

# Assessing the Landscape of Taiwan and Korean Studies in Comparison

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# ROC-ROK International Fate

## *Decolonization, Democratization, and Pragmatism*

*Moises de Souza and Fabricio A. Fonseca*

### 1 Introduction

Dramatic geopolitical developments such as the Chinese Civil War, World War II (WWII), and the Korean War, along with the status inside of the United Nations (UN) created the grounds for the diplomatic position of Taiwan (Republic of China, ROC)<sup>1</sup> and South Korea (Republic of Korea, ROK)<sup>2</sup> in 20th century global politics that still persists unto the present. Years later, economic development and democratization would also be important factors in the elaboration of these countries' foreign policies, as well as the maintenance or expansion of their international space, and their responses to the challenges posed by their powerful neighbors who claim those territories as part of their own, namely the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the People's Republic of China (PRC)<sup>3</sup>.

This chapter briefly discusses some elements that played essential roles, first from 1949 until 1971 when both Koreans and Taiwanese were fighting for their place inside the UN, and later from 1972 to the present, when the Sino-American rapprochement changed the balance of power in the region. The first part is organized around the idea that the way that Taipei, Seoul, and Beijing reacted to the decolonization process after WWII was one of the drivers behind the fate of Koreans and the Nationalist Chinese inside the UN.

Similarly, the PRC, via a radical change in its way of conducting its foreign affairs, skillfully captured the trends represented by the decolonization and non-aligned movements, to not only change its international image but also to finally assume its place in the UN as a member of the Security Council. The flexibility demonstrated by Koreans and the Communist Chinese would prove critically important for the achievement of their diplomatic goals

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1 In this chapter, Taiwan and ROC have been used interchangeably.

2 In this chapter, South Korea and ROK have been used interchangeably.

3 In this chapter, China and PRC have been used interchangeably.

while the rigidity of the Kuomintang worked in exactly the opposite fashion.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, pragmatism finally prevailed among the policy makers in Taipei once it was clear the PRC also embraced the One China Principle and made it an inseparable element of its own foreign policy.

The second part of this chapter presents the transformations in South Korea and Taiwan's foreign relations after the UN episodes, paying special attention to the elements of democratization, international cooperation, and their relations with the United States (US), and to a lesser extent, with Japan. The pragmatic approaches followed by these governments, characterized by a clear separation between politics and economics, have ensured the stability of the region and contributed to the rise of the Indo-Pacific as the most dynamic engine of economic growth in the world. Paradoxically, being the most critical points to the maintenance of regional security, the pragmatism and ambivalence displayed when addressing the situation in the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait, not only by the ROC and the ROK, but also by the other major powers, have contributed to the delay in their final resolution.

## 2 The ROC-ROK Evolving Position at UN: Decolonization as a Game Changer

Both the ROC and ROK confronted many challenges regarding their presence in the UN during the Cold War years. However, two fundamental aspects set them apart. First, is the fact that the ROC was already a UN member holding a permanent seat at the Security Council. Taipei's struggle was to keep itself as the legitimate representative of China at UN due the ascendancy of the PRC as an important geopolitical player. On the other hand, South Korea was seeking admission to the UN as a new state-member. The second aspect that set them apart was Seoul's awareness about the developments in global politics during the 1960s in contrast to Taipei's inability to adjust itself to facing the changing international scenario. The first movements initiated to integrate South Korea,

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4 The PRC flexibility here was essentially visible in the way the Communist regime saw the UN. Beijing never lost the opportunity to denounce it as an appendix of the US State Department which, according to China, had utilized it as a way to penetrate into the Third World countries economically and culturally. Mao was also uneasy playing the game of the big powers inside the UN, which, from his perspective, used most of the states simply as pawns and invariably disrespected their sovereignty. As the chapter will demonstrate, gradually, the PRC would become less vocal and more practical towards the agency, without however, yielding their adamant principle of One-China. For more, see Samuel S. Kim, "The People's Republic of China in the UN: A Preliminary Analysis," *World Politics* 26, no. 3 (April 1974), 299–330.

with the active support of ROC, as a member of the UN, are understood as a piece in the complex puzzle that East Asia had become immediately after World War II, with the Chinese Civil War and the Korean War as its more dramatic facets.

Under the banner of the anti-communist movement leadership, the ROC and ROK both locked into their own territorial stalemates with their Communist counterparts, transforming the UN as a whole, especially the Security Council and the General Assembly,<sup>5</sup> in another front for their respective domestic dramas. Under these circumstances, with an international order that at that time seemed immutable in many ways, it is possible to understand the sequence of the ROK's failures in attempting to obtain membership in 1949. From that moment, all attempts to include ROK in the UN and to replace (or keep) ROC by the PRC, would provide the same results: constant resistance from the Soviet Union and its allies against ROK membership and ROC permanence, with the American allies working in opposite fashion.<sup>6</sup> Notice that despite the crucial role played by the Security Council in the process of admission – or rejection – of new members, the applications can transit in different ways until facing the perspective of veto by any permanent-member. In a normal procedure, a UN membership must start with the country submitting an application to the Secretary-General and formally stating that it accepts the obligations under

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5 Despite the lack of Security Council decision-making power, the role of the General Assembly to discuss, debate, and make recommendations about international questions has transformed it along with the Security Council where the ideological clashes and the level of controversy around specific topics becomes visibly identified. The examples abound as the case of Nikita Khrushchev's shoe-banging incident in 1960 and Yasser Arafat's olive branch or gun speech in 1974 among others. Specifically, during the 1950s the General Assembly also gained some prominence with resolution 377 A (V), known also as the "Uniting for Peace," a strategy elaborated by the Americans to circumvent future Soviet vetoes against Security Council determinations of further actions in the Korea Peninsula. Thus, when discussing the Korean and Chinese questions, both the General Assembly and Security Council were widely utilized by all sides to defend their positions. See: UN General Assembly, uniting for peace, November 3, 1950, A/RES/377. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f08d78.html>, accessed August 23, 2019.

6 In January 1950, Moscow had its proposal of non-acceptance of the ROC representative credentials rejected by the Security Council. In response, the Soviet representative Jacob Malik walked out in protest. Although not a veto per se (given it was understood as a procedural question), the "empty chair" policy conducted by Moscow, boycotting most of the Security Council meetings, worked in the same fashion by indicating the level of resistance against Taipei representation at the UN by the Soviet regime. Finally, from 1951 to 1960, the Soviet Union used the General Assembly to bring Chinese representation to discussion, but it was always rejected. See: Evan Luard, "China and the UN," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), 47, no. 4 (Oct. 1971), 729–730.

the UN Charter. After analysis, the applications are sent for consideration to the Security Council, where it must receive the support of nine of the fifteen members, and no vetoes from any of the permanent ones. After that, the applicant still must gather a two-thirds majority vote in the General Assembly to finally be admitted as a new member. However, this is an outside-in process utilized by a non-member to apply for membership directly.

In the cases of both the ROC and ROK, most of their applications were made by state-members through UN internal commissions. As indicated by Jonsson, a good example happened in 1949, when Australia presented, at the 25th meeting of the UN General Assembly's Commission on Special Political Affairs, a proposal regarding UN membership for nine countries, including South Korea. The Australian proposal had as its main goal to recommend the Security Council to reexamine the membership application issue for these countries. As the first filter, the Australian proposal was first adopted by the General Assembly before being vetoed by the Soviets, therefore avoiding any further discussion at the Security Council.<sup>7</sup> The same happened in 1954, when the General Assembly decided:

... not to consider, at its ninth regular session during the current year, any proposals to exclude the representatives of the Government of the Republic of China or to seat representatives of the Central Government of the People's Republic of China.<sup>8</sup>

As the case illustrates, the proposal to alter the Chinese status quo inside the UN was not the subject of specific analysis by the Security Council but, exclusively, a matter discussed by the General Assembly. This is also understood by the fact that the seat of China had existed since the beginning of the organization. Therefore, the so-called "China issue" was not observed as the admission of a new member, but as a decision regarding which regime should occupy the seat of an already admitted member in opposition to the Korean case.

Besides the relations between the two major powers, we also need to pay attention to the importance of the process of decolonization. Regarding the quest of ROC-ROK to assure their position in the UN, the anti-colonial movement impacted it in three ways: 1) The fight for independence was literally

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7 Jonsson Gabriel, *South Korea in The United Nations: Global Governance, Inter-Korean Relations and Peace Building* (London: World Scientific, 2017),32.

8 The UN General Assembly, (1X) Question of the representation of China in the General Assembly. 473rd plenary meeting, September 21, 1954. Available: [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/903\(1X\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/903(1X)), accessed: June 22, 2019.

against the European powers making the incipient nations (principally in Africa) in many ways more pro-East and more sympathetic to the leftists anti-imperialist rhetoric; 2) the hesitance of the US to side with the anti-colonial movement due to its commitment with the European powers to contain the Soviet Union under bipolar rationale; and, 3) the skillful diplomatic efforts by the PRC to support nationalist movements, anti-colonial wars, and become a vocal partner of the so-called non-aligned movement. All three of these factors would prove decisively influential to the Chinese and Koreans interests at the General Assembly.<sup>9</sup>

In this regard, the ROK and ROC opted for different tactics. After the first veto in April 1949, South Korea tried five more application attempts unsuccessfully<sup>10</sup>: 1949 (October), 1951, 1954, and 1955 (twice).<sup>11</sup> Despite the failures, the ROC-ROK relations were, as usual, enjoying a highly positive moment, seeing themselves as “brothers in arms” against the communists. As an example, in 1954 the government of Syngman Rhee helped in the repatriation of more than 14,000 Chinese prisoners of war to Taipei who had refused to return to the mainland.<sup>12</sup> In response, in 1955, even after the exclusion of South Korea from the groups of nations accepted as new UN members, Chiang Kai-shek instructed his diplomats to coordinate efforts for a new attempt. Thus, on December 10, the ROC representation issued an official recommendation for South Korean membership that, in contrast from their first attempt, was not even considered for a vote by the General Assembly. The ROC would demonstrate its support to South Korean membership one last time in 1957, signing a

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9 The discussion of the Kuomintang (KMT) government in Taiwan as colonial rule, despite important, is not considered as such in this study. The presence of the Kuomintang on Taiwanese soil was a result of diplomatic negotiations among the ROC, the United Kingdom (UK) and the US (with Moscow's consent) as registered by the 1943 Cairo Conference and later incorporated into UN framework. From this perspective, the KMT was “restoring” a territory stolen by a – de-facto and internationally recognized – colonial power, Japan. The debate about the KMT as an alien power in Formosa would be raised only later by the local indigenous independent movements receiving little or no international support.

10 The vetoes by the USSR against South Korean membership was also part of a consistent policy to reject the admission of any new member by Moscow during the early years of the UN. As result, until 2015 the Soviet Union (later Russia) had been the Security Council member that had cast most of the vetoes, a total of 141. See: “The Veto.” Security Council Report. October 19, 2015. Available: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>, accessed: August 21, 2019.

11 Jonsson Gabriel, *South Korea in The United Nations: Global Governance, Inter-Korean Relations And Peace Building* (London: World Scientific, 2017), 31.

12 See: “When ‘Brother Nations’ Meet Together.” Taiwan Today, March 1, 1966. Available: <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=4&post=6892>, accessed: March 1, 2019.

joint draft resolution along with the US and other members, that also did not manage to be approved by the Security Council.<sup>13</sup>

The last two failed membership applications were followed by the striking realization by the South Korean diplomats at the UN that the world order that had emerged after WWII was not working in favor of their interests. Symbolically, in this regard, a report by a UN *ad hoc* committee in the year of 1953, recommended a set of guidelines for the General Assembly to follow when considering recognition of a former colonial state and during their membership application process: 1) The state shall demonstrate the ability to carry on international responsibilities through treaties; 2) full administrative and economic autonomy; and 3) absolute freedom to form a government of their preference.<sup>14</sup>

With these guidelines finally set after years of delays and negotiations, the anti-colonial movement gained momentum inside the UN.<sup>15</sup> As a result, by 1965, with 117 members, the General Assembly was composed of a majority of recently independent former colonies.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the Korean question along with the Chinese question was no longer being discussed in a European-led world scenario. Regarding the role of the US, China's performance in the Korean conflict against a mighty coalition led by Washington was a game-changer in terms of perception.<sup>17</sup> For many former colonies in Africa, China's

13 Gabriel, South Korea, 32.

14 Domenico Mazzeo, "The United Nations and the Problem of Decolonization: The Special Committee of Twenty-Four," (PhD diss., Department of Political Science of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ottawa, 1969).

15 It is important to highlight though, that the decolonization process did not happen in a linear temporal line. It had different moments obeying different drivers according to the historical circumstances. Mazzeo, proposes three main phases of this development: from 1919 to 1945 is the awakening of the Middle East, from 1946 to 1955 is the victory of Asian nationalism, from 1956 to 1963 the majority of the African countries accede to independence (1969, 12).

16 Michael Collins, "Decolonization," in *The Encyclopedia of Empire*, ed. John M. Mackenzie (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 2.

17 The challenges faced by the PRC to engage in a war in the Korean Peninsula were indeed tremendous. First, due to the demobilization of 1.4 million People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers in May 1950 in consequence of its lack of financial resources; second, the PRC military leaders had not followed closely the developments in the Korean Peninsula, the PRC ambassador to Pyongyang was only chosen in late August 1950. Finally, when the conflict started the PLA had only one division along the Yalu River, mainly for crop production purposes, while the others were scattered in different parts of the territory. Having been able to sustain combat with a world coalition by the American forces, preventing them from crossing the Chinese border, is seen by many as a great military prowess. See: Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited." *The China Quarterly*, no. 121 (March 1990), 99–100.



ability to achieve a military stalemate in Korea was nothing short of a stunning demonstration of resilience, bravery, and commitment to the cause of “anti-imperialism” a term that was rapidly becoming synonymous with “anti-Americanism.” At the same time, Beijing – in contraposition to Moscow – began to be perceived as an exemplar of the same brand of socialist ideology that was emerging in the newly decolonized African nations.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the US did not have to find its place of whether or not to support anti-colonial movements, due to the strategic imperatives of the Cold War. For many in the White House – during different administrations from Roosevelt to Kennedy – sympathy for the concept of self-determination rights for all people around the world was conditioned to the American geopolitical interests, and the latter always had prominence over the former. In general, “*the US adopted a very conservative view of the anti-colonial movement seeing the independence of the colonies as inimical to Western European recovery and the Anti-Soviet alliance, but, also, believed, that it “would create weak nations unable to resist penetration and subversion by Moscow.”*” In sum, by giving priority to Europe over the incipient independent nations, the US ended up being seen as a guarantor of the continuity of the European colonial possessions between 1948 and the beginning of the 1970s.<sup>19</sup>

It was with this background and in response to this new reality that South Korea and its diplomatic allies decided to radically change its approach and diplomatic objectives. Thus, in 1968 Seoul stopped submitting the Korean question to the General Assembly every year as it had been doing since 1949. As Jonsson points out, “the purpose of the new South Korean policy was to prevent the unfavorable and unproductive debates on the Korean question in the UN that was the major arena for the inter-Korean rivalry.”<sup>20</sup>

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18 James I. Matray, “Beijing and the Paper Tiger: The Impact of the Korean War on Sino-American Relations,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2011), 170.

19 Ebere Nwaubani, “The United States and the Liquidation of European Colonial Rule in Tropical Africa, 1941–1963,” *Cahiers d’Etudes africaines* 43, no. 171 (2003), 505.

20 Needless to say, that Communist North Korea worked in frontal opposition to the South Korean approach. Under the leadership of the Soviets, Pyongyang instructed its supporters to keep submitting draft resolutions calling for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from South Korea and the dissolution of the UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK), what in practice was the recognition of the regime in Pyongyang as the sole legitimate government of Korean Peninsula. South Korea, instead of submitting for UN membership per se, required its allies to present counter submissions asking for intensification of the role of the UNCURK, free elections in North Korea and reiterated the UN position on the ROK as the legitimate government of Korea. See: Gabriel, South Korea, 34–35.

These unproductive debates are better explained by looking back at the inception of the UN. Since 1947, the organization worked under the premise of establishing a unified, independent and democratic Korea under a representative form of government, and full restoration of international peace and security. With the American influence at its apex, the Western bloc at the UN was able to provide the majority of votes necessary to keep the ROK with a representative attending the sessions of the General Assembly. The status of observer had ever since provided a comparative advantage to Seoul compared to Pyongyang in having its positions heard.<sup>21</sup> The tides changed for the ROK in 1960, when during the 15th session of the General Assembly, the first wave of African and Asian states was accepted as new members, altering the balance of power between the West and the Communist bloc at the floor of the General Assembly.

It is important to highlight that, together with the new strategies the ROK adopted at the GA, they followed up with an aggressive bilateral diplomacy initiative aimed largely at this bloc of new members. From 1961 to 1971, the ROK established relations with more than 60 countries around the world. Of these, 29 were Afro-Asian, and 19 were Latin American nations. By 1971, as Sang-Seek Park argues, there were 41 new African states and the ROK had official relations with 23 of them. Taking into account that until 1960 Seoul did not have any diplomatic relations in Africa, this demonstrates the magnitude of how radical its approach towards this new world scenario really was. A similar approach would be implemented by the North Koreans, and by 1972 they had established relations with 36 new countries, of which 16 were African.<sup>22</sup>

After the shift in 1968, Seoul would, in 1973, set a new turning point in the question of Korean UN membership. Having observed that the great powers and other members had finally agreed on the dual admission of West and East Germany to the UN that year, South Korean representatives announced the ending of their opposition to separate UN admission for the two Koreas, something that until that moment had been absolutely inconceivable for both the South and North regimes. Hence, South Korea would show that, in the long term in international relations, the need to have a plan B and a more pragmatic approach is always a powerful tool. A tool that for many reasons Taipei at that time completely lacked.

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21 Chong-Ki Choi, "The Korean Question in The United Nations" (Paper presented at Sixth General Conference of the International Peace Research Association, Turku, Finland, August 15, 1975), 398.

22 Sang-Seek Park, "Africa and Two Koreas: A Study of African Non-Alignment," *African Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (April 1978), 76–77.

At the moment that South Korea stopped submitting its regular membership application, the Chinese question had become, since 1951, a topic *in the moratorium*, meaning that the question was not to be discussed until favorable conditions were reached. In this regard, the postponement worked in favor of the ROC and American allies in opposition to the Soviet bloc that advocated the immediate expulsion of the ROC representative and the acceptance of the PRC as a UN member. This way, the question regarding the legitimate representative of China in the UN, which consequently included a seat at the Security Council, was – directly or indirectly – to be voted on continuously every year until 1960 without the need of one of the members submitting a draft resolution. However, by 1960 it had become unavoidable for Washington to postpone the Chinese question, as they faced the reality that the PRC had established itself as the effective power in the mainland, and its presence in the community of nations was increasingly accepted.<sup>23</sup>

Again, the changes in the profile of the General Assembly, with the continuous arrival of new members that had impacted South Korea diplomatic strategies, would soon start to peel away the support of the ROC's UN allies. As a consequence of the international outrage caused by the North Korean attack in 1950, from 1951 to 1955, Taipei experienced continuous growth of support for its permanence as the representative of China at the UN.<sup>24</sup> Taipei had

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23 Washington's proposal to put the Chinese question in moratorium was part of its strategy to keep the PRC distant of any form of international recognition. Here, it is important to keep in mind that the level of distrust between the two sides was at its climax. Not only in consequence of the wounds of the Korean War and the presence of the seventh-fleet in the area, but also due to the two Taiwan Strait crises in 1954–1958. According to Matray, the US had decided to keep Beijing under constant diplomatic siege during the entire period by getting approval at the UN for a resolution calling PRC an aggressor, freezing financial assets, imposing a trade embargo, exclusion of all UN-related bodies, among other measures. See: Matray, *Beijing and the Paper Tiger*, 160.

24 The Soviet stayed out of the UN from January to August 1950. A study describes the Soviet return as "... marked the beginning of a new policy of active participation in international and regional organizations." Indeed, in "Data and Analyses of Voting in the UN General Assembly" Erik Voeten registered the Soviet consistent presence at voting sessions during the period of the Korean War (1950–1953) and after. On the other hand, Dallin points out, that the Soviet presence at the UN during this period "was more token than real" given the lack of disengagement of Moscow and its satellites from the debates and commissions works. See: Raymond E. Zickel and Eugene K. Keefe, *Soviet Union: A Country Study*, (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991), 445; Erik Voeten et al. "UN General Assembly Voting Data" & "UN General Assembly Voting Data," Harvard Dataverse, V21; and Alexander Dallin, *The Soviet View of the UN*, (Cambridge: Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1959), 33.

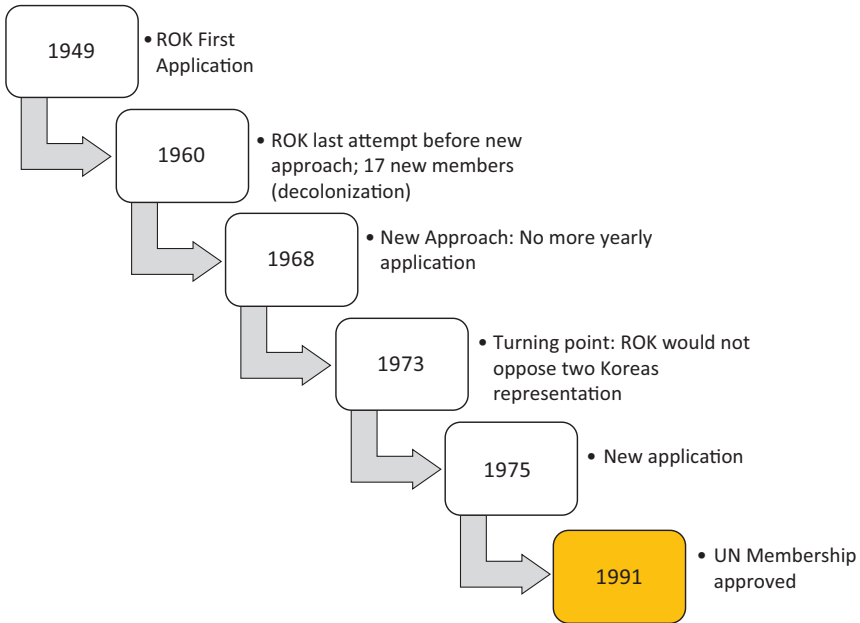


FIGURE 4.1 ROC UN membership timeline (1949–1991)  
 SOURCE: AUTHOR’S COMPILATION BASED ON KIM, 1974: 302

56 percent of the votes in 1951 and would see this number increase to 62 percent in 1952, reaching its peak with 73 percent of the votes in 1953. But this started to change as the number of countries began to grow. From 1954 to 1972, the ROC would see the erosion of its diplomatic status decline steadily to an average of 47 percent through the whole of the 1960s. By 1970, before the famous trip of Richard Nixon to Beijing in 1972, Taipei had, for the first time since the establishment of the UN, already lost the majority in the General Assembly by gathering only 39 percent of votes. Later, in 1971, it reached its lowest level at 27 percent, already making Taipei’s position inside of the UN and as a member of the Security Council simply unsustainable, resulting in its withdrawal in October of the same year.

Along with the ideological preferences of the recently independent countries, other strategic factors also had an important role in explaining the downward trend of the ROC’s diplomatic support at the UN. The changing attitudes of the great powers, especially France and the United Kingdom, towards the Chiang Kai-shek regime in Taiwan were combined with the consolidation of the Communist regime in the mainland, the latter’s split with Moscow, and its eventual acquisition of nuclear weapons. Similarly, as pointed out by Samuel S. Kim, the drastic change conducted by the

communist regime in Beijing in the way that they conducted their foreign affairs after the climax of the Cultural Revolution had passed, played a very important role as well.<sup>25</sup>

Since 1949, the year of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, sixteen countries immediately recognized it as the "real" China. At that time, the ROC had diplomatic relations with 37 countries, although only seven decided to move their embassies to Taipei. With the advent of the Korean War in 1950 and the realities of the Cold War, along with pressures from Washington, the ROC was able to maintain and even add more diplomatic allies to its side. From 1960 to 1963, 13 African nations established relations with Taipei, while the Mao regime only received five new diplomatic allies.<sup>26</sup> However, after the period of international isolation marked by a perceived promotion of support to revolutionary groups in other parts of the world, mainly in Southeast Asia, the People's Republic of China (PRC) assumed a more amicable and less defensive attitude towards the UN, principally with the anti-colonial groups,<sup>27</sup> leading to a complete inversion of the conditions as discussed above.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to highlight that the Kuomintang regime had a clear picture of the importance of the new African nations and about the impact that the decolonization could have at the UN. The problem, however, was Taipei's inability to compete with China in terms of resources and diplomatic appeal. With an emergent economy highly dependent on US aid, Chiang Kai-shek largely relied upon cultural exchanges and joint educational programs focused on agricultural development as his main tools to persuade the former colonies

25 Samuel S. Kim, "The People's Republic of China in the United Nations: A Preliminary Analysis," *World Politics* 26, no. 3 (April 1974), 299–330. [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0043887100012909](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0043887100012909), accessed March 20, 2019.

26 Timothy S Rich, "Renting Allies and Selling Sovereignty: Taiwan's Struggle for Diplomatic Recognition," in *The Changing Dynamics of the Relations Among China, Taiwan and the United States*, ed. Cal Clark (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 181.

27 The accurate sense of opportunity demonstrated by the PRC to explore the overtures of the new international reality proved surgically efficient to reposition the country internationally. The words of A.D. Hassan, High Commissioner for the Republic of Tanzania in India, and active voice for the anti-colonial movements and the non-aligned group, offers a good summary of how both groups saw the PRC at that moment: "China is an ally of the oppressed, dominated, colonized and segregated people in the world. China is an ally of non-aligned countries in our fight against colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism. This fact has been recognized and still being recognized by the non-aligned movement." See: A.D. Hassan. "China and the non-aligned." *International Centre Quarterly*, No. 13, N. 3. 1976, 66.

28 Kim, "The People's Republic of China in the United Nations," 303.

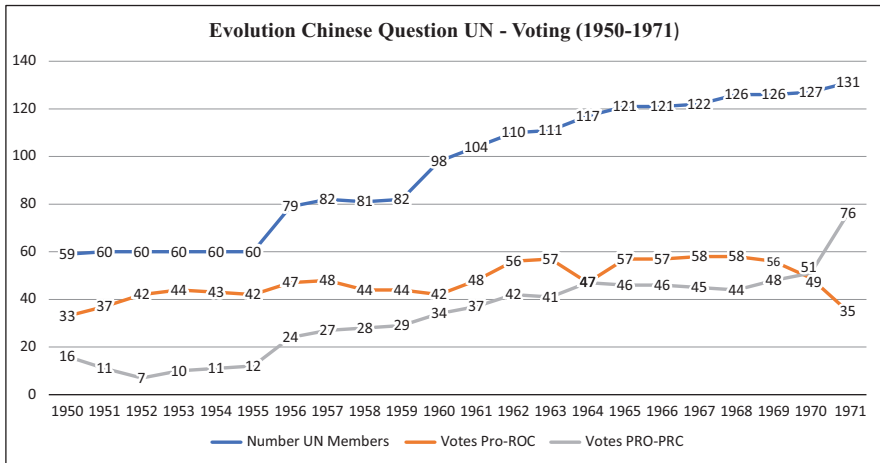


FIGURE 4.2 Evolution of the Chinese question at UN – voting  
 SOURCE: AUTHOR’S COMPILATION BASED ON JONSSON, 2017 AND UN ARCHIVES

to maintain their diplomatic support. In the long term, these tools showed themselves to be insufficient to turn the international tides to be less favorable to Beijing. As Lin contends, Zhou Enlai’s achievements in terms of diminishing the fears of Communist China had taken away Taipei’s most powerful tool in its relations with new African states, states that had long had a fear of communist interference that prevented them from having an amicable relationship with Beijing.<sup>29</sup> Zhou not only removed these anxieties but also made the PRC an ally of the non-aligned group.

Finally, with the PRC announcing in 1964 that it had successfully developed its own nuclear bomb and conducted its first atomic tests, followed by the country’s pacification with the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1967, the international profile of the communist regime in Beijing had reached a point that was impossible to ignore. And even less to keep it outside of the UN. Without a new facet in its diplomatic strategy, as exhibited by the South Koreans later in 1973,<sup>30</sup> to cope with the new international reality, the ROC saw its days as a UN

29 Bih-jaw Lin, “The Republic of China and Africa: A Case of Positive Adaptation,” in *Foreign Policy of the Republic of China on Taiwan: An Unorthodox Approach*, ed. Yu San Wang (New York: Praeger, 1990), 145–160.  
 30 As mentioned earlier, the 1973 decision to end its opposition to the dual-recognition Seoul removed an important barrier against its membership that would happen in 1991 when both Koreas were admitted as UN members. Flexibility that Taipei took too long to exhibit.

member, and its powerful position in the Security Council, dwindle day after day. When Chiang Kai-shek finally gave permission to discuss the possibility of a dual representation (two Chinas) in 1971, as a way to escape from the deadlock established since the 1950s, it was already too late.<sup>31</sup>

With its official expulsion from the UN on October 27, 1971,<sup>32</sup> the ROC would join both Koreas in the group of nations without official international representation in the majority of diplomatic decision-making bodies formed after WWII. This new condition did not put Taipei in exactly the same condition as Seoul or Pyongyang, however. At the beginning of the 1970s, Seoul and Pyongyang had reached equal geopolitical importance and diplomatic weight making them each unable to exercise their will or gain the upper hand over the other. Although South Korea underwent impressive economic development between the 1970s and 1990s, it could not translate this economic power into additional geopolitical weight on the Korean Peninsula question. In other words, there were no conditions for a “One-Korea policy” or even a “One-Korea representation policy.” With lessons learned from the sequence of failures of its application for UN membership, Seoul switched to the tactic of blocking the

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31 J. Bruce Jacobs makes the question of Chiang Kai-shek's regime adherence to One-China very clear. He argues that despite the fact the idea be mostly associated as a PRC demand, the KMT equally did not signal any possibility of flexibility and also worked actively to its maintenance, even after its expulsion from the UN in 1971. A new approach would only happen with the arrival of Lee Teng-hui to the presidency in 1988. For that, Jacobs adds: “Taiwan maintained a rigid “One-China policy” in which the ROC or Taiwan, was the only China. By the time of the flexibility of 1988, more than fifteen years had passed since China had “re-entered” the world with the Kissinger and Nixon visits, the entry of the PRC into the UN, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with most countries. Thus, Lee Teng-hui's pragmatism came much too late to be internationally effective for the newly emerging nation of Taiwan. Today's democratic Taiwan continues to suffer from the consequences of the stubborn obduracy of the prior rigidly dogmatic authoritarian Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party) regime.” See: J. Bruce Jacobs, ‘One China, diplomatic isolation and a separate Taiwan’. In *China's Rise, Taiwan's Dilemmas and International Peace*; edited by Edward Friedman (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 85–109; Also see “Taiwan and the UN – Withdrawal in 1971 was an historic turning point.” Taipei Times, September 12, 2001. Available: <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/local/archives/2001/09/12/102595>, accessed August 24, 2019.

32 The New York Times, in its October 27, 1971 edition, described the reaction at the UN: “After the tension and drama of last night, today was spent in efforts at reconciliation and in political introspection and analysis.” It also noted, “Secretary General Thant appealed to all members to ‘endorse the tremendous step forward’ represented by Peking's admission and to set aside suspicion and bitterness.” See: “UN Awaits Peking Delegates; Taipei Clings to Affiliate Ties; Roger Calls Outer a Mistake.” October 27, 1971. Available: <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/on-this-day/october-25/>, accessed August 24, 2019.

acceptance of the North as an alternative. With the mutual blocking strategy implemented by Seoul, the Korean question at the UN would continue for two decades as an unsolved issue until both Koreas finally gained membership in 1991.<sup>33</sup>

However, with diplomatic support for Taipei's adherence to the idea of One-China representation eroding quickly, Chiang Kai-shek lost the opportunity to add a new element that could give time for the new UN to consider choices besides Taiwan's complete expulsion in 1971.<sup>34</sup> The US Ambassador George H.W. Bush would later say the lack of enough time to consolidate the support for the American proposal resolution of dual recognition as one of the factors behind the adoption of the resolution 2758.<sup>35</sup> With the PRC enjoying a reinvigorated international profile after years of isolation and hostility towards the western powers, the majority of the UN members did not hesitate a second to switch sides.

### 3 The Role of Democratization and International Cooperation

South Korea and Taiwan embarked on a process of political liberalization due to both domestic and external factors and have been considered as two stable 'Third Wave' democracies in Asia.<sup>36</sup> According to the modernization theory, the economic success of those countries in the previous decades allowed them to increase the size of their middle-class, which eventually became instrumental

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33 On August 8, 1991, Security Council Resolution 702 recommended to the General Assembly the admission of both Koreas. It was later confirmed by the General Assembly resolution 46/1, September 17, 1991.

34 Taipei's adherence to the One-China policy had until the 1970s international diplomatic support that provided basis for its insistence. Later, the PRC developed the leverage to sustain the same demand, first due to its geopolitical importance as a result of the Sino-American rapprochement, and later also with the weight of its economic growth. Seoul and Pyongyang never had at their disposal enough of either geopolitical or economic resources to emulate the Chinese case, thus making it impossible for any side of the Korean Peninsula to impose a unilateral UN membership.

35 "We lost the China vote. The People's Republic of China was admitted to the UN – which we supported – but Taiwan was expelled ... In the end, it became more of an anti-American vote than anything else ... Some anti-American delegates literally danced in the aisles. ... I felt it was a dark moment for the UN and international diplomacy." See: Pamela Falk, "George H.W. Bush Stood out As Tough Negotiator on the World Stage," *cbsnews.com*, last modified December 2, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-hw-bush-stood-out-as-tough-negotiator-on-world-stage/>, accessed: August 24, 2019.

36 J. Bruce Jacobs, "Taiwan and South Korea: Comparing East Asia's Two 'Third-Wave' Democracies," *Issues & Studies* 43, no. 4 (2007), 227–260.



in the demand for more participation in the political process of their societies.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, in a time when modernization theory has seemed to be challenged by the current developments in places like China and Russia, it is also necessary to consider other important elements that help us explain the democratization process in places like the ROK and ROC.<sup>38</sup>

Being close allies to the US during the Cold War, Taipei and Seoul reached an informal understanding with Washington, which according to the hegemonic stability theory, the latter would open its markets and promote loans and productive investments pouring into these countries, and in exchange, they would commit themselves to contain the advance of Communism in the region.<sup>39</sup> Lacking an instrument similar to the Marshall Plan, the US signed bilateral cooperation and defense treaties with the ROK and the ROC, in 1953 and 1954 respectively, and devoted large amounts of money not only for the acquisition of defensive weapons and equipment, but also for the promotion of infant industries and economic growth.<sup>40</sup>

Considering the need for these governments to avoid growing dependence on US aid, cooperation efforts eventually included the development of important export industries that would allow them to maintain constant access to foreign currency. Different from what had happened with the ROC government during the final years of the Chinese Civil War in the mainland, with constant allegations of mismanagement and corruption, the cooperation funds that were devoted to Taiwan between the mid-1950s and 1960s were the ones showing the best performance among the nations in East Asia receiving American funds, including countries like the Philippines and Thailand.<sup>41</sup>

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37 Seymour M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959), 69–105.

38 Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49, no. 2 (1997), 164–165.

39 Charles P. Kindleberger, *Power and Money: The Economics of International Politics and the Politics of International Economics* (New York: Basic Books, 1970).

40 Hsiao-Ting Lin, *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-Shek, The United States, and the Making of Taiwan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

41 According to USAID data, during the first two decades after WWII, most of the foreign aid provided by the US government to Asia was concentrated in Thailand, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea, and Taiwan. Together with Thailand, Taiwan was the place where each dollar received from the US reported the highest achievements, as observed in the high GDP and GDP per capita growth rates. After 1965, when Washington stopped providing civilian aid to Taiwan, the ROC government, concerned by the potential negative macroeconomic effects of the lack of foreign currency sources, adopted an export-led growth strategy, replicating the success observed in Japan. Neil H. Jacoby, *US Aid to Taiwan: A Study of Foreign Aid, Self-help, and Development* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1966), 150–162;

The rise of US-supported developmental states in South Korea and Taiwan had the goal, among many others, to consolidate capitalism and offer a viable option to the communist alternatives as being developed in North Korea and mainland China. Therefore, domestic political considerations came on second place to foreign-policy makers in Washington. The economic miracles in the ROC and ROK were carried out by authoritarian regimes, with a relatively autonomous bureaucracy, isolated from the interests of the business class and the workers. In South Korea, a succession of military dictatorships, initiated with strongman Park Chung-hee's rule after his coup in 1971, and the imposition of martial law and the creation of a new constitution one year later, were instrumental in the implementation of the successful developmental policies in place until the 1990s. In Taiwan, it was a hegemonic party rule with Chiang Kai-shek at the top, that also allowed the organization of periodical elections at the local level but continued martial-law and put a tight grip on opposition leaders in a period that was known as 'White Terror'.<sup>42</sup>

However, when Jimmy Carter sanctioned the inclusion of the international promotion of human rights, particularly among the allied countries, in the US foreign policy agenda, pressure for regimes like those of the ROK and ROC to liberalize their political systems began to grow. The vision of the USSR as an 'empire of evil' by the Reagan Administration, also contributed to the continuation of the US worldwide advancement of democracy. According to this logic, Washington would not have the moral ground to condemn authoritarianism in Communist nations while supporting military dictatorships and authoritarian regimes in allied countries in East Asia and Latin America. As a result, the incidents involving heavy state repression of social protests calling for democratization in Zhongli (1977) and Kaohsiung (1979) in Taiwan, and Gwangju (1980) in South Korea, received international attention and drew heavy criticism from important organizations in the US and Europe.<sup>43</sup> These

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Yuezhao Li, "Guoji shehui dui Taiwan de yuanzhu" (The International Community's Aid to Taiwan)," in *Guoji fazhan hezuo de gainian yu shiwu (Overview of International Cooperation and Development)* (Taipei: International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), 2007).

42 Chien-chao Hung, *A New History of Taiwan: Asia's First Republic in the New Millennium* (Taipei: The Central News Agency, 2011), 367–370.

43 Hung-mao Tien, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China* (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1989), 95–98; Bruce J. Jacobs, *The Kaohsiung Incident in Taiwan and Memoirs of a Foreign Big Beard* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

events were also influential in the ensuing political liberalization in the ROC and the ROK.<sup>44</sup>

One year after the popular movements known as the EDSA Revolution overthrew Ferdinand Marcos out of power in the Philippines and started the third wave of democratization, in 1987, Seoul announced political reforms, including the first direct presidential elections in its history. Taipei also carried out important changes, allowing the formation of new opposition political parties and lifting martial law. Democratization was part of a larger trend of transformations, framed in a changing international system, marked by the end of bipolarity and the rapid embrace of globalization. Opening their political systems also meant the relaxation of state-led economic policies, diminishing the role of the developmental state. In South Korea, this meant a continuous effort by the state to limit the increasing role of *chaebols'* interests in the policy-making process, albeit with mixed results.<sup>45</sup> In Taiwan, it signified a bigger challenge, by conciliating the domestic security concerns with the interests of the so-called *Taishang* (Taiwanese businesspeople) in continuing their investments in mainland China.<sup>46</sup>

The way these countries were ruled during the Cold War also affected the way democracy evolved. Having been ruled by strong military dictators, South Korea did not experience the creation of strong and deep-rooted political parties, hence affecting political negotiation and the way the Legislative branch interacted with the Executive after democratization.<sup>47</sup> This situation has made possible the impeachment and removal of President Park Geun-hye, and her ensuing arrest on charges of influence-peddling and abuse of power, as well as the incarceration of former president Lee Myung-bak, accused of corruption, embezzlement and bribery.

The ROC, on the other hand, being dominated by the KMT until democratization, evolved into an effective two-party system after the creation of the PP in

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44 Bruce J. Jacobs, "Two Key Events in the Democratisation of Taiwan and South Korea: The Kaohsiung Incident and the Kwangju Uprising," *International Review of Korean Studies* 8, no. 1 (2011), 28–56.

45 Mark A. Abdollahian, et al, "Economic Crisis and the Future of Oligarchy," in *Institutional Reform and Democratic Consolidation in Korea*, ed. Larry Diamond and Doh Chull Shin (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 191–231.

46 Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).

47 Hoon Jaung, "Electoral Politics and Political Parties," in *Institutional Reform and Democratic Consolidation in Korea*, ed. Larry Diamond and Doh Chull Shin (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 43–71; Kie-Duck Park, "Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Korea," in *Asian New Democracies: The Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan Compared*, ed. Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao (Taipei: TFD-CAPAS, 2008), 127–156.

1986, and the eventual *Taiwanization*<sup>48</sup> of the Kuomintang.<sup>49</sup> The existence of other minor parties has forced the two largest parties to join forces with them, forming two large camps, known as Pan-blue and Pan-green, and defined by their different approaches to ethnicity and the future of the island regarding its position towards the mainland. In this sense, the element of identity has become an important cleavage in ROC politics.<sup>50</sup> The KMT control of the Legislative Yuan during the government of Chen Shui-bian from the DPP was also determinant to its return to power under the leadership of Ma Ying-jeou in 2008, and to the detention of Chen on charges of corruption that same year. The alternation of the presidency between the two largest parties completed with the victory of Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, has also consolidated the democratic transformation of Taiwan.

Therefore, the transition to democracy in both the ROC and the ROK has put them more in line with the interests of other major democratic countries, in what can be identified by the Constructivist theory as socialization of the states, and their shared commitments to maintain and defend democratic practices.<sup>51</sup> The governments of both countries have encouraged the use of

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48 The *Taiwanization* of the KMT is the name given to the process pursued by the ROC hegemonic party to give more prominence to ethnically Taiwanese cadres and politicians, appointing them to key positions in the administration under the tenure of Chiang Ching-kuo (1978–1988). The most relevant case was that of Lee Teng-hui, nominated and elected by the National Assembly to the position of Vice president during the rule of Chiang Ching-kuo. Originally, the process was intended to gain more support for the ruling party among the majority Hoklo population on the island. After the split of the Kuomintang in the 2000 elections, and the triumph of DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian, Lee was expelled from the party and the process was notably slowed down. As a result, the KMT had to find new ways to remain competitive. One of them was the idea of “New Taiwanese,” embraced by Ma Ying-jeou, who was originally born in Hong Kong from Hunanese parents, but promoted the idea of “Taiwanese-ness” of KMT politicians, which had now a new generation of politicians born and raised on the island, who in spite of having mainlander descent, now claim to be as Taiwanese as the other ethnic groups that conform the population of the ROC. Nonetheless, the close ties with the PRC that the Ma administration pursued has been seen as one of the reasons for the KMT failure in the 2016 presidential elections, with many young people showing their concerns about the future of the island, as seen during the social protests known as the Sunflower Movement in 2014. See: Malte P. Kaeding, “Taiwanized “New Taiwanese”: The Effect of Taiwanization on the 2008 Presidential Election Campaign of Ma Ying-jeou,” *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* 9, no. 2 (2009); Bruce J. Jacobs, *Democratizing Taiwan* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 5–18.

49 Tien, *The Great Transition*, 253–254.

50 Thomas B. Gold, “Taiwan’s Quest for Identity in the Shadow of China,” in *The Shadow of China: Political Developments in Taiwan since 1949*, ed. Steve Tsang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1993), 169–192.

51 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

contemporary methods of public diplomacy with other democratic countries, and the other power branches, particularly the legislative one, have also gained experience in extending their contacts with their counterparts in other parts of the world.<sup>52</sup> In the case of the ROC, there has been a visible effort to consolidate a support network including European Parliamentarians and Representatives and Senators of the US, who often are invited to visit Taiwan, and to host unofficial visiting delegations from Taiwan in their countries.<sup>53</sup>

Democratization and economic development also affected the way Taiwan and South Korea practiced their international cooperation. In the same way they paid close attention to the developmental policies implemented by Japan after the end of WWII, Seoul and Taipei also emulated the mechanisms of cooperation developed by Tokyo. If, as mentioned above, international cooperation during the Cold War was aimed at the establishment of relations with recently independent countries looking for their support on their positions in the UN, the process of democratization brought more pressure to make cooperation more institutionalized, effective, and transparent. After Tokyo established the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 1974, and fifteen years later, in 1989, Japan became the largest provider of official development assistance in the world,<sup>54</sup> decision makers in Seoul and Taipei also decided to follow a similar path.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, in order to coordinate the efforts of economic aid and technical assistance to least developed countries, the ROC government set up the International Economic Cooperation Development Fund (IECDF) in 1989, under the supervision of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. In 1996, this fund was merged with an organ dedicated to technical assistance and was granted larger autonomy, then forming the International Cooperation Development

52 Gary D. Rawnsley, *Taiwan's Informal Diplomacy and Propaganda* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, 2000).

53 Yuchun Lan, "The European Parliament and the China-Taiwan Issue: An Empirical Approach," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 9 (2004), 115–140.

54 The official development assistance (ODA) offered by countries like Japan, and later emulated by governments like those from the ROC and ROK, have been the subject of study, noting how it has acquired elements of hard and soft power, sometimes implying different types of strategic demands, both economic and political, from the donor countries. See: Alberto Alesina and David Dollar, "Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?" *Journal of Economic Growth* 5, no. 1 (2000), 33–63. For a comparison between Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, some of their motivations and amounts, see Joel Atkinson, "Comparing Taiwan's foreign aid to Japan, South Korea and DAC," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 22, no. 2 (2017), 253–272.

55 Robert M. Orr, *The Emergence of Japan's Foreign Aid Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

Fund (ICDF), which has been an advanced mechanism of cooperation not only with diplomatic allies but also with other less developed regions in the world.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the ROK government established the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (ECDF) in 1987, which later evolved into the more autonomous Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), in 1991. Using a more extensive network of diplomatic channels, the ROK has established offices in several emerging and developing countries around the globe.<sup>57</sup>

These agencies have served their governments to advance an idea of success stories, with their countries having been recipients of aid during the 1950s and 1960s, and then transforming themselves into important economic powerhouses and therefore aid donors. Hence, in their own views, theirs is an effort at giving back, sharing their experience and becoming an inspiration to others. Similarly, the governments in both countries have intended to project an image of being responsible players in the system. After years of consideration and a few months of negotiation, South Korea was finally admitted into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996, hence performing multiple reforms to be more in tune with the goals of the institution, specifically democracy and market economy. Limited by the “One China” policies observed by the different members of the organization, the ROC has been unable to join the OECD. Nonetheless, since the late 1980s, the government in Taiwan has followed closely the reports and recommendations issued by the organization, and in many cases, it has unilaterally implemented reforms in areas like governance, transparency, economic freedom, rule of law, among others, the same way it is expected for the member countries.<sup>58</sup>

Taiwan’s ICDF and South Korea’s KOICA also represent an important show of difference with their self-proclaimed Communist neighbors. Despite the increased volume of official development assistance and technical cooperation with other nations in the past two decades, the institutionalization of the PRC international cooperation remains underdeveloped. Chinese international cooperation continues being a non-transparent and non-centralized process, without a single agency in charge, therefore involving many different

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56 International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), *Guoji fazhan hezuo de gainian yu shiwu (Overview of International Cooperation and Development)* (Taipei: ICDF, 2007).

57 Eun Mee Kim and Jinhwan Oh, “Determinants of Foreign Aid: The Case of South Korea,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 12, no. 2 (2012), 299–330.

58 Zhao Linian, *Woguo jiaqiang canyu OECD guoji hezuo huodong zhi kenengxing (Analysis on the possibilities of our country to increasingly participate in the OECD international cooperation activities)*. Working Paper no. 21005, (Taipei: Ministry of Economy, ROC, 1992).

official agents and levels, usually with opposing views.<sup>59</sup> The PRC is also among the few countries in the world that are both donor and recipient of aid. The DPRK, on the other hand, despite having carried out some efforts to provide technical assistance to recently independent countries in the past, is now among the countries more in need of receiving official development assistance (ODA). The minimal international cooperation practiced by North Korea in the past was also highly influenced by its desire to export the ideology of *Juche* as a viable alternative for less-developed nations.<sup>60</sup> As a result, the international cooperation agencies developed by the ROK and the ROC as a result of democratization, advance their cause as promoters of shared values like democracy and social justice, and for the case of Taiwan, it has helped the island to maintain and increase its international space.

#### 4 Security Challenges and Increasing Pragmatism

Since the 1970s, South Korea paid close attention to the political developments in Germany. As discussed above, when both Bonn and East Berlin were admitted as members to the UN in 1973, Seoul also changed its strategy and showed its willingness to be admitted to the organization together with Pyongyang. When both countries finally joined the UN in 1991, after the Cold War ended, Germany was also under the process of reunification, with the capitalist West taking the lead and absorbing the East. These events boosted the confidence of South Korea, now under the rule of democratically elected president Roh Tae-woo, who also imitated the successful German policy known as *Östpolitik*, and embarked on a new trend later branded as *Nordpolitik*.<sup>61</sup> Using its economic miracle as a promotion tool and the successful organization of the 1988 Olympic games, Seoul approached effectively Beijing and Moscow, seeking to eventually achieve similar results as those obtained by the Federal Republic of Germany in the past.

Once admitted to the UN, and attracted by the scale of economic reforms in the PRC, South Korea decided to switch diplomatic recognition, abandoning

59 Carol Lancaster, "The Chinese Aid System," Center for Global Development, last modified June 2007, [https://www.cgdev.org/files/13953\\_file\\_Chinese\\_aid.pdf](https://www.cgdev.org/files/13953_file_Chinese_aid.pdf), accessed August 23, 2019.

60 Alzo David-West, "Between Confucianism and Marxism-Leninism: Juche and the Case of Chong Tasan," *Korean Studies* 35 (2011), 104–110.

61 Victor Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012), 323–328.

its traditional political alliance with Taiwan, and being the last country in Asia to formalize diplomatic relations with Beijing.<sup>62</sup> The PRC, nonetheless, has played a vital role in the continued existence of the DPRK, as its largest trading partner and provider of aid. After the Cold War, the pragmatism of Seoul contrasted with the increasing hermetic response from Pyongyang. After years of promoting the policy of *Juche* or 'self-reliance' as a response to the Sino-Soviet split, the government in North Korea went into further isolation from the outside world and heavy militarization, making huge sacrifices to develop a nuclear program as the only way to ensure regime survival.<sup>63</sup>

For the past 25 years, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Pyongyang has remained the greatest security concern of Seoul, and one of the largest threats to the development of East Asia. Successive democratically elected governments in South Korea have transitioned from the *Nordpolitik*, to the more pragmatic Sunshine Policy, which contemplated direct contacts with North Korea and gradual steps of cooperation in different areas, and to the mediation of other regional powers in the framework known as Six-Party Talks.<sup>64</sup> None of those policies were successful in convincing Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear ambitions. After the 'strategic patience' shown by the Obama administration towards North Korean missile tests, the governments of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye decreased cooperation with the North and tried to find mechanisms to put more pressure on Kim Jong-un to stop North Korea's nuclear program.<sup>65</sup>

The formal security alliance with the US has been an important factor in the evolution of the ROK's policy towards the DPRK. The lack of a peace treaty negotiated after the armistice of the Korean War has made the Korean Peninsula to remain a hot topic in East Asia, even three decades after the end of the Cold War. The deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea, in 2016, with the cooperation of the US Department of Defense, raised the level of regional tensions. Not only did the North Korean government increase the number of missile tests throughout 2017, but the

62 Wenshou Chen and C.X George Wei, "Separating Economics from Politics: Contemporary Taiwan-South Korea relations" in *China-Taiwan Relations in a Global Context: Taiwan's Foreign Policy and Relations*, ed. C.X George Wei (New York: Routledge, 2012), 115–139.

63 Soyoung Kwon, "State building in North Korea: from a 'self-reliant' to a 'military-first' state," *Asian Affairs* 34, no. 3 (2003), 286–296.

64 Chung-in Moon, *The Sunshine Policy: In Defense of Engagement as a Path to Peace in Korea* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2012).

65 Yangmo Ku, "Inter-Korean relations and reunification," in *Politics in North and South Korea: Political Development, Economy, and Foreign Relations*, ed. Yangmo Ku, Inyeop Lee, and Jongseok Woo (New York: Routledge, 2018), 192–214.



Chinese government also reacted angrily. Fearful of the possible negative implications to its own security, Beijing encouraged calls on social media to boycott Korean brands, companies and even K-pop stars in China, harming considerably South Korea's business interests in that country, but also the level of bilateral trust.<sup>66</sup> These developments led to a change, with the arrival of Moon Jae-in to the Blue House and Donald Trump to the White House.

Moon has promoted a revival of the Sunshine Policy, encouraging more cooperation with the DPRK and bilateral summits with his counterpart in the North, Kim Jong-un. Similarly, a more personalist approach has characterized the style of Trump, who also has met Kim personally, and in spite of the lack of a formal commitment to denuclearization, the joint US-ROK military exercises were halted, while Pyongyang also temporarily refrained from testing new missiles. In spite of the changes regarding the threat posed by the North Korean nuclear program, Seoul has maintained its security alliance with Washington, and South Korea still hosts some of the largest US military bases in East Asia. The armed forces of the US are still an important element in the security of the ROK, and its sustained economic growth has also depended on the protection offered by the former.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, it is difficult to think about a change in the nature of the bilateral commitments in the coming years.

On the other hand, the relationship between the US and the ROC has adopted a more ambivalent quality. Since the ROC government refused to abandon its commitment to the "One China" ideal after its walkout from the UN, fearful of a backlash from the nationalist military who migrated to Taiwan with the hope of eventually retaking the mainland and reuniting with their families and loved ones, the rest of the countries in the world had to carry different versions of "One China" policies. This situation limited their interactions with Taiwan.<sup>68</sup> After the 1972 Shanghai Communique agreed by Nixon and Zhou Enlai, where the US government abstained from recognizing the PRC's sovereignty over Taiwan but acknowledged that both sides considered themselves as part of one China, among the first states to develop a pragmatic approach was Japan. In this case, different from the continuously tense relations between Tokyo

66 *The Economist* (London). "A geopolitical row with China damages South Korean business further," October 19, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/business/2017/10/19/a-geopolitical-row-with-china-damages-south-korean-business-further>, accessed August 23, 2019.

67 Mark E. Manyin, et al, "US-South Korea Relations," in *South Korea: International Relations, Trade and Politics*, ed. Alan K. Becker (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2011), 1–26.

68 Tien, 240–41.

and Seoul,<sup>69</sup> manifested by the negative views still held among many Koreans regarding the Japanese colonial domination and its behavior during WWII, the people of Taiwan tend to have a very positive impression of Japan, its government and its people.<sup>70</sup>

This was demonstrated when, in 1972, after establishing official diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China and abrogating the 1952 Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty that formally ended the war between Japan and the ROC, the government of Japan established the Interchange Association to serve as a de facto embassy in Taiwan. Since Japan was the second-largest source of cooperation and aid to the ROC during the first years of the Cold War, Tokyo paid special attention to the political and economic developments on the island, and maintained intense commercial, cultural and academic links even after the recognition of Beijing as the legitimate government of China.<sup>71</sup>

The Japanese ambivalent attitude has also been reflected by the support that some right-wing factions have offered to Taiwanese movements and politicians in favor of independence at different periods of time. This situation has tended to create tensions between Japan and the PRC, and also with the movements favoring reunification with the mainland in Taiwan.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, Tokyo has continued to show its support to the island by renaming its representative office as Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association in 2017. This bold move, including for the first time the name Taiwan, instead of the more traditional and conservative name of Taipei, has been seen as deepening its ambivalence regarding the situation of cross-strait developments.

After Japan, many other countries have established informal relations with the ROC and have opened representative offices in Taipei, while allowing the creation of similar offices in their capital cities. The end of the Cold War and democratization allowed Taipei to fully embrace pragmatism and warm ties with the government in Beijing. Starting with people-to-people exchanges, both sides of the Taiwan Strait developed a series of policies to improve economic, cultural, social and academic exchanges, hence clearing the way for Taiwan to do the same with third countries.<sup>73</sup> During the administration of Lee

69 Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 9–35.

70 Chen and Wei, "Separating economics from politics," 115–39.

71 Jing Sun, "Japan-Taiwan Relations: Unofficial in Name Only," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 5 (2007), 790–810.

72 Thomas S. Wilkins, "Taiwan-Japan Relations in an Era of Uncertainty," *Asia Policy* 13 (2012), 113–132.

73 For further studies on Taiwan's foreign policymaking process, see Jie Chen, *Foreign Policy of the New Taiwan: Pragmatic Diplomacy in Southeast Asia* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar,

Teng-hui, the creation of semi-official bodies in Taiwan and China for the conduction of Cross-Strait affairs in the early 1990s, also permitted both sides to reach an unofficial understanding on the use of the term “One China,” although with different interpretations. This was later known as the “1992 Consensus.”<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, in practice, the observance of the “One China” policy by other governments and international organizations has limited the international space of the ROC. With only 15 countries maintaining official diplomatic relations with Taiwan at the beginning of 2020, in past decades the country has found it difficult to access other institutions or be readmitted to the UN.<sup>75</sup>

Unlike the ROK, that has been able to expand its international economic presence through the signature of FTAs and PTAs, as well as other cooperation agreements, the ROC faces constant isolation and self-imposed barriers by countries who fear a backlash from an increasingly powerful PRC, in case they decide to forge closer ties with Taiwan. Even so, the Taiwanese authorities and businesspeople have been able to find pragmatic answers to these obstacles, as represented by the diplomatic truce with the mainland, in effect during the years of President Ma Ying-jeou,<sup>76</sup> or by the New Southbound Policy implemented by his successor, President Tsai Ing-wen.<sup>77</sup>

The ambivalent example set by Japan in its relations with Taiwan was closely watched by the US. Hence, when the Carter administration decided to take the step to establish formal diplomatic ties with the PRC, it also created the American Institute at Taiwan to serve as its de facto embassy on the island. Abrogating the 1954 bilateral defense treaty, which meant the removal of all troops and active military personnel from the island, Washington came under

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2002); Dennis V. Hickey, *Foreign Policy Making in Taiwan: From Principle to Pragmatism* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

74 The Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) operates in Taiwan, and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) was set up in mainland China. Both bodies were created in 1990–1991 and represented an effort to conduct Cross-Strait high-level talks. Ying-jeou Ma, “Policy Towards the Chinese Mainland: Taipei’s View,” in *In The Shadow of China: Political Developments in Taiwan since 1949*, ed. Steve Tsang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1993), 193–211.

75 In case they managed to join international organizations, due to pressure from the PRC, it has been under a different name, usually “Chinese Taipei,” in order to avoid the idea of the existence of two Chinas, or one China and one Taiwan.

76 T.Y. Wang, et al, “Structural realism and liberal pluralism. An assessment of Ma Ying-Jeou’s Cross-Strait policy,” in *New Thinking about the Taiwan Issue: Theoretical insights into its origins, dynamics, and prospects*, ed. Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Dennis V. Hickey (New York: Routledge, 2012), 137–171.

77 Bonnie Glaser, et al, *The New Southbound Policy: Deepening’s Taiwan Regional Integration* (Washington, DC: CSIS – Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

heavy pressure by the so-called China Lobby and the US Congress moved fast to pass the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). The TRA and the 1982 Six Assurances offered by the US to Taiwan, and derived from another bilateral communique agreed with the PRC, became the base of the informal relations between the US and the ROC.<sup>78</sup> In all of the communiqués, Washington has expressed its opposition to the use of force and any unilateral changes in the cross-strait status quo, which not only means a rejection of any forced unification by the PRC but also to any radical move at proclaiming independence by the government of the island. Nonetheless, the US has also committed itself to continue its arms sales to Taiwan, although it agreed to reduce its volume and intensity.<sup>79</sup>

The US government has also shown evidence of its continued commitment at different times, such as in 1996, when it sent the Pacific Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait after Chinese forces launched missiles into the water as a way to influence the first direct presidential elections in the ROC. And recently, especially after the election of Donald Trump and the rise of tensions between Washington and Beijing, US legislators from both parties have endorsed and passed new acts promoting further interaction between American and Taiwanese officials, and have pledged to contribute toward the construction of a domestic submarine fleet for Taiwan.<sup>80</sup> These moves have also contributed to the increasing hostility from the PRC government towards the administration of President Tsai Ing-Wen, and the continuous calls by Chinese leaders to President Xi Jinping, to set a deadline for the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland.

This situation shows the way the US is perceived by the governments of the ROC and the ROK as the most important ally in terms of their national security. For the case of Taiwan, Japan is also seen as a strategic player. Meanwhile South Korea sometimes reluctantly cooperate with Japan, encouraged mainly by the US.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, with the increasing role that the PRC is playing in the region, both Taipei and Seoul need to develop different strategies when dealing with Beijing and its close ally Pyongyang. For the case of South Korea, the PRC can be the key to find a sustainable solution to its problems with the DPRK, and eventually dream of successful Korean reunification. For the case

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78 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 174–84.

79 Henry Kissinger, *On China* (London: Penguin, 2011), 381–86.

80 Richard Bush, “Why a new office building in Taiwan is heightening US-China tensions,” *Brookings: Order from Chaos* (May 29, 2018), online, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/05/29/why-a-new-office-building-in-taiwan-is-heightening-u-s-china-tensions/>, accessed August 23, 2019.

81 Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism*, 3.

of Taiwan, the options are more limited, and even considering a more pragmatic approach towards mainland China in the future, it does not affect the fact that the majority of the people in the island still prefer to maintain the status quo and to leave the choice between independence or unification to future generations.<sup>82</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

After geopolitical events created the structural conditions of the current situation in the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait, their process to access or remain in the UN contributed to their perpetuation. In that sense, if a state's geography is fated as they say, the position of those states inside of the international system is inevitably a question of interpretation by other members of the system. There were interpretations that gave North and South Koreans a different destiny than the one granted to the ROC. It was not the PRC that initially isolated the ROC in world affairs, but the latter's original embrace of the One China principle and its ensuing interpretation by UN members that made its diplomatic exile a reality. What makes Taipei's misfortune different from the Korean one? The answer is tragically simple: Koreans are a member of the UN, and Taiwan is not, and that makes a difference.

The UN's interpretation about the role that the ROC is supposed to play in world politics rendered it dismissible when compared to the importance of the PRC on the world stage, and the majority of the members have accepted this perspective. In their attempt to gain (or retain) a seat at the organization, Seoul did not have a powerful piece to move on this new board, so it decided to stop playing, and eventually to stop the game itself. On the other hand, Taipei also did not have good pieces to play and yet did not yield, with results being the ones we have observed.

The democratization of both Taiwan and South Korea was an important game-changer. Both countries could present a renewed image to the world, after years of also being perceived as important successful cases of industrialization and economic development. The end of the Cold War, achieved in part through the Sino-American rapprochement, served the ROK to accomplish its goal to join the UN and to maintain diplomatic ties with the major powers in the system, including the PRC. On the other hand, Taiwan initially intensified

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82 Election Study Center (ESC). "Taiwan Independence vs. Unification with the Mainland (1992/06~2018/12)," *ESC-National Chengchi University*, (January 28, 2019), online, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=167>, accessed August 23, 2019.

the competition for allies, but also took a more pragmatic approach with the major powers, maintaining informal relations and increasing economic ties. Nonetheless, once the balance of power between both sides of the Taiwan Strait changed dramatically during the past two decades, being significantly unfavorable to Taipei, it is difficult to think about a future abandonment of the “One China” principle by the PRC. This means that the government on the island must dedicate its limited resources to maintaining and eventually increasing its international space, and to avoid any unfavorable unification with the mainland in the near future. Conversely, now that the nuclear program in North Korea starts looking like a reality more than a future project, the peaceful unification of the peninsula also seems like a yet distant goal.

The analysis of the evolution of the foreign policies of both the ROC and the ROK is indeed a complex task. Nonetheless, the introduction of the different elements, as exemplified first in their relations to the UN, and later democratization, economic growth and their interactions with strategic players like the US and Japan, contribute to the understanding of the similarities and differences in the responses to external challenges faced by these two countries throughout contemporary history. The peaceful resolution of the situations in the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait, and the maintenance of peace in the Indo-Pacific region, will require the constant attention and communication between the different actors presented in this chapter. So far, the abandonment of ideological positions and the embrace of pragmatism can be seen as effective steps in that direction.

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