Narrative Democratization in South Korea and Taiwan

Eun A Jo

Cornell University & George Washington University

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Abstract: How do nations narrate their founding moments and what implications do these narratives hold for foreign policy? Post-conflict nations often construct stories around dominant enemies against which they came to exert a sense of autonomy. Yet, given the complex nature of founding traumas, it is far from predetermined who becomes the dominant enemy and how narratives about them evolve. Moreover, changing these narratives entails risks of instability, because they are purposefully curated to legitimize the exercise of political sovereignty and rule. This dilemma is exemplified by the cases of postcolonial, postwar, and post-authoritarian Taiwan and South Korea. Despite shared traumas of Japanese colonialism and wars against their communist rivals, Taiwan and South Korea have developed divergent founding stories. What explains their narrative trajectories? I argue the answer lies in "narrative democratization": a transition by which the nation's communicative regimes—set of rules and practices that regulate public discourse—becomes democratic. How progressive actors re-narrate founding moments during this process critically shapes the contours of partisan narrative politics in post-conflict democracies and thus the menu of foreign policies partisans choose from. To demonstrate, I conduct a historical comparison of Taiwanese and South Korean national narratives, combining a quantitative, hand-coded content analysis of 602 commemorative speeches from 1948 to 2021 with a qualitative analysis of archival and elite interview data. My interdisciplinary theoretical framework and mixed-method research design provide a novel approach to understanding how nations narrate their enemies—and thus, themselves.

1   Introduction

In 2007, Taiwan's president Chen Shui-bian mounted a full-fledged independence campaign, heightening his criticism of China. In one emotionally charged interview, he stated, "The Communist Party of China's authoritarian regime emphasizes one-party totalitarian rule and repression, which means that it has absolutely no concept of democracy, and no respect for others [. . .] who live in the community of democracies, especially the 23 million people of Taiwan."[1] That same year, South Korea's president Roh Moo-hyun rallied a peace initiative with North Korea; he remarked in a speech commemorating the May 18 Democratic Uprising: "Inter-Korean relations are clearly headed in the path of reconciliation and cooperation. . . This could not have been achieved without a democratic government."[2] For Chen and Roh, democracy seemed to carry divergent implications for cross-strait and inter-Korean relations—an alienating force in Taiwan and a mollifying one in South Korea.

But such disparities were not always the case. In the wake of independence, Taiwanese and South Korean narratives vis-à-vis their "enemies" were remarkably similar. Both Taiwan and South Korea competed for sovereignty over their divided nations; their founding constitutions declared them as the original and sole legitimate representatives.[3] This "founding story" was often recalled to center their foreign policy agendas around unification, even by force. Moreover, the imperative to counter the "existential" threat posed by their communist rivals allowed autocrats to centralize domestic political power and indefinitely dispense with democratic governance at home. Though Taiwan has since made more concerted efforts to revise—in fact, replace—their founding constitution, both it and South Korea had initially embraced principles of "One China" and "One Korea" in their national narratives and made unification a national imperative.

So why and how do such "founding stories" change and what implications do these stories hold for politics at home and policy abroad? I argue they change through a process of "narrative

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[1] *The New York Times*, October 18, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/18/world/asia/19taiwan-web.html.

[2] Presidential Speech Archive, May 18, 2007.

[3] Chang 2015, 30.

democratization." Narrative democratization is a transition by which the nation's communicative regimes—set of rules and norms that regulate public discourse—becomes democratic. This transition is marked by three indicators: (1) whether alternative narratives circulate liberally in the public sphere, (2) whether narrators other than the state are authorized to tell stories, and (3) whether narrative institutions facilitate the co-existence and -influence of different narratives. Narrative autocratization, by contrast, suggests the closing of such a narrative space and the winnowing of such narrative practices. Moreover, I argue the substantive content of the counter-narratives that progressive actors adopt during narrative democratization crucially condition the contours of narrative contestation over time and across groups. Progressive actors reset how debates about the nation's self-understandings transpire, as well as reshape the narrative boundaries of such debates, in the post-transition period.

Using this framework, I compare South Korean and Taiwanese founding stories over time. Despite initial similarities in the postwar period, South Korea and Taiwan have developed divergent national narratives about their founding "One Korea" and "One China" narratives most dominant enemies.[4] What explains their narrative trajectories? I answer this question in two steps: (1) describing the changes and continuities in their narratives through a hand-coded content analysis of 602 presidential commemorative speeches; and (2) tracing the conditions under and mechanisms by which these narratives have evolved, by process-tracing key moments of narrative change using archival and elite interview evidence. My interdisciplinary theoretical framework and mixed-method research design provide a novel approach to understanding how nations in post-conflict settings narrate their enemies—and thus, themselves.

2   Founding Stories: A Concept

Changing national narratives is possible but hardly easy.[5] They tend to become institutionally, behaviorally, and rhetorically "sticky" over time. This is particularly so for "founding stories,"

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[4]Ching 2019; Chang 2015; Cheong 1991.

[5]Mylonas and Tudor 2021.

which are grounded in the nation's most formative moments.[6] In this regard, scholars have explored the consequences of national narratives[7] and the processes by which national narratives become established[8] or settled[9]. In this project, I focus on how they *change.* Recent works have sought to examined the life-cycle of national narratives; yet, they often treat narrative change as elite-driven.[10] As a corrective, I clarify the concept of national narratives, drawing from various disciplines—ranging from memory studies, social psychology, philosophy, to literary studies—and theorize explicitly about how the interactive processes of narrative democratization shape the nation's self-understandings.

In this project, I conceive of national narratives as collective and constitutive stories about the nation's boundaries and relations. First, they are collective, because they are more than the sum of individual, subjective beliefs.[11] As collective knowledge, national narratives provide a set of ideas by which to assert political sovereignty of a national community[12] as well as a repertoire of social practices that help mobilize loyalties to that nation.[13] They tell people who they are and what unites them, by weaving together past feats and failures, present challenges, and possible futures in a coherent and resonant manner.[14] In this way, national narratives act "like moulds unto which we are forced to cast our actions,"[15] providing an ontological basis for agency in the international arena.[16]

Second, national narratives are constitutive. This is because national narratives are fundamentally endogenous—they shape their own change and continuity by "establishing the terms and conditions of when change is appropriate; and constituting the most likely option(s) for the new

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[6]Brubaker 1992; Smith 2003.

[7]He 2009.

[8]Liu 2015.

[9]Bonikowski 2016.

[10]See, for example, Krebs 2015.

[11]Durkheim 1966.

[12]Gellner 1983.

[13]Brubaker 1992.

[14]Krebs 2015.

[15]Durkheim 1966, 70.

[16]Steele 2008.

orthodoxy."[17] Such narrative orthodoxies, in fact, circumscribe what can be collectively imagined and legitimately articulated in public; they set the discursive terrain on which political actors fight battles over their preferred courses of actions.[18] National narratives can thus become "axiomatic," setting a set of internalized assumptions about the nation that—through habit and institutionalization—come to espouse a taken-for-granted character.[19] Accordingly, to study national narratives is to delineate the specific ways by which nations conceive of their identities vis-à-vis others and how those self-other conceptions are reinforced or transformed in the interplay between expectations, behavior, and events.

I focus on a fundamental category of national narratives—that is, a state's narratives about its founding moments, or "founding stories." Founding stories often involve enemies that people fought and from whom they recovered a sense of autonomy. These enemies provide key referents against which nations can demarcate their territorial and membership boundaries; stories about them thus pitch the self—a protagonist—against these others in a meaningfully structured plot, defining the values, beliefs, and practices that distinguish the self.[20] From this perspective, these "imagined communities" are necessarily social[21]: they determine attributes of shared identity through *othering*.[22] It is in this process that founding stories generate and sustain nationalism[23]; by purposefully curating sentiments of solidarity, they legitimize the exercise of political sovereignty and, therefore, rule.[24]

In practical terms, founding stories can fix priorities among policy problems—foreign and domestic—as well as a menu of appropriate solutions from which to debate, choose, and evaluate policies. These national narratives are then constitutive of "grand strategy," which Barry Posen defines as a

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[17]Legro 2005, 13.

[18]Goddard and Krebs 2015.

[19]May 1962.

[20]Ricoeur 1984.

[21]Anderson 1983.

[22]Caruth 2014; Tajfel 1982.

[23]Mylonas and Tudor 2021.

[24]Weber 1968.

"state's theory about how it can best 'cause' security for itself,"[25] because foreign policy preferences depend on how state and societal actors define national interests in the first place. From this perspective, founding stories perform two objectives in relation to policy: (1) they provide a portrait of the nation's most salient others, conditioning how actors sort international and domestic events into threats or opportunities[26]; and (2) they circumscribe the universe of legitimate policies from which actors fashion their responses to those events.[27] Importantly, the second objective cannot be fulfilled without the first.

3   Narrative Change: A Theory

This project raises a broad theoretical question: Why and how do national narratives change? I argue that narrative change occurs through "narrative democratization": a transition by which the nation's communicative regimes—set of rules and norms that regulate public discourse—becomes democratic. This means to (1) permit alternative narratives to circulate in the public sphere; (2) authorize narrators beyond the state to tell its stories; and (3) manage narrative institutions by which different stories co-exist and co-influence. A closed communicative regime, by contrast, restricts public discourse by erasing alternative stories, silencing non-state narrators, and closing discursive spaces for narrative engagement. A change in the communicative regimes from open to closed thus constitutes "narrative autocratization."

Narrative democratization drives changes in the founding stories, because it invites and sustains narrative contestation. Here, contestation entails public and intentional efforts by state and societal actors to replace dominant national narratives. This contestation—a "narrative-generative" practice[28]—is a necessary condition for narrative change, because it reveals otherwise unobservable rifts between orthodox and alternative narratives, allowing actors to clarify key points of contention around which to mobilize. The growing salience of counter-narratives can generate pressure for

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[25]Posen 1984, 13.

[26]Campbell 1998.

[27]Goddard and Krebs 2015.

[28]Wiener 2014.

renewed negotiation over—and thus, adjustments to or replacement of—narrative orthodoxies that are deemed no longer representative. But only an open communicative regime supplies the necessary institutional and rhetorical resources for free and fair narrative contestation between state and societal actors.

Contestation can arise from, but does not necessarily require "shocks."[29] Dramatic events such as war, revolution, and crisis can easily upend social expectations and discredit old narratives, giving way to new narratives.[30] During such narratively "unsettled" situations, debates over national identity are unstructured as ideas that were once considered common-sensical become questioned and jettisoned.[31] By contrast, in the absence of such shocks, the scope of legitimate ideas is relatively "settled," preventing alternative ideas from penetrating the mainstream policy debates. Because there is a common foundation for legitimation, political elites can justify their preferred courses of action by referring to the dominant narrative and, in the process, reinforce its orthodoxy. In this view, narrative disorder from "shocks" provides fertile political ground for narrative revision.

But these shocks are relatively rare and their effects, often indeterminate.[32] This is, in part, because once narratives have reached dominance in the public sphere, they become common-sensical; conceiving of alternative narratives become exceedingly difficult. Indeed, despite shocking policy failures such as a military defeat, dominant narratives in the United States have tended to be reproduced rather than replaced.[33] Even the 2008 financial crisis—despite the severity of its shock—failed to dislodge the neoliberal orthodoxy.[34] These observations also correspond with Jeffrey Legro's findings that similar shocks, such as world wars, can have different effects.[35] In brief, shocks do not automatically engender narrative change and can, at times, reinforce narrative orthodoxies.

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[29]Olson 1982; Khong 1992.

[30]Krasner 1976.

[31]Swidler 1986.

[32]Dixon 2019.

[33]Krebs 2015.

[34]Drezner 2014.

[35]Legro 2005.

Indeed, this is because shocks—or "structurally induced unsettled moments"[36]—must also be understood within existing frameworks of understanding. For instance, scholars have emphasized, "WWII did not cause the Bretton Woods agreements. Rather, what agents thought caused WWII caused the Bretton Woods Agreement to take their particular form."[37] The kind of shocks that trigger narrative change during contestation is, therefore, *endogenous*—when agents intersubjectively interpret events as demanding change, in terms of both policy (i.e. determining who gets what and how) and politics (i.e. negotiating who they are and what they want). In short, narratives change when supporters of narrative orthodoxy can no longer legitimize their political agendas through the existing narratives and respond affirmatively to demands for narrative change—to remake self-image, enable new social bonds, and direct new policies.

This is why, in the context of narrative democratization, the substantive content of the counter-narratives that *progressive actors* mobilize matters. Because these counter-narratives are mobilized in reference to the orthodox narratives, the perimeters of their challenge condition the contours of contestation that emerges as a consequence of narrative democratization. Specifically, the extent to which these counter-narratives revise orthodox understandings shape how democratic institutions—from political parties, the media, to civil societies—articulate their positions and layer their identities; the breadth and depth of such narrative revision change how these democratic entities narratively differentiate from one another, and crucially, how understandings of democracy themselves become co-opted in their narratives. In short, what progressive actors say provides the requisite narrative substance to contestation, which then informs whether and how the contours of narrative politics endure or evolve in post-transition democracies.

But democratization is a murky process, and the incentives for narrative revision among democratizers may vary depending on *where* in the process they operate. Typically, scholars differentiate between transition and consolidation as distinct phases of democratization.[38] For leaders during transition, narrative change is a far more risky and difficult task; unsettling an existing source of

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[36]Katznelson 2003, 274.

[37]Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke 2007, 749.

[38]Linz 1990, O'Donnell 1992, Geddes 1999, Haggard and Kaufmann 2016.

legitimacy—a coherent founding story—can introduce unwelcome instability amid political transition.[39] In fact, they may be tempted by the opposite: to seek a sense of continuity by reinforcing ideologies and nationalism, even of the belligerent kind.[40] For leaders during consolidation, however, narrative change is easier, if not expected. The opening of public discourse during democratic transition would provide ample institutional and rhetorical resources from which to draw, revealing where the social basis for narrative change lay. Deciding whose voices and which narratives to amplify or tolerate becomes an indispensable part of consolidating democracy.

In other words, the practical implications of narrative democratization for each phase of political democratization differ, for the state and the society (see Table 1).[41] In transitional rule, even as leaders cling to narrative orthodoxies, the initial changes in the communicative regimes may authorize the proliferation of new narratives and narrators. Still, legacies of prior sanctions on political expression may continue to reverberate in public discourse, limiting access to narrative institutions and even promoting self-censorship. This is especially so for states that underwent authoritarian-led democratization, wherein democratizers likely reshaped the narrative landscape in ways that continue to favor the state.[42] What this means is that, despite growing press freedoms and civil society mobilization during narrative transition, those with more institutional and rhetorical resources, like opposition leaders or dissident intellectuals, more readily emerge as new and authoritative voices. Reigning narrative institutions tolerate, but rarely seriously engage with, alternative narratives or narrators within the carefully constrained narrative space.[43]

Meanwhile, in consolidated rule, narrative contestation is freer and fairer. Leaders are incentivized to reinvent narrative orthodoxies in ways that better resonate with the broader society to

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[39]This is consistent with the observation that many transitions during the Third Wave of democratization were of competitive authoritarian (Levitsky and Way 2010), illiberal democratic (Zakaria 2007), electoral authoritarian (Schedler 2009), or hybrid (2002) in nature.

[40]Mansfield and Snyder 1999.

[41]This comports with approaches within democratic theory that disaggregates "deliberativeness" from "democraticness." See Warren, 2017.

[42]Rachel et al. 2020.

[43]As Stephen Haggard and Robert Kaufmann note: "In transitional situations, the actors' commitment to new institutions is highly uncertain" (2016, 133).

be more electorally competitive. The stabilization of open communicative regimes encourages even the general public to participate in narrative contestation; alternative narratives proliferate in this environment. As new narrative institutions mature—from civil societies that broaden the scope of legitimate narrators, elections that hold state actors accountable to narrative breach, to trials that establish the boundaries of legitimate narratives—the patterns of narrative politics become more stable and predictable. In this context, different stories not only co-exist, but co-influence. Whether such a dialogical process results in more meaningful deliberation[44] or narrative polarization[45] depends on larger questions of partisan politics that are not within the scope of this study.

Table 1: Practical Implications

	Transition	Consolidation
Narratives	Alternative narratives begin to emerge but signs of self-censorship linger	Alternative narratives proliferate, even those that were considered inappropriate
Narrators	New narrators, particularly those with more institutional and rhetorical resources (including opposition leaders and intellectuals) become prominent	New narrators, even among the general public, emerge in public discourse
Narrative institutions	Narrative institutions (from government bodies to popular media) tolerate the co-existence of alternative narratives and narrators, at times even co-opting them	Narrative institutions encourage the co-existence and co-influence of alternative narratives and narrators

4 Narrative Change: A Methodology

To demonstrate the process of narrative democratization, I conduct a historical comparative case study of South Korean and Taiwanese national narratives. In doing so, I seek to (1) identify the narrative trends over time, leveraging a quantitative content analysis of an original dataset of found-

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[44]On "deliberative systems," see Mansbridge 1999; Mansbridge et al. 2012.

[45]On "polarization narratives," see Fiorina and Abrams 2008.

ing stories; and (2) illustrate the dynamics of narrative democratization, by process-tracing of each periods of narrative change. In this way, I illustrate both the substantive contours of narrative change as well as the interactive drivers at play in each significant period.

4.1 Case Selection

I chose South Korea and Taiwan as my core comparative cases for a number of reasons. First, both South Korea and Taiwan were significantly impacted by wars against their communist rivals, which ended in 1953 for South Korea and in 1949 for Taiwan. Given the longevity and magnitude of such traumas, these founding moments feature prominently in their national narratives. Moreover, the unresolved disputes over unification mean that questions of national identity dominate discussions of cross-strait and inter-Korean relations. From the standpoint of historic significance and contemporary relevance, then, South Korea and Taiwan make ideal candidates for studying national narratives.

Analytically, South Korea and Taiwan also constitute "crucial" cases for my study of narratives. Given the series of major security challenges they have confronted in their postwar periods, they should be easy cases for existing explanations of systemic threat to prevail. Yet, the divergence in South Korean and Taiwanese narratives about their communist rivals is puzzling for a number of reasons. Based on the scale of hostilities, South Korea has had more reasons to censure and alienate North Korea. In fact, the number of inter-Korean crises far exceeds the number of cross-strait crises in the postwar period; as of 2016, there have been 8 and 3, respectively.[46] This underestimates the gap, as North Korea has conducted at least 2 more nuclear tests and 23 additional missile launches since 2016. Notwithstanding the recurrent crises, South Korean official narratives about North Korea have so frequently supported reconciliation and even unification. By contrast, despite growing cross-strait economic ties and people-to-people exchanges, Taiwanese official narratives about China have increasingly emphasized the de facto sovereignty of the island. In fact, there remains limited public appetite for unification—whether immediate, conditional, or eventual. Today, if narratives of "One

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[46]International Crisis Behavior dataset.

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Korea" sustain longing for unification, narratives of "One China" pose a threat to Taiwan's political status and aspiration for independence.

4.2   Content Analysis

To establish the narrative trends, I leverage an original dataset of South Korean and Taiwanese founding stories, drawing from presidential commemorative speeches from 1948 (earliest record) to 2021 (latest record). To narrow the scope of analysis to national narratives concerning their most "significant others,"[47] I focus on commemorations of founding moments, in particular war against or separation from North Korea and China. Focusing on presidential speeches holds constant a number of potential confounders, including the position of the speaker and intended audiences, and ensures that the narratives reflect an intentional political message. Commemorative speeches, in particular, provide a useful scope condition, as they pertain specifically to the subjects of my interest—founding moments. These speeches help trace any changes to founding stories as the dominant narrator—the state—utilizes recurring, programmed opportunities during commemorative events to revise and consolidate their own narratives. I have gathered 602 presidential commemorative speeches that meet the scope condition.[48]

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[47]Wendt 1999.

[48]In this iteration of the paper, I analyze the years 1980-2010, which draws from a total sample size of 245 speeches.

Table 2: Overview of Commemorative Speeches

Place	Dates	Commemoration	Speeches
South Korea	March 1	Independence Movement Day	273
	June 6	Memorial Day	
	June 25	Korean War Day	
	July 17	Constitution Day	
	August 15	Independence Day	
	October 3	National Foundation Day	
Taiwan	January 1	Republic Day	329
	September 3	Armed Forces Day	
	October 10	National Day	
	October 25	Taiwan Retrocession Day	
	December 25	Constitution Day	

To systematically analyze these speeches, I construct a nine-point questionnaire that captures their overall portrait of the founding enemies and stance on unification (see Appendix 1). I code the questionnaire for each speech in the database, calculating (1) the general understandings of their main referents—North Korea and China, (2) use of "One Korea" or "One China" narrative, and (3) support for unification policy as expressed in the speeches.[49] On the representational side, the questionnaire captures portrayals of North Korean and Chinese intentions, the nature of their threat, their strength, the state of inter-Korean and cross-strait relations, as well as the "One Korea" or "One China" frame for self-identification. On the programmatic side, the questionnaire records the stated objectives in relation to the founding enemies, the primary approach to pursuing those objectives, and broader assessments of the necessity and feasibility of unification as a founding objective. This original dataset thus encapsulates the most visible pattern of changes in founding stories.

I conduct a longitudinal content analysis for two primary objectives: to track the changes in the representational and programmatic contents of founding stories over time; and to understand

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[49]In the next iteration of this paper, I will ensure intercoder reliability by conducting double-blind coding and calculating the Cohen's kappa and Krippendorff's alpha scores for robustness checks.

the relative significance of the changes. To this end, I first delineate three periods in each context, defined by their domestic institutional trajectories from autocracy to democracy using Polity IV scores. I then specify which period of narrative transition, on a particular aspect of the questionnaire, has been statistically significant ($p < .05$), using a combination of analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's honest significance tests. The former allows me to test whether the narrative change has been statistically significant over time and across cases, under different domestic institutional landscapes, while the latter helps ascertain which moments of narrative change are comparatively more meaningful. In other words, I leverage these statistical tests to establish key "inflection points" in which founding stories shifted and on which specific dimensions, to minimize the risks of over-determining the scope and nature of narrative change.

4.3 Process Tracing

Once the broader narrative trends have been established through quantitative content analysis, I process-trace periods of significant narrative change to probe the theory of narrative democratization. Process tracing evaluates the underlying causal processes within a given period; it enables me to monitor alternative explanations of narrative change, such as systemic threats, against my own suggested mechanisms of narrative democratization. The objective is to capture the fine-grained relations and distinctions among these contending theories to more fully explicate the complex dynamics of narrative politics in post-conflict, post-authoritarian polities. In doing so, I illustrate on a cross-case basis when exactly South Korean and Taiwanese narratives diverged over time, and on a within-case basis why the substantive contours of their narrative politics took the range and form they did.

To conduct process-tracing, I triangulate various primary and secondary sources collected over a seven-month-long fieldwork.[50] For official narratives, I consult official executive statements, auto-biographies of leaders, legislative documents, and other state-sanctioned accounts including party

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[50]I have conducted fieldwork in South Korea in June-August 2021 (archival research) and am scheduled to visit again in spring 2023 (interviews). I have conducted fieldwork in Taiwan in April-June 2022 (archival research) and October-November 2022 (interviews).

manifestos and textbooks. For popular narratives, I look to editorials of key newspapers, civil society publications, organic narratives in the form of protest slogans and pamphlets, and public opinion surveys. Finally, I supplement these sources with findings from semi-structured elite interviews, conducted with a total of 20 individuals (20 in Taiwan, X in South Korea), whom I identified through a combination of purposive and snowballing sampling strategies (See Appendix 2). The goal is to provide "thick descriptions" that illustrate the changes in the scope of narratives, narrators, and narrative institutions operating in each stage of narrative democratization.[51]

5 Narrative Change: Some Findings

The findings of this research are organized into three sections. First, I establish the patterns of narrative divergence in South Korea and Taiwan, demonstrating that founding objectives—the most core aspect of their founding narratives—did not change until after democratic transition and that the contours of narrative debates during democratic transition shifted noticeably along partisan lines. Second, in the South Korean case, I trace the enduring force of "One Korea" narratives to the counter-narratives that progressive leaders during democratic consolidation provided, which did not challenge unification as the objective itself but rather the means by which this could be achieved. Third and by contrast, in the Taiwanese case, I show that the progressive leaders fundamentally altered the contours of narrative debates by embracing independence as the new objective and, in doing so, bounded the narrative responses of the conservative leaders to a more tamed objective than unification—the status quo.

5.1 Narrative Divergence in South Korea and Taiwan

The content analysis yields some important insights about the narrative comparisons of South Korea and Taiwan. First, the narratives of the two nations only began to diverge meaningfully in the mid-1990s. This defies the commonly-held assumption that exogenous shocks drive narrative change; the end of the Cold War, for instance, appears to have had little noticeable impact on the founding ob-

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[51]Geertz 1973.

jectives of unification in both places. Second, it is only after democratic transition that the contours of narrative contestation in South Korea and Taiwan shifted markedly: in South Korea, partisan narratives on the primary policy objectives wavered between pursuing unification and maintaining the status quo; meanwhile in Taiwan, they varied between maintaining the status quo and pursuing normalization. This suggests a more nuanced yet nonetheless notable divergence in their narrative politics after democratic transition.

South Korean and Taiwanese founding stories continued to emphasize the intrinsic "oneness" of the two Koreas and the two Chinas, and the policy of unification this warranted. Nearly all commemorative speeches in the 1980s still emphasized unification as the driving goal of South Korean and Taiwanese foreign policy, although South Korean speeches were not as consistently disambiguous (see Figure 1). If, of the 48 speeches delivered in Taiwan in the 1980s, *every* speech specified unification as the key policy objective, of 41 in South Korea during the same period, a still notable majority of 33 did. Meanwhile, Taiwanese portrayals of unification as either necessary or feasible shifted far more drastically than those of South Korea (see Figure 2). In both places, however, the official narratives during democratic *transition* were not significantly different from the narrative orthodoxies during the autocratic period. Only in the 1990s, South Korean and Taiwanese leaders began to vary more visibly in their articulations of national objectives, which by the 2000s, took drastically different narrative bounds. In short, it was during democratic *consolidation* that founding stories became significantly different.

Figure 1. Founding Objectives in South Korean and Taiwanese Official Narratives
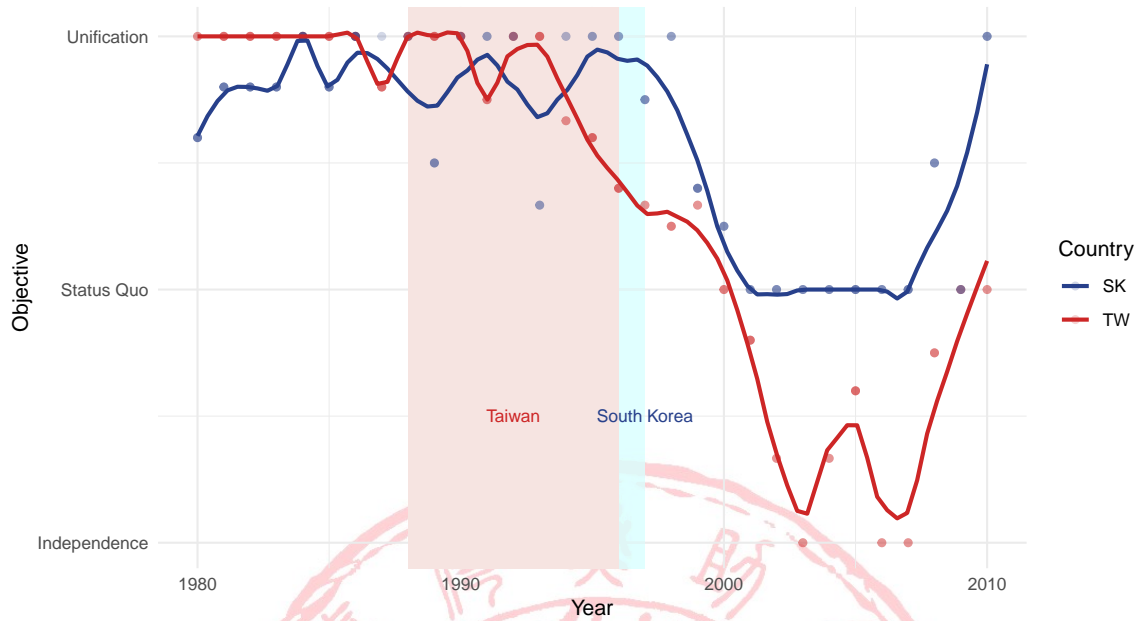
Note: The colored blocks indicate the transition phases in each place based on Polity IV data: SK (1988–1997) & TW (1988–1996).

Figure 2. Portrayals of Unification in South Korean and Taiwanese Official Narratives
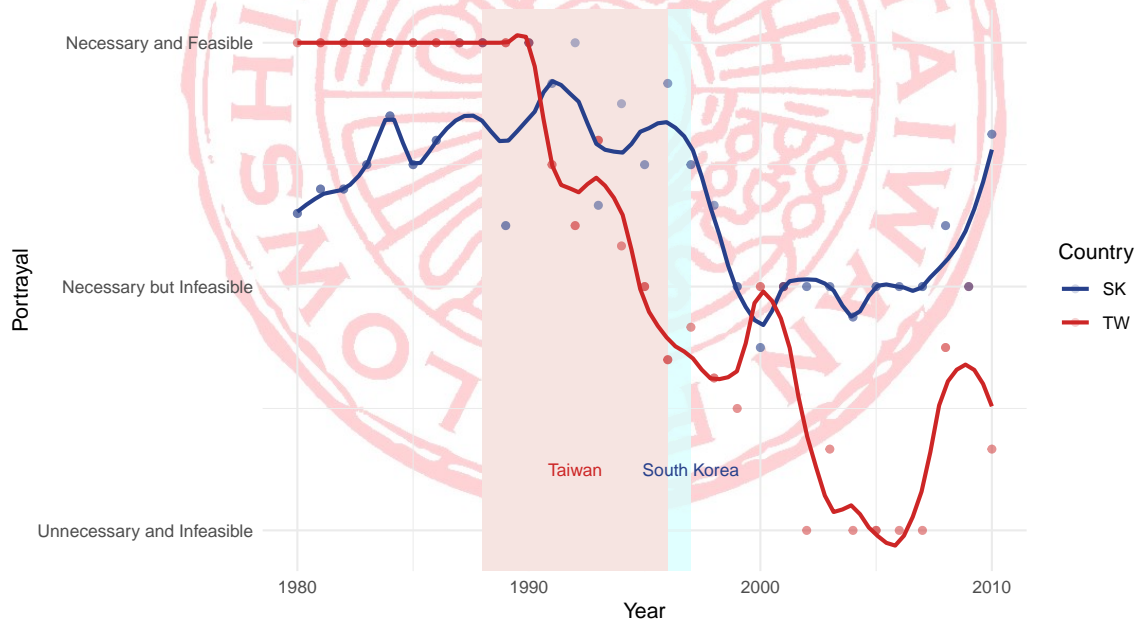
Note: The colored blocks indicate the transition phases in each place based on Polity IV data: SK (1988–1997) & TW (1988–1996).

Cross-case statistical comparisons reaffirm this pattern of narrative divergence (see Table 3). South Korean and Taiwanese narratives were not meaningfully different in terms of their founding objectives during the autocratic and transitional periods, but became so in the consolidated period

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($p < 0.001$). This suggests that there are significant differences in the motivations for narrative revision *among* democratizers. If leaders during transition favor narrative continuity, others during consolidation may draw from an increased breadth of institutional and rhetorical resources during the transitional period to alter their narratives. Relatedly, this also implies that despite continuities in the official narratives, the opening of communicative regimes during democratic transition matters—that is, the scope of alternative narratives and narrators that emerge during such transition crucially condition the specific form and degree of narrative revision pursued by leaders during democratic consolidation.

Table 3: Cross-Case Comparison of Founding Objectives

	Estimate	SE	T-ratio	P-value
Autocracy	-0.17	0.08	-1.97	0.05
Transition	-0.14	0.10	-1.32	0.19
Consolidation	0.26	0.07	3.84	0.0002***

Within-case comparisons based on ANOVA and Tukey's tests illustrate similar patterns of narrative democratization in South Korea and Taiwan. One-way ANOVA tests reveal that, in both places, democratic consolidation accompanied statistically significant differences in the founding objectives that leaders advocated—between unification, status quo, and normalization ($p < 0.001$). Meanwhile, Tukey's test for multiple comparisons find that the founding objectives were significantly different between transitional and consolidation phases, as well as autocratic and consolidation phases ($p < 0.001$) (See Appendix 3). Crucially, however, there was no statistically significant difference between policy objectives in autocratic and transitional narratives ($p= 0.98$ for South Korea; $p= 0.1$ for Taiwan). This suggests that neither South Korean nor Taiwanese leaders during democratic transition mobilized around new founding objectives. The critical shift in "One Korea" or "One China" narratives and their attendant support for unification policy occurred *after* the transitional phase as partisan identities consolidated.

Indeed, the contours of narrative debates diverged between South Korea and Taiwan following democratic transition. Whereas in South Korea, "One Korea" narratives still persisted and leaders wavered between policies of unification versus status quo, in Taiwan "One China" narratives

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were increasingly displaced in favor of "indigenous Taiwan" narratives. In his New Year's Speech in 2007, for instance, Taiwanese president Chen Sui-bian implored: "We must uphold the "Taiwan consciousness," and urge both the governing and opposition parties to rise above the unification-independence conflict, to see beyond issues of ethnicity, and work in the common interest so as to garner a consensus on national identity."[52] Such narratives were far more revisionist in comparison with contemporaneous South Korean narratives, which emphasized autonomous and peaceful settlements of North-South issues based on the principle of Korean centrality.[53] Though the tactical aim of maintaining peace at times outweighed the broader imperative to unify in these narratives, the underlying notion of "one Korea" remained largely unchallenged.

Interestingly, the content analysis also reveals that while systemic shocks may not upend the core aspect of founding stories—how one identifies itself and thus what to strive for—they may incentivize narrative changes in the fringes. Until the mid-1990s, both South Korea and Taiwan held steadfastly onto the founding objective of unification. The means by which they proposed to achieve unification had varied more widely to this point, however, with forcible measures featuring more heavily in Taiwan. Yet, the end of the Cold War appears to have encouraged them to adopt more moderate approaches, involving a mix of containment and engagement strategies (see Figure 3). The emphasis on pragmatism and a need to balance sticks with carrots to achieve unification persisted in the official narratives until progressive administrations entered in South Korea in 1998 and Taiwan in 2000. By this point, leaders in both countries were advocating for the status quo.

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[52]Academia Historica Presidential Database, January 1, 2006.

[53]Snyder 2007, 53-82.

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Figure 3. Policy Approaches in South Korean and Taiwanese Official Narratives
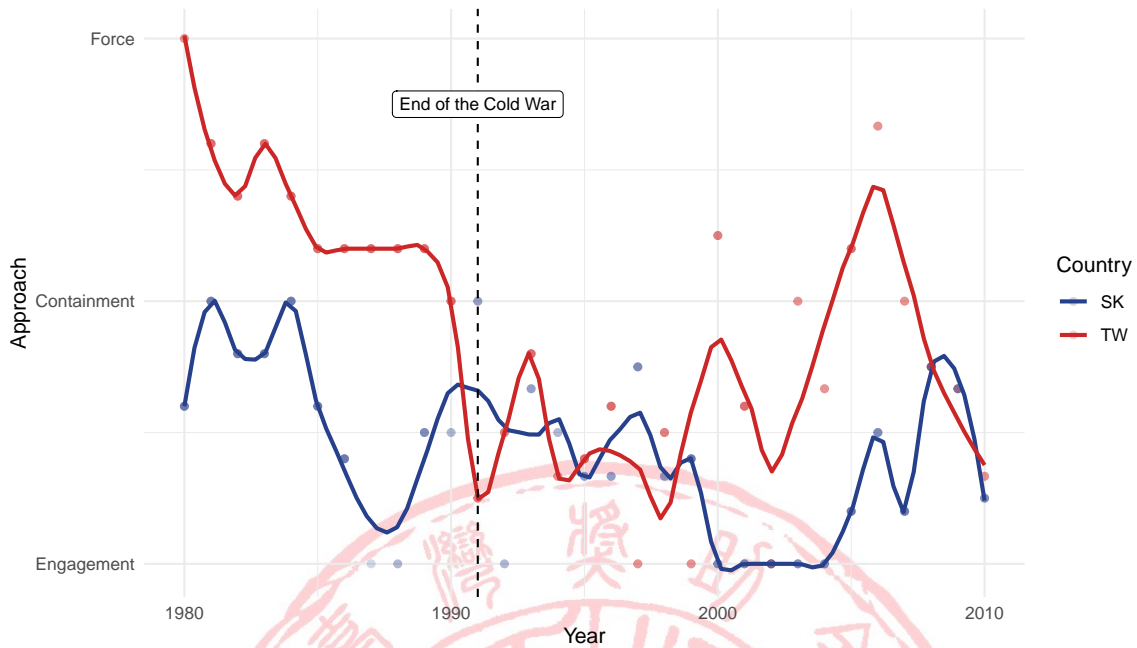
5.2 Narrative Democratization in South Korea

A closer look at the South Korean narrative trajectory reveals three notable findings. First, leaders during democratic *transition* favored narrative continuity to maintain a sense of national solidarity amid persistent political instability. This helped reinforce, during the transitional period, the orthodoxy of "One Korea" narratives, albeit with a more peaceful and nationalistic flavor. Second, the narratives during democratic *consolidation* marked a significant departure from the existing narratives. The initial opening of communicative regimes facilitated the development of more politically viable alternative narratives during consolidation. Third and relatedly, the narratives of the progressive leaders during consolidation critically conditioned the narrative responses of their conservative counterparts. The contours of narrative politics would thus reflect this process of revisionist feedback, as partisans sought to redefine their democratic identities.

Postwar leaders in South Korea centered its founding story on ethno-nationalist notions of pan-Korean unity. The republic's first constitution declared the South as the sole legitimate sovereign of the Korean peninsula.[54] From Rhee Syngman's "One People-ism" (*ilminjooeui*) to Park Chung-

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[54]Constitution of the Republic of Korea, 1948, Articles 9 & 11(2).

hee's "Han superiority," South Koreans held on to myths of belonging to a unitary nation that was deemed indivisible, formed by a people of an exceptional bloodline.[55] In this narrative, the division of the peninsula was abnormal—even immoral—and unification, a national imperative. Given the geopolitical challenges of the Cold War, this founding story of "One Korea" was accompanied by a staunch anti-communist campaign to differentiate the South from, and expunge—by force if necessary—the Northern "traitors." Such ideological underpinnings of Korean essentialism was evident in the state-sanctioned history textbook *Kuksa Kyobon*, which was newly adopted in 1946; it emphasized indigenous, anti-colonial projects such as the March First Independence Movement but conspicuously evaded any mentions of communist armed struggle against Japan.[56] In this way, the "One Korea" narrative helped justify continued military mobilization in service of unification as well as an indefinite suspension of civil liberties to stamp out communist sympathies that purportedly impeded unification.

This notion of "One Korea" was equally entrenched in public discourse, though revisionist narratives that distinguished popular (*minjung*) nationalism from state-centric imaginaries emerged. As influential Korean historian Son Jintae wrote in 1947: "Since the beginning of history we have been a single race (*dongil-han hyeoljok*) that has had a common historical life, living in a single territory ... sharing a common culture, and carrying out countless common national struggles under a common destiny."[57] But when this "One Korea" narrative became layered with—and increasingly dominated by—anti-communist frames during the Cold War, popular narratives began to take on a more self-critical flavor. A series of opposition writings titled *Korean History Before and After Liberation* (*Haebang Chonhusaeui Insik*) from 1979 to 1989 detailed the inglorious and imperial origins of the South Korean state: Song Geon-ho, a political dissident and later the founder of a progressive newspaper *Hankyoreh*, wrote in his essay of Rhee Syngman's failure to form a unified government in Korea, in favor of a puppet regime and fake democracy, funded and secured by the

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[55]Shin 2006, 102.

[56]Em 2013, 147.

[57]Son 2016, 175.

United States.[58] Yet, these narratives circulated only narrowly until they became entirely banned under the martial law command of Chun Doo-hwan.

Unification had thus come to feature prominently in South Korean democracy movements. When the Rhee regime—an ardent advocate of unification by conquest—collapsed in 1960, popular narratives about peaceful unification proliferated: the Central Association for National Unification (*minjok tongil bonbu*) declared a new unification agenda based on principles of self-reliance, peace, and democracy, while the National Alliance for Self-Reliant Unification (*minjok jaju tongil hyeophoi*) and the Alliance of Students for National Unification (*minjok tongil jeonguk haksaeng yeongmaeng*) promoted inter-Korean student talks and exchanges.[59] The demise of the Park regime—who advocated for "modernization as a prerequisite for unification"—similarly reinvigorated pro-democracy, pro-unification civil society groups. The opposition (*jaeya*) established the People's Movement for Democracy and Reunification (*minju tongil minjung undong yeonhap*), with the overarching narrative that democratization and unification were two sides of the same coin. To democratize, in this alternative narrative, was to complete "One Korea."

5.2.1 *Narrative Continuity during Democratic Transition*

Leaders during democratic transition, including Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam, maintained the broader "One Korea" narrative while departing from the more coercive and US-dependent orientation of prior unification agenda.[60] In a Special Declaration on July 7, 1988, Roh announced his signature foreign policy, *Nordpolitik*. Unlike the more militant narratives of his predecessors, Roh underscored ethnic reconciliation (*minjok hwahae*) and promised co-prosperity via a "common-

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[58]Song 1989.

[59]Koo 2011, 95.

[60]The framing of their policies echoed the 1972 South-North Joint Communiqué signed under the Park Chung-hee regime: "First, unification shall be achieved through independent Korean efforts without being subject to external imposition or interference. Second, unification shall be achieved through peaceful means, and not through the use of force against each other. Third, as a homogeneous people, a great national unity shall be sought above all, transcending differences in ideas, ideologies, and systems." Yet, as Don Oberdorfer notes, the document was not intended to deepen engagement but to avoid official recognition of each other's sovereignty. See Oberdorfer 2001, 25.

wealth" as the foundation for peaceful unification.[61] At the same time, as Roh recalls in his memoir, *Nordpolitik* was also intended to communicate to the neighboring countries that "Korea has the autonomy and leadership to address its own issues on the peninsula."[62] He stressed this point in a 1989 speech: "We were not able to prevent division by our own strength, but unification must be achieved democratically by our own capabilities in accordance with the will of our people. And our reunification cannot be achieved through war or the overthrow of the other by either side, but must be achieved peacefully."[63] In this view, Korea's division was a relic of great power competition; the end of the Cold War meant that Korea could pursue unification on its own preferred terms—that is, through autonomous processes and by peaceful means.

Meanwhile, Kim's narrative reinforced the emphasis on South Korean autonomy. Through a campaign of globalization (*segyehwa*), Kim sought to multilateralize issues in inter-Korean relations and sought conscientiously to decouple from the United States. In his inaugural speech on February 25, 1993, he remarked, much to Washington's chagrin: "[N]o ideology or political belief can bring greater happiness than national kinship... [And] no alliance is better than people united."[64] Soon thereafter, he introduced the National Community Unification Formula (*minjokgongdongchae tongilbangan*), systematizing Roh's unification-by-peace program into three distinct phases: (1) reconciliation and cooperation, (2) establishment of a transitional commonwealth, and (3) unification.[65] In doing so, Kim continued Roh's policy of engagement, professing to eschew "unification by absorption" or international isolation of North Korea. Though this policy would be forced into disarray with the sudden death of Kim Il-sung and the subsequent nuclear crisis, Kim remained committed to peace as a tactical necessity. As he recalls in his memoir, he pressed for de-escalatory measures even when the 1994 Agreed Frameworks broke down and the Clinton administration considered military options including a preemptive strike against the North's nuclear facilities.[66]

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[61]Snyder 2008, 57.

[62]Roh 2011, 144.

[63]Presidential Speech Archive, August 15, 1989.

[64]Presidential Speech Archive, February 25, 1993.

[65]Ho 2014.

[66]Kim 2015.

Despite the important steps that the two transitional leaders—Roh and Kim—made, democracy remained both unstable and imperfect during their tenures. A former military general and Chun Doo-hwan's close associate—people called him "Chun with a wig"—Roh's succession was deemed in many ways a continuation of military dictatorship.[67] Though he had instituted the country's first direct presidential election, following the historic June Democratic Uprising, the decision had been both reluctant and calculated.[68] As the first civilian leader, Kim was less directly tethered to the conservative-military establishment; yet, his electoral success had materialized on the heels of an unexpected merger between his and Roh's political parties as well as substantial and illegal campaign support from Roh's "slush fund." From this vantage point, neither Roh nor Kim were innocent inheritors of South Korea's authoritarian legacies.

Narrative revision during democratic transition was thus tamed and often inconsistent. The "One Korea" narrative and policy of unification continued to feature heavily in South Korean narratives, even though they innovated on the fringes—namely, the approach by which they would pursue this objective. Both Roh and Kim emphasized a need to "depoliticize" the Korean peninsula through sustained inter-Korean talks and exchanges.[69] Indeed, Roh heralded "the expansion of the unification movement and its development into the peace movement"[70] as anti-American sentiments grew and, correspondingly, public appetite for a hostile approach to North Korea waned. In a 1989 survey, 70 percent of respondents had characterized the United States as a "hindrance to democracy," affirming the association of the US occupation with past dictatorships in public attitudes.[71] Still, under Roh, South Korean school curriculum included a mandatory program on the "sphere of unification and security," which blamed the North for the separation.[72] Meanwhile, Kim broadened the definition

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[67]Jung and Kim 1993.

[68]On June 23, president Reagan sent Gaston J. Sigur as a special emissary to Chun to warn that any violence against civilians will not be tolerated (Sigur 1993, 10). At the same time, the Reagan administration assured Roh that, with the opposition divided, he was sure to win the election.

[69]Sanford 1993, 4.

[70]Jung and Kim 1993, 16

[71]Helgenen 1998, 86.

[72]Synott 2002, 45.

of security from protection of the state (*gukga anbo*) to preservation of the political and territorial integrity of the Korean nation (*minjok anbo*), and purged "politicized" members of the autocratic-era military clique called *Hanahoe*—literally, "one-heart, one-mind" society—from the National Unification Board and the National Intelligence Agency.[73] In doing so, Kim maintained the broader "One Korea" premise and the objective of unification, while jettisoning the militant approach of the country's dictators.

Despite the overall continuity of the "One Korea" narrative, transitional leaders allowed for the proliferation of new narrators and narratives—even those that were different from their official positions. Civil societies flourished: of 843 NGOs surveyed in 2000, a striking 76 percent had been formed in the decade since 1987.[74] Many dealt explicitly with inter-Korean issues, which was made possible by Roh's Special Declaration just ahead of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, in which he promised to "actively promote exchanges of visits between the people of South and North Korea."[75] In one speech, Roh had nullified a critical element of the National Security Law, which had prohibited inter-Korean contact of any kind.[76] He also provided amnesty to the members of the Pan-National Alliance for the Reunification of Korea (*choguk tongil bumminjok yeonhap*) that were imprisoned from their visit to the North as well as members of the Seoul Regional Alliance of the National People's Fine Arts Movement (*Somiryon*) that were arrested for praising the North.[77] As one scholar notes: "The more tolerant and less restrictive approach toward the North meant that the boundaries of what was permissible in the discourse on reunification and Korean national identity, as defined by the state, came under severe and very public testing."[78] In this way, public discourse about unification had rapidly diversified.

Progressive civil societies during this period drew on inter-Korean issues as "a moral compass" to

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[73] Moon and Kang 1995, 174-5, 187-8.

[74] Kim 2003, 58.

[75] Presidential Speech Archive, July 7, 1988.

[76] Kim 2019, 95-96.

[77] Amnesty International Report 1992, 163, 167.

[78] Chung 2003, 22.

forge inter-group unity.[79] In particular, democracy activists—dissident intellectuals, students, and workers—mobilized around the long-suppressed narrative of *minjung* nationalism, with a renewed focus on unification as a means to restore national spirit from the vestiges of Japan-inspired and American-backed authoritarianism. As one scholar notes, "unification became a buzzword for every sector of the [democracy] movement."[80] Key organizations supporting this dual objective included the United People's Movement for Democracy and Reunification (*minju tongil minjung undong yeonhap*), the Korean Federation of Student Associations (*hanguk daehak chonghaksaenghoi yeonhap*), the Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice (*kyeongjae jeongui shilchoen shimin yeonhap*), and the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (*chamyeo yeondae*).[81] While championing other, more narrowly-defined domestic political issues including labor rights and land reform, these activist organizations converged on the revisionist narrative that inter-Korean reconciliation was the first step to seeking true constitutional revision and political liberalization at home. After all, it was this "special security situation" of national division to which autocrats appealed when centralizing power and resorting to repression.[82] A resolution to this founding dilemma was deemed imperative for redefining a new democratic identity.

5.2.2 *Narrative Revision during Democratic Consolidation*

It was during democratic consolidation—and under progressive leadership in particular—that founding objectives in South Korean narratives began to shift more meaningfully, away from unification and toward a status quo. If transitional leaders had focused on peace only as a tactical measure to achieving unification, progressive leaders during narrative consolidation began to emphasize peace as the goal, even at the expense of undermining aspirations for unification.

Kim Dae-jung, the first progressive leader, reframed "One Korea" narrative to pursue reconciliation—specifically, the Sunshine policy (*haetbyeot jeongchaek*). Notably, though he never *formally*

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[79]Chung 2003, 16.

[80]Koo 2011, 100-1.

[81]For an overview, see Dae-Yup Cho, A Study of Social Movements and Typological Changes in Movement Organizations in Korea from 1987 to 1994, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, Korea University, 1995.

[82]Chung 2003, 18; Kim 2000, 39-40, 46-7, 102.

relinquished the long-term objective of unification, he so de-emphasized the possibility—in favor of preserving the status quo of "one nation, two states"—that he practically jettisoned the program.[83] In fact, Kim ordered that "unification" be removed from all depictions of his policy toward the North, employing instead more neutral terms such as "constructive engagement policies."[84] Meanwhile, he continued to appeal to essentialistic notions of Koreanness. On returning from the historic summit in Pyeongyang in 2000, he stated: "[In visiting, I realized] Pyeongyang was our land. The people living in Pyongyang were of the same bloodline and the same ethnicity as us. [...] We must work on what we can, with the idea that North Korea is our brother."[85] In doing so, Kim instituted peaceful co-existence, which transitional leaders had merely underscored as an intermediary step to unification, as the new objective for the nation; yet, he did not depart from the broader narrative of "One Korea" in legitimizing his stance.

Indeed, while the official policy in many ways echoed the approaches of the transitional administrations, Kim shifted the overall framework of inter-Korean relations from a commonwealth to a confederation, which would recognize the sovereignty of both Koreas. For this reason, Kim also sought to bolster international recognition of North Korea and facilitate the momentum of "North Korea becoming a more normal country."[86] Partly as a result of this effort, within two years of the 2000 summit, seven states—including several US allies such as the UK, Germany, and Canada—established diplomatic relations with North Korea.[87] Inter-Korean ties deepened as well: the two Koreas held a total of 124 meetings, including 14 rounds of cabinet-level talks.[88] The overarching goal was to reassure Pyeongyang that South Korea did not seek absorption, either by force or by isolation, of the North; rather, the operative assumption was that economic and diplo-

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[83]As his foreign minister wrote in *Foreign Affairs,* "Seoul's constructive engagement policies aim for peaceful coexistence. The longer-term goal of unification can wait" (Hong 1999, 10).

[84]Levin and Han 2002, 23.

[85]Presidential Speech Archive, June 15, 2000.

[86]Armstrong 2006, 154.

[87]The full list includes Italy (2000), Australia (2000), the Philippines (2000), the United Kingdom (2000), Canada (2001), Germany (2001) and New Zealand (2001).

[88]Kim 2005, 7.

matic incentives would facilitate Pyongyang's gradual transformation, which would promote peaceful coexistence. Whether that would advance unification was of secondary relevance to Kim.

Under Roh Moo-hyun, another progressive leader, support for the status quo and reconciliation became further entrenched as the official narrative. To this end, he vowed to expand the scope of "Sunshine policy" to build a "structure of peace" in the region.[89] In his Policy for Peace and Prosperity (*pyeonghwa bonyong jeongchaek*), Roh envisioned a similarly gradual, three-step process, aimed respectively at: (1) resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, (2) improving inter-Korean economic cooperation, and (3) instituting a peace regime. Crucially however, this policy removed unification as the final step, prioritizing peace as the objective itself. When asked to reflect on his vision for inter-Korean relations in 2008, Roh recalled that "the value of peace precedes reunification," and that "reunification is largely a symbolic goal."[90] Though Roh did not explicitly advocate for a two-state solution, he had come to acknowledge the status quo of *de facto* separation and mobilized the "One Korea" narrative in service of building a peace regime.

This narrative was bolstered, and even inspired, by competing narratives within the unification movement and the rise of the alternative peace movement in the broader society. Unlike the traditional pro-unification narrative, which relied heavily on nationalistic notions of Koreanness, alternative narratives centered around universalistic ideals of peace. These rejected any power struggle with the North as misguided, preferring peaceful co-existence to forced unification.[91] In this way, a narrative focus on peace made South Korea's commitment to unification ambiguous, even suspect. On the one hand, a peace regime could be interpreted as a means to an end—that is, unification. On the other, it could help to normalize relations between the two Koreas and institutionalize the status quo of state-to-state relationship. Unification, in this alternative narrative, was an open possibility rather than an imperative.

A notable example of such movement arose within the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers' Union (*chunkyojo*), which sought to recognize the two Korea's common cultural origins as well

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[89]Presidential Speech Archive, February 25, 2003.

[90]Kim 2017, 289.

[91]Koo 2007.

as eliminate hostile teachings about North Korea.[92] The *chunkyojo* blamed the militarization of the South Korean school curriculum to US-backed dictatorships and centered its narrative around Korean sovereignty; as one scholar noted, the *chunkyojo* believed "people should be educated so that they can liberate their country from the illegitimate influence of the *foreign powers* [the United States] which have been involved in the partition of the nation and the later development of dependent capitalism."[93] Against this backdrop, popular sentiments around the North Korean threat, and correspondingly, the US-South Korean alliance, also began to shift. An opinion poll in 2004 showed that South Koreans saw the United States as the "greatest threat" to South Korea's security, at 39 percent, ahead of North Korea at 33 percent.[94] In this alternative narrative, the United States was an impediment to, rather than a partner for, peaceful unification with North Korea.

These new narratives and broader changes in public discourse shaped official narratives and policy in two ways. First, "One Korea" narratives remained dominant. The ideal of unification persisted, too, as a result, "based on the premise that ethnic unity ought to ultimately lead to reunification."[95] Indeed, neither the North or the South, nor the conservatives or the progressives in South Korea, disputed the ethnic homogeneity of Korea and the desirability of unification. Second and however, partisan narratives diverged on the approach by which the two parties proposed to address the issue of Korean division—whether by containment or engagement. For the conservatives, the emphasis lay for long in preventing an armed invasion by the North and preparing for the contingency of a collapsed North. Naturally, this meant close coordination of policies with the South's ally, the United States. The progressives, by contrast, focused on normalizing ties through a series of positive inducements, such as humanitarian aid and diplomatic summitry, even at the expense of US preferences. Carving out an autonomous policy space on inter-Korean relations, apart from the United States, has therefore been a consistent approach. Crucially, while the progressives

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[92]Synott 2002, 42. The *chunkyojo* was identified in 1989 as one of 126 leftist groups that promoted unification under communist rule. The union was legalized in 1990.

[93]Lee 1990, 164-65. *Emphasis added.*

[94]*Chosun Ilbo,* January 11, 2004.

[95]Shin 2006, 164.

have become increasingly silent about unification—for fear of stoking hostilities in the North—they have nonetheless voiced support when pressed on the issue, which showcases the powerful and enduring nature of the "One Korea" frame in South Korean national narratives.

These narrative continuities around unification and change surrounding peace also reshaped conservative narratives under presidents Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye. Indeed, while the overarching "One Korea" theme and emphasis on peace endured, conservative administrations stressed regime change as a core conditionality of peaceful unification, and relied more heavily on coercive tactics such as international sanctions to tame the North's transgressions. In their narrative, "peace" was a structural problem rather than a bilateral aspiration; without the North's denuclearization and international integration, peace could not be guaranteed. Both Lee and Park thus underscored the principle of reciprocity in their dealings with North Korea. In his "denuclearization, openness, 3000 vision," Lee promised to uplift the North's living standards to an income of $3,000 per capita within 10 years, should the North abandon their nuclear program and open up their system. Park similarly promoted a policy of *trustpolitik* (*shinroi woigyo*)—a system of carrots and sticks aimed at transforming North Korea into a responsible stakeholder of the international community.[96] Unification that follows, she promised, would be a "jackpot" (*daebak*).[97]

Popular sentiments reflected these competing narratives. Indeed, aspirations for unification remained consistently strong during this period: the Korean General Social Survey (KGSS) notes that large majorities of the public, 67 percent and above, saw unification as somewhat or very necessary from 2003 to 2012; another survey by the Asan Institute echoes this finding, with 80 percent of its respondents expressing support since 2012.[98] Even at the height of North Korean provocations under the Park administration in South Korea, majorities (58.1 percent and above) saw the North as "one of us."[99] At the same time, popular narratives became ideologically bifurcated between a

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[96]Park 2014.

[97]*The Korea Times,* January 6, 2014.

[98]Kim et al. 2018, 6. These results were also robust to any framing effects in surveys; even bearing the economic and demographic costs of unification, the South Korean public's support was not significantly different from the baseline rate. Rich 2018.

[99]Kim et al. 2018, 5.

progressive one that prioritized peaceful coexistence—that is, the status quo—and a conservative one that was more explicitly committed to regime change in the North. Most notably, these competing narratives diverged on the role that the United States played in the inter-Korean peace and unification agenda—an implicit spoiler in the former and an indispensable partner in the latter.

5.3 Narrative Democratization in Taiwan

A focused study of Taiwan's narrative trajectory generates three main findings. First, Lee Teng-hui, Taiwanese leader during its democratic *transition*, sought narrative continuity and pushed for unification. Much as in South Korea, the orthodoxy of "One China" narrative remained staunch, even as alternative narratives centered on "indigenization" (*Bentuhua*)[100] emerged in the public discourse. Second, it was only once Lee became president through the country's first direct election—that is, during democratic *consolidation*[101]—that he began to jettison the "One China" narrative in favor of a more ambiguous formula of status quo. Finally, the country's first progressive leader further deepened the partisan rift in these narrative debates by assuming a Taiwan-centric position that placed independence as the new founding objective for the Taiwanese people. With the growth of Taiwanese consciousness (*Taiwan yishi*), the "One China" narrative gradually atrophied in the public sphere.

Postwar leaders in Taiwan crafted a singular founding story of pan-Chinese unity. The Kuomintang (KMT)-ratified constitution pronounced it as the only legitimate government of China (including the mainland, Taiwan, Mongolia, and Tibet).[102] The first yearbook in 1951—an official annual record of national objectives and achievements—also depicted the Republic of China as the "original" Chinese regime, whose legitimacy had been temporarily usurped by the "communist bandits" (*gongfei*).[103] Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo promoted the notion of "the

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[100]Indigenization *Bentuhua* is often used synonymously with "Taiwanization."

[101]Most Taiwan scholars consider 1996 to be the starting point of democratic consolidation in Taiwan. See Rigger 2011; Ho and Huang 2017.

[102]Constitution of the Republic of China, 1947, Articles 4 & 26.

[103]Chang 2005, 30.

Great Chinese nation" (*zhonghua minzu*) and the political and cultural mandate of the KMT. The premise of the "One China" narrative was thus intensely ideological: the KMT was to "free" China from communist degeneracy—just as the forefathers of the Xinhai Revolution had overthrown the Qing imperial rule—and Taiwan would serve as the righteous base from which to revive the country (*fuxing jidi*). The resulting narrative was as anti-Taiwan as anti-communist, depicting Taiwan as China's inherent (*guyou*) territory and claiming the Republic of China (ROC) as the sole inheritor of Confucian orthodoxy (*daotong*).[104] As Hsiau A-chin writes, "the *raison d'être* of Taiwan was [thus] China's future reunification."[105]

In the public sphere, the notion of "One China" remained deeply contested between mainlanders (*waishengren*) and natives (*benshengren*). For the mainland exiles, "One China" narrative sustained a "sojourner mentality" and a yearning for unification[106]; meanwhile, the natives—a diverse population composed of migrants and aborigines—deemed it a smokescreen for Chinese colonialism.[107] The lack of cross-strait collective identity and the violence that had followed the nationalist takeover of Taiwan made this narrative divide difficult, if not impossible, to bridge. In what became euphemistically known as the "February 28 Incident," Chiang Kai-shek had slaughtered a substantial segment of the local population to stymie anti-government riots and stomp out pro-communist sentiments.[108] The subsequent four decades of "White Terror" (*Baise Kongbu*) had also accompanied a brutal purge of dissidents and a blanket system of political repression aimed at enforcing centralized authority. Among the prominent victims was Lei Chen, a democracy activist who ran the *Free China Journal*, which was already advocating the concept of "Two Chinas."[109] The KMT thus sought to control public discourse that could undermine its "One China" narrative, including standardizing textbooks

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[104]Zhu 1990.

[105]Hsiau 2005, 149.

[106]Yang 2020.

[107]Kerr 1965; Phillips 2003.

[108]Though official death toll is contested, it is expected to fall between 18,000 and 28,000 (Li et al. 2006, 73).

[109]Hsueh 2020, 417-20.

in 1968[110], and targeted cultural platforms supported by the opposition movement (*Dangwai*).[111] The violent crackdown of one such magazine *Formosa* (*Meilidao*) in 1979—or the "Kaohsiung Incident"—came to serve as a key inflection point in Taiwan's democratization.[112]

Even so, independence had been a divisive, rather than rallying, factor within the democracy movement. This fracture had long been evident in the emergence of and debate over "Taiwanese consciousness" (*Taiwan yishi*) in the public sphere, on the degree to which cultural Taiwanization necessitated political de-Sinicization.[113] The split between radicals and moderates on their long-term visions for Taiwan, in terms of aspirations for independence from China, had simply been cast aside for a more immediate goal of sovereignty from the KMT.[114] It was only when the *Dangwai* movement formally organized the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986 that a more expansive and exclusive vision of Taiwanese self-determination, from KMT as well as People's Republic of China (PRC), consolidated as an opposition project.[115] In mass rallies across the country, anti-KMT narratives abounded, with references to the February 28 and Kaohsiung Incident; in one symbolic move, protesters also used slogans and songs in Hoklo—a native language—to elevate Taiwanese

[110]On state influence on textbooks, see Wang 2005. A key party slogan in the 1970s was "Love your home town, but love your country more" (*ai-hsiang keng ai-kuo*). The KMT also published several monographs, including *China's Taiwan* (1980), *The Roots of Taiwan* (1980), and *Blood is Thicker than Water* (1981) "to refute the absurd idea of Taiwan independence." Hsiau 2005, 152-3.

[111]Wang Fu-chang notes that in the first half of the 1980s the *Dangwai* published more than fifty political journals. See Wang 1996, 168. Ou-yang Sheng-en also claims that, from 1975 to 1985, the *Dangwai*-affiliated magazines published more than one thousand issues. See Ou-yang 1986, 21.

[112]As prominent novelist and activist Li Chiao recalled: "Conflicts like the Chungli Incident and the Kaohsiung Incident have made me mature... I once claimed that art is independent of reality, having nothing to do with politics... [Now] I have passed beyond that stage... It is evident that Taiwan's writers have to tell black from white and to distinguish injustice from justice. It is a shame for a writer to try to "disentangle himself from political affairs." It is impossible to have literature without politics, especially for Taiwan's contemporary writers." (Li and Chao 1998, 30-1.)

[113]Hsiao 2005, 92-95, 97-99, 156.; for an example, see Sung 1984.

[114]Tien 1989.

[115]For debates within the *Dangwai* concerning democracy and independence in the early 1980s, see Jacobs 2005, 22-34; Hsiao 2005, 101-2. The return of overseas Taiwanese dissidents, including most famously the members of the World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI), following the lifting of the martial law in 1987 further supported the convergence of the independence and opposition movements. Ibid, fn. 56.

consciousness.[116] Meanwhile, efforts to re-write Taiwan's founding gained a new momentum among dissident intellectuals.[117] Though not as yet uniform, an alternative narrative was taking shape, depicting the KMT as an alien regime (*wailai chengchuan*) and an agent of Chinese chauvinism. If to democratize was to Taiwanize[118], to Taiwanize was to de-Sinicize.

5.3.1 *Narrative Continuity during Democratic Transition*

It was in this climate that Lee Deng-hui, a native Taiwanese, came to power; and as a KMT leader, Lee relied on the same "One China" narrative while admitting the *de facto* divided status of Taiwan from China.[119] In his inaugural speech on May 20, 1990, Lee maintained that "Taiwan and the mainland are indivisible parts of China's territory, and all Chinese are compatriots of the same flesh and blood."[120] Yet he also moderated expectations about the prospects of immediate unification and called for a gradual cross-strait dialogue on the issue. The 1991 National Unification Guidelines (*guojia tongyi gangling*), published under his directive, formalized this narrative: "China's unification, its timing and method, must first respect the rights of the people of the Taiwan region... Unification must be gradually reached in phases under the principles of rationality, peace, equality, and mutuality."[121] Indeed, by implementing constitutional amendments in 1991, Lee had effectively recognized that "two equal political entities exist[ed] in two independent areas of one country."[122] Lee was playing an intricate balancing act to sustain Chinese consciousness that had long defined

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[116]Wang 1996, 174-88. In 1987, the DPP established a special section to enhance its relations with social movement organizations in order to coordinate efforts to pressure the KMT regime. More than 3,000 demonstrations organized either by the DPP or other social movement organizations occurred in the 1980s. Wang 2005, 69.

[117]As historian Wu Mi-cha wrote: "The study and narration of Taiwanese history in itself is indeed a part of Taiwanese nationalism. It is because of the striking development of Taiwanese nationalism that [the concept and study of] Taiwanese history obtains. Hence the accepted [study of] Taiwanese history should address itself to questions of the emergence, development, and character of Taiwanese nationalism." (1994, 92). Also see Hsiau 2005, 156-172.

[118]As Lan Yi-ping wrote in 1983: "Democratization is precisely Taiwanization" (*minzhuhua jiu shi Taiwanhua*). Lan 1983, 11–12.

[119]Stockton 2002, 157.

[120]Academia Historica Presidential Database, May 20, 1990.

[121]The National Unification Guidelines, February 23, 1991, 83.

[122]Jacobs and Liu 2007, 381-2. Additional Article 10 (now 11) stipulated that rights and obligations between people on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait may be specially regulated by law.

the KMT—and to which hardliners within the party remained deeply committed—and respond to the rise of Taiwanese consciousness on which support for the DPP hinged.[123]

This position was further institutionalized in the "1992 Consensus," reached between the Chinese Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) and the Taiwanese Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF). The two bodies adopted the formula of "One China, respective interpretations" (*yige Zhongguo gezi biaoshu*), in which they agreed that there was "one China" but disagreed as to what that meant.[124] Taiwan's official interpretation had been specified in a contemporaneous resolution titled "Definition of One China" by the National Unification Council (NUC), which stipulated that "One China" refers to "the Republic of China that was founded in 1912 and have been in existence ever since; and that its sovereignty includes all China, though its administration currently is limited to Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen, and Mazu."[125] An important, though oft-neglected, point of departure in the Taiwanese and Chinese interpretations centered around the character of cross-strait relationship: while Taipei asserted that "Taiwan and the mainland are both parts of China," Beijing stressed that "Taiwan is a part of China."[126] The distinction thus lay in whether Taiwan should be seen as equal versus subordinate to mainland China in negotiations over China's future.[127]

Against this backdrop, Lee's narrative revision at home occurred only gradually as he sought to sustain the myth of "One China" and simultaneously "Taiwanize" the KMT. On the one hand, he maintained the pro-unification narrative, asserting that "the Republic of China is one nation (*guojia*) of a divided China... When in the future China truly wishes to unify, then there will be a much greater result."[128] On the other, he attempted to reinvent the KMT's image as representing

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[123]On factionalism within the KMT during this period, see Chang 1994; Hood 1997.

[124]The precise wording did not appear in the 1992 correspondences. Beijing has expressly rejected the principle since 1996.

[125]National Unification Council, August 1, 1992. [Official translation.] Beijing provided their own interpretation, in a formal letter to the SEF: "both sides of the strait uphold the principle of One China, and actively seek national unification, but the political interpretation of the One China principle will not be referred to in the cross-strait negotiations on functional issues."

[126]Su 2009, 54-5.

[127]Setting these disagreements aside was critical for expanding cross-strait exchanges. See Su 2009, 63-70.

[128]Jacobs and Liu 2007, 383.

Taiwan. In an interview with Japanese journalist Shiba Ryotaro for the *Asahi Shinbun* in 1994, Lee admitted his efforts to localize the party: "Even the Kuomintang was also a regime that came from the outside. It was simply a party that came to rule the Taiwanese. So it was necessary to make it a Kuomintang of the Taiwanese."[129] These narrative maneuvers allowed Lee to advocate for "eventual" unification, through a peaceful, dialogue-based approach.[130] In his address to the NUC in 1995—famously known as "Lee's Six Points"—he argued that "China's unification [must be] based on the reality that the two sides are governed respectively by two governments [that] in no way are subordinate to each other."[131] To this end, he made numerous calls for bilateral exchanges "based on Chinese culture," reinforcing essentialistic notions of "One China."[132]

Undeniably, however, Lee's leadership also brought about the opening of communicative regimes in Taiwan that permitted new narratives about the nation's founding. In particular, the constitutional amendments in 1991, combined with the revision of the Criminal Code in 1992 to permit non-violent protests, emboldened independence activists. As Bruce Jacobs notes, the "last taboo" of Taiwan independence had been broken.[133] The "national identification problem" (*guojia jentung wenti*) pervaded public discourse as dissident intellectuals recast—without the threat of sedition charges—the ideological and ethnic underpinnings of KMT nationalism. The unsettling of "One China" narrative in the broader society was also evident in public opinion surveys during this period, which marked a sea change in Taiwanese/Chinese consciousness: if those who saw themselves as solely Taiwanese rose from 16.5 percent in 1991 to 33.1 percent in 1996, those who identified as solely Chinese dropped in equal measure, from 32.5 percent to 16.6 percent.[134]

Amid this transition, the KMT continued to "Taiwanize," whereas the DPP proceeded to "repackage" independence toward self-determination from within ROC rather than secession from

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[129]Ibid.

[130]Yet, this was not received well among the orthodox KMT members, who exited the party en masse in 1993 to establish the pro-unification Chinese New Party (CNP). See Chang 1996.

[131]Academia Historica Presidential Database, April 8, 1995.

[132]Ibid.

[133]Jacobs 2005, 38.

[134]Chen 1996.

PRC. Its initial electoral failures, largely due to a lack of mainlander support[135], prompted the DPP to revise its narrative toward a more inclusive vision of Taiwan as a "community of fate" (*mingyun kungtungti*) among the "four great ethnic groups" (*sida tsuchun*).[136] It was not until 1992, with the establishment of pro-independence civil society groups like Mainlanders for the Taiwanese Independence Association (*waishengjen Taiwan tuli hsiehchinhui*) that the image of the DPP as a "Taiwanese-only" party began to wade.[137] Meanwhile, the KMT adopted a dual narrative, which at once emphasized Taiwanese consciousness and Chinese heritage. This worked in Lee's favor during the country's first direct presidential election in 1996: with a majority of the public who saw themselves as *both* Taiwanese and Chinese[138], and growing military threats from China that made the public war-wary, Lee was able to secure 54 percent of the votes, from across pro-unification and pro-independence camps.[139] In his acceptance speech, Lee once again stressed: "We must encourage a new concept of "New Taiwanese." At the same time, those who cherish nationalist feelings, uphold Chinese culture and do not forget the ideals of China's unification, they are Chinese."[140] What it meant to be Taiwanese, in the shadow of the enduring "One China" narrative under Lee's transitional leadership, remained deeply contested.

5.3.2 *Narrative Revision during Democratic Consolidation*

As in South Korea, it was during democratic consolidation that founding objectives in Taiwanese official narratives began to shift more meaningfully, away from unification and toward independence. If Lee, as a transitional leader, had accepted separation as *de facto* cross-strait status without undermining the overall goal of unification, in the consolidation phase, he openly championed Taiwan's separate statehood. Under his progressive successor Chen Shui-bian, the sovereignty narrative be-

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[135]A stark majority of 95 percent of votes for the DPP in various local elections in the late 1980s had come from the native Taiwanese. See Wu 1993; Wang 1994.

[136]Hsiau 2005, 103-4.

[137]Wang 1994, 8.

[138]According to the survey, 45.1 percent of the respondents identified themselves as both Taiwanese and Chinese in 1996. See Chen 1996.

[139]Liao 1996.

[140]Lee 1999, 76.

came further entrenched, with *de jure* independence emerging as a new founding objective.

The most conspicuous change in Lee's official narrative came in 1999 when, in an interview with *Deutsche Welle* (German Radio), he characterized cross-strait relations as a "special state-to-state relationship" (*teshu de guoyuguo de guanxi*),[141] which the KMT formally incorporated in its party platform. This was a momentous decision. According to the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Lee and various cabinet-level officials discussed the formulation in at least 23 major events between July 9—when the interview was held—and the end of the year.[142] The MAC dropped the expression "one country" in all official documents and replaced references to "two equal political entities" with "two countries" (*guojia*).[143] Government policy reflected the the "two state theory" (*liangguo lun*) as well, with corresponding changes in domestic laws governing nationality, security, and cross-strait relations.[144] Abroad, Taiwan relied on this new narrative basis to expand its diplomatic representation. If prior KMT strategy to re-enter the United Nations (UN) was by mobilizing support for the repeal of UN Resolution 2758 (1971) that recognized the PRC as China's representative, the KMT under Lee now sought permission to join as a new and separate state. Though Lee clarified on various occasions that he was not seeking independence—asserting that Taiwan's new *sovereign* status was necessary for peaceful unification—he had, by this point, discarded the "One China" framework.

Under Chen Shui-bian, the first president from the opposition DPP, the official narrative veered further in the direction of independence. Initially, Chen pursued more moderate—often ambiguous or even contradictory—postures, rather than assume a radical position. In his inauguration speech in 2000, Chen declared, "Leaders on both sides possess enough wisdom and creativity to jointly deal with the question of a future 'One China.'"[145] Implicitly, this meant that "One China" was not

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[141] Jacobs and Liu 2007, 389, 392. Lee has since argued that the statement was intended to discourage Wang Daohan's visit to Taiwan in 1999, which he suspected would be used to bolster unification narratives in PRC. See Su 2005, Ch. 3.

[142] "Major Events Across the Taiwan Straits: 1999," Mainland Affairs Council.

[143] Lijiun 2002, 11.

[144] Ibid, 12.

[145] Academia Historica Presidential Database, May 20, 2000.

a viable principle in the present, but a potential aspiration for discussion.[146] Meanwhile, through the "Five No's"[147] and the "Three Acknowledgements and Four Suggestions"[148], the Chen administration sought to reassure Beijing (and Washington). Yet, given the DPP's party platform—which explicitly denies the "One-China principle"—and growing domestic divisions over the issue of independence, Chen often resorted to doublespeak and caveats. He once bemoaned: "Taiwan's danger does not lie on the side of China or the United States but on Taiwan itself... The danger is, there is no consensus regarding who is the enemy, who is the friend."[149] In this environment, Chen had no firm approach to the two state framework.

But Chen's stance on Taiwan's independence was never seriously questioned.[150] According to Chien-min Chao, the DPP had "redefine[d] the terms of independence by stressing preservation of the status quo over reconstruction of a new entity."[151] In essence, this new formulation was consistent with Lee's premise that "the ROC has been a sovereign state since it was founded in 1912 [and] consequently there is no need to declare independence."[152] But Chen's "deliberate nation-building effort,"[153]—aimed at institutionalizing Taiwanization and de-Sinicization—combined with regular rhetorical reminders such as claiming "one country on each side" (*yibian yiguo*) in 2002, provided

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[146]Chang and Holt 2009, 310.

[147]The "Five No's" (also known as "Four Plus One No's" (*si bu yi meiyou*)) refers to Chen's promises that Taiwan would (1) not declare independence; (2) not change the national name; (3) not pursue constitutional adoption of the "two states" theory; (4) not promote a referendum to change the status quo; and (5) not abolish the National Unification Council (and its guidelines).

[148]The "three acknowledgements" state that (1) the current state of cross-strait affairs is due to history; (2) neither the PRC nor Taiwan mutually represent or belong to one another; and (3) any change in the status quo must be approved by the people of Taiwan. The "four suggestions" conclude that (1) cross-strait relations must be dealt on the basis of the ROC Constitution; (2) a new mechanism or adjustments to current measures must be created to coordinate differences in opinion; (3) both sides must work toward a peace treaty to build confidence; and (4) Taiwan must insist on peace, democracy, and prosperity as cornerstones for cooperation with the international community.

[149]"Guoren Diwo Bufeng Shi Lian'an Wenti Guanjian" [The Crux of the Cross-Strait Issue is that We Cannot Distinguish Enemies and Friends], Chung Kuo Shih Pao, 26 July 2000.

[150]See for example, Ross 2006.

[151]Chao 2003, 141. This is partly the reason why the notion of "status quo" itself became controversial during Chen's tenure. See Hsu 2010, fn. 1.

[152]*Deutsche Welle* 1999.

[153]Dittmer 2004, 475

assurances that he continued to promote the normalization of *de facto* separation of Taiwan from China. By 2003, Chen was mobilizing support for a replacement of the KMT-designed constitution, and by 2006, he shuttered the National Unification Council as well as nullified the National Unification Guidelines. Chen appeared to inch closer to a *de jure* independence agenda, within a narrative framework that increasingly equated the status quo with independence.

These changes in the official narratives provided important templates for the broader society to register their own counternarratives, clarifying overlaps, fissures, and ambiguities. By the end of Chen's tenure, Taiwanese people's support for the status quo had increased to a striking 82 percent in 2003. Yet, there had been more disagreements about what the "status quo" was and what it should aim: while a growing force, at 16 percent, favored the status quo with a view to achieving independence, a far stronger majority of 57.3 percent preferred to postpone the decision (35.8 percent) or "indefinitely" maintain the status quo (21.5 percent).[154] As most interviewees confirmed, this was due to the duel development of independence *as* status quo narratives (mentioned by 12/20 interviewees) and the threat of Chinese sanction in the event of declaring *de jure* independence (mentioned by 14/20 interviewees). One activist asserted, "For me, it's quite simple. People cannot differentiate between status quo and independence. For most Taiwanese, we are already independent."[155] Given that a similar proportion of the public, 91.5 percent, saw themselves as either Taiwanese only (48.4 percent) or both Taiwanese and Chinese (43.1 percent), their preference for the status quo suggests implicit support for independence rather than unification.

These new narratives and broader changes in public discourse shaped official narratives in important ways. First, pro-unification narratives became electorally untenable. Already by 2000 presidential elections, the public discourse had so shifted that none of the presidential candidates, whether from the KMT or the DPP, defended the "One China" principle in their campaign platforms and explicitly rejected the idea of "one country, two systems."[156] Even in the aftermath of Chen's exit and post-office disgrace, KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou was unable to pub-

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[154]Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

[155]Interview on November 1, 2022, with Mr. Sung Chen-en, CEO of Taiwan New Constitution Foundation.

[156]Lijian 2005, 44-45.

licly support unification as a founding objective. Second, narratives of Taiwanization (*Bentuhua*) became increasingly entrenched in official narratives. In 2003—barely months before the 2004 elections—the conservative "pan-blue" alliance coopted the *bentu* frame, calling itself the "moderate Taiwan group" (*wenhede bentu pai*) as opposed to its progressive counterpart, which it labeled "radical Taiwan group" (*jijinde bentu pai*).[157] Finally, the "status quo" became the *modus vivendi* for cross-strait relations in Taiwanese narratives, albeit with divergent emphases across partisan lines. For the pro-independence camp, the status quo came to underscore the *de facto* independence of the island, whereas for the pro-unification camp, it highlighted a lack of resolution on Taiwan's political status.

Narrative institutions during this period bolstered the authority of alternative narratives and narrators. This was particularly clear following the election of KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou. In several instances where Ma breached the prevailing narrative bounds—that favored independence as status quo narratives—he was met with popular resistance. In 2008, when Ma suppressed protests in advance of a visit by China's top cross-strait negotiator Chen Yunlin, including banning publicly waving Taiwan's national flag or chanting "Taiwan does not belong to China" (*Taiwan bu shuyu zhongguo*), some 200 university students staged a series of sit-in demonstrations in what became known as the "Wild Strawberry Movement."[158] Then in 2014, after the ruling KMT party announced the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), which would drastically liberalize cross-strait contact despite overwhelming public skepticism[159], various civil society groups and student organizations stormed the Legislative Yuan in a guerrilla-style protest. The so-called "Sunflower Movement" coalitions included the Democratic Front Against Cross-Strait Trade in Services Agreement—a group of NGOs on labor, gender, human and environmental rights—as well as the Black Island Nation Youth Front (*heisedao guo qingnian lianmeng*).[160] Crucially, these new narra-

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[157]Jacobs 2005, 47.

[158]Lee 2014, 425.

[159]According to the Taiwan Social Change Survey conducted in late 2013, skepticism over cross-strait economic integration was prevalent: 73.7 percent of respondents held negative attitudes toward "Chinese working in Taiwan." See Fu *et al.* 2014, 230-231.

[160]On the Sunflower Movement, see Ho 2015.

tive institutions portrayed KMT actions as not only appeasement of the Chinese, but "trampling of

the rule of law."[161] Pro-Chinese actions by the KMT were treated, thus, as anti-democratic.

6   Conclusion

7   References

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[161]Ho 2015, 83