce resistance. This hostility continued to be inherent in its society even after the Koreans were liberated from Japanese rule in 1945.[90]

The South Korean government also promoted education after the Korean War. Where previously in 1966, more than 97 percent of children attended primary school, only 41 percent attended junior secondary school. However, by 1980, more than 95 percent of the children have attended junior secondary school.[91] The fast-paced economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s led to rapid urbanization and a shift from agriculture to manufacturing. The literacy rates also increased significantly as the country

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[88] "Report for Selected Countries and Subjects," International Monetary Fund, accessed September 1, 2013,
http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=42&pr.y=14&sy=2009&ey=2012&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=924&s=NGDPD,NGDPDPC,PPPGDP,PPPPC,LP&grp=0&a=.

[89] Wu, "Taiwan's Democratization," 52.

[90] Alagappa, *Civil Society and Political*, 140–1.

[91] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 244.

prospered.[92] The improvement in socioeconomic conditions in South Korea also saw the rise of the middle class. With basic necessities issues out of the way for this group of people, they grew increasingly dissatisfied with the authoritarian regime and yearned for more political participation. Nevertheless, civil society was severely repressed prior to the 1980s as each leader from Syngman Rhee, Park Chung-hee to Chun Doo-hwan clamped down brutally on forces that threatened their position.

When the authoritarian regime under Chun Doo-hwan relaxed its control in the 1980s in a bid to increase its popularity, there was a marked increased in the formation of civil society groups. These civil groups and the opposition NKDP organized mass pro-democracy movements in various South Korean cities such as Kwangju, Taegu and Masan. It was postulated that such mass rallies not only numbered more than 700,000 people, participation also extended to different levels of society including students, workers, and religious leaders. In essence, there was widespread middle class support for pro-democratic movements. Compared to Taiwan's protests, South Korea's mass mobilization were often larger in scale and involved more bloodshed. This inevitably created more pressure on the government for political liberalization.[93]

South Koreans has had limited exposure to elections even as early as the Japanese colonial times. Subsequently, local elections were abolished in South Korea in 1961.[94] Nonetheless, South Koreans are no strangers to the electoral process even if the central elections under the authoritarian regime are often rigged by the ruling elites. This exposure to democratic elections promotes the peoples' understanding of democratic governance and the liberty to choose their leaders, which was always part of the demands brought up at mass rallies.

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[92] Ibid., 233.

[93] Charles K. Armstrong, *Korean Society Civil Society, Democracy, and the State* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 55–7.

[94] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 245.

3. Exogenous Factors

The threat of a belligerent North Korea featured prominently since the peninsula was divided into two states based on an imaginary line at the 38th parallel in 1953. Similar to Taiwan, South Korea is also highly dependent on the United States for external security against Pyongyang, and foreign aid to rebuild its economy. While previously the United States had been more focused on counteracting the communist threat, and hence propping up the authoritarian regimes in Seoul. Towards the end of the Cold War with the threat from the Soviet Union dying down, South Korea faced considerable pressure from the United States to democratize as a result of its brutal suppression of protesters and other human rights abuses. The explicit security guarantee by the United States also enabled South Korea to transform to a democratic system with a less probability of retaliation by North Korea. Furthermore, reunification of the peninsula has been the agenda for both the North and South. Therefore, democratization would lend more legitimacy to the government in South Korea among the developed nations and enabled the country to be accorded international recognition.[95]

Notably, news of the fall of Ferdinand Marcos in Philippines in February 1986 boosted the democratic movements in South Korea. The situation in the Philippines was quite similar to the South Korea in many ways. Both countries were under authoritarian rule for decades. There were widespread protests against the ruling regime. Likewise, rigging scandals often plagued South Korea's presidential elections and the authoritarian leaders were repeatedly "voted" into power. In order to keep himself in power, Marcos called for an election and was accused by many of rigging the election to maintain his position. Hence, when hundreds of thousands of Filipinos and took to the streets and overthrew the Marcos regime, this success story inspired South Koreans from all walks of life to demonstrate against the Chun Doo-hwan regime.[96]

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[95] Scalapino, "Democratizing Dragons," 82.

[96] Kate McGeown, "People Power at 25: Long Road to Philippine Democracy, *BBC*, February 24, 2011," http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12567320.

With South Korea poised to host the twenty-fourth Olympiads in 1988, the authoritarian regime was also under pressure to resolve the domestic crisis. Declaring martial law or violent suppression of the demonstrators ran the risks of the International Olympic Committee changing the venue of the Olympic games. Separately, the international community also threatened to boycott the games due to human rights abuses by the regime. Hence, the regime was hard-pressed to come to a resolution with the opposition as well to preserve its international standing.[97]

Access to press reports and television broadcasts in the 1980s and 1990s kept South Koreans in the know of the socioeconomic and political conditions in other countries. Similar to the Taiwan's example, these increased in exposure facilitates comparison and fuelled dissatisfaction. In the Philippines case, it also encouraged emulation to overthrow the regime.

4. Political Leadership Factors

Some scholars attribute the primary driver of South Korea's democratization to mass demonstrations. However, they also overlook how the mass mobilization came about in the first place. While the Chun regime was highly repressive in the early 1980s, there was a change of tactics towards more tolerance from the late 1983. In order to increase the ruling DJP popularity, less control was exerted over political activities and dissenters. This was assessed to lead to the rise of social movements such as students and labor groups, and the growth of more credible opposition such as the NKDP. Without the liberalizing moves by the ruling elite, civil society would still be stifled. However, such moves worked against the ruling party contrary to their expectation.[98]

Although the democratic transition was marked by major demonstrations in the country, negotiation between the ruling elites and the opposition led to a transformation to a more democratic order. While it was acknowledged that civil society was a formidable force in South Korea, the breakthrough would not have been achieved if the

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[97] Young Whan Kihl, *Transforming Korean Politics: Democracy, Reform, and Culture* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 86.

[98] Armstrong, *Korean Society Civil Society*, 54–5.

ruling elites refused to budge. Even though there was no assurance that he will be able to remain in power or win during the next elections, Roh Tae-woo nonetheless agreed to democratic reforms, which was known as the "June 29 Declaration." He could have dispatched repressive forces, implemented martial law and crushed the protesters as his predecessor Chun Doo-hwan had during the pro-democracy movements. Instead, he acceded to the protesters demands for liberalization and elections. Roh was only elected as the next president because the opposition failed to decide on a single candidate, causing support for the opposition to be split, thus enabling Roh to garner a higher percentage of votes than the two opposition candidates.[99]

With five republics from 1948 to 1987, the South Korea's political scene was characterized by multiple coups, volatility and domination by military strongman. From Park Chung-hee, Chun Doo-hwan to Roh Tae-woo, these presidents were known to operate like a dictator using force as their primary weapon. This could be observed based on the repressive tactics used on the opposition and dissenters. From 1948 to 1987, about six to seven hundred people were killed or executed, and slightly more than 100,000 people were imprisoned for political crimes.[100] It was also the very same domineering element that enabled Roh Tae-woo to overcome resistance within his own party and institute democratic change. To a lesser extent, Chun Doo-hwan also played a part in South Korea's transition by accepting Roh's proposal, without which the struggle against authoritarianism would have been more bloody and prolonged.

In South Korea, more than half of the first Yushin cabinet had also studied overseas. Six out of the seventeen members possessed military education. The progressive infusion of party members with higher education and liberal ideas facilitated a shift in the mindset of the party.[101]

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[99] Ibid., 53.

[100] Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea," 236–7.

[101] Ibid., 234.

D.   CONCLUSION

As with Taiwan, South Korea belonged to the third wave of democratization and also the few democracies that had consolidated itself over the years while other countries have backslidden to authoritarianism. South Korea's democratization took place as a result of liberalization moves in the early 1980s that was started by Chun Doo-hwan and the deliberate direction adopted by Roh Tae-woo to democratize. In view of the oppressive tactics that the authoritarian regime had been accustomed to, the actions by Chun and Roh were a departure from the past. Hence, it is argued to be an elite-led democratization. This is not to say that civil society does not have a part to play. Rather, the liberalization enabled the strengthening of civil society groups and the opposition, and weakened the state, thereby contributing to the democratization process.[102]

Furthermore, civil society had been a consistent factor in all three democratic junctures. However, it was only during the third juncture that South Korea managed to democratize. While other factors are also in play that led to the democratization in 1987, the leadership factor was a prominent factor that facilitated the change.

Since South Korea's first democratic election in 1987, the country has experienced several peaceful transfer of power. Of significance, was when Kim Young-sam became the first South Korea's civilian president in February 1993, shaking off the military shadow of the past presidencies. This successful transfer of power over the years have shown that South Korea has shaken off its authoritarian past and further consolidated its democracy.

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[102] Kihl, *Transforming Korean Politics*, 69.

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V. CHINA PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY

A. INTRODUCTION

China has transformed tremendously since Deng Xiaoping initiated economic reforms and his policy of "opening up" to the world in 1978. However, many scholars observe that the pace of political reforms continued to lag behind economic reforms. Nonetheless, even though China continues to operate as an authoritarian state, significant political reforms have been instituted since 1978. However, these political liberalizations have not led to democratization. Instead, China managed to achieve rapid economic growth without embracing democracy, akin to the many developmental states in Asia such as Taiwan and South Korea before their transition to a liberal democracy.

It is not exactly true that China reject the idea of democracy. Many Chinese scholars have brought up democracy in their written works and widely discussed the merits of democracy such as Yu Keping's "democracy is a good thing."[103] Similarly, Chinese political elites have highlighted democracy in their speeches, interviews and white papers. However, democracy is a concept that is defined differently in different contexts. The notion of democracy in China could differ from person to person, just as the Chinese concept of democracy differs from the West. Therefore, it is important to set the record straight when examining the prospects of China democratizing. The benchmark used is critical to assess the gap between the current situation and Beijing's likelihood of becoming a democratic state. Moreover, democracy is a process that requires continuous enhancements and conscientious consolidation to build upon the democratic practices and institutions.

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[103] Cheng Li, *China's Changing Political Landscape Prospects for Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 8.

B.   DEFINING DEMOCRACY

Democracy originates from the Greek word *demokratia*, where it essentially translates to a system of rule by the people.[104] However, such a definition is ambiguous at best and fails to provide a set of conditions of what it actually entails. As a result, democracy has taken on different interpretations by different people. Of significance, what democracy means in the West is very different from how the prevailing regime in China views it.

China first published a white paper on democracy in 2005 titled "Building of Political Democracy in China." Three themes stood out that encompass the crux of how the CCP defines democracy. Firstly it stated, "China's democracy is a people's democracy under the leadership of the CPC."[105] Secondly, the paper highlighted that "China's democracy is a democracy in which the overwhelming majority of the people act as masters of state affairs…. In China, people enjoying the democratic rights include everyone who has not been deprived of political rights by law."[106] Thirdly, the paper also included a disclaimer that "criminal activities, such as sabotage of the socialist system, endangering state security and public security, infringement on citizens' rights…are penalized according to law so as to safeguard the fundamental interests of the broad masses."[107] Hence, the CCP's interpretation is unique in itself that label China as a "socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics."[108] One which is contingent on the CCP being the overarching authority, one in which the CCP defines and draws the limits of its citizens' rights, and also one which stability and security of the state supersedes individuals' rights. Indeed, if the CCP were known as a party state, this would mean that

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[104] Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy.

[105] Government White Papers, accessed September 2, 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/book/145877.htm.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

the stability and security of the party is therefore paramount, above civil and political liberties.

This unique stream of definition is in stark contrast to what most social scientists and human rights advocates would argue. Interestingly, China issued an update on human rights achievements for 2012 in which the paper highlighted that the country has advanced in terms of democracy and rule of law. The meaning of "masters of state affairs" was explained in the human rights white paper in which "democracy at the grassroots level is an effective form for people to be masters of the country."[109] This seemed to indicate that democracy in China will not extend to the central levels, and will continue to be out of the Chinese citizen's sphere of influence. In addition, civil liberties, one of the measurements of democracy were articulated in the same white paper as "practical measures are taken to ensure citizens' right to know and right to be heard. With the deepening of reform and the rapid development of information technology, the Chinese people's scope of the right to know has been expanded, and so has the room for them to express their will."[110] This gives the regime much room for maneuver in deciding what constitutes citizens' rights and what are considered practical. This Chinese definition represents the interpretation by the CCP. Therefore, in the regime's eyes, the country is practicing a form of democratic governance.

It is a fallacy to think that just because one calls itself a democracy, one is a democracy. Democracy varies in its extent of civil and political liberties, for the purpose of this study, democracy shall be defined in accordance with the modern Western concept. Robert Dahl defined democracy as a state whereby there are "elected officials, free, fair and frequent elections, freedom of expression, access to alternative sources of information, associational autonomy and inclusive citizenship."[111] These conditions are predicated on the rule of law such that personal rights and civil liberties can be adequately protected. These characteristics form the general view of what a liberal

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[109] "Progress in China's Human Rights in 2012," *Xinhuanet*, May 14, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-05/14/c_132380706.htm.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 85–6.

democracy entails[112] Hence, whether the state adopts a parliamentary or presidential system is immaterial. The current democracy in both Taiwan and South Korea also closely follows this definition.

To bring about democratization in an authoritarian regime, Huntington observed that there are three avenues, namely, transformations, replacements and transplacements. Transformations are essentially elite-led democratization. Taiwan is a classic case of transformation where Chiang Ching-kuo spearheaded democratization. Elites opt to democratize for a variety reasons. Some assessed that the costs of repression has become too high to maintain and the lost of power is imminent. Some believed that democratizing would increase their legitimacy and maintain their hold on power. Other elites democratize with an altruistic belief that it will be beneficial for the country in the long run, or a combination of the above. Replacements are transitions in which the opposition in the regime grows powerful enough to overthrow the ruling elites even if they refused to relinquish power. Last but not least, transplacements is a process whereby the ruling and opposition factions in a regime compromise and initiate regime change such as the case of South Korea.[113]

While the different types of transitions are distinct processes, democratization may sometimes evolve from one type to another and may not fall neatly into a single category. Case in point is South Korea's democratization. While South Korea resembled a transplacement initially as the opposition and ruling party negotiate on mutual political changes, it could have potentially resulted in a replacement had Roh Tae-woo not set in motion significant constitutional changes. This was in many ways starkly different from the repressive approaches that marked previous authoritarian leaders like Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan. Hence, South Korea's democratization is assessed to comprise both transformation and transplacements.[114]

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[112] He and Feng, "A Path to Democracy," 141.

[113] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 124–52.

[114] Kihl, *Transforming Korean Politics*, 68.

C. LIBERALIZATION VS. DEMOCRACY

Democratization involves liberalization; however, the latter should not be confused with the former. Liberalization entails the expansion of civil and political rights. A democratic state needs to possess the various characteristics listed by Robert Dahl as described in the preceding paragraph, which involves much more than the granting of individual rights.[115] China has progressively loosened civil and political control since Deng Xiaoping initiated economic reforms in 1978. As a result, the Chinese population started to enjoy greater freedom, access to media, technology and material goods. Political participation has also increased, and formal channels to seek redress have also been made available. Nonetheless, various restrictions still abound in contemporary China, and Beijing is still far from being a liberal democracy. Liberalization provides an important signal on the direction of transition as it is considered a precursor to democratization. However, liberalizations may not always result in democratization if the regime's interest is the primary motive since there will be impetus to liberalize but not necessarily democratize. Various dynamics come into play for democratization to take place. The next section will dwell into the factors that affect China's prospects for democratization.[116]

D. FACTORS THAT AFFECT DEMOCRATIZATION IN CHINA

1. Economic Factors

Taiwan and South Korea's transition to democracy lends credence to the modernization theory that economic growth leads to democratization. Both Taiwan and South Korea's transition took place at a time when both countries attained high levels of prosperity. According to Przeworski study, the tendency for a country to transit to a democracy occurs when the country's GDP per capita is between $1,000 to $6,000, beyond which dictatorship tends to persist in the country. In yet another study, Fukuyama and Marwah justified that countries are most likely to democratize when GDP per capita

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[115] Ibid., 21.

[116] Suisheng Zhao, "Three Scenarios," *Journal of Democracy* 9, no. 1 (Jan 1998): 55.

is between $5,000 to $6,000.[117] When South Korea democratized in 1987, its GDP per capita was $3,244 while Taiwan transited to a democracy when its GDP per capita was $13,527.[118] Based on both studies, Taiwan should have democratized much earlier in 1988 instead of eight years later in 1996. In accordance with the same prediction, based on China's 2013 GDP per capita of $5,511, it should most probably democratize around 2014 to 2015.[119] However, looking at the pace of political reforms in the country currently, democratization is not on the cards of the regime any time soon. Hence, while numerous studies have shown a high correlation between development and democratization, predicting when a country will democratize solely based on its levels of economic development is not a sufficient or accurate indicator.[120]

Moreover, some argued that prosperity and economic growth could also sustain authoritarianism. Economic proceeds equipped the government with resources to distribute to the people. The higher standards of living associated with rising income levels also creates a satisfied population and imparts regime legitimacy. Similarly, in times of economic recession, the people could mobilize and overthrow the regime or the government could prevail by coming down hard on the protesters. The prospects of democratizing are therefore dependent on the tussle between the various forces.[121]

Currently, China's 2013 growth rate has stabilized at 7.7 percent. Although this is a marked decrease since its double-digit growth days, economists are lauding it as a healthy sign that China's economic reforms may be gradually working, which is beneficial to the country in the long run. While optimists assessed that a growth in world trade will help China growth rates, pessimist opined that further growth reduction is expected if the economic reforms continue to prove to be effective. Regardless of the direction of China's growth, affluence in itself is a double-edged sword. If growth

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[117] He and Feng, "A Path to Democracy," 156.

[118] Global Taiwan Business Web Service [In Chinese], accessed February 9, 2014, http://twbusiness.nat.gov.tw/old/pdf/sec9.pdf.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Przeworski and Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," 159–60.

[121] He and Feng, "A Path to Democracy," 156.

continues, it will impart legitimacy but give rise to social forces that may threaten to overrun the regime. If growth slows, the regime loses its legitimacy to rule. A holistic approach is thus required to take into account the other factors to assess China's democratization potential.[122]

Besides examining per capita GDP, it is also important to look at income distribution. The economic opening brought about a rise in income and a higher standard of living, but this wealth is distributed disproportionately among the people. The disparity between the rich and the poor gets much publicity in social media. Although absolute earnings have risen, income inequality is increasingly evident in China. Based on the World Bank survey, the Gini coefficient that measures income equality showed a significant rise in inequality in China from 0.3 in 1998 to 0.43 in 2008. This was much higher than other countries in Asia while being on par with places like Nigeria and Russia. A high-income disparity increases the grievances of the marginalized section of society and could be potentially destabilizing.[123]

2. Social Factors

Increasing wealth in China has led to the inevitable rise of the Chinese middle class. Numerous studies have been conducted on how the growth of the middle class leads to democratization due to the citizens' recognition of basic human rights such as freedom, justice, equality and political participation. Even as China envisaged that its middle class would make up half of the population by 2050, the current middle class is small by most standards, making up only 25 percent of the population. Compared to the middle class in Taiwan and South Korea, it is significantly lower. As a force for change, it is still lacking in mass. Moreover, Joseph Fewsmith opined that China's middle class prioritizes standards of living and job prospects over political participation. Hence, it is

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[122] "China Economic Growth Rate Stabilises at 7.7 Percent," January 20, 2014, *BBC*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25805227.

[123] John Knight, "Inequality in China: An Overview," *The World Bank Research Observer* 29, no. 1 (Feb 2014): 1; "Wealth Gap Soaring as Xi Pledges Help," *Bloomberg*, December 8, 2013, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-12-09/china-s-wealth-gap-soars-as-xi-pledges-to-narrow-income-divide.html.

unlikely for the time being that the middle class in China will have the impetus to push for significant political change, unlike in South Korea in the 1980s. Furthermore, discontent over civil and political liberties does not mean that the middle class is calling for a regime change. Rather, with the CCP positive economic deliverables thus far, it could be a call to address the social inequalities.[124]

Besides the role of the middle class, the population inclination towards democratic governance is also important. There is a dearth on comprehensive and up-to-date research on Chinese citizens' perception of democracy. One of the latest studies by Zhengxu Wang on China citizens' views on democracy was based on a series of surveys conducted between 1992 and 2002. He concurred with Fewsmith that although the China population are receptive towards more democracy in the future, their priorities continued to be focused on economic growth and stability. There is a common impression among Chinese citizens that certain elements of democracy such as the presence of multiple political parties may affect political and social stability, thereby undermining economic development. Of particular interest, the general population is satisfied with the current regime's rate of political liberalization towards democracy. This could be attributed to the political reforms instituted over the years including the implementation of grassroots level elections and rectification of governance issues such as rampant corruption and wastage within the CCP. On another note, even as the current population is contented with the social and economic conditions, the next generations are placing higher premiums on civil liberties such as political rights. While the push for democratic reforms may be slow now, the shift in mindset is nonetheless taking place slowly.[125]

To empower the citizens, political liberalization at the local levels were promulgated as an experiment in 1988. Village elections have become a widespread feature in China where residents regularly elect their village committee. Direct elections have also been extended to townships and counties local people's congresses. While

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[124] Joseph Fewsmith, "The Political Implications of China's Growing Middle Class," *China Leadership Monitor* no. 21 (2007), http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM21JF.pdf.

[125] Zhengxu Wang, "Public Support for Democracy in China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 16, no. 53 (Nov 2007): 572, 577.

these initiatives were criticized for being plagued by corruption issues, lack of real competition, candidates being supported by party patronage, tight regime supervision, and the concentration of actual power within the party, scholars find it encouraging as this has exposed the population to the concept of democratic elections.[126]

A pluralistic society conducive to democratization is dependent on the growth of civil society. Although civil society has flourished when Deng Xiaoping liberalized the personal domains and allowed for greater freedom, civil groups in China continues to be tightly regulated. Presently, NGOs require a government agency to sponsor prior to registering with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. All these meant NGOs are closely monitored, those that espouse liberal political values are prohibited by the regime, and illegal organizations are subjected to clampdown by the government. Even legal organizations are subjected to laborious administrative and supervision requirements, face extensive restrictions due to multiple laws and regulations governing NGOs, and regular inspections by the state are conducted to ensure strict compliance. Those found contravening the regulations are disbanded. Other methods to exert influence over the civil organizations include establishing close linkages of these NGOs to the government, co-optation of civil groups leaders, control the access to funding, and lastly through coercive means.[127] Case in point is the Falungong, a religious group that practices meditation and espouses moral virtues. At its peak, the group consists of tens of millions of believers. But due to its sheer number of members and the way it operated independent of the state, Falungong has been viewed as a threat to the CCP, and hence extensively cracked down and outlawed in China.[128]

In essence, social organizations are sparse in China. Where they do exist, they are allowed to grow in a way that does not threaten the regime, and usually lacks autonomy from the state. At the moment, the limited reach of these social organizations and close ties to the ruling CCP will not result in significant political changes that takes place from

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[126] Yao, "A Chinese Way of Democratisation?" 341.

[127] Alagappa, *Civil Society and Political Change,* 30.

[128] Ibid., 440.

a bottom-up approach. The social forces are currently weak and unable to support an opposition, even if there is one in the first place.

In addition, to the various methods to curb civil society, the CCP also rely on its coercive apparatus to keep its citizens in place. For the year 2012, the CCP spent tremendous amount on internal security to the tune of $114 billion compared to the national defense budget of $109 billion.[129] This was calculated to be an increase of 11.5 percent compared to 2009. As society gets more complex and savvy with information technology, the costs of maintaining this repressive arm will be an increasing burden to the state. In the event of economic downturn, resources will be constrained, and it may reach a point whereby the regime may no longer keep up with the escalating costs.[130]

The proliferation of the Internet also saw a tremendous surge in Internet users. Internet users in China were estimated to be as many as 618 million people by December 2013.[131] On top of that, virtual social networks such as Sina Weibo and Twitter have especially enabled the rapid spread of ideas and information both externally and internally. Due to the lack of formal channels to voice their frustrations, and the tight regulation of the media, the Chinese population has took to these informal channels to voice their discontent. The people who possess the technology know-how usually hail from the middle class, and are increasingly challenging the state control apparatus.[132]

Over the years even as economic reforms requires greater information access, the government has not correspondingly relaxed media control. Censorship coordinated by the CPD has become all the more pervasive, blocking controversial websites and keywords. China ranked poorly in press freedom standing at 173 out of a total of 179

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[129] Cheng Li and Ryan McElveen, "Can Xi Jinping's Governing Strategy Succeed?" Brookings, September 26, 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/09/26-xi-jinping-china-governing-strategy-li-mcelveen.

[130] Cheng Li, "Rule of the Princelings," *Brookings*, February 10, 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/02/china-xi-jinping-li.

[131] Xu Beina, "Media Censorship in China," February 12, 2014, Council on Foreign Relations, http://www.cfr.org/china/media-censorship-china/p11515.

[132] Tom Ginsburg, "Lessons from Democratic Transitions: Case Studies from Asia," *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs* 52, no. 1 (Jan 2008): 101.

countries according to the 2013 press freedom index. Violators are often slapped with lawsuits, fines, jail terms and cessation of publications. Dissenters that advocate democracy or highlight the regime's shortcomings were jailed most notably of which was Liu Xiaobo, a Nobel prize winner.[133]

Official government documents such as the white paper released in 2010 specifically states that:

> Internet security is a prerequisite for the sound development and effective utilization of the Internet. Internet security problems are pressing nowadays, and this has become a problem of common concern in all countries. China also faces severe Internet security threats. Effectively protecting Internet security is an important part of China's Internet administration, and an indispensable requirement for protecting state security and the public interest.[134]

The regime's emphasis on state security clearly supersedes media freedom. The restriction on the Internet is also enforced in the name of public interest, under the CCP's discretionary interpretation. Akin to the North Korean state, an effective tool of control is based on information restriction since some information promotes development of alternate views and independent thinking. However, Chinese citizens have found innovative ways to bypass the extensive censorship. The technically savvy population will increasingly challenge the feasibility of sustaining information control. In the long run, the regime may find it to be an unsustainable endeavor.[135]

3. Cultural Factors

Many associate Confucianism with authoritarian form of government as traditional Confucian values such as family over self, compliance to authority, strong collective ties, loyalty, consensus and hierarchism denotes certain subservient elements about society in general. This is not necessarily true. The other aspects of Confucian

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[133] Beina, "Media Censorship in China."

[134] Government White Papers, accessed September 2, 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/book/145877.htm.

[135] Beina, "Media Censorship in China."

values also emphasize good governance, political accountability, equality, tolerance, human rights, participation and meritocracy. Hence, Confucian values are not antithetical in a democratic system. What would make a Confucian society democratic does not need to depend on the morality of the ruling elites; rather, it is the adherence to the rule of law. Doh Chull Shin also opined that it is not impossible for a society to embrace both Confucian and democratic values. In which case, the democratization of Taiwan and South Korea proved that a Confucian society is not a hurdle for democratization.[136]

4.   Exogenous Factors

China has grown strong economically and militarily. Even though its military capabilities still lag far behind the United States, it is fast becoming a regional power in its own right. Unlike Taiwan and South Korea, China is not dependent on any country for its security or economy. Hence, external influences hold little sway over China's domestic issues. Case in point is the frequent international outcry against China's human rights abuses against dissidents as well as towards its ethnic and religious minorities. Thus, far, such criticisms have not stopped China from harshly cracking down on dissidents and separatist movements. Furthermore, Beijing has consistently maintained that other states should not be involved in its domestic affairs.[137]

Nevertheless, even if China is not susceptible to direct influences, it may be inclined to improve its international image and standing. In an increasingly globalized world with an intricate web of trade and financial linkages, China is progressively adopting internationally accepted institutions and norms. However, it has shown that China is able to progress economically without adopting corresponding level of political liberalization. Hence, it remains to be seen how far the regime is willing to go to sustain economic growth.

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[136] Shin Doh Chull, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 58–9, 68.

[137] William Wan, "Human Rights Abuses Worsening in China, U.S. Diplomats Say," August 2, 2013, *The Washington Post*," http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/human-rights-abuses-worsening-in-china-us-diplomats-say/2013/08/02/fcef3434-fb7a-11e2-a369-d1954abcb7e3_story.html.

In the 1970s and 80s, Japan was the only liberal democracy in Asia. With the end of the Cold War, and the collapsed of the Soviet Union resulted in more democracies globally. Currently, Taiwan and South Korea has joined Japan as one of the consolidated democracies. Operating in this international environment will also lend much impetus to Beijing to adopt acceptable economic, social and political norms to enhance its international standing and legitimacy. Moreover, the spread of liberal values is even more pervasive than it was in the 1980s and 90s when Taiwan and South Korea democratized.

China's past history of humiliation by external powers has stirred up nationalism and fierce resistance against external interference, especially pressures to conform to a western standard. Anti-foreign nationalism can be leveraged upon by the ruling regime to bolster its legitimacy in the midst of its declining popularity. Nationalism also creates a sense of belonging and national identity and foster national integration.[138]

With the highly publicized territorial disputes in East China Sea over the Senkaku islands by the media, China has to adopt a tough stance lest its population view it as weak and incapable. The intense anti-Japanese sentiments in recent times also resulted in demonstrations against Japan with the most recent case in September 2012 whereby protests erupted in 50 cities in China. It should be noted that the party seemed to give implicit approval via the People Daily, the CCP's official newspaper.[139] Instead of coming down hard on the protesters, the regime adopted a sympathetic view and called these demonstrations as patriotic acts. This approach is adopted to enhance its popularity and also to ensure that public anger does not escalate to pro-democracy protests against the CCP. Furthermore, nationalism is a convenient conduit for the regime to use to discredit the values system espoused by the opposing states. Both Japan and the United

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[138] He and Feng, "A Path to Democracy," 159.

[139] Ian Johnson and Tom Shanker, "Beijing Mixes Messages over Anti-Japan Protests," *New York Times*, September 16, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/world/asia/anti-japanese-protests-over-disputed-islands-continue-in-china.html.

States are embodiment of democracy. Hence, the regime will be able to rally its people not only against both countries but also the associated democratic values, reinforcing authoritarianism.[140]

5.   Political Leadership Factors

The regime's political leadership has adapted itself well over the years. Since the initiation of economic reforms, it has modified its progressively defunct Maoist ideology to one that is more all encompassing. In the early 1980s, the CCP focused on the role of the party in delivering economic growth, improving living conditions and satisfaction of the peoples' material needs. This is a critical move to ensure the relevance of the party and sustain its legitimacy, which was supported by a robust economy. With increasing affluence and changing social demographics, the CCP developed a strategy to promote itself as an all-inclusive party for the people. Instead of purely a proletarian party, Jiang Zemin's "three represents" co-opted the different strata of society to include the professionals, technical and entrepreneurial elites to broaden its party base. With widening income disparity and social ills that accompany rapid economic growth, Hu Jintao's "harmonious society" subsequently aimed to address the social tensions within the country. The party has adeptly changed its ideology from proletarian, performance-based to people-centric.[141]

To relieve the pressure by the people for more political say, the party implemented elections at the local levels since the 1980s. However, some scholars argued that local elections at the villages, township and county people's congresses were mere token gestures by the CCP to provide some form of controlled democracy, as the real power continues to lie with the party. There is also no meaningful opposition in these elections. The basis of conducting local elections was aimed at pacifying the rural

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[140] Zhao, *China and Democracy*, 267.

[141] Yao, "A Chinese Way of Democratisation?" 334.

dwellers due to the failure of the commune system during the period of economic reforms. Hence, even if it is only restricted to the local levels, it was not the intention of the CCP to promote democracy in the first place.[142]

Evidence continues to point towards the CCP tight grip on power. Even though village elections have been conducted for more than two decades, there are no intentions by the party to extend it to the central level. The intra-party democracy of the Politburo remains behind close doors, and do not take into account citizens' participation. Hence, the token gesture for village elections is argued by some as pacification methods to grant some semblance of autonomy to the population. Other attempts at expanding elections such as the initiative to elect township governors were stopped.[143]

Nevertheless, the CCP has been proactive in coping with the social problems that accompanied economic growth. The regime enacted several policies to improve welfare, improve accountability, enhance responsiveness, incorporate the peoples' voice into decision-making, and stem corruption. To alleviate income inequality especially between the urban and rural dwellers, several policies introduced in the 2000s aimed to improve income distribution. Agricultural taxes were removed, farming subsidies and rural healthcare were introduced, school fees in rural areas were abolished, and minimum wages were also instituted. However, due to implementation efficiencies, the effects were not as pronounced as envisaged.[144]

Other methods at pacifying the people involved providing the people with outlets to address their perceived injustices. The 1989 Administrative Litigation Act provided citizens with the avenue to sue the government for contravening its own policies. Andrew Nathan opined that these outlets direct the peoples' anger towards the local government instead of the CCP. In addition, it also allows individuals to get redress instead of

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[142] Hsieh, "Democratizing China," 378–9.

[143] Yao, "A Chinese Way of Democratisation?" 342.

[144] Knight, "Inequality in China," 11–2.

resorting to civil organizations, which the CCP perceived as a bigger threat.[145] On top of that, imbuing the PPCC with a consultative role enable citizens to voice their opinions on certain governmental issues.[146]

The anti-corruption drive has been an ongoing effort by the regime to revitalize its image. According to news reports, the drive has convicted almost 150,000 officials for corruption in the short span of five years since 2008.[147] However, the scale of corruption in China is large and the extent to which corruption can be substantially controlled or continue to run rampant can be a force for democratization as well. In order to effectively curb corruption, media and judiciary liberalization is necessary, both elements of which contribute to democratization. Conversely, a half-hearted attempt at combating corruption would rouse further social discontent, and erode the regime's hold on power.[148]

To counter widespread discontent against pervasive corruption among party cadres, utilization and supervision of resources are now more tightly regulated and by different departments to prevent abuse of power. With the exposes on the wealth of prominent political elites, the CCP instituted measures that necessitate self-declaration of assets and avenues for the public to report corruption. However, these measures are still assessed to be lacking in transparency, as party members are only made accountable to party mechanisms and not to the judicial system. However, public backlash in recent events have caused the CCP to be more sensitive in the handling of issues related to members misconduct.[149]

Although some of the policies to relieve social problems have helped to relieve some pressure on the regime, social discontent is increasingly prevalent. The number of protests in China number around five hundred daily. Nonetheless, these demonstrations

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[145] Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," 15.

[146] Yao, "A Chinese Way of Democratisation?" 342.

[147] Michael Martina, "China Convicts Nearly 150,000 for Corruption Since 2008," *Reuters*, October 22, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/22/us-china-corruption-idUSBRE99L0OZ20131022.

[148] Li, *China's Changing Political Landscape*, 246–7.

[149] Cheng Li, "Intra-Party Democracy in China: Should we Take it Seriously?" Hoover Institution, *China Leadership Monitor* no. 30 (Oct 2009), http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM30CL.pdf.

mostly concern environmental, labor, social, religious and ethnic issues more than overt calls for democracy. Concurrently, there is also a rise in nationalism due to the maritime disputes over the Diaoyu islands. In a bid to distract the population from its social issues, the regime may increasing rely on these nationalistic sentiments to distract the population on its governance issues, bolster its legitimacy and increase its popularity.[150]

Compared to the era when South Korea and Taiwan democratized, both countries had credible opposition in the government. On the other hand, China does not have any genuine opposition. The current eight non-Communist opposition parties in Beijing are a mere façade, and rely on the CCP's patronage.[151] Setting up of opposition parties in China is illegal and those who do so are frequently accused of subversion and harshly cracked down. Case in point was Cao Haibo who advocated for democracy and attempted to form the "China Republican Party" in 2012. He was arrested and sentenced to eight years imprisonment.[152]

E.   ROLE OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ON CHINA DEMOCRATIZATION PROSPECTS

The process of democratization is like a black box. It not possible to pinpoint a set of checklist in which democratization will take place if a tick is recorded for every condition. At the same time, the degrees in which conditions are fulfilled vary. In some cases, all it takes is a single factor to result for a tipping point to be reached. Georg Sorenson very aptly sums up that people are the crucial link in bringing about changes. Preconditions exist to facilitate or restrain these political actors, but in itself do not cause democratization.[153]

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[150] Li, "Rule of the Princelings."

[151] Roberts Dexter, "Bo Xilai Political Party is Formed in China: How Long Will it Last?" *Bloomberg,* November 11, 2013, http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-11-11/bo-xilai-political-party-formed-in-china-how-long-will-it-last.

[152] "China Opposition Party Lasts a Day, Founder Gets 8 Years in Prison." *NBC*, November 1, 2012, http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/11/01/14847377-china-opposition-party-lasts-a-day-founder-gets-8-years-in-prison?lite.

[153] Georg Sørensen, *Democracy and Democratization Processes and Prospects in a Changing World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2008), 47–8.

While it is true that there are important pre-conditions existing in Taiwan's and South Korea's societies as well as external influences; however, examining the transition process of both countries will show that the ruling elite spearheaded democratization in their countries. Even though there were alternatives that they could resort to, they embarked on a journey of political liberalization and eventual democratization.

Democratization is a political process determined by human elements and not by structural preconditions.[154] There are many examples whereby countries democratized even when certain preconditions deemed important by scholars are absent, and the reverse holds true as well. Hence, democratization can be a bottom-up or a top-down process. The analysis above shows that civil society is weak in China. Compared to South Korea, it does not possess the organized strength nor will to push for democratization. Hence, it is concluded that for democratization to take place in China, it has to be elite driven. Huntington similarly argued that democratization is a political choice undertaken by the political elites.[155]

Political leadership is crucial in shaping the trajectory of democratization as shown in both the Taiwan and South Korea's case studies. Hence, some scholars have argued that if Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader had facilitated the democratic movements in 1989 just as Chiang Ching-kuo had instead of using repressive techniques; China might have embarked on a very different path. To assess China democratization prospects, one must thus focus on the dynamics of elite politics as it shed light on the political decision-making process. In particular, the following section will also cover an evaluation of the fifth generation of leaders under the stewardship of Xi Jinping.[156]

F.   ANALYSIS OF ELITE POLITICS IN CHINA

In the earlier years of PRC formation, personalistic leaders like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping commanded immense political power with their domineering style. The

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[154] Przeworski and Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," 176.

[155] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 13.

[156] Edward Friedman, *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 244.

first and second-generation leaders could overruled decisions, purged their rivals and bulldoze over the oppositions. However, when Deng passed from the scene in 1997, it also marked the last of the charismatic leaders within the CCP. Where previously the prominent leader made the decisions, the CCP now conduct collective decision-making. Instead of power being concentrated in one person, it is now shared among a few. Young Nam Cho observed that policy-making during Jiang Zemin's terms was consulted not only with the general secretary but also the premier of the State Council and chairman of the NPC. This change in trend is attributed to three factors. The generation of leaders after Deng were not involved in the struggle against the Nationalists; hence, they lack the revolutionary credentials in building the party. Secondly, Deng's efforts in institutionalizing politics had also in the process created not only certainty in establishing terms and age limits but also instituted collective decision-making. It is no longer the one-man show that it once was. Thirdly, each political elite possesses substantial power and influence over his or her area of responsibility. All these meant that decision-making over the years became more consensuses based.[157]

Instead of the preeminent leader of the past, even the general secretary can no longer wield power indiscriminately. As a "first among equals," decisions often had to be made through negotiations with different power-holding groups within the party. Where the party leader was able to dictate his successor previously, as with the appointments of Liu Shaoqi, Hua Guofeng, Zhao Ziyang, Hu Yaobang and Jiang Zemin, this had not been the case for leaders after Deng. Occurrences that served to validate this included appointment of Xi Jinping to the post of general secretary although Li Keqiang was Hu Jintao's succession choice. Similarly, Hu also did not managed to insert his protégés into the Politburo at will or managed to reduce the nine-member Politburo Standing Committee to seven. This translates to a new style of collective leadership aimed at safeguarding the majority interests.[158] Hence, this makes implementation of radical reforms unlikely as any of the members could block another's proposal. Rather, policy

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[157] Cho, "Elite Politics," 157–8.

[158] Ibid., 160.

approaches would veer towards moderate policies with the emphasis on protection of entrenched political interests due to the power-sharing dynamics within the party. Some scholars attribute this to the stagnancy of political reforms over the years.[159]

Growing institutionalization in succession precludes turbulent power tussles among the different factions. While power seizures and purges marked previous leadership transfer, Deng's time especially after 1987 saw a smooth transfer of power. Without the volatility of power transfers, regime tends to be more stable and there is less probability of a regime change.[160]

G.   POLITICS OF THE FIFTH GENERATION LEADERS

The once a decade transfer of power to the fifth generation CCP's political elites in November 2012 invoked a sense of optimism among the liberals that political reforms will gain momentum. Thus, far, the fifth generation leader Xi Jinping has consolidated his power, embarked on a highly publicized anti-corruption movement and push ahead with economic reforms. The Chinese public also viewed the handling of the Bo Xilai's case positively and just, which has improved his popularity ratings considerably.[161]

Selection of CCP leaders has also seen personnel with better educational backgrounds progressively. While previously the PSC leaders possessed revolutionary credentials, subsequent PSC members consist of more technocrats. Eight of the nine members in the 2002 PSC were technocrats.[162] Within the fifth generation PSC members are two PhD holders namely Xi Jinping, the party secretary and Li Keqiang, the premier. It also saw for the first time numerous personnel educated in the humanities, which some

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[159] Yongnian Zheng, "China in 2012: Troubled Elite, Frustrated Society," *Asian Survey* 53, no. 1 (Jan 2013): 169.

[160] Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," 8.

[161] Cheng Li, "Chinese President Xi Jinping's One Year Report Card," *Brookings*, November 30, 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/11/20-president-xi-report-card-li.

[162] Li, *China's Changing Political Landscape*, 70.

experts suggest could result in more emphasis on people-oriented policies. This could come in handy as China grapples with its rising social tensions.[163]

Other observations within the party also reflect a growing emphasis on consensus-based leadership. For one, the PSC was reduced to seven members during the 12th NPC held in March 2013 to facilitate collective decision-making. The practice of balancing blocs in the Politburo continues to be a feature in the Xi Jinping's administration. This prevents any groups from dictating the policies. Instead, collective decision-making has been deeply entrenched since Deng's time and continues to be the rule of the day.[164]

The CCP is split into two different factions commonly known as the "elitist" and "populist" camps. Collective decision-making is facilitated by the even split between the two camps within the PSC among the fourth generation leaders. However, the current fifth generation leaders sees an uneven split with six members from the "elitist" camp under Xi Jinping prompting forecasts that party politics maybe dominated by the "elitist" faction. However, Cheng Li assessed that though the PSC is dominated by one camp, the Politburo, the Secretariat and the CMC still managed to achieve quite a good balance. Hence, decision-making can still be expected to be consensus-based.[165]

New political elites infused with liberal ideas could also be an alternative avenue for leadership change to take place. These liberal views proliferate with increasing modernization and may come to dominate the political arena in the long run. While previous generation CCP leaders were educated in China, close to 20 percent of the fifth generation Politburo members were educated overseas such as Yang Jiechi, Li Hongzhong and Li Yuanchao.[166] Some of the party members within the Politburo are also known to be more liberal-oriented. Notably, the ex-premier Wen Jiabao, Li Yuanchao

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[163] Raymond Li, "Six Politburo Standing Committee Members are Not Technocrats," *South China Morning Post*, November 20, 2012, http://Www.Scmp.Com/News/China/Article/1086358/Six-Politburo-Standing-Committee-Members-are-Not-Technocrats.

[164] Alice Miller, "The Work System of the Xi Jinping Leadership," *China Leadership Monitor* no. 41 (2013), http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM41AM.pdf.

[165] Li, "Rule of the Princelings."

[166] Li, *China's Changing Political Landscape*, 106.

and Wang Yang are more receptive towards democracy. However, it is recognized that their concept of democracy may still be some distance away from the western concept of liberal democracy.[167]

The fifth generation leadership also has more conservative elements than liberal ones especially since Vice President Li Yuanchao and Vice Prime Minister Wang Yang, both noted for advocating political liberalization were not selected for the prestigious PSC. Therefore, the current dominantly conservative PSC may mean limited political liberalization.[168]

While China's new leader, Xi Jinping has worked fervently for economic reforms and to clamp down on corruption, the same cannot be said about political reforms. Xi Jinping internal memo, known as Document No. 9 brought up the danger on the Western concept of democracy, human rights, free press and social participation.[169] Other specialists on China concurred that since Xi Jinping took over, his approach has took on a more conservative stance. The clamping down of corruption stemmed from the need to maintain party control, and the recognition that social outrage over corruption has on many occasions brought down regimes. Hence, scholars assessed that political reforms will not be moving forward any time soon.[170]

H.   CONCLUSION

Hence, the analysis above has shown that the ball is now in the political elites court whether China will democratize. The middle class and opposition are not significant in producing the change based on the current situation. Hence, any prospects for democratization will need to be a top-down approach.

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[167] Li, "Intra-Party Democracy in China," 5.

[168] Li and McElveen, "Can Xi Jinping's Governing Strategy Succeed?" *Brookings*, September 26, 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/09/26-xi-jinping-china-governing-strategy-li-mcelveen.

[169] Chris Buckley, "China Takes Aim at Western Ideas," *New York Times*, August 19, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/world/asia/chinas-new-leadership-takes-hard-line-in-secret-memo.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&.

[170] Joseph Fewsmith, "Xi Jinping's Fast Start," *China Leadership Monitor* no. 41 (2013), http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM41JF.pdf.

Reviewing the current situation in China sees a country characterized by poor civil liberties especially when it comes to religious and associational freedom and human rights. Political participation is severely limited and media censorship is ever more pervasive. Rule of law is weak in China, respect for private and property rights are lacking, and establishment for an independent judiciary is left wanting. Although China's legal system has improved tremendously since the Maoist era, numerous new laws have been passed, and the pool of people with legal expertise has increased substantially. However, judicial independence is still subsumed under the CCP, and is severely underdeveloped.[171]

China's democratic future continues to be bleak in the near future. However, with economic reforms and limited political liberalization, one can be sure that the CCP can no longer be stagnant and yet continue to hold on to power absolutely. The socioeconomic conditions have vastly transformed the Chinese society since China first opened its doors in the late 1970s. Political evolution will be a matter of inevitability. China is currently in a state whereby economic success is necessary to ensure the regime legitimacy. Previously some form of political liberalization was undertaken to facilitate economic reforms. Likewise, further economic reforms also necessitate increased political reforms to be effective. The regime perceived political reforms as a threat to regime survival; hence, it is foreseeable that the CCP may continue to delay political reforms, resorting to other means to pacify or repress the population. Until such time that the costs of exacting control is too great to overcome, will there be a possibility of significant political liberalization that may actually lead to democratization.

In the event that liberals within the party gains more ground, political cleavages within the CCP can result in a split between the different factions. In the tussle for power, the more liberal side has a tendency to advocate policies contrary to the conservatives and attempt to garner societal support. When pressures on the regime starts to mount, the conservative faction may be forced to negotiate for increased political reforms that inevitable leads to democratization in the future. China specialists highlighted the

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[171] Li, *China's Changing Political Landscape*, 10.

Tiananmen incident as an example whereby factional conflicts resulted in political upheavals, which could potentially change the course of the country's political path.[172] Separately, economic or social crisis may compel political elites to negotiate. Even isolated incidents such as corruption scandals can severely erode the regime's legitimacy and incite social discontent.

Many social scientists today argued that democratization is a process, and the United States and United Kingdom democracies have achieved the openness of today through a protracted journey lasting about two centuries.[173] Considering that China only started opening its door to the outside world in 1978, the unfavorable judgment leveled on its dismal democratic progress may have been too critical.

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[172] Liu and Chen, "Why China Will Democratize," 54.

[173] Li, "Intra-Party Democracy in China" 3.

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