

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Norm contestation and framing strategies: the home rule movements in Taiwan and Korea during Japan's colonial era

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(Received 20 November 2023; revised 10 July 2024; accepted 15 August 2024; first published online 04 February 2025)

Abstract

The home rule movements in Taiwan and Korea were two major events that took place at a time when the Taisho Emperor was embracing a more liberal atmosphere. While Taiwan asked for equal standing within the Japanese empire, Korea wanted political independence from colonial rule. The different framing strategies adopted by the social activists lead to the following empirical puzzles: How did the public intellectuals and social activists define their colonial grievances in Taiwan and Korea and seize the window of opportunity in the post-WWI era? And what framing strategies did they apply in promoting their ideas of self-determination?

This article proposes a comparative analysis of Taiwan's and Korea's mobilization of international norms, and it investigates how their framing strategies were used in their respective home rule movements during the colonial era. Their rhetoric and mobilization finally led to Japan's shift to a more conciliatory policy in these two colonies. The finding contributes to the theoretical development of norm contestation and discourse analysis in international relations.

The organizational structure of this article is presented as follows. First, it engages the current literature on social movements, norm diffusion, and East Asian politics, and it explores the framing strategies of the resistance to Japan's rule by comparing Taiwanese and Korean social movements in the early 1900s. Second, this study offers a framework of norm contestation in capturing how activists in Taiwan and Korea promoted the principle of self-determination. Third, it addresses alternative explanations on the structural factors and agency in these two movements.

Keywords: discourse analysis; Japan; Korea; Norm contestation; Taiwan

To be contemporary is, first and foremost, a question of courage, because it means being able not only to firmly fix one's gaze on the darkness of the epoch but also to perceive in this darkness a light that, while direct toward us, infinitely distances itself from us.

Giorgio Agamben, *What Is the Contemporary?*¹

¹Agamben 2009.

1. Introduction

Taiwan and Korea were Japan's most important colonies from the 1900s to the end of WWII. Even though Japan adopted similar policies toward these two places in the early colonial era, there were strikingly different responses to Japan's rule.² More specifically, social activists and public intellectuals in the two colonies organized Taiwan's Parliament Petition Movement and Korea's March First Movement in the 1920s, respectively.

While Taiwan asked for equal standing within the Japanese empire, Korea wanted political independence from colonial rule. The different framing strategies adopted by the social activists lead to the following empirical puzzles: How did the public intellectuals and social activists define their colonial grievances in Taiwan and Korea and seize the window of opportunity in the post-WWI era? And what framing strategies did they apply in promoting their ideas of self-determination?

A straightforward answer to their mobilization strategies may stem from their initial conditions prior to Japanese rule. Namely, Korea enjoyed the status of an independent sovereign state for centuries while Taiwan was an isolated province during the Qing dynasty. Therefore, Korea's quest for national identity and independence was certainly greater than that of Taiwan. However, such an explanation cannot adequately capture how local agents skillfully crafted their framing strategy in association with the global norms and political values of the time.

This work takes into account the actors' framing strategies and structural factors in international politics and weighs them equally in conducting a comparative study of the Korean and Taiwanese social movements. The Japanese government was vulnerable to criticisms of police brutality and the violent oppression of activists and students when it proposed racial equality at the Paris Peace Conference. Namely, if Japan was to demonstrate to the world that there was a promising way to modernity and an advanced civilization, then it had to implement benign rule in its Asian colonies.³ The mass demonstrations in Taiwan and Korea undoubtedly contributed to Japan's urgency for reform. More importantly, their framing strategies led to substantive debates over democratic governance and political participation, and Japan's Prime Minister Hara Kei adopted the cultural rule (*bunka seiji*) toward its colonial subjects.

Scholars of Japanese history termed the interwar period from 1918 to 1931 as Taisho Democracy, because Japan's civil society and political parties flourished in the public sphere.⁴ Starting in 1920 and continuing into the 1930s, Taiwanese elites organized peaceful petitions to Japan's Diet, asking for the official establishment of a local parliament. Even though the Japanese government did not respond to these requests, the movement gained strong support, including from political elites and doctors in Taiwan, liberal politicians, and university professors in Japan. It became the most important nonviolent movement in Taiwan's political history.

Meanwhile, Korean activists and overseas students organized a large-scale social movement and announced a declaration of independence in 1919. The aim of Korea's agenda was inspired by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points of self-determination following the end of WWI.⁵ Even though the League of Nations refused to consider Korea's demands, the March First Movement marked the most important social uprising against Japan's colonial rule.⁶ An in-depth study of Taiwan and Korea allows for the accumulation of knowledge on how the international and local framing strategies interacted and leads to more theoretical developments on how norms diffused, traveled, and impacted the colonial era.

These two social movements, albeit failing to achieve their intended aims, have received little scholarly attention in international relations. The frustrating results do not mean the framing strategies adopted by the intellectuals and activists were inconsequential at all. From a long-term perspective, the

²Duus, Myers, and Peattie 2021.

³Shimazu 2002, Dudden 2006.

⁴Garon 2003.

⁵Mishra 2013.

⁶Wells 1989.

later political development in Korea and Taiwan, such as the mass mobilization against authoritarian rule, struggle for freedom of speech, and direct election of government officials, draws important lessons and inspiration from the discursive framework on democracy and autonomy in these two movements. This study highlights how the norm of self-determination was contested within Japan's colonies and the mobilization strategies the activists adopted in the home rule movements in Korea and Taiwan.

The organizational structure of this article is presented as follows. First, this study engages the current literature on social movements, norm diffusion, and East Asian politics, and it explores the framing strategies of the resistance to Japan's rule by comparing Taiwanese and Korean social movements in the early 1900s. Second, it offers a framework of norm contestation in capturing how activists in Taiwan and Korea promoted the principle of self-determination. Third, it addresses alternative explanations on the structural factors and agency in these two movements.

2. Theorizing norm contestation through discourse analysis

Norms are one of the most important topics in the study of political science and regional studies, and they address the intersubjective beliefs shared by the international community. Norms also constitute the social identities of actors when they justify certain behavior or policy options.⁷ In this sense, norms can be defined as shared expectations and political practices.

The existing literature on norm diffusion focuses on how transnational advocacy networks interact with local ones, how the rational calculations of actors shape the domestic opportunity structure, and the different modes of socialization.⁸ However, their works treat norm transfer or diffusion as a one-way process, and they overlook a rather marginalized process of local agency in constructing the meanings of self-determination based on their colonial backgrounds.⁹

In addressing these limitations, Amitav Acharya offers an insightful understanding of what ideas travel to different areas. Norm localization, according to Acharya, refers to the way in which local actors reconstruct foreign norms to ensure the content of the norm reflects their identities.¹⁰ The localization process might be a complex one, as there are multiple ways through which norm-takers reach a consensus between the transnational norms and local practices.

Following Acharya's work on norm localization, there has been a burgeoning literature on unpacking the agency of norm contestation and capturing different types of framing strategies.¹¹ For example, some prefer to use the term translation instead of diffusion, as norm translation implies that differently contextualized ideas can be brought into another realm, such as from the global to national, or from the local to national levels.¹² Others apply in-depth case studies to capture the complexity of norm localization and divergence in regional governance, transitional justice, and arms control.¹³

Recent works by constructivist scholars have developed more theoretical perspectives and offered rich empirical evidence in identifying the emergence, contestation, and diffusion of international norms. For example, the concept of a "norm cluster" captures multiple combinations of related norms.¹⁴ This theoretical framework allows for a more precise understanding of how actors adopt and implement certain values and behaviors. Regarding the model of the norm cycle, Elveria Rosert offers a four-step sequence to understand norm emergence: problem adoption, issue creation, norm creation, and norm negotiation.¹⁵ Her model highlights the importance of discursive transformation in the

⁷Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, Risse and Sikkink 1999, Risse 2000.

⁸Börzel & Risse 2012; Checkel 2005.

⁹Kolmašová 2023, Tabak 2021.

¹⁰Acharya 2004.

¹¹Zimmermann, Deitelhoff, and Lesch 2017.

¹²Zwingel 2012, Zimmermann 2017.

¹³Capie 2008, Subotic 2015, Tholens 2019.

¹⁴Winston 2018.

¹⁵Rosert 2019.

public sphere. In addition, scholars investigate the robustness of a norm by highlighting the practical and discursive dimensions.¹⁶ The degree of norm robustness is determined by the type of contestation by the challengers.

This article highlights the role of non-state actors in studying the imperial struggles and liberal international thoughts, as the Wester-centric perspective rarely treat these actors, political activists, intellectuals, and cultural associations, in their own rights. Japan's occupation of Taiwan and Korea demonstrated Tokyo's civilizing mission to instill order and progress in both colonies. However, the public intellectuals, college students, and activists in both places offered powerful statements against Japan's colonial rule. The non-state-centric approach points to the diversity of the involved agency, as they constructed their argument on the home rule movement and sought to gain support in both domestic and international realms.¹⁷

Specifically, the framing strategies adopted by the non-state actors in Taiwan and Korea are integral parts of constructing a more pluralist and nuanced understanding of liberal internationalism and anti-colonial movements. Building on their critique of Japan's rule, Christians, young students, and political activists in both colonies advocated their objectives based on the rule of law, constitutionalism, and the ideas of self-determination.

The tensions between constituted meanings and actual practices have always been the central focus of norms research in recent years. Current literature on social protests or independence movements often focuses on the capabilities and incentives for groups to challenge the status quo.¹⁸ However, the mass mobilizations in colonial Taiwan and Korea were not just about overcoming collective actions but also how the political elites made their claims against the Japanese rule. Discourse analysis, in this sense, provides an enhanced understanding beyond a state-centric perspective on norm contestation.¹⁹ In this regard, Richard Price points out the pre-conditions that facilitate norm diffusion. When the contents of the international norms resonate with the existing cultural traditions, the local agents will adopt the new norm more easily.²⁰ Price's insight shows how a new agenda built upon a previously established norm often facilitates acceptance. The framing strategies might be of great importance here, especially when the linkages between the global norm (self-determination) and local conditions (parliamentary petition) were identified.

The dynamics help shed light on the interactions among actors (norm adopters and entrepreneurs), processes (diffusion mechanisms), and the norm (self-determination). A comparative analysis of Taiwan's and Korea's framing strategies during the self-rule movements provides an excellent opportunity to clarify the causal mechanisms of norm diffusion in the early 20th century. In Taiwan and Korea, activists living under Japanese rule applied the norm of self-determination after the WWI, but they used different framing strategies for their social protests. Meanwhile, Japan's quest for great status at the Paris Conference also made it vulnerable to political pressure and criticism: Tokyo asked for racial equality among the participating states, but the Japanese government violently oppressed the home rule movements toward its colonies.

During Japan's colonial rule, activists in Taiwan and Korea were both non-state actors, but they effectively reinterpreted the ideas of self-determination in local contexts. In the case of Taiwan and Korea, both movements started as nonviolent, even though they had different political demands. The Japanese police detained and interrogated several local activists, but the parliament petition movement in Taiwan remained peaceful in nature. The Japanese authorities responded forcefully toward the March First Movement, as there were several uprisings throughout Korea leading to mass casualties and military oppression.

¹⁶Deitelhodd and Zimmermann 2019.

¹⁷Coleman 2013, Wiener 2017.

¹⁸Robert and Ash 2009, Chenworth and Ulfelder 2017.

¹⁹Epstien 2008, Martel and Glas 2023.

²⁰Price 1998.

In her seminal work on norm constitution, Antje Wiener claims that norms are subject to contestation at all stages of implementation and promotion. Specifically, she highlights the multifaceted nature of norm diffusion and proposes two types of contestations: reactive contestation and proactive contestation.²¹ Norm contestation refers to the process in which rules, regulations, or procedures are often critically challenged by nation-states, social activists, or international organizations.²² Building on Wiener's framework, this work shows that the home rule movements in colonial Taiwan and Korea reflect the strategy of proactive contestations in which political activists had constructively engaged with the norm of self-determination.

From 1918 to the 1920s, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson had explicitly articulated a vision for the post-world order. Specifically, Erez Manela identifies three elements in Wilson's thinking: collective security, self-determination, and making the world safe for democracy.²³ Manela highlights the "Wilsonian moment" for Asians, as this concept provides a framework in capturing how they responded to Wilson's rhetoric. Based on Manela's work and that of others on Wilson's ideals and the history of WWI, this study highlights the different trajectories in Korea and Taiwan in the post-WWI era, exploring how these two colonial societies mobilized for political autonomy and representation.²⁴ The adoption of President Wilson's ideas not only provided an institutional foundation for the Paris Peace Conference, but it also offered a discursive structure for the activists in framing the norm of self-determination against imperialism and colonialism.

Wiener's work on proactive contestation points to the political status of Taiwan and Korea after the WWI. Both colonies had limited access to the norm of self-determination: they couldn't participate diplomatic affairs internationally, and the Japanese government strongly oppressed the freedom of speech and the flow of information domestically. Given these limitations, local organizations and public intellectuals still actively interpreted the idea of self-determination in their specific conditions.²⁵ These two social movements were not isolated events, but they were interrelated in the context of global history and transnational ideas of self-determination.

Conventional account on imperialism and liberal internationalism often overlooked the public statements and works from Asian activists and intellectuals, treating them as passive consumer of European and U.S. political ideas. This work undertakes critical investigations on norm contestation of self-determination, and it shows that Taiwan and Korea framing strategies on equal treatment and political independence are important sources of original thinking. The mass movements eventually gained partial results, as Japanese government relaxed some of its colonial measures. In the case of Taiwan's home rule movement, the activists adopted the cultural assimilation discourse and the norm of democracy so that their demands could gain resonance in the Japanese political climate. Through its framing strategy, the Taiwanese elites re-interpreted this norm by associating it with Japan's political development in the Taisho Democracy period. They also asked for greater electoral participation at the same time.

Korea's achievement of self-determination was the establishment of the Provisional Government in Shanghai, which led to democratic republicanism in Korea's political discourse and abroad. The *declaration* of the movement, drafted by Choe Namson, stated: "Korea is an independent state. We proclaim it to the nations of the world in affirmation of the principle of equality. We claim it to preserve the right of national survival."²⁶ This widely distributed document represented rising Korean nationalism with the republican ideas of liberty and equality. In addition, the Constitution of Korea's Provisional Government clearly stated that liberation from foreign domination does not rule out the need for political order.²⁷ Koreans demanded the new justice to redress the wrongs of nations at the

²¹Wiener 2018, Orchard and Wiener 2023.

²²Neimann and Schillinger 2017, Wiener 2021.

²³Manela 2005, Manela 2019.

²⁴Dickson 2014, Smith 2014.

²⁵Wiener 2014.

²⁶Kim 1989.

²⁷Kwak 2019.

Paris Peace Conference.²⁸ Its claim for self-determination was not to denounce the West but to focus on Japan's oppression and atrocities against the Korean people.

Scholars in political history and diplomatic studies have mostly focused on the power politics, coalition formation, and military maneuvers after the WWI, devoting inadequate attention to social movements and political struggles outside of Europe.²⁹ Therefore, this work examines the concept of self-determination in global and local contexts, as both Taiwan and Korea were Japan's colonial subjects in the 1920s. Studying the responses of liberalists and nationalists from the periphery is crucial for understanding the intellectual history of anti-colonialism and Asian politics. Namely, the quest for political participation and autonomy in Taiwan and Korea not only led to heated domestic debates over Japan's colonial policies but also Tokyo's vulnerability to external criticism. The framework of norm contestation provides both micro- and meso-levels analysis on how non-state actors localize the concept of self-determination and also how Taiwan and Korea create more legitimate their framing strategies. The case studies on Taiwan and Korea allow for more detailed examinations of norm localization as well as contestations with their effects on regional and global politics.

Public intellectuals and students throughout Asia showed apparent admiration for Wilson's idea of self-determination and their adoption of his rhetoric point to tactical maneuvers to mobilize the public against imperial expansion and colonial rule. The social movements in Taiwan and Korea led to Japan's greater sensitivity to external criticism of human rights issues and political governance in these colonies, especially when Tokyo sought to promote the clause of racial equality at the Paris Peace Conference. Even though Japan's proposal had little to do with actual equality, such a proposal mainly served to secure its security interests from unfair treatment by the West.³⁰

The atrocities committed by the Japanese authorities raised concerns from the diplomats of the United States and the UK, and such a negative image undermined Tokyo's reputation at the Paris Peace Conference.³¹ In Japan, public intellectuals, such as Yanagi Soetus, Fukuda Tokuzo, and Yoshino Sakuzo, were openly critical of Japan's brutality and oppression in Taiwan and Korea. The petition and demonstration drew worldwide attention, and the Japanese authorities eventually adopted cultural rule in the subsequent decades.³²

Put together, the studies on norm contestation offer a helpful theoretical framework for understanding the discursive linkage between the global norms and regional ones in the home rule movements of Korea and Taiwan. Political activists in Taiwan and Korea had actively engaged in the meaning-making of self-determination through mass mobilization in the colonial era. Specifically, Taiwan's framing strategy aimed at gaining resonance in Japan's political climate of the early 20th century, while Korea leveraged its discourse of self-determination by using the shared vocabulary among other decolonization movements. In this sense, this norm is promoted within a specific discursive environment, in which both their cultural backgrounds and political demands matter for the contestation and mobilization strategies.

3. Norms and social movements in empire-colonial studies

Scholars of international relations investigate how international norms have evolved over time and how the contestations over the content impact world politics.³³ For example, Jeffrey Checkel indicates that the cultural match between global norms and domestic politics is the determining factor for the degree of diffusion.³⁴ When an international norm gains resonance with domestic practices, the diffusion process will be more effective.

²⁸Lorca 2014.

²⁹Long and Schulz 2024.

³⁰Flynn 2021.

³¹Kim 2011, Xu 2017.

³²Caprio 2011, Souyri 2015.

³³Finnemore 1996, Checkel 1998, Wendt 1999.

³⁴Checkel 1999.

Mass protests demanding political equality and nationalist movements asking for independence are usually the two types of social incidents that take place under imperial rule.³⁵ However, the framing strategies and the timing of such movements that the local activists adopt remain unclear in the study of the empire-colonial relationship. In *Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism*, Adria Lawrence indicates that social movements are more likely to adopt nationalistic discourse when imperial governments refuse to address political equality and reforms. Demands for independence are the results of the failed efforts to achieve political equality within the context of the imperial-colonial rule.³⁶ Through archival studies and fieldwork, Lawrence claims there were no strong calls for independence in Senegal, Morocco, and Guiana, as the French granted political equality to their colonial subjects. In contrast, for those whose demands were rejected, locals turned toward nationalist movements.

Lawrence's findings on the French empire and its overseas colonies offer great insight into the Japan–Taiwan–Korea triangle. Namely, local activists and elites might craft different campaign strategies and political discourse in response to colonial rule. This study highlights a discursive perspective of norm mobilization in which the local activists appropriated the global norm of self-determination under Japan's colonial rule.

Scholars of mass mobilization have identified a cluster of ideologies employed by activists in constructing political opportunities and advancing their agenda.³⁷ Specifically, activists can rhetorically transform the master frames within the protest cycle to make them resonate more clearly with the local social and political conditions. For example, Sinn Féin, a group of mostly young Irish nationalists, adopted the ideas of self-determination as a master frame in their struggle for political autonomy during the early 20th century.³⁸ More specifically, Sinn Féin leaders depicted not only Great Britain as a security threat to world peace but also a great power with a double standard. While it supported the right of self-determination of small countries ravaged by German aggression, it failed to do so with respect to the Irish situation. The norm of self-determination serves as a master frame in mobilizing the public in Taiwan and Korea, as the activists adopted schemes of interpretation according to their grievances and goals.

When President Wilson forcefully elevated the idea of self-determination to a creed, his words gained resonance in Europe and beyond.³⁹ For example, in an official speech on America's Independence Day in 1918, Wilson stated:

“The settlement of every question, whether of territory or sovereignty, of economic arrangement, or of political relationship [must be] . . . upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned, and not upon the material interest or advantage of any other nation or people which may desire a different settlement for the sake of its exterior influence What we seek is the reign of law, based on the consent of the governed and sustained by the organized opinion of mankind.”⁴⁰

In his view, this concept provided a normative legitimacy for people to choose the form of government they preferred. If implemented properly, the risk of conflict would be significantly reduced.⁴¹

President Wilson's ideas created heated debate over humanitarianism and imperial rule at the Paris Peace Conference and in the League of Nations. More importantly, the meaning and practice of

³⁵Smith 2003, Clayton 2014, Cooper 2014.

³⁶Lawrence 2013.

³⁷Tarrow 2011, Ciani 2023, Van Dijk 2023.

³⁸Swart 1995.

³⁹Lynch 2002, Smith 2017.

⁴⁰“President Wilson's Speech at Mount Vernon on July 4th, 1918.” Full text available through: <https://www.mountvernon.org/preservation/mount-vernon-ladies-association/mount-vernon-through-time/mount-vernon-during-world-war-i/woodrow-wilson-july-4-1918-mount-vernon-speech/#:~:text=What%20we%20seek%20is%20the,power%20and%20of%20national%20opportunity.>

⁴¹Throntveit 2011, Griffiths, Pavković, and Radan 2023.

self-determination also led to decolonization movements in Asia and Africa. For example, Nnamdi Azikiwe, an activist in Nigeria's independence movement, applied Wilson's Fourteen Points in supporting the anti-colonial agenda.⁴² In his manifesto of the Freedom Charter, Azikiwe countered British policy to differentiate the liberation struggle in its colonies from universal human rights, by advocating the right of the Nigerian people to choose their own government.

Mainstream international theories often investigate how social movements "strategically exploit" opportunities to achieve their political demands.⁴³ For example, rationalism unpacks the cost-benefit analysis of when activists decide to apply the tactic of mass mobilization to gain greater leverage in negotiating policy change with the government. The liberalist perspective considers protests or petitions parts of the political appeal from civil society and NGOs.

However, they overlook a more nuanced understanding of why two colonies under Japan's rule seemingly framed their claims of self-determination differently. Wilson's idea of self-determination provided great inspiration for young students and activists in Taiwan and Korea, as they constructed their own political discourse against Japan's colonial rule. Admittedly, the home rule movements in Taiwan and Korea both failed under Japan's oppressive and violent rule. Social activists in the colonies deployed specific claim-making strategies on political grievances or social purposes to mobilize so many ordinary people in the home rule movements.⁴⁴

Regional factors, such as the shifting power distribution after the WWI, Japan's imperial expansion, and Japan-UK relations, certainly play roles in Korea and Taiwan home rule movements. This study devotes equal attention to these structural factors and their local conditions. More importantly, it shows that their framing strategies were not immediate reactions to self-determination, and the empirical finding points to critical reflections about the contested nature of the norm and their struggles under Japan's colonial rule.

For Koreans, the essential debate showed that a foreign rule should not be imposed upon a people who already possessed a nationality prior to Japan's presence. For Taiwanese, the petitions demand Tokyo political representation and equal treatment based on the norm of constitutionalism and the rule of law. Political leaders and activists in both colonies challenged their isolation from the Eurocentric international order and President Wilson's initiatives.

Even though they were relatively weak compared to the Japanese government, the alternative source of leverage from the less powerful ones, such as local knowledge, strategic calculation, and political discourse, deserve more attention in international relations.⁴⁵ A close examination of social-political settings in Taiwan and Korea reveals the internal process of their claim-making strategies.

4. A prelude: different ideas and interpretations in the 1910s

Although Lenin's call for self-determination came forth earlier than Wilson's idea, a closer look at the framing strategies adopted in Taiwan and Korea suggests that the activists associated their claims with the League of Nations and democratic movements during the early 1920s in East Asia. In the early 1900s, several protests and disturbances had already occurred because of Japan's discriminatory policies in Taiwan and Korea. Therefore, the end WWI was a critical moment for the intellectuals and activists in both places, as Wilson's rhetoric resonated with their political objectives. This section offers an overview on how the norm of self-determination was initially circulated among different Korean and Taiwanese political actors.

As the Japanese authorities oppressed all political groups in Korea, Christian churches provided a viable way for organized activism. Christians played a prominent role in the independence movement,

⁴²Moses, Duranti, and Burke 2020.

⁴³Solomon 2023.

⁴⁴Varshey 2003, Cunningham and Sawyer 2017.

⁴⁵Dunford 2017, Stalley 2018.

strongly promoting the concept of modernity and equality among all people.⁴⁶ In the late 1890s, Korean intellectuals formed the Independence Club to advocate for more liberal policies for the Korean government. It regularly held public events and published journals to raise public awareness on the rights of individuals and free speech. During the height of WWI, Koreans in China organized the Revolutionary Corps, and they urged Korea to support Germany against Japan. Korea, they argued, would be able to declare independence if Japan was defeated.⁴⁷

The 1920s were a crucial era for colonial Korea and Taiwan, as Western ideas, such as liberalism, Marxism, and Social Darwinism, were all introduced to the informed intellectuals and political elites. Immediately following WWI, the norm of self-determination remained the dominant political agenda in Taiwan and Korea, and the division among activists became apparent between right and left, and between gradualists and Marxists later in the 1930s. This section addresses an alternative explanation of norm mobilization and looks into whether the communist ideas of class struggle or political revolution could have become a rising norm in the early 20th century.

The aim of the Taiwan Cultural Society is a good case in point. It was an active civil organization that not only supported the parliament petition movement but also promoted Western ideas during the colonial era. Starting in the 1930s, it began hosting more seminars and lectures focusing on the class struggles of peasants and workers and was forced to go underground by the Japanese government.⁴⁸ As more activists embraced the ideas of Marxism and social reform, the Taiwan Communist Party was formed in 1929 and operated as a branch of the Japanese Communist Party.⁴⁹ However, the heavy crackdowns and arrests by the Japanese police were significant blows to communists and leftists.⁵⁰ In 1925, the Communist Party of Korea was formed under similar circumstances.⁵¹ After intense oppression by the Japanese government, the party dissolved a few years later.

Therefore, Wilson's liberal internationalism and Bolshevism were two competing ideas in Europe, but such an ideological divide was not salient in Asia in the 1910s.⁵² It is fair to infer that the norm of self-determination, rather than communist ideas, remained the source of inspiration for political activists and intellectuals in 1919 and continuing into the 1920s.

Anarchism was another progressive ideology among activists in the late 1910s and early 1920s. The guiding principle for activists in Korea was to sustain the anti-colonial struggle against Japan and seek national independence.⁵³ For example, Yu Rim, an active anarchist and nationalist, promoted social awareness to workers and farmers during the colonial era. The anarchists aimed to liberate Korea from Japanese oppression and construct an anarchist society later.

Anarchists in Taiwan were also critical of Japan's imperialism. Whereas most of the anarchists in Korea supported the March First Movement in 1919, anarchists in Taiwan took a more radical view. For example, Fan Ben-liang questioned the legitimacy of Taiwan's Parliament Petition movement because of the conservative nature of its stance.⁵⁴ He envisioned more revolutionary measures to disrupt the system of imperialism and unjust dominance.

Therefore, the Taiwan Parliament Petition movement not only demonstrated how the norm of self-determination was disseminated in the early 20th century, but it also showed that this idea could be interpreted as a political representation other than the establishment of an independent, internationally recognized sovereign state. It was the appeal of President Wilson's ideas, rather than socialism or anarchism, that shaped Taiwan's political and social debates in the 1920s.⁵⁵

⁴⁶Eckert *et al.* 1990.

⁴⁷Lee 1984.

⁴⁸Liao 2006.

⁴⁹Rubinstein 2007, Chao 2013.

⁵⁰Chou 2016.

⁵¹Shin and Moon 2019.

⁵²Manela 2006.

⁵³Hwang 2016.

⁵⁴Chan 2021.

⁵⁵Dickson 2013.

Due to anarchism having close ties with socialism in the 1920s, the Japanese police constantly arrested activists and disrupted their events. Koreans and Taiwanese were never able to establish a formal organization for advocating their revolutionary agenda.

As the Japanese government strictly controlled the newspaper outlets in Korea and Taiwan, activists and students struggled to receive progressive ideas or political thoughts from the West.⁵⁶ While Christians, intellectuals, and socialists might have different interpretations of self-determination, all of them possessed high hopes for the new Asian order in the post-WWI era. Taiwanese and Korean activists seized the liberal opening of Taisho Democracy circa 1919, trying to play an active role in it by demanding greater representation and autonomy in their own terms.

Admittedly, the idea of self-determination was created with the support of major powers in Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, the non-state actors, such as Christians, young students, social activists expanded considerable effort and resources on promoting this norm in Taiwan and Korea. For example, Taiwan Cultural Society, Taiwan Youth Society, Independence club in Korea, and the Provisional Government in Shanghai were major organizations that helped elaborate the idea of self-determination and disseminate it to the general public.

By conducting a structural comparison, this work draws official documents, public speeches, newspaper coverages, and secondary sources on the League of Nations, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. Therefore, Korea and Taiwan anti-imperial movements were deeply rooted in experiences of great power politics, Japan's colonial rule, and social resistance, and the comparative study is integrated into the political history of self-determination.

5. Regional order in the post-WWI Era

Liberal democracy, racial equality, and constitutional rule are Western ideas that have been translated into local languages, and it is certainly important to identify what norms really matter in East Asia. This article treats the norm of self-determination as the guiding principle that supported all these emerging ideas after WWI.⁵⁷ The norm of self-government or self-rule became predominant since it had been influential in mobilizing a range of independence movements in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. More importantly, the ways in which Taiwanese and Korean activists constructed their political claims also engaged the current literature in social movement studies.⁵⁸ Their framing strategies for collective action point to the promotion of global norms in the local context in the early 20th century.

5.1. Conflicted views on Wilsonianism

U.S. President Wilson was committed to promoting a peaceful settlement of the post-WWI order in Europe, but other allies were hesitant to explicitly endorse his Fourteen Principles. For example, Georges Clemenceau, the French prime minister, publicly said: "He exasperates me with his fourteen Commandments when the good God had only ten."⁵⁹ Namely, their overseas interests might be greatly undermined if their colonies in Asia and Africa also applied the norm of self-determination and demanded greater autonomy. This ambivalent and conflicted stance also applied to the Japanese government in the 1920s.

Japan's imperial expansion created a political debate over its grand strategy and colonial policies. Specifically, how to define Japan's interests and security and how to achieve these goals were critical questions in the 1910s. In *An Imperial Path to Modernity*, Jung-Sung Han analyzes how Japan internalized and institutionalized liberal ideas to govern its overseas colonies. Han explores the ways in which liberal norms were contested within the public discourse and political structure. For example,

⁵⁶Robinson 1984.

⁵⁷Smith 2018.

⁵⁸Johnston 2013.

⁵⁹Goldstein 2013.

Yoshino Sakuzo, a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, was cautious against the self-centered thinking in Japan's policy and advocated a home rule policy for governing Japan's imperial subjects.⁶⁰ He strongly opposed Japan's aggressive policy and was sympathetic toward the quest for autonomy in Korea and Taiwan. Moreover, there were also heated discussions over the Pan-Asian approach and liberal constitutional rights, as the Japanese people witnessed the social movements in Taiwan and Korea.⁶¹ Taisho Democracy was a critical period in which intellectuals, diplomats, and government officials in Japan had inconsistent or ambivalent attitudes toward the League of Nations and liberal ideas, as it had undergone intense domestic debate over Japan's colonial and foreign policy.

When Japan defeated Russia in 1905, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt advised Japan to adopt the Monroe Doctrine in East Asia. He was friendly toward Japan and expected a stronger Japan to protect Asia from European aggression.⁶² Later, Ishii Kikujiro, Japan's ambassador to the League of Nations, advocated for an Asian Monroe Doctrine to secure Japan's interests.⁶³ This concept was in direct conflict with the claims of the self-determination in Korea and self-rule in Taiwan.

For example, in response to Korea's quest for self-determination, Japan offered an official stance on Wilsonianism. Specifically, it claimed that the Korean people were incapable of self-rule and the annexation of Korea was justified through mutual consent.⁶⁴ The colonial authority had already conducted social reforms in Korea, and therefore the international community should not exaggerate the impact of the March First Movement.

Even though the Paris Peace Conference concluded that the norm of self-determination was not applicable to the Korean peninsula, it became a powerful rhetorical resource for the Korean elites in negotiating for more autonomy. Taiwan's petition movement for political representation set up a canonical precedent when Taiwan experienced its democratic transition in the 1990s. A comparative analysis of the framing strategies employed in Taiwan and Korea against Japan's colonial rule suggests that the norm of self-determination exerted substantive effects on their social movements. In sum, the finding of this study contributes to the theoretical development of norm mobilization and discourse analysis in international relations.

5.2. Audience: international and domestic appeals

To gain an enhanced understanding of the history of the anti-colonial struggle, it is essential for scholars of international relations to pay as much attention to the less powerful outpost of empires as to the West and imperial centers. This article on self-determination investigates anti-colonial movements at the grassroots and framing strategies in the Taiwanese and Korean contexts.

Building upon previous works of norm contestation and social movements, this article views Wilson's principle of self-determination as the crucial idea that shaped the course of the anti-colonial struggle. Both movements aimed to garner public support against Japan's colonial rule, and there were still significant turnouts given Japan's police brutality. However, their external appeals differed due to their specific goals.

For example, the target audience of the March First Movement was the United States and other world leaders at the Paris Conference.⁶⁵ For example, a student manifesto highlighted Korea's quest for independence in accordance with the current developments. It claimed:

"Since the American president proclaimed the Fourteen Points, the voice of national self-determination has swept the world, and twelve nations, including Poland, Ireland, and Czechoslovakia, have obtained independence. How could we, the people of the great Korean

⁶⁰Han 2020.

⁶¹Bailey 2019.

⁶²Blackslee 1932.

⁶³Burkman 2007, p.152.

⁶⁴Palmer 2020.

⁶⁵Choi 2005.

nation, miss this opportunity? Our compatriots abroad are utilizing this opportunity to appeal for the recovery of national sovereignty.⁶⁶

Syngman Rhee, who would later become the first President of Korea, also proposed a resolution entitled “Appeal to America” in 1919.⁶⁷ This statement reiterated Wilson’s words back to him, urging the United States to address Korea’s home rule movement.

On the other hand, Taiwan’s quest for autonomy was based on the idea of extending the homeland rule, and activists hoped to achieve equal rights in local society. Therefore, the target audience of the Parliament Petition Movement was Japan’s colonial authority and the public in Taiwan. Taiwan’s framing strategies of the Parliament Petition Movement were not only based on the claim of the rule of law, but also on the liberal values espoused during the Taisho Democracy period. More importantly, the Taiwanese activists legitimized their claim by referring to Japan’s ambitions of becoming a civilized country.⁶⁸ In the 1920s, Taiwanese activists adopted a democratic language for greater autonomy that was similar to the Japanese domestic discourse.⁶⁹ For example, Tsai Pei-Ho, an informed intellectual fluent in Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese, proposed a special Taiwan council within the framework of the Japanese Constitution.⁷⁰ He urged the Japanese government to treat the Taiwanese equally in terms of political and economic participation.

More importantly, the effect of norm mobilization was substantive as the Taiwanese intellectuals constructed their arguments for greater representation when elites in both Taiwan and Japan were embracing liberal democracy and constitutional rule from the West.⁷¹ The political elites, even if they were liberal, left-leaning, or progressive, all agreed that electoral representation, constitutional equality, and the rule of law were crucial ways for Taiwan to reach its full potential.

On the other hand, Korea’s March First Movement was inspired by the political atmosphere of the post-WWI era. The norm of self-determination was initially introduced in the League of Nations at Versailles after WWI and was later promoted in the United Nations Charter. Woodrow Wilson, the U.S. president, delivered an inspiring speech elaborating on this norm in 1918. He said:

“[I]mpartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty, the interest of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.”⁷²

Upon first reading his public statements, one might easily get the impression that the norm should apply to all colonies throughout the world. However, President Wilson’s intent was to resolve the colonial issues related to Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Germany after WWI. Structural factors, such as the nature of the existing norms, international organizations, and alliance formations, would shape the chance of success of certain political issues in the target countries.⁷³ The March First Movement faced strong external constraints, as the West did not support Korea’s legal argument.

In terms of domestic politics, Korea’s mobilization strategy reflected an inherent tension between the political activists and the ordinary citizens. Peasants in rural areas, labor unions, and the local gentries might not have shared the progressive views of a democratic Korea, and therefore the concept of the nation was still unclear during the March First Movement.

⁶⁶Lee 2023.

⁶⁷Lew and Yu 2014.

⁶⁸Lin 1920c.

⁶⁹Wakabayashi 2022.

⁷⁰Fong 2006.

⁷¹Chen 2014.

⁷²Speech on the Fourteen Points by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, full text available from <https://wwnorton.com/college/history/ralph/workbook/ralprs34b.htm>.

⁷³Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002.

For example, Kim Kyu-shik, one of the leaders of Korea's self-determination movement, offered a civilizational statement at the Paris Peace Conference. He claimed: "the Korean people form a homogenous nation, having their own civilization and culture, and having constituted one of the historical states in the Far East for more than four thousand and two hundred years. During those forty-two centuries, Korea has always enjoyed national independence."⁷⁴

The cultural associations of Korea's long-lasting history constitute one of the most distinctive features of Korea's self-determination movement. This framing strategy reflected a shared narrative on cultural heritage which might be better able to mobilize the general public. For example, the popular terms like *kaebyok* (great opening) or *taedong* (great harmony) in the 1920s also contributed to the mobilization of the March First Movement, including the peasants, political elites, and the middle class, in support of Korea's independence.⁷⁵

Public intellectuals and overseas students in both places had actively engaged the ideas of self-determination and appropriated them in their local politics, respectively. The comparative case study challenges whether the norm of self-determination was heuristically more useful than referring to a fixed notion of national identity: Taiwan demanded political participation, while Korea asked for liberation and independence. They adopted the strategy of proactive contestation through mass mobilization, and their framing strategy on the norm of self-determination reflected how Taiwan and Korea understood their status in relation to Japan.

Taiwan's Parliament Petition Movement and Korea's March First Movement both challenged Japan's authority and asked what political status meant for the colonial subjects in the empire. This study moves beyond conventional explanations and highlights the opportunities and limitations that Taiwan and Korea faced under Japan's colonial rule.

6. The self-determination movements in comparative perspective

The two social movements took place at a time when the Taisho Emperor was embracing a more liberal atmosphere. The following sections present a comparative analysis on the norm of self-determination in the Japanese colonial era. The Taisho Democracy period was also a great time to examine how the Japanese elites responded to the respective political demands of the Taiwanese and Koreans, because the democratic regime soon yielded to militaristic and right-wing nationalist rule that highly suppressed political and social freedoms in Japan and its colonies.⁷⁶ Taiwan's parliament petition and Korea's independence claims showed that the framing strategies in these home rule movements were often in accordance with global norms, and the political elites selectively appropriated them to their advantage. The mobilization strategies in responding to the global norm and the public rhetoric they adopted provide a rich empirical foundation for conducting a comparative analysis.

6.1. Taiwan's parliament petition movement

During the Taisho Democracy period, the norm of constitutional rule and legal equality provided a great window of opportunity for the Taiwanese elites to frame their political demands in accordance with Japan's progressive way of thinking. More specifically, the aim of Taiwan's social movement in the 1920s was not to seek political independence but to obtain equality within the Japanese empire. Even though the participants considered their demand for self-rule to be moderate and legitimate, the Japanese Diet was reluctant to openly address this issue. From the Japanese perspective, this social movement was more than a formal request to establish a colonial parliament, and it could possibly have

⁷⁴The Petition Presented by Korea's Delegation at the Peace Conference, 1919.

⁷⁵Baik 2021.

⁷⁶Ramesh 2020.

been the first step toward secession from the empire.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, the colonial administration arrested many activists in Taiwan and put down this movement.

From the 1920s to the 1930s, the repeated petitions for a formal parliament marked one of the most important social movements in Taiwan's history, as the political agenda on electoral rights and the rule of law gained resonance among both the elites and the masses. For example, Tsai Pei-Ho, a social activist and public intellectual, proposed a succinct concept for Taiwan–Japan relations during the colonial era: “Taiwan is at the same time the Taiwan for the Empire, and Taiwan for the Taiwanese.”⁷⁸ This slogan during the petition movement offered a clear indicator of a framing strategy that attempted to transfer Japan's political system onto Taiwan's colonial context. His appeal for equality and representation highlighted Taiwan's centrality within the Japanese empire while advocating for democracy and the rule of law at the same time.

Lin Chen-Lu, a well-known political activist in colonial Taiwan, repeatedly advocated for the establishment of the rule of law, electoral representation, and individual rights under the Japanese empire. In Lin's view, Taiwan, in becoming a member of the international community, should embrace modernity and enlightenment.⁷⁹ The first step in achieving this goal was to frame Taiwan's quest for a formal parliament as an integral part of the political endeavors under Taisho Democracy, promoting Taiwan's presence at a time when Japan was embracing more liberal and progressive values. For example, he explicitly demanded Taiwan's political equality within the Japanese empire. Lin stated:

“In politics, with regard to Constitutionalism, there are movements aiming at . . . implementing democracy and adopting universal suffrage . . . Internationally, there is a demand for securing independence and justice. These are the demands made by the voice of the weak.”⁸⁰

His vision for Taiwan's future place in the world was shared by other public intellectuals like Tsai Pei-Ho during this time. In order to catch up with the world, Taiwan's social movement of parliamentary petitions was based on the principles of justice, equality, and morality. Taiwan's quest for greater representation was a collective expression of the public's will to assert greater political and social autonomy.

Specifically, Taiwan's movement for establishing a formal parliament was not only a long-lasting mobilization effort in the 1920s, but it also gained support from intellectuals of different political orientations. Wakabayashi Masahiro, a renowned scholar of Japanese colonial studies, undertook a careful investigation into the composition of the participants.⁸¹ According to his finding, they were mostly “ethnic-Chinese landowners” or “young intellectuals,” and they had enjoyed a relatively stable lifestyle in colonial Taiwan.

The most important feature of Taisho Democracy lies in Japan's consolidation of constitutional rule, in which government officials were representatives of the people. Even though Taiwan's formal petitions continued to be submitted from 1921 to 1934, the Japanese government failed to meet Taiwan's demands. They were never brought to the Diet to be debated. Nevertheless, the frustration of inequality and restrictions shared by the political activists in Taiwan not only created a sense of common purpose but encouraged them to draw inspiration from this political norm as well.

At the beginning of the Parliament Petition Movement, Taiwan's intellectuals adopted a modernization discourse to highlight the overall development between the colonies and the central government. For example, an opinion piece published in *Taiwan People's Daily* proposed a convincing argument. It indicated:

⁷⁷Takekoshi 1907.

⁷⁸Tsai 1920.

⁷⁹Lin 1922.

⁸⁰Lin 1920b.

⁸¹Wakabayashi 2020.

“The spirit of colonial governance after the war was meant to achieve the glorious mission of creating a civilized country. We, as subjects of the Japanese empire, have the right and obligation to work together to carry out such a mission.”⁸²

The framing strategy presents an excellent example of norm contestation, as it stressed that Taiwan was an integral part of the Japanese empire. Namely, if Taiwanese people, including the public intellectuals, Japanese citizens, and the masses, were to be granted the equal right of political participation, like the concurrent development in Taisho Democracy, then Taiwan would have exercised its full potential, moving away from a typical backward colony to an enlightened self-governed island in Asia.

Compared to the March First Movement, the nationalistic sentiment of political independence was lacking in Taiwan’s framing strategy of the self-determination norm. A closer look at Taiwan’s statements in the parliament petitions reveals the activists’ framing strategy on the self-determination principle.⁸³ For example, these petitions urged the colonial government to honor Japan’s constitution on the division of the executive and the legislative branches. The governor-general in Taiwan possessed too much power and that contradicted Japan’s constitutional rule. In addition, Taiwan had achieved financial independence in 1905, and therefore the Taiwanese people should be entitled to political representation in allocating its annual budget.⁸⁴ More importantly, the documents often ended with professing loyalty to the Japanese rule and expressing confidence in the positive development of Taiwan.

Unfortunately, Japan’s hypocrisy of racial hierarchy presented a sharp contrast to the Taiwanese claim for a local parliament. According to the petitions, the island belonged to all the people who lived in Taiwan, and they should enjoy a legal voice concerning matters of local governance.⁸⁵ This political agenda went a step further than just relaxing Japan’s privileged rule; it advocated for equal representation for all the residents of Taiwan, including Japanese citizens as well.

Public intellectuals in Taiwan sought to expand social networks in Japan. For example, Lin Sien-Tang, a prominent leader of the Petition Movement, established the Assimilation Society in 1914 with Itagaki Taisuke, a liberal Japanese intellectual.⁸⁶ This civil organization included 3000 members, and it aimed to promote positive relations between the Japanese government and the Taiwanese people. In addition, Taiwanese students in Tokyo formed the Taiwan Youth Society and published monthly journals on Taiwan’s history for the general public in Japan.⁸⁷ When the Versailles Conference took place after WWI, political debates over equal rights and universal suffrage also emerged in Japan’s domestic politics. This student-led organization shared similar progressive ideas during Taisho’s tenure: political representation and freedom enjoyed at the national level should apply to Taiwan on an equal basis. More importantly, *Taiwan Youth*, the flagship magazine for political equality and progressive values during the colonial era, often featured political commentary and observations from a number of Japanese university professors, such as Yanaihara Tadao, Yamamoto Miono, and Izumi Akira. This magazine was written in Japanese and published regularly in Tokyo, reaching a wide readership in both Japan and Taiwan.

Furthermore, political elites in Taiwan and young students in Tokyo seized the opportunity to frame the parliament petitions as part of Japan’s overall political agenda to achieve social equality for the general public.⁸⁸ As the Japanese government was eager to embrace liberal values and gain greater prestige in the international community, the Taiwanese elites also considered political equality and electoral representation as crucial steps for greater autonomy under colonial rule.

⁸²*Taiwan People’s Daily*, September 1st, 1924 (original text printed in Chinese, translated into English).

⁸³For the full texts of Taiwan’s Parliament Petition, see <https://web.archive.org/web/20140320061949/http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=3733>.

⁸⁴This viewpoint can be observed in the sixth petition of Taiwan’s parliament in February 1925.

⁸⁵Lin 1921.

⁸⁶Tsurumi 1980.

⁸⁷Chen 1988.

⁸⁸Kerr 1974.

6.2. Korea's March first movement

During the colonial era in Korea, the nationalistic sentiment was widely shared by the general public and political elites, and the March First Movement marked the most important expression of the people's will. In the 1920s, there were different schools of thought among Korea's nationalists, such as liberalism, Marxism, and socialism.⁸⁹ Although these intellectuals had divergent views for addressing social reforms or economic inequality in Korea, they shared the same objective in gaining independence from Japan's rule.

Admittedly, there are multiple factors that led to the March First Movement, such as the previous peasant uprisings, Japan's discriminative policies, and Ireland gaining independence. The more immediate factor was the death of King Kojong that led to protests in rural Korea. While some Koreans' resistance revealed their thoughts of a loyalist restoration, the king's funeral points to an end of the Korean monarchy.⁹⁰

While overseas students and political elites in Korea adopted the idea of a democratic republic in framing self-determination, the public might still have held a traditional image of Korea as a pre-modern nation.⁹¹ These conservatives did not possess any specific ideas of the Korean state that could replace the monarchy, but the Declaration of Independence upheld by the political activists pointed to a departure from feudal rule.

Specifically, the Fourteen Points speech delivered by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson in 1918 provided a normative foundation for Korea's home rule movement. For example, on February 8th, hundreds of Korean students in Tokyo held a public gathering during which they demanded political independence from Japan.⁹² This overseas movement inspired both the leaders of the local religion, Chenodokyo (the Heavenly Way), and Protestants in Korea to organize peaceful demonstrations against Japan's colonial rule as well.⁹³ Thirty-three leaders who endorsed the Declaration of Independence in 1919 belonged to these two religious groups.

After WWI, the international norm of self-determination served as a great rhetorical framework for developing a local narrative in Korea. More specifically, how the nationalists justified their claim in accordance with U.S. President Wilson's idea reflected how the global norm interacted with the framing strategies of the March First Movement. From the perspective of the European countries, the purpose of the Paris Peace Conference was to discuss the war-related issues concerning the colonies in the Middle East and Africa, but not the self-determination of colonies in general.⁹⁴

Still, President Wilson's rhetoric provided inspiration, and Koreans seized on this opportunity for their country to be a part of the new international order. Wilson's declaration publicly stated: "National aspirations must be respected; people may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. 'Self-determination' is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action."⁹⁵

The norm of self-determination certainly encouraged more Korean activists to participate in the independence movement, but the norm itself could not fully determine the content of the nationalist discourse. Rather, this global norm was selectively applied and re-interpreted by the local elites in colonial Korea. Specifically, the political activists constructed a legal claim, stressing that Japan annexed Korea against the people's will and, therefore, violated the treaty of obligation to uphold its independence.⁹⁶

For example, Kim Kyusik, a young activist, drafted an open letter to gain foreign support at the peace conference. In highlighting the applicability of the norm, Kim firstly highlighted Korea's prior

⁸⁹Kang 2013.

⁹⁰Ku 1985.

⁹¹Bellomy 2019, Ko 2021.

⁹²Manela 2009.

⁹³Lee 2000: 132–133.

⁹⁴Baldwin 1969.

⁹⁵Woodrow Wilson, President Wilson's State Papers and Addresses (New York, February 11th, 1918).

⁹⁶Letter from the Korea Association to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, December 2nd, 1919.

political status as an independent state, and how Japan used force to occupy Korea. More importantly, he juxtaposed President Wilson's statement with Japan's harsh rule in Korea, legitimating Korea's quest for self-determination in an Asian context. He wrote:

"In 1918, President Wilson's message highlighted the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another . . . As one of the Allies in the War, Japan has expressly accepted the Fourteen Points with their underlying principle of justice. The principle of justice is certainly violated by Japan's exercising of all rights of sovereignty without the consent of the Korean people."⁹⁷

Although the original text of President Wilson's Fourteen Points did not include the term "self-determination," Wilson's vision for the post-war order became the focal point of the local elites.⁹⁸ The Taisho Democracy period was a critical time when Japan actively engaged the international community. It was a member of the League of Nations, and the academic community, journalists, and liberal intellectuals all called for the Japanese government to adopt democratic governance and pacifism. For example, Yoshino Sakuzo, a university professor, advocated for more progressive political reforms so that Japan could enjoy a stronger presence in international affairs.⁹⁹ Kim legitimized Korea's quest for independence in association with the norm of self-determination. Namely, if President Wilson's agenda were universal, then colonial Korea should be included in the discussion as well.

Unfortunately, the Japanese colonial administration suppressed the movement and arrested the leaders with brute force, and the independence movement suffered a setback. However, the Korean activists and intellectuals continued to adopt the norm of self-determination even after the social movements ended. For example, members of the Korean diaspora – in China, Japan, and the United States – all actively participated in the anti-colonial struggle in which the norm of self-determination provided the justification for Korea's independence movement from Japan's colonial rule. More importantly, throughout the March First Movement, the Korean people developed a "we consciousness" in fostering their nationalistic narrative, and *Tongnip Manse* ("long live independence") was a popular slogan at mass gatherings.¹⁰⁰

Korean records show that "*manse*" (long live, or ten thousand years) was repeatedly shouted by the masses at gatherings, but this term did not fit in with the republican polity envisioned by the Korean activists and young students.¹⁰¹ This term in Korea's home rule movement recalled its feudal past of the monarchy and evoked nationalist feelings among the general public. To be clear, the conservative voice of royal restoration had been oppressed and marginalized by the colonial government, as Tokyo attempted to establish the centrality of Japan's empire in Asia. The March First Movement after King Kojong's funeral provided a window of opportunity for both Confucian conservatives and progressive activists to demand Korea's independence from Japanese rule. When the March First Movement gained more momentum nationwide, the pre-modern language had become well associated with the republican thoughts in Korea that aimed to appeal to the mass mobilization in opposition to Japan's colonial rule. That is the main reason why the framing strategy in Korea's home rule movement reflected a mix of pre-modern and liberal language of political independence.

Admittedly, these two movements failed to achieve their goals, as Korea did not successfully become an independent country, nor did Taiwan establish a local parliament in the 1920s. Nevertheless, these frustrating results do not mean that their framing strategies are inconsequential for norm diffusion and social movements. In fact, scholars of Korean politics often stress the legacy of the March First

⁹⁷Kim's Letter to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, May 12th, 1919.

⁹⁸Manela 2007.

⁹⁹Burkman 2007.

¹⁰⁰Verma 2021.

¹⁰¹Baik 2019.

Movement, as it was the first time that young activists adopted the concept of a democratic republic in modern Korean history.¹⁰²

Similarly, the Petition Movement did not achieve its goal of establishing a local parliament, but it was a turning point in Taiwan's history. More importantly, people from diverse backgrounds – professors, young students, and intellectuals – actively participated in this nonviolent movement, as the colonial Taiwanese first gained the awareness of self-rule on a collective level.¹⁰³

In the short term, these two movements were unsuccessful, as the Japanese government did not significantly change its colonial policies in Taiwan and Korea. A closer investigation of their framing strategies shows that they set the stage for future debates among activists, public intellectuals, and nationalists on how to exert autonomy and practice democratic rule.

In sum, these home rule movements demonstrate the flexibility of the principle of self-determination, and how this global norm can be a useful rhetorical device for mass mobilization. Public intellectuals in both colonies opposed Japan's discriminatory and oppressive policies, but the political activists constructed their framing strategies in different ways. Their interpretations of the global norm and Japan's colonial control in Taiwan and Korea offer great insight into the impact of framing strategies in social movements.

7. Alternative explanations

As a rising power in East Asia, Japan experienced internal debate over its colonial ambitions and foreign policy. This study addresses two alternative explanations: (1) Japan's colonial policies in Taiwan and Korea; and (2) global norms and external pressure on Japan. They can partially account for the cause of the movements but cannot provide a more in-depth understanding of framing strategies.

In the 1900s, Japan's political discussions were centered on whether it should culturally assimilate the colonized groups or allow them home rule.¹⁰⁴ For example, Shimada Saburo, a public intellectual in the 1900s, claimed that even though the Japanese and Koreans shared the same ethnic origin, Koreans were unable to govern their own country. Therefore, Japan must bring about civilization and cultivate better character in its subjects.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, Yanaiharad Tadao, a university professor known for his liberal thinking, claimed that Japan should set up colonial parliaments in Korea and Taiwan so that the imperial subjects could live in liberal pluralistic societies.¹⁰⁶ Relatedly, the construction of the "Nanyo" region (or the South Sea) reveals how Japan imposed racial hierarchies in the countries of Southeast Asia and the Pacific to justify its overseas expansion. Tomohito Baji examines the scholarly works in the prewar era and unpacks the racism and liberalism inherent in Japan's imperial project. Specifically, government officials, intellectuals, and journalists participated in colonial policy studies, and they created a Japan-centric order against the colonized and the weak.¹⁰⁷ This racialized way of thinking can also be applied to how Japan governed Korea and Taiwan and responded to their social movements.

In Korea, Japan ruled with an iron fist, as all the governors-general had military backgrounds. On the other hand, Japan's rule over Taiwan was indirect, as Taiwan's governor-general reported to the Ministry of Colonial Affairs.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, Japan implemented civilian rule from 1919 to 1936 in Taiwan, and its assimilation policy aimed at helping Taiwanese people become Japanese through education and language programs.

¹⁰²Ko 2021. In his article, Tae-woo Ko offers first-hand materials on how Korean scholars evaluate the role of the March First Movement in Korean identity formation, and how the discourse on democracy shaped Korea's political landscape later, such as the national liberation movement, struggle for democratization, and the Candlelight Revolution.

¹⁰³Chen 1972, Liao and Wang 2006.

¹⁰⁴Duus, Myers, and Peattie 2021.

¹⁰⁵Spurr 1993.

¹⁰⁶Nakano 2012.

¹⁰⁷Baji 2022.

¹⁰⁸Abramson 2004, Yan 2013.

Even though this policy was based on a discourse of equality, the Taiwanese were never treated the same as the native Japanese.¹⁰⁹ During the Petition Movement, political activists demanded to rescind the discriminatory policies in Taiwan and advocated the principle of “extending the homeland” – offering Taiwanese people equal rights as those in Japan. The variation in Japan’s policies can partially explain how the colonial authorities responded to the social movements in Korea and Taiwan, as the former suffered from greater oppression than the latter. However, such an institutional perspective cannot fully account for the movements’ framing strategies. This institutional perspective only serves to provide background information on why the collective grievances occurred in Taiwan and Korea, and the discursive analysis sheds light on how they reshaped the master frame (self-determination) for their specific conditions.

Scholarship on social movements and norm promotion has paid much attention to how global and local factors impact policy outcomes.¹¹⁰ The emergence of a global norm exerts a strong influence on local activism if international organizations or external powers increase pressure on the target government. Moreover, the chances of success will be higher when the target country is integrated into global society.¹¹¹

In the early 1910s, Japan was not well integrated in the international community, as it was a new member of the League of Nations. Its proposal of racial equality was rejected by the West, and some officials suspected that such an international organization might constrain Japan’s foreign policy.¹¹² More importantly, Taiwan and Korea were under Japan’s colonial rule and had no official participation in international affairs.

Even though President Woodrow Wilson had high hopes for the idea of self-determination in the post-WWI order, the U.S. government was apathetic to the March First Movement. Similarly, the British embassy in Korea was critical of Japan’s colonial rule, but the central government only urged Japan to implement gradual reforms. The lack of external support provides a structural explanation on why these social movements failed to achieve their goals.

However, this viewpoint cannot account for the transnational advocacy networks established in Taiwan, Korea, and beyond. The discursive process highlighted in this article aims to link the mobilization, goals, and inspiration of the public in reaching supporters in foreign countries. Their strategies point to how the movements’ leaders actively adopted and reshaped the norm of self-determination promoted by the League of Nations.

8. Conclusion

Korea and Taiwan were both colonized by Japan, and the oppressive and discriminative policies led the local elites and activists there to initiate and engage in long-lasting mass mobilization campaigns during the 1920s. Nevertheless, the legacy of Korean statehood and the absence of it in Taiwan only provide an initial reference point for their different responses to Japanese rule, and not a systematic understanding of the discursive linkages between the empire and the colonies during their home rule movements.

It is reasonable to expect that international norms would be more easily adopted if they had shared common cultural traditions or practices in the local contexts. However, such an intuitive explanation fails to provide an enhanced understanding of the process of norm diffusion in the Japan–Korea–Taiwan triangle. Even though Woodrow Wilson’s announcement of the Fourteen Points was widely promoted after WWI, the ambiguity of the “self” meant that there was much room for interpretation.¹¹³ Moreover, the term was not explicitly referenced prior to WWI, but activists, such as Christians, students, public intellectuals, possessed progressive ideas in colonial Taiwan and Korea, providing a

¹⁰⁹Ching 2001, Barclay 2018.

¹¹⁰Keck and Sikkink 1999, Soule and Olzak 2004, Minami 2019, Solomon 2023.

¹¹¹Tsutsui and Shin 2008, Graubart and Kimenez-Bacardi 2016.

¹¹²Shimazu 2002.

¹¹³Kim 2014.

fertile ground for social movements in 1919. Wilson's rhetoric of self-determination was used to justify different political goals in Taiwan and Korea. The political debates offered great opportunities for the social activists in Japan's colonies, as they appropriated the same norm in addressing their local circumstances. The push for "cultural rule" in Japan's colonial policy was driven by the framing strategy of self-determination adopted by activists in Korea and Taiwan.

This article adopts a global-local perspective in examining the framing strategies of the Taiwanese and Korean home rule movements. For the activists, students, and intellectuals, "to be contemporary" was to promote the norm of self-determination against colonial rule. For Giorgio Agamben, the Italian philosopher whose quote introduces this article, these two social movements were definitely acts of bravery, as many of the participants faced death threats, detention, or were violently abused by the Japanese police afterward. This study illustrates how norms were conceived and promoted by activists through an empirical analysis of the two contrasting cases of Taiwan's and Korea's social movements.

Funding statement. The research is supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan. (Grant number: MOST 110-2410-H-001-034).

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