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DEMOCRATIZATION AS SOCIALIZATION TO "GLOBAL CULTURE"

In October 2003, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was busy making preparations to host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, a glittering but normally vacuous annual event whose most memorable moment comes when regional leaders gather for a group photograph wearing specially designed shirts. October 2003 also marked the thirtieth anniversary of a Thai student-led uprising that forced the collapse of a corrupt military dictatorship and inaugurated a (brief) period of genuine democracy in Thailand for the first time in history. Many of the student leaders of October 1973 were now middle-aged members of the Thai elite, including high-profile academics and leaders of the country's most visible nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Some wanted to stage anniversary demonstrations at Sanam Luang, the oval field next to Bangkok's Grand Palace that serves as Thailand's symbolic political center. October 1973 was, after all, a watershed date in the country's history, and younger people should be educated to its significance through exhibits and speeches. Commemorations might also help to strengthen and consolidate Thai democracy, which had been crushed in a military coup of October 1976 but then reinstated following the success of another mass uprising in May 1992.

Thaksin, an elected prime minister who often mocked democratic institutions and values, seemed far more interested in making sure the APEC summit went smoothly than in facilitating what he regarded as pointless and embarrassing NGO activism. He had, in any case, already promised the NGOs he would eradicate poverty within six years. Why did they still complain, and even go mobilize landless villagers for demonstrations in Bangkok? The thought of such scruffiness spoiling the nation's capital

during APEC was evidently too much for Thaksin to bear. He became visibly angry and ordered that no demonstrations of any sort be held. But he did not have the authority to issue such an order, since freedom of assembly was guaranteed under sections 39 and 44 of the 1997 "People's Constitution," the capstone to the 1990s' democratization movements. Lacking authority, Thaksin issued threats:

> Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra warned yesterday [1 October 2003] that any villager groups holding protests during this month's APEC summit in Bangkok would fall out of favor with his administration. "You will be among the last ones to receive financial aid from the government," he said, referring to an ambitious plan to spend at least 200 billion baht [about $5 billion] to stamp out poverty . . . Thaksin also threatened to blacklist any non-governmental organization taking part in a street rally during the meeting. "Any NGO that brings them [poor villagers] for protests will no longer be able to work with me in the future," Thaksin said . . . "It won't hurt if you will think about your country and the image of your country for just a week."[1]

Thaksin then delivered the *coup de grace* against NGO activists: "These people merely need to show they are working to please their overseas sources of funding. Everybody knows that NGOs are funded by foreigners."[2]

All through the rainy season (June–October) of 2003, Thaksin had hammered away at the theme of NGOs catering to the whims of foreigners. He initiated this strategy in August 2001, after the Constitutional Court decided in a controversial 8–7 vote that the former police colonel and (still) billionaire telecommunications tycoon—who first became Prime Minister in February 2001—did not intend, in 2000, to hide millions of dollars in assets by registering them in the names of his servants.[3] After the verdict, Thaksin could rest assured that he would not be barred from politics for five years, as would have been required under the Constitution had he been found guilty. No longer would he need to tread so cautiously.

Also buoyed by high popularity ratings accompanying Thailand's booming economic growth, Thaksin and his key lieutenants in the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party were, by the time of the APEC summit, in no mood to tolerate activists' troublemaking. The prime minister criticized NGOs by suggesting they were "un-Thai." He instructed NGO leaders and Bangkok Governor Samak Sundaravej, as they negotiated whether and how to commemorate October 1973, to "please be helpful and do not act as if you were from different nations." Samak wanted to forbid demonstrations entirely so that the grass in Sanam Luang could be kept tidy for APEC visitors.[4] Samak had been a cabinet minister in the

military government forced from power in October 1973 and was associated with the right-wing paramilitary groups that rampaged through Thailand before and during the October 1976 crackdown.[5] But apparently to Thaksin, Samak represented the Thai nation, while NGO leaders represented foreign radicalism.

Democrat Party leader Banyat Bantadtan, speaking for a weak and hamstrung parliamentary opposition, countered the prime minister by arguing in a parliamentary session that "allowing peaceful protests would reflect a democratic political system, whereas the country's reputation would be damaged if [during APEC] freedom of expression were suspended." Sounding more desperate than Banyat, the head of Forum-Asia, a human rights NGO, offered that Thaksin was making "a serious mistake" and that "his actions are like those of a dictator." In the end, Thaksin and Samak did agree to permit activists to hold restricted commemorative events in a limited section of Sanam Luang. But they also allowed rumors of impending police action to flourish, with the result that only a few dozen members of the general public dared to attend.[6]

The "International Dimensions" of Asian Democratization

Throughout Asia, contemporary struggles to establish or consolidate democracy ignite passions rooted in two centuries of humiliating encounters with Western soldiers, merchants, and proselytizers. Some of the passions are genuine; some are manufactured artificially by conservative elites. Not only in Thailand, but also in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan, Burma and Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia, and most other Asian countries, *international identity*—as developed through many decades of adjustment to a West-centered global society—is a powerful factor affecting propensity to democratize. When Thaksin criticizes NGO activists, he is suggesting that the human rights, community rights, wealth redistribution, and cultural pluralism they promote represent the same forces of foreign arrogance that have humiliated Thailand in the past. It does not matter that Thaksin himself agreed to make Thailand a "major non-NATO ally" of the United States in 2003 and to send troops to Iraq. It matters less that his government received far more money from foreign aid agencies than NGOs could ever hope to receive. NGO activists do disturb the social harmony and order (*khwam riaproy*) prized by Thailand's prosperous urbanites. When Thaksin criticizes NGOs for blocking roads, interfering with dam construction, and smearing his government's reputation during APEC, he is seeking to denigrate democracy itself. That the tactic works is suggested by the experience of one human rights campaigner arrested on the way to a 2002 protest near

the Burma border. The arresting officer asked the campaigner: "Why do you want to protest for human rights, anyway? Human rights are just '*farang*.' "[7]

Although not contesting the close association of human rights and democratic liberties with (the best in) Western civilization, Thai democracy activists insist that their philosophical foundations are universal, and that all Asian societies have traditions and legacies on the basis of which democracy can, and should, be built.[8] But if liberalism becomes discredited in Thailand as a result of cynical associations with images of Western arrogance, Thai democracy would be in danger, possibly to be replaced by a corrupt version of the paternalistic corporatism championed in such places as Malaysia and Singapore. A similar outcome might result if the authoritarianism of economically vibrant China were to become attractive in Thailand and legitimate Thaksin-style populist authoritarianism.

Democracy is also under threat in the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, which the PRC proposes to annex under the "one country, two systems" formula used for Hong Kong and Macau. "Hongkongization" would neuter Taiwan politically and transform it into a place smoldering with discontent and unable to express or act upon popular views on a wide range of subjects Beijing deems off-limits. The fear of Hongkongization prompts an extremist wing of the Taiwanese nationalist movement to seek a restructuring of ROC society through new limits on cross-Strait economic and cultural transactions and the political rights of ethnic Mainlanders. Yet this, too, would cause Taiwan's transmogrification into an entity far less liberal than it is today. The appeal of defensively illiberal Taiwanese nationalism might evaporate if China itself were to become democratic. But given the ruling Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) crushing of the China Democracy Party in 1998, its tight restrictions on civil society development, and its heavy regulation of Internet use and other forms of public communication, prospects for the PRC's democratization seem extremely poor.

One reason the CCP can resist democratization successfully is because Party leaders use their public discourse—even more pointedly than Thaksin—to associate democratization with caving in to Western domination. This association resonates with a Chinese public taught from childhood to feel humiliated and angry at the century of Western and Japanese imperialism from the 1840s to the 1940s. CCP elites, including establishment intellectuals, link democracy and human rights with subservience to "American hegemonism" (*Mei ba*). They mock democracy as currently practiced in Japan and Taiwan as corrupt and hypocritical. In the mid-1990s, a few years after home-grown democracy activists

TABLE 1

Classifying Theories of Democratization

Domain of explanation	Level of analysis	
	Global	Domestic
Material	A. Robinson	B. Moore; political economy
Ideational	D. World-polity	C. "Civic culture"

erected a "Goddess of Democracy" statue (modeled partly on the Statue of Liberty) in Tiananmen Square, the CCP's intensive cultivation of reactive nationalism began to bear fruit, and young Chinese started expressing hostility to the US and "Western-style" democracy and human rights. The party-state succeeded in reconstructing democracy and human rights as tools designed by Washington—sometimes with the connivance of Tokyo and Taiwan independence activists—to weaken and divide a China that had finally begun a glorious "peaceful rise" to world power status, national reunification, and mass prosperity.[9]

Clearly, Asian democratization must be conceived and understood in its rich historical and international contexts.[10] But what Laurence Whitehead calls "the international dimensions" of democratization (in any region) are under-theorized in the specialist literature.[11] Democratization theories can generally be classified with the aid of the foursquare matrix in Table 1.[12] On the vertical axis, theories are classified according to whether they stress the material (usually economic) or ideational (cultural) side of social and political life; on the horizontal axis, they are classified according to whether they stress the global or domestic level of analysis. Because the systematic study of democratization emerged from political development studies in the field of comparative politics, most democratization theories explain domestic-level dynamics. Examples would include such classics in comparative politics as Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (material domain) and Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* (ideational domain).[13] The domestic approach also dominates the huge corpus of contemporary work, most prominently books and articles elucidating the role of civil society in democratization.[14]

Many democratization studies "select on the dependent variable," by only focusing on like cases, usually successes.[15] Except for the special category of large-N quantitative studies,[16] democratization specialists tend to focus their analytical attention on countries that have succeeded in becoming democratic, giving far less attention to those that remain authoritarian. This is despite Gerardo Munck's important argument that continued development of democratization theory will require specialists to "dispel

a deeply-ingrained belief that only similar cases can be compared."[17] Persistence of the case-selection bias distorts understanding by reinforcing the popular assumption that democratization is natural, normal, and even inevitable. *The* road of political development leads to democracy. There is no other road. Whatever barriers exist only block the eventually inevitable, and the detours are temporary. Yet as Thomas Carothers contends, "aid practitioners and policy makers looking at politics in a country that has recently moved away from authoritarianism should not start by asking, 'How is its democratic transition going?' They should instead formulate a more open-ended query, 'What is happening politically?' Insisting on the former approach leads to optimistic assumptions that often shunt the analysis down a blind alley."[18]

Theorists working at the global level of analysis may be more likely than country specialists to view democratization as normal. Samuel Huntington concludes *The Third Wave* by conceding that although "new forms of authoritarianism could emerge that are suitable for wealthy, information-dominated, technology-based societies," in the absence of such scenarios (which he apparently considers unlikely), "economic development should create the conditions for the progressive replacement of authoritarian political systems by democratic ones. Time is on the side of democracy."[19]

Whitehead describes East European democratization as a contagious process in which "relatively neutral transmissions of information" about democratization entered from Western Europe and interacted with domestic situations to produce successful transitions relatively easily. "International demonstration effects" acquired their potency from "an almost universal wish to imitate a way of life associated with the liberal capitalist democracies of the core regions (the wish for modernity)." This wish "may undermine the social and institutional foundations of any regime perceived as incompatible" with it.[20] Yet clearly in China, and to a lesser extent in Thailand, many people are content to tolerate authoritarianism or authoritarian tendencies if the payoff is high economic growth. They may wish for *material* modernity, but not necessarily political modernity. Or, from another perspective, they may seek to redefine political modernity to include certain forms of authoritarianism.

Another study at the global level of analysis exhibiting similar problems is William Robinson's *Promoting Polyarchy*. Working primarily in the material domain of explanation (Table 1)—but, as a Gramscian, also concerned with culture—Robinson argues that the United States and associated global elites promote conservative "political democratization," in contrast to social and economic democratization, for the purpose of

obfuscating material domination by a transnational capitalist elite.[21] In the 1960s and 1970s, an increasingly fine articulation of global production and distribution processes spawned resistance movements throughout the Third World. Capitalist elites in the United States and elsewhere began worrying that the entire political-economic order might soon come under threat. Robinson contends that they responded by promoting a neutralization of radicalism through political democratization, in places ranging from the Philippines and Chile to Nicaragua and Haiti.[22]

Like many of the mainstream democratization specialists whose work he criticizes, Robinson studies only cases of successful political democratization. On this basis, he concludes that democratization is the norm under US-dominated high globalization.[23] Robinson seeks to be a critical theorist, in Robert Cox's sense of "standing apart from the prevailing order of the world" and asking how that order came about:

> Critical theory, unlike problem-solving theory, does not take institutions and social power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing. It is directed toward an appraisal of the very framework for action, or problematic, which problem-solving theory accepts as its parameters . . . . Critical theory is theory of history in the sense of being concerned not just with the past but with the continuing process of historical change.[24]

Robinson is critical of political-economic institutions but not the post-Enlightenment Western cultural narrative. He does not analyze this narrative's reception by non-Western actors under the assumption they might reject it *fundamentally*. Robinson and most mainstream democratization specialists work *inside* the Enlightenment tradition, Robinson taking a Marxist/Gramscian approach and Huntington, Whitehead, and others a Tocquevillian or classical political economy approach. The result is to project the concerns of one particular branch of the Western Enlightenment tradition on the entire world, implicitly ruling out the possibility that people in other countries might approach political development from a radically different set of cultural assumptions.[25]

Disinclination to take Cox's strictures to heart and try to stand outside the Western narrative makes it difficult for some scholars to accept the possibility that a country such as China may *never* democratize. For example, in predicting China's certain democratization, Bruce Gilley declares that "the laws of social science grind away in China as they do elsewhere, whether people like it or not."[26] This is precisely the sort of ahistorical and decontextualized approach that Cox rejects.[27] Gilley acknowledges the (remote) possibility that the CCP's dictatorship may "survive through

a deep structure of political organization that I have simply not grasped, bound as I am by the circumstances of my time and unable to perceive the radical implications of the deep social forces that keep the CCP in power."[28] This is an important concession because accepting the possible permanence of Chinese authoritarianism is crucial to breaking the trap of methodological and conceptual selection on the dependent variable. Even acknowledging that "China may not become democratic for a very long time" would be insufficient, because if the analyst is convinced that "in the end" China is *certain* to democratize, he or she will fail to comprehend its development trajectory. The same would hold for any analyst convinced that China is certain *not* to democratize.

Yet another important globe-level theory of democratization is world-polity theory (or "sociological institutionalism"), a neo-Weberian approach developed in the 1980s and 1990s by Stanford sociologist John Meyer and protégés. World-polity theory does not explain democratization per se. It explains the "considerable, and on many dimensions increasing, isomorphism among the world's diverse national states and societies," especially the fact that most countries "adopt remarkably similar constitutional frames, around stylized goals of collective progress and individual rights and equality."[29] Today, governments worldwide collect vast amounts of socioeconomic data, establish national education systems, promote science and technology development, protect the population's health and welfare, and struggle to sustain the environment while "growing" the economy.[30] No state pursued such goals 200 years ago. World-polity theorists contend that the reason for the change—and for increasing state isomorphism—is that a powerful, rationality-esteeming "global culture" (sometimes, "world culture") developed out of the European Enlightenment and diffused worldwide through imperialism and imitation.[31] Universally, global culture now socializes state elites to pursue humanitarian progress based on rationality and reason. Global culture was thus Western in origin but eventually became denationalized.[32] Today, even Westerners are incapable of resisting its constitutive power. To world-polity theorists, states become democratic through *socialization to global culture*.[33]

World-polity theorists join most democratization specialists in expressing a normative preference for democracy and the modern rational state, hoping and expecting that states will become more alike and more humane. They would be classified as "solidarists" in the parlance of English School International Relations (IR) theory.[34] This will be a useful categorization to keep in mind when considering conservative Thai and, especially, Chinese Communist responses to democratization. As Barry Buzan

explains, solidarist explanations of, and hopes for, world order can be contrasted with conventional and conservative "pluralist" approaches:

> In substantive terms, pluralism describes "thin" international societies [of states] where the shared values are few, and the prime focus is on devising rules for coexistence within a framework of sovereignty and non-intervention. Solidarism is about "thick" international societies in which a wider range of values is shared, and where the rules will not only be about coexistence, but also about the pursuit of joint gains and the management of collective problems in a range of issue-areas . . . .
>
> Under pluralism, . . . self-interest certainly stretches to cooperation in pursuit of a livable international order, but it keeps the focus on *differences* among the states and does not require that they agree on anything beyond the basics, or that they hold any common values other than an interest in survival and the avoidance of unwanted disorder. It nevertheless needs to be noted that pluralism does not exclude the members of interstate society from sharing a degree of common identity.[35]

In a completely solidarist international society, "states might abandon the pursuit of difference and exclusivity as their main *raison d'etre* and cultivate becoming more alike as a common goal." They might develop a deep common identity, rooted in "a package of values that is associated not just with belonging to the same civilization (which was true for the states of classical pluralist Europe), but also with a substantial convergence in the norms, rules, institutions, and goals of the states concerned."[36] Ascending solidarism is the world-polity theorists' vision. They are convinced of global culture's power to reconstitute all states as liberal-rational entities. Ascending solidarism is also the vision of many democratization specialists, especially those who hope and work for a "democratic peace." But the question is whether global culture is actually powerful enough to overcome the commitment of an authoritarian superstate such as China to "world plurality" (*shijie de duoyangxing*).[37]

Like a number of democratization specialists, world-polity theorists tend to select on the dependent variable in designing their research, and thus presume and elucidate, rather than test, global culture's (re)constitutive power. For example, in *National Interests in International Society*, Martha Finnemore develops the important argument—contra Neorealism and Neoliberalism—that states are empty organizations, devoid of identity and ignorant of their interests, until socialized by global culture: "I want to explain why all states create science bureaucracies at the same time, why they all agree to new rules of war, why they agree to redefinitions of development and change policies accordingly. . . . [T]here is no variation in behavior (the 'dependent variable') in my study. It is

precisely the similarity in behavior where none should exist that makes these cases theoretically anomalous and worthy of investigation."[38]

Using a set of meticulously drawn case studies, Finnemore demonstrates that global culture sometimes reconstitutes states in significant ways. But because she studies only successful cases of state socialization, she cannot explain *why* socialization occurs, only *how*. In effect, she brackets the question of why and assumes socialization's inevitability. As long as her only goal is to elucidate process, there is no problem. But in stating that "I want to *explain* why *all* states" undergo socialization, Finnemore makes a claim that goes beyond what her research design can support. Selecting on the dependent variable leads too easily to the conclusion that state isomorphism is inevitable.

World-polity theorists also tend to deny states and other actors genuine agency in constructing the world polity. They do assert that actors exercise agency. Finnemore writes that "actors create structures which take on a life of their own and in turn shape subsequent action. Social structures create and empower actors who may [then] act to overturn structures for reasons of their own."[39] She and other world-polity theorists devote considerable attention to the processes by which actors such as international NGOs (INGOs) participate in this structuration process by socializing (some) states to global culture.[40]

But closer inspection reveals a structuralist bias in much of this work. World-polity theorists assume implicitly that INGOs and other "agents" of socialization enjoy little or no autonomy vis-à-vis the global culture. The culture becomes like a disembodied hermeneutical force shaping and transforming all people and organizations in its path.[41] INGOs act as "agents" only in the quite different sense of "agent" to the "principal" of a reified global culture.

Boli and Thomas exemplify this structuralist bias when they write that "in the context of these constitutive [global] cultural principles and models, actors do not *act* so much as they *enact*." At best, "enactment does not entail mechanical recitation of highly-specified scripts. Rather, actors actively draw on, select from, and modify shared [global] cultural models, principles, and identities."[42] Actors can maneuver in this limited way because global culture is internally inconsistent in some respects and so cannot completely prescribe behavior. For example, it esteems both efficiency and equality, an inconsistency that allows some actors the "agency" to choose between championing economic growth and championing wealth redistribution. But no actor can choose simply to ignore the economic-development *problematique* altogether.

The structuralist bias implies that global culture became set in the West (in unspecified ways) about two centuries ago and then slowly unfolded

in a self-realization process no human actor could stop. The possibility that a powerful challenger to Western hegemony, such as China, might arise and successfully contest some of global culture's most important constitutive norms eludes most of these writers. Since global culture in the world-polity theorists' sense originated in the West, the West's successive defeats of Nazism, Fascism, Japanese *bushido* militarism, and Soviet Stalinism might contribute to the sense of the culture's invincibility. But advancing world-polity theory—as advancing democratization theory—requires explicitly allowing for the possibility that the future is open-ended. Perhaps global culture is malleable or even breakable at a deep level.

World-polity theorists also systematically underestimate the domestic sources of state identity. This reinforces their sense of global culture's invincibility. Boli and Thomas claim that "worldwide constructs provide social identities, roles, and subjective selves by which individuals rationally organize to pursue their interests. . . . World-cultural conceptions also define the collective identities and interests of such entities as firms, states, and nations."[43] Indigenous sources of identity and local agency in "imagining the community" are presumed insignificant. Boli and Thomas do concede the importance of understanding "the generation and promotion of competing world-cultural models of social organization and action."[44] But they decline to study such phenomena.

Cognate problems cloud Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink's important edited volume, *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*.[45] This book's purpose is to examine how human rights norms diffuse from the centers of global culture in the West to authoritarian postcolonial states. Risse and Sikkink know that selection on the dependent variable has marred previous such studies. To avoid this problem, "in addition to the well-publicized 'success stories' of international human rights like Chile, South Africa, the Philippines, Poland, and the former Czechoslovakia, we also examine a series of more obscure and apparently intractable cases of human rights violations in such places as Guatemala, Kenya, Uganda, Morocco, Tunisia, and Indonesia."[46] Reviewing the country chapters, Risse and Sikkink conclude that "the diffusion of international norms in the human rights area crucially depends on the establishment and the sustainability of networks among domestic and transnational actors who manage to link up with international regimes, to alert Western public opinion and Western governments."[47] NGOs become central to the norm-diffusion process, and they are usually successful, because "despite the geographic, cultural, and political diversity of the countries represented in our cases, we saw similar patterns and processes in very different settings."[48]

Contributors to *The Power of Human Rights* did find that human rights violations increased in a few countries, such as Tunisia and Kenya. But in their introduction, Risse and Sikkink play down these negative cases and focus on modeling the step-by-step process by which *successful* norm diffusion occurs. In this they do a laudable job—the model is carefully drawn. But with a case like China in mind, or Thailand under Thaksin, the reader is left wondering exactly *why* successful diffusion occurs, not just how. Clearly, it does not occur in every case.

Risse and Sikkink's sample selection process also remains biased, because it includes only weak states already embarked to some degree on a course of human rights improvement. All the states in their sample had agreed in principle to accept the demands of foreign governments and international aid agencies to accede to global human rights standards. Contributors to *The Power of Human Rights* take these already semisuccessful (and some quite successful) cases, examine their history of interactions with NGOs and other important actors, and then develop an abstract model of what in effect becomes "the road" to human rights improvement. A significantly more effective approach would have been to *maximize* variation on the dependent variable by including some cases of countries—such as China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Burma—not even embarked upon "the road" and apparently not planning to embark upon it any time soon. China would be especially important to include because of its growing power.[49]

That Risse and Sikkink believe in a single road and a single process of international norm diffusion is reinforced by the "phase" metaphor they use to structure their model. "Phase" language conveys a sense of inevitability about successful socialization:

> Because of changes in "world time," it is possible that denial and backlash is a normative phase particular to a period in which new international norms have emerged, but when they are still strongly contested internationally. Governments, through their denial, engage in this contestation. If this is the case, we would expect the denial stage to disappear in cases of more fully institutionalized norms. . . . In Latin America, it is possible that the historical limits to the denial phase are being reached in the mid-1990s, but we would expect this contestation to continue much longer in Asia and Africa.[50]

If all are embarked upon "the road," Asian and African countries must eventually exit the current "denial and backlash" phase when its "historical limits" have been reached, making their proper advance to the next stage. All countries must one day be socialized successfully to global culture's human rights norms. Resistance can only be temporary. Thus, "we argue in this book that instrumental adaptation to growing international

and domestic pressures is a typical reaction of norm-violating governments in the early stages of the socialization process."[51] Yet perhaps the unsocialized state will *always* indulge in mere instrumental adaptation, never internalizing liberal human rights standards. Such a state armed with sufficient levels of what John Hobson terms "international agential power" might even take actions to change the content of global culture, reversing the recent trend toward global solidarism and restoring a pluralist world order.[52]

"Post-*Tiyong*" Global Socialization

The liberal-rational global culture is not invincible. NGO and other activists from all parts of the world have had to struggle and sacrifice—*exercising agency*—to develop the culture's democratizing potential. Since especially the 1960s, activists' efforts have succeeded in pressuring conservative states, including some in the West, to reform politically. Partly because historical factors have made Thailand and Taiwan comparatively open to global socialization, they have become democratic in recent decades. But China under the CCP, while open to some forms of socialization, rigorously macromanages the process to prevent reconstitution at the level of collective identity. This is a key reason the CCP rejects democratization.

When Asians first encountered liberal-rational global culture in the nineteenth century, they unavoidably associated it with Western imperialism. Many found it difficult to reconcile Enlightenment values with actual Western behavior. The West appeared hypocritical, but it was also attractive. In this situation, Asians had to decide what of their own culture's imagined essence (and they did essentialize) to risk sacrificing in exchange for Western technology, institutions, and values. Even conservatives conceded that some borrowing would be necessary to improve popular welfare and increase military strength. But what would be a safe and acceptable level of damage to indigenous culture and institutions? This traumatic crucible was called in Chinese the *tiyong* dilemma, *ti* denoting China's imagined collective essence or identity, and *yong* the foreign technology and institutions that could be used to develop, defend, and exalt the *ti*.[53]

All Asian societies faced the equivalent of a *tiyong* dilemma, and all resolved it by borrowing some elements from Western culture (not necessarily the liberal elements) while rejecting others. Deciding what to borrow and what to reject was not usually a rational, controlled, or even completely conscious process. Particularly after young Asians began going to the West (and Japan) in significant numbers to study—Siamese students in

the 1870s and Chinese in the 1900s—different groups competed to offer different solutions to the dilemma. The competitions frequently spawned violence, and through the resulting turmoil, produced fundamental changes to Asian states, societies, and cultures. In many ways, the turbulent cascades produced by the *tiyong* crises continue to roil Asia today. The problem of democratization can only be understood in this context.[54]

Importantly, Asian societies all resolved their *tiyong* dilemmas differently. They did not simply receive the good news of liberal-rational global culture and enact its prescriptions passively on the basis of a "wish for modernity." Nor did they categorically reject it in the interest of preserving premodern and essentially authoritarian "Asian values."[55] As explained in Chapter 2, nineteenth century Siamese elites were unusually receptive to transforming their society on the basis of many (but not all) of liberal-rational global culture's values. They imagined the global culture to be consistent with Siam's Buddhist essence, and as a result made it acceptable for later generations to look abroad for ideas on how to restructure the Thai state.

In contrast, nineteenth century China was torn asunder by its encounters with the global culture. To many of the scholar-gentry class, the culture seemed fundamentally incompatible with Confucianism. For this reason, Chinese solutions to the *tiyong* dilemma remained kaleidoscopically numerous and unfocused until about 1930, when the society—governed loosely by Chiang Kai-shek and warlords—settled into a new equilibrium and on a formula for all successful *tiyong* solutions down to the present: China must remain at "the Center" of the collective imagination. Even in the aftermath of radical revolution, Mao Zedong embraced this presupposition. He jettisoned the Soviet model of social and economic development in the late 1950s because he found it unsuitable for Chinese conditions. He then launched a violent assault on certain Soviet-style (and other) institutions during the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76. Overreliance on Soviet assistance and imitation of the Soviet development model implied China's decentering within the Communist world, something Mao and other Chinese leaders could not abide. The Chinese revolution and path to development must cast China at the Center.[56]

But Enlightenment modernity—even as interpreted by Marx—exalted the West as the world's Center, the primary Subject driving world history forward. How could China embrace liberal-rational global culture without at the same time accepting decentering? Chinese elites acknowledged the desirability of economic development and political renovation, but found it difficult to accept a world in which the West—especially the United States—was the cultural Center. As detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, *aversion to decentering* is one of the chief reasons the CCP resists

democratization, and is why so many establishment intellectuals support the CCP's nationalistic authoritarian project. Chinese elites do not agree with the world-polity theorists that democratic global culture is genuinely transnational. They see it as Western.

The consensus on Sinocentrism as the foundation for all *tiyong* solutions emerged with Chinese nationalism during the period 1895–1935. It was confirmed in the holocaust that followed Japan's 1937 invasion. Whatever the precise content of the imagined Chinese *ti* of today, it is not the same essence as specified by Confucian scholars of the nineteenth century. As Joseph Levenson found over forty years ago, cultural clashes with the West destroyed Chinese Confucianism as a total ideological system.[57] Remnants of Confucian values remain, but not the total system. The signal date for the system's destruction was 1905, when the Imperial Qing government abolished the examination system as the gateway to elite status. This system had for centuries created a powerful incentive for intelligent boys and young men to spend years toiling to indoctrinate themselves in Confucian beliefs, which stressed loyalty to the Emperor, to patriarchy, and to social service—as well as to the idea that the Emperor's realm (not yet the Chinese nation) was qualitatively superior to all foreign societies.

As Confucianism disintegrated, China entered cultural turmoil. Decades of experimentation followed, in everything from neo-Confucian quasi-Fascism (Chiang in the 1930s), to nativistic yet nihilistic cultural revolution (Mao in the 1960s), to unabashed authoritarian capitalism (the 1990s and beyond). Today's Chinese leaders promote conspicuous consumption, breakneck economic growth, growing military budgets, and sometimes chauvinistic foreign policies, all with the aim of elevating, glorifying, and ultimately recentering the Chinese nation. The CCP also pursues construction of a "socialist spiritual civilization" but currently invests few resources in the endeavor.[58] It tolerates "patriotic" churches of various faiths and denominations, but none that might become subservient to foreigners. The Party's goal is to reduce spiritual belief to worship of the Chinese nation. Enthusiasm that cannot be satisfied through material consumption must be channeled into nationalistic Sinocentrism. Citizens are not required to express enthusiasm in their day-to-day lives. But if they do, they must express it for material consumption and/or "patriotic" endeavors such as coercing Taiwan into unification, spending billions on a space program, or resisting "Western" democracy as a front for "American hegemonism."

As elaborated in Chapters 4 and 5, the CCP uses the media and educational systems to construct the notion China is or can be an alternative Center to the West within world society. Perhaps one day it will supplant the West as *the* Center. A state that requires its people to take

the national community as their primary object of worship cannot indefinitely tolerate a condition of being decentered. The CCP struggles to amass "comprehensive national power" (*zonghe guoli*) while rejecting democratization. It fears that democratization would lead to loss of control over collective identity construction, including *the power to create difference* between "China"—the twentieth century construct fashioned from the ruins of the Manchu Qing Dynasty—and all Others. Democratization would entail a loosening of restrictions on freedom of speech and debate, after which the Chinese people could begin self-consciously to reexamine their collective identity and try, should they desire, to change it. Media and telecommunications liberalization would facilitate importation of symbol systems from abroad. CCP elites worry that throwing the doors open completely to liberal-rational global culture would run the risk of society accepting the culture's perceived West-exalting narratives. Recentering China in the popular imagination would then be impossible.

The CCP views the worldwide democratization trend of recent decades as part of a US scheme to impose global hegemony. To Chinese Communists, the world is structured ontologically around national poles of comprehensive power, which cannot be dissolved through globalization. All culture, even global culture, must serve state power. Yielding to the siren song of international cosmopolitanism would only result in China becoming a "stooge" (*fuyong*) of the United States. Democratization implies submission to US domination.

In striking contrast, Thai elites—as explained in Chapters 2 and 3—are not motivated to uphold or restore Siam's imagined global centrality and are not worried about their country dissolving into a global cosmopolitan community. The premodern Siamese state was never central to anything of significance beyond the Indo-Chinese peninsula and was always open to outside influences. King Mongkut's reforms of Buddhism in the middle third of the nineteenth century allowed Siamese elites to imagine that their country's cultural essence was not fundamentally different from the modernity then developing in the West. At root, both were rationalistic; thus, global culture was genuinely transnational. As a result, Siam avoided the traumas of a full-scale, mismanaged *tiyong* crisis. This facilitated the country's eventual democratization. Taiwan, meanwhile, holds the distinction of not actually having had an "essence" or *ti* to defend until very recently—and some would say that it still lacks a coherent *ti*. As explained in Chapters 6 and 7, ROC society was left with its collective identity shattered after the Kuomintang (KMT) state lost international recognition in the 1970s as the sole legitimate government of all of China. Taiwanese began critically debating their country's history and essence as a part of the democratization processes of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Distortions

of history-teaching under the KMT had made identity questions sensitive and exceedingly difficult to answer. The KMT tried to socialize Taiwanese into a Sinocentric worldview similar in important respects to the CCP's, in which the Taiwanese were cast as peripheral players in Chinese history, just as they had been cast as peripheral in Imperial Japanese history from 1895 to 1945. Breaking out of the mental vice of being some other country's peripheral, exploited, or borrowed territory thus became the central challenge facing Taiwanese intellectual and political leaders. But precisely because Taiwanese identity was uncertain and contested, few people on the island resisted liberal-rational global culture. With Taiwan lacking a clear identity and lacking international security, the Taiwanese *ti* came to *reflect* the global culture. Becoming a model world citizen was the only way for Taiwan to remain autonomous.

Some in Taiwan and Thailand are concerned about their country's "location" in the geomoral scheme and try to think of ways to achieve a kind of recentering. They do not, as elites in China do, resist decentering or object to it bitterly, but they do take pride in being "politically advanced." Some Taiwanese and Thai perceive their countries as playing important roles in the world-historic task of disseminating liberal-rational global culture to societies still under authoritarian rule. Both Taipei and Bangkok host NGOs working to advance democratization and human rights, and promote their cities as headquarters for the world's news media. Taiwanese and Thai also try directly to socialize other countries into the global culture: Taiwanese (sometimes) work to socialize China, while Thai (sometimes) work to socialize Burma. Making these efforts signals a kind of moral recentering that many find satisfying. Numerous Taiwanese and Thai were educated in the West, Japan, and other global centers, and they travel the world participating in conferences, meetings, seminars, and business activities. They feel at a deep level that they are a *part* of the modern world. When they promote democracy and human rights in China or Burma, they feel, in a sense, that their countries are "sharing Subjecthood" with the world's leading democracies.

In absolute terms, many people in the PRC also view democracy as universally valid and would like to imagine China sharing this kind of Subjecthood. But the CCP makes selective use of such global-cultural values as rationalism and science to pursue a different kind of recentering based on massively increasing Chinese comprehensive national power. CCP praxis (if not always propaganda) rejects the concepts of civil and political rights, and frequently even social and economic rights, stressing instead the right of the entire country as a collective unit to a leading role in world affairs. The collectivity matters far more than individuals, who are often treated as expendable. As detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, the

CCP seeks over time to establish an alternative global Center based on principles antithetical to democracy and human rights. The Party remains firm in its commitment to "world plurality," rejecting liberal solidarism as a cloak for US hegemony.

Global Culture(s), Singular and Plural

As adumbrated above, understanding democratization in its world-historical context requires distinguishing among those global cultures generally supportive of authoritarianism and those generally supportive of democracy—a bifurcation fundamental to the Western experience from the French Revolution down to at least 1989.[59] S. N. Eisenstadt contends that, in a world of ultimately multiple modernities, the eighteenth century project of early (Western) modernity, which conditioned all the others, "entailed a very strong emphasis on the autonomous participation of members of society in the constitution of the social and political order."[60] Bjorn Wittrock finds that modernity's foundational institutions "involved a conception of political order as constituted and legitimated in terms of not only silent tolerance but also some form of active acquiescence and participation. . . [P]ublic discourse should not be subject to persecution or censorship but should rather enable the expression of opinion on all aspects of political and public life."[61] Boli and Thomas take this line of thinking a substantial step further, contending that in a *unified* high modernity of the present and future, INGOs can create a single world community in which everyone possesses "world citizenship":

> Everyone is an individual endowed with certain rights and subject to certain obligations; everyone is capable of voluntaristic action seeking rational solutions to social problems; everyone has the right and obligation to participate in the grand human project; everyone is, therefore, a citizen of the world polity. World citizenship is the institutional endowment of authority and agency on individuals . . . . Correspondingly, only fully democratic governance structures are consistent with world citizenship . . . . States must ensure these rights for their citizens; national citizenship is the means whereby world-citizenship principles are to be realized.[62]

World-polity theorists find a "deep structure" at the root of global culture, anchored by the foundational institutions of early (European) modernity. Yet even a cursory glance at the historical record shows there is usually more than one culture providing attractive state socialization models at any given time. The most powerful countries in material terms are not always the most liberal, and even in the West, liberal-rational global culture has at various times been far from hegemonic. In the 1920s and 1930s, Asian elites looking to global culture(s) for models of how to

reconstitute their political and socioeconomic systems could choose from among Anglo-American liberal capitalism, Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, Italian Fascism, German National Socialism, and Japanese *bushido* militarism (itself a variant of Fascism). In the 1950s and 1960s, they could choose from Soviet Stalinism, American-sponsored authoritarian developmentalism, and, later, Maoist Communism.

In civil society, Western countercultural movements of the 1960s suggested radical experimentation truer to Enlightenment values than many of the policies pursued by leading states. Today's global NGO movement—assigned a central role in world-polity theory—traces its roots partly to this 1960s' antiwar and civil rights activism as well as to indigenous struggles for democracy and justice. The countercultural and (later) NGO movements might be interpreted as struggles to force conservative states to live up to Enlightenment ideals. To this extent, world-polity theory could accommodate them. But the inspiration for many of the people leading these movements lies outside the liberal-rational tradition. Intellectual influences in the 1960s included such Third World revolutionists as Mao, Gandhi, Frantz Fanon, and Ho Chi Minh. Some African-American leaders looked to Islam for insight. Jazz musicians probed the African depths of their art and abandoned elements they felt to be "too white" or European. Popular musicians drew on Indian and North African sources. World-polity theorists might claim that counterculturalists were driven by a unified global culture's esteem for experimentation and exploration. But in self-consciously pushing the cultural limits and opening the door to non-Western values, ideas, and perspectives, counterculturalists—even in the West—were *subverting* the dominant global culture to make it more humane, democratic, and cosmopolitan.

Critical NGOs inherited this legacy. By the 1990s, advances in travel and communications allowed far-flung opponents of globalization, conspicuous consumption, technophilia, and other contemporary practices and institutions to link together.[63] NGOs used the Internet to coordinate protests and socialize members and supporters into a common oppositional worldview. They self-consciously centered their activities in the "global South." For analytical purposes, this critical NGO culture might best be conceived as an alternative or *oppositional* global culture, inheriting the Enlightenment legacy but not strictly adhering to a narrow liberal-rational agenda. World-polity theorists might contend that NGO culture is simply a part of the overarching global culture; after all, disputation is inherent in global culture's deep structure. But as subsequent chapters make clear, trying to comprehend real-world events suggests the utility of viewing the oppositional culture as, in fact, oppositional. Global culture is (at least) bifurcated. It is probably even more complex still.[64]

Within this context, the fact that China "missed" the global 1960s becomes crucial. During the violent and nativistic Cultural Revolution (1966–76), China was more tightly closed to the outside world than at any time in the previous century. This isolation was devastating for Chinese political culture because it prevented the Chinese people from patching into the global oppositional culture, or even into the mainstream liberal-rational global culture. Starting in the 1970s and 1980s, Chinese did begin patching into the mainstream global culture, and they successfully absorbed the values of authoritarian-capitalist development. But they found it difficult *critically to assess* development, state domination of society, and militaristic foreign policies. Those who tried to criticize were often exiled, imprisoned, fired from their jobs, or banned from publishing. Missing the 1960s therefore impoverished Chinese political culture because it made Chinese intellectuals less likely than those in other countries to regard capitalism, the state, and nationalism critically. Today, with political NGOs shut out of the country and the Internet tightly controlled, China has still not patched into the global oppositional culture. This is a key reason democratization forces remain weak and the CCP's nationalistic-authoritarian agenda is relatively popular.

Summary

This book explains Asian democratization by reference to ideational factors at the point of nexus between the domestic and global levels of analysis (see Table 1). Understanding democratization requires analyzing the articulation of domestic society with global society. Focusing only on global-level culture leads to presumptions of cultural determinism (people "enact"), while focusing only on domestic culture artificially rips societies from their natural context, underestimating the contribution of external factors.

Some scholars prefer explanations in the material domain, whether at the domestic or global level of analysis. Their studies can be powerful but often feel incomplete. For example, one familiar materialist explanation holds that democratization occurs when economic development produces a new middle class, whose increased wealth creates a sense of political efficacy and a stake in the system. The middle class's demand to participate in politics eventually translates into democratization.[65] This kind of explanation persists despite Przeworski and his colleagues' demonstration that economic development does not usually "generate" democratization, though it does help powerfully to *sustain* democracy.[66]

The problem is that middle classes do not always agitate for increased participation. Sometimes—as in contemporary Singapore—they

seem content to let dictators rule as long as they rule effectively. Many middle-class Thai business people anxious for unelected Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon to step down in May 1992 were not motivated by a desire to participate in politics so much as by a desire to see the disorder end. As a *Bangkok Post* business commentator explained at the time:

> The problem is not just General Suchinda as a person. Nor is it his legitimacy. Some people like him; some do not. . . . What is worrying the business community is the Government's clear lack of stability. This is not simply because four opposition parties, human rights activists, academics, students, and tens of thousands of members of the public are willing to gather repeatedly in protest. . . . Without stability, then growth, income redistribution, and any other economic objective can at best be short-lived.[67]

The contributions of economic development and social-structural change to democratization are best assessed in their cultural, historical, and international contexts. As explained in Chapters 2 and 3 on Thailand, and in Chapters 6 and 7 on Taiwan, when economic development and the rise of a middle class occur in settings of openness to liberal-rational global culture—and especially to the global *oppositional* culture—middle classes are more likely to demand democratization, and moderates in the ruling groups are more likely to accept it. Communication, travel, study abroad, and economic exchange all facilitate the importation of global culture(s), important because the desire for democracy does not arise automatically with economic development. People are not born rational animals who naturally demand democratization once they acquire a certain level of wealth. They must first be socialized into valuing democracy and regarding democratization as desirable. If Thai and Taiwanese people had attained contemporary levels of wealth before the Enlightenment, they might never have demanded (or received) democracy—assuming no comparable philosophical movement arose elsewhere.

There is no inherent, structural reason why societies cannot be wealthy and support vibrant middle classes yet also accept governance by authoritarian states. As explained in Chapters 4 and 5, this is precisely the goal of the CCP, and it takes successful Singapore as its model. The CCP bans the global oppositional culture and discredits "Western" democracy, betting that China's rising middle classes will be satisfied with increasing material wealth and their country's exaltation in world affairs. The CCP rejects democratization and seeks China's recentering. Its international goal is the consolidation of "world plurality."

The CCP's experiment is of world-historical importance. On its success or failure may hinge the future not only of Chinese democracy but of *all* Asian democracy, including that in Thailand and Taiwan. If the CCP

succeeds in using authoritarian institutions to enrich the Chinese people while keeping them politically subjugated, aspiring authoritarians elsewhere in Asia will be heartened. Given sufficient comprehensive national power, the CCP might one day find itself in a position to reshape global culture. Liberal-rationalism must therefore be considered only one possible road to the future in Asia. Democratization and democratic consolidation are far from inevitable.