Conceptions of Chinese Democracy

Lorenzo, David J.

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Lorenzo, David J.

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Chapter Three

Chiang Kai-shek

Democracy and Chinese Tradition

As Sun Yat-sen had noted, there are three groups of people in any given nation. . . . It should not take an extraordinary amount of imagination for Chiang to conclude that he, the heir to Sun’s mantle of leadership and wisdom, is the discoverer, his loyal followers the promoters, and the general public the practical men.

What was Chiang Kai-shek’s public position on democracy? Did he provide meaningful discussions of the topic? Did he put forward a recognizably Chinese conception of democracy? It is clear that both on the mainland and on Taiwan, Chiang headed a government that fell short of democracy as measured by most mainstream definitions.¹ Chiang and the KMT were dominant. The government controlled laws and interpretations of the laws. Access to power was largely controlled by a single party. Chiang held the presidency until his death by being repeatedly elected by a body (the National Assembly) permanently dominated by the KMT. While elections were held at the local level, only a limited number of parties were permitted to participate in them, and competitive national elections, as well as other forms of accountability necessary for a truly democratic regime, were lacking.²

Despite this situation, I argue that Chiang did publicize and legitimize important democratic concepts. This chapter documents and assesses Chiang’s discussions of democracy during his residence on Taiwan, exploring thematically Chiang’s treatment of democracy in his public pronouncements published by the ROC’s GIO from 1949 to his death in 1975. In all, I argue that the conception of democracy Chiang provided was somewhat more liberal than Sun’s and that he offered a stronger justification of democracy than did Sun, adopted many of the problematic features of Sun’s model, and projected the image of someone who had created a Chinese conception of democracy.
Chiang’s Problems

It is important to understand that, in its historical context, the conception of democracy Chiang presented was responsive to several important problems he faced: the need to unify the populace on Taiwan, the need to identify himself as the leader of the Chinese nation, and the need to link the ROC with the West.

Like Sun, Chiang faced the problem of achieving unity. But unlike the difficulties he and Sun faced on the mainland, where vast spaces, warlords, and a historic lack of Chinese nationalism were the defining aspects of the problem, those Chiang faced on Taiwan presented a different set of challenges. First was the reality of the Communist domination of the mainland after the Nationalists lost the civil war in 1949. In terms of territory, population, and military might, Chiang was at a severe disadvantage not just with regard to his determination to retake the mainland but even in the more immediate problem of defending his stronghold on Taiwan. To survive, he argued, the Nation-
alists must be united in the face of their enemies. In promoting democracy, Chiang had to find ways of disciplining the general population as well as his own sometimes fractious followers. Thus we find Chiang’s emphasis on a unitary demos, the common good, and discipline, characteristics that form important parts of both the republican unitary and Chinese unitary models.

Related to these problems was Chiang’s need to reinforce the understanding that he was the rightful leader of the Chinese people as a whole. In this task, he had at his disposal the long history of rulers’ strategies for attaining such an end. Successive dynasties, especially those originating outside the Han areas, had resolved this problem by emphasizing their support for traditional Chinese culture. They adopted Chinese customs and embraced Confucian and Daoist thought and practices. Chiang also had Sun’s example at hand. As we have seen, Sun was careful to argue that there was a Chinese basis for the political positions he took and did not discard traditional Chinese culture and teachings from his revolutionary storehouse. For Chiang as well, conceptualizing democracy as an expression of Chinese culture and himself as a traditional Chinese leader met part of his need to establish his status as the true leader of the Chinese nation. Such characteristics are, again, part of the Chinese unitary model.

Finally, Chiang realized that he depended militarily, politically, and economically on the West. This dependence had characterized his regime on the mainland after 1941, when his government was supplied by the wartime allies. This support became more erratic after the war, and there was a decision to abandon him after he lost to the Communists. The Korean War and the Cold War came to his rescue. Washington’s unhappiness over the PRC’s intervention in Korea and its attempts to increase the strains between the PRC and the USSR led to a resumption of ties between Chiang and the United States. While Chiang’s support stemmed mostly from Taiwan’s strategic location, he naturally needed to go further in his identification with the Western cause; speaking continuously of democracy as part of his identification with the “free world” served this purpose. Bare invocations of democracy were not enough. Chiang had to demonstrate more forcefully that he understood democracy in ways that differentiated him from those who labeled their regime a “people’s democracy.” This requirement helps in part to explain his gestures toward meaningful constitutionalism and references to individual rights and freedoms associated with the liberal model of democracy.
Sun and Chiang

Understanding Chiang’s portrayal of democracy also requires examining the influence of Sun on his conceptions. We find invocation of Sun’s philosophy throughout Chiang’s public pronouncements. It is clear that Chiang publicly identified Sun’s understanding as broadly normative of any legitimate Nationalist position on the future of a Chinese state. That state must, at some point, become democratic. But as noted in chapter 2 with regard to Sun’s understanding, the democratic Chinese state would not necessarily be realized in the immediate future, nor would it conform exactly to liberal standards. In particular, we find that Chiang adopted the most salient parts of Sun’s conception of democracy: that “government” as policy making is for experts, the demos should be a unified body, and a period of tutelage is necessary before adoption of a fully democratic regime. Acting on and expressing a common good that is discoverable rather than revealed through electoral competition just as strongly marked Chiang’s conception as Sun’s assumption of a general will. Thus there are major differences between both Sun’s and Chiang’s conceptions and a liberal conception of democracy.

But there are also differences between Chiang’s conception and Sun’s. Chiang makes more references to individual rights and constitutionalism than does Sun, making him somewhat more liberal. They also differ on the sources of political solidarity. For Sun, a focus on the nation and national goals, as well as the teachings of Chinese philosophy, would provide the collective spirit necessary to mold a people’s will and a common good. He seems primarily to have had in mind the displays of patriotism that marked the American and French Revolutions. Chiang differed. He much more strongly emphasized the role of traditional Chinese ethics in fostering social order and discipline and making a unified demos of Chinese citizens. This stance partly flowed from the fact that Chiang did not privilege, as did Sun, the place of Western history in democratic theory. Where Sun (at least in his Sān Mín Chǔ Yì democracy lectures) took the West to be the locus of modernity and an important source of political wisdom in terms of both philosophical concepts and experiences, Chiang embraced a more skeptical understanding of the West in general and looked more fundamentally to traditional Chinese sources. In particular, he turned to Confucian and neo-Confucian writers and values for ways to unify and discipline citizens. We find him touting with much greater frequency than did Sun such Confucian virtues as benevolence, self-control, and goodwill as the markers of good citizenship and the sources of
the political and social solidarity necessary to make a democracy feasible, rather than participation, critical assessment of leaders, and other markers of Western civic virtue. It is here that Chiang cleaves more closely to the Chinese unitary model than did Sun.

**The Literature on Chiang**

Discussions of Taiwan’s democratic transition often portray the elder Chiang as at best a nonpolitical contributor. Politically, he is not depicted as a democrat. Even more than Sun, Chiang has been the subject of wide debate over his alleged fascist influences and political practices. He is often depicted from the left as the author of an “anti-democratic political and economic philosophy.” Liberals likewise cast doubt on his democratic credentials by emphasizing his leadership of a Leninist party.

Alongside such depictions is a considerable body of scholarship that understands Chiang not as a fascist, a strongman, or a pale totalitarian but more as a Chinese traditionalist. Some attribute his emphasis on virtue, the community, and nationalism to the influence of late Ching restorationists. Others argue for his association with attempts to preserve a traditional Confucian culture and hold that he was ultimately a follower of “reform traditionalism.” These judgments would put him outside the historical Chinese conversation regarding democracy, though still within the mínběn tradition of discussions regarding the nature of enlightened rulers.

Somewhat more sympathetic are portraits of Chiang as a military figure who ran greater China, and later Taiwan, as an authoritarian leader but with democratic accomplishments to his credit. Such is the general portrait provided in the late 1950s by Walker, who joins with others in praising the KMT’s achievements on the issues of land reform and local elections. In other areas, particularly in discussions that address individual rights and freedoms, some scholars argue that Chiang put forward a more liberal understanding of democracy than did Sun with regard to ordinary citizens. Lei in particular holds that Chiang was more interested than Sun in placing limitations on the scope and reach of the state, holding with Cheng that Chiang displayed, at least theoretically and rhetorically, a commitment to ensuring that government officials do not encroach upon the sovereign powers exercised by ordinary citizens. Chiang certainly mentions individual rights and freedoms more often than did Sun and was not as adamant in asserting that the Chinese, for cultural and historical reasons, need not pay much attention to such concepts.
He also does not employ Sun’s jiùwáng argument that China’s context requires good governance through a strong state. However, most scholars (even those who display considerable sympathy for his politics) agree in describing Chiang’s conceptions of rights and freedoms as falling short of liberal standards, containing as they do important attempts to balance the concrete autonomy conferred by rights and freedoms with equally compelling political duties to be disciplined, to take up responsibilities and obligations to society and the state, to respect strictly the rule of law as handed down by officials, and to conform obediently to official definitions of order. Markedly absent is a liberal skepticism regarding the power of the state and liberal democracy’s overall privileging of rights and freedoms as fundamental.

As is the case with Sun, many commentators are unimpressed by Chiang’s abilities as a democratic theorist. Writers sympathetic to the Democratic Progressive Party, even if they grudgingly concede Chiang Ching-kuo’s contributions late in life, refuse his father any credit for helping develop Taiwan’s democratic understandings. More generally, the views of critics are summed up by Loh, who not only remarks that Chiang’s understanding of democracy was circumscribed by his commitment to Confucian values but more generally observes that “Chiang was ill-equipped and inept in matters of theory.” The analysis that follows partially disagrees, holding with other studies that this judgment is exaggerated. Chiang’s speeches and pronouncements, despite many weaknesses, do provide important and systematic elements of a democratic conception.

**The Democratic Content of Chiang Kai-shek’s Writings**

**Justifications of Democracy**

The largest contribution Chiang made to Taiwan’s democratic discourse was his assertion that democracy is good and attainable. He made this argument in a variety of ways, including his ritual invocations of the Sān Mǐn Chǔ Yì. More specifically, he elevated democracy as an important goal by identifying it with Sun and the ends of the Chinese Revolution, by referencing democracy’s roots in human nature and a universal moral order, and by emphasizing democracy’s compatibility with Chinese culture.

**Democracy as Sun’s Revolutionary Legacy**

To a considerable degree, Chiang based his claim to legitimacy on Sun. His claim to leadership of “Free China” was based on the perception that he was
Sun’s legitimate political heir. This was partly confirmed by his leadership of the KMT and solidified by his occupation of the presidency of the ROC. But more important was his claim to be the political and intellectual, and not just institutional, heir of the founder. To be the true leader of China meant to be a leader in Sun’s mold: revolutionary, ascetic, transformational, jealous of China’s place in the world, optimistic about China’s future, and a democrat.

In the course of these arguments, Chiang made the point that democracy forms part of the Nationalists’ revolutionary goals and particularly Sun’s revolutionary legacy by conflating democracy with the Sān Mín Chú Yì. For Chiang to emphasize democracy as part of the Sān Mín Chú Yì is of considerable significance. By identifying Sun with democracy and himself with Sun, he established democracy as the ROC’s only completely legitimate form of government. This is probably one reason Chiang was so insistent during the 1950s on labeling the ROC regime on Taiwan a democracy, even though he later acknowledged that it fell short by many democratic standards. For Chiang to be Sun’s legitimate heir, he had to be a democrat and had to preside over a democratic, or at least democratizing, government.

In ritually invoking Sun, Chiang repeatedly stated that the goal of the Chinese Revolution was the implementation of the Sān Mín Chú Yì. He tirelessly cited Sun’s formula that the Sān Mín Chú Yì doctrine entails Lincoln’s maxim that government should be “of the people, by the people, and for the people” and that important elements of the revolution will be fulfilled once all of China is ruled by a government that follows that maxim. He made sure to emphasize the democratic elements of the Sān Mín Chú Yì, not merely glossing over them in anticipation of nationalism and people’s welfare, as we see in this typical passage from Chiang’s New Year’s message for 1961: “Only our Three Principles, which stand for national independence, democracy and social well-being, are in conformity with the natural law and enjoy the support of the people.” Note the connection Chiang draws among democracy, the Sān Mín Chú Yì, and the national will. If Sun’s legacy had to be protected and carried on in accordance with both his and the people’s will, democracy was an intrinsic part of that legacy. This is a formulation found in almost every one of Chiang’s ritual messages, generally delivered on January 1, October 10 (National Day), and December 25 (Constitution Day) from the early 1950s until his death.
Democracy Is Natural

Having made the connection between democracy and the revolutionary heritage of Sun and the doctrine of the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì, Chiang sometimes referred to a second point—that democracy is good because it is natural. We see one formulation of this claim in the excerpt quoted above, as well as in his October 10 message of 1959. In the latter, he goes further to argue not only that there is a connection between the doctrine of the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì and the character of the universe (tiān xìng, 天性) but also that human problems can only be solved by implementing the principles constituting the doctrine of the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì. There is an association, Chiang asserts, between democracy and natural law. Contrary to Sun’s assertion, democracy is not man-made or artificial. It is involved with something bigger than and antecedent to humans.

In these assertions Chiang appears to refer to at least two conceptions of “natural law.” When he argues that democracy and the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì are involved with natural law as the character of the universe (天性), he appears to make a general reference to Confucian and Daoist philosophical tenets that speak of the need for humans to participate in something that is part of the larger structure of existence. Democracy here is part of The Way (tào, 道), the naturalistic set of ethics everyone must follow. It is always right and proper to support democracy because democracy reflects the permanent character of the universe.

In the same passages, however, Chiang also invokes a traditional understanding of the “mandate of heaven” (tiān mìng, 天命) in a claim to legitimacy for democracy and the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì. This formulation is also compatible with a generally Confucian or Daoist conception of a universal structure and order that establishes what is natural and good for humans, but in a different fashion. In this usage, it appears that democracy is the way of the universe in the sense that it has the approval of heaven. This understanding is not connected with political type but rather with political performance. Authoritarian states in the past, which were headed by an emperor, have also been described as enjoying the mandate of heaven based on their ability to rule well. Here, the claim to legitimacy does not appear to be that democracy and the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì are part of the permanent structure of the universe and participate substantively in The Way but rather that they are legitimate because they follow The Way as a separate and universal set of criteria by which good
government in general is measured. This is a more transient and contextual understanding of political obligation. The mandate of heaven could change to reflect different circumstances (such as failures of governance or failure to follow The Way). Citizens would then be forced to change their allegiance to particular governments or even forms of government in compliance with these changed circumstances given that heaven does not, in this instance, dictate a particular form of government but only standards by which to judge good governance.

While the terminology that Chiang employs suggests otherwise, we must consider the possibility of a third understanding of nature and natural law given the fact that, by the 1950s, Chiang was a practicing Methodist and may have also picked up and used the Christian conception of natural law. In Christian belief, if democracy is in accordance with natural law, it is compatible with God’s will. One should support democracy because God ordered the universe so as to make democracy morally mandatory. This understanding would work similarly to the first conception described above, in that natural law is permanent and its injunctions eternal, not transitory. It is also external to humans, requiring that they learn it in order to have knowledge of it. This location of moral knowledge outside humans in Christian theology is also generally accompanied by the argument that humans cannot automatically choose rightly or intuitively understand what is right. According to most mainstream Christian theological understandings, human nature is no longer “good” in the sense that humans can automatically participate in God’s will. The freedom of humans to naturally choose rightly (libertas) has been lost. Because of the Fall, knowledge of God’s will is not innate within humans or otherwise automatically available to them. One must force oneself to conform to God’s will and natural law and thus force oneself to conform to the dictates of an externally located moral code.

Chiang’s further justifications of the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì and democracy as natural lead us to reject the possibility of his use of a Christian or otherwise Western conception. These justifications came in the form of arguing that the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì and democracy are associated with human nature (rén xìng, 人性). In these arguments, the naturalness of democracy is located within humans themselves. Humans fulfill themselves and are true to themselves when they live in a democratic political system because doing so expresses, exercises, or is compatible with something innate within them. One way Chiang made this argument was by disputing the human character of the PRC by
contrasting the latter with the character of democracy and the Three Principles of the People. He characterized the regime on the mainland as alien to human characteristics. “Communism is inhuman, reactionary,” Chiang argued. At other times, he argues that the policies of the PRC stray from human nature (人性). These assertions were meant to draw a contrast between the PRC and the situation on Taiwan, where democracy was said to be the rule. The 三民主义 is unlike communist doctrine in that it is not alien to humans or an imposition of ideas from outside the human experience. The mainland’s government is different. It cannot operate without attempting to change human nature by violence. “The Peiping regime,” he argued, “must first resort to terrorism in order to destroy the human nature and the moral principles innate to youths so that it may insulate them from the influence of their historical and cultural tradition, that is, the ideology of San Min Chu I.” Chiang held more explicitly elsewhere that a party that is both revolutionary and democratic was necessary to “human nature and the times.” Democracy and the 三民主义 are congruent with human nature and the nature of the world and universe, in part because the desire for freedom is innate in humans, and in part because people are naturally good. As “the eternal ideal and goal for all mankind,” the fulfillment of the 三民主义 and democracy is attainable and represents a universal and necessary project.

Chiang then completes this argument by asserting that the 三民主义 are a decisive contribution by China and Sun to democratic theory and thus represent the culmination of the democratic project that humans have labored over for centuries. To implement fully the 三民主义 is to fulfill human destiny and usher in “an era of mankind marked by freedom, equality and human compassion.” Democracy and the 三民主义 are not just good; they are necessary to the continued existence of humans. In Chiang’s rhetoric, therefore, the doctrine of the 三民主义 and democracy are the highest achievements of humans and must be attained, expressing as they do the knowledge and standards that are both innate in humans and contained in natural law. All systems other than democracy necessarily fall short of what humans require and what they are capable of achieving. To be without democracy is to experience a degrading situation that robs humans of their humanity, while to live under a democracy is to be fully human.

We see that Chiang’s references to human nature generally rule out the Christian and Lockean conceptions of natural law. Human nature refers to something intrinsic in humans. To follow human nature is literally to do what
comes naturally. One does not need to learn something that is part of human nature. Thus when Chiang holds that democracy is at one with human nature and says that democracy coincides with the moral precepts contained in the natural law that orders the universe, he is locating the goodness of democracy in both places. Chiang probably is not drawing upon Christian doctrine here because he claims a connection between natural law and human nature that is absent in most mainstream Christian accounts. In those accounts, humans must learn or otherwise acquire knowledge of what is good, including the contents of natural law.\textsuperscript{28}

He is also not invoking a Lockean conception of natural law.\textsuperscript{29} In Locke’s understanding, natural law is part of the natural, preexisting moral structure of the universe. It contains various types of general moral precepts (respect for the life and property of others, for example) that are relevant to humans given human nature. But there is no overlap between human nature and natural law. Humans must learn natural law because knowledge of it (or indeed any knowledge) is not innate to them. Humans are a blank slate when it comes to knowledge. Instead, what humans possess are faculties and characteristics—they are rational and self-interested. It is through the use of their faculties that humans acquire knowledge, including that of natural law (i.e., they grasp it with their rationality). Thus, while Locke holds that an acceptable state can be justified by reference to human characteristics, he argues that the state itself is artificial rather than natural or at one with human nature. In this judgment, he is arguing two things with regard to the state. First, natural law does not dictate a particular form of the state, and no particular form of the state is part of the structure of the universe because the concept of the state itself is not part of natural law. Rather, natural law informs us of the characteristics of what would be a good state by providing standards that define the meaning of justice in any situation, whether a state is present or not. Though Locke goes further by conceptualizing the state itself as artificial, his natural law in this regard acts much the same as does the mínbén conception of good government and the concept of tiān ming (though the latter is more performance oriented than the former). Second, Locke is arguing that neither the state per se nor forms of the state flow automatically from human nature. Living under a state is not part of humans’ natural condition, and no understanding of a good state is implanted in Lockean humans.\textsuperscript{30} The identification and creation of the structures of a good state are, rather, the product of rational thinking and human effort, not introspection or the apprehension of a
preset political blueprint that is part of a universal order. Locke argues that experiences in the state of nature are such that a rational understanding of natural conditions leads humans to create states that meet the standards of natural law, in that such states are capable of performing the political and other tasks that are implicated in the substance of natural law and the needs generated by the stresses of humans living together. A good state is one that is rationally justifiable by reference to an external and eternal set of standards. Humans build a good state and know that a state is good only through the use of their rationality to apprehend and apply natural law and by reflecting on their experience, not by consulting their intuitions. Therefore, Locke would not argue that a good state, a liberal state, or a democratic state is in accordance with human nature or mandated by natural law. Rather, he would argue that a good state is one that humans construct in accordance with a judicious use of natural human faculties that process experience and apply the moral principles that are incorporated in natural law.

This understanding of the state puts Locke in the company of Sun in that both see the state as an artificial tool. Where they differ is in Locke’s argument that a state that performs very specific functions in accordance with specific normative criteria is always rationally defensible (given his assumption of a stable, universal human nature as well as stable natural law) and is useful for enforcing the moral precepts of natural law. This type of normative argument is absent from Sun’s account; Sun instead refers to contextual and functional criteria and a plastic understanding of human nature.

Thus, Chiang differs from Christianity, Locke, Sun, and traditional uses of mínbèn and tiān mìng when he argues that democracy is in accordance with both human nature and natural law. His argument requires that there be substantive content directly addressing the specific form of a good state in both natural law and human nature that is missing from those accounts. A particular interpretation of Chiang’s references to human nature and natural law helps us explain this facet of his discussion. This interpretation accepts the proposition that Chiang was influenced by Wang Yang-ming (王陽明). Tsui and Lokuang argue that Chiang crucially accepted Wang’s moral epistemology, particularly his acceptance of and distinction between innate knowledge and “learned” knowledge.31 If Chiang is speaking of what is “natural” through the lens of Wang’s philosophy, he is referring to innate human knowledge and the structure of the universe, both of which originate from and are imparted by heaven (tiān, 天). Human nature in this scheme is moral knowledge that is
planted within humans, as we see in Chiang's reference to innate moral knowledge in the quotation above.\textsuperscript{32} Natural law is the moral and physical order of the universe. What is natural in this understanding, therefore, exists both inside and outside of humans in the form of permanent knowledge and ethical understandings that one intuits from within and learns from the outside through observation of and experience with the workings of eternal laws and principles. While one gains these types of knowledge differently, both participate in the same stable body of knowledge and reinforce one another. Both are also politically substantive, in the sense that they consist not just of such capacities and characteristics as rationality and self-interest (human nature for Locke) and general moral principles (natural law for Locke) but of specific injunctions that dictate that one particular form of the state is morally correct. To follow these precepts is to follow one's own nature and the precepts contained in structure of the universe; to follow both is to follow The Way. In this understanding, the distinction between human nature and natural law that a Christian theorist or a Lockean would embrace does not exist, and there is no tension in asserting that democracy is in accordance with human nature and natural law.

**Nature as a Justification of Democracy**

If this account is correct, then Chiang located democracy within a Chinese understanding of ethics in which moral precepts are seen to permeate the universe and inform the daily and political life of every being who follows the true, heaven-sent set of morals. To participate in a democracy is to practice a moral life and to follow the moral path that is The Way spoken of and extolled throughout the history of Chinese philosophy. This is a strong defense of democracy that departs significantly and usefully from Sun's justification, as well as from some traditional accounts. By invoking it, Chiang is able to avoid many of the problems that we found in Sun's account. By identifying democracy with an eternal natural law and positing a fixed human nature consisting of innate and substantive moral knowledge, he can hold that a particular, universal, and timeless set of moral understandings and principles demand a democratic state. Democracy is good and right for all humans at all times. By avoiding the jiùwáng justification, Chiang also need not deal with contentions that authoritarian regimes are better placed to solve China's (or Taiwan's) problems because the justification is not instrumental but moral. While he invokes cultural arguments and a general mǐnbēn approach, his rendering is
sufficiently different to render moot the argument that nondemocratic states are also compatible with Chinese culture. Finally, Chiang's justifications of democracy on these grounds generally serve to delegitimize competing conceptions of the state. It is clear that the state on the mainland is delegitimized because of its inability to practice democracy. Competing forms of governments in general, despite any merits they may possess, are also delegitimized by their failure to follow human nature (including the innate desire for freedom he identifies) and their residence outside the confines of natural law.

Yet there are a variety of other problems and tensions in these arguments from the viewpoint of promoting democracy and delegitimizing alternatives. The first problem is precisely the fact that in making these assertions, Chiang departed significantly from Sun's position. For Sun, there is no innate moral approval of democracy. Instead, akin to Han Fei (韓非), Sun implied a kind of plasticity to humanity's political nature, such that humans naturally gravitate to different forms of government in different eras for functional reasons. So where in other places Chiang rested a significant portion of his justification of democracy on Sun's democratic legacy, invoking Sun as an infallible guide, he departs here from that legacy and undercuts an important part of Sun's analysis of China's political history. This unacknowledged departure brings significant incoherence into Chiang's line of justification. People reading the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì alongside Chiang's pronouncements cannot but be confused, leading to a possible conclusion that democracy cannot be justified, that those who promote democracy lack clearheadedness, or that the promotion of democracy is a kind of trick.

Another tension resides in the conflict between this assertion of naturalness and Chiang's (and Sun's) simultaneous assertions that the Chinese must undergo a period of “tutelage” before they are able to practice and enjoy the fruits of democracy. If democracy is, in fact, natural and good for humans, why would Chinese citizens need to undergo tutelage? Does not such an assertion, particularly the argument that the desire for freedom and democracy is innate, necessarily imply that humans are also automatically suited for this type of political order? If people have to be trained and educated to practice democracy, does not this position imply that humans are being changed, artificially molded, in order to fit into the democratic paradigm?

A solution to this problem may lie in the substance of Chiang's understanding of tutelage. It appears he did not see it as the imposition of an artificial character onto citizens but as the refinement and development of their
existing character and increasing appreciation and reliance on their innate moral knowledge. The development of virtues and discipline is the encouragement of elements that are already in humans. Thus his acceptance of humans as good (another difference from Sun) is important, as is his assertion that moral knowledge is innate. In this understanding, “tutelage” entails government programs that encourage the development of particular types of behavior in people that merely assist in the maturing of citizens into fully developed humans. Supporting this interpretation is Chiang’s argument that people on the mainland, despite their experiences and the current government they endure, are also capable of democracy because of what they are as humans: “Remember you are all citizens of the Republic of China. . . . You all are endowed with the sense of self-respect, independence and love of freedom. In you lives a spiritual force to save yourself and the nation.”

Yet, while this argument allows us to smooth over contradictions in this part of Chiang’s discussion, it again implies a different understanding of the relationships among human nature, democracy, and tutelage than Sun supplied. For Sun, while tutelage did not entail a wholesale makeover of humans, it did seem to mean making the Chinese people partly different from before by stripping out their traditional localist mentality (though not all their traditional culture) and engrafting on them through teaching and practice a modern nationalist mentality and interest in public affairs that is compatible with democracy. This is possible because humans can be trained to adopt whatever type of state best suits the spirit of the times. One simply takes out one type of mentality and substitutes another. For Chiang, political elements reside directly within humans as part of their innate moral knowledge, and instead of having to be transformed in order to practice democracy, they rather must be denatured in order to reside under a regime that does not practice democracy or at least have democracy as its goal. The preparation they need for democracy lies in their development of innate capacities, not the inculcation of attributes. Again, Chiang’s contribution to democracy would appear to be weakened by this basic difference from Sun, particularly given that Chiang never openly acknowledged it.

Democracy Is Compatible with Chinese Culture

Aside from their roots in human nature in general, Chiang also emphasized the compatibility of democracy and the doctrine of the Sān Mín Chǔ Yì with Chinese culture. He made references sometimes to Chinese culture alone and
sometimes to the synthetic character of the Săn Mín Chữ Yì. We find an example of the first tactic in an address in 1966. Here he held that

Dr Sun Yat-sen was born just in time. By originating the San Mín Chu I . . . he made possible the restoration of China’s cultural tradition. I firmly believe that the essence of San Mín Chu I is to be found in ethics, democracy and science . . . and these are likewise the foundation stones on which the traditional culture of China is built.\(^{35}\)

Chiang similarly argued on other occasions that the Chinese have developed unique understandings of democracy and “obtained enlightenment from its internal sources and trod its own road of development.”\(^{36}\) He also referenced the mǐnbèn justification, holding that democratic concepts had been formulated and advanced by Chinese reformers and revolutionaries for several hundred years.\(^{37}\) Chiang furthered this argument by identifying even deeper roots for democracy in traditional Chinese culture and holding that Sun based the Săn Mín Chữ Yì on traditional elements and figures. He held, for example, that the Săn Mín Chữ Yì doctrine is based not only on Chinese culture in general but more particularly on the teachings of pivotal historical and philosophical figures, including Confucius and the eight virtues associated with Confucianism.\(^{38}\) The most important of the latter for Chiang is the virtue of benevolence, which he held was intrinsic to the Săn Mín Chữ Yì and necessary for democracy and good government in general.\(^{39}\)

This is a somewhat diluted form of the mǐnbèn conceptualization and derivation of democracy, but it works here (as in Sun’s account) more as an argument for the compatibility of democracy with the Chinese character than as a use of cultural materials to fashion an understanding of democracy. Democracy in this argument is a form of government that has roots in indigenous sources. It is not alien. The Chinese did not need Westerners or any other foreigners to introduce it to them. As a nonalien political philosophy, it is compatible with the rest of Chinese civilization. As Chiang tended to view Chinese culture as homogeneous, this would make sense. In his understanding, doctrines with shared national and cultural origins have constituent elements (“foundation stones”) in common. The combination of Chinese culture with democracy is therefore not incoherent in his reading, including the joining of democratic theory and practice with Confucian and neo-Confucian values and educational systems. But Chiang also seems to go further by appearing to
argue that the pursuit of democracy is the only way of fulfilling the promise of traditional Chinese culture. In finding democracy at the root of the teachings of important Chinese figures, Chiang claims that democracy is an integral part of Chinese culture. Not only does China not need the West to teach it democracy, and not only is democracy not alien to China; by association with key cultural figures, democracy is at the core of being Chinese. To reject democracy is to reject classical Chinese teachings, Chinese culture, and the genius of Chinese civilization. To be Chinese is to be a democrat.

Note both the strength of this argument and its subtle differences with a more classically mínbēn justification. In putting democracy at the heart of Chinese culture, Chiang not only legitimates it as a form of government; he also mobilizes the prestige of that culture against any other form of government, thus turning on its head the general argument that democracy is not Chinese. This argument also differs from other mínbēn justifications in that Chiang is not arguing that democracy is necessary because it conforms to traditional understandings of good government. Rather, he identifies democracy as a form of government within those traditions, reading democracy as implicitly present in those philosophical principles rather than bringing those principles forward into modern times and using them as a checklist for approving (and possibly limiting) democracy as a conception of government. As noted above, this is another area in which he differs from Sun; unlike Sun’s position, this line of argument would not accept that previous authoritarian governments were defensible because they conformed to populist mínbēn standards of good government. For Chiang, mínbēn is not agnostic regarding forms of government; only democracy meets the mínbēn criteria in his formulation because democratic principles are the mínbēn criteria.

Despite the number of these assertions, Chiang sometimes also provided a somewhat different understanding of the nature of democracy and the origins of the Sān Mín Chu Yì doctrine in relation to Chinese culture. Here, Chiang references the Western origins of democracy and asserts that, in the form of the Sān Mín Chu Yì, Sun consciously distilled Western borrowings and added them to Chinese culture. In this rhetoric, Sun played a role in reviving Chinese culture by adding to it an important leavening of foreign ideas. “Dr. Sun,” says Chiang, “carried the moral heritage of the sages. He skimmed the essence from both Chinese and foreign cultures . . . and brought together all the excelling points in the vital synthesis of San Mín Chu I culture.”

In
pursuing this line of argument, Chiang holds that the modern concept of democracy had its origins in the American and French Revolutions. He emphasizes that Sun was aware of both premodern and modern democratic concepts in the West and used them in constructing the 三民主義 but was a crucial filter in adding to the Chinese version only those Western concepts that were sound because compatible with the genius of Chinese civilization. In these arguments, the 三民主義 is described as based on unique features of Chinese civilization in representing a “philosophy of virtuous rule and world harmony” and “a Tao that combines internal uprightness with external justice,” but on the whole the 三民主義 and its democratic conception are not completely Chinese.41

Here Chiang argues that Sun built his democratic conception out of compatible elements of Chinese and Western understandings. This is a much more constructivist understanding of Sun’s conception and project than we have discussed so far, and it contrasts more sharply with Chiang’s naturalistic justification of democracy than does his purely Chinese cultural explanation. The latter can be made consistent with his naturalistic explanation by positing that democracy’s presence in Chinese culture is a manifestation of its presence in all cultures. But his constructivist argument, by imputing agency and a degree of originality to Sun in creating a cultural synthesis, strongly implies that Sun’s conception of a democratic state is artificial and thus stands apart from any natural conception.

Despite these inconsistencies, Chiang was generally much closer to Sun on this topic than he was in his discussions of democracy and human nature. And yet there are still problems. When Chiang wavers in his basic understanding of the origins of the democratic concepts he claims to have inherited, he raises important questions. Is democracy indigenous to China or not? Is it essentially Chinese or not? Is to be Chinese to be a democrat, or can one embrace some parts of Chinese culture that are not democratic and still be authentically Chinese? Can one build an authentically Chinese, nondemocratic government out of Chinese culture? If important parts of modern democratic thought are imported from the West, which are they? And how are we to know that they are in fact compatible with Chinese culture? Equally important, if modern democracy originated in the West and must be “filtered” to operate in China so that it is compatible with Chinese culture, might that assertion imply that there are democratic elements that are not compatible with Chinese cul-
ture? If so, which parts are incompatible? And how are we to know that the “filtered” version remains recognizably democratic? Must democracy be “purified” of extraneous Western elements? Must it be otherwise modified to fit the Chinese context?

Chiang never fully answers these questions, though he, like Sun, hints that Chinese culture may have little affinity with untrammeled modern Western understandings of individualism that are part of the liberal conception of democracy. There are also moves on his part that suggest he believed democracy must be given Chinese characteristics. This stance, of course, posed problems for Taiwanese advocates of democracy who looked to Western, liberal understandings. His overall understanding in this second cultural conception of democracy, unlike the first, also incompletely delegitimizes nondemocratic governments in terms of Chinese culture. But despite these problems, it cannot be denied that Chiang does some important work on the larger task of legitimizing democracy to Chinese traditionalists through these attempts to link democracy to Chinese culture and supplies better justifications of this type than did Sun.

**What Is Democracy?**

Chiang’s conception of democracy was based on Sun’s writings and, therefore, privileged the decision-making authority of elites rather than popular participation and individual expression. It is emphatically an indirect model. But he does not construct his understanding of democracy on the argument that democracies allow for the creation of strong states that are capable of good governance in the context of large national tasks. Instead, he conceptualizes democracy in terms of constitutionalism. Democracies are regimes that institutionalize popular control by means of written rules and procedures. However, while Chiang sometimes referenced the need for democratic leaders to attend directly to the opinions of citizens as a constitutional form of downward accountability, he often depicted citizens in these references as passive, obeying the orders of officials rather than participating in active forms of accountability. Chiang also moves beyond understandings of rules, procedures, and even the constitution by stressing the importance of traditional Chinese ethics as the means for guaranteeing good governance on the part of officials and disciplined unity on the part of the demos. Democracy, he argues, requires the practice of virtuous self-restraint on the part of both officials and citizens in
addition to constitutionalism. This leads to an emphasis at times on what Fukuyama labels “moral accountability” for officials rather than institutionalized downward accountability.

**Democratic Constitutionalism**

Chiang’s rooting of democracy in Sun’s doctrine meant that he accepted almost in toto the latter’s understanding of constitutionalism. He argued that a constitution is essential to a mature democratic system, implying the subordination of official power to a fundamental and binding plan of government rather than allowing government officials to create their own policies and procedures at will. As part of this understanding, Chiang embraced Sun’s “five-power” constitution. Such a constitution, as we have seen, spreads power among five separate branches, seemingly dividing official authority and potentially setting the stage for checks and balances.  

In Chiang’s description, a constitution is essential to a democracy because it connects people to government and reflects the fact that the citizens are ultimately sovereign. At times, his understanding of constitutionalism accords with the liberal democratic conception of limitations on power and the rule of (constitutional) law. To have a constitution is to place limits on officials’ powers through explicit prohibitions and mandatory procedures. Chiang alluded to such a conception frequently when criticizing the Communists, particularly in referring to the “terrorism” of Mao. An intrinsic part of Mao’s tyrannical rule, Chiang charged, was his willingness arbitrarily to jettison political and judicial structures and procedures that the Communists themselves had created. In contrast, he held that on Taiwan the government and the people supported and followed the constitution. Procedures and laws should be predictable and stable to be good. He argued elsewhere that “our democracy is the democracy of a government under the rule of law,” an argument that emphasizes that officials are not just the creators of law but are under the rule of law, and thus indicating that he rejects the traditional concept of “rule by law.”

Building on these and similar references, scholars such as Cheng, Lei, and Tsao and Tang argue that Chiang took constitutionalism seriously and can be labeled a constitutional democrat. They hold that Chiang’s embrace of Sun’s five-branches system and agreement with Sun that political powers should be divided between the people (in the form of suffrage, recall, referendum, and initiative) and officials (legislation, administration, judging, examining, and
Chiang Kai-shek  105
censoring) indicate that Chiang accepted a subordination of officials to a con-
stitutional plan of government that embodied a liberal system in which the
government’s power is divided and limited, checked by the citizenry at large,
and subordinate to and disciplined by constitutional rights of the people and
the rule of law.48

However, Chiang also expressed understandings that throw doubt on the
strength of the constitutionalism he advocated. In those references, the consti-
tution is merely a mechanical way of legitimizing power in which Sun’s divi-
sion of administration from sovereignty is less a system for checking power
and more a way of empowering officials. In this system, the act of governance
is reserved for those who have the knowledge and talent for administrative
affairs. He quotes with approval the principle “Political sovereignty to the
people and administrative power to the government.”49 In this formulation,
there appears to be little purchase for constitutional structures. Power is given
to officials, period. There is no room for checks and balances, procedures that
limit the power of officials or other impediments to official discretion.

This construction of Sun’s doctrine makes sense in the context of the politi-
cal environment Chiang believed he inhabited. Given the goals of the revolu-
tion and the problems presented by the Communist takeover of the mainland,
not only was the exercise of power by elites justified in Chiang’s constitu-
tional understanding, but centralization within the government itself was
paramount. Again, while Sun provided for a five-power constitution, he did
not necessarily see those multiple institutions exercising strong checks on of-
ficials’ powers.50 Chiang, in practice, paid even less attention to nonexecutive
branches than did Sun and largely emasculated the principle of horizontal
institutional accountability. While Cheng holds that Chiang can be seen as
conceptualizing the five branches as the means for checks and balances among
officials, he argues that Chiang really conceptualized those branches as per-
forming functions in a linear understanding of policy making (the legislative
branch supplies the ideas, the Examination Yuen supplies the personnel, etc.);
thus they are designed to be the locations of discrete tasks rather than the
sites of competing centers of power and representation.51 Constitutional rules
and procedures here have to do mostly with describing and allocating func-
tions rather than the means for defining and constraining power or mandat-
ing downward or horizontal accountability. We also find Chiang defending the
blurring of lines between such functional divisions. As Halbeisen has noted,
the emergency provisions Chiang added to the constitution and defended as a
necessary response to the Communist threat strengthened the powers of the president of the republic at the expense of the Legislative Yuan, the Control Yuan, and the premier. While Chiang did argue that the rationale for this centralization of power would disappear once emergency conditions ceased, he was never moved to make such a determination.

Even more disturbing, while Sun stressed the importance of the popular powers of referendum, initiative, and recall as ways the populace enforce downward accountability, Chiang rarely mentions them. When we consider this reticence along with his lack of enthusiasm for horizontal checks, Chiang sometimes seems to see the constitution more as the framework the population has agreed government officials should use to organize and utilize political power and solicit legitimacy and less as a set of laws and norms that limit, check, and define the powers of government officials. Indeed, Chiang was not overly concerned in everyday political life with the concepts of limitations, divisions of power, checks and balances, or any other understandings of procedural democracy except in their gross, outward forms. Constitutional government in his understanding, as in Sun’s, was compatible with one-party government—both are primarily organizational instruments that allow for efficiency and legitimacy in his understanding. Chiang therefore often spoke of constitutional democracy as a matter of administrative efficiency and practicality, buttressed by an amorphous understanding of “social control.”

Consequently, the democratic conception Chiang often expressed emphasized the concentration of power in a constitutional framework whose purpose is the realization of political goals. The source of the constitution is the people, and ostensibly power is exercised for the good of the people, but ordinary citizens do not exercise power. Thus Chiang’s description of the ROC government:

Our Constitution was enacted by the people of the whole country. Our government was elected by the people and since World War II has been entrusted with the responsibility of leading the nation in carrying out the ideals embodied in the Three Principles of the People and the duties of our National Revolution.

Again, in an important speech he had given earlier but reprinted in 1955, he eschews the notion that constitutionalism necessarily means that power is dispersed, even if it does means that different responsibilities are formally ascribed to different branches. The entity that bridges the branches, undoing
their separation if not their differences, is the KMT as a party charged with democratizing the country:

In the present Party reform we are melding political freedom and economic equality in one pot. In organization we should bring together democracy and concentration of power so that the Kuomintang may become the revolutionary democratic political Party to carry out its mission of fighting Communism.\(^57\)

At best, this is a version of the competitive elitist model of democracy without the prospect for much competition. The most disturbing element of this part of Chiang’s conception of constitutional democracy is the notion that the KMT is above the constitution. Chiang never seems to have discarded this concept (as the reprinting of this speech suggests). The KMT was the entity empowered to run the government; to hold or not hold elections; and to create, amend, or abrogate constitutions. So while he held that democracy implies constitutionalism, it is not clear how much real bite constitutions in his scheme should have on nongovernmental bodies whose members believed themselves charged with implementing and defending democracy, or on officials themselves.\(^58\)

As we see, Chiang does defend the general concept of constitutional democracy, but his practical understanding and depiction of constitutionalism is mixed. He specifically defends proceduralism and limits on power when discrediting his PRC rivals, but he does little to further that conception as an intrinsic part of a move toward full democratization on Taiwan and, indeed, tends to hollow out that conception the more he discusses it. His contribution to the public’s understanding or expectations of how a constitution should operate in a democracy is limited by his refusal to outline a full theory of constitutionalism in the context of Taiwan’s government, his blurring of the lines between branches of government, his views of constitutionalism as empowering officials, and his privileging of the KMT.

**Traditional Chinese Values and the “Democratic Way of Life”**

Chiang contrasted good governance with anarchy and argued that democracy does not allow everyone to do anything he or she wishes. In making this comparison, Chiang displayed some anxiety regarding the strength of Western liberal democracies to maintain order and social discipline.\(^59\) Democracy in his understanding must be constructed as a purpose-driven form of government
that both expresses and forms the popular will. In following this path, Chiang again leans toward the republican unitary and Chinese unitary models.

The reason morality and virtue are needed in Chiang's understanding of democracy is that he assumes that the diversity we find among people is the result of indiscipline. Both are problematic. Diversity leads to a weakening of the country and a lack of political focus. A lack of discipline leads to a breakdown of law and order. As noted earlier, Sun had turned to modern nationalism and the experience of democratic government as the glue that would overcome China's pluralism and form “the people” into a united entity. The Chinese would unite in a burst of nationalistic fervor in the same way that the French and Americans did in the aftermath of their revolutions. Chiang, having witnessed the weakness of Chinese nationalism both before and during World War II, is skeptical of this proposition. Not only the war but the social disorders and factionalism of the prewar and postwar periods seem to have influenced him on this score. This skepticism was probably reinforced by his training in classical Chinese philosophy. Moreover, he is generally more dubious than Sun of the ability of humans to unite themselves spontaneously and of the capacity of democracy alone to produce unity. People must be trained and educated in social mores and social discipline. While the potential for those attributes is inside them, they will not be developed if people are left to their own devices through the unfettered enjoyment of rights and freedoms. Their innate desire for democracy and freedom leads to dangerous possibilities if not balanced by disciplinary practices that originate both inside and outside themselves. To rule themselves collectively and defend themselves against such enemies as the Communists, citizens must participate in political and cultural systems that will provide them with discipline and virtue, he argues. Therefore, while he conceptualized democracy as part of a revolutionary agenda, Chiang emphasizes that the moral principles and virtues the demos and leaders are to cultivate should be drawn from traditional Chinese culture because of their content as well as their participation in China's heritage.

Chiang was always predisposed to the resurrection of traditional Chinese morality in politics, but he was especially assiduous in making this argument during and after the Cultural Revolution on the mainland. He interpreted this event and its disastrous aftermath as a vindication of his long-standing argument that the Chinese Communists were not only lackeys of the imperialist Russians but also people whose lawlessness resulted from their rejection
of Chinese tradition. Indeed, as he argued on numerous occasions, the correct interpretation of the Cultural Revolution was that the Communists were attempting to destroy Chinese democracy by eliminating the traditional Chinese “ethical philosophy” and “moral code” that provide the necessary cultural roots of democracy.\(^6\) Or, as he put in on another occasion, freedom and democracy necessarily entail “the rule of virtue and benevolence” that the Communists lacked and the ROC possessed by reason of its attachment to traditional Chinese culture.\(^6\)

Chiang also referenced lessons from Europe’s immediate past to emphasize the need for Chinese values to help citizens attain the unity, discipline, and virtues that allow a democracy to operate and to mark the problems presented by an undue emphasis on rights and freedoms. “The Three People’s Principles,” he argues, are “based on our traditional morality as summed up on the eight virtues of loyalty, filial piety, justice, harmony and peace, benevolence, fraternity, faithfulness. If democracy is not founded on the eight virtues . . . it will be seized by political demagogues and turned into mob rule or totalitarianism.”\(^6\) This emphasis on traditional virtues appears in tandem with the theme of social discipline that forms the substance of Chiang’s hectoring that often took place in the early and mid-1950s. Typical are remarks from 1953 that indicate that while democratic practice is important, something more than just political processes is needed, given that “no marked improvement has been made in the field of social and cultural reforms. The habit of extravagance and lavishness is still prevalent. Loose ness in organization and moral turpitude has not been corrected.”\(^4\) As Lei, Cheng, and Tsao and Tang argue, Chiang wanted to create a “democratic way of life” that embodies the combination of rights and responsibilities, freedom and discipline, respect for other individuals and society, and unquestioning obedience to laws and the forces of order.\(^6\) To enable “the people” to practice democracy successfully, the government must prioritize the teaching and practice of traditional Chinese values as a coequal goal with political democratization. The two must go together if the latter is to be worth pursuing.

Chiang developed more thoroughly the connection among the themes of traditional virtue, democratic realization, and the active role of officials in his Constitution Day address in 1968 in a way that emphasizes the importance of traditional values. Democracy, he holds, “is possible only in a framework of ethical government.” It has to do with ruling and being ruled in a particular ways: “The ideal of democracy to be found in Chinese culture is to
‘guide by virtue and regulate with decorum.’ This formula entails a strict separation of responsibilities between officials and ordinary people. Both must be virtuous, but their virtue consists of different things:

As the ancients put it, “When the people are created, the Lord makes rules for them to follow; so long as they obey, they are possessed of virtue.” Another old saying maintains that “Government prospers when it keeps pace with the aspirations of the governed and declines when it breaks faith with the people.”

In this understanding, the virtue of government officials provides them with an active role, while that of the populace relegates them to a passive position. Government rules, and its officials ensure that its rule is democratic by “keeping pace with” and “keeping faith with” the populace. This is reminiscent of Sun’s argument regarding the correct understanding of officials’ and citizens’ roles and responsibilities. But Chiang goes further. In his description, the most important day-to-day responsibility of the ordinary citizen is to be autonomous (self-ruling) by following the traditional laws of morality. While external laws are necessary, they are not sufficient in a democracy. Thus, Chiang emphasizes that “it is up to each person to fulfill his responsibility as a man and to live up to the criteria set for humankind. . . . Only such a democracy can be regarded as sufficiently sound to avoid the discrepancies and shortcomings of run-of-the mill democratic systems.”

This invocation of rén (仁) in terms of the responsibility of citizens to cultivate their humanness and follow The Way stands opposed to Western liberal democratic systems that lack an emphasis on morality, particularly the traditional Chinese moral values that stress solidarity over individuality. Those other systems, he argues, are not fully developed, not because they are institutionally lacking but because they are culturally and ethically immature. In such systems, citizens, by “abusing their freedom . . . have moved toward an iconoclastic negation of all their conscious values. Morals of day-to-day life have deteriorated into profligacy. Pseudo-democracy and social conflict have emerged in the political sphere.”

Because morality is important for rulers and people in Chiang’s conception, there is room for the government to play the role of moral tutor. At his harshest Chiang argues that “the power of social control and mutual assistance should be employed to convert even the lazy to be diligent and the weak to be strong, thus strengthening general mobilization.” In his more temperate moments, he speaks of the need for further “accustoming our people to de-
mocracy, the rule of law, and the observance of law.” Overall, he argues, the key problem of democracy is discovering how to extend education to all citizens in such a way as to “promote higher moral concepts and spread knowledge among more people, thereby strengthening the foundation of democracy.”

Yet, while Chiang’s dependence on traditional values to teach people morality and virtue points to an activist state, it also implies definite limits on public officials that were absent in much of his discussion of constitutionalism. If implementing the Sān Mín Chū Yì entails applying the eight traditional virtues of Confucianism to government officials, then the untrammelled will of those officials cannot be the source of public policy. Officials, too, must be disciplined, other-centered, mild, compassionate, honest, and competent. As Chaibong has argued, these moral virtues, at least theoretically, present important checks on arbitrariness and “excesses” not just in their workings but also in the standards to which those officials may be held. Such “moral accountability,” when coupled with the institutional means of accountability in the form of elections, provides the demos with important tools for measuring the government’s performance and underscores the proposition that officials are accountable to the population as a whole. Unlike the technical details of policy making and administration, which are beyond the reach of ordinary people in Sun’s conception, the content of Confucian morality is accessible to all. This system of moral accountability also goes beyond the traditional mínběn criteria of good government. The basis for assessment is not only the implementation of policies that benefit the general public but also adherence to a particular set of ethical standards that limit the exercise of power. This understanding of the moral foundations of democracy makes possible a reciprocal relationship between officials and the demos that is absent in Sun’s conception or in the traditional mínběn understanding. Both official and citizen, at least theoretically, can use traditional Confucian morality as a standard for substantive critique of behavior and possibly of policies.

Chiang did, on occasion, defer to this standard by admitting to his failings and retreating from claims to an infallible knowledge of political or moral affairs. Even if such confessions were a standard part of both Chiang’s political strategy and his personal neo-Confucian practice, they could be important for the development of a kind democratic ethos based on moral virtues because they discard the conception of an infallible leadership and emphasize a kind of popular accountability. Chiang admitted at various times that his “leadership has been at fault” with regard to various human right violations.
and admitted that he had “brought more stains to the revolutionary history and have failed to live up to the expectations of all [his] compatriots.” This recognition of fallibility also spilled over into policy decisions, as Chiang admitted to a “dereliction of duty and failure of mission.”

Therefore, it appears that Chiang at least occasionally acted on and publicized this understanding of reciprocal accountability between political leaders and the demos and in doing so demonstrated a rhetorical commitment to the concept of responsible government and to the core democratic assumption that governments are inevitably fallible. In these references, he contributed to democratic learning with regard to accountability in general. But in substance, Chiang’s invocation of a system of moral accountability did little to remedy his neglect of institutional and political downward responsibility. Equally problematic is the fact that Chiang’s understanding of a democratic way of life depends upon the government’s promotion of a comprehensive and perfectionist account of the good life based on a common acceptance of Confucian ethics. The grounds for the possible critical assessment of government by citizens are those the government sets, not those the citizens themselves choose. Thus his understanding of democracy is not of the liberal variety but one with (traditional Confucian) Chinese characteristics.

The Nature and Role of Officials and the Demos

Even though democracy entails embracing traditional Chinese understandings of morality and virtue available to everyone, Chiang followed Sun in holding that administrative talents are not equally distributed. While few mainstream Western democratic theories support a completely equal distribution of power in the form of a direct democracy, only the most elitist vest as much responsibility in officials as Chiang often did. However, he was not consistent in this view; on some occasions he gestured toward a more robust role for citizens that entailed their guidance on public policy. Even more than in his discussions of aspects of democracy, Chiang puts forward inconsistent conceptions of this very important part of democratic theory. In wavering among different democratic models, though generally embracing the elitist understandings of competitive elitism and the Chinese unitary model, he provides rather weak lessons in the responsibilities and roles of ordinary citizens in a democracy.

Usually for Chiang, democracy entails “the people” electing officials who then exercise power on behalf of the demos. Like Sun’s conception, this
understanding implies a trusteeship rather than a delegative function for officials and thus invokes a conception of democracy in which the demos's role is mainly confined and subordinate. This understanding also implies that officials are not to weigh the importance of various interests, compromise and bargain, or engage in other attempts to find common ground among a variety of viewpoints, because it assumes that there is a single, identifiable set of correct policies that the superior talents of officials recognize and act upon. This understanding is spun out in Sun's conception as the “people” articulating a general will that officials then actualize in terms of correct policies; Chiang, however, does not emphasize the subjective will of the people but rather the existence of a common good arising from objective circumstances. Voters need not choose among candidates using criteria based on different interests or various intellectual constructions of the world. Rather, it is the job of officials, with their administrative and intellectual gifts, to understand the common good and implement policies compatible with it. Choice among candidates per se is not as important as empowering those who understand the common good. Nor is choice among policy options important. There is only one “good” set of policies, and if candidates from a single party have a sufficient grasp of the common good and requisite policies, there is no need to have multiple parties putting forward different candidates and contrasting platforms.

In this construction, the absence of choice reflected by a refusal to recognize pluralism largely transforms voting by the demos from an exercise of sovereignty to a ratification of unequal power relations. While Chiang does not dwell at any length on the gulf between ordinary citizens and leaders, he often conveyed this understanding when discussing his expectations of ordinary citizens by describing popular participation in a fashion that limits its scope. For example, he held in an early New Year’s Day message that the populace should “support and supervise the government . . . work harder and make Taiwan a model province based on the Three Principles. . . . I urge all our countrymen to review and promote the Four Reformation Movements.” The role ascribed to citizens here is passive and reactive. They are only weakly encouraged to criticize, assess, or even suggest measures but are exhorted more strongly to “support,” “review,” and engage in “promotion” because the “Four Reformation Movements” embody the correct policy. There are no other “correct” alternatives. The government having identified the correct policies, the task of citizens is to support the government and only “review” how
policies are implemented. Indeed, Chiang often described the correct role of citizens as “supporting” and “carrying out all Governmental orders.”\textsuperscript{82} The assumption of such statements is that the government knows what is best and that citizens should subordinate themselves to that understanding and to the power of officials in general.

Chiang sometimes did embrace a more subjective account of the demos in his discussion of how the government operates in a democracy, though like Sun he still spoke of a singular will emanating from it. For example, in an address from 1964 he implies that government policy reflects the wishes of a demos that expresses a single will that the government apprehends and implements as part of its democratic duty:

Of special importance is the necessity of observing and implementing the axioms that “national affairs are to be decided by popular will” and that “political power lies in the hands of the entire people.” This has always been our attitude and a foremost requirement that we must fulfill without fail.\textsuperscript{83}

Here, while it is public opinion that is ultimately said to control the direction of government, it is the government that interprets the substance and meaning of that opinion, and it is taken as existing in a singular form. On still rarer occasions, Chiang holds that it is public opinion that checks government power. He argued in 1972, for example, that delegates to the National Assembly should “abide by the wishes of your electorate . . . and uphold principle.”\textsuperscript{84} The public seems to be playing an active role in this statement by impelling government officials to follow their guidance and understanding. However, the public’s input is not in the form of arguments for this or that policy or the expression of particular interests. Such a multiplicity of voices is not seen as helpful. Rather, as Chiang put it on an earlier occasion, it is the input of “responsible persons” that will lead to “improvements in public affairs,” implying that there is an objectively correct set of policies that particular members of the populace may help government officials discover and correctly implement if the latter lose their way.\textsuperscript{85}

Even when the goal is democratization, Chiang’s emphasis was often on the role of the government, not the role of the populace, in identifying correct policies, implementing reforms, and creating structures. In discussing ongoing efforts to implement his early, much-trumpeted scheme of local self-government, for example, Chiang commented that the burden of action fell on the government, which should emphasize efficiency and education. “From
now on,” he held in 1960, “we should further raise our administrative efficiency, increase the functions of local self-government. We should take another step forward in accustoming our people to democracy, the rule of law, and the observance of law.”86 The initiative always resides with the government in this view, with the populace expected to trail obediently behind. Chiang did sometimes refer to what initially appear to be more vigorous types of participation as part of his usual appeals for support from ordinary citizens on the mainland. Of the many promises he made should his regime regain control of greater China, one was that not only would “democracy . . . dawn once more on the mainland,” but “we shall then undertake to initiate political consultations, amend the Constitution and hold nationwide elections so as to enable the people to make the supreme decision on national policy and steer the government in accord with public opinion.”87 These references to decision making and steering imply a role for citizens that extends beyond the passivity emphasized earlier. However, public opinion is still taken to be singular, it is the government that decides whether or not to grant elections, and public input is only of the most general kind. Chiang does not appear to be referring to officials being elected on the basis of competing platforms with different policy proposals and arguments. Rather, he seems to have in mind the holding of plebiscitory elections in which the approval of citizens is solicited for a group of sitting officials.

It is difficult to make sense of these differing positions. In part, they capture the inconsistencies of Sun’s vision. But Chiang does not completely duplicate Sun’s extensive arguments regarding the immense differences among people as a means of justifying his acceptance of Sun’s position on the differentiation between the powers of sovereignty and the powers of officeholders. He assumes such a differentiation, as well as a unitary demos without much discussion. His elitism and antipluralism are implied rather than elaborately rehearsed. Again, he follows the republican unitary and Chinese unitary models of democracy in preference to the liberal emphasis on downward accountability and pluralism. Substantively, he provides useful accounts for democratic learning with regard to democratic citizenship only in the context of those models.

**Elections and Limits on Tenure in Office**

Consideration of the role of the demos leads directly to an understanding of the role, nature, and importance of elections in Chiang’s public discussion.
Does his understanding lend itself to a conception of elections that includes broad eligibility for office and choice among candidates and policies? Do his discussions provide the basis for thinking that elections ought to be meaningful exercises in downward accountability? We know that, in practice, Chiang only moved in small steps toward implementing such a conception. While the government did allow multiple candidates to run for local positions, none but the officially sanctioned parties could organize electoral campaigns. Candidates who were not members of the KMT or the tiny officially sanctioned alternate parties had to run as independents (though a surprising number won). We also know that a full range of policy options was not on the table come election time because, for example, expressions of pro-independence and pro-Communist views were harshly penalized, as were, retroactively, criticisms of government policies uttered during election campaigns.88

Chiang did discuss elections with some frequency, approved of them, and described them as important exercises of popular will. But that does not mean that he approved of all calls for elections. He stubbornly clung to the argument that his government on Taiwan was the legitimate government of all of China and therefore must be kept intact until the mainland was retaken. This meant that the National Assembly, which controlled the election of the president, as well as the Legislative Yuan, must keep their membership without new elections on Taiwan because “the electorate [on the mainland] were no longer free to exercise their constitutional right [to vote],” and changing the composition of those bodies with only votes from Taiwan would be unconstitutional.89 This position, of course, served Chiang well, for it is unclear that if completely free elections were held early in his tenure on Taiwan the KMT would have emerged victorious. He did, however, eventually change his mind on this question (allegedly at Ching-kuo’s urging) and sanctioned elections to the Legislative Yuan to fill various vacancies.

Many of his statements reflected a narrow understanding of elections as opportunities for choice. In discussions of one set of elections in the 1960s, for example, Chiang argued that such exercises were mechanisms for picking the “right” persons to hold office and manage government on behalf of people. Elections in this sense were depicted more as a part of a broader, state-initiated program of government reform, renewal, and co-optation than as an exercise of sovereign choice and popular representation. This conception is reflected in a variety of ways: in the reason for holding elections (“We have decided to hold elections this year to choose additional representatives and to
fill vacancies in representative organs on the central level”); in describing the purpose of the election as being to “broaden and enlighten the function of our democracy by electing intelligent, competent persons to public office”; and in describing the desired result of the election as the capacity to “strengthen our program of self-government, enhance our system of responsibility in the source of the people, rid ourselves of bureaucratic abuses, and thereby reinforce the foundations of efficient, honest government.” In all these statements, it is the government that is in charge and that benefits from elections. Chiang does nothing to stress that elections are necessary and should be regularly scheduled. He similarly described an earlier set of elections as facilitating “mobilization for the suppression of the Communist rebellion” as well as “implement[ing] the ideal of ‘letting all the people share political powers’ and giv[ing] an opportunity to the young people to serve their country through periodic elections.” There is little in any of these descriptions about representing interests, debating policy options, choosing among different parties with competing policy positions, or the role of elections as important means of downward accountability. Elections generally appear to have other purposes connected with strengthening the government or helping it conduct its business rather than with allowing the population to exercise sovereignty and hold officials accountable.

Chiang did, however, argue for a more expansive conception of participation in other discussions of elections. He held, for example, that if the ROC took back the mainland, a political program would be initiated to implement the Sān Mín Chū Yì doctrine, with the result that “every Chinese citizen is entitled to vote and/or to be voted into office irrespective of his class or party affiliation.” He also referred to elections as exercises of popular sovereignty. These discussions do recognize choice as a sovereign and meaningful act, recognize equal citizenship, and gesture toward some understanding that different parties may develop different policy agendas and that elections are more than tools by which government makes its life easier.

Perhaps more important for promoting an expansive and meaningful view of elections is the fact that Chiang at times acknowledged the democratic shortcomings of the ROC in the area of elections. While he did often argue that the ROC was a full democracy and had progressed past the periods of military rule and political tutelage and reached the era of full constitutional government, at other times he backed away from such claims. For example, early on he held that local elections were indications that Taiwan was “on the
road to democracy.” Later, he explicitly cited the need for more progress in democracy and referred to elections of municipal and hsien councilors as indications of “marked improvements” in “political democratization.” He likewise argued that movements toward “local self-government” and local elections indicated that “progress” was being made in implementing the Sun Mín Chǔ Yì.

Again, we find a dichotomy in Chiang’s discussion. Many of his descriptions of elections depict them as merely devices that those who hold government power use to legitimate themselves and co-opt talent. At best, this reflects the elite-driven understanding of democracy he inherited from Sun. Government and party officials have superior knowledge and are rightfully ratified in their positions of power. His emphasis on having the “right” kinds of people in office also tells us that Chiang depicted elections on these occasions as, again at best, expressive of broad mandates ratifying the power of officials rather than the means by which ordinary citizens make fundamental choices about who should hold power and which policies the government should implement. Yet when it came to local elections, Chiang seemed willing to say that ordinary citizens should control and hold accountable government officials and government policy by means of elections. In this view, Chiang seems to argue not only for the possibility of real choice but also for the prospect that favored KMT candidates could legitimately be voted out of office as unsatisfactory, as inferior in ability to other candidates, or as proponents of policy positions the majority of the public rejects. This provides the basis, however tentative, for a stronger democratic conception in the vein of either a fully competitive elitist model or possibly the liberal democratic model. It also more generally provides an understanding, useful for democratic learning, of what citizens should expect from truly democratic elections.

Rights and Freedoms

Chiang’s discussion of rights and freedoms, like other aspects of his discussion of democracy, is fragmented into several pieces that fit oddly together. He argued that the desire for freedom is innate, thus abandoning Sun’s argument that freedom was not something in which the Chinese had interest. However, he also went out of his way on many occasions to argue for restrictions on rights and freedoms. We can see the outlines of this complicated stance by taking as an example a major speech on the subject in 1955. In this speech Chiang clearly articulated one of the fundamental tensions in his pronounce-
ments: the contradiction between his claims to be the head of a free democracy that recognizes a full range of rights for its citizens and what he argues are necessary actions government must take to safeguard those citizens against external and internal threats to their safety, security, and freedom.

In the course of this address, Chiang argues that the foundation of democracy is in law, order, and national security. While rights are necessary, they must be built on law, while order and national security take precedence over them. So while he argues that democracy “must protect people’s rights, and in order to obtain freedom, we must first have freedom of speech,” he qualifies this assertion with an argument that depicts aims other than rights as primary: “As Taiwan is today the bastion for the Anti-Communist and Resist-Russia struggle, there must first be peace and order before we can have security.” Decisions must be made “in accordance with laws and regulations and without favoritism or prejudice.” This assertion sets the stage for his justification of limitations on a whole range of freedoms that he nonetheless argues are compatible with democracy and individual rights. Despite the fact that the government limited publications by rationing paper and punished some authors and publishers for articles that criticized the government or its policies, there was “no censorship,” he insists. There is freedom of speech, he argues, as evidenced by the fact that “there have been published many suggestions, criticisms and even attacks on the government.” But government tolerance should not and did not extend to allowing the public airing of views hostile to established policies, particularly those that have to do with mainland Communists and Russia. To do so, he implies here and elsewhere, is to contribute to public confusion and to the weakening of the nation.

The sanctity of established policy, particularly in the form of national goals, represented one limit to speech and publication in this understanding. “Crisis” represented another. Speech could be limited because of the circumstances the nation faced. The greater the crisis, the more authority the government should have to limit expression in order to protect national security and preserve national solidarity. The fact that the “crisis” is ongoing gives the government reason continually to suspend rights. But Chiang goes even further, suggesting at times that any rationale will do, so long as provisions for limiting rights are enshrined in law:

Freedom should be confined to the limits of law. Freedom of speech should not be otherwise. . . . There would be serious consequences on national morale
and peace and order if we allow the publication of articles encouraging moral
depravity or endangering national security. . . . [The press law that provides for
suspensions] is not intended to gag, but to protect, lawful freedom of speech.102

This formalistic understanding of the limits of freedoms and rights has im-
portant implications. It implies that rights have no substance other than that
which government decides to accord them. It could shrink them in any way it
chooses as part of its power to keep order and secure the nation. There are no
principles, no decision rules, no constitutional provisions, no precedents that
must be consulted or invoked. This implication includes the law itself, in that
Chiang’s formulation suggests a plasticity to it—no citizen could have knowl-
edge or insight into whether a particular expression or publication would run
afoul of the statutes Chiang references. That determination would be entirely
in the hands of government officials, who would make decisions ad hoc based
on their understanding of relevant conditions.

These positions are fundamentally illiberal. They do not conceptualize
rights and freedoms as fundamental, to be limited only to prevent actual dis-
order or when they conflict with one another. Here, governmental authority in
the pursuit of order and security, as well as its own policy preferences, is fun-
damental, subordinating rights and freedoms. Earlier, we saw that Chiang em-
braced the notion that traditional ethics should be deployed to limit and
balance the exercise of rights and freedoms. There, rights and freedoms are
placed on equal footing with a set of moral principles supported by the govern-
ment. In these statements we see a different picture of how Chiang sometimes
conceptualized rights and freedoms as secondary to officials’ preferences and
their efforts to foster order and security.

In contrast, Chiang (in addition to the arguments from human nature pre-
viously discussed) did on occasion argue that rights and freedoms are neces-
sary and in so doing implicitly endorsed the understanding that democracy is
fundamentally connected with a strong set of rights and freedoms:

We are all human beings; we are not machines. As human beings, we should
have human rights, human freedoms, a human way of thinking and human
dignity. If everyone is condemned to never-ending struggle in Peiping’s “revolu-
tion,” then for whose sake is the “revolution” fought?103

At various times, Chiang listed freedom of speech, publication, religion, and
travel as necessary for a democratic regime. He argues that Sân Mín Chữ Yì
democracy entails a mixture of fixed revolutionary and national goals and negative freedoms for people. When fully instituted, democracy would mean there would be no more class struggle, despotism and violence, political chicanery, intimidation and war, no tampering with history and culture, no persecution of minorities or families. On the positive side, “everyone will be free to enjoy his freedom and to possess his own property.”

Yet Chiang was often more adamant in discussing the denial of such negative freedoms to mainlanders under the PRC than in defending their necessity for those who endured the rigors of his own government. For the latter, freedom must be balanced against the problems individual contingency brings. This meant that freedom for young people sometimes reduced in his discussions to the opportunity to become to ethical beings and patriots as produced by “San Min Chu I education.” Or it could mean that “disciplined freedom” was needed in the face of the dangers of hedonism, debauchery, degeneration, and the loss of moral courage that comes from modern prosperity. Tsao and Tang emphasize this aspect of Chiang’s democratic understanding, arguing that he was consistent in his conception of the relationship between citizens and the state. They argue that Chiang created a particular conception of democracy that builds on Sun’s belief in the need for a disciplined demos. In this conception, citizens are expected to respect and contribute to society while living an individual life. In this democratic way of life, not only are individualism and social awareness balanced, so also are the importance of citizens embracing both rights and obligations and in placing equal importance on freedom and public order. All this is founded on a fundamental emphasis on the rule of law. Thus they argue that Chiang did not favor an authoritarian or illiberal state, even if he moved away from a strongly Western liberal model. He strove instead for a hybrid understanding that he thought best fit the need for individual autonomy and social discipline in the Chinese context.

This interpretation appears to give Chiang more credit for a systematic view than is really the case and to overstate his acceptance of individual rights and freedoms. It also appears to misunderstand the liberal placement of rights and freedoms and its resistance to government sponsorship of perfectionist life plans. But even in this sympathetic treatment, the picture we have of Chiang’s conception emphasizes the fact that he partly followed in the footsteps of Sun on this question. For the latter, China, unlike Europe, historically had problems not with the absence of freedom but with too much
freedom. Revolution for him primarily had the goal of strengthening the nation through unity rather than pursuing the glamour of liberty. If this meant taking away some individual freedoms, Sun was untroubled by the prospect. Chiang seems to have partially picked up and perpetuated this attitude, though in his references to negative liberty he appears, at least rhetorically, to have linked liberty more closely to democracy than did Sun. He had absorbed from other sources, possibly Western, a partly liberal vocabulary on rights and freedoms that he liked to deploy when speaking of the mainland. But that liberal vocabulary sat rather incongruously alongside his other uses of republican and Chinese unitary vocabularies that stressed discipline and unity above individual autonomy.

As in many other areas, Chiang’s contribution to democratic learning in this area is mixed. He does defend rights and freedoms in the abstract. He does list a number of rights as important. He denounces the PRC for refusing to respect individual rights. A regime that totally denies rights is, in this portrayal, not legitimate. But he does not provide a defense of a rigorous system of rights. He legitimizes the limitation of rights and their subordination to
projects important to the government. He attempts to balance freedom with state-sponsored traditional ethics. He does not mention the need for an independent judiciary to defend rights. In all, he does not provide a very full or detailed understanding of what a democratic government characterized by a full respect for individual rights would entail.

**Chiang Kai-shek’s Contributions to Democratic Learning and to Discussions of Democracy in the Chinese Community**

It is clear that, in practice, Chiang presided over a regime on Taiwan whose use of elections and constitutional precepts amount to something more than a “pseudo-democracy” in Diamond’s terms and less than a democracy in Lipset’s minimal definition. At issue here, however, is the democratic understanding Chiang contributed in his public statements and their possible influence on democratic learning and socialization. I argue that his rhetorical contribution was significantly greater than his practice. It falls somewhere between Lipset’s standard and Diamond’s conception of a liberal democracy, settling in a description that mixes the republican unitary, competitive elitist, and Chinese unitary models with liberal elements.

In contrast to Sun, Chiang provides a very strong justification of democracy that sidesteps many of the contextual and pragmatic pitfalls of his predecessor’s defenses. For Chiang, it is not just modern humans (or Western citizens) who desire democracy. Neither is democracy the product of higher civilization or topical only because of the need for powerful states to accomplish historic tasks. Democracy is necessary because it corresponds to the natural order of things, is responsive to an innate human desire for freedom, and is identifiable with the substance of both an innate and an external understanding of morality and ethics. These justifications are intellectually congenial to citizens trained in China’s traditional philosophical and religious systems and serve to delegitimize authoritarian alternatives.

More complex are Chiang’s discussions of democracy in relation to the authority of Sun, Chinese culture, and tutelage. Chiang expends an inordinate amount of energy linking democracy with Sun. The ROC should be a democracy because that is what Sun desired. This justification is problematic from a democratic point of view, as we shall discuss more fully below. His rooting of democracy in Chinese culture, which mirrors aspects of the cultural mínběn justification, as well as his references to human nature, are also complicated by his insistence on tutelage. Part of this complication can be explained by his
belief that training in traditional virtues is important to democratic discipline and his probable assumption that tutelage brings out human potential. Nonetheless, to hold that the Chinese require tutelage before they can practice democracy puts the entire project of democracy in question as a potentially alien, artificial, or paternalistic construct that sits uneasily alongside his rooting of democracy in human nature and Chinese culture.

While he does not push a jiùwáng justification of democracy, Chiang’s focus on nationalism and unification does affect his understanding of democracy in a parallel fashion. He suggests that, given the challenge of unification and later of the Communist enemy, a viable China can only be democratic if it stresses unity. Where Sun sees democracy as a valuable contextual variation of government that provides a nation with a powerful tool for solving problems, Chiang sees democracy as responsive to a facet of human nature that must be accounted for but that in operation can encourage fragmentation. Thus while he argues that democracy is anthropologically necessary, he speaks as if it is not always instrumentally helpful. Given that understanding, Chiang discusses democracy in ways that imply that officials must constantly pay attention to and guard against the dangers democracy poses, which come in the form of excessive individualism and social indiscipline. This is why important democratic rights and powers were suspended under the “Emergency Provisions”; as later justifications put it, the government could not allow citizens to exercise their rights in full or allow the participation of multiple parties whose “politicking . . . could divide a nation’s strength” in the face of the Communist challenge. Thus we find Chiang’s emphasis on the unifying and disciplinary benefits of traditional Chinese culture, benefits that he attempts to incorporate into democratic practice through the joining of rights and freedom with the civic virtues of responsibilities, discipline, and a rigid respect for law and order.

This last point leads to the observation that, in its contours, Chiang’s conception of democracy follows Sun’s in its elitist and unitary characteristics and shares the problems of downward accountability we identified in Sun’s discussion. Like Sun, Chiang assumes that the KMT can represent the entire demos and does little to recognize the legitimacy of pluralism. This makes his state resistant to expressions of downward accountability. But there is a difference here between Sun and Chiang in their understandings of democracy’s relationship to unity, with Sun relying upon the practice of democracy and Chiang relying upon on Chinese culture. Chiang also depends on tradi-
tional ethics for a form of moral accountability. Sun is closer in this sense to the republican unitary model than Chiang, while Chiang is closer to the Chinese unitary variant of democracy than Sun. Yet Chiang also goes further than Sun to incorporate aspects of liberal democracy into his discussions, particularly in the areas of constitutionalism and individual rights.

Chiang is a complex figure in the general Chinese conversation on democracy. When he emphasizes liberal understandings (constitutional forms, the role of the public, gestures toward rights and freedoms), he appears to draw more substantively from the West than did Sun. However, Chiang’s rhetorical resistance to seeing democracy as only a Western concept, his insistence that it is a concept that must be adapted to Chinese contexts, his repeated references to Chinese cultural figures, and his employment of traditional Chinese ethics as the means by which to solidify the demos and balance individualism add important elements to his understanding that are clearly absent from Western models. Likewise, his justifications of democracy by reference to a Chinese understanding of natural law, the nature of the universe, and The Way produce a discussion that marks this version of democracy as different from Western models and distinct from the universal, advanced model that Sun put forward. Substantively, he mixes both sources more thoroughly than did Sun. Where Sun portrayed himself as a democratic theorist advancing our understanding of democracy while working in the Chinese context, the bulk of evidence points to Chiang presenting himself as a proponent of a Chinese variant of democracy.