

THE CONTENTIOUS DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT: MILITARISM, CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOOD IN A TAIWANESE VILLAGE¹

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Utilizing a case study of a Taiwanese village near a navy base, this paper explores the environmental consequence of militarization and democratization. I maintain that, despite the destructiveness of war, militarism—in the form of protracted war preparation—may actually help to shelter the natural environment from commercial encroachment, even as it compels community residents to poach for their survival in an unsustainable manner. Following democratization, however, when the military's control of land—including entry restrictions—is lifted, an acute environmental crisis results. Democratization thus proves to be inherently controversial because it escalates the conflict between conservationists and local residents over how land is to be used, as both groups engage in a struggle to redefine the relationship between human beings and the natural environment. Despite this conflict, however, in the long run democratization leads to a new coalition between opposing groups—a coalition that transcends the previous antagonism.

POLITICAL REGIMES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In the age of universal risk, Ulrich Beck argues, only the “ecological extension of democracy” provides an antidote to ubiquitous ecological crises given the fact that an open society assures information transparency and greater public participation (1992:101). At its core, democracy consists of universal citizenship guaranteeing each citizen equal protection and consultation. The transition to democracy is necessarily a process of extending rights, either by incorporating once-excluded groups or by covering more aspects of human life, from the political to the personal. Freedom from pollution and equal access to a clean environment have been deemed by some to be vital human rights, or ecological citizenship (Smith 1998).

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The positive effects of democracy on environmental protection have been well documented in the empirical literature. It is argued that freedom of speech and discussion can avert ecological disasters that may result from dubious developmental projects (Shapiro 2001:21-65). Moreover, strong currents of environmentalism emerge only when meaningful civil liberties exist. Some studies also find positive correlations between democracy and environmental governance, which can be measured by policy design (Tang and Tang 2000), policy effectiveness (Janicke 1996), or institution-building (Tang and Tang 2006). Furthermore, exposure to global culture is also said to encourage the adoption of environmental protection measures nationally (Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer 2000).

Nevertheless, some scholars are much less sanguine regarding the ecological virtues of democracy. In the 1970s, environmental alarmism called for radical solutions. Specifically, since it was argued that every individual was inclined to overexploit the commons, a strong public authority, capable of upholding "mutual coercion," was needed (Hardin 1968). Both radical and conservative theorists agreed that *laissez-faire* democracy was no longer sustainable. Robert Heilbroner (1991) predicted that the dismal prospect of dwindling resources and a growing population would constrain the economic growth that had blunted economic struggles in the past. An intensified clash of interests would result in political conflict and would lead to the rise of an "iron government, probably of a military-socialist cast" (Heilbroner 1991:39). For William Ophuls, ecological scarcity confirmed the core credo of conservatism—that men were fettered by their own insatiable appetites (1977:163). Since ecological knowledge was necessarily esoteric and unpopular, "ecological mandarins" were needed to govern public affairs in a society that could no longer stake its future on economic growth.

Most of these discussions were cast in a dichotomous, either-or style, which left little room for a comparative understanding of the impact of different political regimes on the environment. This paper revisits this classical debate by focusing on the issue of militarism as an extreme form of authoritarianism. As a source of social power (Mann 1986:25-26), war-making and war-preparation activities have exerted a tremendous influence upon the environment. According to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, "warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development" (United Nations Environment Programme 1992). During the first Gulf War (1991), the entire world witnessed the ecological devastation visited upon that region. Since that time, the environmental costs of war have become all the more visible (Woodward 2001: 205).

Peacetime military activities are equally harmful to the environment, albeit in a less dramatic way. Routine live-fire training is not only a deadly threat to civilians, but also a source of contamination to nearby land, as evidenced in the famous case of Vieques in Puerto Rico (McCaffrey 2006).

Development projects in the name of national security are particularly devastating, such as the Brazilian effort to develop Amazonia (Ciccantell 1999; Wood and Schminck 1993) and the industrialization of inland China (Shapiro 2001:139-158). Even the non-military use of "war sciences," such as earth-moving by means of nuclear explosions, often turns out to be environmentally risky (Kirsch 2000).

How then can we conceptualize these highly diverse and sometimes contradictory arguments concerning the relationship between militarism and the environment? For a start, the term militarism cannot be reduced to the sum of all war-related behaviors. Woodward defines militarism as

the shaping of civilian space and social relations by military objectives, rationales and structures, either as part of the deliberative extension of military influence into civilian spheres of life and the prioritizing of military institutions, or as a by-product of those processes. (2005:721)

Militarism is thus not merely the ensemble of the armed forces' activities; rather, it is an analytical concept that highlights a situation in which military institutions play a predominant role in patterning society. Militarism is both an institution that allocates considerable resources to war-making and war-preparation and a mindset that views the world through a military perspective. Therefore, militarism should not be confused with military regimes, such as the Burmese junta, because it also exists in civilian-ruled countries.

Given the universally recognized environmental consequences of military activities, there is surprisingly little systematic theorizing on this topic. Santana points out that environmentalists wage a spirited campaign against "toxic capitalism," while paying relatively less attention to fighting "toxic militarism" (2002:37). Take the U.S. Defense Department as an example. The Pentagon proudly presents itself as the country's "oldest, largest, busiest, and most successful company," and this bold claim is justified by the fact that it is the largest sole consumer of energy in the United States, if not worldwide (Santana 2002:37).

This paper seeks to further our understanding of militarism by looking at a seemingly paradoxical case in which military activities are actually "beneficial" for nature conservation. There is no denying the destructive nature of war. But under particular circumstances, placing military goals over economic and other civilian demands may actually help to preserve natural resources from relentless exploitation. When national security is believed to be under threat, the defense imperative can override the goal of development and thus impede the environmental degradation that would otherwise result. One such notable example is the heavily armed Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in the Korean Peninsula—an area that has developed into a sanctuary for endangered

birds. In other words, military activities may produce, as well as destroy, nature (Davis 2007).

Using Taiwan as an example, I argue for a more balanced and nuanced perspective. Authoritarian militarism may incidentally preserve the natural environment by prohibiting encroachment by outsiders and restraining residents' economic activities. The less the human infringement, the less the irreversible damage that is done. However, such coercive control also gives rise to what James Scott (1990) calls "everyday forms of resistance," in which residents' struggles for livelihood result in environmental poaching. In addition, the classical question of "who guards the guardian" remains. Wielding nearly absolute power, the military itself is blamed for many environmental abuses.

Democratization often results in the settling of past accounts with the authoritarian regime. One such highly controversial and contested area involves how best to use well-preserved natural environments.² The removal of the military's control can trigger an acute environmental crisis as angry residents seek to reclaim their rights to livelihood. Urban conservation groups, on the other hand, using their newly gained freedom of association, can form coalitions to preserve the military's legacy by demanding greater regulations on land use, inevitably causing a head-on collision with local interests. While democratization is a contentious process, intensifying environmental degradation and exacerbating social conflicts, I shall argue that conservationists and residents are beginning to reach a common ground that encompasses both—the right to a livelihood as well as the right to quality of life based on environmental protection.

In this article, I present a case study on a suburban community in Kaohsiung City of southern Taiwan, Chaishan (literally "Firewood Mountain"—a hilly area squeezed by a navy base in the north and a commercial harbor in the

²In Taiwan, highly diversified patterns of land use have taken hold after the evacuation of military units. The Fuyang Nature Park in Taipei City was originally a military barracks and has since become a community park, owing to residents' lobbying (Taipei City government 2008). The former Tucheng Ammunitions Depot in Taipei County was rezoned to accommodate a relocated prison, resulting in residents' protest. While the transition in Fuyang was smooth due to the park's small size (3.8 hectares) and lower levels of impact on residents, by contrast, the Tucheng case was more complicated as a result of the prison construction and the removal of residents living in this relatively large area (96 hectares). An even thornier case was that of Chaishan, where the military did not totally abandon its base. Chaishan was also larger (1,200 hectares) than Fuyang and Tucheng and involved commercial interests (see the analysis below).

south. Due to its strategic location, Chaishan and its seaside village, Taoyuan,³ had been under military control by the Japanese colonial government during the 1930s. The postwar Kuomintang (KMT) government placed restrictions on entry and economic activity until the late 1980s, when Taiwan began to democratize. This protracted military presence in Chaishan brought about an unexpected consequence: both the village as well as its ecological resources remained well preserved, paving the way for a new environmental politics in the 1990s. As middle-class conservationists rediscovered Chaishan's pristine beauty, they campaigned to maintain the existing regulations on development. Taoyuan residents, however, saw the demise of authoritarianism as a long-awaited opportunity to reclaim their right to a livelihood. Restaurants and holiday resorts began to mushroom on this once-forbidden land. Conservationists denounced such commercial development as reckless greediness, while locals justified it as belated compensation for their long-standing deprivation. This politics of conservation versus the right to a livelihood in Chaishan epitomized the conflict-ridden nature of Taiwan's democratization process.

The data I present here was collected in 2006 and 2007, when I conducted field work in Kaohsiung. During that time, I interviewed individuals from different camps, including local elders, community leaders, schoolteachers, restaurant owners and residents, as well as conservation activists and city officials. I also relied on journalistic accounts as well as official documents for relevant information.⁴

FROM A TREADMILL OF DESTRUCTION TO A TREADMILL OF PRODUCTION

The "treadmill of production" is a powerful concept that environmental sociologists use to capture the fundamental dynamic in which more and more natural resources are relentlessly extracted to meet the imperative of economic expansion (Gould, Pellow, and Schnaiberg 2004; Schnaiberg and Gould 1994). In this process, a large coalition of business, labor and government interests takes the lead in environmental development and exploitation, producing a myriad of environmental hazards unevenly distributed along class and race cleavages. While capitalism's culpability in this regard is rarely questioned,

³Taoyuan ward was the administrative name of Chaishan during the postwar era. The locals, however, refer to themselves as Chaishan people, rather than Taoyuan people. To avoid confusion, I use Taoyuan for the settlement and Chaishan for the whole mountainous area.

⁴During this field research, Li-ting Huang offered her generous assistance. She worked for a Kaohsiung conservation group before we collaborated on this project. She assisted by introducing me to key local informants and providing useful information on the middle-class orientation of the conservation movement.

another social force that produces equally grave environmental threats—militarism, or the “treadmill of destruction”—is often neglected. Militarism, with its distinct logic of geopolitics that cannot be reduced to profit-making, has profoundly reshaped relations between human beings and their habitat (Hooks and Smith 2004). These two treadmills can be friend or foe, depending on the historical configuration, and their relationship has a highly diversified impact on the natural environment. I maintain, however, that the story of Taiwan’s environment offers an example of the transition from the treadmill of destruction to that of production.

Previous studies have stressed the critical impact that economic activities have had on Taiwan’s environment. In the postwar era, Taiwan underwent a sustained period of rapid economic growth as, at the same time, its natural environment underwent grave and irreversible damage. Economic prosperity came at a high price—pollution and population concentration—which greatly reduced the quality of life (Arrigo 1994; Chi 1994; Edmonds 1996).

Taiwan’s economic growth did not come in a natural, unplanned fashion, however, but was carefully engineered from above by a powerful “developmental state” (Haggard 1990; Wade 1990). According to this view, KMT governing elites sought to justify their minority rule by accelerating the speed of industrialization so as to gain the support of the population (Williams 1992; Wong 2003:242). In addition, during this period, Taiwan was tied to the U.S.-led anti-communist bloc and therefore benefited greatly from the unprecedented export-led boom in global trade experienced since the 1960s (Cumings 1987). Thus, when environmental protests emerged in the mid-1980s, they were invariably interpreted as a great awakening. Disillusioned and victimized, grassroots groups mounted a tremendous challenge to the political economy of “high-speed, export-oriented growth espoused by the KMT and business elite” (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990:213).

While this interpretation of Taiwan’s economic growth has much to commend it, it fails to capture the role of militarism in this development. First, the establishment of a war-mobilizing regime in Taiwan predated political authoritarianism and industrialization. In the mid-1930s, for example, as the colonial Japanese government braced itself for war with China, it promoted a policy of “militarization, industrialization, and Japanization” in Taiwan. To achieve this, the Japanese silenced political dissent and suppressed native culture and language. A command economy gradually came into being through efforts to rationalize the country’s economic structure and through war-related heavy industrialization (Lin 1996). After a confused transition period, the KMT government inherited a colonial legacy of enhanced industrial assets from Japanese rule, as well as an efficient means of resource extraction—both laying the foundation for the authoritarian capitalism that followed.

Second, a full-blown armed conflict across the Taiwan Strait was a highly probable scenario in the early phase of the cold war. Indeed, a major

artillery battle took place in Quemoy (Kinmen) in 1958, and, as late as 1969, the KMT continued conducting consistent armed raids against China (Clough 1978: 99). In accordance with Chiang Kai-shek's avowed goal to "expel the communist bandits," during this time, Taiwan maintained a larger army than necessary for its defense. Military expenditures were an overriding priority of state, consistently claiming from 85–90% of national government outlays (Jacoby 1966:93). A direct environmental corollary of this was that a large portion of agricultural land was devoted to rice production in order to feed the KMT soldiers, contributing to a conflict over resources between war-making and industrialization. Consequently, the KMT's developmental agenda took off only after the military goal was suspended and economic technocrats began to eclipse the influence of military generals. Without this reorientation, it would have been difficult to introduce such developmental policies as land reform, family planning, and trade liberalization (Wade 1990:246, 265-266).

Militarism also affected the relationship between society and the environment. As war preparation took precedence over civilian goals, the environmental degradation that is typically brought about by economic development was restrained and cushioned. In the absence of military mobilization, a high population-density country like Taiwan would have depleted many of its natural resources that still remain intact today. For example, due to fears of communist guerrillas, a martial law-era decree applied court-martial punishment to any individuals who burned or cut the mountainous forests without permission (Hsüeh 2000:119, 132). Although the draconian measure did not stop state agencies from engaging in commercial logging, it served to largely deter civilian encroachment.

Taiwan's coastline offers another example, where national security needs outlawed private ownership of coastal land. Only state agencies, such as port authorities and state-owned enterprises, were allowed to develop the coastline. It was not until the early 1990s, when, facing pressure from business, the KMT government began to legalize the private ownership of coastal land, which resulted in what Taiwanese environmentalists have called "the coastal crisis" (Shih 1998).

Finally, the reforestation of Quemoy Island was directly brought about by Cold War military confrontation. For centuries, Quemoy had been depleted of its forests and had become barren and highly uninhabitable. To defend this tiny island, lying in close proximity to China, the KMT armed forces began a massive land-engineering project in order to provide better camouflage for its military facilities. As a result, forest covers more than half of the total area, and Quemoy has become the greenest county in Taiwan (Tsai 2003:212).

In sum, while warfare is highly destructive of natural environment, the effect of war preparation is far from uniform. Beyond these anecdotal examples, a closer look at Chaishan can help paint a fuller picture of the environmental consequences of militarism.

CHAISHAN UNDER MINITARY CONTROL

Chaishan is located at the heart of Kaohsiung City, the second largest metropolis in Taiwan, with a population of more than 1.5 million. Had it not been for the military control imposed since the mid-1930s, this area would have long ago been urbanized due to sheer population pressure. Instead, because of military regulations, Chaishan, including Taoyuan village, became a sparsely populated area—a holiday resort that attracts urban denizens to enjoy its coffee, gourmet food and the spectacular seaside scenery.

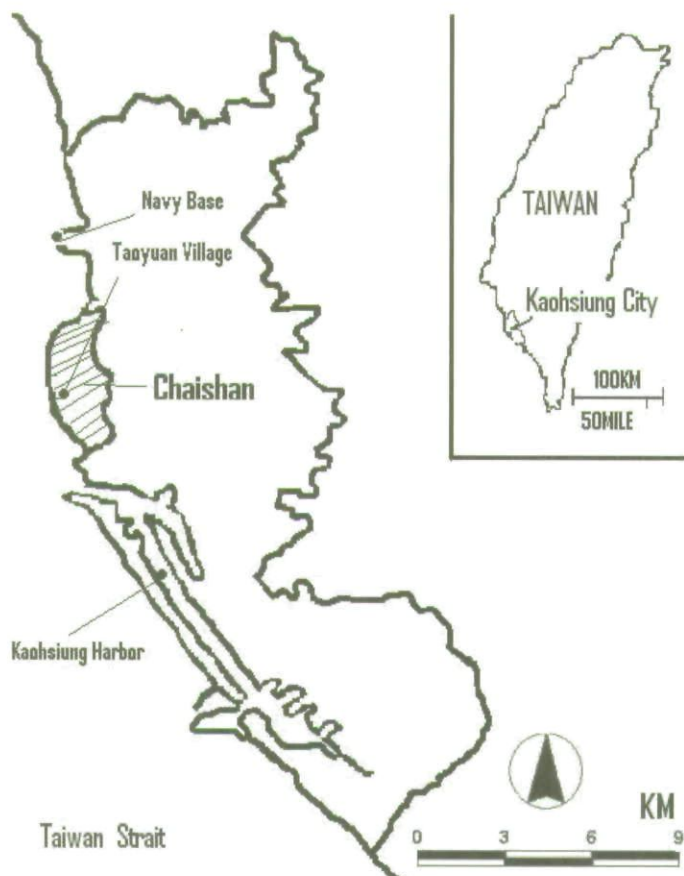


FIGURE 1: CHAISHAN AND KAOHSIUNG CITY

It is ironic that Chaishan was populated before Kaohsiung. Historical records document that aborigines and Chinese pirates settled here in the early 17th century, when the lowlands surrounding Chaishan were still a vast tract of uninhabitable swamp. Japanese officials decided to declare Chaishan a forest preserve in 1907; villagers, however, were permitted to make a living by collecting dry wood for sale—thus, the origins of the name, “Firewood Mountain” (Hung 1995:17-18). With the drenching of the lowland swamp and the construction of Kaohsiung harbor south of Chaishan, villagers later began to migrate to the urban plain.

In 1936, the Japanese colonial government designated Kaohsiung a “national defense city for the southern advance,” that is, as a springboard for military action in the South Pacific region. Accordingly, a naval base was constructed north of Chaishan in 1941 and a nearby settlement was forced to relocate elsewhere.⁵ As a result, Taoyuan became the only settlement in the Chaishan area and residents’ fishing activities were strictly regulated (Tu 2004). Sandwiched between the busiest commercial harbor and the most important navy base in Taiwan, Chaishan became a site with paramount strategic significance. The daily lives of Taoyuan villagers came under military surveillance, especially during the Pacific War (1940–1945). In the latter days of the war, U.S. bombing made it necessary for villagers to take refuge elsewhere. According to local elders, some evacuees never returned to Taoyuan.

Gradually, the KMT armed forces expanded the military base in the Chaishan area to the point that the entire Taoyuan village was encompassed by various kinds of military facilities, such as barracks, a combat training center, a missile base, a radar station, and a shooting range. During the cold war, military exercises were common in Chaishan, sometimes with Chiang Kai-shek and foreign leaders invited as guests.

Such developments demanded a level of security that placed villagers under strict control. A 1950 decree, for example, barred non-villagers from moving to Taoyuan, prohibiting individuals with suspicious intentions from taking up residence there. A military post was set up to regulate incoming traffic, with visitors being permitted to enter only when they possessed an invitation from a village inhabitant. Even these visitors, however, had to leave by sunset as overnight stays were prohibited. Such regulations so isolated Chaishan that many Kaohsiung citizens did not even know of Taoyuan village’s existence.

In addition to these restrictions, the military regulated villagers’ housing as well. A moratorium on the construction of new houses was announced in 1958. Accordingly, houses built after 1958 were deemed illegal and were

⁵The destroyed village was called Taozheyuan. Taozheyuan and Taoyuan village (then officially called Chaishan) were the only two settlements in Chaishan before the war. In the postwar period, the name of the former was given to the latter in modified form, which was the cause of some confusion.

subject to demolition. Villagers were allowed to renovate their homes only with military permission, on the condition that they would be the same size, the same height, and in the same location. This rule forced Taoyuan villagers to live in cramped and dilapidated homes, even as the size of families increased.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL BALANCE SHEET OF MILITARISM

These military-control measures transformed Taoyuan village into a *de facto* military compound and its inhabitants nearly into soldiers against their will. Villagers complained about unreasonable demands, but, for many years, they were effectively silenced because of the repressive political atmosphere. Indeed, militarism hermetically sealed Chaishan off from the rest of Taiwan, where capitalist development had drastically altered both the landscape and its people. Taoyuan villagers missed out on the "farm-to-factory" transformation that took place in many rural communities during the economic take-off period (Gallin and Gallin 1992). Spared the fate of ruthless exploitation, however, Chaishan's coral limestone, vegetation, and wild monkeys were preserved, as were the residents and their traditional way of life. When middle-class conservationists "rediscovered" the village in the early 1990s, they saw a world composed of an "ancient way of life without modern civilization pollution" (Tsai 1993:195). Thus, from the early 1950s to the late 1980s, Chaishan represented a rare and extreme case of authoritarian management of the environment at the expense of residents' human rights.

To what extent, did authoritarianism secure a better environment from human intervention? Undoubtedly, Chaishan would have depleted its ecological resources without these military regulations. However, while authoritarian control was effective in restricting outsiders' infringements on Chaishan, it did not prevent internal environmental damage. Indeed, not only was the military itself responsible for a number of ecologically unsound projects, but the need for subsistence living drove villagers to engage in poaching activities that were mostly tolerated by the military.

When KMT troops were initially stationed in Chaishan immediately after Japan's surrender, they simply took over available land for the building of military facilities without any geological considerations. Soon, barracks and posts erected on steep hills were abandoned due to persistent landslides. A precious archaeological site discovered by Japanese scholars during the colonial period was also partially destroyed by the KMT's military construction.

In the 1970s, villagers began to shift their subsistence activities from fishing to agriculture as the military imposed a ban on fishing within five hundred meters of the coastline. As a result, a wave of reclamation began, clearing the forested areas above Taoyuan village, as fruit orchards and poultry farms encroached upon the formerly preserved forest. The military was hardly in a position to stop this trend since it was being indirectly encouraged by the fishing ban. Farming brought a steady income to Taoyuan villagers and, for a

period of time, some farmers even made a small fortune through the sale of lichee, a sweet edible fruit. Seeking to contain the extent of private enclosure of land, however, the military demanded that farmers sign an annual lease and pay rent for farming the public land. However, this taxation was suspended by the military in 1979.⁶ As a result, most illegal farming continued until the late 1980s, when more lucrative business opportunities sprang up with the gradual phasing out of military control.

In the mid-1980s, the military also undertook an ambitious project to build a missile base squarely at the center of Taoyuan village. To no avail, villagers petitioned against this project, which demolished their houses and forced some residents to move out of the area. Owing to their traditional understanding of Chaishan's topography, they recognized that the designated site was fragile and would likely not be able to sustain an elaborate system of tunnels, docks and silos. In the end, the villagers' assessment was correct; the missile base caused further soil erosion, almost damaging the nearby village. Moreover, the villagers saw the project as a waste of money since they never saw a missile launched after the facility's completion.

According to Scott, poaching had been the weapon of the weak *par excellence* in Europe (1990:189-191). This hidden form of resistance enabled disfranchised peasants to maintain their livelihood. In the case of Chaishan, poaching by forest reclamation was a popular response to coercive control. The military was faced with a dilemma. It was constrained from playing the role of responsible guardian and therefore had to tolerate these poaching activities as its presence in the area brought about an acute subsistence crisis among villagers. Otherwise, the relentless suppression of these economic activities would lead to village-wide dislocation, which would likely pose an even greater problem.

DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE WANING OF MILITARY CONTROL

For Taoyuan villagers, military control had always been an unbearable burden. The repressive political atmosphere of living under military control made it risky for them to speak out and challenge the military's authority. With gradual liberalization in the early 1980s and the subsequent democratization which ensued, the balance began to tilt in favor of the villagers.

In the late 1980s, the democratization process gave villagers some political leverage to attain their collective goal, petitioning the Kaohsiung City Council to consider their plight. Council members criticized the domineering manner of the military and demanded the immediate removal of its control. One mayor even declared that normalizing Chaishan was his personal commitment.

⁶The locals attributed the end of contracting and taxation in 1979 to a typhoon disaster in the previous year. But a more plausible explanation may be that the military did not want to give the impression that it recognized the private enclosure of land.

Facing mounting popular pressure, the military was forced to make concessions. In 1988, the area under military control was downsized by approximately one-third, to 981 hectares, although this still encompassed the entire village and its farmland.

The most important policy change was not one formally announced by the military, however, but its effects on villagers' livelihoods were far-reaching. Specifically, the military began to tolerate the restaurants that were proliferating in the village—restaurants built in violation of the construction code. In fact, even the military post that controlled traffic to Taoyuan village was instructed to allow visitors who intended to dine in these restaurants access to the area. Indeed, dining became the only legal means by which outsiders could explore the natural beauty of Chaishan. The result of this relaxation was that the restrictions on traffic and visiting were for all intents and purposes lifted.

The period of the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a boom in real estate and stock speculation in Taiwan. The demand for domestic tourism surged as the *nouveau riches* were willing to pay a relatively high price to experience novel dining. In Taoyuan, restaurants specialized in the cuisine of *t'uchi*, a locally produced wild chicken, and seafood. According to locals, for a period of time, customers had to wait in long lines to be seated. Such was the demand that many villagers gave up farming and devoted themselves to this more profitable business. At its peak, there were more than a dozen restaurants and cafés in this village—one with a population of less than 800 inhabitants.

As more and more tourists visited Chaishan, Taoyuan village was no longer isolated. Land speculation, which had surged in Taiwan's major cities, also spread to this area. Locals sold their land to the urban parvenus, who built stately vacation mansions on sites where decaying houses once stood. To be sure, there was a limited supply of private land in Chaishan for sale. Most of the land transactions involved publicly owned land that had been privately occupied and reclaimed for farming. Buyers obtained only the rights to use the land; they did not become *bona fide* owners. However, many were willing to invest in Chaishan because of rumors that the government would soon release the occupied land at a very low price. The speculation craze went to such an extent that the same city mayor, who had once vowed to rescue Chaishan from the military's grip, now began to denounce speculators for environmental damage.

Soon, local business interests and outside speculators were united by their common effort to remove any remaining military control. With the involvement of moneyed outsiders, the military faced even greater pressure. The early 1990s saw a great number of elected representatives calling for the opening of Chaishan; it was widely believed that these politicians were related to land speculation themselves. Emboldened, villagers grew more impatient with military control. "If Quemoy could be opened up for tourists," they argued, "why should Chaishan be the exception?" Taoyuan villagers' hidden resistance suddenly became a public protest. In 1993, villagers staged a demonstration at

city hall to demand privatization of occupied land. In 1996, they blocked a military base, pitching a tent at its main entrance to prevent their buildings from being listed as illegal.

In November 1996, the military post that had controlled the entry to Taoyuan village for 46 years was finally abandoned, albeit without any formal announcement. Now the entire village settlement was accessible to anyone at anytime, and a new post was erected to guard only the interior area. While villagers celebrated their liberation, Kaohsiung conservationists were angered by this move. To them, removal of the military post amounted to no less than an abandonment of the military's responsibilities. Urban conservation groups held a press conference to protest the hasty decision that was made without regard to possible environmental consequences. Hereafter, a new politics of conservation and development came into being.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION

While Taoyuan villagers were busy running their restaurants, brokering land transfers, and campaigning for the lifting of military control, a full-blown environmental movement had emerged throughout Taiwan. In the Kaohsiung metropolitan area, the late 1980s witnessed the rise of violent anti-pollution protests staged by residents of poorer communities (Ho 2005). In the early 1990s, this style of grassroots environmentalism continued, while middle-class professionals also began to pay greater attention to ecological issues, giving rise to a stream of urban conservationism (Lee 2007).

Like other Kaohsiung citizens, these middle-class professionals—journalists, writers, medical doctors, lawyers and architects—came to know Chaishan only after military control had been gradually relaxed. At first, they were simply groups of friends who had enjoyed exploring the uncharted mountainous area of Chaishan on weekends. Taken by its natural beauty, they soon became convinced of the need to do something more. At first, they simply held a local photography exhibition to disseminate their message to the general public. By 1992, however, they organized the Chaishan Natural Park Promotion Society (CNPPS) to coordinate their efforts.

In many ways, the CNPPS neatly fitted the profile of "wilderness crusades" analyzed by Guha and Martinez-Alier (1997). Noteworthy for its middle-class participation, post-materialistic values and idealistic protection of nature, the CNPPS was antithetical to the grassroots struggles for livelihoods which characterized Taoyuan villagers' hidden resistance and public protest against military control. In the early years, however, the CNPPS rarely had contact with local villagers, as most of its attention was concentrated in areas that had not been settled and reclaimed.

Inevitably, its advocacy for a nature preserve in Chaishan came into conflict with the interests of development-minded villagers. In 1993, the CNPPS drafted a proposal for future conservation, which was used to lobby the city

government into more aggressive action. The basic thrust of this proposal was that Chaishan should be divided into several regions with varying degrees of accessibility and permitted activities. As a result, Taoyuan village was designated a tourist region, while development bans were placed on the rest of Chaishan. The proposal also suggested that public transportation be introduced and that incoming traffic be assessed an entry fee in order to contain it. The proposal also called attention to the looming problems of wastewater pollution, land speculation, illegal construction and the danger of possible landslides. Stricter regulations on housing development were also presented (Taiwan Ecological Research Center 1993).

In 1997, the CNPPS's tireless efforts to educate the public and lobby politicians finally paid off: the Kaohsiung city government declared the establishment of Chaishan Natural Park. All land ten meters or more above sea level was included. It encompassed around 1,200 hectares, with more than five-sixths of the land still under military control. The CNPPS's proposal of differentiated land use was also adopted and written into law (Kaohsiung City Government 2002).

For many Taoyuan locals, however, the creation of the National Park had replaced unwanted military control of the land with an equally unwanted alternative form of outside control, and thus was perceived as public enemy number one. Much to villagers' chagrin, the city government proved more willing to respond to conservationists' demands while keeping a watchful eye upon villagers' business activities in farming, restaurants and land sales. Indeed, villagers began to yearn for the final days of military control, roughly dating from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, when their questionable practices were largely tolerated by the weakened military authorities.

The use of land for restaurants and vacation homes was the most controversial issue. From the perspective of conservationists, the villagers cleared the forest and usurped public lands, including a number of beautiful enclaves. Their businesses were not only illegal but also ecologically destructive. A conservationist emphatically told me that "Taoyuan people would be ashamed of abusing their homeland in such a manner." But for the locals, this was belated compensation for the suffering generations of villagers had undergone. Taoyuan villagers were sacrificed for the sake of national defense and, consequently, robbed of the opportunity to pursue a more prosperous way of life. As they claimed, Chaishan belonged to them; their ancestors had settled in the area much earlier than the majority of Han immigrants and the KMT army. Denying that they were poor stewards of Chaishan, the villagers blamed tourists and mountain-climbers for bringing about environmental damage by collecting fauna and flora.

Aware of the local sentiment of relative deprivation, conservationists focused their attacks on the private mansions built by speculators, not the restaurants and cafes run by villagers. In 2000, they staged a citywide petition

campaign to put pressure on city officials to demolish an illegal mansion owned by a powerful local politician. However, this campaign antagonized local residents who vowed to defend their subsistence rights. When the city government sent a special taskforce to tear down this mansion, a violent clash ensued. A local restaurant owner physically attacked two conservationists on the scene and a lawsuit followed. In the aftermath, Taoyuan villagers argued that they were being tyrannized by the "environmental protection ruffians," a name coined by the KMT government to legitimize its crackdown on aggressive anti-pollution protests between 1990 and 1992 (Ho 2003:697). Subsequent government demolitions met the dogged resistance of villagers. Unwilling to incur the political costs of removing additional illegal buildings, the city government became less enthusiastic about enforcing construction regulations.

In sum, after democratization, ever more conflictual relations characterized the interactions of the various stakeholders. Public authorities—the military and the city government—were caught in a tug of war between conservationists and developers, failing to please either. The current status quo in Chaishan was unacceptable to either side. For conservationists, city officials were simply retreating from their mandate to enforce law and order. For Taoyuan villagers, the city government was an uninvited, domineering and meddlesome master, as soldiers had once been. Interestingly, both sides became nostalgic for the past. The former liked the way in which Chaishan had formerly been cordoned off from seedy commercialism, while the latter missed the way in which its economic activities had been sheltered from public scrutiny. To be sure, however, no one actually advocated for the return of militarism.⁷

Like other environmental conflicts (Hurley and Walker 2004; Walker and Fortmann 2003), what lay in the heart of the Chaishan controversy was a clash of two community visions. Should Chaishan be treated as a natural asset for all Kaohsiung citizens or as a backyard, where its inhabitants could make a livelihood? Rather than bringing about a consensual solution, democratization aggravated potential tensions that led to a seemingly irreconcilable conflict.

PROSPECTS FOR A LIVABLE CHAISHAN

The politics of Chaishan represent a conflict between livability and livelihood that is common in many temporary urban areas across the globe. Key players indeed followed the scenario Peter Evans (2002) describes: parochial communities are willing to dismiss ecological goals in order to make a living, while idealistic middle-class members of NGOs sponsor environmental causes based upon their privileged status. Is there a democratic means of settling such different perspectives into a common vision of a livable Chaishan? Although the

⁷For its part, the military did not try to develop an environmental discourse to justify its continuing, albeit much reduced, presence—as did the United Kingdom's army (Woodward 1998).

two versions of Chaishan seem incompatible, I argue that a common ground has in fact emerged.

First, the rapid transformation of the village economy, which caused visible damage to Chaishan, has become a safety concern. To build private mansions and restaurants, villagers leveled slopes and cleared vegetation. As a result, the ground has begun to tilt towards the sea and the terrain upon which villagers dwell has become unstable. This geological vulnerability became apparent in 1994, when a torrential rain caused serious mudslides and blocked the main road for days. Though the great earthquake in 1999 took place in central Taiwan, Chaishan was not immune from damage. In the aftermath, the city government installed an elaborate ground monitoring system which revealed that Taoyuan village was sliding towards the sea at the rate of three to four centimeters per year. Less sophisticated observations also confirmed this looming threat. Villagers noted that the coastline was receding from the sea annually. Casual walks through the village revealed many places with road erosion, fractured embankments, and cracking walls. Although pro-development hardliners claimed that Chaishan's terrain had been very fragile ever since their ancestors settled the area over 300 years ago, the damage caused by heavy construction was undeniable. A local teacher pessimistically prophesied that Taoyuan village would be submerged under the sea in coming years. For more knowledgeable locals, the fabled city of Atlantis seemed to be their destiny.

Second, many Taoyuan villagers began to complain about the noise, trash and traffic brought by tourists. Just ten years earlier, Taoyuan villagers were able to leave their keys in their scooters without worrying of theft, as there were virtually no strangers in the village. During my fieldwork, a local woman I met said she now locked the door of her house even when going to the bathroom nearby or tending to her garden. She also complained that many tourists, who considered her garden a public park, trespassed into her property.

Third, the benefits of development in Chaishan were not equally distributed. Some villagers who had sold their land to outside speculators now regretted having done so because their profit was not as high as that of the speculators. In addition, restaurant owners were usually village headmen who had the political resources to conceal their land squatting and construction violations from the authorities. By contrast, the less privileged could only work as helpers and waiters, which provided them with only limited economic advancement.

In other words, Taoyuan village's rapid development has been a divisive, hierarchical, and mutually destructive force. While most villagers were coaxed to jump on to the pro-development bandwagon, at least some of them have become critical of the recent drift. During my field work in 2006, a group of villagers were considering the possibility of forming a community organization to combat the trend. More importantly, they were not unwilling to work with the conservation group, despite a decade of mutual distrust.

More frequent contacts with Taoyuan village brought about noticeable changes in attitude of the conservationists as well. Since 2000, the CNPPS has sponsored an annual Chaishan Festival each May to promote public education and raise conservation consciousness. In 2003, the CNPPS decided to stage the Festival at Taoyuan village's elementary school, mobilizing students to take part in such activities as staging dramas, painting and beach cleaning. Some conservation activists, once they came to know villagers better, began to empathize with their plight. One of them indicated in an interview that he began to invite friends to dine in Taoyuan because patronizing village restaurants would put a stop to villagers selling their land to land developers.

In addition, the tiny elementary school in Taoyuan village has left an indelible impression on conservationists. Its small student population (less than 90 students), its physical proximity to the natural environment, and the intimate relationship between community and teachers make it distinct from public schools in urban areas. As a result, it is very attractive to some middle-class parents who want their children to grow up in a stress-free environment. In the late 1990s, the city government launched an experimental program, the "Forest School," allowing students from the rest of Kaohsiung City to attend.

In 2004, the city government abruptly announced the closure of Taoyuan Elementary School, citing mounting maintenance costs caused by geological fractures as the reason. Local students would now be bused to an outside school. This announcement angered Taoyuan villagers, who resented the closure of their "alma mater" as well as the fact that their children were to be bused out of the local community. A protest was waged to fight the decision. While the protest failed to change the minds of city officials, it was noteworthy that pro-development leaders were unenthusiastic about the protest. It was widely rumored that they had their eyes set upon the campus site for redevelopment. By contrast, the conservationists came to help Taoyuan villagers protect their school.

In sum, rather than benefiting villagers as a whole, development was a highly uneven process that created a deep cleavage between them. Those marginalized by the rapid economic transformation were ready to shift their allegiance away from the traditional community leadership. By contrast and despite their class bias, conservation activists were not averse to working with villagers in their struggle to preserve community life. As a result, a new coalition with the dual concerns of quality of life and a good livelihood has begun to form. If this coalition is able to challenge the existing leadership of the pro-development community, a livable Chaishan may well be realized.

CONCLUSION

Scholars have debated the best institutional designs for environmental governance. Various models of authoritarian control and environmental democracy have been proposed to deal with the contemporary ecological crisis.

There are numerous discourses of this "politics of the earth" (Dryzek 1997), but many of these debates are primarily theoretical in nature. The empirical question of how these proposed institutions would affect the environment and its inhabitants remains largely unanswered.

In this paper I presented an in-depth case study of a Taiwanese community in order to understand the environmental impacts of different political regimes. In a span of seventy years, Taoyuan village has been transformed from a rural settlement to a military fortress, then to a suburban holiday resort. Military-imposed seclusion from postwar capitalism largely preserved the village and its surroundings, but this environmental asset became a highly explosive issue as democratization removed the village's suppression and isolation.

The story of Chaishan evinces the following lessons for students of environmental politics. First, while the impacts of economic modernization on restructuring relations between human beings and nature have been well documented, the environmental consequences of militarism have rarely been recognized. Without doubt, war-making is universally destructive to nature, but the outcomes of war preparation are inconsistent. As a form of authoritarianism, militarism suspends civil liberties. However, it may also help to preserve large areas from capitalist exploitation. Aside from these positive benefits, though, its negative impacts should also be taken seriously. Militarism can trigger a severe subsistence crisis that forces residents to poach for their survival. Accountable to no one, the military may also engage in environmentally destructive projects that result in irreversible damage. In other words, contrary to some authoritarian proponents of environmental governance, militarism is unsustainable, not only politically but environmentally as well.

Moreover, democratic theorists have paid insufficient attention to the often unavoidable conflict between making a living and protecting the environment. By granting access rights, democratization can serve to uncork a pressurized bottle, producing an acute environmental crisis and subsequent politicization. Weakened public authorities are caught in a head-on collision between development and conservation. As a decision-making procedure, democracy may not be able to reconcile these different voices into a common vision of community and its environment.

Finally, despite intensifying environmental conflicts over the short term, only democracy makes it possible for different actors to understand one another and to explore their common grounds. With freedom of information and association, differences are more likely to be respected, understood and even bridged. As a result, democratization also sows the seeds for a coalition of livelihood and quality of life concerns to converge in order to transcend the dilemma of development and conservation. Democratization shatters the false façade of imposed consensus and heightens the atmosphere of uncertainty. But only out of this rubble can a sustainable social order be built.

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