RULING IN PLACE:

GEOGRAPHY, LEGITIMACY, AND REGIME SURVIVAL IN SINGAPORE AND TAIWAN

By

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Abstract

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This study explores the phenomenon of authoritarian regime durability and change in two advanced industrialized countries of East Asia – Singapore and Taiwan. Why has the regime in Singapore been able to survive while the one in Taiwan ended two decades ago? Does authoritarian rule mainly depend on coercion and/or material rewards? Are there alternative sources of regime legitimacy and stability? How does a country's political geography influence the way in which a regime maintains power? This work argues that a viable source of authoritarian regime legitimacy is the country's *geo-idea*, which derives from the place's *physical* characteristics, *historical* legacies, and the spatial *identity* of its people.

Singapore's small size, strategic location, lack of resources and historical experiences of international and regional influences have engendered a geo-idea of a small vulnerable ethnically different place situated within a hostile region. Consequently, the ruling People's Action Party legitimized and prescribed restrictive *pre-political* rules, arguing that any overt politicking based on race and/or religion would heighten past animosities and lingering tensions, and destroy the barely surviving state. Taiwan's small size and location near China and history of external powers' colonialisms and Chinese intermittent rule have given rise to at least two competing geo-ideas. Claiming that Taiwan was an integral part of China in which it still represented and would eventually return, the ruling Kuomintang enacted martial law to halt national elections and ban political challenges. Arguing that the island possessed a geo-identity separate from China, the opposition constantly challenged the KMT's idea and finally capitalized on the international de-

recognition of the KMT's claims to push for democratic reform and an end to authoritarian rule.

The study highlights the importance of a state's geography not only in its defense or geopolitics, but also in national policies, including identity construction and political domination. In legitimizing their rule, regimes can draw on its spatial surroundings and characteristics, the sort of history it has experienced, and the perception and fears of its people. The relative acceptance of the regime's claims validates its political order, and vice versa.

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Arian, Eva Bellin, Vince Boudreau, Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner, Mitchell Cohen, Kenneth Erickson, Mauricio Font, David Jones, John Harbeson, and Susan Woodward. Though it was often difficult to juggle dissertation writing and teaching at the same time, I also benefited immensely from the 4-year teaching experience at Brooklyn College, and remain grateful to Sally Bermanzohn, Chair of the college's Political Science Department, for the opportunity and support. Last but not least, for two years, my intellectual home was the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, where I worked directly with Thomas G. Weiss, the eminent UN scholar and practitioner, on his Presidency of the International Studies Association and other writing projects. I am deeply impressed with Tom's breadth and depth of knowledge, as well as his unrivaled work ethic and scholarly productivity. Most of all, I am extremely thankful for his generosity, support, and many good cheers. The Bunche Institute, as well as the Political Science Program, also has many dear colleagues and friends who provided good company throughout the journey.

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I remain of course solely responsible for all errors of fact or interpretation in this dissertation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A NEW TAKE ON AN ENDURING PUZZLE

An old puzzle lingers on in the new century. Advanced economic development is often postulated to undermine authoritarian regimes and bring about liberal democratic polities. Yet, the allure of authoritarianism continues. So far, only two economically developed states in East Asia – Taiwan and South Korea– have emerged as liberal democracies (both in the late 1980s) from such a sequence while industrialized Singapore, Hong Kong, and rapidly industrializing Malaysia and China are poised to remain relatively authoritarian, with single hegemonic party regimes wielding unchallenged power for the indefinite future. Paradoxically, according to the World Governance Indicators (1996-2007), it is semi-authoritarian Singapore and Hong Kong, which have scored consistently higher on measures of governmental effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption, than liberal democratic Taiwan and South Korea. Furthermore, the latest survey about democracy in the region reveals that "most East Asian third-wave democracies have suffered inconclusive or disputed electoral outcomes, incessant political strife and partisan gridlock" and that even in Taiwan and South Korea, more than half of the people surveyed expressed support for "a possible authoritarian option."[1]

The cases of Singapore and Taiwan present a fascinating contrast to explore the phenomenon of authoritarian endurance in East Asia. From the perspective of traditional social science theories, particularly the democratization literature, these cases often invoke the question: why have similarly developed, traditionally Confucian, overwhelmingly ethnically Chinese small states, like Taiwan, been able to embrace democracy, while Singapore failed to do so? Conventional answers focusing on domestic-level factors, including the presence or lack of democratic conditions and democratizing agents, do not seem to account for this variation. In addition, questions which probe a society's refusal or failure to follow the democratic path are

[1] Yun-han Chu et al., *How East Asians View Democracy* (Columbia University Press, 2008), 1 and 23.

often laden with assumptions of a certain liberal universal value.

This study, instead, asks: why has the authoritarian regime in Singapore been able to survive for all these years while the one in Taiwan crumbled two decades ago? Does it mainly depend on coercion and/or material rewards? A negative answer challenges the key assumptions of authoritarian rule. Can authoritarian regimes be legitimate? The possibility is always troubling from a democratic point of view. How does a country's place and location influence how a regime maintains authoritarian rule? The question has rarely been broached by the social sciences altogether.

The Argument in Brief

This work argues that the durability of an authoritarian regime can depend on how successfully it legitimizes itself based on the country's political geography. Particularly for small countries like Singapore and Taiwan, the content and process of regime legitimation are intimately tied to each country's place in the region and the world, understood in *physical*, *historical*, and *ideational* terms. Small states' geographies are more than dotted lines on maps. They are the origins of particularly acute external influences, interventions, and vulnerabilities. Stemming from constraining physical sizes, locations, resources, as well as historical interactions with powers near and far, these states' geographies shape their distinctive identities, collective memories, and shared fears.

Over time, the confluence of a given state's physical characteristics and historical legacies develop into what could be called its *geo-idea* – or the overall political idea of that country in relation to its surroundings and the broader world. For Singapore, both its hard geographical features (small size, limited space, location between two larger, ethnically different, neighbors, lack of resources for survival and development) and historical experiences (European rivalries and intervention, British colonialism, integration and separation from the greater Malaysian Federation, Chinese communist influence) have engendered, especially for the early postwar period between 1960-1980, a geo-idea of a small, vulnerable, ethnically different place situated in a hostile region under threat from Islamic Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as

Communist China. Similarly, Taiwan's geographical physicality (small size relative to and location near mainland China) and history (European rivalries and intervention, Portuguese and Japanese colonialisms, and Chinese intermittent rule) meant that by the mid-twentieth century at least two distinct and competing geo-ideas of the country had arisen – one predicated on the notion that Taiwan was an integral part of China and the other on the premise that the island possessed a physical and political identity separate from China. The first was promulgated by the authoritarian Kuomintang (KMT) regime, the second by the democracy-demanding opposition.

Each idea of a country has a profound consequence for its politics. It influences how a regime constructs its legitimacy, or its rightfulness to rule in a certain place. Given the geo-idea, the regime defines and polices the boundaries of political engagement, or what in politics is acceptable ("in place") or unacceptable ("out of place"). In Singapore, the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) made use of the country's constraining political geographical features and historical legacies to prescribe political rules limiting freedom of expression, assembly, and organization. The PAP argued that any overt politicking based on race, ethnicity, and/or religion would heighten past animosities and lingering tensions, and destroy the barely surviving small state situated in a hostile region. In Taiwan, the KMT, once forced to move to the island after losing the Chinese civil war to the communists in 1949, likewise enacted measures to proscribe political activities that it considered "out of place." Because Taiwan was still part of China in which the KMT claimed legitimate representation and vowed one day to return to effective rule, authoritarian martial law was "temporarily" promulgated to ban political challenges of the communist and pro-separatist "Taiwanist" variety.

The study argues that as long as there is congruence between a country's geo-idea and its political legitimacy project, the regime endures. This is the case of Singapore, from the 1960s until today, where the PAP and the general public shared and still largely share similar views about the island's limited spatial characteristics, historical legacies, and thus the corresponding geo-idea and necessity to implement restrictive political rules. By the same token, authoritarian regime change depends largely on the ability of challengers to deconstruct and undermine the geographic source of legitimation. As the case of Taiwan in the 1980s demonstrates, the

opposition to KMT rule mobilized support by projecting an alternative geo-idea of Taiwan, one that derived from the historical experiences of European and Japanese colonialisms as well as the loose ties to China, long periods under which Taiwan distanced itself spatially and politically from the mainland. The championing of an alternative idea gradually undermined the claims of the ruling regime that Taiwan was part of China and challenged the necessity for martial law to stay in place. The credibility of the KMT's legitimating formula became even more problematic when the United Nations and Western powers recognized the People's Republic of China instead of the KMT's Republic of China by the 1980s. The need to accommodate the changing geo-idea of the country internally and compete for international recognition with rising China externally compelled the KMT to liberalize its politics, and eventually to lift martial law in order to join the "democratic club" under the United States, which implicitly made continued protection of Taiwan contingent on democratization.

Overall, geography affects the thinking and actions of states not just in military and geopolitical terms. Political geography, understood physically, historically, and ideationally, shapes domestic policies and actions, including the manners in which autocratic regimes are legitimized and maintained. Singapore and Taiwan are not alone. The political destinies of other smaller places, from Cuba in the Americas and Belarus in Eastern Europe to Syria in the Middle East and North Korea and Laos in Asia, have been shaped by where they are located, what geographical sizes and features they possess, what neighbors they are forced to live with, and what external interventions they have had to endure from foreign powers throughout history. Relatively small, strategically located, vulnerable and threatened throughout history, these countries view their places in the region and the world in specific ways, and consequently adopt political measures to protect those places.

Yet the way regimes are legitimized does not always have to be authoritarian. To explore, for example, why Switzerland and Israel have developed into relatively liberal democratic countries, one must situate those countries within their respective regions, examine how certain political ideas and process flow through them, and trace those nations' historical and ongoing interactions with surrounding countries (both autocratic and democratic) as well as interested

external powers (their geostrategic interests in supporting certain political regimes). Thus, while geography is the main reason Singapore has stayed authoritarian, the Taiwan case shows that the changing dynamics of political geography, and how the democratic challengers successfully capitalized on this change, facilitated political opening in the way of democracy.

The cases of Singapore and Taiwan are used to suggest the utility of a *comparative geographical analysis* (CGA) in determining the sources of small strategic states' regime legitimation and their importance for regime maintenance and collapse. CGA is an analytical framework, not causal theory. The study emphasizes the importance of geography, and that in its broad sense, means more than just physical size, location, and resources but geo-historical experience and political identity as they relate to those hard geographical features. The work crosses social scientific disciplinary lines that privilege domestic level factors by introducing political geographical analysis that emphasizes both internal and external constraints and opportunities. The three-fold conceptualization of the geo-idea – physically, historically, and ideationally – integrates existing emphases by geographers on the importance of space and place, historians and historical social scientists on the significance of time, and anthropologists and cultural analysts on the primacy of culture and identity. The determinisms of all three are hence avoided.

What ensues is a discussion of the social science literature as it relates to the research questions posed above, followed by an argument for taking authoritarianism and legitimacy seriously. Political geography is then introduced into the study of authoritarian regime legitimation and durability. A preview of the rest of the work concludes this chapter.

THE LITERATURE

Modernize Then Democratize?

One prominent theory of political modernization proposes that advanced economic development leads to liberal democracy. Made famous by Seymour Martin Lipset,[2] Karl Deutsch,[3] and recently

[2] Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960).

reaffirmed by Carles Boix and Susan Stokes,[4] this theory derives from the strong correlation found between the levels of capitalist economic development (i.e. per capita income) and democracy. Various explanations have been offered for this link, but a simplified version is that once economic development has raised prosperity, new and complex social and political conditions are created which pre-modern authoritarian political systems are unable to handle in the long run. In this process, various social forces emerge to challenge the authoritarian regime and champion democracy. In sum, the causal sequences are linear: industrialization leads to increased urbanization, education, communication, mobilization, and political incorporation, resulting finally in democracy. Though this proposition could to some extent be applied to Taiwan,[5] or South Korea,[6] in the late 1980s when those two developed states democratized, it could not explain similarly economically advanced Singapore, or Hong Kong (which did not even become a democracy under the United Kingdom).

No Democratic Culture, No Democracy?

Another popular theory – which places emphasis on cultural attributes – proposes that Singapore's "Confucian" culture is the reason for its submission to authoritarian one-party rule.[7]

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[3] Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *The American Political Science Review* 55, no. 3 (September 1961): 493-514.

[4] Carles. Boix and Susan C. Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics* 55, no. 4 (2003): 517-549; Ross E. Burkhart and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, "Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 4 (December 1994): 903-910; John F. Helliwell, "Empirical Linkages between Democracy and Economic Growth," *British Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 2 (April 1994): 225-248.

[5] See Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985); Tun-Jen Cheng and Stephan Haggard, *Political Change in Taiwan* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 71; Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Doh Chull Shin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics* 47, no. 1 (October 1994): 135-170; Hung-mao Tien, ed., *Taiwan's electoral politics and democratic transition: riding the third wave* (M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

[6] See Sung Joo Han, "South Korean Politics in Transition," in *Democracy in Developing Countries*, ed. Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Martin Seymour Lipset (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989); Thomas W. Robinson, *Democracy And Development In East Asia: Taiwan, South Korea, And The Philippines* (Washington DC: AEI Press, 1991).

[7] Pye, *Asian Power and Politics*.

Whether defined as the Protestant ethic (Max Weber),[8] the virtue of social pluralism (Alexis de Tocqueville),[9] civic culture (Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba),[10] or social capital (Robert Putnam),[11] a specific type of culture which emphasizes liberal values such as freedom, individualism, tolerance, civic participation, and trust is vital in creating the necessary conditions for the rise and sustenance of democracy. Confucianism, with its supposed emphasis on hierarchy, authority, and communitarianism, is thus not a type of culture that could bring about Western-style liberal democracy.[12] If culture is decisive, however, it again cannot explain straightforwardly why Taiwan or South Korea – both societies with as much (or little) Confucian characteristics as Singapore – were able to embrace liberal democratic political systems.[13] In the final analysis, as the Singapore case will show, the question is not whether Confucian culture has impeded or advanced democracy in these East Asian societies but whether or not (and how) it is strategically employed by the ruling regime not only to keep power but to steer the right course for the nation given its history and identity.

Other Democratic Conditions and Agents?

[8] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Allen & Unwin, 1930).
[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Adlard and Saunders, 1838).
[10] Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989).
[11] Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton University Press, 1993).
[12] See the debate in: Fareed Zakaria, "Culture Is Destiny: A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 2 (April 1994): 109-126; Bilahari Kausikan, "Governance That Works," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 2 (1997): 24-34; Meredith Woo-Cumings, "The 'new authoritarianism' in East Asia," *Current History* 93 (1994): 413-416; Clark D. Neher, "Asian Style Democracy," *Asian Survey* 34, no. 11 (November 1994): 949-961; Steven J. Hood, "The Myth of Asian-Style Democracy," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 9 (September 1998): 853-866; Daniel Bell, *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia* (Macmillan Pub Co, 1996); Huntington, *The Third Wave*; Russell Arben Fox, "Confucian and Communitarian Responses to Liberal Democracy," *The Review of Politics* 59, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 561-592; Gilbert Rozman, ed., *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation* (Princeton Univ Press, 1991).
[13] John Fuh-Sheng Hsieh, "East Asian Culture and Democratic Transition, with Special Reference to the Case of Taiwan," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 29 -42; Dae Jung Kim, "Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values," *Foreign Affairs* Nov/Dec (1994); Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations'," *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (2000): 37-57.

Aside from works that emphasize economic development and democratic culture, the democratization literature also heavily concentrates on other social, economic, and/or international conditions for the emergence of democracies,[14] or the role of democratizing actors – whether from above or below.[15] To be clear, these factors are important, such as the roles of international pressure and "democratizing" elites in Taiwan. However, the common assumption with these works, as with the modernization and culturalist schools, is that in the absence of the conditions for democracy, authoritarian regimes will stay alive, which is not always the case. There is less an investigation of why these regimes are durable in the first place.

Stalled Transitions and Hybrid Regimes?

Recently some have tried to reorient the study of democratization to examining the nature of "hybrid regimes" or those countries that are once on the path to democracy but somehow morph into something else in the process.[16] Though this offers some conceptual advance, it is still very

[14] Huntington, *The Third Wave*; Terry Lynn Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 23, no. 1 (October 1990): 1-21; Karen L. Remmer, "New Wine or Old Bottlenecks? The Study of Latin American Democracy," *Comparative Politics* 23, no. 4 (July 1991): 479-495; Shin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization."; Frances Hagopian and Scott P. Mainwaring, *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); Daniel Lynch, *Rising China and Asian Democratization: Socialization to "Global Culture" in the Political Transformations of Thailand, China, and Taiwan* (Stanford University Press, 2008).

[15] Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,"," *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 (n.d.): 337-363; Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press, 2000); M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1996); Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Cornell University Press, 2002); Valerie Bunce, "Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience," *World Politics* 55, no. 2 (2003): 167-192.

[16] Terry Lynn Karl, "The Hybrid Regimes of Central America," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (1995): 72-86; Jeffrey Herbst, "Political Liberalization in Africa after Ten Years," *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 3 (April 2001): 357-375; Larry Jay. Diamond, "Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 21-35; Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2002): 5-21; Andreas Schedler, "The Menu of Manipulation," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 36-50.

much embedded within the optimism that these "democracies with adjectives"[17] or "semi-democracies"[18] are already some sorts of democracy and that there are factors that prevent them from becoming the liberal types commonly found in the West. Thus, you have a concurrent set of scholars who are devoted to exploring the problems of democratic consolidation.[19] Moreover, studies of "electoral authoritarianism" and "competitive authoritarianism" as hybrid regimes overly focus on the incumbents' manipulation of the electoral process to stay in power[20] without paying attention to extra-electoral factors,[21] most prominently, legitimacy.

Late Development, No Democratization?

Given these shortcomings, studies that emphasize the role of the state under late economic development[22] do shed light. For example, according to Eva Bellin and others works by China scholars,[23] unlike early development, state sponsorship of capitalists and workers under late

[17] David Collier and Steven. Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (1997): 430-451.
[18] William F. Case, "Can the 'Halfway House' Stand? Semidemocracy and Elite Theory in Three Southeast Asian Countries," *Comparative Politics* 28, no. 4 (July 1996): 437-464; William Case, "Southeast Asia's hybrid regimes: when do voters change them?," *Journal of East Asian Studies* May-August (2005).
[19] Scott Mainwaring, *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Ben Ross Schneider, "Democratic Consolidations: Some Broad Comparisons and Sweeping Arguments," *Latin American Research Review* 30, no. 2 (1995): 215-234; Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Stephen Hanson, "Defining democratic consolidation," in *Postcommunism and the theory of democrac* (Princeton University Press, 2001); Gerardo L. (Gerardo Luis) Munck, "The Regime Question: Theory Building in Democracy Studies," *World Politics* 54, no. 1 (2001): 119-144.
[20] Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[21] Richard Snyder, "Beyond electoral authoritarianism: the spectrum of non-democratic regime," in *Electoral Authoritarianism*, ed. Richard Snyder (Lynne Rienner, 2006).
[22] Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962).
[23] Eva Bellin, "Contingent Democrats: Industrialists, Labor, and Democratization in Late-Developing Countries," *World Politics* 52, no. 2 (2000): 175-205; Eva Bellin, *Stalled Democracy: Capital, Labor and the Paradox of State-Sponsored Development* (Cornell University Press, 2002); Teresa Wright, "State-Society Relations in Reform-Era China: A Unique Case of Postsocialist State-Led Late Development?," *Comparative Politics* 40 (April 2008): 353-374; Kellee S. Tsai, *Capitalism Without Democracy: The Private Sector in Contemporary China* (Cornell University Press, 2007); Bruce J. Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private*

development is so significant that even when these social forces have become powerful enough to challenge the state, they stop short of doing so. These social forces are "contingent" democrats: for capitalists – they are receptive of democracy if they have less to fear in terms of the popular forces championing economic equality and redistribution; and for both capitalists and workers – they will champion democracy only if their material self interests are no longer dependent on the authoritarian state. The emphasis on contingent behaviors departs from earlier scholarship that privileges the consistent democratizing role of bourgeois capitalists (e.g. Barrington Moore)[24] or workers (Dietrich Rueschemeyer et al).[25]

While it is useful to address democratization in the context of late development, a distinction should be made between successful late developers and unsuccessful ones. The former, as "developmental states,"[26] are often characterized as "legitimate" despite their authoritarian politics.[27] This factor of legitimacy must be incorporated into any theoretical framework exploring regime durability and change in successful late developers such as Singapore and Taiwan, where the factors of material self interest and/or fear do not have complete explanatory power. For instance, in Singapore, big businesses depended on the state

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Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Margaret M. Pearson, *China's new business elite: the political consequences of economic reform* (University of California Press, 1997).

[24] Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Beacon Press, 1966); Charles Moraze, *The triumph of the middle classes□: a study of European values in the nineteenth century* (London□:: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966); Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution* (Penguin, 1969).

[25] Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (University Of Chicago Press, 1992); T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Cambridge University Press, 1950); E.P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class* (Pantheon, 1963).

[26] Chalmers A. Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975* (Stanford University Press, 1982); Stephan Haggard, *Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrializing Countries* (Cornell University Press, 1990); Peter B. Evans, *Embedded Autonomy* (Princeton University Press, 1995); Robert Wade, *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization* (Princeton University Press, 2003); Atul Kohli, *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[27] Adrian Leftwich, "Governance, the state, and the politics of development," *Development and Change* 25, no. 2 (1994); Adrian Leftwich, "Bringing politics back in: Towards a model of the developmental state," *Journal of Development Studies* 31, no. 3 (1995); Daniel A. Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* (Princeton University Press, 2006); Georg Sorensen, *Democracy and democratization: processes and prospects in a changing world* (Westview Press, 2007).

but had less to fear in terms of poverty or stark inequality. Small businesses were more independent and less favored by the state but they had not been more open to greater liberalization. As for labor, the fact that it was under state control had increasingly caused resentment to rise; yet no visible calls for regime change had been heard. Likewise, in Taiwan, though small and medium-sized capitalists who were less dependent on the state did support democracy, their role was minimal and should not be overstated.[28] On the other hand, from the view of self-interest and fear, it is puzzling why other businesses, which were squarely co-opted by and dependent on the regime, eventually became receptive of regime change.

Back to Authoritarianism

In general, the overemphasis on the nature of, conditions for, transitions and non-transitions to liberal democracy ignore those regimes that do not essentially make any substantive transition from authoritarianism. For the most part, these regimes still generally fit the classic definition and traits of authoritarianism: a single hegemonic party without full-scale mobilization; a dominating mentality but not full-blown ideology; centralized leadership operating with ill-defined but often predictable limits; limited pluralism without total control of all groups;[29] and no guarantee of civil and political liberties or tolerance for meaningful opposition.[30] In line with the recent calls by some scholars studying political change in the Middle East,[31] Africa,[32] Eastern Europe,[33]

[28] Andreas Martin Fulda, "Reevaluating the Taiwanese Democracy Movement: A Comparative Analysis of Opposition Organizations under Japanese and KMT - Rule," *Critical Asian Studies* 34, no. 3 (2002): 373.
[29] Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in *Cleavages, Ideologies, and Party System*, ed. Eric Allardt and Yrjo Littunen (Helsinki: Westmarck, 1964), 291-342; Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000); Howard Wiarda, *Introduction to comparative politics: concepts and processes*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt, 2000).
[30] Theodore M. Vestal, *Ethiopia: A Post-Cold War African State* (Praeger Publishers, 1999).
[31] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "Beyond Democratization: Political Change in the Arab World," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27, no. 3 (September 1994): 507-509; Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January 2004): 139-157; Holger Albrecht, "How can opposition support authoritarianism? Lessons from Egypt," *Democratization* 12, no. 3 (2005): 378-397; Lisa Anderson, "Searching Where The Light Shines: Studying Democratization in the Middle East," *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (2006): 189-214; Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*.
[32] Aili Mari Tripp, "The Changing Face of Authoritarianism in Africa: The Case of Uganda," *Africa Today* 50, no. 3 (2004): 3-26.

Cuba,[34] Central Asia,[35] Southeast Asia[36] and China,[37] we should focus on how and why contemporary authoritarian regimes like Singapore endure, and less on why they fail to democratize. The above refocus, however, is heavily slanted towards explaining their stability in terms of effective coercion[38] or clientelistic arrangements[39] or both.[40] While these are useful, less attention has been paid to how authoritarian regimes use other methods of social control and political domination beside, or at least in addition to, coercion or patronage.

In fact, reviewing past studies of authoritarian regimes, one could find that coercion is the key instrument of authoritarian rule.[41] In addition, many authoritarian regimes, such as the personalist or neo-patrimonial types, rule through dispensing patronage to a support network of

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[33] Lucan Way, "Authoritarian State Building and the Sources of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave: The Cases of Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine," *World Politics* 57, no. 2 (2005): 231-261.

[34] Darren Hawkins, "Democratization Theory and Nontransitions: Insights from Cuba," *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 4 (July 2001): 441-461.

[35] Paul Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia: Curse or cure?," *Third World Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1998): 29.

[36] Jalal Alamgir, "Against the Current: The Survival of Authoritarianism in Burma," *Pacific Affairs* 70, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 333-350; Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*; Dan Slater, "Iron Cage in an Iron Fist: Authoritarian Institutions and the Personalization of Power in Malaysia," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 1 (October 2003): 81-101; Dan Slater, "The Architecture of Authoritarianism: Southeast Asia and the Regeneration of Democratization Theory," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (2006): 1-22.

[37] Andrew J. Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003): 6-17; Martin K. Dimitrov, "Popular Autocrats," *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 1 (2009): 78-81.

[38] Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East."; Alamgir, "Against the Current."

[39] Albrecht, "How can opposition support authoritarianism? Lessons from Egypt."

[40] Way, "Authoritarian State Building and the Sources of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave."; Eva Bellin, "Democratization and Its Discontents," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 4 (August 2008): 112-119.

[41] Samuel Huntington and Clement Moore, "Authoritarianism, Democracy, and One-Party Politics," in *Authoritarian politics in modern society: the dynamics of established one-party systems*, ed. Samuel Huntington and Clement Moore (New York: Basic Books, 1970); Amos Perlmutter, *Modern Authoritarianism: A Comparative Institutional Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Guillermo A. O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (University of California Institute of International Studies, 1973); Larry Jay Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries* (Lynne Rienner, 1988); Stephanie Lawson, "Conceptual Issues in the Comparative Study of Regime Change and Democratization," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 2 (January 1993): 183-205; Robert M. Levine, "Institutionalizing Authoritarianism: Brazil Since 1964," *Latin American Research Review* 14, no. 1 (1979): 211-215; Daniel Levy, "Comparing Authoritarian Regimes in Latin America: Insights from Higher Education Policy," *Comparative Politics* 14, no. 1 (October 1981): 31-52.

self-interested clients and groups.[42] The type of authoritarian regime that tends to survive the longest – the one-party regimes – does so through a combination of co-optation (dispensing material rewards to as many groups as possible – even potential opponents) and coercion.[43] In short, because classic authoritarian regimes are coercive and/or self-interested, it is commonly argued that they always face the problem of popular legitimacy.[44] Furthermore, lacking the procedural basis for pluralistic political competition that makes democracies legitimate, authoritarian regimes cannot sustain legitimacy for any long period of time.[45] There is no possibility that some authoritarian regimes are legitimate, and that its legitimacy might derive from factors other than liberal procedural democracy.

Taking Legitimacy Seriously

Soek-Fang Sim notes that "given the problems with modernization theories, the question of why authoritarianism in East Asia is sometimes seen as legitimate by its subjects and the question of why it endures despite development need to be broached from the perspective of legitimacy" – "a subjective concept pegged to the perceptions of the ruled."[46] Though it has not been the staple of the democratization literature, the importance of legitimacy has always been acknowledged. Not surprisingly, legitimacy has been singled out as a factor for maintaining polyarchy (Dahl),[47]

[42] Willliam Zartman, "Opposition as support for the state," in *Beyond coercion: the durability of the Arab state*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and William Zartman (New York: Croom Held, 2003); Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," *World Politics* 46, no. 4 (July 1994): 453-489; Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democracy After Twenty Years?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1999): 115-144.
[43] Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democracy After Twenty Years?".
[44] Perlmutter, *Modern Authoritarianism*; Lawson, "Conceptual Issues in the Comparative Study of Regime Change and Democratization."; Paul C. Sondrol, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Dictators: A Comparison of Fidel Castro and Alfredo Stroessner," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23, no. 3 (October 1991): 599-620.
[45] Larry J. Diamond, "The Illusion of Liberal Autocracy," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 4 (2003): 167-171; Huntington, *The Third Wave*.
[46] Soek-Fang Sim, "Authoritarianism - East Asia - Legitimate(d) Authoritarianism", n.d., http://science.jrank.org/pages/8415/Authoritarianism-East-Asia-Legitimate-d-Authoritarianism.html.
[47] Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 129-149.

ensuring democratic stability (Almond and Verba),[48] and helping to consolidate democracy (Diamond).[49] Yet legitimacy is not the monopoly of democratic regimes alone. For both democrats and autocrats, legitimacy is a key variable for maintaining power (Weber, Rousseau, or Gramsci),[50] ensuring the effectiveness of the political system (Lipset),[51] affecting governability (Kohli),[52] and preventing regime challenges (Bendix), while low legitimacy and illegitimacy have been cited as contributing to both the breakdown of democracies (Linz)[53] and the collapse of authoritarian regimes and bringing about democratization (Huntington).[54] Clearly, and unlike the assumptions of the authoritarianism and democracy literatures, legitimacy can help or hamper autocrats and democrats alike. This section explains why we should take legitimacy more seriously when looking at the durability and collapse of authoritarian regimes. It explores what is meant by legitimacy, how to gauge it, what causes it, why it is different from coercion and self-interest, and ultimately how and why it matters.

First, with regard to definition,[55] there is a general common understanding that legitimacy is "the belief in the rightfulness of the [ruler], in its authority to issue command,"[56] and that the ruler "is more legitimate the more that it is treated by its citizens as rightfully holding and

[48] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*.
[49] Larry Diamond, *Developing democracy: toward consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 77-93.
[50] Max Weber, *The Theory Of Social And Economic Organization* (Free Press, 1964); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Penguin Classics, 1968); Antonio Gramsci, "State and Civil Society," in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).
[51] Lipset, *Political Man*; Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Doubleday, 1963).
[52] Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
[53] Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown and Reequilibration* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 16-23.
[54] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 46-58.
[55] Lynn T. White, *Legitimacy: Ambiguities Of Political Success Or Failure In East And Southeast Asia* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2005); Muthiah Alagappa, *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy: Results for 72 Countries," *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no. 3 (2006): 499-525; David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991); Rodney Barker, *Political Legitimacy and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[56] Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics," *International Organization* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 381.

exercising political power."[57] Legitimation is the process by which the regime attempts to rationalize its core commands, claims and the ideas underlying the rules of the political game into acceptance by the ruled.

Second, how do we know when a regime is legitimate? And if so, what cause it? The works of David Beetham and Bruce Gilley suggest that one can gauge legitimacy as constituting three elements: views about regime legality (laws, rules, and mechanism), views of its justification for the rule (shared principles, ideas, and values), and acts of consent (positive actions that express a citizen's recognition of the state's right to hold political authority).[58] As to the causes of legitimacy, Gilley finds, using statistical tests of data for 72 countries from 1998-2002, that the three variables most responsible are governance, rights, and welfare.[59] These studies make important advances in the quantitative analysis of the legitimacy concept, and provide answers to reservations held long ago by some scholars who feel that since legitimacy is such a "mushy concept," (Huntington)[60] measuring it would "require considerable ingenuity to execute adequately" (David Easton).[61]

Nevertheless, the latest measurements capture static pictures of legitimacy and not its process. As Lynn White remarks, "photographs may be taken to measure legitimacy at particular times, but we also need to catch the subject in motion by writing histories of the ongoing processes of legitimation and delegitimation."[62] In addition, in his measurement, Gilley concedes that in about one-third of the cases, his quantitative variables do not correlate as high with legitimacy, stating that other *contextual* factors such as international prestige and nationalism are

[57] Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy: Results for 72 Countries," 500.
[58] Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy: Results for 72 Countries."
[59] Bruce Gilley, "The Determinants of State Legitimacy: Results for 72 Countries," *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 47-71.
[60] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 46.
[61] David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, Underlining. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1965), 169.
[62] Lynn T. White, "Introduction: Dimensions of Legitimacy," in *Legitimacy: Ambiguities Of Political Success Or Failure In East And Southeast Asia*, ed. Lynn T. White (World Scientific Publishing, 2005), 10.

responsible for legitimacy – for instance, in China.[63] As we shall also see with Singapore and Taiwan, contextual factors, including geography, history and identity, also matter significantly for legitimacy. Treating legitimacy and the process of legitimation subjectively and interpretively can therefore better appreciate these contextual factors, an approach favored by most historical social scientific and philosophical treatments of the subject. As Muthiah Alagappa writes, "at the heart of the legitimacy issue is the discourse… between the ruler and ruled at various levels – a fact that should not be obscured by the methodological requirements of scientific rationality."[64]

Third, is legitimacy reducible to fear or self-interest, as Adam Pzreworski charges?[65] This question returns us to the notion that maintaining authoritarian regimes can only be done through repression or patronage. Again, theoretical logic and empirical observations from Taiwan, Singapore and beyond hold otherwise. First, legitimacy is not reducible to fear because the experiences of many Third Wave democratic transitions seem to demonstrate that even a regime with a strong state coercive apparatus, including Taiwan, eventually broke down or embraced regime change when faced with declining legitimacy.[66] Likewise, it has been observed that the end of communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, despite their coercive strength, was as much about a "legitimation crisis" as anything else.[67] Second, legitimacy is not reducible to self-interest if certain social forces, as in Singapore, that do not receive particularistic material rewards from a regime nevertheless lend it support. Legitimacy is also not reducible to self-interest if co-opted groups with clear material ties to a regime demand regime change when it is seen illegitimate. As Reinhard Bendix argues, though interrelated, a ruling coalition of self-interested elites and a legitimate authority based on the public acceptance of ideas and rules are

[63] Gilley, "The Determinants of State Legitimacy," 271. See also Alagappa for other contextual factors: from politically defining moments (e.g. an independence movement) and international support to, drawing on the work of Max Weber, normative goals (e.g. ideologies and religion) and personal authority (e.g. a charismatic ruler).
[64] Muthiah Alagappa, "The Anatomy of Legitimacy," in *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority* (Stanford University Press, 1995), 13.
[65] Adam Przeworski, "Some problems in the study of the transition to democracy," in *Transitions from authoritarian rule: comparative perspectives*, ed. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Lawrence Whitehead (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 51-52.
[66] Huntington, *The Third Wave*.
[67] Leslie Holmes, *The End of Communist Power: Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Robert English, *Russia and the Idea of the West* (Columbia University Press, 2000).

not the same.[68] In short, while fear and self-interest can induce compliance, legitimacy is a theoretically distinct mechanism that induces compliance because it is the "appropriate" thing to do.[69]

Finally, as to whether legitimacy matters for political stability and change, some have doubts. For example, Stathis Kalyvas contends that "delegitimation" was less a cause but a correlate of the collapse of communism in Europe.[70] More importantly, Przeworski also argues that the survival of a given regime depends not on legitimacy but the absence of "preferable alternatives."[71] Yet, this logic could be turn on its head to argue that precisely because a regime is legitimate, no preferable alternatives therefore exist.[72] The absence of preferable alternatives could be a strong indicator of legitimacy itself. Furthermore, as some African democratic transitions make clear, a loss of legitimacy was often sufficient to topple authoritarian regimes that relied too much on personal loyalty – before any organized alternative was present.[73] Ultimately, even if legitimacy's sole explanatory power is disputed, Kalyvas' explanation for the breakdown of one-party communist regimes constantly evokes the background role of legitimacy;[74] and Przeworski himself acknowledges that the loss of legitimacy can "signal" to strategic opponents to push for regime change.[75]

In short, this work will show that legitimacy is a significant and necessary factor for the stability and collapse of authoritarian regimes. Where there is relative acceptance of its core claims, the ideas underlying the rules of the political game, as well as its right to hold political

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[68] Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 20-21.
[69] Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics."; Barker, *Political Legitimacy and the State*; Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 32-33; Andrew F. March, "State ideology and the legitimation of authoritarianism: the case of post-Soviet Uzbekistan," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 8, no. 2 (2003): 211-212.
[70] Stathis Kalyvas, "The Decay and Breakdown of Communist One-Party Systems," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 323-43.
[71] Przeworski, "Some problems in the study of the transition to democracy," 51-52.
[72] Juan J. Linz, "Legitimacy of democracy and the socioeconomic system," in *Comparing Pluralist Democracies: Strains on Legitimacy*, ed. Mattei Dogan (Westview Press, 1988), 16, 18, & 65.
[73] Bratton and Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," 460-61.
[74] See Bruce Gilley, "Legitimacy and Institutional Change: The Case of China," *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 3 (March 1, 2008): 278.
[75] Przeworski, "Some problems in the study of the transition to democracy," 55.

power and issue commands, an authoritarian regime can claim legitimacy. As Mario Estaban argues, "legitimacy provides the government with the voluntary support of the population... In so doing, legitimacy guarantees the stability of a given regime in the long term, making the government less dependent on its short-term results, since the governed are willing to endure some sacrifices."[76] Or as Reinhard Bendix asserts more bluntly: "Legitimation achieves what power alone cannot, for it establishes belief in the rightness of rule which, as long as it endures, precludes massive challenges."[77] This is the reason why most autocratic regimes do not rule on the basis of force and material rewards alone. Most spend exorbitant amounts of time and effort perpetuating ideas, beliefs, and principles that define their rule.[78]

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Especially for small states, these ideas do not arise out of a vacuum but originate in a particular geographic location and setting, with its associated history and identity. The following section (re)introduces political geography to political science, where for most of its history has treated geographical categories such as space and place as static and inconsequential background for politics. It calls for the mutual constitution of space and politics – each is consequential for the other, and vice versa. A framework for comparative geographical analysis is then presented, which, unlike comparative historical analysis, explores political development not only through history but the intertwinement of history and geography. The chapter explains the concept of the geo-idea, a historically grounded political-geographical identity, and how it influences certain aspects of politics, in this case regime legitimation and maintenance.

Geography and the Social Sciences

[76] Mario Esteban, "The Management of Nationalism during the Jiang Era (1994-2002) and Its Implications On Government and Regime Legitimacy," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2006): 184.
[77] Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 17.
[78] Lisa Weeden, *Ambiguities of domination: politics, rhetoric, and symbols in contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Geographers such as John Agnew, Neil Smith, and David Harvey have constantly called on American social scientists to engage the geographical issues of space, place, and location in their social and political studies.[79] For most of the last century,[80] geographical categories were seen as fixed or static, or as factors that had little bearings on or relationships to the dependent variables that were the object of most political analyses.[81] Writing in a geography journal, the influential political science methodologist Gary King considers and then brushes aside one of the existential reasons for geographical analysis, pleading with political geographers to "not be so concerned with demonstrating that context matters." Instead, he stresses that their objective "should be to try as hard as possible to make context *not* count."[82]

While not all social scientists have been in rush to heed King's advice and ignore context, many usually view context as history[83] but not geography. Edward Soja has been prominent in pointing out that "foregrounding *historical* interpretations of social relations, social will, and societal development, while decidedly insightful, essentially subordinated space to time, geography to history, creating an ontological predisposition that would carry over to affect epistemological debate, theory formation, and empirical analysis in all the human sciences.„[84] Even when some social scientists could see the value of geography, the calls for engagement

[79] John Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, 3rd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008); David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Blackwell, 1996).
[80] Daniel J. Elazar, "Political science, geography, and the spatial dimension of politics," *Political Geography* 18, no. 8 (November 1999): 875.
[81] David Newman, "From 'Moribund Backwater' to 'Thriving into the Next Century'," in *The Razor's Edge: International Boundaries and Political Geography*, ed. Clive Schofield et al. (London: Kluwer Law International, 2002), 12-13; David Newman, "Comments on Daniel Elazar, political geography and political science," *Political Geography* 18, no. 8 (November 1999): 905-911; Lynn A. Staeheli, "Place," in *A Companion to Political Geography*, ed. John A. Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell, and Gerard Toal (London: Blackwell, 2003).
[82] Gary King, "Why context should not count," *Political Geography* 15, no. 2 (February 1996): 159-164. Emphasis in original.
[83] Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton University Press, 2004).
[84] Edward W. Soja, "Cities and states in geohistory," *Theory and Society* 39, no. 3-4 (March 2010): 362-363. Emphasis added.

have often been quite parochial in focus.[85] For example, to be useful to political science, Ian Lustick would like geographers to concentrate on territorial and boundary issues, including their definitions and changes.[86] And when contextually challenged Gary King sees utility in how geographers put the same political phenomenon he is studying under visualization and cartographic display, geographers John O'Laughlin and Alexander Murphy point out that this understanding only appreciates "geography as technique," which is understandable within the positivist proclivities of most social scientists.[87]

Some of the ignorance or hostility to a broader range of geographical research and analysis on the part of the social sciences has been the failure by the latter to take into account the distinction between "space" and "place." Traditionally, the study of international relations, for instance, has mostly regarded the two concepts one and the same, and in terms of analysis, again to treat both as mere backdrops where conflicts play out.[88] During the Cold War, the research obsession with topics such as the tensed relations and military competitions between the Soviet Union and the United States treated space as "distance" – either to be conquered/overcome (offensive use of weaponry) or defended (through the use of territories of allies and third countries).[89] As O'Laughlin notes, "the mathematical modeling so pervasive during the Cold War needed a simple conception of distance and space since other equation elements (comparative military strengths, alliance behavior and structures, tit for tat games, leadership styles, crisis conditions, etc.) were so complicated."[90] For strategic and international relations analysts during this period, the significance of geography for strategic maneuvers was quite obvious; yet as some of them admit, "the theory explaining why and how geography really

[85] John O'Loughlin, "Geography as space and geography as place: The divide between political science and political geography continues," *Geopolitics* 5, no. 3 (2000): 131.
[86] Ian S. Lustick, "Geography and political science," *Political Geography* 18, no. 8 (November 1999): 901-4.
[87] O'Loughlin, "Responses," 131; Alexander B. Murphy, "'Living together separately': Thoughts on the relationship between political science and political geography," *Political Geography* 18, no. 8 (November 1999): 887-894.
[88] Murphy, "Living together separately," 887-894; John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 53-80.
[89] O'Loughlin, "Responses," 132.
[90] Ibid.

counts is, in effect, missing in action."[91] The reason might have to do with mainstream political science's focus on the search for "order and regularity" in the supposed realist world of anarchy and conflict, where the rationalist "spatial approach" has been found to be useful,[92] while other geographical analysis and method seeking to understand the "messiness of a world of regions that is constantly in the process of being reshaped and redefined by internal and external forces" is less appreciative.[93] Again, to conventional political science, politics can affect space and place, but the other way around is less understood.

To some extent, this perception has begun to change. Some visible geographers-cum-social scientists, such as David Newman and Edward Soja, have noted that the relationships between the "geo" and the "poli/socio" are "now correctly perceived as bi-directional" or "mutually constituting,"[94] and even the work of some leading social scientists, such as Charles Tilly, Robert Goodin, or John Mollenkopf, have acknowledged that "place matters."[95] Nevertheless, the mainstream literatures on democratization, authoritarianism, and legitimacy rarely apply systematic geographical perspectives. To continue correcting the imbalance where geographers studying political phenomena read political science works, and less the other way around, this study brings the insights from political geography to bear on the question of authoritarian regime legitimation and maintenance.

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[91] Colin S. Gray, "Inescapable Geography," in *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, ed. Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 162.
[92] Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, "War and Peace in Space and Time: The Role of Democratization," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 1-29.
[93] O'Loughlin, "Responses," 135.
[94] Newman, "From 'Moribund Backwater' to 'Thriving into the Next Century'," 13; Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).
[95] Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly, *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitics For The Twenty-First Century* (University Press of Kansas, 2005).

Comparative Geographical Analysis (CGA)

Informed by the fundamental assumption that geography affects politics,[96] political geography examines "the variation of political phenomenon from place to place in connection with variation in other features of the earth."[97] Since there are material and non-material characteristics that distinguish each place from other places, a geographical perspective highlights "the areal context of events, objects and actions."[98] Just as social scientists accept that all political processes happen in *time*,[99] political geographers recognize that they also unfold over particular *places* – and hence the alteration of the *historical* and/or *geographical* constitutions of those processes will likely change how the processes operate.[100] A comparative geographical analysis (CGA), like comparative historical analysis (CHA), has three distinctive features: causal analysis, processes over time, and systemic and contextualized comparison.[101] But unlike CHA, CGA explores political development not only through history but how geography and history intertwine. Both time and place act not merely as background but as affective and consequential context for political thinking and behavior.

For most geographers, the difference between the material and non-material corresponds to the distinction between space and place. At the basic level, space is associated with territory, location, or distance which has a certain level of abstractness, neutrality, and impersonality, and

[96] Agnew, *Place and Politics*; John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell, and Gerard Toal, *A Companion to Political Geography* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).
[97] Richard Hartshorne, "Political Geography in the Modern World," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 4, no. 1 (March 1960): 52; Saul Bernard Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a World Divided* (New York: Random House, 1963), 5-6.
[98] J. Nicholas Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 6.
[99] Pierson, *Politics in Time*; James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[100] Deborah G. Martin and Byron Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2003): 145.
[101] Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, 10; Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (The MIT Press, 2005); Pierson, *Politics in Time*; Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (April 1980): 174-197.

whose property can be quantified and modeled,[102] as in the "spatial approach."[103] Place on the other hand implies familiarity, tradition, or intimacy, whose significance are profound and observable but not easily measurable in formal terms. As Richard Muir writes: "place, as it is explored in modern geography, is much more emotive, complex and elusive than a simple intersection of coordinates on the map."[104] It is, as Newman states, "a perceived entity… around which groups determine a sense of belonging and attachment."[105] To analyze place, context becomes very important, as it contains "elements of historical memory, geo-sociological influences, macroeconomic-microsocial interactions."[106] Place gives a sense of "security and stability," says Yi-Fu Tuan, an influential authority in human geography, while space signifies "openness, freedom, and threat."[107] Space becomes place "as we get to know it better and endow it with value."[108] Space can be physically contested, but only place can be ideationally contested.

There is some debate in geography on the nature, meaning and construction of place, and its relationship to physical space. For David Harvey, "place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct. The only interesting question that can be asked is: by what social process(es) is place constructed?"[109] Place as solely a social construct is a dominant approach, favored especially by those with certain political agendas because it implies that human power can make and remake structures, whether geographical, social or political.[110] Yet as those on the

[102] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), Chapter 1; O'Loughlin, "Responses," 133.
[103] Gleditsch and Ward, "War and Peace in Space and Time."
[104] Richard Muir, *Political Geography: A New Introduction* (London: Wiley, 1997), 19.
[105] Newman, "Comments on Daniel Elazar, political geography and political science," 13.
[106] O'Loughlin, "Responses," 133; Allan Pred, "Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time□Geography of Becoming Places," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74, no. 2 (March 1, 1984): 279-297; John Agnew, "Mapping politics: how context counts in electoral geography," *Political Geography* 15, no. 2 (February 1996): 129-146; Allen J. Scott, *Regions and the World Economy: The Coming Shape of Global Production, Competition, and Political Order* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2000).
[107] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.
[108] Some refer to this space as the "socially produced space," see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Blackwell, 1991); Smith, *Uneven Development*.
[109] Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, 261.
[110] Cresswell, *Place*, 30.

other side of the debate point out, a first and foremost emphasis on place as always being socially made ignores the reality that physical space, though without meaning in itself, plays in shaping any social processes. Jeff Malpas, here conceiving place as physical space, asserts, "humans cannot construct anything without being first in place – that *place is primary to the construction of meaning and society*. Place is primary because it is the experiential fact of our existence."[111] As for the social, he writes: it "does not exist prior to place nor is it given expression except in and through place… it is within the structure of place that the very possibility of the social arises."[112]

There should be a middle ground between the two views, as Robert Sack suggests: "privileging the social in modern geography, and especially in the reductionist sense that 'everything is socially constructed,' does as much disservice to geographical analysis as a whole as has privileging the natural in the days of environmental determinism…" He continues: "While one or other may be more important for a particular situation at a particular time, none is determinate of the geographical."[113] One way to move beyond the debate is through Anthony Giddens' structuration theory,[114] which proposes that human behavior is neither totally determined by material structures beyond our control nor the result of free social will. Structures, such as a certain language with grammatical rules, constrains our free actions yet also depend on our actions to exist and have meaning, which through a series of further actions have the potential to become altered or new but never forever constraining structures.[115] Hence, a broader understanding of place could be found in John Agnew's broad definition of it as "location, locale, and sense of place",[116] as well as Edward Soja's, inspired by the work of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, notion of place, which he terms "space," as three related realms: firstspace (place

[111] J. E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32.
[112] Ibid., 36.
[113] Robert David Sack, *Homo Geographicus* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 2.
[114] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (University of California Press, 1986).
[115] Cresswell, *Place*, 35.
[116] John Agnew, *The United States in the World-Economy: A Regional Geography* (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

as territory that could be objectively visualized and measured), secondspace (place as subjective and imagined), and thirdspace (place as practiced and lived experience).[117]

The Geo-Idea: A Three-Fold Conceptualization of Place

For our purpose therefore, the balance between the social and the physical as well as the need to avoid crude geographical determinism necessitate one to conceive the similarities and distinctiveness of a place (e.g. city, country, region, etc) in fluid interconnected ways. Drawing on the above, and expanding on the author's earlier work on geography and revolution, place is conceptualized as, first, *physical space and location*; second, place as *historically evolved* space; and finally, in linking physical materiality and history to politics, place as embodying *social and political identity*.[118]

The first conceptualization of place as physical space and location is straightforward.[119] As per above, space simply identifies the amount of physical material size, land, territory, and resources (for survival and development) and location points to where a given place is located. In terms of analysis, physical place should be further distinguished along the geographical concept of *scale* – national, regional, and international. As geographers Deborah Martin and Byron Miller argue, "scale clarifies the scope or extent of places, and in turn, a variety of social and political relations."[120] While the absolute space and location of a certain place is important, how that place relates to other places is just as significant in understanding the link between physical place to the two other conceptualizations of place discussed below.

To understand how significant, these different scales and relations need to be identified and "problematized."[121] For instance, in national terms, what are the size, shape, resources and boundaries of a certain place and what do they mean in terms of national sovereignty,

[117] Edward Soja, "Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination," in *Human Geography Today*, ed. Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Phillip Sarre (Polity Press, 1991), 260-278; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.
[118] Anoulak Kittikhoun, "Small state, big revolution: geography and the revolution in Laos," *Theory and Society* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 35-38. This article has won awards from the American Sociological Association (ASA) and the Association of Asian Studies (AAS).
[119] Staeheli, "Place," 159.
[120] Martin and Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics," 148.
[121] Murphy, "Living together separately."

independence, and vulnerability? At the regional scale, what other places are connected to that place – how and where? How do these connections matter in terms of the places' relationships? At the international scale, as political geographer Saul Bernard Cohen notes, "the essence of geographical analysis is the relation of international political power to the geographical setting."[122] Thus, the questions here are: what is the position/location of a certain place in "an international league table of nations,"[123] and what does this position mean in terms of great powers' strategic competition? Political geography at the international scale is not simply geopolitics in the traditional sense, but what geographers call "critical geopolitics." It not only helps to explore external powers' material interests and discursive understandings for being involved in a certain place, but also the power used by the ruling authority in defining "danger" and "security" as well as "a vision of the world in ways that specify political behaviors" in particular spatial contexts and in response to extra-national interventions.[124] Furthermore, while existing studies of democratization and authoritarian durability sometimes examine external impacts and influences,[125] without a geographical perspective, questions about the rationale for and intensity of those competitions and conflicts in a given place are assumed rather than explicitly addressed. Plus, the vulnerability of small countries to geographical pressures is in an order of magnitude much greater than those of bigger states.

The second conceptualization of place as historically evolved recognizes that categories such as space and location are neither fixed nor static. Places are not only different "in the simple sense of being located in different parts of [the world]", argues Tim Cresswell, but "they all have complicated relationships both to the past and to other places near and far."[126] A place's history shapes not only the first conceptualization of place's simple ontological materiality but also its third conceptualization – place as embodying identity. Here, how a certain place's physical

[122] Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a World Divided*, 24.
[123] Martin Jones, Rhys Jones, and Michael Woods, *An Introduction to Political Geography: Space, Place and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39.
[124] Kevin C. Dunn, "Identity, space and the political economy of conflict in Central Africa," *Geopolitics* 6, no. 2 (2001): 58 and 73.
[125] Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "International Linkage and Democratization," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 3 (2005): 20-34.
[126] Cresswell, *Place*, 79.

characteristics and identity emerge as a result of historical interactions with places in the region and in the world reveal much about its self-perception, its surroundings, others' perception of it, and hence its political and cultural attitudes. As Forrest Colburn suggests: "what is important… is not actual history, but collective memory and how it is shaped socially, even politically." "Nationalism," for example, "appears… to emerge partly out of the experience of living together in a particular setting, with unique endowments of geography, local cultural quirks, shared fears (including, prominently, of neighbors)."[127]

The literatures on authoritarianism and democratization do take cultural and ideational factors into account. Constructivist and cultural explanations, for example, usually start from the proposition that actors behave on the basis of deeply held or internalized values and norms.[128] However, these approaches sometimes ignore how culture or ideas interact with geography to produce social action. As Kevin Dunn points out, "people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations and memories… intimately linked with discursive constructions of identity and space."[129] Thus, the connection between identity, culture and geography needs to be better appreciated. Each identity narrative is grounded in specific practice and representation of a place. A basic example would be when people say they do things because it is how they usually do them given the places they are at or come from – it is first a geographical reasoning rather than a cultural one. According to Susan Smith, "place matters if we want to understand the way social identities are formed, reproduced, and marked off from one another."[130] To put it another way, *where* identities are made have an effect on which markers of difference – be it culture, ideology, class, race, etc – "are salient, and which are veiled."[131] Certain races and/or nations are often socio-cultural constructs that are reinforced, tied to, and

[127] Forrest D. Colburn and Arturo Cruz, *Varieties of Liberalism in Central America: Nation-States as Works in Progress* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 16.
[128] For example, see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[129] Dunn, "Identity, space and the political economy of conflict in Central Africa," 73.
[130] Susan J. Smith, "The Cultural Politics of Difference," in *Human Geography Today*, ed. Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Phillip Sarre (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999), 139.
[131] Smith, "The Cultural Politics of Difference."

reproduced in particular places,[132] while certain ideas and ideologies are more resonant in some places than others. Consider, for instance, what one prominent idea of America as a place seemed to be according to one of its (in)famous Presidents, Ronald Reagan: "this land was *placed here between the two great oceans* by some divine plan. It was placed here to be found by a *special kind of people – people who had a special love for freedom* and who had the courage to uproot themselves and leave hearth and homeland and come to what in the beginning was the most undeveloped wilderness possible."[133]

Overall, the three-fold conceptualization of place helps analysts identify what could be called a country's historically-evolved *geo-idea*: that is, the overall political idea or identity of a place given its physical space and history. This concept integrates existing emphases by geographers on the importance of space and place, historians and historical social scientists on the significance of time, and anthropologists and cultural analysts on the primacy of culture and identity. It is therefore an antidote to the determinisms of all three.

From the Geo-Idea to the Pre-Political Notion: A Process of Legitimation

Most of all for a small state, this geo-idea heavily shapes its politics.[134] It is the underlying basis of the regime's legitimation strategy, or its claims about guardianship and rightfulness to rule in a given place. Place can be used to powerfully construct accepted ideas about what is appropriate (in place) and inappropriate (out of place).[135] Utilizing the geo-idea, the regime can therefore define its *pre-political notion* – or what in politics is or should be accepted as given, commonsensical, unproblematic, and off the table.[136] The pre-political notion puts a limit on political engagement between the regime and social forces, draws appropriate political

[132] Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, eds., *Constructions of Race, Place, and Nation* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
[133] Quoted in Cresswell, *Place*, 72. Emphasis added.
[134] Colburn and Cruz, *Varieties of Liberalism in Central America*, 12. The authors argue: "political identity begins with geography. The enigma of countries lies in their peculiarities and in the ways in which these thousand peculiarities [of the places]… shape the conduct of politics."
[135] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
[136] March, "State ideology and the legitimation of authoritarianism: the case of post-Soviet Uzbekistan," 211.

boundaries, and encourages the kinds of politics that are in line with the nation's geo-idea. To the extent that these are accepted, one could speak of a society's *pre-political consensus*.

The distinction between the pre-political and the political[137] is important in understanding regime legitimation – in both liberal democracies and autocracies. In democracies, the pre-political that is accepted as legitimate is the sacrosanctity of the liberal values, constitutions, electoral procedures, and the "definitions of their political communities (who is a member and who is not, what are the boundaries of the state, what is the community to which the state is giving representation and identification)."[138] Thus, for instance, one cannot overthrow a democratic state through revolutionary means or replace political power using unconstitutional or extra-constitutional procedures other than voting in competitive elections. The soundness and legitimacy of the electoral democratic framework, however flawed in certain respects, can never be challenged as doing so violates the pre-political consensus.

The same logic about what is pre-political and political operates in authoritarian regimes. While most (liberal) commentators are concerned about the depoliticization of the polity in some of these regimes,[139] what autocrats are actually doing is not depoliticizing but defining and refining the pre-political notion which all significant social groups must accept before engaging in politics. Without a liberal definition of politics that privileges competition[140] and participation,[141] there is no such thing as depoliticization per se. As Chua Beng Huat, a prominent Singaporean

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[137] A similar distinction is in Sheldon Wolin's two forms of political power: the struggle for consensus (statesmanship) and the struggle for competitive advantage (partisanship); or in Herbert Werlin's note about two types of democracy: classical democracy (which emphasizes consensus-building) and liberal democracy (which has to do with competitive elections, multi-party systems, and majority rule). See Herbert H. Werlin, "Classical and Liberal Democracy: Singapore and Jamaica," *Journal of Social, Political & Economic Studies* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 173; Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

[138] March, "State ideology and the legitimation of authoritarianism: the case of post-Soviet Uzbekistan," 210-211.

[139] Stephanie Lawson, "Sanitizing Ethnicity: The Creation of Singapore's Apolitical Culture," *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 63-84; Heng Chee Chan, "Politics in an administrative state: Where has the politics gone?" (Department of Political Science, University of Singapore, 1975); Stephan Ortmann, *Politics and Change in Singapore and Hong Kong: Containing Contention* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Chapters 3, 4, and 6.

[140] Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1962), 269-283.

[141] Dahl, *Polyarchy*.

sociologist and sometimes critic of the authoritarian government, instructs: "the concept of depolitization is [itself] ideological… [because] it glosses over rather than exposes and explains the political dimension."[142] In other words, politics always exists. The only relevant question is what kind. That is, to understand modern authoritarian regimes, we must ask: where are the political boundaries and how are they being accepted/contested?

For anti-regime social forces, both the nation's geo-idea and the regime's pre-political notion have severe enabling or disabling effects on the possibilities for political contestation and challenge. If the regime's legitimacy were tied to its guardianship of an internalized geo-idea, with its corresponding pre-political notion presented as consequentially necessary, political power is rarely successfully challenged. The regime, as in Singapore, therefore endures. On the other hand, if the legitimacy of the nation's supposed geo-idea had not been largely internalized and often been called into question, or if an alternative or parallel one were to exist, it opens up avenues to contest the authoritarian regime's pre-political notion. Consequently, as Antonio Gramsci recognized long ago, a legitimation crisis (a general "crisis of authority") ensues in which one could argue the ruling authority has lost its pre-political consensus, is no longer the "leading" force in society and exercises mainly repression to stay in power.[143] As the cases of Taiwan (and South Korea) in the 1980s had demonstrated, the outcomes were regime changes.

PREVIEW

The following chapters present the case materials, organized around the research questions and causal narratives of the whole work. Chapter 2 explains the success of authoritarianism in the early period of newly independent Singapore (1960s-1970s). It explores how the ruling People's Action Party capitalized on and further highlighted Singapore's deeply internalized geographic constraints and its negative geo-historical interactions with larger powers near and far to legitimize the *pre-political* rules laid down to counter regime challenges. As a small vulnerable

[142] Beng Huat Chua, "Not Depoliticized but Ideologically Successful: the Public Housing Programme in Singapore," *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research* 15, no. 1 (1991): 25.
[143] Gramsci, "State and Civil Society," 210.

Chinese-dominated place doubly constrained within the Malay zone and the larger international expanding Communist environment, Singapore could not afford to tolerate the kinds of politics and political expressions that would ignite tensions – racial, ethnic, religious – and further invite or advance the causes of external powers within the region (Islamic Malaysia and Indonesia) or the world (communist China).

Chapter 3 examines the delegitimation and change of the authoritarian regime in early postwar Taiwan (1950s-1980s), as a cross-case comparison to Singapore of the previous chapter. It explains how the Chinese Nationalist (KMT) regime ruled Taiwan based on an idea that was forged from a geographical vantage point of its previous rule in Mainland China. To the KMT, Taiwan was no more than a small part within a big Chinese territory under threat from communism in which the Nationalist government would soon vanquish. Consequently, politics could not operate as usual, and new pre-political rules were cast down to combat the communist and "Taiwanist" oppositions to the Nationalist geo-idea. To the Taiwanese, the idea of Taiwan under the KMT always had questionable domestic legitimacy. The island was physically separate from China's space, was only loosely historically associated with the Chinese mainland, and had developed an incipient sense of non-Chinese geo-consciousness as a reverberation of centuries of subjugation to external powers' rivalries and occupations. The Taiwanese challenge to the KMT's geo-ideational claim ultimately broke through when it interacted with the dramatic changes in the international environment brought about by the rapprochement between the United States and communist China, the de-recognition of "Free" China by the United Nations and the US, and the subsequent decline of radical communism and rise of capitalism in the People's Republic of China.

Chapter 4 acts as a within-case comparative analysis to Singapore of the second chapter and a cross-case juxtaposition to Taiwan of the third chapter. As the former, it discusses a major change in the world environment – China's abandonment of radical communism – that led to a partial shift in the geo-idea of Singapore (1980s-2000s). As the latter, it demonstrates how the ruling PAP regime, unlike the KMT, took the initiative to reformulate that shift in order to meet the new challenge of rising political activism and contestation at home and preempted regime

change. The chapter argues that the PAP continued to capture the essence of its constrained regional geographical milieu in its legitimizing formula while drawing attention to new international opportunities of a rising capitalist China to reconnect with Singapore's long-suppressed Chinese heritage. In consequence, the refashioned geo-idea transformed politics. Yet instead of liberal democracy, the new pre-political rules embraced Chinese Confucian-inspired principles that reframed political participation as consultative and political expression as non-confrontational.

Chapter 5 concludes with four comparative observations, and highlights the significance of the work. The first observation is that an authoritarian regime survives as much on its ability to legitimize itself as its capacity to do anything else. Second, the key basis of a given authoritarian regime's legitimacy lies in that country's particular place, derived physically, historically, and ideationally within the region and the world. Third, material rewards to supporters and potential opponents matter for authoritarian survival. So is the capacity to repress political challenges. But these are not sufficient. Furthermore, the continuing and changing dynamics of the country's political geography mediate the regime's ability and will to forcefully and materially maintain authoritarian rule. Fourth, the economic performance of an authoritarian regime is important for its legitimacy and durability, but not always. What is as or more significant is political performance, or the ability to forge a national consensus on the country's identity and politics.

Overall, the work reminds readers about the salience of political geography. Geography affects the thinking and actions of states, including in the areas of social and political domination. In legitimizing their right to rule, authoritarian regimes draw on its spatial surroundings and characteristics, the perception and fears of its people regarding other states near and far, and the sort of history the country has experienced. The relative public acceptance of the regime's claims to legitimacy validates its restrictive political measures. The constant contestation of those claims gradually undermines the authoritarian political order needed to enforce the claims.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GEO-IDEA OF EARLY POSTWAR SINGAPORE: REGIME LEGITIMACY AND SURVIVAL IN THE 1960s-1970s

What was the idea of Singapore in the early postwar period? How did this idea affect the way the ruling regime legitimized itself to maintain power? This chapter traces the formation and articulation of Singapore's geo-idea, or the political idea derived from both its physical geographical environment and geo-historical development. Small in size and strategically located in the heart of the Malay Peninsula in Southeast Asia, Singapore had been subjected to external powers' rivalries and intervention, both from within the region and the world. Under British colonialism, the city saw the increase in the number and dominance of the ethnic Chinese, which contributed to racial tensions with the local Malay people who considered Singapore part of the ancient "Malay world." The failed marriage between the island and the greater Malaysian Federation, due inter alia to geo-historical animosities and ethnic riots, did much to contribute to the idea that Singapore was a place sandwiched between hostile Malaysia and Indonesia, with the added concern for the influence of Communist China because of Singapore's majority Chinese population.

The chapter then explores how the ruling regime capitalized on this geo-idea to create pre-political rules that deterred contestation and challenges. Because the country was situated in a region full of bad neighbors, the regime moved to ban certain kinds of politics that would not only threaten its survival but that of the country as a whole. Freedoms of expression, association, and assembly marked by racial, religious, and communist overtones were thus carefully policed. Yet because the geo-idea had become deeply internalized by both the ruler and the people, the regime's pre-political notion had come to be accepted as legitimate, even though some of the mechanisms used to keep them in place were authoritarian.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

The identification of Singapore's geo-idea starts with its national shape, size, location, and resource endowments. With a total land and water area of 697 sq km, the island of Singapore is

located in Southeast Asia between two extremely larger neighbors – Malaysia to the north (329,847 sq km total area) and Indonesia to the south (1,904,569 sq km total area).[144] Singapore is almost deprived of any natural resources (except fish) and the percentage of its arable land is a miniscule 1.47.[145] Out of the 256 independent and semi-independent territories in the world, it is ranked 199th in terms of size, while Malaysia is 73rd and Indonesia 23rd.[146] The country therefore is not only small in absolute shape and size, it is also extremely small relative to the key surrounding states. And unlike its much larger neighbors, Singapore has always faced particular geo-economic constraints – it does not possess any hinterland or self-sustaining resources for survival and development. Whatever it could do to survive depends on others, near and far. And though surrounded by sea, the country's location at the southern tip of the Malaysian peninsula has also engendered a dilemma not unlike that of a land-locked nation – access by sea and air requires passage through the sea and airspace of Malaysia and Indonesia. In fact, the two neighbors had occasionally denied Singaporean civil and military air and sea passages.[147]

In the early post-independent period, Singapore's dependence and vulnerability were additionally demonstrated by the fact that it was required to purchase most of its daily water usage from Malaysia and to a lesser extent Indonesia.[148] In other words, Singapore might have simply died of thirst had their neighbors cut off water supply, a threat heard too often from radical elements in Malaysia whenever tensions arose between the two neighbors. Thus for Singapore, the dependence on water of neighbors had been a physical geographical vulnerability that exuded the mentality of "overnight, an oasis may become a desert."[149] Lee Kuan Yew, leader of Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP) and subsequently the country's first and longest-serving

[144] "CIA World Fact Book: Singapore", October 4, 2009, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html.
[145] Ibid.
[146] "CIA World Fact Book: Malaysia", October 4, 2009, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html; "CIA World Fact Book: Indonesia", October 4, 2009, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html.
[147] Michael Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 5.
[148] Ron Matthews and Nellie Zhang Yan, "Small Country 'Total Defence': A Case Study of Singapore," *Defence Studies* 7, no. 3 (November 2007): 3.
[149] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 19.

Prime Minister, admitted this much in 1978: "If water shortage became urgent, in an emergency, we would have to go in, forcibly if need be… and restore the water flows."[150]

GEO-HISTORICAL INTERACTIONS

Regional Antagonisms

Singaporean-Malaysian Mutual Enmity and Suspicion

While the absolute size, location, and economic resource constraints influence how Singapore perceives itself, a history of antagonistic interactions with neighboring states in the region would reinforce it profoundly. One could imagine that given a different set of geo-historical interactions, Singapore's perception of vulnerability would be less, or certainly different. In any case, the reality for Singapore is that the historical relationships with neighbors have made politically salient not only its geographical features but also the different racial/ethnic[151] compositions without its borders.

For Singapore, of its 4.6 million people, 76.8 percent are made up of ethnic Chinese, 13.9 percent Malay, and 7.9 percent Indian.[152] While the absolute number of each has increased since independence, the percentages have remained relatively stable. In terms of language, the majority of Chinese [now] speak English and Mandarin; other dialects in use are Hokkien (11.4 percent), Cantonese (5.7 percent), and Teochew (4.9 percent). Nearly all Malays speak the Malay language and a sizable number of Indians speak Tamil.[153] In terms of religions, Buddhists comprise 42.5 percent, Muslim 14.9 percent, Taoist 8.5 percent, Hindu 4 percent, Catholic 4.8 percent, other Christian 9.8 percent, other 0.7 percent, and none 14.8 percent.[154] Significantly,

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[150] Kuan Yew Lee, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 276.
[151] While "race" and "ethnicity" are different, they are more or less treated synonymously in the Singaporean and Malaysian contexts.
[152] "CIA World Fact Book: Singapore." Population is a 2009 estimate; ethnic percentages are from the 2000 census. Note also there are sub-categories within each major one. The rest are "others."
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.

nearly all Malays are Muslim while nearly every ethnic Chinese is not.[155]

In Indonesia and especially Malaysia, almost the complete opposites have been the case. For Malaysia, of its 25.7 million people, 50.4 percent consists of Malays, 23.7 percent Chinese, 11 percent indigenous, and 7.1 percent Indian.[156] What is significant is that while most Malaysian Malays are Muslims and speak the Malay language, more than 60 percent of the total population are followers of Islam. For Indonesia, of its 240 million people, more than 85 percent are Muslims.

Thus for Singapore, clearly it is a small Chinese-majority state in a predominantly Malay sub-region, with a significant portion of its own Islamic population whose Malay ethnicity is closer to its neighbors Malaysia and Indonesia. Furthermore, sizable percentages of ethnic Chinese are citizens of surrounding states. However the fact of the country's ethnic and religious differences per se would not actually have political implications had it not been for a history of antagonism, especially with Malaysia, that may have been forgiven at times but never forgotten.

The logic of minimizing a small state's and racial/ethnic minority's insecurity complexes greatly influenced Singapore's bid to secure a merger with the larger Malay states in the early 1960s. Soon after World War II, although Britain – the colonial power – had granted Singapore political parties to contest for limited self-government in 1955 and full self-government within the British Empire in 1959, the anti-colonial nationalism that emerged against the Japanese occupation during the war proved that self-rule was not enough. Moreover, the Federation of Malaya (a new entity composing of Malacca, Penang, and other Malayan peninsular territories) gained self-rule by 1955 and independence from the United Kingdom by 1957. Cognizant of the fact that it would not make any political, ethnic, or economic sense for geographically small Singapore to remain on its own at a time of various Malay powers' consolidating and British power's dwindling, Lee and the PAP decided to join Malaya, the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak to form the new independent Federation of Malaysia in 1963. As he explained a year

[155] Khun Eng Kuah, "Maintaining Ethno-Religious Harmony in Singapore," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 28, no. 1 (March 1998): 103-121.
[156] "CIA World Fact Book: Malaysia." Population is a 2004 est.; the rest are "others."

before the merger, “Singapore with its predominantly Chinese population would, if independent on its own, become a South-East Asia’s Israel with every hand turned against it.”[157]

If geography had been the main rationale behind the merger for Singapore, it also turned out to be the union’s undoing. For the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the ruling party in Malaysia, the basic logic behind accepting Singapore into the federation was to prevent it from becoming a center for ethnic Chinese communist mobilization in the region,[158] with the capacity to influence the sizeable portion of Malaysia’s own Chinese population. From the viewpoint of the departing power, Britain also insisted that the new Malaysian union include Singapore for security reasons.[159]

During the merger, UMNO sought to rectify the historical economic dominance of the Chinese through affirmative action measures on behalf of the Malay race. As historian C. M. Turnbull writes, “distrust and resentment against the immigrant communities, and particularly the Chinese, ran deep among the Malay population” and “their suspicions of Chinese loyalty remained as strong as ever.[160] To PAP and most Chinese, UMNO’s measures were at best positive discrimination and at worst outright racism. PAP in turn began to question the *bumiputera* (favoring Malays) principle promulgated by UMNO and instead called for a multiracial “Malaysian Malaysia” when it contested the 1964 federal elections. UMNO immediately saw this as a challenge to its ruling status and representative of the majority race. Though the PAP’s Malaysian Malaysia slogan might have genuinely been an “attempt to divert politics from communalism towards socio-economic questions that affected all communities,” Turnbull states that it “was interpreted as a threat to Malay privileges, and it aroused the very communal passions that the PAP aimed to allay.”[161]

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[157] *The Guardian*, London, 11 September 1962.
[158] Heng Chee Chan, *Singapore: The Politics of Survival, 1965-1967* (Oxford University Press, 1971), 6; C. M. Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2009), 287.
[159] Thomas J. Bellows, *The People’s Action Party of Singapore: Emergence of a Dominant Party System* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1970), 13.
[160] Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, 289.
[161] Ibid.

The political battles between PAP and UMNO were reflective of greater hostilities between the different races – hostilities that would be visibly demonstrated in a series of deadly inter-racial-religious violence and riots, many of which would be dictated not only by internal prejudices but, as we shall see, external manipulations. The first major one, the Maria Hertogh Riot of 1950, occurred even before merger and had to do with the fight for custody of a Eurasian girl who had been raised as a Muslim by a Malay family.[162] Muslims became angry when a colonial court awarded custody to her Catholic Dutch birth parents and removed her from a marriage to a Malay husband. The incident, in which riot "mobs were ranging all over the island, dragging Europeans and Eurasians from cars and buses" and other places in sight, killing and injuring hundreds,[163] demonstrated to the then ruling British (and soon to be Chinese) authority the capacity of previously suppressed racial tensions to get out of hand as well as Muslim seriousness and sensitivity to the perceived public insult to their faith.[164]

Ethnic riots directly between Malays and Chinese took place in 1964 and 1969 – two extremely violent years during two politically defining moments (merger and immediate post-separation). The first, during the Malay-Singapore merger, took place in July 1964 and resulted in 22 deaths, 454 injuries, 256 arrests, and 1579 curfews; a further riot ensued in September and claimed 12 more lives and many more injuries.[165] According to a recent survey of Singaporeans and Malaysians, "the days of rioting that occurred… are *still* remembered today."[166] They "served

[162] Syed Muhd Khair Aljunied, *Colonialism, Violence and Muslims in Southeast Asia: The Maria Hertogh Controversy and its Aftermath* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Tom Eames Hughes, *Tangled Worlds: The Story of Maria Hertogh* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1980); Richard Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia, 1945-1983* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985); A. J. Stockwell, "Imperial Security and Moslem Militancy, with Special Reference to the Hertogh Riots in Singapore (December 1950)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 17, no. 2 (September 1986): 322-335.
[163] Stockwell, "Imperial Security and Moslem Militancy, with Special Reference to the Hertogh Riots in Singapore (December 1950)," 330.
[164] Michael Leifer, "Communal Violence in Singapore," *Asian Survey* 4, no. 10 (October 1964): 1116-1117.
[165] Lawson, "Sanitizing Ethnicity," 71.
[166] James H. Liu et al., "Social representations of history in Malaysia and Singapore: On the relationship between national and ethnic identity," *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 5, no. 1 (April 2002): 7. Emphasis added.

as *indelible* milestones in Singapore's race-relations history."[167] The riots occurred within the context of the feud over the special treatment policy for the historically disadvantaged Malay masses. In addition to implementing this policy generally for the federation, UMNO also proposed a similar arrangement for the Malays residing in Singapore during merger.[168] When PAP insisted against any preferential treatments except some educational development programs, the Malay vernacular newspaper, *Utusan Melayu*, charged at one point that it was "trying to turn Singapore into another Israel and suppressing Muslims."[169] The geographic reference was unmistakable: a Malay region that was overwhelmingly Islamic must not be a place Malay-Muslims were oppressed.

Singapore separated from the Malaysian Federation in August 1965. From PAP's point of view, Singaporeans, especially those of Chinese background, "fought for our rights as a people and we were expelled."[170] Singapore was not and could not be "Malaysia."[171] In a speech in May 1965, Lee Kuan Yew declared: "According to history, Malays began to migrate to Malaysia in noticeable numbers only 700 years ago… Therefore it is wrong and illogical for a particular racial group to think that they are called Malaysians and that the others can become Malaysians through their favour." Though this view of history was, according to Lily Zubaidah-Rahim, "poor" given the supposedly "atavistic internal migration within the Malay World,"[172] it was nevertheless a widely held perception.

In UMNO's perspective, and in the broader "historical consciousness of the Malays," as local historian Albert Lau puts it, "Malaya was primarily a Malay country and that the non-Malays, who had settled there under British rule, were in Malaya on sufferance and were not entitled to

[167] Rahil Ismail and Brian Shaw, "Singapore's Malay-Muslim minority: Social identification in a post-'9/11' world," *Asian Ethnicity* 7, no. 1 (February 2006): 38. Emphasis added.
[168] Lawson, "Sanitizing Ethnicity," 71.
[169] Ibid.; Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, 290.
[170] Lee Kuan Yew, quoted in *Strait Times*, 19 February 2003.
[171] *Strait Times*, 1 August 1990.
[172] Lily Zubaidah-Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World: Building and Breaching Regional Bridges* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 33.

citizenship rights except on Malay terms."[173] Furthermore, merely being from a small place, Lee and other PAP leaders were deemed as overly ambitious in asserting Singapore's importance in/to the Federation, and when faced with resistances from UMNO, broke away.[174] To UMNO's then leader and Prime Minister of the Malaysian Federation, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Singapore's limited position within the new Federation was quite obvious: "the island should occupy the place of New York in contrast to that of Kuala Lumpur, represented as the Washington of Malaysia in a clear separation of economic and political roles."[175]

In addition to miscalculating its importance,[176] PAP and especially Lee was also labeled as being insensitive to Malay political culture and history.[177] For example, towards the end of the merger, Lee raised the idea that the the states that were not predominantly Malay in population composition, such as Singapore, Penang, Malacca, Sabah and Sarawak, might be better off on their own. In fact, with those states in the Federation, the percentage of non-Malays to Malays was 61 to 39, something Lee made frequent references to.[178] Overall, though it was Singapore leaders, especially Goh Keng Swee, who first raised the possibility of separating from Malaysia,[179] the fact remains the merger did not work due to "a clash of temperaments and worldviews, with consequent misunderstandings among the key players."[180]

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[173] Albert Lau, *A Moment of Anguish: Singapore in Malaysia and the Politics of Disengagement* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003), 280; Carl A. Trocki, "Review: A Moment of Anguish," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (2000): 802. Lau's book has been criticized by scholars such as Zubaidah-Rahim and Carl Trocki as being in line with the official "Singapore story" promoted by the regime, though Trocki does use these words to describe the book: "definitive treatments of these events," "well documented," "well-balanced, and thorough account."

[174] Bellows, *The People's Action Party of Singapore*; Zubaidah-Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World*, 25-28.

[175] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 30.

[176] Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region, 1945-65* (Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 2005); James Minchin, *No Man Is an Island: A Study of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew* (Unwin Hyman, 1987).

[177] Datuk Abdullah Ahmad, *Tengku Abdul Rahman and Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1963-1970* (Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing, 1985).

[178] Patrick Keith, *Ousted!* (Media Masters, 2005), 66.

[179] Michael D. Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Beliefs Behind the Man* (Georgetown University Press, 2000), 79-80; Melanie Chew, ed., *Leaders of Singapore* (Singapore: Resource Press, 1996), 147.

[180] Michael D. Barr and Ziatko Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore: Elitism, Ethnicity and the Nation-Building Project* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008), 29.

After separation, animosities between Malays and Chinese did not subside. Many Malays continued to harbor the feelings that Chinese (and Indians) were much better off economically and that more should be done. The former of course resisted. As one Chinese *towkay* (master) instructed a Malaysian Malay official: "If it weren't for the Chinese, you Malays would be sitting on the floor without tables and chairs;" in which the latter retorted: "If I knew I could get every damned Chinaman out of the country, I would willingly go back to sitting on the floor."[181] With this typical deep-seated sentiment as backdrop, another deadly Sino-Malay riot broke out on May 13, 1969 in Kuala Lumpur. With thousands dead and injured,[182] it was the worst in Malaysian history and resulted in a declaration of a state of emergency and suspension of parliament for two years. The "May 13" Incident, as it had become immortalized in Malaysian collective memory, occurred after an emotional general election that saw a face-off between rallies by opposition parties and counter-demonstrations by adherents of ethnic Malay nationalist parties spin out of control. Not surprisingly, the riot reverberated down the peninsular into Singapore, sparking Chinese revenge against Malays in a weeklong ethnic conflict that left 4 dead and 80 wounded.[183] The spillover rekindled anxieties that any racial conflict up north would quickly engulf the island, with the worst case being the drawing in of Indonesia.[184]

Malaysian-Indonesian Rivalry

The geopolitical rivalry between Malaysia and Indonesia, despite being similar ethnically, also clouded political developments in Singapore. This was especially the case during the period of *Konfrontasi* or "Confrontation" (1962-1966), when the two fought over control of the territories in the giant island of Borneo (made up of contemporary eastern Malaysia, northern Indonesia, and Brunei). Perceiving the new Malaysian Federation to be a British neo-imperial project,[185] and a

[181] Cited in "Malaysia: Preparing for a Pogrom," *Time*, July 18, 1969, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901058-1,00.html. [Accessed October 4th, 2009]
[182] Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia, 1945-1983*.
[183] Joe Conceicao, *Singapore And The Many-Headed Monster: A Look At Racial Riots Against A Socio-Historical Background* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2007), 112-113.
[184] Dick Wilson, *The Future Role of Singapore* (Oxford University Press, 1972), 37.
[185] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 59.

threat to its independence, Indonesia vehemently opposed the Merger and worked to destabilize it – adding another layer of complication that contributed to its undoing.

Although it did not directly lay claim to Singapore's territory, Indonesia had pursued "limited acts of terror and intimidation" within Singapore,[186] and Indonesian gunboats forcibly took over many fishing crafts from the island.[187] In 1963, Indonesia ostensibly proposed the "Malay Confederation of Maphilindo" (or the combination of Malaya, Philippines and Indonesia).[188] During the 1964 riots in Singapore, both UNMO and PAP blamed Indonesian operatives who illegally entered the island to incite further disturbances.[189] In addition, there were reports of provocations from Indonesian paratroopers amassing in Johor (the Malay state closest to Singapore). In 1968, Singapore tried and convicted two Indonesian marines for "terrorist murder" against civilians during the Konfrontasi period. Despite pleas for clemency, the two were hung, provoking violent outrage by an Indonesian mob against Singapore's diplomatic mission in Jakarta. Thus to Singapore, the sense of vulnerability was not only felt from its hostile northern neighbor but also from the largest Muslim country in the world just south of the border.

One note however is that although the Malaysian-Indonesian rivalry influenced political developments in Singapore, as troubling for the city-state was the prospect of a Malaysian-Indonesian "united front" against it. In fact, during an earlier visit to Indonesia in January 1960, Lee Kuan Yew supported the country's claim to Irian Jaya (then the western part of New Guinea) in opposition to Malaysia's.[190] In a way, the Indonesian-Malaysian rivalry was bad but certainly better than rapprochement, which became a reality after the end of Confrontation in the late 1960s. Lee stated shortly after independence: "Our long-term survival demands that there is no government in Malaysia that goes with Indonesia."[191]

International Interventions and Influences

[186] Ibid., 2.
[187] Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, 290.
[188] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 38.
[189] Lawson, "Sanitizing Ethnicity," 71-72.
[190] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 59.
[191] *The Observer*, 15 August 1965.

Most local and Western literature on Singapore politics in the aftermath of the separation from Malaysia in 1965 commonly point out the PAP's legitimizing strategy of ensuring Singapore's "survival" in the face of severe internal challenges since independence was forced upon and not fought for.[192] In addition to the well-known problems of ethnic tensions and riots, Singapore also faced reduced entrepot trading, skyrocketing unemployment, rapid population growth, severe housing crisis, and over-crowding of the central city area.[193]

However, many newly independent countries also faced these kinds of problems and their political authorities had not used the necessity of survival argument to legitimize a politically restrictive guardianship of the country to the same extent as the PAP. To appreciate this legitimation strategy, we must dig deeper into the geo-historical sources of the lingering enmity that colored Malaysia-Singapore relations and how particular international interventions and influences had shaped Singapore's idea of its place. As earlier specified, analysis of relations at the international scale and their impact on local development rounds out a more complete geographical perspective.

Because Malaysia and Singapore were key geo-strategic and geo-economic places in Southeast Asia – an area geographer Saul Cohen called a "shatterbelt," power struggles within the state and region were always complicated by incessant interventions of powers from without. By virtue (or vice) of being located in a shatterbelt, it is not possible to comprehend Singapore's internal political developments through "a purely national vantage point, because in almost every instance complications arise from relations with neighboring states or with extra-regional states."[194] This is not mere empty theorization, as Lee Kuan Yew recognized in practice at the outset of independence: "we are in the heart of that archipelago which makes our position one of supreme strategic importance and, at the same time, one of grave perils."[195]

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[192] See Chan, *Singapore;*.
[193] Jon S. T. Quah, "Government Policies and Nation-Building," in *In Search of Singapore's National Values*, ed. Jon S. T. Quah (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1990), 46-47.
[194] Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a World Divided*, 83.
[195] Quoted in Mark Hong, ed., *MFA Reader*, vol. 1 (Singapore: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1988).

European Rivalry and British Imperialism in Southeast Asia[196]

The modern day history of Singapore usually started with the island being "discovered" by the British colonial administrator Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles in the early 19th century. Yet if one wished to better grasp the deeper historical roots of Malaysia-Singapore antagonism examined above, one needs to go further back to much earlier when external great powers, especially the Dutch and British, scrambled to establish geopolitical positions in the Malay peninsular.[197] Since the seventh century, Singapore was probably a small trading dependency of the Srivijava Empire, with its capital at Palembang, whose domain extended to parts of Sumatra, western Malaya, and western Java.[198] By the eleventh century, a Javanese kingdom, Majapahit, overtook Srivijava as the dominant sea power in the Malay sub-region and claimed Singapore as a vassal in 1365. Control changed hands again when Singapore became a vassal of the Malacca Sultanate in 1400, founded by the previous sultan of Palembang. By this time, China, during the early Ming Dynasty decades during the reign of Yung-lo (1403-24), also had a naval base in Malacca; the sultan in fact accepted Chinese suzerainty as protection against the Siamese and Javanese.[199] The death of Yung-lo and the rule of the non-seafaring Manchu in China led to the decline in Chinese naval interest and activities in Southeast Asia.[200] When the Portuguese and Spaniards arrived in the region in the early sixteenth century, "there was no Asian power with naval capacity to oppose" them.[201]

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[196] The historical information in this study comes from a variety of sources, and where information is contradictory, efforts have been made to either point them out or to rely on the relatively authoritative history of Singapore by C. M. Turnbull, which most scholars agree is an excellent, fairly accurate, and balanced account. Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*; Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee, eds., *A History of Singapore* (Oxford University Press, 1991); Albert Lau, "The National Past and the Writing of History of Singapore," in *Imagining Singapore*, ed. Kah Choon Ban, Anne Pakir, and Chee Kiong Tong (Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004); Edwin Lee, "The Historiography of Singapore," in *Singapore Studies: Critical Surveys of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Basant K. Kapur (1989: Singapore University Press, n.d.); Kim Wah Yeo, "Review: A History of Singapore 1819-1975," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (1979).

[197] Liu et al., "Social representations of history in Malaysia and Singapore," 7.

[198] Lin Ken Wong, "The Strategic Significance of Singapore in Modern History," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Oxford University Press, 1991), 18.

[199] Ibid., 19.

[200] Ibid., 20.

[201] Ibid.

In 1511, the Portuguese became the first Western power to seize Malacca. As "a great entrepot and strategic choke point [with] access to the whole of South-East Asia and even to southern China," it had been written that "whoever was Lord of Malacca has his hands on the throat of Venice."[202] For the next 130 years, Portugal controlled Malacca and fought off repeated attempts to oust it by Achenese, Javanese, and Malay forces.[203] But with the help of another European power, the Dutch, the Malays were finally able to reclaim it back in 1641.[204] The Malacca Sultanate was later reconstituted as the Johore Sultanate/Empire in the Riau-Lingga Archipelago. Half a century of peace followed until internal troubles gave way for the Dutch to take more formal control by the late 18th century when the Johor Sultanate became a Dutch vassal, with a Dutch Resident and garrison installed in Riau.[205]

By 1786 however, the British, through the East India Company, arrived on the scene with the establishment of settlements in nearby West Sumatra and Penang, two key positions with the purpose of denying bases to the French and protecting the monopoly of the British Empire's China trade.[206] Then in 1795, during the French Revolutionary Wars, the British took temporary possession of Malacca and Java, removing the Dutch Resident and garrison from Riau and allowing the local sultan to reassert some authority.[207] As peace was returning to Europe and in the spirit of promoting cooperation, in 1814, the British agreed to restore Dutch power in Java and Malacca.[208] The Dutch also reclaimed the Sumatra islands of Banka, Billiton, and others, upon which they had had initial influence before losing them to Britain.[209] Raffles, who was then Lieutenant-Governor of Java, opposed the restoration of Dutch power and wanted to use the wartime occupation to expand British advantage and "to supplant the influence of the Dutch, whose ways of government and commercial monopoly he regarded as 'contrary to all principles of

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[202] Arthur Joo-Jock Lim, "Geographical Setting," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Oxford University Press, 1991), 13.
[203] Wong, "The Strategic Significance of Singapore in Modern History," 20.
[204] Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, 22-23.
[205] Ibid., 23.
[206] Ibid., 25.
[207] Ibid., 23.
[208] Ibid., 25.
[209] Zubaidah-Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World*, 20; Syed Hussein Alatas, *Thomas Stamford Raffles, 1781-1826: Schemer or Reformer?* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971), 9-14.

natural justice and unworthy of any enlightened and civilized nation.'"[210] To Raffles, the occupied area represented "a prized location at the junction of communications between the Indian and Pacific Oceans."[211]

Dutch-British rivalry was reheated when the Johore-Riau-Lingga Empire ruler, the Malay Sultan (Mahmud Badruddin), died in 1812. A power struggle for the throne ensued between two princes, Hussein and Abdul Rahman – in fact the previous Sultan's two sons and half-brothers – each supported by different ethnic powers in the region (the older Hussein by the empire's Malay princes and Abdul Rahman by the migrant Bugis from Celebes/Sulawesi).[212] Hussein became the new "Sultan" of the empire, with his throne based in Lingga; Abdul Rahman was also declared Sultan, with a base in Riau.[213] Keen on protecting its domination of peninsular Malaya against the United Kingdom, the Dutch aided Abdul Rahman against his brother.[214] On the other hand, Raffles supported and granted recognition of Sultan Hussein as the rightful ruler of the Johore-Riau-Lingga Empire.[215] Representing the commercial interests of the British East India Company, Raffles further out-maneuvered the Dutch by offering to pay Sultan Hussein 5,000 dollars a year and the local Chief Temengong (also named Abdul Rahman) 3,000 dollars a year in a treaty signed on February 6th, 1819.[216]

Delighted with the British "founding" of Singapore, Raffles wrote later that year that "it breaks the spell… [that] they (the Dutch) are no longer the exclusive sovereigns of the eastern seas."[217] As "far as naval superiority and commercial interests are concerned," he continued, it is "of much higher value than whole continents of territory."[218] He was right; as Wong Lin Ken points out: "An arc of islands surrounds Singapore, with three straits opening into the Indian Ocean – the Straits of Malacca, the Sunda Straits, and the Lombok Straits. [The 500-mile long

[210] Quoted in Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, 26.
[211] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 2.
[212] Husain Haikal and Atiku Garba Yahaya, "Muslims in Singapore: The colonial legacy and the making of a minority," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 17, no. 1 (April 1997): 83-88.
[213] Zubaidah-Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World*, 21.
[214] Haikal and Yahaya, "Muslims in Singapore."
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, 29.
[218] Ibid., 31.

Straits of Malacca] between the Malay Peninsular and Sumatra is the shortest distance between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Thus, Singapore is at the focal point where sea routes conjoin: from Europe and India in the West; from China, Japan, Indo-China, and Thailand in the north; from Borneo and the Moluccas in the east; and from Java and Australasia to the south."[219] Raffles even put a clause in the treaty that would not allow any other nations to set up factories or posts where Britain already had theirs.[220]

It was not long however before the British realized that to secure the trading post against internal and external influences, it needed ownership of the whole island and the rights to make laws. Thus, through further coercive and financial pressures,[221] another agreement, dubbed the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, was concluded in 1824 with Sultan Hussein ceding Singapore directly to Britain in perpetuity. It was made easier because shortly before this in that same year the British and Dutch had already signed their own treaty delimiting the imperial boundaries in the Malay Archipelago, which recognized the British right to Singapore.[222]

Though Malay indigenous status is officially recognized in the Singaporean Constitution (Section 152), both Malays and Chinese could claim that they were there from the very first day Raffles established a British trading post on the island on January 29th, 1819. According to Malaysian historiography, however, Malays were the majority at the time,[223] though others say that there were a similar number of Malays and Chinese.[224] To Malays, British tutelage since 1824 (administered under British India) and official British colonialism since 1867 (when Singapore, Malacca, and other territories became crown colonies after the East India Company dissolved) would turn them from majority to minority status in favor of other racial groups – especially the Chinese. From constituting a little more than 30 percent of a population of about

[219] Wong, "The Strategic Significance of Singapore in Modern History," 18.
[220] Christopher H. Wake, "Raffles and the Rajas: The Founding of Singapore in Malayan and British Colonial History," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 48, no. 1 (1975): 58-59.
[221] Haikal and Yahaya, "Muslims in Singapore."
[222] Harry J. Marks, *The First Contest for Singapore, 1819-1824* (The Netherlands: Nijhoff, 1959); L. A. Mills, *British Malaya, 1824-1867* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966).
[223] Haikal and Yahaya, "Muslims in Singapore."
[224] Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, 25; Lawson, "Sanitizing Ethnicity."

10,000 in Singapore before 1824, as opposed to Malays' 50 percent, the former swelled to make up more than half of the island's inhabitants and 65 percent by 1867.[225] While the harsh conditions in China and the potential business opportunities in the port city of Singapore contributed to Chinese migration to and growth on the island, it was also the almost unrestricted immigration policy for welcoming Chinese and non-Muslims that Britain favored. In fact, when Raffles, though like most imperialists regarded the "others" including the Chinese as inferior,[226] was Lieutenant-Governor of Java based in Batavia (now Jakarta) during the early 1810s, he was exposed to the significance of the Chinese – the massacre of more than 5,000 of them, who were important merchants, contractors, laborers, and commercial agriculturalists, plunged Batavia's economy into crisis and led to its eventual decline.[227]

For the next century and a half until the advent of the Second World War, though the people of today's Malaysia and Singapore were not nationally conscious and referred to themselves as "people of Malaya,"[228] they continued to be racially and ethnically conscious. Outright hostility and violence were kept under control through the familiar imperial divide-and-rule strategy. Prior to the 1950s, colonial subjects of different races and ethnicities were kept isolated from one another, so that the colonial administration could blindly, or purposefully, report that there were: "no social problems of race or cultural relations of any magnitude."[229]

In sum, the modern mutual enmity and suspicion between Malays and Chinese, and in turn, Malaysia and Singapore, have the above geo-historical roots. The attempted merger and its unsuccessful outcome, interspersed with violent inter-racial riots, were not simply results of the politics of those days. They were culminations of a long historical process and could not be

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[225] Haikal and Yahaya, "Muslims in Singapore."
[226] Lady Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (J. Duncan, 1983), 82-83.
[227] Roy Jones and Brian J. Shaw, "Palimpsests of Progress: Erasing the Past and Rewriting the Future in Developing Societies—Case Studies of Singapore and Jakarta," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 2 (March 2006): 123.
[228] Dayang Istiaisyah bte Hussin, "Textual Construction of a Nation: The Use of Merger and Separation," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 29, no. 3 (2001): 403. Singapore, Malacca, Penang, and others were parts of the British Straits Settlements, which along with Federated Malay States and unfederated Malay States, were parts of the larger British Malaya until the end of WWII. Singapore then became a Crown colony in 1946 before achieving internal self-rule in 1959.
[229] Lawson, "Sanitizing Ethnicity," 67.

understood divorced from its reference. Whether they were indigenous to the island or not, Malays believed they were originally the rightful majority in a Malay-ruled territory before the Chinese replaced them as a result of external powers' conflicts, manipulations, and subsequent imperialism. The appearance of British favoritism towards the Chinese, who had become economically better off, and the "minoritization" of the Malays, in numbers and in status,[230] would further add to the collective memory and psyche of the Malay people. It would in turn shape how Singaporeans, especially Chinese Singaporeans, viewed the intentions of Malay-dominated Malaysia during the merger and ever since. In this context, one does not wonder why, unlike other ex-colonial states, Singapore's ruling authority had not "made a fetish of expunging the colonial record and legacy"; instead, Sir Raffles had generally been lauded for his "enterprise and vision" and the British legacy had been "valued for having bequeathed high standards of professionalism and probity in public life."[231]

Communist China Rising

If the 1950 Maria Hertogh Riot were an indication of Malays' capacity to mobilize on behalf of their cause, the 1955 Hock Lee Bus Riot proved that ethnic Chinese were capable of similar action. The situation was complicated further because of the perceived "natural" association between the local Chinese and communism,[232] which had become a major political movement in Malaya and Singapore following the establishment of the Chinese Malayan Communist Party (MCP) in 1930. The MCP, dubbed the "best organized and most powerful political force immediately following the war,"[233] was a local reincarnation of the South Seas Communist Party (Nanyang Communist Party), set up by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1922 and headquartered in Singapore for communist activities in the Southeast Asian region. The May

[230] For instance, the British did not teach the Malays English and therefore (directly or indirectly) prevented their upward mobility in colonial administration and society. See Haikal and Yahaya, "Muslims in Singapore."
[231] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 11.
[232] Raj Vasil, *Asianising Singapore: The PAP's Management of Ethnicity* (Heinemann Asia, 1995), Chapter 2.
[233] Gordon Paul Means, *Malaysian Politics* (Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1976), 70; A. J. Stockwell, "The Formation and First Years of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO)," *Modern Asian Studies* 11, no. 4 (1977): 486.

1955 riot itself, instigated by union bus workers linked to communists and later joined by thousands of Chinese-language school students from all over the island, resulted in 3 killed and 31 injured.[234] The incident was an early lesson in Singapore's perceived geographic vulnerability to the supposed external meddling from China's communist regime at the time, especially since the majority of Singapore's population was Chinese. It also did not help that "nearly all the communist terrorists had been Chinese."[235]

During PAP's championing of the multi-racial *Malaysian Malaysia* idea during merger, there were some accusations of disingenuousness on PAP's part that in fact its leaders were themselves closet ethnic Chinese chauvinists. For example, some writers note when it challenged the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) – UMNO's Chinese partner in the ruling coalition – in the 1964 federal elections, PAP campaigned mostly for the Chinese votes and presented itself as the true Chinese representative.[236] A geographical perspective would argue, however, that PAP was engaging in a delicate balancing act. Whatever its real intensions, it had to maneuver against both the extreme chauvinist/communist (i.e. the MCP) as well as the Malay sympathizer (i.e. the MCA) sections of the ethnic Chinese population. To PAP, while the former was propagating communist supremacy through an exclusivist Chinese movement that could become the "third China"[237] with no geographic loyalty to Malaysia/Singapore, the latter risked marginalizing the status of the Chinese by caving in to more and more demands of UMNO. Steering between two

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[234] Lay Yuen Tan, "Hock Lee Bus strike and riots" (National Library Board Singapore, September 29, 1997), http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_4_2005-01-06.html; Michael Fernandez and Loh Kah Seng, "The Left-Wing Trade Unions in Singapore, 1945-1970," in *Paths Not Taken*, ed. Michael D. Barr and Carl A. Trocki (National University of Singapore Press, 2008). Fernandez and Loh Kah Seng question the perception that left-wing trade unions were infiltrated by communists.

[235] Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, 289; C. C. Chin, "The United Front Strategy of the Malayan Communist Party in Singapore, 1950s-1960s," in *Paths Not Taken*, ed. Michael D. Barr and Carl A. Trocki (National University of Singapore Press, 2008); Michael D. Barr and Carl A. Trocki, *Paths Not Taken: Political Pluralism in Post-War Singapore* (University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 26. Although CC Chin suggests that communist strength was declining as a force by the late 1940s and early 1950s, the perception was still there. Furthermore, to PAP, there was not really a distinction between communism and left-wing Chinese radicalism (especially its potential of being influenced by communists), which all acknowledged was flourishing at "unprecedented levels" (See Barr and Trocki).

[236] Chris Tremewan, *The political economy of social control in Singapore* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 85.

[237] C. P. Fitzgerald, *The Third China: The Chinese Communities in South-East Asia* (University of British Columbia Press, 1965).

extremes, PAP's *Malaysian Malaysia* campaign could be better understood in these geo-historical contexts.

Western Withdrawal and Further Communist Expansion

Thus due to regional instabilities and communist activities, it was not surprising that tiny Singapore was under shock when Britain, in its last days of empire, announced that it was withdrawing its military from the island and did so by 1971 – four years sooner than previously stated.[238] Then, when the United States finally lost the Vietnam War in 1975, it signaled earlier fears about Western powers disengaging from the region and being replaced by communist USSR, China, and now Vietnam.[239] Subscribing to the domino theory of communist expansion, Prime Minister Lee and his foreign minister constantly reminded people during this period of the likelihood of a communist Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) supporting wars of liberation in Thailand, Malaysia,[240] and Indonesia.

Finally, the 1979 Vietnamese invasion of murderous Pol Pot's Kampuchea, *inter alia*, to halt the killings of ethnic Vietnamese illustrated too well for Singapore all the lessons of geography and history it had hitherto internalized. That is, while it might have been good for anti-communist Singapore that three communist states were then fighting one another when China invaded Vietnam in response to the latter's attack on its ally Cambodia, the larger lessons being drawn were more likely these: a larger regional state attacking a smaller neighbor, a expanding communist state bent on imposing its version of an ideology, an ethnic power intervening on behalf of its "people" in other countries. Logically speaking, if geographically bigger Vietnam could have done this to smaller Cambodia, there was always the possibility of bigger Malaysia doing likewise to tiny Singapore. Size does matter, and ignored at one's peril. In the international arena, Singapore led the regional effort on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

[238] Jerome R. Bass, "Malaysia and Singapore: Moving Apart?," *Asian Survey* 9, no. 2 (February 1969): 123.
[239] Marvin L. Rogers, "Malaysia and Singapore: 1971 Developments," *Asian Survey* 12, no. 2 (February 1972): 176.
[240] Stephen Chee, "Malaysia and Singapore: Separate Identities, Different Priorities," *Asian Survey* 13, no. 2 (February 1973): 189; Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 64.

(ASEAN) to mobilize voting support in the United Nations General Assembly against Vietnam's invasion and the unseating of the Khmer Rouge's representative. Tommy Koh, Singapore's ambassador to the UN at the time, asserted: "If Democratic Kampuchea were to lose its seat in the United Nations, it would be tantamount to saying that it is permissible for a powerful military state to invade its weaker neighbour, to overthrow its government and to impose a puppet regime on it."[241]

THE EARLY GEO-IDEA

In short, Singapore's geo-idea during the early postwar period was one of *double constraints*: a small vulnerable Chinese-dominated place doubly constrained within the region (by hostile and different ethnic and religious powers) and the larger international expanding Communist environment. Instead of drawing on its pre-colonial heritage as a viable commercial port city within the *Nusantara* (or historical Malay world)[242] and using it as an opportunistic link to better relations with Malaysia, as some scholars and others have suggested,[243] Singapore maintained an outsider psyche, and invoked its geographic vulnerability vis-à-vis two hostile bigger neighbors and the larger international sphere. The location within the "Malay womb" could not have been seen as positive, and an argument otherwise simply refuses or ignores the country's geo-idea.

CORRESPONDING PRE-POLITICAL NOTION

The PAP's pre-political notion, or what in politics was allowed or not allowed to be practiced given the country's place, history, and identity, drew significantly from Singapore's geo-idea. By legitimising its rule to Singapore's survival as a small vulnerable country itself, PAP argued that the new nation's doubly constrained geographical environment, including its lack of resources for

[241] Quoted in Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 86.
[242] The *Nusantara* included pre-colonial Sri Vijaya, Majapahit and Johor-Riau and Malacca Kingdoms, as well as what are present day Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, southern Philippines, and southern Thailand. See Timothy P. Barnard, ed., *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries* (National University of Singapore Press, 2003).
[243] Lily Zubaidah-Rahim, "Singapore-Malaysia relations: Deep-seated tensions and self-fulfilling prophecies," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 29, no. 1 (March 1999): 38-39; Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 24-25; Carl Trocki, *Singapore: Wealth, Power and the Culture of Control* (Routledge, 2005), 8-9.

development, meant that it could not afford to tolerate the kinds of politics and political expressions that would ignite tensions – racial, ethnic, religious – and further invite or advance the causes of external powers within the region (Malaysia and Indonesia) or the world (China). Singapore depended on its "hostile" neighbors for access, resources, and markets – so while the country could not openly embrace or join them due to geo-historical reasons, it could not completely break away either. "While ethnic minorities such as Malays, Indians and Eurasians were reminded to be mindful of not exercising pressure in ways that could upset the Chinese ethnic majority," writes Hussin Mutalib, "the majority Chinese, in turn, were persuaded to acknowledge the [larger] geopolitical Malay region and to see the minorities as 'equal minorities rather than subordinate ones.'"[244] In other words, what must be done in a place where the delicate balance was between a Chinese majority in the country and a Malay majority in the sub-region? It was decided that politics therefore could not have anything to do with expressing Malayness (with Islamic overtones) and Chinese-ness (with communist overtones). These were, to put it simply, "out of place."

At the very first session of parliament in December 1965 after the separation from Malaysia, the PAP government proclaimed: "...one of the cornerstones of the policy of the Government is a multi-racial Singapore. We are a nation comprising people of various races who constitute her citizens, and our citizens are equal regardless of differences of race, language, culture and religion."[245] In fact, it was the first state on the planet to declare itself an official constitutional multiracial country.[246] More significantly, it did not fail to rationalize this proclamation by referencing what shaped the country's geo environment: "Whilst a multi-racial secular society is an ideal espoused by many, it is a dire necessity for our survival in the midst of turmoil and the pressure of big power conflict."[247] Hence, the government's duty was to "build a

[244] Hussin Mutalib, "Singapore's Quest for a National Identity: The Triumphs and Trials of Government Policies," in *Imagining Singapore*, ed. Kah Choon Ban, Anne Pakir, and Chee Kiong Tong (Eastern Universities Press, 2004), 57.
[245] Cited in Kuah, "Maintaining ethno-religious harmony in Singapore," 105.
[246] Beng Huat Chua, "Political Culturalism, Representation and the People's Action Party of Singapore," *Democratization* 14, no. 5 (December 2007): 913.
[247] Kuah, "Maintaining Ethno-Religious Harmony in Singapore," 105.

nation of Singaporeans out of the disparate groups in the city-state" that would "*surmount all the chauvinistic and particularistic pulls* of the Chinese, Malay, or Indian identities."[248]

Note however that despite the rhetoric about wanting to become multi-racial/cultural, an ideal admittedly "espoused by many," it could be argued that in this early period PAP only knew the kind of politics Singapore could *not* practice but not the kind it *should* be practicing. As detailed below, all the energy was focused on policing Malay/Islam and Chinese/Communism and less on articulating what a multi-racial/cultural notion of politics actually was. To put it another way, banning ethnic, racial, religious, and ideological expressions was the classic politics of necessity, not one of imagination.

To start, it was not a Malay or Chinese or Indian that was proclaimed as the founder of Singapore, but the Englishman Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles. Foreign Minister Rajaratnam recounted: "After attaining independence in 1965, there was debate as to who should be the founding fathers of Singapore. The debate was brought to an abrupt end when the government fixed responsibility for this on Sir Stamford Raffles and officially declared him founder of Singapore."[249] This is especially significant in light of the fact that the PAP "started off as an anti-colonial party,"[250] and as Rajaratnam recounted on 28 April 1984, the recognition given to a colonialist was "unprecedented in the history of anti-imperialist nationalism" and "completely mystified… many of our Third World friends."[251] Yet given Singapore's particular location and history, it was unimaginable to name "local personalities for special mention as Singapore's pioneers" as it could be seen as "indicative of the weightage assigned to the contributions of their respective communities."[252] According to Chua, it was "to suppress the possible lengthening of history back to those of China, India, and Southeast Asia, lest racial disharmony results from this

[248] Quah, "Government Policies and Nation-Building," 45. Emphasis added.
[249] S. Rajaratnam, "The Uses and Abuses of the Past," *Speeches*, 8, 2 (March/April 1984), 6.
[250] *Straits Time*, 7 August 1969.
[251] Cited in Heng Chee Chan and Obaid ul Haq, eds., *S. Rajaratnam: The Prophetic and the Political* (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1987), 150.
[252] Lau, "The National Past and the Writing of History of Singapore," 46.

longer history of its people."[253] Strategically, the move also signaled to British and Western powers that their economic interests would not be harmed in light of the region's flirtation with the communist zeal. For Singapore struggling to develop, appealing to Western legacy also made sense economically.

In terms of language and communication, English was therefore promoted as the *lingua franca* for public administration, business, and commerce. In possession of no great economic endowment but its people, the push for the former colonial master's language was meant to create an English-speaking labor force conducive to foreign business investments. As important, English also became a key tool in making the regime's pre-political notion a reality. The PAP, whose leadership was made mostly of English-educated Chinese, regarded with suspicions both the Malay schools as well as the Chinese-language schools believed to churn out those preferring more privileges for the Chinese majority as well as those sympathizing with communist ideas.[254] As a non-local (both non-Chinese and non-Malay) language, English was the most appropriate medium to combat the particularistic pulls of both Malay-Muslims and extreme Chinese chauvinist-communists. As the language not identifiable with any significant racial group in the country, it perfectly served the purpose of striping Singapore of racialism. Chua Beng Huat observes: "'racially neutral' English thus reduces every Asian-Singaporean, in abstraction, to 'culturally' equal starting point, ensuring competition without prejudice."[255]

Yet given Singapore's geo-idea, certain sensitivities were accorded to the sizeable Malay population in the country. In the Constitution, it is written that "the Government shall exercise its functions in such manner as to recognise the special position of the Malays, who are the indigenous people of Singapore, and accordingly it shall be the responsibility of the Government to protect, safeguard, support, foster and promote their political, educational, religious, economic, social and cultural interests." Thus, the PAP officially elevated Malay as the national language and language of the national anthem, allowed Malays to attend all school levels for free, reserved

[253] Beng Huat Chua, "Forward," in *The Scripting of A National History: Singapore and Its Pasts*, ed. Lysa Hong and Jianli Huang (Hong Kong University Press, 2008), x.
[254] Robert O. Tilman and Jo H. Tilman, "Malaysia and Singapore, 1976: A Year of Challenge, a Year of Change," *Asian Survey* 17, no. 2 (February 1977): 148.
[255] Chua, "Political Culturalism, Representation and the People's Action Party of Singapore," 922.

a space for a mosque in every public residential estate, and designated a cabinet-level minister to represent Malay and Muslim interests.[256] At the same time, given the geo-historical baggage Singapore inherited, these special measures could never have approached the same extent of preferential treatment for Malays in Malaysia. Thus in Singapore, the language of school instruction had never been Malay, and Islam had never been declared a state religion (even officially), as in Malaysia and Indonesia. Instead, all religions were recognized equally from the start, while the main languages of the other groups - Mandarin Chinese and Tamil - were designated official languages as well. In state-funded schools, all students must learn English, while Chinese, Malay, and Tamil were taught only to those whose mother tongues were those languages.

Keeping in mind the country's history of geo-political-cum-racial problems, however, PAP established state institutions to keep a check on radical racial and Islamic activities and placed responsibility on Malay and Muslim leaders to "properly interpret" Islam. As Khun Eng Kuah points out: during this period, "to ensure that each religious group functioned within its own boundary, the government has never failed to use appropriate occasions to remind the religious leaders of their responsibility to the wider community at large." That is, "the interpretation of the Islamic doctrine would also express the values espoused by the state, i.e. multi-racialism, multi-religious tolerance, forbearance and togetherness."[257] Hence, as early as 1966, the Administration of Muslim Law Act was enacted. Coming into effect in 1968, the act created the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS), or Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, "to assist Muslim organisations in Singapore to regulate their affairs" as well as "to administer the Muslim Law."[258] In addition, an office of the Mufti (Islamic legal scholar/interpreter) was established under MUIS to "oversee religious rulings pertaining to Islamic Law."[259] Institutionally, the state was at the pinnacle: the Minister-in-charge of Muslim affairs – a position seen more as state rather than Muslim representative – supervised MUIS and appointed the Mufti.

[256] Ibid., 914.
[257] Kuah, "Maintaining Ethno-Religious Harmony in Singapore," 105-106.
[258] Ibid., 106.
[259] Chua, "Political Culturalism, Representation and the People's Action Party of Singapore," 916.

Finally, efforts continued with the other main part of pre-political control in reducing the perception of Singapore as a "third China" – a hotbed for Chinese chauvinism or communism. By the late 1970s, a major success was recorded when Nanyang University, the first Chinese-language university outside of China, was slowly integrated into the English-medium University of Singapore. Long known since its establishment in 1955 as the center for Chinese activities (again read: "chauvinism" and "communism" to the PAP during this time)[260] even though some argue that the relation of the Chinese student radicals to communism was "not a pattern to imitate exactly, but a frame of reference,"[261] Nanyang was eventually combined, despite heavy resistance by its alumni and the Chinese community, with the former to form the new National University of Singapore (NUS) in 1980. As Lee Kuan Yew remarked to visiting Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in 1978, the future of Chinese Singaporeans was not in China but Southeast Asia and that this future "must be equally shared with Malay, Indian and other Singaporeans."[262] As Shee Poon-Kim also contends, this remark signaled at the time that Singapore was trying to create its own political identity – a Singapore that could not epitomize a *Hua Chaio* (overseas Chinese) political center.[263]

To repeat, there were two kinds of challenges to PAP's rule during the early post-independent period of the 1960s and 1970s: activities by Malay racialists or Muslim radicals and Chinese communists. The early instruments for countering such challenges to the regime's pre-political notion were the Internal Security Act (ISA) and Penal Code, which allowed the state to arrest and detain any persons without trials for actions that disturb social order and national security. The ISA had its origins in the British Malayan ISA of 1960, which extended to cover Singapore in 1963 during merger, and subsequently empowered the Internal Security Department

[260] Poon-Kim Shee, "Singapore 1978: Preparation for the 1980s," *Asian Survey* 19, no. 2 (February 1979): 125; Eugene K. B. Tan, "Re-Engaging Chineseness: Political, Economic and Cultural Imperatives of Nation-Building in Singapore," *The China Quarterly*, no. 175 (September 2003): 754.
[261] Souchou Yao, "All Quiet on Jurong Road: Nanyang University and Radical Vision in Singapore," in *Paths Not Taken*, ed. Michael D. Barr and Carl A. Trocki (National University of Singapore Press, 2008).
[262] Shee, "Singapore 1978," 128.
[263] Ibid.

(ISD) – formally established in 1966 but with roots going back to 1916 as a police Special Branch engaging in counter-subversion. On its website, the ISD still references the geo-ideational rationales behind its existence, stating that unlike many countries in the world, Singapore, "being a multi-ethnic society, faces a major potential threat from communalism or racial and religious extremism. This reflects the sense of a vulnerability inherent and fundamental in our makeup as a society."[264]

Furthermore, the media was regulated through the 1974 Newspaper and Printing Press Act (NPPA), the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), and the Public Entertainment and Licensing Unit. The last one was to issue permits relating to public gatherings and demonstrations, while the first two were to regulate the distribution of publications, foreign and domestic, that intend "to generate political, ethnic, and religious unrest," or indulge in "slanted, distorted, or partisan reporting" that would reverberate into unrest; and the roles of the SBC were to "help foster national unity" and "support and explain national policies and goals."[265] Since separation, the government had already banned Malaysian newspapers in Singapore – a measure likewise implemented in Malaysia.

Policing Malayness with Islamic Overtones

The Internal Security Act and other control-of-expression measures were deployed early on to keep the so-called "Malay problem" in line. In addition to its visible applications during the already mentioned Sino-Malay riots of the 1960s, the PAP kept a close watch throughout the 1970s on those of Malay and Muslim backgrounds, from inside and outside country, that were trying to violate its pre-political notion. One such case was the ban on entering the country issued to Imaduddin Abdul Rahim, an Indonesian lecturer who incited Singaporean Muslims in 1973 to resist the government's massive resettlement schemes that would result in demolishing mosques

[264] Internal Security Department, Mission Statement, http://www.mha.gov.sg/isd/abt-isd.htm [Accessed October 4, 2009]
[265] Quah, "Government Policies and Nation-Building," 59.

and erecting non-Muslim prayer houses in their path. According to him, the failure to do so would mean Singaporean Malays and Muslims were no more than "stooges" in their own country.[266]

Another representative case during this period was the 1979 expulsion of a Malaysian religious instructor and detention of five leaders of the *Ikhwan* or Muslim Brotherhood who the government accused of engaging in clandestine activities to establish an Islamic state, modeled on Saudi Arabia and Iran, through extra-constitutional and armed means if necessary.[267] According to a report of the Internal Security Department, the *Ikhwan* group recruited its members from "pre-university students and undergraduates" in "religious classes conducted by a Malaysian religious teacher," whose objectives were to train them as "writers and religious teachers in order to disseminate revolutionary ideas and sow disaffection among the Muslims." ISD also discovered that the group had taken over the Malay language societies of the Ngee Ann Technical College and the Singapore Polytechnic, and had plans to take over the Pertubohan Muslimin Singapura (PERMUSI) – an inactive Muslim organization.[268]

While these two incidents might not have led Malays and Muslims to rise up and kill Chinese and non-Malays as were the case in the 1960s, they illustrated vividly to both the PAP and the public the continuing geo-historical sentiments of Malays and Muslims and the added geopolitical influences of outside forces on Singapore. Consequentially, part of Singapore's geo-idea of being a small vulnerable state within a threatening Malay-Muslim region legitimized part of PAP's pre-political policing of the Malay-Muslim challenge to its rule.

Policing Chineseness with Communist Overtones

Likewise, the other part of its geo-idea of being engulfed by an international environment of expanding Chinese communism would provide legitimacy to the other part of the PAP's pre-political notion of policing against the domestic Chinese challenge of either the communist or chauvinist variety. The most visible and unforgettable application of the ISA in this regard was the

[266] Cited in Kuah, "Maintaining ethno-religious harmony in Singapore," 110.
[267] Report of the Internal Security Department, cited in Kuah, "Maintaining ethno-religious harmony in Singapore," 113.
[268] Report of the Internal Security Department, cited in Kuah, "Maintaining ethno-religious harmony in Singapore," 113.

February 1963 “Operation Cold Store” against the leftist and communist leaning *Barisan Socialis* (BS), or Socialist Front party, and trade unions, arresting without trial more than 100 of their leaders who were accused of being communist subversives, which they of course denied. The PAP, founded in 1954, initially lost the first elections in 1955 to David Marshall’s Worker’s Party (WP) and actually had to form an uneasy alliance with the radical left, whose leadership was educated in Chinese and sympathized with communist causes, in order to win the next general elections on the way to Singapore’s self-rule in 1959. Ignoring the geographic logic of joining Malaya, and fearing that the Malayan anti-communist emergency regulations would apply to Singapore once the two merged, the PAP’s leftist wing and its mass base broke away from Lee and co. to actively opposed merger.[269] Immediately PAP accused the BS of being ethnic Chinese chauvinists who wished to keep Singapore a Chinese dominated state, and/or communists, whose ultimate loyalty and links were not with Singapore but with foreign communist powers and movements under direction from China. In fact, as Yong notes, “hardcore communists still could not conceive Singapore as an independent entity and in the name of their political party, there is no mention of the word ‘Singapore’.”[270] The reputation newly acquired for crushing communist opponents would effectively help distance Singapore from being susceptible to Communist China’s regional influence.

Unable to politically counter the above charges, and with its leadership in jail, the *Barisan Socialis* boycotted parliament despite winning 18 seats and 35% of the popular vote in the 1963 elections. Vowing to take the fight to the streets, BS boycotted the next elections in 1968 all together and handed all seats to PAP. This “political irresponsibility,” according to Chua Beng Huat, passed up an early moment (not to be available since) that an effective political opposition could have been institutionalized against the PAP in Parliament.[271] A political geographical view, however, is that the BS and other pro-communist movements were probably doomed to fail in

[269] Beng Huat Chua, “Arrested Development: Democratisation in Singapore,” *Third World Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (December 1994): 656.
[270] Yong Mun Cheong, “Singapore: The City-State in History,” in *Imaging Singapore*, ed. Ban Kah Choon, Anne Pakir, and Tong Chee Kiong (Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004), 16.
[271] Ibid.

Singapore because they did not take into account the geo-idea of this place.[272] The opposite was true for the PAP.

Another early instance of using the laws to implement the nation's pre-political notion was the crackdown on newspapers that were judged to directly incite Chinese communalism.[273] In the early 1970s, in the context of the government trying to further promote the use of English, many of the Chinese-educated resisted "Lee's apparent determination to make Singapore an English speaking country with a trilingual base."[274] Their views were expressed in major Chinese vernacular presses such as the *Nanyang Siang Pau*. Charging the newspaper with "glorifying China and fomenting Chinese chauvinism," four executives of the *Nanyang Siang Pau* were arrested without trial for two years.[275] At about the same time, another Chinese newspaper, *The Eastern Sun*, ceased publication after it was accused of having financial links to Chinese communist agents operating in Hong Kong.[276]

CONCLUSION: AUTHORITARIAN LEGITIMACY AND SURVIVAL

On the front cover of "The Singapore Story: Overcoming the Odds", a CD-ROM produced by the government, Singaporeans were invited to "learn how we battled the *twin challenges of communism and communalism* to build the cohesive multi-racial society of today."[277] This message had been reinforced at every moment through various media, speeches, statements, and memoirs, and in time, the PAP succeeded in making the challenges to the new nation and those to its regime one and the same. The geo-idea at founding - that of Singapore as a doubly-constrained place - was used to shape the regime's pre-political notion and the state's apparatus that implemented it, the reverse of which happened, for instance, in Pakistan, where the military-

[272] Kittikhoun, "Small state, big revolution," 38-51. This is a detailed explanation of how other communist movements in small states succeeded because they embodied those places' historically evolved geo-ideas.
[273] Cherian George, *Singapore, the air-conditioned nation: essays on the politics of comfort and control, 1990-2000* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2000), 65-72; Francis T. Seow, *The Media Enthralled: Singapore Revisited* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 65-72.
[274] Rogers, "Malaysia and Singapore," 175.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid., 175-176.
[277] Emphasis added.

state imposed its own religious-political version of the idea of Pakistan, irrespective of its history and the original idea at founding.[278]

In short, to understand a key mechanism of authoritarian survival, one has to focus not just on the fact of coercion but also the ideational basis that makes it acceptable. The early authoritarian PAP regime did not solely rely on force – relative to other authoritarian regimes, it actually used quite little – to stay in power but on a legitimation strategy that focused on Singapore's self and others' understanding of its place regionally and internationally. Because Singapore's geo-idea had derived from its political geography, the PAP was able to use it effectively in legitimizing its conception of the pre-political, or the acceptable and non-acceptable of politics. The justification for the ban and crackdown on internal racialist activities with religious and communist overtones was the deeply ingrained historical and continuing tensions with Malaysia as well as the supposedly expanding international Chinese communist threat. Survival and development, not political freedom, became a national security imperative.

As acknowledged by former regime critic and now senior diplomat, Chan Heng Chee, "as a result of its size and geographical position in the Malay Archipelago, Singapore perforce had to wear its ethnicity with restraint, remaining, as it has, constantly aware of its neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia, would be unlikely to tolerate a virulently Chinese state in their midst." Thus, she continues: "any political leadership would have to use its skills to keep Chinese chauvinism in check."[279] Despite her manifest anti-PAP views, Lily Zubaidah-Rahim admits to "the significance of historical and socio-political factors in… producing negative and exaggerated perceptions of the national and regional 'other'", to the benefit of "the authoritarian PAP government."[280] And in a work that attempts to demonstrate the once lively (and now forgotten and/or suppressed) political activism of 1950s-1960s where "alternative outcomes" – whether communism, communalism, trade unionism or even Western-style political liberalism – "to the current state of affairs used to be well within the imagination of Singaporeans," Michael Barr and Carl Trocki note

[278] Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 3.
[279] Heng Chee Chan, "Political Political Developments, 1965-1979," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Oxford University Press, 1991), 170.
[280] Zubaidah-Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World*, 80.

that “it is also true that people were caught… in the more imponderable and impersonal blind forces of history” and that “there were global economic, environmental, political and social trends at work, and those in Singapore could only hope to shield themselves from them or to take advantage of them.”[281]

The argument here is that, given this uncontrollable geo environment, the PAP strategically moved to take advantage of it to out-maneuver rivals. The challenges to the pre-political consensus that arose from time to time could be suppressed without any broad opposition. After all, no one could reasonably question the main reason or goal for that consensus: “racial harmony” – a “public good that [even critics say] few can politically and ethically deny”[282] And racial harmony was what PAP had succeeded in fostering, as Hussin Mutalib indicates, “the extent of inter-ethnic harmony in the Republic today is truly remarkable when compared to other equally heterogeneous countries such as Sri Lanka, India, Lebanon, Fiji and the satellite countries of the former Soviet Union.”[283] The legitimacy in guarding the “racial harmony” consensus and the need to police communism and communalism, through whatever means, were therefore intact during this period. The unilateral ban on certain political activities indeed made the political regime authoritarian; yet because these activities were deemed to undermine a greater public interest, PAP’s success in guarding it might as well make it a legitimate authoritarian regime. The existence of a consensual polity allows a single party regime to legitimately claim to represent it, as opposed to an ideologically fragmented polity where a multi-party representation might be necessary.[284] Therefore, in the early independence period, the so-called legitimation crisis of authoritarianism was rarely experienced in Singapore. The regime endured into the 1980s and 1990s as the third wave of democratization was wiping away several non-democratic regimes all over the world.

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[281] Barr and Trocki, *Paths Not Taken*, 7.
[282] Chua, “Political Culturalism, Representation and the People’s Action Party of Singapore,” 197; Rogers, “Malaysia and Singapore,” 175.
[283] Mutalib, “Singapore’s Quest for a National Identity: The Triumphs and Trials of Government Policies,” 63.
[284] Soek-Fang Sim, “Asian Values, Authoritarianism and Capitalism,” *The Public* 8, no. 2 (2001): 48.

CHAPTER THREE

POSTWAR TAIWAN'S COMPETING GEO-IDEAS: REGIME LEGITIMATION, DE-LEGITIMATION, AND CHANGE

Unlike in Singapore, where the geo-idea evolved through a long historical process to become internalized by both ruler and ruled, and therefore contributing to the latter's relative acceptance of the former's pre-political notion and regime, there were two competing geo-ideas for Taiwan, conceptualized from two different vantage points of physical space and history. The ruling Nationalist or Kuomintang Party's (KMT) version (1950s-1980s) was predicated on Taiwan being part of China, temporarily occupied by communist forces hostile to the legitimate Nationalist government now vulnerable and confined to a small island. In consequence, national democratic politics as previously practiced when the KMT was effectively ruling the mainland was suspended, and new pre-political rules were cast down to combat both the communist and Taiwanist challenges to the Nationalist geo-idea.

On the other hand, for most Taiwanese, the hundred sixty or so kilometers separation between the mainland and the island meant that Taiwan was not physically part of China. This geographic separation from the rest of China, observes Joseph Wong, "gives the Taiwanese a 'spatial' sense of distinctiveness and separateness."[285] Likewise, Jean-Pierre Cabestan writes: "The roots of Taiwanese nationalism were geographical before becoming historical. Taiwan's insularity explains a number of historical developments that have taken place."[286] Even when the island was under nominal Chinese authority, Taiwan retained this insularity, which had not been disturbed in spite of Chinese immigration from Fujian, itself a peculiar place seen as "a landlocked province which has always tended to turn away from the imperial capital."[287]

For much of its long history, Taiwan had often been defined as "a small part of something else." It had passed through being "an overseas possession of a European power (1624-1661),

[285] Joseph Wong, "Maintaining KMT Dominance: Party Adaptation in Authoritarian and Democratic Taiwan," in *Political Transitions in Dominant Party Systems: Learning to Lose*, ed. Edward Friedman and Joseph Wong (Routledge, 2008), 345.
[286] Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "Specificities and Limits of Taiwanese Nationalism," *China Perspectives* 62 (December 2005): 3.
[287] Ibid.

an independent kingdom (1661-1683), a prefecture of a province (1684-1885), a province of an empire (1885-1895), a colony of a rival empire (1895-1945), and a province of a republic (1945-1949)."[288] Hence, the fact that Taiwan was never always part of China, and centuries of relative isolation and neglect from China, as well as the subjugation to foreign power rivalries and colonialism, interspersed with occasional resistance, had fostered a nascent alternative geo-idea, especially by the end of the Second World War. From a geographical perspective, the struggles by the Taiwanese in history could hence be read as attempts to break out of the "mental vice of being some other country's peripheral, exploited, or borrowed territory."[289]

Taiwan's competing geo-ideas profoundly affected the way the KMT legitimatized its regime on the island and the way native Taiwanese challengers contested this legitimacy. Where regime maintenance in immediate post-independent Singapore relied heavily on the congruence between the country's geo-idea and the regime's pre-political consensus, increasing mismatch between what was emerging as the idea of Taiwan and the version propagated by the ruling authority eventually led to the delegitimation of the regime. Opposition to KMT rule mobilized by drawing on Taiwan's deeper history, grounded in its lack of strong ties to China's imperial space as well as the island's political struggles against external forces. Strengthened by the changing international environment (the derecognition of the Republic of China by the United Nations and the United States) that undermined the credibility of the KMT's claims to legitimacy, including the notion that Taiwan was the last bastion against communism and an integral part of China still under Nationalist reign, the existence of and push for an alternative geo-idea led to regime change.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

In 1949, the Kuomintang, defeated by the Communist Party of China (CPC) on the mainland, arrived in small-sized Taiwan still harboring the claim that it reigned over the vast territory of all China – the 4th largest country in the world with an area of 9,596,961 sq km. A small island off the

[288] Steven E. Phillips, *Between assimilation and independence: the Taiwanese encounter nationalist China, 1945-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 3.
[289] Lynch, *Rising China and Asian Democratization*, 17.

southeastern coast of China, Taiwan is in reality not bigger than any of the provinces on the mainland.[290] Out of the 256 independent and semi-independent territories in the world, Taiwan ranks 138th with a total land area of 32,260 sq km, including the smaller islands of Penghu (Pescadores), Kinmen, and Matsu (Quemoy).[291] Thus, while it is bigger than Singapore, it is incredibly smaller than the communist-controlled Chinese mainland.

At least from the KMT's point of view, counting the islands under its jurisdiction, Taiwan is geographically very close to China. Taiwan could be seen from China's southern Fujian province on "a clear day."[292] Both the Kinmen and Matsu island groups are located within "shouting distance" of Fujian, with Matsu being very close to the port of Fuchou.[293] Two of the Kinmen group of six islands are controlled by the People's Republic of China (PRC), and are near its strategic port of Xiamen (Amoy).

Despite being very close to China, Taiwan is geographically separated from China by sea. Furthermore, looking at Taiwan's deeper history, the island was also not always politically part of China. For the longest time, it was considered in the periphery of the Chinese imperium.

GEO-HISTORICAL INTERACTIONS

Early European Rivalry and Dutch Colonialism

Although Holland was the first Western power to establish military control in Penghu (Pascadores), one of the smaller northern islands of Taiwan in the early 1620s, it was the Portuguese that sighted Taiwan first in 1517, calling the island "Ilha Formosa."[294] Portugal however did not claim or occupy it,[295] as the Portuguese would do later in Macao and other places in Southeast Asia. Being about the only European sea power in the area at the time,

[290] Hainan is now the smallest province in China, after it was made a province in 1988.
[291] "CIA World Fact Book: Taiwan", April 17, 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html.
[292] John F Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?*, 4th ed. (Westview Press, 2003), 30.
[293] Ibid., 3.
[294] W. G. Goddard, *Formosa: A Study In Chinese History* (Michigan State University Press, 1966), Chapter 3-4; Chiao-min Hsieh, *Taiwan-Ilha Formosa: A Geography in Perspective* (Butterworths, 1964), Chapter 11.
[295] Copper, *Taiwan*, 33.

Portugal had some freedom of navigation and trade. European rivalry arose however with the establishment of the Dutch military post in Penghu, which was used to police sea traffic in the Taiwan Strait.[296] Because Penghu was Chinese territory, the Dutch were driven to Taiwan itself in 1624.[297] The central authority in China did not consider Taiwan as part of its "imperial" domain and thus tolerated Dutch presence.[298] As a result, Taiwan would become a colony of Protestant Holland for almost four decades until 1662. During its rule, the Dutch not only kept away Portugal but also another rival Catholic imperial power Spain, who was ruling the Philippines to the south. Spanish forces landed in northeastern Taiwan in 1626. The Spaniards tried unsuccessfully to expand their control beyond Keelung and Tamsui areas, but by 1642, most Spanish settlers were eventually driven out by Holland.[299]

Dutch rule in Taiwan resulted in important development, including the expansion of agriculture, trade with merchants from different places in the region, construction of castles and wells, establishment of land surveys, creation of a writing system for the Aboriginal languages, and conversion of the local people to Protestantism.[300] Clearly however, the colonial authority, under the overall direction of the Dutch East India Company, was mainly in Taiwan for exploitation and profits.[301] Through the familiar strategy of divide and rule, the colonial authority found an ally in the local Aboriginal people, who were themselves initially subjected to military crackdown and "pacification," in crushing the ethnic Chinese opposition to the Dutch presence.[302] More Chinese inhabitants, following increasing migration from Fujian, put up failed rebellions against Holland in 1640 and 1652.[303]

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[296] Ibid.
[297] Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Cornell University Press, 2003), 15.
[298] John E. Wills Jr., "The Seventeenth-Century Transformation: Taiwan Under the Dutch and Cheng Regimes," in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A. Rubinstein (M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 86-90.
[299] Copper, *Taiwan*, 33.
[300] Ibid.
[301] George M. Beckman, "Brief Episodes: Dutch and Spanish Rule," in *Taiwan in Modern Times*, ed. Paul K. T. Sih (St Johns University Press, 1973).
[302] Copper, *Taiwan*, 33; Roy, *Taiwan*, 16.
[303] Simon Long, *Taiwan: China's Last Frontier* (St Martin's Press, 1991), 10-11.

Beginning in the 1660s, the Dutch would come to confront a much stronger threat. A Chinese pirate operating in Taiwan, Cheng Cheng-kung (aka Koxinga to Europeans), had been leading Ming dynasty expatriates against Manchu rule on the mainland using remnants of the Ming's naval forces. The forces were given earlier to Cheng's father, Cheng Chih-lung, to help save, unsuccessfully, the Ming's collapse in the face of the Manchu's invasion of China in the 1640s. Despite an army of almost 100,000 men, continually built up from those Chinese fleeing Manchu rule, the younger Cheng, like his father, fought abortively against the Qing dynasty for more than a decade (1646-58).[304]

As a deterrent against the Manchu on the mainland, Holland initially allowed Cheng to operate openly from northern Taiwan, and to accept large numbers of migrating Chinese. In time, this turned out to be a mistake. With the prospect of restoring the Ming dynasty in China increasingly dimmed, Cheng shifted gear, turned against the Dutch, and attempted to bring Ming-style rule to Taiwan. Following two years of war, he succeeded in dislodging Holland from the island in 1662. To some, Dutch defeat led to the establishment of the first Chinese government in Taiwan, complete with a legal system, court, scholars, and advisers.[305] However, Cheng was ruling Taiwan for the sake of taking China – an unsuccessful fate that would also befall his contemporary Chiang Kai-shek three centuries later. Moreover, Cheng's rule was in reality feudal, relying on alliance with local families.[306] The Cheng regime came to an end after the death of his son, Cheng Ching. In 1683, a Qing dynasty's naval force destroyed the Cheng government's fleet in the Penghu island, and upon landing in Taiwan, precipitated the surrender of the rest of its soldiers.[307] From then on, Taiwan was overtaken by the ruling central authority in Mainland China, administered as part of Fujian province.

Ancient Chinese Rule

[304] Copper, *Taiwan*, 34.
[305] Parris H. Chang, "Cheng Cheng-kung (Koxinga): A Patriot, Nationalist and Nation-Builder," in *Taiwan in Modern Times*, ed. Paul K. T. Sih (St Johns University Press, 1973).
[306] Copper, *Taiwan*, 34.
[307] Ibid., 35.

In contrast to the current claims by the ROC, or PRC, Taiwan's deeper geo-history puts into question the notion that Taiwan was always a Chinese possession, or that ancient China always saw Taiwan as part of it, or that the people residing in Taiwan themselves always accepted such claims. For a start, while Taiwan's strategic importance is clearly obvious today, as it was to early European powers, who equated controlling the island with access and influence not only over the Taiwan Strait but also the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and South China Sea. A continental power like China however did not always pay attention to Taiwan – at best it was seen as a natural buffer against potential foreign sea powers that could threaten the mainland. This changed periodically throughout history, and dramatically by the middle of the twentieth century until today. Thus the "salience" of the island's physical geography – its "permanent features" – to China and other powers has often reflected their "ever-shifting evaluations of strategic priorities."[308]

In AD 239, when a Chinese historical record mentioned for the first time the official contact with Taiwan made by a 10,000-member Chinese expeditionary force, it did not mention any Chinese claim made to the island. Subsequently, no follow-up expedition was ever deployed until nearly four centuries later in AD 605 by another dynasty, the Sui.[309] In fact, confirming early court records, historian John Fairbank emphasizes that the Chinese during the early period deemed Taiwan to be "outside the pale of Chinese civilization."[310] Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin go further and state: "Taiwan, as a frontier settlement for poor Chinese immigrants, had been tossed aside by Chinese governments for centuries."[311] "In the eyes of Chinese elites, Taiwan's inhabitants were savages who possessed nothing of interest to China and who were unwilling to pay tribute or learn Chinese ways," writes Denny Roy.[312] From then on until the Mongols came to

[308] Alan Wachman, *Why Taiwan?: Geostrategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity* (Stanford University Press, 2007), 32-33.
[309] Copper, *Taiwan*, 31.
[310] John Fairbank, *The United States and China* (Viking Press, 1967), 13; John Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Harvard University Press, 1968).
[311] Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity," *The China Quarterly* 165 (2001): 104.
[312] Roy, *Taiwan*, 11.

rule it in the 13th century, China did not launch any official missions or expeditions to Taiwan.[313] Though banned by Chinese law, emigration to the island picked up from the 1200s, which subsequently led to increasing settlements.[314] Most of these settlers however did not plan on claiming Taiwan for their "motherland," or returning to China for that matter.

Starting with the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1263-1368), China reversed centuries of neglect and began to see the geo-strategic utility of Taiwan in conquering Japan.[315] But again, no claim was made on the island. After the Mongol, China returned to Han Chinese rule under the Ming Dynasty; and like previous Han Chinese dynasties, the Ming court did not show much interest in Taiwan. Only the nearby Penghu islands were officially recognized as "imperial territory" from the 1620s, though court officers had been based there since at least 1170.[316] Also during the Ming period, the legendary Chinese explorer Cheng Ho landed once in Taiwan in 1430, but only inadvertently. Not surprisingly, he made no claim for China as well. Historical records at that time also did not indicate contacts between Cheng or anyone from China and the ethnic Chinese living there.[317]

Besides the Mongol period, the only other time ancient China had any substantive connection to Taiwan proper was when China itself was under another "foreign" rule – the Manchu, who set up the Qing dynasty (1683-1895). As described above, it was the Manchu that incorporated Taiwan into China, administratively as part of Fujian province.[318] Nevertheless, one could argue that both the Yuan and Qing dynasties were "Chinese" civilizations, as the Mongol and Manchu had come to rule China as any Han Chinese would have. Both cultures were absorbed and assimilated into the "superior" Chinese civilization, influenced intellectually and

[313] Copper, *Taiwan*, 31-32.
[314] *Area Handbook for the Republic of China* (Washington DC: United States Government, 1969), 22; Copper, *Taiwan*, 32.
[315] J. W. Davidson, *The Island of Formosa: Past and Present* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.
[316] Alan M. Wachman, "Taiwan: Parent, Province, or Blackballed State?," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35, no. 1 (2000): 188.
[317] Copper, *Taiwan*, 32.
[318] Edwin Winckler, "Mass political incorporation, 1500-2000," in *Contending Approaches to the Political Economy of Taiwan*, ed. Edwin Winckler and Susan Greenhalgh (M E Sharpe, 1983).

administratively by Confucian scholars and bureaucrats.[319] So like previous dynasties, initially, the Qing was not really concerned with Taiwanese affairs or responsive to local problems. The incorporation of Taiwan served basically three purposes at the time: "to keep it out of the hands of foreigners; to preclude any anti-Qing movements from emerging there; and to prevent the island from being too great an economic drain on the Chinese empire."[320] The local Fujian officials sent to the island were in the words of one historian "lazy, inefficient, and corrupt;"[321] few understood the dialects spoken on the island.[322] Known for centuries as a "base for pirates," Taiwan had now become "the land of rebellion and unrest" as Chinese rule (or lack thereof) precipitated as many as fifteen social and political insurrections between 1683 and 1843.[323] Overall, in the more than two hundred years under the Qing, communal strife occurred on an average of every two years.[324] Yet the faraway central authority in Peking (now Beijing) did not accord it too much attention, still considering the island then as part of the "frontier."

Geopolitical competition with extra-regional powers somewhat changed this.[325] When the Opium War started in 1839, China saw Taiwan's strategic utility in a more extensive battle against the British. The war in fact saw the mobilization of its forces on the island. Even after the Qing's defeat in 1842, local authorities continued to clash with British sailors, inviting the possible colonization of the island by Britain.[326] Two years before the Second Opium War in 1856, the US had contemplated establishing a presence in Taiwan, including the idea of buying the whole territory.[327] The Americans did not pursue the purchase, but did set up a trading post, along with

[319] James C. F. Wang, *Comparative Asian Politics: Power, Policy and Change* (Prentice Hall, 1994), 22.
[320] Roy, *Taiwan*, 19.
[321] Copper, *Taiwan*, 35.
[322] Davidson, *The Island of Formosa: Past and Present*, Chapter 7.
[323] Goddard, *Formosa*, 99; Copper, *Taiwan*, 35.
[324] See Wen-hsiung Hsu, "Frontier Social Organization and Social Disorder in Ch'ing Taiwan," in *China's Island Frontier: Studies in the Historical Geography of Taiwan*, ed. Ronald G. Knapp (University of Hawaii Press, 1980).
[325] Gregory Veeck et al., *China's Geography: Globalization and the Dynamics of Political, Economic, and Social Change* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 78.
[326] Copper, *Taiwan*, 36.
[327] Ibid.

many European powers, on the island in the 1850s.[328] Then in 1884-1885, in the midst of the Sino-French War, France took over the Penghu islands, attacked the Qing forces in Taiwan and imposed a naval blockade.[329] Only due pressures from other European powers as well as Japan, which had taken over the nearby Ryuku Islands in 1879, led the French to withdraw.

All these geopolitical maneuvers prompted Qing China to use Taiwan more strategically, or at minimum to prevent it from becoming a bridgehead for use by hostile naval powers. In addition, China was responding to the ever more intensified local challenge to its rule in Taiwan itself after China's humiliating defeat in the Opium Wars and the resulting "Unequal Treaties" of Nanking and Tianjin in which it lost Hong Kong to Britain. Hence, in 1885, for the first time in history, Taiwan was given the status of a province, with the able Liu Ming-chuan as first Governor (*xunfu*). Though Liu's governorship was regarded well by both Chinese and Taiwanese scholars, it did not last long due to China's eventual loss in the first Sino-Japanese War of 1895. Consequently, Taiwan, along with Penghu, once again changed hands and became Japan's colony via the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Controlling Taiwan was a long-held Japanese goal at least since the 1590s.[330] In the early seventeenth century, Japan had unsuccessfully invaded the island many times; and in the late nineteenth century, it landed a major military expedition but withdrew shortly after the Qing dynasty, with British help, sent in reinforcement to Chinese troops on the island.

Japanese Colonialism and Chinese-Japanese Rivalry

It could be argued that Japanese colonialism, including its negative aspect ("Japanization" or the suppression and replacement of Chinese languages and culture) and more positive feature (economic progress), contributed importantly to the ideational distancing of Taiwan from Mainland China. First, as typical of colonial rule, the Japanese period was authoritarian and repressive. In 1896, the Imperial Diet passed Law No. 63, which among other things granted the Japanese

[328] Leonard H. D. Gordon, "Taiwan and the Powers, 1840-1895," in *Taiwan: Studies in Chinese Local History*, ed. Leonard H. D. Gordon (Columbia University Press, 1970).
[329] Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*, 35.
[330] "A Brief History of Taiwan" (Government Information Office, Republic of China, n.d.), http://www.gio.gov.tw/.

Governor-General in Taiwan the power to issue decrees without any countervailing institutional checks. Many political decrees were indeed issued, with some of them equivalent to criminal law and implemented with no basis in any existing legal framework.[331] An extensive police network was also built, with 1 police officer performing surveillance for every 600 or so Taiwanese by 1905.[332] Arrested "criminals" were trialed and punished (frequently by death) in tribunals, instead of civil courts.[333] Through these harsh means, Japan quickly cemented its authority, established law and order, and eventually eliminated most warlords on the island.[334]

Yet Japan saw the strategic and resource utilities of Taiwan, and sought to develop it. This was not for Taiwan's own sake of course but for the benefit of the motherland – both its material advancement and cultural prestige. The island's key infrastructures for economic growth were therefore dramatically enhanced, including roads, railroads, harbors, electricity (the first in Asia outside Japan), and other communication facilities.[335] More effective and efficient irrigation and fertilization techniques were introduced in agriculture, leading to drastic improvement in rice and sugar production; though most of the rice and sugar was sent to Japan.[336] The economy was modernized. The monetary system became standardized and uniform commercial practices were promoted.[337] Under these measures, economic development was recorded,[338] which some argue served as the foundation for industrialization in the 1960s and 1970s.[339] Japan also upgraded public sanitation (many deadly diseases were eliminated or reduced) and promoted education (literacy rate was among the highest in Asia).[340]

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[331] Copper, *Taiwan*, 39.
[332] Ching-chih Chen, "Police and Community Control Systems in the Empire," in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, ed. Ramon H. Myers and Peattie (Princeton University Press, 1987), 213-239.
[333] Copper, *Taiwan*, 39.
[334] Ibid., 38-39.
[335] George H Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed* (Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 88-91.
[336] Copper, *Taiwan*, 39.
[337] Ibid.
[338] Samuel P. S. Ho, *Economic Development of Taiwan, 1860-1970* (Yale University Press, 1978).
[339] Kohli, *State-Directed Development*, Chapter 1.
[340] Copper, *Taiwan*, 39.

In this context, it could indeed be concluded that Japanese rule in Taiwan was "discriminatory and predatory" on the one hand and "beneficial and progressive" on the other.[341] This ambivalent perception also reflects the way the Taiwanese themselves interacted with their colonial master for more than half a century. In the beginning, upon the signing of the 1895 Shimonoseki Treaty, a group of outraged local leaders declared independence. But without widespread political and military support from the divided population, the self-proclaimed Republic of Formosa/Taiwan (*Taiwan gonghe guo*), one of the very first independent republics in Asia,[342] did not survive beyond its year of founding. Some of the leaders of the new Republic were in fact pro-China and recognized Chinese suzerainty. But despite earlier signs to the contrary, Manchu-ruled China did not do much to prop up the republic. Armed resistance to Japanese rule would remain fierce for the next twenty years; but each uprising would prompt consistent colonial suppression.[343] Under harsh rule, with no outside support from China or any other powers, violent opposition eventually became futile. The last major armed uprising was put down in August 1915 in southern Taiwan.[344] Except for the Taiwanese "aborigines" in rural and mountainous areas, whom the colonizer had more difficulty in "pacifying" but whose last major rebellion also ended in bloodshed in 1930 in Wushe, most on the island eventually caved in. Some even resented "China's betrayal" for failing to supposedly rescue its "people" from Japan.[345]

Though the radical opposition to Japanese rule did not end well, there were those who accepted "Japanese rule as a given" but continued to challenge it "within the boundaries of the colonial framework."[346] From the period of 1914 to 1937, at least half a dozen political organizations or movements sprung up, all in some ways and to various degrees questioned Japanese policies and actions. Three of them stood out in terms of establishing the groundwork

[341] Ibid., 38.
[342] Contrary to popular wisdom, this republic would have been the first in Asia except for the 1771 founding of the Lanfang Republic (part of present-day Indonesia).
[343] Harry J. Lamley, "Taiwanese under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: The Vicissitudes of Colonialism," in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A. Rubinstein (M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 202.
[344] Edward I-Te Chen, "Formosan Political Movements Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1914-1937," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (May 1, 1972): 477.
[345] Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed*, 14.
[346] Fulda, "Reevaluating the Taiwanese Democracy Movement," 364.

for "a Taiwanese based political consciousness."[347] The first, the League for the Establishment of a Formosan Parliament (*Taiwan Gikai Kisei Domei*) called for self-governance on the island. The League lasted from 1920 to 1934. The second, the Taiwan Cultural Association (*Taiwan Bunka Kyokai*), in operation from 1921-1930, promoted cultural activities that emphasized the use of Chinese and Taiwanese languages against the backdrop of Japanese assimilation policies. Some argue that the TCA was the foremost organization in fostering an early sign of "Formosan nationalism."[348] From trying to champion the equality between Japanese and Taiwanese, the TCA slowly shifted its stance to emphasizing "Taiwan's peculiarity," and ultimately called for representative parliament.[349] The third, the League for the Attainment of Local Autonomy in Formosa (*Taiwan Chihojichi Kisei Domei*), active from 1930-1937, worked to promote the goal in its name and attracted as many as four thousand members and eighteen thousand participants. All these organizations obviously were under close surveillance by the Japanese, faced repression, and eventually were shut down. However, all were able to exist for some period of time due to the support of sympathetic Japanese figures and a sizeable percentage of the local landowning elite and intelligentsia.[350]

The political movements that emerged in reaction to harsh colonial rule arguably kept "the issue of Taiwan's quest for self-determination alive"[351] and "helped Formosans to learn about the many hitherto totally alien concepts… such as home rule, popular election, and universal suffrage."[352] China's neglect did not help either. Historians note that by the start of the Second World War, "the Chinese population of Taiwan for the most part had forsaken their ties with China and saw little reason to reestablish them." There was no protest against Japan when it invaded and occupied Manchuria in 1931.[353] Moreover, when the Second Sino-Japanese War commenced in 1937, many in Taiwan participated in the war effort by working in Japanese war-

[347] Ibid.
[348] Chen, "Formosan Political Movements Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1914-1937," 489.
[349] Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan," 108.
[350] Fulda, "Reevaluating the Taiwanese Democracy Movement," 367.
[351] Ibid., 368.
[352] Chen, "Formosan Political Movements Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1914-1937," 496.
[353] Copper, *Taiwan*, 40-41.

related industries, among other things.[354] And during World War II itself, Japan of course mobilized all those under its possession, including the Taiwanese. Some coercion no doubt was applied. But significantly, many in Taiwan *voluntarily* participated in military service, with very few defecting afterwards. They even fought alongside Japanese soldiers in China itself, including in the atrocities committed against the Chinese in Nanking.[355] Overall, there were over 200,000 Taiwanese serving in the Japanese military during World War II.[356] All in all, according to one Taiwanese observer, Japan's colonialism in Taiwan could be crudely summarized in three stages: "the Japanese converted the hitherto medieval colony by turning it first into a rice basket, then into a workshop, and finally into war machine."[357]

Hence when Taiwan was given to China in 1945, many of the people residing on the island, including those of Fujian descent, had begun to perceive themselves as a distinct sub-ethnic group, different from the departing Japanese (Japanization never fully succeeded) and incoming Mainland Chinese. Again, certain ambivalence pervaded the air given a complex history. Few Taiwanese of Chinese ancestry rejected "their Chinese cultural identity" per se and Japanese colonial rule was more foreign and militaristic, especially during the mobilization for war.[358] Many therefore welcomed the end of colonialism. Yet being part of Japan for half a century had impressed upon the people of the island distinct economic, political, and social profiles from those of the ones just arriving from China. For a start, economically, Taiwan was much more "developed" than most of the Chinese mainland; politically, the repressive but efficient colonial state had built a relatively "unified system of administration, law, education, commerce and agriculture."[359] Though any clear sense of independent national identity had not yet

[354] Tse-han Lai, Ramon Myers, and Wou Wei, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford University Press, 1991), 38.
[355] Copper, *Taiwan*, 41-42.
[356] Christopher Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society* (Routledge, 1997), 22.
[357] Thian-hok Li, "Our Historical Struggle for Liberty," *3F Newsletter* (April 15, 1956), http://www.wufi.org.tw/eng/lthistry.htm.
[358] For an account of how colonial Taiwanese subjects struggled with multiple identities, see Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming Japanese: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (University of California Press, 2001).
[359] Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan," 112.

developed, colonialism did expose Taiwanese to "new cultural values and worldviews,"[360] and instilled collective memories that differed drastically from those on the mainland, who experienced Japanese imperialism in a "more distorting way."[361]

Reflecting this reality, at the end of World War II, not everyone in Taiwan thought that Taiwan was naturally part of China, to be turned over to it unconditionally. Independence was the preference of a small minority, while a trust territory under the United Nations was tabled as another possibility by a few.[362] Others suggested that the United States, which was then to administer South Korea and Japan, should also govern Taiwan.[363] When Taiwan was destined to become part of China anyway, the Taiwanese participants in the ceremony accepting the Japanese surrender requested a "special status" for the island. None of these options was of course taken seriously into consideration as it had come to be accepted to the US and its allies by the 1943 Cairo Conference, reaffirmed at the 1945 Postdam Declaration containing the terms of the Japanese surrender, that Taiwan would be handed over to China.[364] The Americans understood the strategic use of the island by Japan during the war, and did not want Taiwan to fall into the "wrong" hand again.[365] For the ROC at the time, taking over Taiwan was also more of a geopolitical than an irredentist move: much to do with "a wish to take back China's due from a defeated adversary" and to prevent Japan from "the means to menace China again, rather than reuniting what had been perceived of as disunited."[366] This is in line with the fact that previously, Nationalist China had not given Taiwan any special consideration – for example, none of the constitutions of 1925, 1934, and 1936 listed Taiwan as a province of China.[367]

Chinese Nationalist Rule

[360] Ibid., 111-112.
[361] Fulda, "Reevaluating the Taiwanese Democracy Movement," 369.
[362] Phillips, *Between assimilation and independence*; Roy, *Taiwan*, 93-94; Copper, *Taiwan*, 43.
[363] Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed*, Chapter 3.
[364] Copper, *Taiwan*, 42-43.
[365] Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*, 36.
[366] Ibid., 22.
[367] Copper, *Taiwan*, 42.

Upon becoming part of China again in 1945, the Taiwanese did not immediately witness the KMT rule their country much better than the Japanese; some would say it had been much worst. Preoccupied with the resumption of civil warfare with the communists, the KMT transferred a great deal of available resources on the island to the mainland for the war effort. The Nationalist government did not make way for some form of autonomous democratic governance; it instead installed the Garrison Commander Chen Yi to run the island military-style. There were pervasive mistrust and tensions between the new Chinese and those living in Taiwan. The latter were regarded as Japan's "collaborators" during the war. Moreover, most of them did not speak Mandarin but Japanese or a dialect more akin to that in Fujian (Hokkien). Only after a major violent anti-KMT uprising broke out in 1947 did the KMT turn its attention to Taiwan and officially make it a province, an upgrade from the previously designated "special military zone."

For the KMT, most of Taiwan's history up to and including the Japanese period had to be ignored or suppressed. There could not be a separate geo-idea of Taiwan. Once forced to retreat to the island in 1949, the KMT became more forceful in its claim that Taiwan was part of China and that the KMT continued to represent all of the latter. The relationships and interactions that shaped the KMT's idea of Taiwan were thus seen from the vantage point of its rule in China. To the KMT, this rule was only temporarily interrupted, but the war with the CPC was not over.

CPC/PRC - KMT/ROC Rivalry

The hostility between Nationalist-ruled Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan and the PRC on the mainland originated of course from the 1920s when the Communist Party of China, officially founded in 1921,[368] battled the KMT, established in 1912, for the control of the whole country during the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949).[369] The KMT traced its roots back as early as 1894 to

[368] For origins of the CPC, see Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

[369] This chapter cannot do justice to the complexity of the Chinese civil war, but what it aims to illustrate is the main players, events, and deep-seated rivalry between the KMT and CPC, and how these influenced the KMT once in Taiwan. For general history of the period, see John Fairbank, *China: A New History*, vol. Part III (Harvard University Press, 1991); Alan Lawrance, *China Since 1919 - Revolution and Reform: A Sourcebook* (Routledge, 2003); James E.

the Revive China Society led by Sun Yat-sen in Hawaii – a Chinese nationalist group dedicated to bringing down the "foreign" Manchu Qing Dynasty ruling China at the time.[370]

The fierce rivalry between the KMT and the CPC actually began in somewhat auspicious fashion. The two worked together against warlord rule (1916-1928) after the end of the Republican government of military leader (and President) Yuan Shikai (1912-1916), who later proclaimed himself Emperor after bringing down the imperial system in 1911. Some of the warlords were in fact Yuan's top officers who seized the opportunity during China's disintegration to carve up their own areas of influence.[371] In the First United Front (1922-1927), communists and nationalists joined forces, under the leadership of the KMT, and in a Northern Expedition (1926-1927),[372] gradually recovered China away from the warlords and began the process of reuniting the country. Toward the end of the Expedition and while still in alliance, KMT's hard-line military strongman Chiang Kai-shek, who assumed leadership of the Party after Sun's death in 1925, turned against his communist partners – slaughtering thousands in what became well-known as the Shanghai Massacre of 1927. The civil war then resumed from 1927-1936 between the KMT, headquartered in Nanking, and the CPC, who retreated in the face of KMT pursuits underground[373] and into rural southern China.

The Second Sino-Japanese War,[374] and the onset of World War II, forced – much to Chiang's dismay, since to him communists were more pressing enemies – the KMT to join hands

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Sheridan, *China in Disintegration: The Republican Era in Chinese History, 1912-1949* (Free Press, 1975).

[370] For origins of the KMT, see C. Martin Wilbur, *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923 -1928* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[371] For works on Yuan and subsequent problems, see Ernest P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China* (University of Michigan Press, 1977); Edward Friedman, *Backward Toward Revolution: The Chinese Revolutionary Party* (University of California Press, 1977); Andrew Nathan, *Peking Politics 1918-1923: Factionalism and the Failure of Constitutionalism* (University of California Press, 1976).

[372] Donald A. Jordan, *Northern Expedition: China's National Revolution of 1926-28* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1986).

[373] Patricia Stranahan, *Underground: The Shanghai Communist Party and the Politics of Survival* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

[374] James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine, *Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945* (M.E. Sharpe, 1992).

with the CPC again. The Second United Front (1937-1945),[375] though never fully coordinated, battled against the invading and occupying Japanese military. With the end of Second World War and Japan's defeat, the CPC and KMT – following a brief truce – resumed the third phase of their civil war with the later eventually losing and fleeing to Taiwan by the end of the 1940s.[376]

For the KMT immediately after retreat, Taiwan became a place – a province of China – that was meant to serve as a temporary station for its administrative and military personnel, along with 1.5 to 2 million civilian supporters, in order to regroup and retake the mainland. Since no armistice or treaty was ever signed between the CPC and KMT, both treated each other as enemies to be completely wiped out. Severely defeated, however, the KMT did not appear to constitute a serious military threat in its goal to take back Mainland China – though some attempts were coordinated with the US.[377] The potential of CPC's invasion of Taiwan on the other hand was real. Almost overnight, Taiwan became priority number one for the PRC, which like the ROC, had hitherto not been too interested in Taiwan. This volte-face was not only about nationalism (to destroy the KMT and unite China) but also the island's strategic location (to prevent its use as a US-ROC springboard for anticommunist activities). From then on, in geostrategic terms, for both the PRC and ROC, "the inhabitants of Taiwan do not matter as much as the land they inhabit. Having the island is not nearly as important as preventing others from having it."[378]

In late 1949, the communist Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) attempted to invade Taiwan. However they were unable to advance pass Chiang's forces on Kinmen Island. In 1950, CPC leader Mao Zedong again planned to go after the Nationalists using thousands of small boats, as most of China's navy and merchant marines were taken by the KMT.[379] This time the elaborate

[375] Tetsuya Kataoka, *Resistance and Revolution in China: the Communists and the Second United Front* (University of California Press, 1974); Kui-Kwong Shum, *The Chinese Communists' Road to Power: The Anti-Japanese National United Front, 1935-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1988).
[376] Odd Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2003); Michael Lynch, *The Chinese Civil War 1945-49* (Osprey Publishing, 2010).
[377] John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (M.E. Sharpe, 1997).
[378] Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*, 40.
[379] Copper, *Taiwan*, 46-47.

scheme was delayed not by Chiang's military but by a liver fluke that infected Mao's men swimming in the Fujian water holes preparing for the invasion.[380] Chairman Mao tried again in the mid and late 1950s when the PLA started shelling the KMT outposts in Kinmen and Matsu in what became known as the First (1954) and Second (1958) Taiwan Strait Crises. During both times, the crises unfolded not solely on the actions of the CPC and KMT but on the backdrop of extra-regional powers' influences.

Cold War US – PRC/USSR Rivalries and Tensions

As the geo-idea of Singapore could hardly be comprehended without direct reference to international interventions, so too was the geo-idea of Taiwan, as would be conceived by the KMT. For once, the Cold War between the two superpowers colored CPC-KMT interactions, both during the early period on the mainland as well as in Taiwan.

On the mainland, it was actually the Soviets that aided both the KMT and CPC in their "united" fight against the warlords.[381] The two Chinese camps had radically different ideologies and social bases of power - most Nationalist support was among the wealthy merchants in China's coastal cities and landowners in the countryside, while the Communists' base of power lay with peasants. In this context, the Soviets – through the Comintern – helped Sun reorganize the KMT in 1923, as well as encouraged the Chinese communists to join the revamped expanded party – but without abandoning communism. The KMT's official ideology of course remained the "Three Principles of Sun Yat-sen": nationalism, democracy, and the people's livelihood. Soviet military advisers helped establish the Whampoa Military Academy in 1924 with Chiang Kai-shek, whom Sun sent briefly to Moscow for study, as head, and supplied most of the materials, organization, and equipments in training KMT cadres in the art of mass mobilization. Many CPC members, on an individual basis, also studied at the Academy; some, such as future PRC Prime

[380] Frank A. Kierman, *The Fluke the Saved Farmosa* (Center for International Studies, MIT, 1954).
[381] G. Patrick March, *Eastern Destiny: Russia in Asia and the North Pacific* (Greenwood, 1996), 205; C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920-1927* (Harvard University Press, 1989); Jane L. Price, *Cadres, Commanders and Commissars: Training of the Chinese Communist Leadership, 1920-45* (Westview Press, 1976).

Minister Zhou Enlai, even became political instructors.[382] The largely successful Northern Expedition against the warlords was in fact financed and supplied by the Soviets.

Once he consolidated power and without the compromising figure of Sun Yat-sen (whom the communists also admired), Chiang of course turned against his communist allies in the 1927 Shanghai Massacre, subsequently expelled Soviet advisers, and began to vigorously court American assistance in the so-called Nationalist period of modernization (1927-1937).[383] To stamp communist influence, US aid poured into the KMT, most of which went disproportionately into the military for the main purpose of communist elimination – a personal obsession of Chiang. The funds were also hoarded, mismanaged, and wasted by the KMT's top leaders and never effectively put into building up the national economy or combating economic difficulties.

While American aid gave Nationalist troops the military advantage, corruption and economic neglect turned US support into a liability.[384] Chiang's army suffered great losses. During the last phase of the Chinese civil war in the late 1940s, American assistance was drastically reduced, leading to the desertion and decommission of thousands of KMT soldiers that were subsequently recruited by the People's Liberation Army. The communist army in contrast excelled in guerilla warfare; its strength and membership increased dramatically during the period**.** In the wake of the CPC's triumph, most, including the United States, concluded that the KMT's escape to Taiwan was not a provisional move to live and fight another day but a permanent move to final defeat. The Soviets immediately granted recognition to the newly proclaimed People's Republic of China and supported its "rightful" quest for membership in international organizations such as the United Nations.

Taiwan's political geography, however, extended the KMT's life. In the context of containing the Soviet Union, rising communist China, their support for communist movements in Korea and Southeast Asia, and ultimately the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, the

[382] Alfred K. Ho, *China's Reforms and Reformers* (Greenwood, 2004), 7.
[383] Lloyd E. Eastman et al., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); Hung-mao Tien, *Government and Politics in Kuomintang China, 1927-1937* (Stanford University Press, 1972).
[384] Wesley M. Bagby, *The Eagle-Dragon Alliance: America's Relations with China in World War II* (University of Delaware Press, 1992).

United States resumed its financial and military aid to the KMT after nearly a year halt. US-ROC relations had never been easy, but out of necessity, the US had to support Chiang and co.[385] The island had become the "center stage in the struggle between East and West, between communism and capitalism."[386] Beefing up Taiwan's defense was in accordance with US geopolitical strategy to preserve "America's cornerstone in the Pacific Rim."[387] Along with South Korea and Japan, both of which the US occupied after WWII, Taiwan became the third leg of a triangular communist containment in Northeast Asia. The US and its Western allies refused to recognize the PRC and Chiang's ROC representatives still "represented" China in the UN, including serving as a coveted Permanent Member of the Security Council. The USSR then boycotted this "illegal occupation" of the China seat by the defeated Nationalist government during the start of the war in Korea. Ironically, this international pouting by the Soviets allowed the Americans and its allies to pass a binding "UN" resolution under Chapter VII to legitimize the military "defense" of capitalist South Korea.[388]

When Vietnam was next divided into pro-Eastern North and Western-backed South, the US formally signed a Mutual Defense Treaty in 1954 with the ROC, effective from 1955. The treaty guaranteed American protection of Taiwan and the Penghu Islands.[389] Though the Treaty did not cover ROC islands near the mainland, Congress did pass a resolution in 1955 allowing the US to use force to defend them if needed. Without American support (including nuclear brinksmanship), the KMT would probably have not withstood the Chinese communist shelling of Matsu and Kinmen in the mid and late 1950s. Earlier in 1950, Mao's plans to takeover Taiwan ("liberate" in PRC parlance) was also put on hold not by the liver fluke but, from then on, the US

[385] Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, *United States-Taiwan Security Ties: From Cold War to Beyond Containment* (Praeger Publishers, 1993); Martin L Lasater, *The Taiwan Issue In Sino-American Strategic Relations* (Westview Press, 1985).
[386] Roy, *Taiwan*, 185.
[387] Hung-mao Tien and Chyuan-Jeng Shiau, "Taiwan's Democratization," *World Affairs* 155, no. 2 (1992): 58.
[388] See Anoulak Kittikhoun and Thomas G. Weiss, "Imperfect but Indispensible: The UN and Conflict Management," in *Conflict Management: Theory and Practice*, ed. Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (Routledge, 2011).
[389] The Treaty did not cover Matsu or Kinmen, not to mention any part of the Mainland. Thus this theoretically meant the US would NOT support the KMT's invasion of the PRC on the Mainland.

Seventh Fleet.[390] The American shield also prevented a wholesale communist invasion of the island, which most agreed, would have no doubt succeeded, even though the cost would have been grave.[391]

THE GEO-IDEA OF KMT'S TAIWAN

Being geographically constrained in a small island below enemy territory would exude a certain aura of vulnerability for the KMT in Taiwan. The island was in addition poor in resources compared to the mainland. This vulnerability was then exacerbated by the continued rivalry with the CPC. On the other hand however, unlike the military and economic constraints faced by the PAP in Singapore, the Cold War competition between the US and China/USSR at the international level meant unrelenting American support that guaranteed some security – both military and economic.

Together, these factors allowed the KMT to conceive Taiwan's geo-idea and corresponding pre-political notion as it saw fit. To the KMT, Taiwan was no more than a small part within a big Chinese territory under threat from communism in which the Nationalist government would soon vanquish. The KMT maintained a huge military presence on the "offshore islands" near the coast of China – Matsu and Kinmen – not only for strategic reasons but also as a symbol that it was still not entirely cut off from the mainland.[392] Thus, rather than ruling the small place of Taiwan for its own sake, the KMT continued to rule it as if it was only a part of a big land. This big size imagination prevented it from drawing on Taiwan's past, and articulating a new vision that could be shared by its people. For the next thirty years, the KMT officially maintained that everything was temporary – from the CPC's occupation of the mainland to the KMT's hideout on the island. Taiwan, part of the vast Chinese homeland, was to serve as the last "communist-free" base for recovery of that homeland. It did not, and could not have, a separate geography, history, or identity.

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[390] Hung-dah Chui, ed., *China and the Question of Taiwan: Documents and Analysis* (Praeger, 1973), 234; Jon W. Huebner, "The Abortive Liberation of Taiwan," *The China Quarterly* 110 (1987): 256-275.
[391] Copper, *Taiwan*, 192.
[392] Ibid.

TAIWAN'S PRE-POLITICAL NOTION UNDER THE KMT

This geo-idea formed the basis for how the KMT regime legitimized its pre-political rules in Taiwan from the 1950s to the mid 1980s, emphasizing the need to deter communism as well as police what could be referred to as "Taiwanism," or the notion that Taiwan had a distinct political geography and identity separate from China. These two challenges to KMT rule had no place in its idea of Taiwan.

Fighting and Policing Communism

It is worth the emphasis that, unlike the PAP in Singapore after separation from Malaysia, the goal of survival for the KMT in Taiwan after "separation" from China was promulgated not for the survival of Taiwan as a new nation itself, but for the survival of the KMT in order for it to eventually retake Mainland China. As the KMT repeatedly declared: "either we exist to return to the mainland or we have no existence worth mentioning."[393] Chiang Kai-shek went further: "to us recovery of the mainland is a sacred mission" – "it is our duty to launch a punitive expedition against the rebels," "to end Communist aggression in Asia" and "to deliver our compatriots from under tyranny."[394] Thus from the beginning, the grand vision and strategy of reclaiming the mainland took on a "spiritual, quasi-religious character" for the KMT,[395] with Chiang himself very much believing that he was the revolutionary heir of the great Chinese nationalist hero Sun Yat-sen.[396] The "temporary" Nationalist setback in China, to Chiang, came about because Mao's communists were aided by international communism, especially the Soviet Union, and that it was up to all Chinese patriots, on the mainland and in Taiwan, to free themselves from this Soviet communist enslavement.

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[393] "National Recovery," *The Free China Review*, Editorial (April, 1962).
[394] Quoted in Roy, *Taiwan*, 78.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Steve Tsang, "Chiang Kai-Shek and the Kuomingtang's Policy to Reconquer the Chinese Mainland, 1949-1958," in *In the Shadow of China: Political Development in Taiwan since 1949*, ed. Steve Tsang (University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 49.

On the island however, the KMT immediately had to deal with a number of survival crises. As manifested by its defeat, the Party faced severe organizational weakness, ample corruption, poor discipline, low fighting spirit, and no commitment to ideology.[397] To therefore live and fight another day, the Party first went through a radical transformation by, ironically, replicating the organizational structure of a Leninist party.[398] Here, it set up a commissar system in the military and extended party branches to all levels of government and social organizations in the urban and rural sectors. Defining the people as its mass base, the KMT organized youth corps, created farmers' associations, formed labor and trade unions, and prevented the organization of independent associations. In short, the Nationalists copied their enemy in the hope of defeating it.

Along with self-strengthening, the KMT moved to put in place mechanisms to fight and police the communist challenge. The most important political instrument was the martial law promulgated in May 1949, euphemistically titled the "Temporary Provisions for the Period of Mobilization for the Suppression of the Communist Rebellion."[399] The provisions granted extraordinary emergency power to Chiang Kai-shek and the Garrison Command, and placed restrictions on civil and political rights, including public rallies, group activities, media freedom, and travels to the mainland. Opposition parties were not allowed except for two existing ones officially sanctioned by the state – the China Democratic Socialist Party and the Young China Party.[400] Anti-government criticisms, open political debates, and of course any hint of the promotion of communism were proscribed.

In addition to installing this classic "hard authoritarian" regime,[401] the KMT also introduced agricultural and economic reforms that aimed to prevent communism at its roots. It

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[397] Ibid., 50.
[398] Tun-Jen Cheng, "Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan," *World Politics* 41, no. 4 (1989).
[399] Ming-min Peng, "Political Offences in Taiwan: Laws and Problems," *China Quarterly* 47 (1971): 483-493; Richard C. Kagan, "Martial Law in Taiwan," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 14 (1982): 44-54.
[400] J. Bruce Jacobs, "Political Opposition and Taiwan's Political Future," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 6 (January 1981): 22-44.
[401] Edwin A. Winckler, "Institutionalization and Participation on Taiwan: From Hard to Soft Authoritarianism?," *The China Quarterly* 99 (1984): 481-499.

was also eager to showcase that its economic development policies were better than communist ones across the Strait. Economic success was meant to beef up national security, strengthen the state to defeat communism, make Taiwan the "model province" for the rest of China, and ultimately augment Chinese nationalism on the island. In the 1950s, however, the prospects for economic growth were minimal – Taiwan was poor in resources and capital, and had an unfavorable ratio of land to population.[402]

American support would help address this disadvantage. First, "there is no question that the security and political stability" provided by the US, writes James Wang, not only "shielded Taiwan from the mainland China communist threat" but also "allowed the ruling KMT to devote its time and energy to economic development."[403] Under the American security umbrella, the KMT was able to divert funds from defense spending to developing the economy. In addition, Taiwan received massive US aid, capital investment, and favorable market access.[404] Second, unlike in Singapore, Taiwan did possess much more land for development. Thus, the Americans assisted in land reform, one of the most strategic and significant economic initiatives from the late 1940s to early 1950s. The Nationalists had learned that peasant support was a key mark of success for communism on the mainland, and was determined to see this not repeat on the island. In China of course, peasants were rewarded for their communist revolutionary contribution. Land reform there saw Mao confiscating some 113 million acres of land and redistributing them to 300 million landless peasants.[405]

In contradistinction, the reform in Taiwan took a decidedly capitalist turn. It was the work of the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction, led by two technical specialists from the United States and three Chinese agrarian experts.[406] Tenant farmers were sold public land by the

[402] Copper, *Taiwan*, 151.
[403] Wang, *Comparative Asian Politics*, 147-148.
[404] US aid totaled $1.5 billion up to 1965 – the year when "official" economic aid ended. The US remained the top trading partner and source of investment capital after that. In addition, grants and loans continued in the amount of $50 million annually. See Copper, *Taiwan*, 203; Mark Plummer, "Taiwan: The 'New Look' in Government," *Asian Survey* 9, no. 1 (1969): 21.
[405] Franklin W. Houn, *A Short History of Chinese Communism* (Prentice Hall, 1967), 159.
[406] Wang, *Comparative Asian Politics*, 148-149; Joseph A Yager, *Transforming Agriculture in Taiwan: The Experience of the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction*, Food systems and agrarian change (Cornell University Press, 1988).

government on favorable credit terms. They then were asked to sell the government any surplus land that they did not need in exchange for shares in state-owned industrial companies or for government bonds that could be converted to cash. Overall, the reform created a "new urban entrepreneurial class of landlords," eight out of ten farm households would come to own land. Importantly, government bonds were used as capital that contributed to the country's first stage of economic growth. The success of the land reform eliminated traditional landlords as a power base, but most significantly, prevented communist insurgency in the rural hinterland.[407]

Policing "Taiwanism"

In addition to Taiwan being the "last bastion against Communist forces" and constantly subjected to the threat of invasion,[408] the newly arrived Nationalists also faced a hostile local environment of 7 million Taiwanese (*benshengren* or "local people"), who more or less viewed the KMT and its supporters as mainland outsiders (*waishengren* or "outside people"). To combat this challenge and legitimize its rule, the KMT of course used the claim that it was still the true representative government of all China, in which Taiwan was only a province. Because of the ongoing civil war and period of communist rebellion, the 1947 Constitution of the Republic of China had to be suspended indefinitely until the whole of China could be reclaimed.

The suspension, and not total abolition, of the Constitution was meant for the KMT to police Taiwanism or any challenge that the island was anything but part of China. At the same time, it was the only way that would allow Chiang Kai-shek to not accept the reality that the Nationalists in fact had not only lost the civil war but also "China" itself to the communists. As noted by Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin, the 1947 Constitution could not be abolished and replaced since it was the "quintessential legal embodiment of the one-China principle," adopted when the KMT was still the elected and effective government of most of all China and recognized

[407] Tun-Jen Cheng and Yun-han Chu, "State-Business Relationship in Taiwan: A Political Economy Perspective," in *Taiwan's Modernization in Global Perspective*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (Praeger, 2002), 198.
[408] Roy, *Taiwan*, 78.

as such by the international community.[409] Clinging to that principle while temporarily in Taiwan, the two-term limit on the presidency had to be scrapped and the incumbent members of the Republic of China's *national* legislative entities (the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan) had to be exempted from reelection, thus extending their terms for life.[410] To the KMT, the rationale was in fact geographical: any election for both the *national* president and legislators held only in Taiwan would be undemocratic and unrepresentative of the whole Chinese nation.[411]

Nevertheless, local elections were allowed, as they did not violate the geo-idea of KMT's Taiwan. These elections, though relatively competitive and open, were under the control and manipulation of the ruling party. Yet, there were no blatant and consistent "rigging" of the electoral process – which could have been done given the KMT's control of state institutions and vast surveillance and police networks.[412] Instead, the KMT used its extensive political, institutional, and financial resources to ensure victories: regulation of electoral rules, ownership of mass media, control of large blocks of voters such as the military, ties to mass mobilizing local associations, and campaign funding and rewards for candidates supportive of the KMT.[413] On some level, the move to allow sub-national elections was aimed to placate local Taiwanese desire

[409] Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan," 114.
[410] The old *National Assembly* was the body with the power to elect the President and Vice President as well as to amend the Constitution. The *Legislative Yuan* was empowered with the ability to pass laws, approve budgets, and confirm emergency decrees. In addition to the Legislative Yuan, there were four other chambers (or Yuan) where power was distributed according to the 1947 Constitution: *Executive Yuan* (the administrative arm of government headed by the Premier), *Judicial Yuan* (the interpreter of the Constitution, containing the Council of Grand Justices and the court system), *Control Yuan* (the investigative arm), and *Examination Yuan* (the administrator of the civil service).
[411] The first session of the Legislative Yuan, the main lawmaking body, was convened in Nanking on May 18, 1948 with 773 members, with a term of three years to be reelected in 1951. With the move to Taiwan in 1949, the KMT had the Judicial Yuan decide that the members of the Legislative Yuan would hold office until new elections could be held (again) on the Mainland. The KMT reasoned that no new elections could be held if they were not held for all 35 provinces of China. Elections for those legislative seats representing the "Taiwan Province" could in time be held.
[412] Roy, *Taiwan*, 85.
[413] Ibid., 85-86; Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan: Voting for Democracy* (Routledge, 1999), 84-97.

for some measure of self-determination and political participation,[414] which was fine as long as it was expressed within the context of Taiwan being a province of China.

Yet the KMT had never fully trusted that the local elites would not eventually demand political contestation at the national level, where such participation had been suspended by martial law. Even before its massive landing in 1949, the KMT had been suspicious of the loyalty of the local Taiwanese running the provincial administration after Japan returned Taiwan to China at the end of World War II. These elites, especially the intelligentsia and gentry, many of whom were former Japanese colonial subjects, were eliminated as a political force and replaced with loyal Chinese mainlanders.[415] "Re-sinification" policies were introduced, including imposing Mainland Chinese symbols on those native ones on the island, promoting Chinese culture, and requiring the learning, speaking and usage of Mandarin in schools and the public sphere.[416] In the mid 1960s, Chiang's government even launched the "Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement" in a bid to cling to its claim as the "sole representative of cultural China" vis-à-vis Mao's "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" which purportedly rejected traditional Chinese values.[417] The KMT's Movement for China's Cultural Renaissance was also a full-scale propaganda war to woo disgruntled Chinese intellectuals and cadres in the mainland, reminding them of the support for their efforts against Mao and the specter of Nationalist return.[418]

Any major challenge to the KMT's geo-idea of Taiwan was not tolerated. Bloody KMT crackdowns were prominently captured in local collective memories by a series of monumental dates (to be discussed more below): the February 28 Incident of 1947, in which KMT troops killed thousands of local Taiwanese; the White Terror of the 1950s, in which politically motivated incarcerations of dissidents resulted in the executions of as high as forty-five thousands – a

[414] Fu Hu, "The Electoral Mechanism and Political Change in Taiwan," in *In the Shadow of China: Political Development in Taiwan since 1949*, ed. Steve Tsang (University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 137.
[415] Phillips, *Between assimilation and independence*, 278; Fulda, "Reevaluating the Taiwanese Democracy Movement," 369.
[416] Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 92-122.
[417] Jou-Juo Chu, "Nationalism and Self-determination: The Identity Politics in Taiwan," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35, no. 3 (July 2000): 307.
[418] Melvin Gurtov, "Taiwan: Looking to the Mainland," *Asian Survey* 8, no. 1 (1968): 17.

pattern that, though at lower scales, continued into the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s;[419] and the Kaohsiung Incident of 1979, in which KMT hardliners ordered riot police to publicly crush and jail scores of protesting radical Taiwanese opponents.[420]

CHAMPIONING AN ALTERNATIVE GEO-IDEA: REGIME DE-LEGITIMATION AND CHANGE

Again, the KMT came to govern Taiwan from the 1950s with an already established geo-idea. This idea was predicated on "the so-called 'one-China' principle, which sustained the claim that there is only one China, Taiwan is part of China, and the ROC government is the sole legitimate government representing the whole of China."[421] For a long time, this had Western recognition and some international credibility. Confinement to a small island, threat from Communist China, Cold War rivalries, and nearly unlimited American support all allowed the KMT to perpetuate its geo-idea of Taiwan.

Yet the idea's domestic legitimacy remained contested from the beginning because it arose from an ahistorical conception of Taiwan's physical space and its geographic relation to the mainland. Moreover, stretching back to the formative periods when it was subjected not only to Japanese colonialism but the imperial rivalries and occupations by external powers, the island could claim some sense of geo-consciousness, separate and distinct from Mainland China. The slowly emerging alternative idea of a different historical experience served to question the propagation of the ruler's geo-idea and its corresponding pre-political rules (martial law that banned national electoral politics and political challenges of the communist or Taiwanist variety).

Changes in the International Environment

Starting in the 1970s, three factors at the international environment, which hitherto aided the maintenance of the KMT's idea of Taiwan, changed in favor of the domestic ideational struggle against the regime's legitimacy formula.

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[419] Roy, *Taiwan*, 90.
[420] Cheng and Haggard, *Political Change in Taiwan*, 13.
[421] Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan," 117.

First, the simple bipolar Cold War between the US-dominated Western alliance and the Eastern bloc led by the USSR with China as key ally had become more complicated with heightened tension between the Soviet and Chinese communists. Capitalizing on the "Sino-Soviet split,"[422] which intensified from the early 1960s and culminated to open border hostilities later in the decade, as well as the need to disengage from its unpopular war in Vietnam, the US under new President Richard Nixon, elected in 1969, began to make peaceful overtures to its erstwhile enemy communist China.[423] With less active American opposition, the PRC was able to muster enough votes to take over the China seat at the United Nations in 1971 – an effort the PRC had waged since the 1950s and with increasing support from the mid 1960s.[424] Then following the secret visits to the PRC by National Security Advisor Henry Kissenger in the same year (one of which occurred during the time the UN vote was taking place),[425] Nixon's 1972 China trip broke new ground in US-China relations. The Shanghai Communique was signed, which among other things not only stated that the United States acknowledged that "there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China" but also that the US and PRC would work towards the normalization of relations. Shortly after, Japan, the ROC's most significant supporter and trading partner after the US, followed by normalizing relations with the PRC – a no less surprising development dubbed the "Tanaka-shock" after its Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka. Sensing a possible alignment of China with the Western bloc, the Soviet Union was compelled to enter into "détente" with the US. The fierce Cold War rivalries seemed to have become less fierce.

Second, with Chairman Mao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, radical communism gave way to new leader Deng Xiaoping's reforms and embrace of capitalism

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[422] Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton University Press, 2008).
[423] Copper, *Taiwan*, 49.
[424] Joyce K. Kallgren, "Nationalist China: Problems of a Modernizing Taiwan," *Asian Survey* 5, no. 1 (1965): 12. The US and its allies, hitherto actively opposed the PRC's entry into the UN in place of the ROC, were believed to have become less active in encouraging friends and allies not to vote for the GA resolution that finally passed for the PRC to represent China at the UN (technically, the ROC "withdrew" from the UN by walking out of the GA before the vote). By this time, support for the PRC increased from many newly independent developing countries – though not all, such as the ones in Africa, which had benefited from ties to the ROC and its agricultural assistance programs.
[425] Sheldon Appleton, "Taiwan: The Year It Finally Happened," *Asian Survey* 12, no. 1 (1972): 34.

beginning in 1978. With this, there appeared no longer a life-and-death struggle between communism and capitalism – the two could co-exist, quite profitably in fact, in China from then on. The communist threat from the mainland that the KMT purported to defend against hence seemed to have dissipated. Immediately following diplomatic relations with the US, the PRC began to make "peace overtures" across the Taiwan Strait. The ROC of course rejected these overtures, seen ultimately as part of a move to incorporate Taiwan into the PRC.[426] But from the mid-1980s, harsh caricatures and name calling between the PRC and ROC did stop, with the former's leaders no longer labeled "Communist bandits" and the latter's officials regarded as "Chiang puppet clique."[427] "The détente atmosphere in the Straits," note Chu and Lin, "began to melt down the siege mentality among the public."[428]

Finally, the hitherto almost unconditional support that the United States had lent to the Nationalist government in Taiwan took on a new dynamic in light of the US rapprochement with the PRC. From 1973 to 1978, both had liaison offices headed by representatives at ambassadorial rank in each of their respective capitals. The US, under President Jimmy Carter, then established full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic in 1979. The Joint Communiqué officially recognized the PRC "as the sole legal Government of China"[429] and that the US would transfer its embassy from Taipei to Beijing. Significantly, Carter announced that the US would withdraw its military personnel from Taiwan and annul the 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty signed with Chiang's ROC.

In spite of this, the United States found a way to remain close to Taiwan. The de-recognition of the ROC was a blow; but it had been more or less expected. In a major foreign policy address to the Asia Society in 1977, US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance deliberately omitted to mention Taiwan's diplomatic ties with the US or the Defense Treaty.[430] President Carter then made clear shortly after that: "other nations who now have full relationships with the

[426] Parris Chang, "Taiwan in 1982: Diplomatic Setback Abroad and Demands for Reforms at Home," *Asian Survey* 23, no. 1 (1983): 38.
[427] Copper, *Taiwan*, 209.
[428] Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan," 118.
[429] The Communiqué however did NOT explicitly recognize the PRC's sovereign claim over Taiwan. It also did not recognize that Taiwan was independent.
[430] *New York Times*, June 30, 1977.

People's Republic of China on the mainland have continued trade, social exchanges, sales of major equipment to Taiwan."[431] Thus, the recognition of the PRC and unilateral annulment of the Treaty prompted the American Congress to pass (and Carter to sign) the Taiwan Relations Act in April 1979.[432] The Act authorized unofficial relations with the "governing authorities on Taiwan," created the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) as a de-facto embassy, and continued "to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character," and "to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan." Though it was not unambiguously clear whether the US must defend Taiwan in case of PRC attack, some understood this as such (though it was not a legal obligation as in a treaty). Overall, in the words of Julian Chang, "the act allowed the United States to cut through the major diplomatic Gordian Knot of how to improve its relationship with the People's Republic of China without severing 40 plus years of friendship with Taiwan." Though certainly not pleased, "the Chinese government very pragmatically understood that America wanted to uphold some aspects of its longstanding relationship with Taiwan,"[433] including the flourishing economic relationship. Moreover, the PRC was busy with the war against Vietnam (in light of the latter's invasion of Khmer Rouge's Cambodia), and was keen to protect its newfound relations with the US.

Of note in the Act was an important provision on human rights, and a hint that the US would begin to push for political democracy in its authoritarian allies – something it had not done prior to the mid 1970s as Samuel Huntington, among others, note.[434] The Act declared: "the preservation and enhancement of the human rights of all the people on Taiwan are hereby reaffirmed as objectives of the United States." This was to lay the foundation for many US Congressional resolutions later urging Taiwan to address human rights and democratize its political system, not least due to pressure from US-based Taiwanese human rights and

[431] *New York Times*, July 1, 1977.
[432] The vote passed with broad, bi-partisan support (the House vote was 345 to 55 and the Senate vote was 90 to 6). President Carter signed the Act into law (known as U.S. Public Law 96-8) on April 10, 1979.
[433] Kate Hoagland, "Taiwan Relations Act 30 Years Later: Q&A with Julian Chang", April 10, 2009, http://www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/news/articles/ash-taiwan-anniv-apr09.
[434] Samuel Huntington, "Democracy's Third World," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (1991): 14-15.

democracy organizations (more below). Moreover, for the United States, the improving relations with China as well as the effort to disengage from Viet Nam and in effect "allowing" communist victory in Indochina meant that Taiwan had outlived its purpose of being a strategic location for the containment of communism.[435] As China was opening up, the island would instead turn into a prime place next door to disseminate the idea of liberal democracy. As Andrew Nathan and Helena Ho point out, the KMT came under heavy American and Western pressure to democratize,[436] as the perception of the once oppressive "communist" China opening up and the once "free" China continuing to oppress its citizens through martial law was becoming ironic.

The changes in the international environment were of monumental consequences for the KMT, and allowed an alternative geo-idea, which had been long been repressed, to be actively championed by the opposition. The changes and US pressure had to be taken seriously in light of diplomatic isolation and dependence on special American military and economic relations. Following the withdrawal of UN membership and then US de-recognition, the KMT government could no longer claim to represent China in international affairs. The rise of Beijing's international power, observes Alan Wachman, whittled away at "Taiwan's 'international space.'"[437] Thus, Minxin Pei reasons, "from the perspective of Taiwan's political leaders… democratization improves Taiwan's international standing and enhances its security."[438] Officially or not, there was now no illusion which side had won the Chinese civil war. The defeat in the struggle with the CPC to represent China in the world dealt a triple blow for the KMT's legitimizing formula in Taiwan. First, it made empty the claim that the island was part of the larger China in which the KMT was still the rightful ruler. Second, the Party could not hold any further the chimerical notion that its stay in Taiwan was temporary until the recovery of the mainland. Third, with the decline of radical communism and the rise of market capitalism in China, no longer would the Nationalist

[435] M. S. Pratt, "US Reactions to the PRC Use of Forces Against Taiwan," in *If China Crosses the Taiwan Strait: The International Response*, ed. Parris H. Chang and Martin L. Lasater (University Press of America, 1993), 35-54.
[436] Andrew J. Nathan and Helena V. S. Ho, "Chiang Ching-kuo's Decision for Political Reform," in *Chiang Ching-Kuo's Leadership in the Development of the Republic of China on Taiwan*, ed. Shao-chuan Leng (University Press of America, 1993), 54.
[437] Wachman, "Taiwan," 186.
[438] Minxin Pei, "The Fall and Rise of Democracy in East Asia," in *Democracy in East Asia*, ed. Larry J. Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 70-71.

government able to rationalize that it was defending Taiwan as the last bastion against the communist rebellion.

CHANLLENING THE KMT'S GEO-IDEA AND PRE-POLITICAL RULES

Regime Accommodation

With the changes in the international environment that culminated in the loss of Western recognition by the late 1970s, the ruling regime's geo-idea was left exposed on *both* counts – international and domestic. Yet unlike those who argue that it was mainly the Western de-recognition that delegitimized the regime, this chapter has shown that the regime's legitimacy was contested from the outset. The international loss of credibility was important, but it was the interactive effect with a domestic delegitimation process that would prove decisive for regime change. Arguably, had the KMT formulated a geo-idea that could be shared with the larger population from the start, coupled with the strong record of economic performance in its possession, there would be little reason to challenge its regime – even if it was de-recognized internationally. Yet it neither forged anything new nor transformed the one held by the oppositional Taiwanese political movement. Instead, clinging to its internationally delegitimized and nationally contested geo-idea, the KMT tried to accommodate pressures by opening up the electoral system and pursuing a policy of "Taiwanization."[439]

First, while national elections for the whole parliament were not permitted, supplementary elections to create additional seats in the Legislative Yuan were introduced starting in 1969. These did not violate the KMT's geo-idea of Taiwan. It came after a provision was made in 1966 to the "Temporary Provisions" of the Constitution to allow for more representation in parliament due to the increased population of Taiwan (the only "liberated area" of China).[440] Legislators elected on the mainland were also aging and dying. Thus in 1969, out of necessity, 11 supplementary seats were allowed for elections. Then in 1972, the number was increased to 51,

[439] Hung-mao Tien, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China* (Hoover Institution Press, 1989); Cheng and Haggard, *Political Change in Taiwan*; Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan*.
[440] Bass, "Malaysia and Singapore," 19.

then 52 in 1975, 97 in 1980, 100 in 1986, and 150 in 1989.[441] Opposition parties were of course still banned. Second, via its Taiwanization campaign (not to be confused with "Taiwanism"), the KMT began to accelerate the recruitment of Taiwanese into positions in the ruling party and national government from the early to mid 1970s onwards.[442] Previously, Taiwanese had only been able to hold important positions in local level administrations, given of course that they were KMT members.[443] Then, from constituting not much more than 6 percent in the Party Central Committee during the Tenth KMT Party Congress in 1969-76, the percentage of Taiwanese in this top body increased to over 14 percent during the Eleventh Congress of 1976-81; during the Twelfth, it was 19.3 percent.[444] Significantly, by the late 1970s, Taiwanese would occupy over half of the positions in the KMT itself.[445]

Many scholars credit the KMT under Chiang Ching-kuo (CCK), son and successor of Chiang Kai-shek since 1976, for the move toward political reform. Making use of his enormous personal power over the more hard-line ethno-conservatives of his father's generation, he did drive many Taiwanese into the party. Yet while CCK played a major role, it was most likely not due to his democratic inclinations, let alone liberal vision, as some have argued.[446] In fact, Chiang had been trained in the Soviet Union (in fact along with Deng), later helped reorganize the KMT (and military) along Leninist party lines when in Taiwan, and had not championed liberal democracy ever before. He was also not unknown for his harsh political repression and human

[441] Yun-han Chu, *Crafting Democracy in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1992), Chapter 3.
[442] Chong-pin Lin and Man-jung Mignon Chan, "Taiwan and the Mainland: A Comparison on Democratization," *World Affairs* 155, no. 3 (1993): 117.
[443] Joyce K. Kallgren, "Nationalist China: The Continuing Dilemma of the 'Mainland' Philosophy," *Asian Survey* 3, no. 1 (1963): 11.
[444] Teh-fu Huang, "Election and Evolution of Kuomintang," in Hung-mao Tien, ed., *Taiwan's Electoral Politics and Democratic Transition* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.
[445] Tien, *The Great Transition*.
[446] For various perspectives on CCK's role, see Shao Chuan Leng, ed., *Chiang Ching-kuo's Leadership in the Development of the Republic of China on Taiwan* (University Press of America, 1993); Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Harvard University Press, 2000); Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Ray S. Cline, *Chiang Ching-kuo Remembered: The Man and His Political Legacy* (University Press of America, 1993).

rights abuses,[447] especially during his time as head of the secret police. Towards the end of his life, his close confidants revealed that he was not really convinced about the virtue of multiparty democracy for Taiwan.[448] Most importantly, like his father, CCK was a firm believer in the KMT's geo-idea. In the midst of US-PRC rapprochement, Chiang was made Premier not only because he had "blood relationship with his father" but also because he provided "a psychological tie to the Mainland at a time all of Taiwan's active leaders, having made their reputations on Taiwan, lack[ed] close identification with the Nationalists' Mainland period."[449] And when the US de-recognized the ROC, CCK called the former "the biggest sinner in history."[450] Therefore, Chiang Ching-kuo was at best a reluctant reformer compelled to react. According to a longtime Taiwan observer, "the KMT chieftains, both old and young, are shrewd and effective" and would "never give in unless absolutely necessary."[451] As John Copper contends, CCK eventually "realized the need for Taiwan to shed its authoritarian political system" in order to "challenge Beijing to reform as Taiwan had done, and win support from the international community."[452] Politically, joining the Western democratic club was especially important in light of diplomatic isolation and possible absorption by China.

Regime De-Legitimation and Change

To those who opposed the KMT, the regime's move to have more Taiwanese participate in ruling the country was not enough. Most of those who participated could be said to subscribe to the Nationalist geo-idea. Most of them did not believe in an alternative geo-idea or complete overhaul of the system. As Chu notes, "because the KMT power structure had for some time included many native Taiwanese who credited their gradual rise in national politics to KMT-sponsored

[447] Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, 243.
[448] David D. Yang, "Classing Ethnicity: Class, Ethnicity, and the Mass Politics of Taiwan's Democratic Transition," *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007): 511.
[449] J. Bruce Jacobs, "Taiwan 1972: Political Season," *Asian Survey* 13, no. 1 (1973): 105.
[450] J. Bruce Jacobs, "Taiwan 1978: Economic Successes, International Uncertainties," *Asian Survey* 19, no. 1 (1979): 28.
[451] C. L. Chiou, "Politics of Alienation and Polarization: Taiwan's Tangwai in the 1980s," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 18, no. 3 (1986): 27.
[452] Copper, *Taiwan*, 50-51.

reform," these KMT Taiwanese elites did not want "radical change."[453] Thus the sole focus on the ethnic factor – minority KMT mainlanders vs. majority Taiwanese – as the key to democratization, as many scholars have done, can be misleading. "Ethic divisions alone cannot account for variations in regime support among native Taiwanese," writes David Yang, who notes that it was not all but the urban and rural working classes among the Taiwanese that were most committed to championing a Taiwanese identity.[454] Furthermore, and unlike the more radical pro-independent opposition, most moderate Taiwanese oppositionists did not reject their Chinese cultural or ethic roots.[455] They could accept being racially Chinese but politically Taiwanese. Ultimately what they were fighting for was less a "nationalist motive to cut off all cultural and racial identification with China" but a national idea that separates Taiwan politically from China in order to have "an unconstrained international space."[456]

A political geographical perspective centering on geo-identity thus better captures the nuanced reality. The Taiwanese who challenged KMT rule were not those who were part of the Nationalist "high culture" but those who had a different idea of Taiwan. The only way to realize it was not to accept an invitation to join the KMT but to continue to press for an end to the regime's pre-political rules and eventually the regime itself. International de-recognition helped, but ultimately, "if Taiwan was not just another Chinese province, then the KMT should be removed from power and the entire structure of Taiwan would be reconstructed."[457]

As earlier alluded to, the first major challenge was the February 28 incident in 1947, when mutual hatred between the newly arrived Mainland Chinese and the local Taiwanese erupted into violent confrontation.[458] The incident started when an enraged group of Taiwanese threatened the police in response to the latter's killing of a local woman who was caught illegally

[453] Yun-han Chu, "Taiwan's Unique Challenges," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996): 70.
[454] Yang, "Classing Ethnicity," 507.
[455] Fulda, "Reevaluating the Taiwanese Democracy Movement," 360; TY Wang, "'One China, One Taiwan': An Analysis of the Democratic Progressive Party's China Policy," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 2000): 161.
[456] J-J Chu, "Nationalism and Self-determination: The Identity Politics in Taiwan," 307 and 316.
[457] Ibid., 308.
[458] Hung-mao Tien, "Transformation of an Authoritarian Party State: Taiwan's Development Experience," in *Political Change in Taiwan*, ed. Tun-jen Cheng and Stephan Haggard (Lynne Rienner, 1991), 49.

selling cigarettes. Four more Taiwanese were then killed when police fired into the crowd. A series of reaction and counteraction led to widespread rebellion not only against Nationalist rule but also ordinary Mainland Chinese, a large number of whom were killed.[459] The KMT then sent in more troops from China and after a month, order was restored but only after as high as 100,000 Taiwanese perished.[460] Most of the "core of Taiwan's potential local leadership,"[461] many of them with roots in the groups that demanded greater home-rule during Japanese colonialism, were decimated in the February 28 incident.

In the following years, the KMT regime attempted to remove the *er er ba* (2-2-8) "massacre," as the locals called it, from public mention, memory, and history. What the event did instead achieve was the further "affirmation of a Taiwanese consciousness (*Taiwan yishi*) and a Taiwanese identity (*Taiwan rentong*) based on a specific historical path, as well as a demand for autonomy and democracy on the part of the Taiwanese elites."[462] Due to political repression, there would not be a challenge of this magnitude against Chinese nationalist rule until the 1970s. In the 1950s and 1960s, those who rejected the KMT's geo-idea were silenced. For instance in 1964, when he questioned plans to recapture China, objected to the claim that Taiwan was part of China, and tabled the notion that there should be two different sovereign states living side by side across the Strait, prominent political scientist Peng Min-min and two others were incarcerated.[463] An eight-year prison sentence was handed down to Peng for treason – quite a modest comeuppance for the alleged crime. However, "the trial and sentence are designed to underscore the government's determination to curtail any activities that cast doubt upon the Nationalist legitimacy more… than as punishment for betrayal."[464]

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[459] Copper, *Taiwan*, 45.
[460] The actual number varied between 10,000 and 100,000 (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 March 1992). The ROC Government put the figure at 18,000 to 28,000 according to its report in 1992. See Lai, Myers, and Wei, *A Tragic Beginning*; Copper, *Taiwan*, 64, note 48.
[461] Copper, *Taiwan*, 45.
[462] Cabestan, "Specificities and Limits of Taiwanese Nationalism," 102-129.
[463] *New York Times*, Oct 24, 1964, 13; Peter Chen-main Wang, "A Bastion Created, A Regime Reformed, An Economy Reengineered, 1949-1970", in Rubinstein, p. 335; see also Peng's autobio - Ming-ming Peng, *A Taste of Freedom* (NY: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1972).
[464] Joyce K. Kallgren, "Vietnam and Politics in Taiwan," *Asian Survey* 6, no. 1 (1966): 30.

While the KMT by necessity opened up the legislature via supplementary elections, it afforded those opposed to the regime an opportunity to air dissent legitimately. From the 1969 elections, candidates began to call for greater democracy, including direct elections for the Governor of Taiwan and for a Taiwanese to become Vice President. Those who questioned the mainland return policy and proposed a Taiwanese republic independent from China were arrested.[465] By the mid 1970s, Taiwanese dissidents who refused to join the KMT per its "Taiwanization" campaign were loosely united under the "Dangwai" (outside the Party or non-Party) movement. Many gradually entered the Legislative Yuan, and though without the numbers to stall let alone defeat or pass legislation, Dangwai politicians, officially labeled independents, used their platform to question KMT principles and policies. Unlike those who were co-opted into the ruling regime, the Dangwai challenged the geo-idea that Taiwan was part of China in which the KMT, the supposed legitimate government, would eventually recapture. In reality, the Dangwai contended, the KMT was just the ruling authority of relatively tiny Taiwan. As such, there was no longer any basis for maintaining political control and martial law for the purpose of one day resuming the reign over the mainland. According to Chu and Lin, the new cohort of political opposition developed "political identity as well as built electoral support on a platform emphasizing democratic reform and Taiwanese identity."[466] Part of the ineffectiveness of the earlier resistance to the KMT was that it was led either by Chinese intellectuals with mainland roots or local politicians, both of whom were devoid of a larger vision or articulation of an alternative geo-idea that could counter the KMT's.

By this time, local elections, always allowed by the KMT (but mostly won by its candidates and supporters), had also become sites of contestation and challenge to the regime. The turning point came in 1977 when Dangwai candidates captured significant percentages of local and provincial seats (one fourth of the magistrates and over 30 percent of provincial assemblies).[467] This was even labeled as an unprecedented "defeat" for the ruling Nationalist

[465] Sheldon Appleton, "Taiwan: Portents of Change," *Asian Survey* 11, no. 1 (1971): 68-69.
[466] Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan," 120.
[467] Tien and Shiau, "Taiwan's Democratization," 60.

Party.[468] In response to alleged voting manipulation by KMT officials in the elections of the Taoyuan Country, a riot broke out in Chungli (now Zhongli), in central Taiwan. This rare demonstration by the opposition encouraged Dangwai members all over the island to form alliances "based on an updated belief about the vulnerability of the regime."[469] This belief was due mainly to the uncharacteristic restraint by the KMT not to crackdown on the rioters. Yet some suggested that Chiang Ching-kuo relaxed repression in 1977 and early 1978 in his bid to secure support during the transition to assume the Presidency, after which political control resumed.[470]

Then in December 1979, a major opposition riot against KMT rule broke out in the city of Kaohsiung, in the southwestern part of the island. The riot had its roots in reaction to perceived setback in democratic reform, most notably the suspension of the elections the previous year by Chiang Ching-kua. CCK cited the instability that might have reverberated if elections had been held amidst US-PRC normalization of relations.[471] The election suspension led a number of Dangwai oppositionists to found the *Formosa Magazine* in August 1979. It did not matter that "Formosa" was not a native Taiwanese name but a "foreign" one given by the Portuguese – what mattered was that it predated Chinese rule. At any rate, the publication quickly became popular; its mission "was increasingly vocal in urging the Nationalist Chinese authorities to end the 30-year old martial law, to allow greater press freedom (during 1979 approximately a dozen opposition-minded publications had been banned), to release political prisoners, and to allow the opposition movement to form a party.'"[472] Capitalizing on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day on 10 December, the date the UN General Assembly adopted the so-called Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the *Magazine* founders and staffs organized a massive protest. The KMT eventually cracked down the rally, stopped the ensuing riots, and arrested the organizers and Dangwai politicians.

This momentary setback however did not deter the opposition. Instead, underground

[468] Jacobs, "Taiwan 1978: Economic Successes, International Uncertainties," 20-21.
[469] Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan," 120.
[470] Jacobs, "Taiwan 1978: Economic Successes, International Uncertainties," 26.
[471] Lin and Chan, "Taiwan and the Mainland: A Comparison on Democratization," 123.
[472] "The Kaohsiung Tapes," *International Committee for Human Rights in Taiwan* (Seatle, February 1981): 5.

non-KMT Party political and socio-cultural magazines became even more pronounced in terms of sowing an alternative geo-idea for Taiwan.[473] In addition to the *Formosa* Magazine, the three other prominent ones were *Taiwan Political Forum*, *The Eighties*, and *Deep Roots*.[474] The publications might have exaggerated the sense of a Nativist Taiwanese identity vis-à-vis hegemonic Chinese nationalism, but highlighting KMT repression such as the February 28 massacre, the white terror, and the Kaohsiung incident did contribute towards that end. Even more important, the magazines drew extensively on Taiwan's deeper history and spotlighted the "heroes of Taiwan's political resistance" in order to provide "counternarratives" against the idea of Taiwan being part of China.[475] Symbols of Taiwanese resistance and opposition during Japanese colonialism were also revived, and narratives of the Taiwanese as an often colonized and frequently oppressed group were propagated. As Yun Fan observes, "Taiwanese consciousness, broadly defined, can be seen as a native-land consciousness, grounded in Taiwan, which demands that the political, economic, cultural, and educational infrastructure should be designed for those who are currently living in Taiwan."[476]

Complementing and providing a broad base of activities that cushion the political Dangwai movement was the burgeoning of social and civil society organizations from the late 1970s onwards. Some, such as the Association for Public Policy Research (APPR), resembled quasi-political parties in that they acted as institutional vehicles for politicians to meet and strategize for elections.[477] Most of these organizations and their activities however focused on achieving some form of rights – farmers', workers', women's, students', consumers', and religious groups', among others.[478] From 1983 to 1987, more than 1,500 incidents of mass social protest occurred; in 1986 and 1987, 1,200 and 1,800 street rallies and demonstrations on civil and social

[473] Yun Fan, "Taiwan: No Civil Society, No Democracy," in *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia: Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford University Press, 2004), 172; A-chin Hsiau, *Contemporary Taiwanese cultural nationalism* (Routledge, 2000), Chapter 4.
[474] Fan, "Taiwan: No Civil Society, No Democracy."
[475] Ibid., 172.
[476] Ibid., 172-3.
[477] Joseph Wong, "Dynamic Democratization in Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10 (2001): 346.
[478] Fan, "Taiwan: No Civil Society, No Democracy," 166.

issues were recorded respectively.[479] To be clear, the link between many of these organizations and the Dangwai movement was tenuous, and many of the former also did not openly profess political goals – for instance, regime change. What they achieved was the "rollback of state penetration and a refurbishment of the social fabric of civil society."[480]

Taiwanese-centered civil society organizations also formed overseas, especially in the United States. Pushing issues of human rights, democracy, and Taiwan's case for sovereign existence apart from China, organizations such as the World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI), which had a long history and a few previous incarnations, "expanded from the promotion of political consciousness within the Taiwanese immigrant community and offering moral support to the domestic democratic movement to targeting American congressional legislation and public debates."[481] One of its model posters read: "Taiwan is Neither Free Nor China."[482] From the early 1980s, overseas Taiwanese human rights organizations helped strengthen contacts and links between visiting Dangwai politicians and US congressmen, politicians, scholars, and media.[483] US congressmen also visited Taiwan by the middle of the decade.[484] The Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA), a public policy and congressional lobbying group with more than fifty chapters in different American states, played a major role in lobbying the US Congress and Government to push the Nationalist regime on human rights, releasing political prisoners, and lifting the ban on opposition political party formation.[485]

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[479] Tak-wing Ngo, "Civil Society and Political Liberalization in Taiwan," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 25, no. 1 (1993): 7.
[480] Yun-han Chu, "Taiwan's Unique Challenges," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996): 74; Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, "Emerging Social Movements and the Rise of a Demanding Civil Society in Taiwan," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 24 (July 1, 1990): 163-180.
[481] Fan, "Taiwan: No Civil Society, No Democracy," 174.
[482] Appleton, "Taiwan: Portents of Change," 69.
[483] Tun-Jen Cheng, "Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan," *World Politics* 41, no. 4 (July 1989): 487; Fan, "Taiwan: No Civil Society, No Democracy," 174.
[484] James C. Hsiung, "Taiwan in 1984: Festivity, New Hope, and Caution," *Asian Survey* 25, no. 1 (January 1, 1985): 93.
[485] Fan, "Taiwan: No Civil Society, No Democracy," 174-175; Chu, "Nationalism and Self-determination: The Identity Politics in Taiwan," 309. One of the founders of FAPA is the (in)famous political scientist cum political activist Peng Min-ming, known for his pro-independence views.

By the mid 1980s, it was clear that the opposition movement, coupled with social and civil society activities, had attained too great a momentum to be turned back forcefully. CCK and the moderate "Taiwanese" faction of the KMT had grown sympathetic, perhaps strategically, with the more moderate and larger faction of the Dangwai movement, who did not, perhaps also strategically, openly advocate Taiwanese independence. With international isolation and US pressure for further liberalization, the KMT could not risk becoming more of an international pariah by insisting on its de-legitimized geo-idea and repress the call for change – even though it was perfectly capable of doing so given the massive coercive instruments still under its control. In the fall of 1986, while the ban on an opposition party was still in place, the Dangwai politicians proceeded to form the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to contest the elections. The regime did not crackdown on the DPP, though Chiang Ching-kuo did chastise it for failing to meet the government's requirement.[486] Some argued that the DPP was established knowing that CCK had earlier hinted that non-KMT parties could legally exist in the future.[487] In any event, a month later, the KMT announced that martial law would be suspended.[488] In 1988, Chiang Ching-kuo died. In 1991, the "Temporary Provisions" against communism was officially declared over, and the National Assembly was "renewed" and opened for national elections directly in Taiwan for the first time (followed by direct Legislative Yuan elections in 1992). The claim by the Nationalist government to govern all of China, including the mainland, was thus abandoned. A major part of the KMT's geo-idea as well as its pre-political notion had been officially scrapped. Taiwan's one-party authoritarian regime had come to an end.

CONCLUSION: THE CONSEQUENCE OF INCONGRUENCE

In the middle of the twentieth century, there had emerged two competing geo-ideas for Taiwan. For the Nationalist ruling regime, Taiwan was part of the physical geography of China, was historically Chinese and therefore could not be anything but politically Chinese. Even after 1949,

[486] John F. Copper, "Taiwan in 1986: Back on Top again," *Asian Survey* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 1987): 83.
[487] Lin and Chan, "Taiwan and the Mainland: A Comparison on Democratization," 124.
[488] Martial law was lifted for the island of Taiwan in 1987. Theoretically, it was still in place for the Chinese mainland and the off-shore islands.

the war to eliminate communist rebellion had not finished; the KMT was only forced to move to the Chinese province of Taiwan in order to regroup and recover the whole Chinese nation. The international community, mostly Western states that dominated international institutions including the UN, recognized the claim that the KMT was the legitimate governing authority of China. And in the midst of fierce rivalries between East and West during the Cold War, with communist Mainland China bent on destroying it, the KMT instituted new pre-political rules.

To the Taiwanese, the KMT's geo-ideational claim, and its corresponding pre-political notion, always had questionable legitimacy. Taiwan was an island physically separate from China's space, was only loosely historically associated with the Chinese mainland, and had developed an incipient sense of non-Chinese political identification as a result of centuries of being moved back and forth among external powers. To be clear, the majority Taiwanese did not possess an unambiguous national Taiwanese identity vis-à-vis Chinese nationalism, as pro-independence activists' propaganda often asserted. But they did possess a sense of geo-separateness and distinction that provided emotional and political resources to fight the KMT's version. And clearly, Taiwan's geo-idea drew its roots back further than Japanese colonialism, a period that most scholars point to as the dawn of Taiwanese consciousness.[489]

For the first twenty years of KMT rule, sporadic Taiwanese resistance encountered predictable repression by a regime that had Western recognition and American economic and military reinforcement. But Nationalist rule was not completely regressive and backward sliding. The government mixed coercion with accommodation, and to its credit, allowed sub-national democracy, recruited native Taiwanese into the ruling authority, and achieved phenomenal economic growth that brought about material well-being to both Mainlanders and Taiwanese alike. Yet all of this was done as none violated the regime's geo-idea.

Resistance therefore persisted. And it received new momentum when the KMT's geo-idea were questioned anew as a result of dramatic changes in the international geo-environment: US-China rapprochement, UN and US de-recognition of the ROC, decline of radical communism

[489] Angelina C. Yee, "Constructing a Native Consciousness: Taiwan Literature in the 20th Century," *The China Quarterly*, no. 165 (March 1, 2001): 3.

in the PRC, and continued US support to Taiwan contingent on democratization. In this context, the KMT could have shifted course by re-envisioning its geo-idea to one that could resonate with the majority Taiwanese vis-à-vis rising PRC that was becoming successful in eroding Taiwan's international space. Yet it refused to do so; its attempts to accommodate changes by opening up the political system only accelerated the delegitimation of the geo-idea that underpinned that system. Soon enough, the idea was totally undermined. The idea's pre-political rules became the consequential victim.

CHAPTER FOUR

SINGAPORE'S GEO-IDEA SHIFT?
CONTEMPORARY REGIME LEGITIMATION AND MAINTENANCE

Early postwar Singapore and Taiwan demonstrate that congruence and incongruence between the country's geo-idea and the regime's pre-political notion could have a dramatic impact on regime survival and change. Starting from the 1980s, a change in the international environment not dissimilar to the one that helped delegitimize a core claim of the ruling authority in Taiwan also questioned part of the extant idea of Singapore. Yet instead of the development of an alternative idea from non-regime forces, the ruling authority moved quickly to initiate a partial shift in its geo-idea and corresponding pre-political rules. Politics did open up but not in a way that would have delighted liberal democrats the world over. How the PAP continued to capture the essence of its constrained geographical environment while drawing attention to new opportunities in a revamped geo-idea to maintain autocratic power is the focus of this penultimate chapter.

A STILL LIMITED PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

The 1980s had elements of both continuity and change in Singapore's geo-idea and therefore the regime's pre-political notion. Again, from our political geographical framework, we could begin to identify those key elements. At the national level, its physical characteristics had not altered – it was small, of the same size, had little natural resources for economic sustainability, and located between ethnically and religiously distinct Malaysia and Indonesia for whom it continued to depend on economically. Moreover, these countries still provided the city-state a large share of water, though some suggested that with the development of alternatives, such as creating its own reserves, utilizing modern technology for desalination, reverse osmosis and recycling already used water, Singapore might have increasingly become less dependent on water from neighboring states.[490]

[490] Joey Long, "Desecuritizing the water issue in Singapore - Malaysia relations," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23, no. 3 (December 2001): 504-32.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN GEO-HISTORICAL INTERACTIONS

A Still Hostile Regional Environment

Regionally, the antagonisms with Malaysia had not subsided despite increased cooperation in technical, economic, and diplomatic areas – symbolized by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's visit in 1981. Relations with Indonesia warmed somewhat during this period as well, as demonstrated by the official visit to Singapore in 1983 by President Suharto.[491] Geo-historical animosities would soon cut the honeymoon short. In addition to a number of unresolved bilateral issues,[492] tensions between Singapore and Malaysia were high throughout the 1980s. As one commentator puts it: relations between the two neighboring countries, "however cordial they may be on the surface, are fraught with mutual suspicion" and "spiced with racial and cultural xenophobia;" views that were especially predominant "when one of the countries is small."[493] Another observes that only a "superficial assessment" might stress the working relations between the two, in terms of trade, investment, internal security, and defense exercises, but "beneath this veneer of cooperation... severe stresses and strains in the relationship have persisted."[494] "An astounding economic performance since independence has transformed a traditional entrepot role into a modern globalised version," observes Michael Leifer about Singapore, "but without removing an underlying antipathy on the part of neighbouring states. Those predominantly Malay-Muslim states still harbour the stereotype that an ethnic-Chinese Singapore exists in a parasitic economic relationship with its regional locale."[495]

One of the most crucial thorns between the two had been the continued perception that PAP only worked for the interests of the Chinese in Singapore while UMNO's existential purpose was solely to champion Malay causes in Malaysia and beyond. "In contrast to the PAP's essentially 'non-racial' approach to economic, political and social issues (which inevitably implies

[491] Jon S. T. Quah, "Singapore in 1983: The Continuing Search for Talent," *Asian Survey* 24, no. 2 (February 1984): 185.
[492] Simon S. C. Tay, "Island in the World: Globalization and Singapore's Transformation," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (January 2001): 279-309.
[493] M. G. G. Pillai, "Irritants in Malaysia-Singapore Relations," *Economic and Political Weekly* 27, no. 10/11 (March 7, 1992): 514.
[494] Tim Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance?," *The Pacific Review* 4, no. 3 (2005): 206-207.
[495] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 2.

the dominance of the ethnic Chinese given their preponderance in Singapore's population), the ideal of UMNO... is eventual Malay supremacy in all spheres," explains Tim Huxley. "Communal policies do not remain within the two states' borders: in particular, UMNO and other Malay and Muslim organizations in Malaysia tend to see themselves as protectors of Singapore's 15 percent minority Malay population."[496] Similarly, Lee Kuan Yew recounted in his 2nd memoir: "the root causes of the recurring problems in Singapore-Malaysia relations is our diametrically different approaches to the problems facing our two multicultural societies." He went further: "Singapore set out to become a multiracial society of equal citizens… regardless of race, language, culture or religion… we succeeded… This is not what Malaysia's leaders thought would happen when they asked us to leave in 1965."[497]

Thus, while there had not been an "open threat or act of force directed at Singapore's territory" for a long time,[498] there continued to be an abiding sense of threat, as demonstrated by the high percentage of budget of GDP devoted to defense spending (5% annually), allowing it to build over the years "a modern defence capability beyond the capacity of its close neighbours."[499] This defense capacity meant that since the mid-70s onwards, the question of Malaysia using force to overtake or integrate Singapore was not seriously an issue. However, there was always the possibility that a "more strongly nationalist or Islamic Malaysian government might attempt radically to revise the present domestic ethnic balance of economic and political power, creating the sort of tensions which resulted in the traumatic race riots of May 1969."[500]

To Singapore, the negative perception of Malaysians towards it was constantly reinforced by a string of high-profile speeches and statements by Malaysian politicians, theologians, and teachers in Singapore. In addition, Malaysians had never failed an opportunity to remind Singapore that it is "a relic of imperial cunning and the by-product of PAP political manoeuvring during the merger years" that often forgets "its historical *Tanah Melayu* (Malay Land) status and

[496] Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance?," 207.
[497] Lee, *From Third World to First*, 288.
[498] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 2.
[499] Ibid., 3; *The Military Balance 1999-2000* (London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1999), 203-4.
[500] Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance?," 204.

its geographic position within the womb of the *Nusantara*."[501] As Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad wrote, "Singapore belonged to Johore until the Englishman Stamford Raffles installed a puppet sultan, and obtained dubious concession… It had nothing to do with legality."[502] In 1982, Ahmed Hoosen Deedat, a Muslim theologian, admonished the "passive and soft" Singaporean Muslims not to make the mistake of their forefathers when they failed to "convert the Chinese immigrants, so that the Chinese had taken over power from the Muslims."[503] During the same year, the Internal Security Department foiled a plot by a clandestine group of Muslim "extremists" – called the Singapore People's Liberation Organization (SPLO) – to overthrow the government through causing "communal unrest in Singapore by exploiting religious and racial issues."[504] Chan Heng Chee points to the geographical logic of the arrest at the time: even though these plotters were "poorly educated" with "undistinguished political backgrounds," the PAP felt the need to be "vigilant" due to the "political influence and power of fundamentalist Islamic groups in Malaysia."[505]

Again in 1984, another religious teacher from Malaysia, Mat Saman bin Mohamed, equated the demolition of mosques during the government's urban redevelopment with the destruction of Allah's house; two years later, he expressed the deeply held perception that "Singapore belonged to the Malays as they were the natives of the island."[506] Assuring Singaporean Malays of the support of Malaysian Malays, both called on the former to be more militant and unified against the Chinese majority. In August later that year, Malaysian MP Datuk Abdullah Ahmad, whose lecture at the Singapore Institute for International Affairs received wide publicity on both sides of the Malaysia-Singapore causeway, warned that "Singapore must not put

[501] Zubaidah-Rahim, "Singapore-Malaysia relations," 52.
[502] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 52-53.
[503] Kuah, "Maintaining Ethno-Religious Harmony in Singapore."
[504] "Countering Threats," International Security Department, Singapore, http://www.mha.gov.sg/isd/ct.htm [Accessed 1 October 2010]
[505] Heng Chee Chan, "Singapore in 1982: Gradual Transition to a New Order," *Asian Survey* 23, no. 2 (1983): 202.
[506] Quoted in Kuah, "Maintaining Ethno-Religious Harmony in Singapore."

itself up as an alternative and viable Chinese dominant system in the Malay sea" and must grant due recognition to Malay dominance in Malaysian politics.[507]

The most prominent contention of the decade, not just with Malaysia but also Indonesia and Brunei, was the fallout over the visit by Israeli President Chaim Herzog to Singapore in November 1986. Accused of being anti-Islamic and occupier of rightful Muslims' territories, the parallel political geography between Israel and Singapore was not taken lightly by the latter's neighboring states. The visit drew official rebuke from Indonesia and Brunei, while Malaysia and Indonesia recalled their ambassadors from Singapore. On the streets in Malaysia, the emotions were much worst: rancorous demonstrators called for cutting off water supply, diplomatic relations, and expelling Singapore from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),[508] as well as the burning of Singapore flags and effigies of Lee Kuan Yew. As noted by Zubaidah-Rahim, the vocal opposition by many Malaysian as well as Singapore Malay organizations to the visit was seen as "evidence of their split loyalty and served to vindicate the [PAP] discriminatory policies against Malays," especially in the armed forces.[509]

More tensions amounted later in 1987 after Lee Hsieng Loong's, the son of Lee Kuan Yew and at the time the Second Minister for Defence, questioning whether the Singaporean Malay soldier's "emotions for his religion" were stronger than "emotions for the nation."[510] As Singapore's defense posture was primarily a guard against Malaysia, Lee revealed that there were certain military posts that were off-limits to Malays. The statement sparked a "racial discrimination" controversy inside the country and a strong reaction from Malaysia, who criticized Singapore's commitment to its Malay citizens. In Singapore, an editorial in the *Strait Times* retorted: "some 22 years after Singapore left Malaysia, not everyone in Malaysia has accepted the Republic as a sovereign state."[511] Lee Kuan Yew would later explain: "our concerns about

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[507] Lai To Lee, "Singapore in 1986: Consolidation and Reorientation in a Recession," *Asian Survey* 27, no. 2 (1987): 251.
[508] Ibid.
[509] Zubaidah-Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World*, 57; Lily Zubaidah-Rahim, *The Singapore Dilemma: The Political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[510] *Straits Times*, February 23, 1987.
[511] *Straits Times*, March 31 1987.

conflicting realities are real. We know of at least one case where foreign intelligence agencies approached one of our senior officers because he was Malay."[512]

Ceaselessly fueled by geography and history, the 1990s would continue to demonstrate the deeply embedded regional animosity for a small Chinese-dominated Singapore that seemingly did not know its place. It reinforced part of the country's geo-idea of being a "Chinese nut within a Muslim nutcracker." Even the smallest of incidents or comments would reopen old wounds, and in the words of Leifer, "exposed a structural tension in the bilateral relationship."[513] A representative case was the overreaction – but whose significance could never be underappreciated– after Lee Kuan Yew's comments about crime in Malaysia in 1997. Filing a defamation lawsuit against the Worker's Party's opposition MP candidate, Tang Liang Hong, Senior Minister Lee noted that the Malaysian state of Johor – in which Tang escaped to avoid prosecution – was anything but safe as it was "notorious for shootings, muggings and carjackings."[514] The remark drew a firestorm from the Malaysian press and politicians, who called for cutting off relations with Singapore. Despite Lee's apology later, tensions remained further when the PAP leadership did not dissociate itself from the statement, implicitly suggesting that they had acquiesced to Lee's views. In addition, Malaysia saw as Singaporean press and public support for the remarks when the *Strait Times* published crime statistics in Johor as well as a story about tour agents and organizers avoiding Malaysia due to concerns for safety and racism.[515]

From 1996 to 1999, the anti-Chinese violence that erupted all over Indonesia only augmented these concerns.[516] As Zubaidah-Rahim points out, "having been treated as 'outsiders' by colonial and post-colonial authorities, many Chinese in Singapore and the wider region [indeed] suffer from a psychosis of regional insecurity" which is not "altogether surprising"

[512] *The Hindu* (New Delhi), 6 March 2001.
[513] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 23.
[514] Garry Rodan, "Singapore in 1997: Living with the Neighbors," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 2 (February 1998): 180-181.
[515] Ibid., 181.
[516] Amy Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (Doubleday, 2003); Jemma Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999* (University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

"when placed within the historical context of anti-Chinese sentiment and persecution in Southeast Asia."[517] Although less consistent, Indonesia had also been "hypersensitive" to remarks and comments from Singapore leaders about the former's domestic politics. For instance, in early 1998, controversy ensued when Lee Kuan Yew expressed reservations about the suitability of B. J. Habibie for Indonesia's Vice-President. Once Vice-President Habibi succeeded President Suharto by the middle of the year in the wake of the latter's downfall amidst the financial crisis, he blamed Singapore for not doing its utmost to assist Indonesia. One of Habibie's ministers, Adi Sasono, even warned that time was up for those countries, evidently including Singapore, which had "robbed the country's money" in collusion with Suharto during his reign.[518] In February 1999, when asked by Taiwanese journalists about Indonesia's known mistreatment of its ethnic Chinese population, President Habibie deflected the question to assert that the treatment of minorities was worst in Singapore – a country of "real racists" in which Malays could not serve in the military.[519] Although this information was incorrect, it nevertheless was a widely-held misperception in Indonesia as well as Malaysia. As Michael Leifer points out, while Indonesia had always been considered significant for Singapore due to size, population mix, and proximity, "Singapore has never enjoyed a corresponding importance" for Indonesia except as a "'whipping boy' for domestic and political purposes."[520] Habibie infamously remarked: "Look at that map. All the green is Indonesia. And that red dot is Singapore."[521] Yet for Singapore, domestically, that red dot mentality amidst a hostile regional environment had actually served a useful political purpose for emphasizing PAP's pre-political notion. Internationally, the mentality had also turned out to be a driving motivation to diplomatically maneuver beyond its size. After all, who does not see red?

The beginning of a new century had not so far put an end to the old Malaysia-Singapore animosity. It was one of "the most sensitive and unstable relationships between any pair of

[517] Zubaidah-Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World*, 58.
[518] *Straits Times*, 13 Feb 1999.
[519] *Straits Times*, 11 Feb 1999.
[520] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 145.
[521] *Asian Wall Street Journal*, August 4 1998.

ASEAN members."[522] In 2001, the Malaysian media, through its *New Straits Times* newspaper, reported that the PAP's official meritocratic policy had failed to improve the marginal status of the Malay citizens and Malaysia's own special treatment measures might be better.[523] Recall that this was one of the very issues that led to the breakup of the Malaya-Singapore merger and the violent racial riots of the 1960s. The newspaper article used the findings of the Australia-based Singaporean Malay scholar Lily Zubaidah (Rahim), in a book called *The Singapore Dilemma: The Political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community*, to argue that the socio-economic and educational profiles of Malays in Singapore had shown little signs of betterment and in some cases had even worsened since the 1960s.[524]

Immediately, the Singaporean government fired back by raising questions about Malaysia's true motivation – in Prime Minister Goh's words, "it struck me as odd that the Malaysian media should discuss the book only now, when it was published in 1998."[525] In response, Goh issued statistics compiled by the government to point out that the Malay community had come a long way since independence in terms of overall quality of life and income levels. Furthermore, they were actually closing in on the national averages in secondary school admissions and completions, as well as more representation in administrative, managerial, professional, and technical classes. Most significantly, PM Goh argued that "our Singapore Malays fare well when compared with Malaysian Malays" – citing the higher percentage of ethnic Malay workers in Singapore with upper-secondary and higher education (25 percent to Malaysia's 14 percent) and the lower representation of Malays in the Malaysian administrative, managerial, professional, and technical classes (16.9 percent to Singapore's 23 percent).[526]

Critics acknowledged the absolute gains of the Malay community during the past decades and perhaps some "success indicators" of Singapore Malays in comparison with those in

[522] Tim Huxley, *Defending the Lion City: The armed forces of Singapore* (Allen & Unwin, 2001), 45.
[523] *New Straits Times,* December 19, 2000.
[524] Gillian Koh and Giok Ling Ooi, "Singapore: A Home, A Nation?," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (January 2002): 259.
[525] Quoted in Ibid.
[526] Ibid., 259-260.

Malaysia.[527] However, they charged that relative to other ethnic groups in Singapore, most prominently the Chinese, Malays continued to be marginalized.[528] To the PAP, *intra-racial* improvement should be celebrated but *inter-racial* comparison was unacceptable as it violated the pre-political consensus and could precipitate tensions between the races. Like the 1960s, it had the potential to make those who felt marginalized vis-à-vis the other groups rise up and those who felt their positions were threatened to respond in kind.

Changing International Perception

While the notion of Singapore being surrounded by a hostile regional milieu still predominated, the perception of the larger international environment had changed from the early 1980s onwards. This was especially in response to the drastic departure from Maoist communism in China during Deng Xiaoping's assent to power and adoption of capitalist economic reforms.[529] It was also helped by the fact that the People's Republic of China had acquired some international legitimacy in the years after rapprochement with the United States and taking over China's seat, previously "occupied" by Taiwan, at the United Nations. Furthermore, in Singapore, the perceived greater external communist threat by the late 1970s was the Soviet Union, supposedly aided in its mission of expansion by Vietnam through the invasion of Cambodia, which invited a response from China.[530]

In this context, the 1980s saw the PAP begin to portray China less as a giant communist empire bent on spreading its ideology through Singapore as its Southeast Asian center, but more a civilization with a glorious past dating back to the Tang, Song, and Ming dynasties. Due geo-economic constraints and the unstable political and ethnic relations with its neighbors, Singapore had moved to secure better economic opportunities by starting a cautious reengagement with China as the latter was opening up towards the end of the 1970s. Cultural and political confidence then emerged as the new decade advanced. Two educational measures were

[527] Ibid., 260; Ismail and Shaw, "Singapore's Malay-Muslim minority," 38.
[528] *Straits Times*, 9 February 2001
[529] Yan Sun, *The Chinese Reassessment of Socialism 1976-1992* (Princeton University Press, 1995).
[530] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 118.

launched in Singapore to revive the previously suppressed "Chinese-ness." The first was stepping up the Speak Mandarin Campaign, promulgated carefully since 1979, to encourage all ethnic Chinese to learn Mandarin and reduce the use of dialects such as Teochew, Hokkien, and Cantonese. The second was the promotion of Confucianism – a topic not even discussed previously – as an option for a moral/religious class, with resource and publicity devoted to it much more than the case with Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, or Hinduism. It did help that Confucianism was not an organized religion with a claim to truth.[531] To the PAP, the promotion of Mandarin and Confucianism were deemed necessary to benefit from the opening up of China because "Chinese Singaporeans had to be able to communicate effectively in [Mandarin] Chinese and have an intimate understanding of the Chinese psyche."[532] It was also billed as a project to bring Chinese Singaporeans closer together as one "cannot have too many distinct [Chinese] components and be one nation."[533]

Some might point out that the Internal Security Department's discovery of a "Marxist conspiracy" plot in 1987 meant that the regime was still concerned about the threat of communism. Yet from a political geographical perspective, this episode reflected more the PAP's fear of political religion than communism since the international communist threat had receded. In fact, the alleged masterminds were Catholic priests, led by Vincent Cheng, who were using Christian Liberation Theology to incite Singaporeans to speak up. According to an official report, the priests were planning to "infiltrate, subvert and control various Catholic and student organizations" and "manipulate Church publications" to arouse feelings of disaffection with society."[534] In Cheng's televised confession, they would eventually "come into open confrontation with the government" – "leading to public disorder and maybe even rioting, bloodshed."[535] The

[531] According to Francis Fukuyama, "Confucianism is relatively tolerant. In the past, Confucianism has coexisted with other religions, notably Buddhism and Christianity; while Confucianism's record of tolerance is not perfect… it is arguably better than that of either Islam or Christianity." See Francis Fukuyama, "Confucianism and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 2 (1995): 20-33.
[532] Tan, "Re-Engaging Chineseness," 757.
[533] Lee Kuan Yew, in Fareed Zakaria, "Culture Is Destiny: A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 2 (April 1994): 109-126.
[534] Kuah, "Maintaining Ethno-Religious Harmony in Singapore."
[535] *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 27 1987, 23.

conclusion that this plot was a Marxist conspiracy, despite having "no basis to prove that Cheng and his cohorts were Marxists,"[536] might have to do with the rationalization of the ISA's usage. Since there was no other existing legal instrument at the time to police religion, the ISA had to be invoked and legitimized in response to a vague (and clearly not credible) communist threat. In fact, since the 1987 arrests, the ISA had "been invoked mostly against those charged with religious extremism and terrorism."[537] To the PAP, there was zero tolerance for the use of organized religion for political activities– communist or otherwise,[538] and according to then Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, it was not meant to stifle legitimate dissent, as the sole opposition MP Chiam See Tong had argued.[539] Significantly, this "Marxist" conspiracy was locally based, and the regime did not make any charge of ethnic Chinese chauvinism (all the detainees were English-educated) or linkage to international communism – unlike during the 1950s to 1970s when the "communist threat" from China was pervasively invoked.

The economic rise of China thus prompted unheard of confidence in the PAP's expression of Singapore's Chinese connection and heritage. As Hong Lysa and Huang Jianli note, "overseas Chinese leaders who had hitherto been sidelined from history as being China-oriented, communists and communalists have been refurbished as role models on account of their business skills and associated philanthropy, and as bearers of language and culture who have stemmed the tide of deracination in Singapore."[540] Many more streets and places were named in Chinese Mandarin starting in the 1980s, in contrast to the need for names in English in the late 1960s.[541] In 1993, the National Museum, regarded by local Chinese-speakers as a "Baba" (Peranakan or Straits-born Chinese) museum with its world-view as Southeast Asian, was split into two: the Singapore History Museum, which would narrate the history of Singapore, and

[536] Haas, cited in Kuah, "Maintaining Ethno-Religious Harmony in Singapore."
[537] Lysa Hong and Jianli Huang, *The Scripting of a National History: Singapore and Its Pasts* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 22.
[538] *Straits Times*, June 3, 1987.
[539] Lai To Lee, "Singapore in 1987: Setting a New Agenda," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 2 (1988): 202-212. All the detainees except Cheng were released eventually (16 out of 22 within 4 months and the rest by the end of that year).
[540] Hong and Huang, *The Scripting of a National History*, 8.
[541] Lily Kong and Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *The Politics of Landscapes in Singapore: Constructions of "Nation"*, 1st ed. (Syracuse University Press, 2003), 119-123.

the Asian Civilisations Museum, which would house contributions from the country's diverse heritages – most prominently Chinese.[542] In 1995, the Chinese Heritage Centre at Nanyang Technological University was established to promote Chinese culture and language. And most conspicuously, after granting national monument status in 1994 to the Sun Yat Sen Villa (a site Dr. Sun used to plan nationalist revolutionary actions with Chinese living in the city during the 1900s), the PAP government spent S$7.5 million to completely restore it into the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall in 2001. As then Information Minister (now Foreign Minister) George Yeo, the regime's cultural philosopher and spokesman for these maneuvers, explained: "the Villa is a testament to the historical contributions our [Chinese] forefathers made to the important 1911 revolution." He continued: "'the Chinese nationalism launched by Sun provided a lot of energy for Singaporean nationalism,' under-girded as it was by a strong sense of anti-colonialism."[543]

A PARTIAL SHIFT IN GEO-IDEA

David Harvey writes: "some memories can be suppressed and others rescued from the shadows as identities shift and political trajectories into the future get redefined… Imagined places… have consequently played a vital role in animating politics."[544] In Singapore, the partial, yet significant, shift in a key part of its geo-idea occurred beginning in the 1980s. It was a 180-degree turn from the late 1960s' and 1970s' sanitization attempt on its image as a third China for radical communist mobilization. Recall that the multi-racial principle that the PAP championed for Singapore at that time was partly "an anything but Chinese" principle, a type of negative self-perception because it knew what the new nation could *not* be but lacked the imagination of what it actually wanted to become.

Seen from this context, the new embrace of Chineseness was significant. It allowed PAP to imagine Singapore to be "bigger" than its actual physical size – that is, "the idea that the

[542] The Singapore History Museum was reverted back to its original name of the National Museum of Singapore in 2006, while the Asian Civilisations Museum remains.
[543] Jianli Huang and Lysa Hong, "History and the Imaginaries of 'Big Singapore': Positioning the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35, no. 1 (February 2004): 65-89.
[544] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Blackwell, 1996), 306.

Singaporean Chinese 'are not just people from a small island, but people who came from a very rich past with a great tradition.'"[545] As stated, the source of this re-imagination had more to do with political geographical developments at the international scale than Confucian culture, economic success, or the rulers' personal beliefs at home per se. In other words, while it might be the case that any of these factors had contributed to the increasing confidence about embracing a Chinese orientation, it was really the opening up of China, its abandonment of radical communism, and the subsequent decline of communist activities in the Southeast Asia region that allowed those factors to play any role.

At any rate, this "Big Singapore" imagination was still severely limited by the country's harsh physical locality and geo-historical animosity with neighbors. To PAP, the new idea of a big and proud Chinese civilized place had to therefore coexist within a continually restrictive Malay zone marked, now more than ever, by rising Islamic fundamentalism. Thus while it became possible for the PAP not to be viewed as ethnic "chauvinistic" to imagine its reconnection to China, the same re-envisioning could not yet be done with Malayness in light of the ongoing geo-historical animosity with Malaysia and fundamentalist activities. Just like when there was a time any embrace of Chineseness was impossible, the almost automatic equation of Malay with external and hostile Malaysian and Islamic forces had made nearly impossible any embrace of Malayness.

But unlike the double constraints of the early era, the reformulated geo-idea of Singapore was one of *a regionally constrained small state with a big international connection*. It represented a partial geo-idea shift filled with constraints as well as opportunities. On the opportunities, Minister Yeo asserted: "A Big Singapore mentality engages the region, celebrates our diversity and uses it to access [Chinese] economic and cultural spaces all over the world."[546] Always concerned by its economic vitality, trade relations and access to a Mainland Chinese market of over one billion consumers were hard to resist. On the constraints, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, who had succeeded Lee Kuan Yew since 1990, warned in 1998: "the outlook of the

[545] Huang and Hong, "History and the Imaginaries of 'Big Singapore'."
[546] Quoted in Ibid.

Chinese community in Singapore has been attuned to its geo-political environment" and that "the Singaporean Chinese recognise and accept that Chinese culture and Mandarin must be advanced within the multiracial context of Singapore and the political and social milieu of Southeast Asia."[547] Similarly, for Goh's successor, Prime Minister Lee Hsieng Loong, the Chinese must have a sense of duty to be mindful of the country's place: "The Chinese community should reach out to the other ethnic communities, bring everyone closer, and make the minority communities feel comfortable and at ease. Chinese Singaporeans have to make sure the minorities never feel overwhelmed by race."[548] The sense of constrained opportunity was prominently reflected in two major public campaigns of high-profile government-sponsored groups made up of both regime and non-regime individuals: the "Singapore 21" Committee in 1999 and the "Remaking Singapore" Committee in 2002. One of the main recommendations of the former committee was the creation of the "Singapore heartbeat" – or a nation with a "shared sense of belonging, *a collective memory of our shared past*, and total commitment to our shared future."[549] A few years later, one of the five subcommittees of the Remaking Singapore group was tasked to explore ways to create "a notion of Singapore that is *rooted to* but *not limited* by its geographical space."[550]

CONTEMPORARY PRE-POLITICAL NOTION

Overall, instead of deemphasizing racial chauvinist activities with Islamic and communist overtones, in line with the changing geo-idea, the new pre-political notion would police Islamic religious activities with Malay overtones and implement Confucianism with Singaporean characteristics. This new emphasis on religious more than racial activities is important. The PAP was now not attempting to replace race and ethnicity with a vague multi-racial rhetoric; it was attempting to embrace it, in the case of Chineseness, while putting a qualifier on the one, in this

[547] Tan, "Re-Engaging Chineseness," 773.
[548] *Straits Times*, January 28 2006.
[549] Jasmine S. Chan, "Singapore: A Vision for the New Millennium," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2000). Emphasis added.
[550] Kenneth Paul Tan, "Crisis, Self-Reflection, and Rebirth in Singapore's National Life Cycle," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (January 2003): 253. Emphasis added.

case Malayness, that had association with religious fundamentalism, to be reinforced by the post-911 world. Nevertheless, rather than simply and unimaginatively banning certain kinds of political activities as in the 1960s and 1970s, the partial shift in geo-idea offered a political opportunity to mold a new kind of politics starting in the 1980s.

Policing Islamism with Malay overtones

But first, in response to the revival of religious fundamentalism around the world in general and the region in particular, the PAP put out a White Paper on the Maintenance of Religious Harmony in 1989, accompanied by an Internal Security Department report of the problems of religious over-zealousness that was widely disseminated by the media.[551] Despite some questions as to exactly what kind of religious expression was "political," the subsequent parliament bill on the Maintenance of Religious Harmony was subsequently passed with broad support, even among different religious leaders.[552] In 1992, the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRMA) came into effect, along with the establishment of the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony, as a mediating body "to consider and report on matters affecting the maintenance of religious harmony… referred to it by the Government or Parliament."[553]

The White Paper and the Act specify what religious groups and related individuals have to accept before entering politics, as well as the corresponding role, purpose, and power of the state. To start, all religious groups and individuals must "acknowledge the multi-racial and multi-religious character of our society," "emphasise the moral values common to all faiths," and "respect the right of each individual to hold his own beliefs and to accept or not to accept any religion." Secondly, they must "not cause disharmony, ill-will or hostility between different religious or non-religious groups," "not allow their members, followers, officials or clergy from acting disrespectfully towards other religions or religious groups," "not influence or incite their members

[551] Michael Hill, "The Rehabilitation and Regulation of Religion in Singapore," in *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe*, ed. James T. Richardson (Springer, 2003), 351.
[552] Ibid.
[553] Kuah, "Maintaining Ethno-Religious Harmony in Singapore." All subsequent quotes from the Act and White Paper are from Kuah.

to hostility or violence towards other groups," and most importantly, "not get involved in the political processes… whether to incite dissatisfaction or to win political support."

Ever concerned that this latest regulatory mechanism would be seen as illegitimate, the White Paper states that "members of religious groups may, of course, participate in the democratic political process" and "may campaign for or against the Government or any political party"; but they must do so as "individual citizens." Religious leaders and members, "what ever their political views," "should not use their religious authority" to "incite their faithful to defy, challenge or actively oppose secular Government policies, much less mobilise their followers or their organizations for subversive purposes." Throughout the White Paper and the Act, the purpose and rationale for these pre-political rules were consistently reiterated, including the understanding that there had been "a definite increase in religious fervour, missionary zeal, and assertiveness among Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and other religious groups" that were "affecting many countries." "Competition for followers and converts is becoming sharper and more intense" and "most Singaporeans of many religions are inclining towards strongly held exclusive beliefs." Significantly, by arguing that "its causes lie beyond Singapore, and [that they] are not within our control," the Act reaffirmed the geographical source of this rising religious fundamentalism, as well as Singapore's vulnerability to it. Also of note is the fact that neither Confucianism was mentioned among the (fundamentalist) religions nor was China evoked as a place having any connection to them.

As for the state, the role was equally clear: to make sure that "all political and religious groups… understand these ground rules, and abide by them scrupulously." Restraining orders could be served to those who violate the Act, as "it takes only a few incidents to inflame passions, kindle violence, and destroy the good record of religious harmony built up in recent decades. The Maria Hertogh riots were a classic example." "With the heavy knowledge of the almost irreconcilable divisions which were to open up," recalled Lee Kuan Yew, "I would be appalled if I am asked to start off all over again" in the 1950s and 1960s.[554] As the ban on radical Islamic

[554] Ibid.

theologians in the mid-1980s from re-entering Singapore demonstrated, the government did not tolerate "incitement of any kind from external forces"[555] let alone internal ones.

By the late 1990s, despite having made clear the boundary between religion and politics, the PAP regime continued to raise alarms about the potential harmful role of religion – especially Islam – in society. For example, in 1999, it proposed to extend the secular national education curriculum to the island's *madrasahs* (Islamic schools), which hitherto operated quite independently from the state save some supervision from the MUIS.[556] While there was a concern about the high percentage (65 percent) of *madrasah* students not finishing secondary education during this period, much more troubling for the state was the increasing number of Malay parents sending their children to *madrasahs* and the resulting evasion from the regime's common "educational and socialization processes" of the mainstream national schools.[557]

While PAP's Malay-Muslim MPs promoted the proposal, rejection was widespread among such Malay-Islamic organizations as the Association of Islamic Teachers and Scholars (PERGAS) and the newly formed Alternative Joint-Committee of Madrasah (JCM).[558] Furthermore, expressing general dissatisfaction of community representation by PAP's Malay MPs, the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP), a civil society group, in 2000 raised the possibility of creating "an independent, non-partisan 'collective leadership' for the community."[559] Immediately, the regime responded by reminding the AMP of the country's geo-idea and pre-political notion. To Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, the AMP's proposal was tantamount to Malay ethnic chauvinism. If tolerated by the government, it would be an open invitation to other ethnic groups to form "its own structure of leaders to define issues and lobby the government on ethnic lines."[560] PM Goh likewise issued a warning that the AMP was crossing into politics and

[555] *Straits Times*, August 17, 1987.
[556] Koh and Ooi, "Singapore: A Home, A Nation?," 257.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Ibid., 257-258.
[559] Ibid., 258.
[560] Ibid.

threatening multi-racialism.[561] As a civil society group and not a political party, the AMP should stay out of the political arena.

To the PAP, if AMP would like to help the community better, they should consider becoming an institutional member of Mendaki – the state-sanctioned self-help organization that is devoted specifically to assisting the Malay-Muslim community through educational and welfare programs.[562] It was the way to promote the welfare and interests of one's ethnic community without appearing to be ethnic chauvinistic and violating the pre-political of Singaporean society. Not to be misunderstood, the PM stated that the government did not want to eliminate the *madrasahs* per se, as long as they could meet the minimum standard of achievement in a national curriculum; as a token of good faith, funding would also be given to one madrasah.[563] Furthermore, the PAP could recognize the value of Islamic religious education and mosques if they instill moral values that are compatible with the goals of the "larger Singapore society."[564]

The post-911 world, however, would not make it any easier for the regime to not keep one eye wide open for any potential challenge of Islamism with Malay and foreign overtones. The January 2002 revelation of the Internal Security Department's detention of 13 operatives allegedly believed to be members of the US-designated terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiah (JI) in December of the previous year came as a stark reminder to the public. While critics pointed out the fact that "none of the JI detainees had any formal education at local full-time madrasahs"[565] and therefore was not locally grown, this actually gave more reason for the regime to be suspicious of foreign influences. At any event, the ISD made public details of the planned terrorist plots to attack American military and civilian targets in Singapore.[566] Then in late 2002, 21 more "Malay Muslims" (specifically referred to this way by many officials) were arrested, along with the revelation of more plans to attack specific key Singaporean infrastructures such as the

[561] Ibid.
[562] Ibid.
[563] Ibid.
[564] *Straits Times*, January 6 2001.
[565] *Straits Times*, September 20 2004.
[566] Koh and Ooi, "Singapore: A Home, A Nation?," 264.

Changi International Airport and Waterworks.[567] Most significantly, the purpose of the attack was said to later implicate Malaysia and ignite ethnic-nationalist conflicts.[568] Though the attack had been foiled, tensions with Malaysia were rekindled when the Singapore's Education Ministry suspended several Malay high school students wearing the *tudung* (Islamic scarf) and the Malaysian government's immediate offer to enroll them into its own schools.[569]

To Singapore, the JI arrests, the revelation by *Jane's Intelligence Review* that the country was a very possible target for terrorist attack, the subsequent terrorist bombings in Bali, Indonesia in October 2002, and the increasing profile and activities of Al Qaeda-affiliated JI seeking to establish an Islamic state across Indonesia, Malaysia, Southern Thailand, and the Philippines made it clear that "the terrorist centre of gravity was shifting to Southeast Asia."[570] Lee Kuan Yew reminded his people in 2001: "If there's an enormous disturbance in Malaysia, we are going to be affected. If there's an enormous disturbance in Indonesia, especially in Batam, the Riau Islands, we are going to be affected. It's a fact of life."[571] Unfortunately, this put the onus on Malays to constantly prove their loyalty to the Singapore nation in order to lessen any doubt of their automatic identification with the greater Malay or Islamic world.[572] When they failed to do so, "irrational fears" were reported all around: "a sarong-wearing man being visibly shunned; a Singapore Chinese resolution not to get into the same lift as a Malay; the proud claim of a taxi driver that she will not pick up a Malay fare; …parents who insisted their children be transferred out of a class with a tudung-wearing teacher."[573] Just like the old knee-jerk and "natural" association between ethnic Chinese and communism, these fears may indeed have been a sign of "irrationality" and political "immaturity" but their sources were geographical and hard to dismiss.

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[567] William Case, "Singapore in 2002: Economic Lassitude and Threats to Security," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 1 (February 2003): 172.
[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Tan, "Crisis, Self-Reflection, and Rebirth in Singapore's National Life Cycle," 242.
[571] *The Hindu* (New Delhi), March 6 2001.
[572] Case, "Singapore in 2002," 243. Lee Kuan Yew said "it would be very tricky business for the SAF [Singapore Armed Forces] to put a Malay officer who was very religious and who had family ties in Malaysia, in charge of a machine-gun unit." Quoted in the *Straits Times*, February 8, 2001.
[573] Quoted in Ismail and Shaw, "Singapore's Malay-Muslim minority," 41.

Embracing Chineseness with Confucian Overtones

While the regionally constrained part of Singapore's geo-idea would continue to be utilized to meet the perceived challenge of Islamic fundamentalism on the Malays at home, its seemingly more positive orientation vis-à-vis rising China would serve to re-channel a politically conscious population emerging in the wake of economic development in the early 1980s. For the first time since independence, the PAP lost one seat in the 1980 general elections to the Worker's Party's J. B. Jeyaretnam in the constituency of Anson.[574] In the next elections, Jeyaretnam won again, along with Chiam See Tong, of the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), founded in 1980. The 1984 elections not only yielded two opposition MPs against the PAP but also witnessed a significant reduction of PAP's popular vote from 75.5 percent in the last election to 62.9 percent.[575] As a result, there appeared to be a new mood in the country – one where the political reality of a one-party "authoritarian" parliament would no longer be the case and the likely possibility for the election of more opposition politicians.[576] Even in the usually pro-government presses, there were many letters to the editor offering frank political opinions about the unexpected election results; and articles and interviews by academics, journalists, and other professionals took a bolder stance in commenting on government policies throughout the year.[577]

The possible emergence of a politically active sector was augmented by the rise of interest groups by the late 1980s. These institutions, including the Association of Malay Professionals (AMP), the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), and the Nature Society of Singapore (NSS), became the first wave of civil society organizations that emerged outside state-sanctioned institutional frameworks.[578] For obvious reasons, the regime initially was quite suspicious of AMP but eventually recognized and supported it alongside its own

[574] Heng Chee Chan, "Singapore in 1981: Planned Changes, Unplanned Consequences," *Asian Survey* 22, no. 2 (1982): 219.
[575] Heng Chee Chan, "Singapore in 1985: Managing Political Transition and Economic Recession," *Asian Survey* 26, no. 2 (1986): 158.
[576] Jon S. T. Quah, "The 1980s: A Review of Significant Political Developments," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Oxford University Press, 1991), 387. Quah presents specific reasons for Jeyaretnam's 1980 victory, which had less to do with general dissatisfaction with PAP.
[577] Chan, "Singapore in 1985: Managing Political Transition and Economic Recession," 161.
[578] Garry Rodan, *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1996).

Malay welfare organization – MENDAKI.[579] Nevertheless, the mid-1980s (re)rise of a "politicized, articulate, and critical population" shook the regime's complacency and prompted, in Chan Heng Chee's words, "a redefinition of the boundaries of political discussion and participation."[580] It was simply not enough to ban certain activities through such mechanisms as the ISA and the MRHA. In addition to the introduction of Total Defense beginning in 1984, a concept modeled after the experiences of Switzerland (a small state similarly sandwiched among much larger neighbors) which warned citizens that "potential aggressors and threats can appear in less obvious and non-conventional ways (e.g., destroying social cohesion by exploiting differences in race, language, religion…),"[581] the challenge of increasingly liberal political and civil societies must also be addressed by additional means.

To this end, the promotion of Confucian values served as a key foundation of the new pre-political which defines politics as less about liberal individual competition and contestation for political power but more so about communitarian consultation and non-confrontational opposition for the good of the country as a whole.[582] As mentioned, while this view might be familiar, its geographic source is less understood or explicated. In other words, without the changing international image of communist China, and how this had reoriented part of Singapore's geo-idea, the promotion of Confucianism and the so-called Asian values, whose primary source was believed to be from Chinese tradition, would likely have not been attempted in the country. Politics could as well remain as authoritarian as in the 1960s and 1970s. As it turned out, the PAP's Chinese Confucian-inspired pre-political notion would find certain support from the conservative Chinese population (previously condemned as having a natural association with

[579] Michael D. Barr, "Perpetual revisionism in Singapore: the limits of change," *Pacific Review* 16, no. 1 (March 2003): 79.
[580] Chan, "Singapore in 1985: Managing Political Transition and Economic Recession," 158.
[581] Total Defence, Singapore Government, http://www.totaldefence.sg/imindef/mindef_websites/topics/totaldefence/home.html
[582] For more on communitarianism, see Beng Huat Chua, *Communitarian Politics in Asia*, annotated edition. (RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Daniel A. Bell, *Communitarianism and Its Critics* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Daniel A. Bell and Chaibong Hahm, *Confucianism for the Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Daniel A. Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

communists) now worrying about the potential breakout of ethno-religious radicalism due to Singapore's "hostile" locale.

In this context, the official embrace of Confucianism would also be helpful in promoting cultural harmony in a region marked by ethno-historical hostility. Regime leaders, from Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong to senior foreign affairs officials like Kishore Mahbubani and Bilahari Kausikan, both of whom had served as UN Ambassador, led the way in promoting Confucian values in the region and the world not as "Singaporean" or "Chinese" but as "Asian" – values that, while not unique, were found plentiful across Asia but wanting in the West.[583] Always concerned about Western critique of his less than democratic regime, Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad suddenly found a cultural soul mate in Lee Kuan Yew and enthusiastically embraced Asian values in the 1990s. Though this did not lead to a complete embrace of one another by Singapore and Malaysia, some ideological congruence against the West served to manage tensed relations between the two. As Joseph Chan points out, because "Singapore cannot afford to build its national identity exclusively on Chinese ethnicity and culture, for fear of antagonizing its own Malay minority and inviting Malay and Muslim intervention from outside," "'Asian values' is a convenient label for Singapore to use to distinguish itself from the West and rally Asian allies to counteract Western hegemony."[584] Furthermore, the embrace of Asian values ruled out any embrace of liberal democracy because doing so would put Singapore in the American camp both militarily and politically, heighten tensions with Muslim Malaysia, and shake Singapore's credibility as an Eastern alternative to the prevailing Western model of political governance.

At any rate, in line with the shifting geo-idea, the PAP became quite serious at home about implementing its "Confucian" vision of politics as 1) non-conflictual and 2) consultative. First, the non-conflictual mechanisms involved twisting key aspects of liberal democratic electoral

[583] See Zakaria, "Culture Is Destiny."; Kishore Mahbubani, "The United States: 'Go East, Young Man'," *Washington Quarterly* 7 (Spring 1994); Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think? Understanding the Divide Between East and West* (Steerforth, 2002); Bilahari Kausikan, "Governance That Works," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 2 (1997): 24-34; Bilahari Kausikan, "Asia's Different Standard," *Foreign Policy* 92 (Fall 1993): 24-41; Bilahari Kausikan, "An East Asian Approach to Human Rights," *Buffalo Journal of International Law* 2 (Winter -96 1995): 263-83.

[584] Joseph Chan, "An Alternative View," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 2 (1997): 35-48.

features in order to incorporate different viewpoints that would neither be heard in a strictly authoritarian setting nor aired in a strictly democratic environment given the country's geo-idea. These schemes include: the Non-Constituency Member of Parliament (NCMP) in 1984, the Team Member of Parliament in a Group Representative Constituency (GRC) in 1987, the Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) in 1990, a directly elected President in 1991, and the idea of Shadow Member of Parliament in a People's Action Forum in 2000. Second, the consultative mechanisms established non-partisan channels to draw comments, inputs, and complaints from the public, supporters and opponents alike, in order to improve policies of national interest. These include: the Feedback Unit in 1985, Singapore 21 Committee/Report in 1999, Speaker Corner in 2000, the Remaking Singapore Campaign in 2003, and REACH in 2006.

Non-Conflictual Opposition

During the 1984 general elections, PM Lee Kuan Yew formally introduced a plan to allow some opposition politicians into parliament despite none of them winning the majority of votes in any constituency. The need for some opposition in the single-party dominated parliament was made more aware during PAP politicians' walkabouts as well as reports from party branches and grassroots organizations.[585] The Non-Constituency MP scheme would permit at least three non-PAP MPs to be seated in parliament if they had won the highest percentage of votes in their constituencies.[586] The idea was to have the NCMPs raise questions and concerns about governmental policies in a non-conflictual manner. They would be able to "vent" about any alleged government wrongdoings,[587] but in a controlled environment mindful of the geo-idea and in line with the pre-political notion. Unlike elected MPs, the NCMPs would not be able to "vote in Parliament on any motion relating to a Bill to amend the Constitution, a Supply Bill or Supplementary Supply Bill, a Money Bill or a vote of no confidence in the government."[588] According to Lee, this new role for the opposition was necessary because the country could not

[585] Jon S. T. Quah, "Singapore in 1984: Leadership Transition in an Election Year," *Asian Survey* 25, no. 2 (February 1985): 223.
[586] Ibid.
[587] Ibid.
[588] *Straits Times*, July 25, 1984.

afford to go back to the traditional role of a confrontational opposition that gave rise to the "political conflicts of the 1950s and 1960s."[589] Despite some charges by the opposition that the scheme had created "second-class MPs"[590] and that the opposition was unwilling to gain "back-door entry into Parliament by the grace of the government,"[591] Dr. Lee Siew Choh did enter parliament as the first NCMP in 1989. It should be noted that Lee was a leading Chinese *Barisan Sosialis* politician during the 1960s[592] – the fact that the PAP allowed him to take seat in parliament demonstrated its decreasing concern for alleged Chinese "chauvinist" or "communist" activities by this time.

In 1987, the PAP proposed amendments to the Constitution and the Parliament Elections Act to create Group Representative Constituencies. The GRCs would be composed of certain sets of three contiguous constituencies, where political parties would have to put up three candidates as a "team" to compete during elections. Most importantly, each team of three is required to have at least one ethnic minority candidate (especially Malay or Indian). The team able to win the majority of the total vote in all three districts of a GRC would be elected. Conceivably, a team could win one district (constituency) in a GRC and none of the members would become MP.[593] In 1988, the proposal was passed and 13 GRCs were created from new or existing constituencies, constituting about half of the total number of members of parliament.[594] By 1996, the number of single constituencies (especially those that had come close to defeating PAP candidates) was cut from 21 to 9.[595] By the turn of this century, 14 GRCs were established, 9 of which consisted of 5 electoral constituencies (thus needing 5 teams of 5 candidates) and 5 of

[589] Quah, "Singapore in 1984," 223.
[590] Quah, "Singapore in 1984," 223.
[591] Narayanan Ganesan, "Singapore: Entrenching a City-State's Dominant Party System," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (January 1998): 229.
[592] Thomas J. Bellows, "Singapore in 1989: Progress in a Search for Roots," *Asian Survey* 30, no. 2 (February 1990): 204.
[593] Thomas J. Bellows, "Singapore in 1988: The Transition Moves Forward," *Asian Survey* 29, no. 2 (February 1989): 146.
[594] Ibid.
[595] Garry Rodan, "Singapore in 1996: Extended Election Fever," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 2 (February 1997): 178.

which consisted of 6 electoral constituencies (thus needing a team of 6 candidates). The GRCs now made up 75 seats out of the total 84 seats in parliament.[596]

The official justification for the Team MPs mechanism was to ensure that minority views were represented in parliament, given the fact that the constituencies in which most of the 14-15 percent Malay and 6-7 percent Indian communities lived had been broken up during the creation of multi-racial public housing estates that housed most Singaporeans.[597] In light of this, the GRC scheme guaranteed that 25 percent of the 84 total seats was taken up by minority (non-Chinese) MPs.[598] The flip side of course was that it also ensured a permanent ethnic Chinese majority in Parliament. While critics charge that this makes a "mockery of [liberal] democracy and electoral politics,"[599] it was perfectly consistent with the PAP's re-embrace of Chineseness.

The Team MP or GRC idea was a definite sign that the PAP was abandoning the early post-independence attempt to obliterate race from the fabric of Singaporean social and political discourse. Instead of championing a vague multi-racial principle, the regime was now attempting to embrace race as a way to institutionalize a new pre-political notion. As Daniel A. Bell, a Canadian political theorist at Tsinghua University who had previously taught at the National University of Singapore, states, "guaranteeing a seat for minority candidates in… multiseat constituencies" meant that the regime had "about given up on the aim of *replacing* ethnic identity" but sought instead "to accommodate the fact of ethnic pluralism in various ways."[600] At the same time, the embrace of Chineseness and Confucianism would offer ways to manage the Malay challenge under the guise of being concerned for Malay representation. The GRC was a way to bring Malay interests into electoral politics without being accused of Malay chauvinism. Furthermore, according to government reports, Lee Kuan Yew conceived the GRC scheme in

[596] Tim Huxley, "Singapore in 2001: Political Continuity Despite Deepening Recession," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 1 (February 2002): 159.
[597] Bellows, "Singapore in 1988."; Lee, "Singapore in 1987: Setting a New Agenda," 203.
[598] Beng Huat Chua, "Political Culturalism, Representation and the People's Action Party of Singapore," *Democratization* 14, no. 5 (December 2007): 918.
[599] Ibid.
[600] Daniel A. Bell, "Is Democracy the 'Least Bad' System for Minority Groups?," in *Democratization and Identity: Regimes and Ethnicity in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. Susan J. Henders (Lexington Books, 2004), 8.

1982 and not after the opposition's electoral gains in 1984,[601] giving the impression that the scheme was *not* an attempt to eliminate the opposition per se. Nevertheless, the GRC materialized in the late 1980s as a Confucianized way to re-channel that oppositional energy to create a non-confrontational style of representation. As Thomas Bellows points out, the GRC was meant "to nurture harmony, symbolic interaction, and sharing of fundamental values."[602]

The same spirit of actively seeking out, institutionalizing, and thus preempting the emergence of alternative views that might not be in sync with the regime's pre-political notion predominated the creation of the Governmental Parliament Committees (GPCs) in 1987, the Nominated Member of Parliament scheme in 1990, and the Shadow Member of Parliament idea in 2000. The GPCs were designed to bring in professionals with specific expertise in a number of policy areas to participate in the political process. Likewise, the NMP proposal, passed by a parliamentary vote of 74 to 1 in November 1989, aimed to hear inputs from 6 Nominated MPs serving as non-partisan individuals of distinguished backgrounds in key societal sectors (business, labor, environmental, gender, and ethnic organizations and groups).[603] By 1997, it was further expanded to 9 seats. According to Australian political scientist Michael Barr, in fact a frequent critic of the regime, these independent non-elected MPs had nearly full voting and speaking rights as other MPs and had "made many incremental interventions in the development of policy, and on rare occasions they even successfully initiated legislation."[604] To the PAP, non-confrontational constructive criticisms were generally acceptable. Those that were "hostile" or those that challenged "the core principles underlying government policy" would warrant a response in kind.[605] As former Senior Minister S. Rajaratnam, a co-founder of the PAP and longtime foreign minister, warned in the late 1980s: as "an independent Singapore is unnatural and kept there only by human will," the non-elected MPs serving on the backbench should not be

[601] Bellows, "Singapore in 1988," 146.
[602] Bellows, "Singapore in 1988," 146.
[603] Bellows, "Singapore in 1989," 204.
[604] Barr, "Perpetual revisionism in Singapore," 79.
[605] Barr, "Perpetual revisionism in Singapore," 79.

populists but problem-solvers.[606] George Yeo likewise evoked the geographic analogy: we must be careful because "like the Swiss people, it may be our destiny to be forever insecure."[607]

In 1991, in line with the supposed need to keep the one-party dominant government in line, the Constitution was amended, effective by 1993, to allow the position of President to be directly elected by the people instead of appointed by Parliament. The President, previously ceremonial, would have the reserved powers to check the government's corruption, key public appointments, use of the national reserves, and enforcement of the Internal Security Act and Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. Arguably for the PAP, the President's role goes both ways in terms of guarding the pre-political notion. That is, even if the opposition were to make electoral gains and become a political force in Parliament, the President would still be able to make sure that it does not violate the accepted boundaries of political discourse. But had the President decided to do so himself (so far not herself), the PAP would still be able to overrule him either through the Council of Presidential Advisers, whose six members were all appointed and whose agreement he would need to exercise his reserved powers, or two-thirds majority in Parliament.[608]

The latest plan to ensure some oppositional views in Parliament was PM Goh's idea in 2000 of creating a "shadow cabinet" by grouping together about 20 PAP's own backbench politicians to serve as in-house critics.[609] In a general election in which the PAP overwhelmingly won 82 out of 84 seats and 75.3 percent of the popular vote, Goh later officially labeled his scheme a "People Action Forum" – a measure to ensure the public that it should not be so concerned about the paucity of quality representation of alternative views and different interests.[610] Although the scheme was eventually put on hold due to "skepticisms about the workings, feasibility, and credibility of such a mechanism,"[611] it demonstrated that the regime continued to perpetuate its new pre-political notion of allowing a check on governmental power in

[606] Bellows, "Singapore in 1989," 205.
[607] Bellows, "Singapore in 1989," 205.
[608] *Straits Times,* September 22, 1999.
[609] *Strait Times*, March 23, 2002.
[610] Huxley, "Singapore in 2001," 274.
[611] Huxley, "Singapore in 2001," 274.

a way that was neither conflictual nor confrontational. All these mechanisms reflected the "PAP's view that the Westminster-style parliamentary system of government inherited from the British is combative in nature and ill-geared towards achieving the sort of consensus on issues that it desires."[612] As Lee Kuan Yew asserted in an interview, "I'm not intellectually convinced that one-man, one-vote is the best. We practice it because that's what the British bequeathed us."[613]

Managed Public Consultations and Feedbacks

In addition to non-conflictual opposition, a second key set of mechanisms aimed to make the single-party dominated government appear more consultative and responsive to the unmet needs of the public. The sign of an emerging opposition in the early 1980s revealed the inadequacy of the previously existing consultative mechanisms: the Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs), the Community Center Management Committees (CCMCs), the Residents' Committees (RCs), or the Meet-the-People sessions.[614] The concerns were expressed in the 1984 PAP election platform dubbed "Vision 99" and officially launched in 1987 as the "National Agenda" under the chairmanship of Lee Hsien Loong.[615] Through a series of ministerial walkabouts and tours, dialogue sessions with professionals, and education seminars for grassroots and community leaders, the National Agenda Committee sought to build consensus on the party's goals in confronting issues facing Singapore.

Many of the sessions were organized by the government's new agency for soliciting public perspectives – the Feedback Unit, established in 1985 officially under the Ministry of Community Development, Youth, and Sports. According to then Deputy PM Goh, the Feedback Unit aimed to be "a forum [for citizens] to understand major policies, ask questions, make suggestions and generally participate in working out a solution."[616] Answering ultimately to the

[612] Ganesan, "Singapore: Entrenching a City-State's Dominant Party System."
[613] In Ganesan, "Singapore: Entrenching a City-State's Dominant Party System."
[614] Jon S. T. Quah and Stella R. Quah, "The Limits of Government Intervention," in *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore*, ed. K. S. Sandhu and Paul Wheatley (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), 119.
[615] Lee, "Singapore in 1987: Setting a New Agenda," 206.
[616] Feedback Unit: Government Consultation Portal, National Library of Singapore, http://was.nl.sg/details/www.feedback.gov.sg.html [Accessed October 10, 2010]

Prime Minister's Office, it served as a channel of communication between the people and the government.[617] As Jon Quah argues, "consultative" innovations such as the Feedback Unit were in part responsible for the PAP's improved electoral performance in the 1988 elections where it won 80 of 81 seats.[618] The Feedback Unit was instrumental in the process of governmental consultation in the production of the White Paper on Shared Values in 1991, which emphasized among other things the principles regarded as Asian or Confucian: "nation before community and society before self," "consensus not conflict," and "racial and religious harmony." Ultimately, these Confucian communitarian values provide constrained opportunities. As Sim points out, "within the 'Shared Values' discourse, subjects can no longer be discredited as intrinsically/racially flawed and be barred from publicly disseminating their views," as had been done prior to the 1980s. "Dissent can no longer be managed through privatisation, but has to be contained at the level of the public sphere," she argues. In other words, political space might have actually opened up when "the meaning of political participation is transformed from a threatening act of (racial) egoism or chauvinism to a natural extension of citizen's care for society."[619]

Of course, there were some who expressed "lingering doubts, especially among professionals, whether the PAP government was really consulting the people," and many who questioned "whether dissenting views would be accepted eventually."[620] Similarly, some Western scholars, often judging other societies by the yardstick of their own liberal polities, continue to have their reservations. Stephen Ortmann for instance asserts: "It is obvious that these values, which mainly emphasize the importance of the group over the individual and stress the importance of consensus, are also an attempt to counter the pressures in favour of democratizing the country in the direction of a liberal democracy."[621] Thus, towards the end of the 1990s, the PAP regime would step up its efforts in demonstrating to the public that it was genuinely

[617] Suzaina Kadir, "Singapore: Engagement and Autonomy within the Political Status Quo," in *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia: Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
[618] Quah, "The 1980s: A Review of Significant Political Developments," 388.
[619] Sim, "Asian Values, Authoritarianism and Capitalism," 55.
[620] Lee, "Singapore in 1987: Setting a New Agenda," 206.
[621] Stephan Ortmann, "Singapore: The Politics of Inventing National Identity," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 28, no. 4 (2009): 31.

interested in popular consultations – indeed emphasizing the need for consensus not conflict. In 1997, the government further formed seventeen "feedback groups," two in Beijing and London for overseas Singaporean communities, to encourage public participation in policy-related discussions.[622] These groups were part of the overall consultative campaign of the "Singapore 21" Committee, set up in the same year and headed by Education Minister Teo Chee Hean. After large-scale feedback sessions, the Teo Committee produced the "Singapore 21 Report" highlighting common values such as: all Singaporeans matter; opportunities for all; and active citizenry. While the first two aspired to reach out to all Singaporeans, to hear their voices and give them opportunities, the last one demanded that they should simultaneously get involved in the community and serve the nation. As one commentator explains, "active citizenship… goes beyond governmental consultation of prominent individuals in society as well as selected ordinary individuals, [but] calls for the involvement of every citizen in some aspect of the Singaporean community."[623] This way, they would have a "stronger stake in the nation's success."[624] In 2006, this spirit turned the Feedback Unit into REACH (Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry at Home) – designed to actively promote citizen participation and consultation through open forums and direct correspondences.

All the talk of demanding citizens to actively "participate in the nation's affairs"[625] eventually had many wondering whether the PAP was liberalizing political discourse – in other words, changing its pre-political notion. Yet this was not the case as the idea of active citizenship was defined in a "welfarist fashion" and not "an invitation to political commentary."[626] Goh Chok Tong declared: while "Singaporeans will have more space for political debate, it does not mean that the government is vacating the arena."[627] Even if the regime were to tolerate more openness and even dissent, the conservative and Chinese-educated majority had already shown its doubts about their value. Campaigning on a slogan of a "more open, consultative and participatory style"

[622] Ganesan, "Singapore: Entrenching a City-State's Dominant Party System."
[623] Chan, "Singapore: A Vision for the New Millennium."
[624] Chan, "Singapore: A Vision for the New Millennium."
[625] *Straits Times*, October 5, 1999.
[626] Chan, "Singapore: A Vision for the New Millennium."
[627] *Straits Times Interactive*, October 14, 1999.

of government in 1991, Goh's PAP was dealt the worst election outcome since 1968 with its share of the votes reduced to 61 percent and four opposition MPs elected.[628] Thus it was no surprise that a few years later Goh would retune his rhetoric about a new open style in favor of a old autocratic method of Lee Kuan Yew, prompting popular novelist Catherine Lim to publicly note that dashed were the "brightest of hopes, the most heartening promise of a judicious blend of old and new."[629] Hence, there appeared to be a degree of legitimacy for the PAP's authoritarian pre-political notion.[630] And while PM Lee Hsieng Loong announced in 2004 (effective from 2008) that there would be no special licenses required in order to use "Speaker Corner," established since 2000 for controlled venting and performances, he also made clear in a separate speech that there would be little toleration for "criticism that scores political points and undermines the government's standing."[631]

Institutionally, communitarian *civic* society organizations that carry out societal welfare functions complementary to state institutions would be encouraged but liberal *civil* society organizations that carry out political challenges to the state would not. As Simon Tay observes, the PAP's conception of civil society actors is "relatively conservative socially and politically, largely middle class, and nationalistic."[632] This was necessary because of the country's geo-idea. According to Minister Yeo, non-state groups must operate within this idea until "our common consciousness grows" when "the bounds of debate will be relaxed;" in the meantime, "we will always need an outer perimeter to hold our society together."[633]

This was imperative in the context of rising Islamic fundamentalism in the region after 9/11. In this regard, the regime further clarified, through its 2002 "Remaking Singapore Committee," what all social forces in the country should accept before commenting on politics. The Committee was chaired by then Minister of State for National Development (now Minister for

[628] Chan, "Singapore: A Vision for the New Millennium."
[629] Ibid., 181. This in turn drew sharp rebuke from Goh, inviting Lim to enter politics if a private citizen like her would like to be political.
[630] Chua, "Political Culturalism, Representation and the People's Action Party of Singapore," 924.
[631] Chua, "Political Culturalism, Representation and the People's Action Party of Singapore," 924.
[632] Tay, "Island in the World: Globalization and Singapore's Transformation."
[633] Quoted in Ibid.

Community Development, Youth and Sports) Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, and composed of other Ministers of State and Members of Parliament as well as notables from the private sector, voluntary organizations and tertiary institutions.[634] The committee outlined which political expressions and behaviors belong to the "green lane" and which belong to the "red lane": that is, "free-flowing discussions should be allowed" except those that "directly engage in electioneering and party politics" and those that "compromise sovereignty, security and religious or ethnic harmony."[635]

It is important to note that "electioneering and party politics" were allowed but *only* for explicitly declared political parties and *only* during election times. Even here, the pre-political notion and associated mechanisms against the exploitation of religious/ethnic/racial issues and sentiments governed these parties' campaigning. Furthermore, the Societies Act already barred activities by unregistered non-state organizations, and the Parliamentary Elections Act prohibited those registered as civic organizations from electioneering. Ever concerned with external influences on national political processes, the Political Donation Act forbad political organizations from receiving funding from foreign sources, while the Singapore Broadcasting Act already limited their "interferences" in domestic media.

CAN AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME REMAIN LEGITIMATE AND DURABLE?

Lee Kuan Yew published his first memoir in 1998, more than three decades after Singapore's separation from Malaysia. In it, he wrote: "I thought our people should understand how vulnerable Singapore was and is, the dangers that beset us, and how we nearly did not make it."[636] Almost a decade later in the new century, a theme of Singapore's place and geography continued to predominate political discourse. In 2007, Lee Sr pronounced: "Where are we? Are we in the

[634] Remaking Singapore, National Library of Singapore, http://was.nl.sg/details/www.remakingsingapore.gov.sg.html [Accessed November 2010].
[635] William Case, "Singapore in 2003: Another Tough Year," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 1 (February 2004): 117.
[636] Kuan Yew Lee, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1998), 8.

Caribbean? We are in Southeast Asia, in the midst of a turbulent, volatile, unsettled region."[637] Earlier in the year, Lee Jr made clear: "We are tiny… one little red dot out of so many little dots, in the middle of Southeast Asia… operating in a fast changing, competitive global environment against powerful competitors. So in this situation... Our model is ...a government that worries all the time."[638]

Thus, while it might be correct for critics of the PAP regime to argue that the latter had constructed a self-legitimating narrative that serves to perpetuate its political power at the expense of liberal democracy, what is of note has been the realization by all that the PAP could not simply construct something out of thin air, or certainly one that is not deeply shared by the majority of the people themselves, including those critical of the regime. As Michael Leifer reminds us, "the tyranny of geography means that Singapore cannot escape a locale in which problematic relations with close neighbours are permanent facts of political life."[639] Asked why Singapore could not practice liberal style democracy as in similarly developed small countries like Denmark and New Zealand, Lee Kuan Yew again was blunt: "They've got a different physical, economic, geographic and strategic base. Their neighbours are different."[640] The geo-idea therefore was real, and even though those not in power might fantasize about conceiving politics and governance differently, it would be very difficult to do so without a total shift in that idea. The congruence between the country's geo-idea and the regime's pre-political notion in no small part explains why there had been continuing public acceptance, even grudgingly, of many of the restrictive political mechanisms used to quell challenges to PAP rule. In turn, the PAP had been able to hold on to political power by largely avoiding large-scale violence or coercive measures, which only helped to augment its legitimacy, a fact acknowledged by all.

Chua Beng Huat starts off: "Since the mid-1980s, the ability of the PAP to maintain political dominance in Singapore has been less the result of political repression than the

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[637] "Tom Plate and Jeffrey Cole interview Lee Kuan Yew" (Asia Media, UCLA Asia Institute, October 9, 2007), http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=79541.
[638] *Straits Times*, April 12, 2007.
[639] Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 39.
[640] Clarence Chang, "MM Lee on ensuring S'pore's Future as a Special Red Dot," *New Paper (Singapore)*, September 2006.

elaboration of a conception of politics that has resonance among Singaporeans."[641] To Lily Zubaidah-Rahim, the PAP had been able "to maintain hegemony by creatively manufacturing ideological consent rather than resorting too frequently to coercive measures."[642] Though the election victory of Jeyaretnam in 1981 was "a watershed event" that "heralded the onset of a new opposition movement," Stephan Ortmann grants that "it did not signify the beginning of a democratization process" because the "authoritarian regime was able to adapt to the challenges and consolidate its power," and was "successful in defining the dominant discourse in which the opposition has to act."[643] "In shaping a democracy in Singapore, the PAP was far less concerned with adhering to the Western notion of a bill of rights, diffusion of power, and the multiplicity of parties," Chan Heng Chee elaborates, "than with developing representative government and drawing a line between strong disciplined government... and misgovernment by the corrupt and tyrannical. These values of the party gradually came to be shared by the people of the republic."[644]

Based on the critical comments usually found on the online Forum page of the *Straits Times*, Barr and Skrbis note that "the vast majority of the people who expressed cynicism or disconnect in interviews and conversations still harboured... a high degree of grudging support for the Singaporean system, if not explicitly for the government itself."[645] The authors further puzzled: "if members of Singapore's ethnic minority groups suffer the levels of discrimination depicted... why is it that most of them are still loyal Singaporeans who... respect their political leaders?"[646] One thing the PAP did relatively well, as highlighted by this chapter, was to continually readjust the rules of politics in light of changing political geographical circumstances. Despite the "control of dissent", most could agree that Singapore is not "a closed society with a tight ruling oligarchy cut off from the ground." Chan Heng Chee points out that Singapore leaders openly discussed the "problems of the state and their solutions *to"* the people often, and the PAP

[641] Chua, "Political Culturalism, Representation and the People's Action Party of Singapore," 924.
[642] Zubaidah-Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World*, 13.
[643] Ortmann, *Politics and Change in Singapore and Hong Kong*, 176.
[644] Chan, "Political Political Developments, 1965-1979," 179.
[645] Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 256.
[646] Ibid., 13.

political strategy had "always emphasized communication with the people."[647] These efforts matter, as Hong Lysa and Huang Jianli, two historians who are no supporters of the regime, argue: "those who are critical of the Singapore government's heavy hand in the scripting and imprinting of its version of history [and politics] do not give sufficient credit to the thought and skill with which these have been done, nor to the fact that the thickening of the plot of Singapore history [and politics] has been a continuous endeavour."[648]

This continuous endeavor is precisely the argument of this work, because since the 1980s, the PAP had been experimenting with a new notion of politics given the partial geo-ideational shift. The Singaporean public intellectual Simon Tay sees opportunities in this new mode of politics, and in turn suggests that freedom needs to be re-imagined and advanced in creative ways within the Singaporean context. Otherwise, existing political spaces could be shut down, with new controls implemented. In an uncharacteristically frank piece, Tay writes: "a tension is recognised between the [public] wish to have greater consultation and participation, that require freedom, and the [governmental] wish to guide the exercise of that freedom... the argument... is that new ways can and should be found to imagine freedom, to see freedom as 'thicker' or 'thinner' in different situations as affected by different factors." He goes on: "Such a re-imagination of freedom can also serve better to allow people to act, partly within and partly despite present restraints, towards the future growth of freedom."[649] As for the local liberal opposition and outside critics, who had called for Western style democracy regardless of the place, Tay admonishes: "while contrasts between different democracies are not without basis, such an idea of freedom is bankrupt. If we see other societies as absolutely free and Singapore as not free, we demand both too much and too little of the idea of freedom. By insisting on the right to say anything and everything, we miss the utility of being able to say something." Ultimately, what Tay encourages his fellow Singaporeans to do is to "recognise the margins of freedom that are available to Singaporeans"; if not, there is "the danger of being incapable of

[647] Chan, "Political Political Developments, 1965-1979," 178. Emphasis added.
[648] Hong and Huang, *The Scripting of a National History*, 3.
[649] Simon S. C. Tay, "Imagining Freedom," in *Imagining Singapore*, ed. Kah Choon Ban, Anne Pakir, and Chee Kiong Tong (Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004), 81-82.

measuring the Singaporean situation as it prevails and would therefore fail to recognize any further restraint on freedom that might be imposed."[650]

[650] Ibid., 96.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION:
RULING IN PLACE, RULING OUT OF PLACE

This study explores the phenomenon of authoritarian regime durability and change in two advanced industrialized countries of East Asia – Singapore and Taiwan. For a long time, many have predicted Singapore to become liberal democratic. It has had an advanced industrial economy, a vast middle class, and a highly educated population. Yet it has persisted under the grip of an autocratic government for five decades. But in Taiwan, also a country that has undergone rapid and successful industrialization, a liberal democratic polity emerged to take hold from the 1990s onwards. What explains authoritarian resilience in one case and its ending in another? Both countries are similarly small, mostly ethnically Chinese, supposedly culturally Confucian, and of course economically developed. While these are not perfect factors for comparison, they do present intriguing questions about two different paths undertaken by not too different countries.

The work concludes that the ability of the ruling regime, in this case Singapore, to continually legitimize itself based on the particular features of the country's geography, can be a critical source of authoritarian persistence. But why and how is legitimacy, more than coercion and/or patronage for instance, the key to the survival of authoritarianism? It is argued that while repressive strength could force compliance and massive wealth could buy support to some extent, legitimacy alone has the power to instill belief in the rightness of the regime to rule. The Singapore story has shown that as long as this legitimacy exists, challenges to the regime rarely occur.

How does the particular political geography of the country – its size and physical characteristics, its location, and the sort of political history it has with nearby places – shape the content and process of regime legitimation? For a long time, Singapore's strategic location had invited European powers' rivalries and British colonialism, a result of which, among other things, led to the increase in the number and dominance of the ethnic Chinese in a place historically claimed to be part of the Malay world. After World War II, the attempt by Singapore to join nearby

Malay states consolidating to become the Federation of Malaysia failed miserably due to ethnic tensions, riots, and historical animosities. The subsequent necessity not only to survive but also prosper on its own, given the country's limited size and resources, had a fundamental impact on Singapore. Continuing tensions with neighboring states, as well as increased communist activities in the region during the Cold War, added to the notion of what the country was *not* or could *not* become – a wholly Chinese or a wholly Malaysian polity.

Like Singapore, Taiwan's strategic position also made it endure centuries of intervention from extra-regional European colonialists (Holland and Spain) as well regional hegemons (China and Japan). Although China, by proximity, ethnicity, and history, was the one with the strongest territorial claim to Taiwan, not all ancient Chinese dynasties considered the island as part of their imperial domain – or "territorial integrity" in modern parlance. As a result of relative neglect by the Chinese mainland throughout most of its lifetime, Taiwan had avowed some sense of spatial separateness. This distinct consciousness vis-à-vis China was pitted against and further evolved under the KMT or Chinese Nationalist Party, which, after losing the Mainland to the communists, came to rule Taiwan with its own idea of what Taiwan was – a integral part of the whole Chinese nation.

The political and historical features of a county's geography help engender its spatial-political identity – in short, its geo-idea. This geo-idea in turn profoundly influences the pre-political of society, or what in politics is or is not acceptable given the country's place in the region and the world. To safeguard the geo-idea, the regime perpetuates and implements the rules of the political game to prevent challenges. For Singapore, these included chauvinisms and extremisms of various stripes – Chinese, communist, Malay, Islamic. In Taiwan, given how the KMT conceived the island's place, the challenges were "Taiwanist" and communist.

In sum, while the study proposes a new theoretical framework based on insights from the field of political geography and the literature on legitimacy, it both challenges and builds on aspects of existing works on authoritarian rule. Recapping the central argument of the work and drawing comparative inferences from the case materials, the chapter concludes with these findings and implications.

Legitimacy and Survival of Authoritarian Regimes

An authoritarian regime survives as much on its ability to legitimize itself as its capacity to do anything else.

In Singapore, the ruling People's Action Party had been able to propagate a legitimation strategy that broadly resonated with the people at large. In Taiwan, on the other hand, the KMT's legitimacy to rule had never been widely accepted from the start, which contributed to the regime's downfall when there was a political opportunity brought about by a dramatic change in the international environment. For four decades, the KMT, in ruling Taiwan for the sake of returning to China, had never attempted to forge a legitimation strategy that could be shared by the population at large. For PAP, however, the fundamental goal behind its guardianship of the country and its imposition of political control was to safeguard racial accord and harmony in Singapore, a public interest that could not be easily argued against. National surveys have found that "inter-ethnic friendships" among the three main ethnic groups – Chinese, Malays, and Indians – "have increased and are now at high levels" and that 90 percent of the respondents in each ethnic group felt that "race relations have been harmonious or non-problematic."[651] This result is remarkable in comparative terms – not only with pre-PAP Singapore when "various groups were literary at war with each other,"[652] but also with neighboring countries such as democratic Indonesia and the Philippines where kidnappings, killings, property confiscations and destructions by the majority ethnic groups over market-dominant ethnic minorities are not uncommon.[653] In this context, Daniel A. Bell, for instance, observes that perhaps "some less-than-democratic political systems" such as Singapore can be "defended on the grounds that they help to secure the interests of minority groups – and that democratization can be detrimental to those

[651] Seen Kong Chiew, "National Identity, Ethnicity and National Issues," in *In Search of Singapore's National Values*, ed. Jon S. T. Quah (Singapore: Times Academic Press for Institute for Public Policy, n.d.), 66-75.
[652] Bell, "Is Democracy the 'Least Bad' System for Minority Groups?," 31.
[653] Chua, *World on Fire*.

interests."[654] Lee Kuan Yew was even more unproblematic on this point – arguing that had majoritarian democracy prevailed in his country, where the Chinese would dominate over other ethnic groups, race riots and disintegration would ensue.[655] Hence, the legitimacy for the PAP in bringing about this success could not be underestimated. It had become part of the national consciousness that liberal democracy might lead to disunity and disharmony, and that what ever the pre-political order the PAP had put in place must be the right one for society.

Second, while the PAP put in place a restrictive pre-political order, it exercised power within the legal boundaries of that order and expected all social and political actors to play by the same rules of the game. Since the rules favored its prerogatives, the PAP did not need to break any procedural legality in order to stay in power. The regime's legitimacy is therefore enhanced. By comparison, the KMT, during the period of martial law, followed the opposite track. It *officially* stuck to a more expansive procedural legality (allowing elections at the local levels, and promising to bring about democracy and end martial law upon a return to the mainland) but was often unconstrained by them (manipulating local elections, perpetuating martial law, denying national elections, retaining vast power and surveillance systems). As a result, regime opponents constantly contested the legitimacy of the regime's pre-political rules and, unlike in Singapore, had reasons to mobilize through extra-legal channels and make their demands heard.[656]

Third, of relevance to understand the nature of support to the PAP and KMT is to distinguish between "self-legitimacy," which is provided by regime officials and the ruling class, and "external legitimacy," which is granted by the ruled.[657] In Singapore, it could be argued that the PAP possessed both self-legitimacy and external legitimacy. PAP leaders, supporters and the broader public believed in the ideas and principles that formed the basis of PAP rule. By contrast, in Taiwan, while external legitimacy had always been contested, self-legitimacy was only evident

[654] Bell, "Is Democracy the 'Least Bad' System for Minority Groups?," 26.
[655] Ibid., 32.
[656] A similar point is made by Vince Boudreau in comparing the regimes of Marcos in the Philippines and Suharto in Indonesia – see Vincent Boudreau, "Diffusing Democracy? People Power in Indonesia and the Philippines," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 31, no. 4 (1999): 3-18.
[657] For more on this distinction see Rodney Barker, *Legitimating Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

in the early KMT period. It then slowly melted away to the point where by the 1980s belief in the Nationalist legitimation strategy among its own members had also declined, especially the notion that the KMT was the legitimate representative of the whole of China in which Taiwan was a part. In short, the loss in both self and external legitimacy is a deadly combination for autocrats. The want of external legitimacy induces further self-illegitimacy by creating the scope and space for the regime to be constantly challenged.[658] A regime without self-legitimacy is without its own will to use force to cling on to power. Like the KMT during the late 1980s, some communist regimes collapsed largely because they no longer believed in their own ideas and principles.[659]

Geography and Regime Legitimacy

The key basis of a given authoritarian regime's legitimacy lies in that country's particular place, derived physically, historically, and ideationally within the region and the world.

For Singapore, its size and location within the Muslim-Malay sub-region, its resource constraints and dependence on external sources for survival and development, as well as its history of antagonisms with larger neighbors, have fueled a geo-identity that values stability, predictability and order. Pre-political rules, or the boundaries of politics, cast down to police regime challenges – Chinese chauvinism, communist radicalism, or Malay-Muslim extremism – became legitimate and acceptable because most people recognized the country's place regionally and internationally. This recognition has been reinforced by the PAP's ability and success in persuading the ruled of the country's geographical constraints and the need for its pre-political rules.

The basic rationale behind the framework of *comparative geographical analysis* is that all countries are not the same, as it is obvious but not taken seriously by universalist-leaning theories. Thinking counter-factually, in the absence of the constraints associated with its place,

[658] Giuseppe di Palma, "Legitimation from the Top to Civil Society: Politico-Cultural Change in Eastern Europe," *World Politics* 44, no. 1 (October 1, 1991): 49-80.
[659] Esteban, "The Management of Nationalism during the Jiang Era (1994-2002) and Its Implications On Government and Regime Legitimacy," 184.

history, and identity, Singapore could as well be swept by the liberal democratic wave predicted by the economic development-democratization thesis. After all, blessed by a bigger size, more resources, and different neighbors near and far, how would the PAP be able to justify much of its politically restrictive measures? At the very least, without these geographical limitations, Singapore might have followed a different political path. "Modernization theory, although flawed, offers effective descriptions of the democratization pressures confronted by rapidly developing countries," observes one scholar. "What it fails to do, and what is advantageous about localized theories, is the focus on how history, geography, culture, and ideology can come together to engender countervailing forces that stabilize the regime and arrest the drift toward democracy."[660]

In Taiwan, industrialization and economic growth did unleash social forces that demanded political participation and contributed importantly to the democratization process. Lucien Pye even labeled the country "possibly the very best working example of the theory that economic progress should bring in its wake democratic institutions and a healthy surge of pluralism, which in time will undercut the foundations of authoritarian rule."[661] How was this possible in Taiwan but not in Singapore? The role of "place" is a key factor. Imagine had the KMT adopted a different legitimation strategy in Taiwan – one that focused on the island's own physical space vis-à-vis China, an alternative political outcome in the 1980s could not be ruled out. Or, had the KMT been submerged into a Taiwan with a different set of political geographical features and history, a different legitimation strategy might have been forged, with dramatically different effects, for better or worse. This theorizing is not fanciful; on the contrary, thinking geographically means recognizing that different space, place, and history variously shapes human perceptions and strategies, as well as constrains and enables their actions.

It is worth noting that in light of changing geographical circumstances, the PAP *continually recalibrated* the basis of its legitimation while the KMT stuck to an increasingly discredited legitimation formula until the very end. PAP's rule in Singapore had been defined as a

[660] Sim, "Authoritarianism - East Asia - Legitimate(d) Authoritarianism."
[661] Pye, *Asian Power and Politics*, 233.

never-ending attempt to use its given space and place as an inclusionary force to internally unite its disparate population against what it perceived as external enemies. This way, most of the ruled could at least feel officially included in the broader sense of the Singapore idea. However, what the KMT had done during the authoritarian days in Taiwan was effectively making geography an exclusionary force. The native Taiwanese did not have a sense of the broader idea of China, making them resist that particular vision of place the KMT had enacted.

As it turns out, in the KMT's case, refusal to recognize the eventual existence of two competing geo-ideas, one propagated by the ruler and the other championed by the opposition and the larger populace, gradually led to authoritarian delegitimation, while for PAP, the shift in geo-idea at a critical juncture helped forestall political challenges to the regime. In Singapore, when the international atmosphere had been altered due to the decline of radical Chinese communism in China and Southeast Asia by the 1980s, the PAP repositioned the country's geo-idea. Unlike the early era when the ruling party conceived Singapore as a small vulnerable Chinese-dominated place doubly constrained within the hostile Malay-Muslim region and the larger international environment of expanding communism, the reformulated idea of the country became one of a regionally constrained small state with big international Chinese connection. Chinese language, culture, and civilization were embraced, including political Confucianism. The shift was strategically useful in terms of politics. It allowed the PAP to re-channel emerging voices critical of the regime by conceptualizing and implementing new pre-political rules based not on liberal competition and contestation but communitarian consultation and non-confrontational opposition.

On the other hand in Taiwan, the KMT insisted on an idea of the place as no more than a small province within a big Chinese nation in which the KMT continued to be the legitimate government. The idea that Taiwan was not always spatially, historically, and politically Chinese could not be entertained because it would have signified a different notion of politics than the one the KMT deemed necessary in order to return to the mainland. Yet this competing idea persisted against the KMT's version, and served as political and strategic resources for anti-regime mobilization that finally triumphed – occurring at a time when changes in the international

environment further undermined some of the key rationales for the KMT's geo-idea: rapprochement between the US and the People's Republic of China and de-recognition of the ROC by the United Nations, United States, and all major powers.

Overall, the maintenance of the geo-idea in one place (Singapore) hindered democratization and the change in idea in another (Taiwan) facilitated democratization. For Singapore, its geo-insecurity stemmed largely from not being part of something larger, including the failed attempt to join the Malaysian Federation in the 1960s. For Taiwan, while the shift in the 1980s to democratize partly stemmed from the geo-insecurity of being part of something larger (Communist China), democratization was also facilitated by Taiwan's already being part of something geopolitically larger (American security protection). Continued protection was contingent on liberal political reforms.

In this sense, a similar international change – the decline of radical communism in the PRC – had different effects in Singapore and Taiwan due to the differences in geographical proximity and historical interactions between the two vis-à-vis China. For the PAP, China's opening meant the opportunity not only to gain economic access in alleviating geo-economic and security constraints but also to reorient politics at home – Confucian-style. On the contrary, for the KMT, the opening of China presented an imperative for the regime to become more receptive to American pressures for liberal democracy and human rights in order to compete with China for international space and recognition.

Patronage, Coercion, Geography and Regime Survival

Material rewards to supporters and potential opponents matter for authoritarian survival. So is the capacity to repress political challenges. But these are not sufficient. The continuing and changing dynamics of the country's political geography mediate the regime's ability and will to forcefully and materially maintain authoritarian rule.

From classic authoritarian regimes to the modern ones still dominating the twenty-first century landscape, the two key mechanisms of rule are said to be patronage and repression. To many

scholars, because material interests importantly shape the preferences and actions of elites,[662] their decisions to support the ruling regime or defect to the emerging opposition often depend on callous political economy calculations. Ruling one-party regimes, not unlike the ones in Singapore and Taiwan, have been seen as lasting a long time partly because they are able to dispense patronage to a select group of key clienteles – when these supporters are fed side payments, liberal reforms in the name of more open participatory politics could be avoided.[663] From this perspective, the stability and durability of autocrats is a function of a materialist contract between the ruler and powerful segments of the ruled.

The second key instrument of authoritarian rule is supposed to be coercion, often in conjunction with the use of patronage. Writing about the so-called wave of democratic revolutions in the Arab world in 2011, Fareed Zakaria states: "these local rulers were more skilled at negotiating up, to the imperial authorities, than they were at negotiating down, to their people. They ruled their people not through negotiations but by force and bribery (once the oil money began to flow)."[664] Warning against the censoring of news reports about Middle East developments by autocrats in other parts of the world for fear of similar uprisings, pundits point to the immediate need for liberal democratic reforms and the fact that repression, patronage, or even a good economy would not be able to save these authoritarian regimes in the long run.[665]

These arguments are not wrong, but they are limited and parochial. If the cases of Singapore and Taiwan tell us anything, it is that applying repressive tactics or dispensing lucrative rewards are not solely the stories in the durability and collapse of these authoritarian regimes. If force and money were enough, why do autocrats spend so much time and effort on creating and perpetuating the idea that one has the right to govern? The PAP was certainly repressive at the

[662] Robert Kaufman, "Liberalization and Democratization in South America," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 90-91; Helen Milner, "Trading Places: Industries for Free Trade," *World Politics* 40, no. 3 (April 1, 1988): 360.
[663] Herbert Kitschelt, "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities," *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 6-7 (2000): 845 -879; Luis Fernando Medina and Susan C. Stokes, "Clientalism as Political Monopoly," in *Annual Meeting* (American Political Science Association, Boston, 2002).
[664] Fareed Zakaria, "The Mideast's seismic shift," *Washington Post*, February 24, 2011.
[665] Brett Stephens, "Beijing and the Arab Revolt," *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, February 23, 2011.

dawn of its authoritarian rule with the mass arrest of political opponents in the 1960s but then became less violently repressive to focus more on building ideas and principles. Coercive mechanisms, from restrictions on political expression and organization to controlling political opponents through the judiciary, continued to be used. Yet these were not the nuts and bolts of the political system, nor were they pervasively applied. Violent crackdown on the opposition or people had not occurred – the regime was hence not "repressive" in that traditional sense. As for patronage, Singaporeans generally enjoyed material benefits, such as subsidized public housing, and attributed these to PAP rule. However, there were some key social groups, identified by the literature as potential regime challengers, such as small businesses and labor who had not been entirely swum in the patronage of the regime. These social forces could become challengers but they had not. As noted in chapter 5, even the most vocal critics of the PAP, as expressed in blog sites and during election rallies, had not contested the suitability of the system, especially its pre-political rules with regard to limits on freedom of expression on racial and ethnic matters.

In the case of the KMT, if patronage and repression were adequate in keeping its martial law regime for four decades, why were they not sufficient by the late 1980s? The financial coffers of the ruling Nationalist regime were largely intact and key business groups, not only the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) but also small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), often said to be distant from the state but were in reality extensively tied to the SOEs,[666] had benefited from the business environment fostered and guaranteed by the KMT.[667] They had thus material reasons to sanction the continuation of KMT rule. Nevertheless, especially in the case of the SMEs, private sector actors came to provide financial support to the non-KMT (Dangwai) democratic movement. As for repression, the regime's coercive instruments were also largely undiminished, yet state security forces were not unleashed to crackdown, for instance, the opposition when it formed the Democratic Progressive Party in defiance of martial law. Some argue that it was the liberal inclination of President Chiang Ching-kua who backed off pressures from KMT hardliners to repress. Yet arguably he had done so only in the context of the changing dynamics of Taiwan's

[666] Peter B. Evans, *Embedded Autonomy* (Princeton University Press, 1995), 54-60.
[667] Cheng and Chu, "State-Business Relationship in Taiwan: A Political Economy Perspective," 200.

geo-idea – the impossibility of insisting on the KMT's version in light of the alteration in the international environment as well as increased mobilization in the country. Ending the regime's pre-political rules – lifting martial law, allowing national elections, etc – was one way to arrest, or at minimum control, the development of an alternative geo-idea championed by the opposition from below.

Ultimately, it is arguably the ability and will to coerce legitimately that matters most. Given Singapore's political geographical constraints, and the way the general populace had internalized these, the PAP had been able to apply some calibrated coercive measures without widespread contestation. On the other hand, the credibility of the KMT's idea of Taiwan had become by the late 1980s so bankrupt that any new launching of repressive attacks would have been widely condemned – internally and externally. As argued, the decision to further liberalize was also in the context of a renewed China that was increasingly successful in persuading the world that it had become more open, more forward-looking, and more than ready to rejoin the international community – all at the expense of Taiwan. The latter risked absorption by China had it refused to change.

Finally, in Singapore's case, it is important to reemphasize that relative congruence between the regime's geo-idea and what the people perceived as the country's place in the region and the world had lessened the need for the regime to violently suppress its opponents constantly. Hence, the more congruent the broad idea of the country is, the less coercive the regime's forces become. On the contrary, KMT's Taiwan illustrates that incongruence between the regime's geo-idea and the idea of what the country was or should be as conceived by the ruled gives rise to constant contestation and challenge that invites active and violent suppression. In short: less congruence, more coercion. In turn: more coercion, less legitimacy.

Performance, Regime Legitimacy, and Durability

The economic performance of an authoritarian regime is important for its legitimacy and durability, but not always. What is as or more significant is political performance.

Authoritarians the world over often argue that as long as the people have food on the table and money to spend, with the knowledge that these goods are delivered by the regime, there is neither the need nor demand for democracy. In an economy marked by strong growth or robust economic signs, the ruled would be relatively satisfied not to challenge the regime – no matter how politically authoritarian it is. Hence, good economic performance can earn legitimacy for the regime and shield it from political challenge.

Yet in our case studies, both the PAP and the KMT performed admirably in the economic realm. In Singapore, the PAP had succeeded beyond doubt as the party that brought the country from "Third World to First." Through an economic strategy of outward-looking, export oriented industrialization, characterized by governmental regulation, guidance, and fiscal incentives to attract foreign capital, the regime brought the country from a negative growth rate in 1964 of –4.3 percent[668] to an annual growth of 9.5 percent in the 1970s and even 10 percent in the early 1980s – rates not seen anywhere except in a few OPEC countries.[669] Unemployment in the 1960s, which was as high as 10 percent, was solved by 1976 when the country reached full employment.[670] Finally, with regard to the standard of living, from 1960 to 1988, the per capita income had risen twelve-fold from $1,330 to $15,999.[671]

Similarly, in Taiwan, economic development was unprecedented under the KMT. From 1960 to 1980, Taiwan registered a growth rate of 9 percent per annum; industrialization increased from 25 to 45 percent and exports grew at a rate of 20 percent annually; inflation was kept as low as 2 percent; and most significantly for the overall standard of living, income rose and was distributed relatively equally.[672] As Tun-Jen Cheng notes: "no one was left out of the process of economic development: one was either making it happen or realizing its benefits."[673] In spite of this good economic time, authoritarianism came to an end. Likewise, again in the Arab region in

[668] Diane K. Mauzy and R. S. Milne, *Singapore Politics Under the People's Action Party* (Routledge, 2002).
[669] Hussin Mutalib, *Parties and Politics: A Study of Opposition Parties and the PAP in Singapore* (Eastern Universities Press, 2004), 244.
[670] Ibid., 242; Quah, "Government Policies and Nation-Building," 47-48.
[671] Quah, "Government Policies and Nation-Building," 48.
[672] Cheng, "Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan," 481.
[673] Ibid.

early 2011, anti-regime protests occurred in countries that had also performed well economically, especially Bahrain or even Tunisia.

Clearly, something else is contributing to mass unhappiness and it is not just economic downturn or deprivation. While it could be said that good economic performance might have contributed to PAP legitimacy, and therefore helped deter challenges, the same could not be applied to the KMT or other ruling regimes. Along with economic performance, these regimes must demonstrate effective political performance, as the literature highlights.[674] Seymour Martin Lipset, for instance, asserts that "all claims to a legitimate title to rule in new states must ultimately win acceptance through demonstrating effectiveness" in dealing with critical problems.[675] Robert Dahl further states: "where beliefs about the effectiveness of government are uncertain or shallow, inept performance is even more dangerous."[676] Harry Eckstein argues that beliefs about political authority, and arguably political regime, can be reinforced, weakened, or altered by beliefs about the effectiveness of government.[677] All in all, good economic performance but poor political performance is a regime-threatening cause for concern. One key aspect of demonstrating effective political governance is the ability of the regime to forge a national consensus on identity and politics. It is in this area that the PAP outperformed the rest of its fellow authoritarians. Since Singapore's independence, the ruling party had framed the political challenges – real and imagined – and successfully steered the country through them. Others were simply not as effective in doing likewise.

Contribution to Scholarships

[674] Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Doubleday, 1963); Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 147; Harry Eckstein, "Authority Relations and Governmental Performance: A Theoretical Framework," *Comparative Political Studies* 2, no. 3 (October 1, 1969): 283-87; Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 88-93; Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown and Reequilibration* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 13-26.
[675] Lipset, *The First New Nation*, 52.
[676] Dahl, *Polyarchy*, 147.
[677] Eckstein, "Authority Relations and Governmental Performance," 283-287.

Exploring the divergent political paths of two developed Asian states, this work advances four significant fields of political inquiry. First, the comparative study makes a contribution to the literature on modernization and globalization by questioning the convergence of political and governance regime types in those countries that have undergone similar processes of industrialization and development. Second, it questions the literature on democratization, which overly emphasizes the lack of conditions for liberal democracy or democratizing elites to explain authoritarian regime stability while ignoring legitimacy. If an alternative autocratic regime of governance is found to be legitimate and durable, the study should warrant a rethinking of the democracy promotion premise of the democratization literature as well as of Western governments and international organizations in general, which assume that liberal democracy is a universal model and an end value in itself. Third, the research contributes to the authoritarianism literature, which, in explaining regime stability, overly privileges utilitarian conceptions of political domination and social control in terms of either coercion or self-interest and not legitimacy.

Fourth, the study should also shed light to the debate on political stability and change in East Asia's largest state and rising superpower – China, where regime legitimacy has been hotly debated[678] and the divergent political experiences of Singapore[679] and Taiwan[680] intensively studied by academics, intellectuals, and the ruling elites as competing models for China's future. Already there are arguments that the ruling Communist Party has not merely been betting its legitimacy on positive economic performance, but also on an idea of politics that is distinct from the Western model of competing powers like the United States and Japan. Using Confucian-

[678] Bruce Gilley, "Legitimacy and Institutional Change: The Case of China," *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 3 (March 1, 2008): 259-284; Peter Gries and Stanley Rosen, *State and Society in 21st Century China: Crisis, Contention and Legitimation* (Routledge, 2004); Baogang Guo, "Political Legitimacy and China's Transition," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 8, no. 1-2 (2003): 1-25; Shiping Zheng, "Leadership Change, Legitimacy, and Party Transition in China," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 8, no. 1/2 (2003): 47-63; Jie Chen, *Popular political support in urban China* (Stanford University Press, 2004); Andrew Nathan, "Political Culture and Diffuse Regime Support in Asia" (Asian Barometer Project, National Taiwan University and Academia Sinica, 2007).

[679] Daniel A. Bell, *East Meets West: Human Rights and Democracy in East Asia* (Princeton University Press, 2000); DA Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

[680] Bruce Gilley and Larry Diamond, eds., *Political Change In China: Comparisons With Taiwan* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008).

inspired rationales for politics not unlike that in Singapore,[681] it aims to validate one-party rule while cautiously trying to reconfigure "the relations between state and society by meaningful – albeit limited – democratic practice."[682] That is, to some, as long as the CCP "intends to make its authority fair and just by strengthening the rule of law and by implementing more political participation (albeit without effectively challenging Communist supremacy), it does not have to face any serious challenges."[683]

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the study integrates the two related but distinct disciplines of political geography and political science. It reminds social scientists that geography matters, and that political geography, understood broadly, influences behaviors of states not only in policies overtly related to defense but also those inconspicuously aimed at social and political control. As the case studies of Singapore and Taiwan demonstrate, a state's geography does not act merely as inconsequential background for political action but actively shapes perceptions of opportunities, risks, and threats – internally and externally, by both the regime and those under it.

Especially for small countries subjected to centuries of foreign influences and interferences, their thinking and behavior do not arise out of a vacuum but are dictated by perceptions of neighbors and other countries close by. As stated, other smaller states have made political and economic decisions largely in relation to and reaction against the actions, or threats thereof, of other states. The state of Israel, for example, has always been defined by its situation in the Arab Muslim world. Likewise, the identity of Switzerland had been forged at the crossroads of three major civilizations – French, German, and Italian. And Laos, like the Swiss case, is a landlocked country whose destiny has been subjected to regional rivalries with Thailand, between Thailand and Vietnam, as well as amidst super power conflicts dating back to the Cold War among China, the Soviet Union and the United States.[684]

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[681] Daniel A. Bell, *China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society* (Princeton University Press, 2008).
[682] Thomas Heberer and Gunther Schubert, "Political Reform and Regime Legitimacy in Contemporary China," *ASIEN* 99 (April 2006): 13.
[683] Ibid.
[684] Kittikhoun, "Small state, big revolution: geography and the revolution in Laos."

While this study focuses on the particular geographical characteristics and vulnerabilities of small states, and how the spatial limitations give rise to certain external pressures that shape these states' geo-identities and political orders, larger countries are not totally unoccupied with thinking about their geography as well. Take the United States, for instance. Its location between two large oceans, the Atlantic and Pacific, has often dawned the impression that the country is impervious to the influence from the rest of the world. This geographical separateness and peculiarity largely contribute to the idea of "American exceptionalism" – something that has led countless presidents and policy makers to justify ideas and policies that are often at odds with the international community. The vast geography of Russia, China, and Brazil too affect these states' thinking and behavior, and again, not solely in traditional military and geopolitical terms. China, for example, has been preoccupied with the sparsely settled areas on its far-flung borders. Surrounded by fourteen countries, China's geography is further complicated by different ethnic and sub-ethnic minorities in different regions, a geographical fact that no doubt shapes how the ruling Chinese regime thinks and acts in terms of constructing national identity and maintaining political power. This study shows how spatial identity construction and regime maintenance are done in smaller states. Fruitful further research also awaits those that would explore how various forces shape the political geography of bigger states and how this geography affects these states' constructions of identity and organization of power.

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