

Arendt Studies under the Shadow of China: An Overview of Taiwanese Scholarship of Hannah Arendt

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Abstract

Situated against the background of Taiwan's democratic consolidation and the escalating military threats from China, Hannah Arendt political thought has seen a significant surge in scholarly and public interest of the island. This intellectual urgency, amplified by watershed moments such as the 2014 Sunflower Student Movement, has expanded Arendt's readership beyond academia into the broader civil society. This paper examines the trajectory of this engagement by investigating scholarly research and the history of Arendt's translation into Mandarin. It categorizes existing Taiwanese scholarship into three primary domains: (1) exegesis of her political philosophy, (2) comparative analyses with other thinkers, and (3) the application of her theoretical frameworks to contemporary issues. Through this analysis, complemented by a review of introductory publications and available translations, the paper offers a comprehensive overview of how and why Arendt's thought has been introduced, interpreted, and utilized within Taiwan's unique political and social landscape.

Keywords: Academic Research, China, Hannah Arendt, Intellectual History, Taiwan,

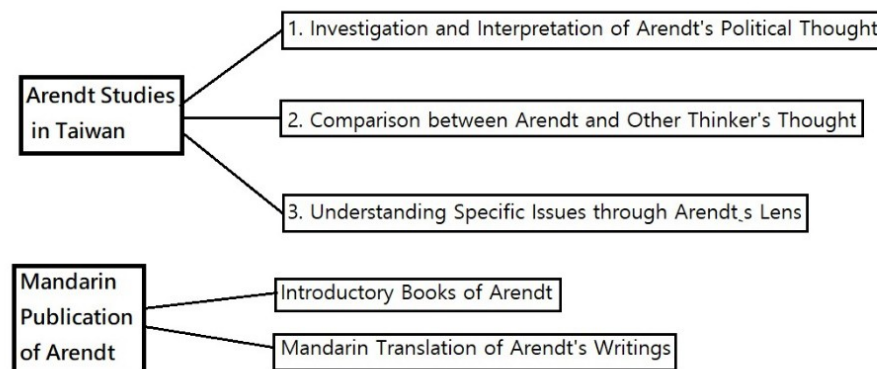
Introduction

This paper presents a comprehensive overview of the development of Hannah Arendt studies within Taiwan, alongside an examination of the Mandarin publication and translation of her works in the country. To elaborate on that development, the paper will first deliver a brief history of democratization of Taiwan against the background of what Jieh-Min Wu called the "China factor" and then investigate such development since democratization. This paper is motivated by the last two sections of the *Hannah Arendt Reader* (『ア-レント読本』), published by the Hannah Arendt Research Society of Japan (日本ア-レント研究会), which offers concise reviews of Arendt scholarship in Japan, Anglophone countries (notably the United Kingdom and the United States), Germany, and France.¹ Inspired by this model, the present study recognizes a need for a similar overview,

1 Hannah Arendt Research Society of Japan, *Hannah Arendt Reader*, Part III.

approaching a “meta-research” of Arendt studies specifically within Taiwan and typically under the shadow of Chinese possible invasion of the island.

The research question is this: What are the general trends in Arendt studies and the Mandarin publication of her books in Taiwan after its democratization? To address it, the paper will categorize the existing scholarship into three principal areas: (a) investigations and interpretations of Arendt’s political thought; (b) comparative analyses of Arendt’s thought with that of other thinkers; and (c) applications of Arendt’s theoretical framework to understand specific contemporary issues. In addition, regarding the Mandarin publication of Arendt’s works in Taiwan, this research classifies it into two types: (a) introductory books on Arendt’s thought, and (b) Mandarin translations of her original writings. I provide a graphical representation outlining the scope and focus of this research below.



Graph 1. Arendt Studies and Mandarin Publication in Taiwan (graph made by the author)

One evident limitation of this paper is that it focuses on the development of Arendt studies in Taiwan *only*. The paper will not discuss Arendt studies in other Chinese speaking world such as China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, or Singapore. This suggests that I leave my exploration of Arendt studies in these places in the future.

1. Arendt Studies under the influence of “China Factor”

My analysis employs a modified conception of the “China factor,” a term originally coined by Jieh-min Wu to describe the People’s Republic of China’s use of economic power for political influence.² Wu’s framework focuses on external pressures, such as media manipulation, disinformation campaigns, and the co-opting of local collaborators

2 We, “The China Factor in Taiwan: Impact and Response”, 430.

in Taiwan.³ While this *external* aspect of China factor is fundamental, I contend that its efficacy in the political situation of Taiwan is contingent upon an equally significant *internal* aspect of it. This internal dimension encompasses the enduring institutional and cultural legacies of the Republic of China's governance and a residual Chinese identity within the populace on the island. The two factors are inextricably linked, creating a more complex dynamic where external pressures from the PRC activate and entangle with internal historical tensions in the Taiwanese society. To understand the reception and development of Arendt studies in Taiwan necessitates a critical examination of this dual-faceted China factor, as it has profoundly shaped the intellectual and political context in which her ideas are debated.

The end of Taiwan's 38-year martial law in 1987 inaugurated a period of profound political and intellectual transformation, creating the context for the reception of Hannah Arendt's political thought. This democratic opening spurred a widespread critique of the internal China factor—the institutional and ideological framework imposed by the Kuomintang (KMT) following its retreat in 1949. The ensuing political project of “Taiwanization” sought to construct a distinct national identity by challenging this legacy.⁴ Against this backdrop of nation-building and ideological contestation, Taiwanese scholars began searching for new theoretical resources to conceptualize a stable liberal democracy. It was within this fertile intellectual climate that Arendt's work was introduced in 1990.⁵ The scholarship that followed, marked by a growing number of publications in Mandarin Chinese, directly reflected Taiwan's political exigencies. Researchers applied Arendt's ideas to analyze contemporary political problems and placed her in dialogue with other liberal thinkers, seeking a theoretical foundation for Taiwan's evolving democracy (see section 2).

China, however, deems the shift to Taiwanization as a push toward independence, which conflicts with its view that the island is “a sacrosanct part of China.” Taiwanese former Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaushieh Wu clarified in an interview that history is not the only reason behind China's resistance of Taiwanese independence because:

Strategically, the Chinese government has seen the expansion of its influence and power, particularly the blue water navy. Several Chinese military leaders have talked about expanding Chinese naval sources and the obstacle Taiwan poses to this type of military expansion. Therefore, there is a real need for them to take Taiwan back if

3 Ibid, 433.

4 Jacobs, “Whither Taiwanization? The Colonization, Democratization and Taiwanization of Taiwan”, 576-578; Wang, *Surveying the Taiwanese Psychology on Self-Defense and Self-Determination*, 6.

5 May, *Hannah Arendt*.

China wants to become a superpower one day. This makes them very emotional about the Taiwan issue.⁶

The 2014 Sunflower Student Movement marked a watershed not only in the trajectory of Taiwanization but also in the dissemination of Hannah Arendt's works in Mandarin within Taiwan.⁷ The movement heightened civil society's awareness of the growing influence of external pressures from China, perceived as a threat to Taiwan's democratic life. In its aftermath, a series of Mandarin translations and introductory studies of Arendt's writings, alongside those of Albert Camus and Simone Weil, gained significant popularity among Taiwanese readers (see Sections 3 and 4). In 2022, large-scale military exercises conducted by the Chinese navy and air force, including missile launches surrounding the island in response to the visit of former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, intensified public anxieties over the mounting military threat posed by the PRC under Xi Jinping. Although Taiwan continues to live in the shadow of China, whether through disputes over Chinese versus Taiwanese identity or through debates on whether to resist or surrender to Beijing, both scholars and the general public in Taiwan turn to Arendt's thought as a resource for making sense of, if not resolving, the island's ongoing political crisis. This underscores the enduring relevance of Arendt's political thought wherever the survival of democratic society is perceived to be at stake.

2. Arendt Studies in Taiwan

The paper proposes three main categories of Arendtian scholarship in Taiwan. Albeit imperfect, it helps readers to grasp the development of Arendt studies in this island.

2.1. Investigation and Interpretation of Arendt's Political Thought

A significant portion of existing research on Arendt can be categorized by its focus on the interpretation of her key political concepts—such as the public sphere, natality, and the banality of evil—or by its provision of a general analysis of her broader political thought.

Within this body of scholarship dedicated to Arendt's political concepts, Yi-huah Jiang's (江宜樺) *Politics Aestheticized: An Interpretation of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Political Action* is the earliest one. Jiang contended that while Arendt elevates beauty as the supreme value in politics, enabling political actors to preserve the greatness and

⁶ Interview with Jaushieh Wu, "Taiwan and its unique relations with the United States and China", 80-81.

⁷ The Sunflower Student Movement is associated with a protest movement driven by a coalition of students and civic groups that came to a head between March 18 and April 10, 2014, in the Legislative Yuan and later, the Executive Yuan of Taiwan. The activists protested the passage of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) by the then-ruling Kuomintang (KMT) at the legislature without a clause-by-clause review. [Search date: June 3, 2025; cited from Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunflower_Student_Movement]

immortality of their actions for posterity, this aestheticization concurrently introduces risks of nihilism and moral indifference.⁸ He concluded that although principles such as promise and forgiveness can guide and initiate political action, Arendt's aestheticized politics struggles to tackle socio-economic problems and to bear the full consequences of action due to its weak moral foundation. Hence, Jiang argued that it is necessary to reintroduce issues of social welfare and human dignity into Arendtian politics for re-evaluating political actions through a moral lens, even if such revisions can diminish the prominence of Arendt's contributions to political aesthetics.

Other scholars have continued to explore diverse facets of Arendt's conceptual framework. Mab Huang (黃默) analyzed the concept of the banality of evil, investigating its origins in Arendt's controversial report on the Eichmann trial and her conceptual transition from "radical evil" to "banality of evil" (Huang, 2006). Huang further substantiated his argument by drawing on cases from Taiwan (Bo Yang, 柏楊) and South Africa (secret police Dick Coetzee), suggesting that state-sponsored daily violence under authoritarian regimes exemplifies a form of the banality of evil.⁹ Shu-Fen Lin (林淑芬) reconsidered Arendt's concept of natality. Lin explored Arendt's introduction of St. Augustine's idea of birth in *The Human Condition* and the subsequent broadening of this concept in her later works such as *The Life of the Mind*. Lin asserted that natality is the basis of Arendt's political thought, which serves as the ontological foundation for her concept of plurality—a given fact or a potential for new beginnings that intrinsically links individuals to others in the world.¹⁰ Kuan-chu Wei (魏光莒) discussed Arendt's notion of public space. Wei elaborated on how the rise of mass society deprives citizens of their right to opinions, thereby diminishing their sense of commonality. He argued that Arendt advanced Heidegger's idea of "being-with" (Mitsein) by emphasizing human plurality and critiquing modern civilization's tendency towards world alienation, noting Arendt's influence on subsequent scholars such as Henri Lefebvre, Daniel Bell, and Kenneth Frampton.¹¹ Yu-Zhong Li (李雨鍾) examined Arendt's concept of factual truth and its relationship to her civil philosophy. He distinguished Arendt's notion of rational and factual truth and argued that Arendt advocated for a division between story-actor and storyteller and another division between truth-telling-as-action and truth-telling-as-fabrication, by which she can safeguard an independent sphere for truth-telling beyond the realm of politics.¹² Hao Yeh (葉浩) interpreted Arendt's concepts of *initium*, public

8 Jiang, *Politics Aestheticized: An Interpretation of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Political Action*.

9 Huang, "Hannah Arendt on Banality of Evil".

10 Lin, "Hannah Arendt's Concept of Natality and Plural Others".

11 Wei, "Hannah Arendt's Theory of Public Sphere and Social Space".

12 Li, "From Story to Truth: Hannah Arendt and the Fact-Crisis in Modern Civil Society".

space, and plurality as constituting a form of republicanism grounded in an ontology of time. Yeh posited that for Arendt, *res publica* pertains more to a shared temporal sense of commonality than a spatial one, wherein individuals form a synchronic community based on a common narrative of their identity within the flow of time.¹³ The persistence of this *res publica*, he argued, depends on their narrative synchronicity and their collective willingness to preserve it.

Recent scholarship has increasingly addressed Arendt's concept of political sentiment and its implications for her theory of judgment. Yu-Zhong provided a detailed analysis of Arendt's conceptualization of political sentiment and emotion, elaborating on the challenges posed by emotion—due to its unworldly, worldless-ness, and anti-world potentials—to political life. Li explained how and why Arendt's politics of emotion can nevertheless be communicable among diverse individuals and ultimately informed her concept of judgment.¹⁴ Building upon this research, Kun-Feng Tu (杜坤峰) investigated the relationship between Arendt's understanding of love and the Will. contends that the transformation of love is both possible and applicable to Arendt's political framework, thereby enabling a deeper comprehension of the conceptual relationships between friendship, compassion, pity, and solidarity within her political thought.¹⁵

In the domain of general analyses of Arendt's political thought, Lishan Lin's (林麗珊) early paper *Hannah Arendt's Political Philosophy* discussed Arendt's critique of capitalist expansion and the rise of the mob (or "the superfluous" by Lin), linking these phenomena to the emergence of totalitarianism. Lin interpreted Arendt by analyzing the distinction between power and violence, arguing that, for Arendt, revolutionary action offers the sole escape from totalitarian tragedy. Such action not only establishes a new public space but also allows revolutionaries to experience the joy of public freedom, which serves as a counter to totalitarianism.¹⁶ Dahua Mo (莫大華) also contributed to the general analysis of Arendt's thought with two papers. In *A Retrospective of Hannah Arendt's Political Thought*, he examined the American scholarship of Arendt of the 1990s by, firstly, summarizing prominent research themes of that period (e.g., conscience versus evil, authority versus power, political action versus the public realm) and, secondly,

13 Yeh, "On Hannah Arendt's Theory of Political Ontology: An Interpretation of Republicanism from the Perspective of Temporality".

14 Li, "Can the Politics of Emotion Acquire Communicability? A New Investigation on the Critique of Emotion and Theory of Judgment in Hannah Arendt's Thought".

15 Tu, "We Must Be Friends: An Analysis and Interpretation of Hannah Arendt's Concepts of Compassion, Pity, and Solidarity"; "I Will Be Your Friend: An Analysis and Interpretation of Hannah Arendt's Concepts of Political Sentiment and Friendship"; "The Will to Freedom: Reconsidering Hannah Arendt's Concept of Love and the Will and Their Relationship to Freedom".

16 Lin, "Hannah Arendt's Political Philosophy".

introducing Mary G. Diez's observations on such scholarship. Mo concluded that despite criticisms of Arendt's writings as unsystematic or ambiguous, the increasing availability of her works offered greater possibilities for clarifying her ideas.¹⁷ In a subsequent paper, Mo further addressed critiques of her thought, such as the idealization of Greek polis politics and the council system. He also observed that fields like cultural research, post-modernism, feminism, political aesthetics, and critical theory have significantly advanced Arendtian research.¹⁸ Commemorating the 100th anniversary of Arendt's birth, Ying-Wen Tsai (蔡英文) authored *From the Critique of Totalitarianism to Republican Democratic Politics: The Legacy of Hannah Arendt's Political Thought* which appraised her intellectual legacy. Tsai compared Arendt with Carl Schmitt on issues like the fall of Weimar and the rise of Nazi Germany, reflect on her critique of modern democracy and capitalism in the United States, and proposed her argument that the "space of appearance" is crucial for re-empowering citizens in a democracy. He concluded that, in Arendt's view, federalism and the council system represent practical means to translate revolutionary impetus into daily political practices, enabling citizens to enlarge their mentalities, improve their political judgment, and foster mutual trust and friendship.¹⁹

The publication of Tsai's book, *Political Practices and Public Space: On Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, can be regarded as a significant milestone in Taiwanese Arendtian scholarship. Beginning with the relationship between totalitarianism and Western modernism, Tsai discussed Arendt's "methodology" of political thinking, through which he elaborated on two central concepts in her thought: Action (or praxis) and the public realm. Applying these concepts, Tsai then sought to understand four issues in modern politics from an Arendtian perspective: Identity and historical discourse, state sovereignty and citizens' political participation, the relevance of morality to politics, and liberal constitutionalism *vis-à-vis* republicanism.²⁰ Tsai himself stated that the book "plans not to give and general elaboration on her political ideas but... to offer [the readers] an outline of them and their implication [to politics]".²¹ Following the book's publication, Kao-yen Hsiao (蕭高彥, later identified as Shaw, Carl K. Y.) wrote a book review commending Tsai's contribution to the scholarship. Hsiao also raised two critiques concerning Arendt's thought itself: Its perceived dramaturgical conception of politics and

17 Mo, "A Retrospective of Hannah Arendt's Political Thought".

18 Mo, "Hannah Arendt's Political Thought: Characteristics and Reflections".

19 Tsai, "From the Critique of Totalitarianism to Republican Democratic Politics: The Legacy of Hannah Arendt's Political Thought". Ying-Wen Tsai here refers to the former researcher at the Centre for Political Thought in Academia Sinica, Taiwan not to the former president of Taiwan.

20 Tsai, *Political Practices and Public Space: On Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*.

21 *Ibid.*, xiii.

its aestheticization of politics, both of which he suggested were too idealized for practical political realities.²²

2.2. Comparison between Arendt and Other Thinker's Thoughts

This body of literature frequently places Hannah Arendt's ideas in dialogue with those of other thinkers to achieve a clearer understanding of their respective thoughts or to explore their implications for contemporary politics.

Many researches within this comparative framework focus on the juxtaposition of Arendt and Carl Schmitt. For instance, Ying-Wen Tsai, after a detailed explication of their respective concepts of “the political”, concluded that each thinker possesses unique insights and blind spots. Tsai argued that while Arendt prompted reflection on citizenship, political action, and civil rights, her profound suspicion of the modern nation-state risked justifying populism and anarchism. Conversely, although Schmitt highlighted the antagonistic nature of politics, his defense of dictatorship could be seen as justifying an amoral, totalitarian politics.²³ Tsai later expanded this comparison to include Claude Lefort, contending that both Schmitt's and Arendt's political theories were too radical for contemporary application: Schmitt's appeal to an impossible national homogeneity and Arendt's proposed abandonment of political representation were deemed impractical. As a result, Tsai suggested that Lefort's concept of the empty space of power and the symbolic representation in democracy offered a more feasible framework for analyzing contemporary democratic politics.²⁴ Will K. M. Chuang (莊國銘) discussed Arendt's and Schmitt's concepts of constituent power (*pouvoir constituant*). He contended that although Arendt, referencing the American experience of constitution-making, asserted no inherent limitations on constituent power, she did not imply it was boundless or that everything is possible. Instead, as Chuang argued, Arendt believed that individuals possessing and experiencing the virtue of equality could foster a democratic community spirit. The experience of self-governance, in turn, facilitates the constitution-making process, thereby overcoming the Schmittian conflict between popular will and popular power.²⁵ Carl K. Y. Shaw sought to explore the “hidden dialogue between Arendt and Schmitt” concerning republicanism, nationalism, and constitutional theory. Shaw explained how Arendt's concept of “principle” (*principium*), revealed in collective action,

22 Hsiao, “The Politics of the Sublime and the Good - A Review of Tsai Ying-wen's ‘Political Practice and Public Space - Hannah Arendt's Political Thought’”.

23 Tsai, “Two Concepts of the Political: Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt”.

24 Tsai, “Political Representation and Liberal Democracy: Schmitt, Arendt and Lefort on Relationship between State and People”.

25 Chuang, “On Hannah Arendt's Theory of *Pouvoir Constituant*”.

can establish political legitimacy for a community, thereby offering a rejection of the Schmittian notion that political order is created via dictatorship.²⁶

Beyond the Arendt-Schmitt nexus, Taiwanese scholarship presents a diverse range of other comparative analyses. Liang Hong (洪亮), for example, discussed the concept of evil in the thought of Karl Barth and Hannah Arendt. Hong concluded that both thinkers identified the “rootlessness” (*Grundlosigkeit/Wurzellosigkeit*) of evil as a force capable of severing human connections and solidarity; he therefore proposed a renewed engagement with their ideas as a means to help individuals and communities (re-)establish their grounding in the world.²⁷ Han-yu Huang (黃涵諭) analyzed Arendt’s concept of radical evil and banality of evil through Lacanian psychoanalytic ethics and Žižekian ideology critique. He argued that for Arendt, there is only one consistent concept of evil, namely, “the banality of radical evil”, by which it unpacks the entanglement of the superego with morality and explores how “the banality of radical evil” can outlive totalitarian regimes and still haunt us today.²⁸ Li Lin (林立), after examining Arendt’s and Immanuel Kant’s texts on aesthetics and judgment, critiqued Arendt’s interpretation of Kant as inappropriate and a distortion of Kant’s original meaning. Lin argued that Arendt effectively nullified the transcendental nature of aesthetic judgment, thereby constructing her own version of Kantian thought to fit her project of a political *sensus communis*.²⁹ Yeu-Jing Miin (閔宇經) undertook a comparison between Arendt and Isaiah Berlin, focusing on their shared concerns regarding human nature and the practical exercise of humanity.³⁰ Yu-he Hsiao (蕭育和) discussed Arendt’s and Michel Foucault’s perspectives on revolution, elaborating on their mutual faith in popular autonomy. Hsiao suggested that both thinkers expected people not only to learn from their experiences and the spirit of revolution but also to reclaim their freedom through collective action.³¹ Kun-Feng Tu compared Arendt and John Rawls in terms of their respective “methods” of thinking

26 Shaw, “Republicanism, Nationalism and Constitutional Theory: The Hidden Dialogue between Arendt and Schmitt”.

27 Hong, “Karl Barth and Hannah Arendt on Evil and Covenant”.

28 Huang, “The Banality of Radical Evil in the Name of Enjoyment: Hannah Arendt Revisited through Ethics of Psychoanalysis”.

29 Lin, “Reflections on the Adequacy of Hannah Arendt’s Appropriation of Kant’s Aesthetics for her Political Thoughts”.

30 Miin, “A study-on the Isaiah Berlin and Hannah Arendt: the Aspect of Self-Practice”.

31 Hsiao, “Reclaiming “Political Spirituality”: Foucault and Arendt on Revolution”.

about politics, arguing that the Rawlsian approach to political philosophy could be detrimental to fostering “political thinking” in the Arendt’ sense of the term.³²

Several major publications further exemplify the significance of such comparative studies within Taiwanese scholarship of Arendt. In *The Logic of Liberal Democracy*, Yihuah Jiang situated Arendt alongside liberal thinkers such as John Locke, Benjamin Constant, John Stuart Mill, and Michael Walzer. This comparative analysis aimed to understand the strengths and weaknesses of liberal democratic politics, drew implications for Taiwan’s democratic development, and considered future challenges.³³ In contrast, Carl K. Y. Shaw, in his work, placed Arendt within the broader historical context of political thought, tracing the origins and development of Western republicanism. Through this lens, Shaw reflected not only on the historical evolution of Taiwan’s constitution but also on the inherent tensions between republicanism and modern society.³⁴ Ying-Wen Tsai also contextualized Arendt within the history of political thought, focusing on democratic rather than republican traditions. After reviewing the historical trajectory of democracy—from the ancient Greek polis, representational government, to revolutions centered on popular sovereignty—Tsai concluded that the dialectical dynamics of democracy, specifically the interplay between popular power and the legal constitutional order, sustain its momentum against autocracy and arbitrary domination.³⁵ This implies not only that democracy’s development is an ongoing process but also that it is perpetually accompanied by the risk of self-destruction; democracy, in essence, is a promise continuously renewed among citizens.³⁶

In addition to juxtapositions with political thinkers, some Taiwanese scholars have compared Arendt’s thought with that of philosophers, spanning both Western and Eastern traditions. Wen-Shang Wang (汪文聖) is among the most prominent contributors to this area, having authored numerous articles on such comparisons. Wang investigated how Paul Ricoeur interpreted Arendt’s idea of exemplification and Kant’s concept of schema and synthesized them into his own theory on the schematism of narrative function. This synthesis, Wang argued, enabled Ricoeur to address fundamental questions of personal (who I am) and communal (who we are) identity.³⁷ Wang has also undertaken comparisons between Arendt and Heidegger on the issues of art (*téchnē*) and

32 Tu, “What We Talk about When We Talk about Political Theory: Reconsidering Hannah Arendt’s ‘Method’ of Political Thinking and its Critiques to the Rawlsian Method of Political Philosophy Today”.

33 Jiang, *The Logic of Liberal Democracy*, Chapter 8, 9.

34 Shaw, *On the History of Political Thought of the Western Republicanism*, Chapter 10.

35 Tsai, *From Autocratic to Democracy: The Unfolding of Western Democratic Thought*.

36 Ibid., Chapter 14.

chance (*túchē*);³⁸ between Arendt and Ricoeur regarding the practical significance of narration and storytelling for healing trauma and forming public narratives of identity;³⁹ and between Arendt, Heidegger, and Husserl concerning image language in Western philosophy, wherein Wang contended that Heidegger's philosophy ultimately constitutes a form of theological philosophy rather than philosophical theology.⁴⁰ The publication of Wang's book, *Phenomenology as a Practical Philosophy: On Ethical, Political, and Religious Philosophy of Husserl, Heidegger, and Arendt*, marked a significant contribution to such philosophical comparisons, interpreting phenomenology in Arendt's thought as a practical philosophy applicable to ethics, politics, and religion.⁴¹

Other scholars have also pursued these philosophical dialogues. For example, Chen-yu Chung (鍾振宇) conducted a comparative study between Arendt and the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi (莊子). Chung sought to place Zhuangzi's ideas of "being-with" (共在) and "common agreement" (共是) in dialogue with Arendt's concepts of plurality and public opinion, through which Chung offered a cross-cultural reinterpretation of both thinkers and emphasized that Zhuangzi's notion of "deep common agreement" (深度共是) could potentially transcend Arendt's concept of an "enlargement of mentality" (Chung, 2023).⁴² Yu-Zhong Li also produced a cross analysis of between Jean François Billeter and Arendt to seek elements of public communication in Zhuangzi's philosophy (Li, 2024).⁴³

2.3. Understanding Specific Issues through Arendt's Lens

37 Wang, "Schematism of Narrative Function: And on a Relationship of Arendt to Ricoeur".

38 Wang, "On Political Freedom in Public Sphere in View of the Contrast between *Téchne* and *Túche* -A Comparison between Arendt and Heidegger".

39 Wang, "Relation between Ricoeur and Arendt Regarding Narrative: A View Starting from Practical Significance".

40 Wang, "Dose Heidegger Stand for a Theological Philosophy or a Philosophical Theology? In Comparison with Husserl's and Arendt's Position".

41 Wang, *Phenomenology as a Practical Philosophy: On Ethical, Political, and Religious Philosophy of Husserl, Heidegger, and Arendt*.

42 Chung, "Zhuangzi's 'Being-with' and 'Common Agreement': Dialogue with Heidegger and Arendt".

43 Li, "Exploring Elements of Public Communication in Zhuangzi's 'On Responding to Things': from Billeter to Arendt".

A distinct category within Arendtian scholarship of Taiwan involves the application of Arendt's thought to various political issues, seeking to elucidate her insights into contemporary politics.

Several studies explore the implications of Arendt's concepts, particularly the "banality of evil". investigated the use and misuse of this concept within the American context. Yulin Chen (陳毓麟) observed that while commentators like Edward Rothstein expressed concern over the abuse of the concept and its problematic analogy to crises in democracies such as the United States, other scholars, including Benjamin Barber, Jonathan Schell, Susan Neiman, and George Kateb, were more focused on the crises themselves, fearing their potential to erode America's democratic spirit. Chen concluded that Arendt herself was cautious about using analogies, whether of totalitarianism or the banality of evil, because superficial similarities between different cases could lead to seriously inappropriate analogies, thereby hindering a true understanding of the realities involved.⁴⁴ Nian Zhang (張念) also addressed Arendt's concept of evil, placing it within a broader discussion of the subject. Zhang commended Arendt's analysis of the nature of totalitarian regimes and the mindset of their officials for its critique of modern bureaucracy and the tendency of officials to evade responsibility. He argued that the human mental ability of thinking is the starting point for taking responsibility, and the faculty of judgment is the genesis of political engagement with others, through which historical tragedies can be prevented from recurring.⁴⁵ Further applications of Arendt's ideas address the enduring challenges of authoritarianism and alienation. Yuanxiong Dai (戴遠雄) focused on the striking resilience of totalitarian arts of ruling, from which contemporary authoritarian regimes can evidently learn. Although acknowledging a potentially troubling global rise in authoritarianism, Dai elaborated on three Arendtian lessons for countering this trend: Active engagement in public debate, the preservation of plural opinions, and the exercise of judgment against authoritarian evil. He concluded that the philosopher's role is not to dictate actions but to hone the citizens' capacity for political engagement.⁴⁶ Song Gao (高松) drew upon Arendt to analyze the modern problem of alienation. Gao contended that Galileo's application of the telescope to astronomical observation marked a celestial turn, initiating an alienation from the Earth. He explained that the Earth became unfamiliar, perceived merely as another planet, implying that human sensory faculties were no longer reliable for seeking truth. This shift suggested that truth lay beyond direct observation, ultimately leading to alienation from the lived world.⁴⁷

44 Chen, "Arendt's Insights Resonate in a Troubled World".

45 Zhang, "The Banality of Evil and Political Judgment: From Arendt's Perspective".

46 Dai, "How Philosophy Confronts the Public: Reading Arendt under Authoritarianism".

Beyond these “general” political themes, scholars have also applied Arendt’s framework to specific “local” political issues in Taiwan. Shun-Fen Lin explored possibilities for political trauma healing and community recovery by applying Arendt’s discourse on human rights. Lin introduced Arendt’s concept of the right to have rights and applied it to a discussion of the February 28 incident in Taiwan (an anti-government uprising in 1947 met with violent suppression, marking a critical juncture in Taiwan’s modern history).⁴⁸ She argued that the promoters of the 228 Peace Movement and their actions exemplified forgiveness and reconciliation in an Arendtian sense, enabling perpetrators, victims, and bystanders to rebuild their common world.⁴⁹ Wen-Sheng Wang, in *A Phenomenological Study of Domestic Nursing Ethics for Psychiatric Patients*, critically analyzed the individual-based psychiatric treatment methods of Rong-Guang Wen (王榮光) and Jiu-Jun Wu (吳就君). Wang proposed Yuan-Ling Huang’s (黃媛齡) community-based approach as one that corresponds to Arendt’s concept of *vita active*.⁵⁰ Kun-Feng Tu attempted to interpret Arendt’s the right to have rights as the collective right of a people to political action. Through this lens, Tu addressed the complexities surrounding the right to self-determination and argued that the primary bearers of the right to have rights were stateless *peoples*, citing Taiwan and Somaliland as examples.⁵¹

Highlighting the progress in this category of applied scholarship, Hao Yeh’s 2024 book, *A Politics of Différance*, stands as a notable milestone. Yeh interpreted Isaiah Berlin’s and Hannah Arendt’s respective concepts of plurality, synthesizing them into his own theory of “narrative synchronicity” and the “community of temporality”. This framework was then employed to analyze and explain—though not to prescribe solutions for—the polarizing politics of *différance* evident in Taiwan.⁵²

47 Gao, “The Archimedean Point of the Modern Age: Arendt on Galileo and the Beginning of the Modern Science”.

48 The February 28 incident (also called the February 28 massacre, the 228 incident, or the 228 massacre) was an anti-government uprising in Taiwan in 1947 that was violently suppressed by the Kuomintang-led nationalist government of the Republic of China (ROC). Directed by provincial governor Chen Yi and president Chiang Kai-shek, thousands of civilians were killed beginning on February 28. The incident is considered to be one of the most important events in Taiwan’s modern history and was a critical impetus for the Taiwan independence movement. [Search date: June 3, 2025; cited from Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/February_28_incident]

49 Lin, “Political Trauma and Care in Arendt’s Perspective on Human Rights: A Case Study of the 228 Peace Movement”.

50 Wang, “A Phenomenological Study of Domestic Nursing Ethics for Psychiatric Patients”.

51 Tu, “The Right to Have Rights as the Collective Right of a People—An Interpretation of Hannah Arendt’s Concept of the Right to Have Rights”.

52 Yeh, *A Politics of Différance*.

3. Mandarin Publication of Arendt's Thought

The 2014 Sunflower Student Movement was the watershed in the progress of Mandarin publication of Arendt in Taiwan, with a serial publication of the Mandarin translation and introductory books of her writings.

3.1. Mandarin Translation of Arendt's Writings

The availability of Arendt's works in Mandarin translation within Taiwan was relatively limited prior to a significant student movement. However, the period following this movement witnessed a remarkable increase in access to her writings. Existing translations were not only reprinted,⁵³ but key texts such as *The Human Condition* were also republished in a new, revised edition.⁵⁴ Furthermore, some of Arendt's major works, notably *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, underwent complete re-translation into Mandarin to provide the Taiwanese audience with more reader-friendly and accurate versions.⁵⁵

Apert from these reprints and re-translations, this period also saw the introduction of new Mandarin translations of Arendt's other important writings, including *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* and *Between Past and Future*.⁵⁶ Among the figures pivotal to this expanded access, translator Yu-Zhong Li has made substantial contributions. His work ranges from translating the new version of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to editing volumes such as *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* and *Between Past and Future*. Through such efforts, Li has played a crucial role in promoting Arendt's thought and broadening her readership in Taiwan.

3.2. Mandarin Publication of Introductory Books of Arendt

The availability of introductory books in Mandarin that focus on Arendt's political thought remains relatively limited in Taiwan. Among these, an early contribution by Jian-Zhang Li (李建漳), published in 2018, primarily addresses Arendt's concepts of action, freedom, and power.⁵⁷ In a different vein, the Mandarin translation of Japanese scholar Masahiko Makino's (牧野雅彦) book, *Hannah Arendt: The Totalitarian Nightmare*, concentrates on the rise of totalitarian mobs and their destructive impact on the public

53 Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil; Men in Dark Times; Responsibility and Judgement; The Promise of Politics; The Life of the Mind*.

54 Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

55 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

56 Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises In Political Thought; Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*.

world and factual truth.⁵⁸ Beyond these general introductory texts, the Mandarin translation of Derwent May's book is the earliest biography on Arendt that can be found in Taiwan.⁵⁹ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's widely recognized biography, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, has also been made available to Taiwanese readers through its Mandarin translation.⁶⁰

4. Recent Developments

In addition to published works, some scholars in Taiwan actively contribute to the dissemination of Hannah Arendt's thought by offering courses and lectures to general audiences, thereby broadening public understanding. For instance, Hao Yeh has delivered an online lecture that examines how Arendt transformed Kantian aesthetics into her project of political philosophy.⁶¹



Graph 2: Hao Yeh's online course about Arendt's interpretation of Kantian aesthetics in ACCUPASS

57 Li, *Hannah Arendt*.

58 Makino, *Hannah Arendt: The Totalitarian Nightmare*.

59 May, *Hannah Arendt*.

60 Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*.

61 The link of the online course is <https://www.accupass.com/event/2409180551288632615500> [Search date: June 3, 2025]

Supported by numerous Taiwanese scholars, including Professor Tsang-Long Liu (劉滄龍) and Hao Yeh, the Hannah Arendt Society of Taiwan (HAST) was established on September 27, 2024. This represents a significant milestone in the advancement of Arendtian scholarship in Taiwan. The society originated from an Arendt workshop series initiated at the National Taiwan Normal University in 2023. The stated aims of HAST are as follows:⁶²

1. Advancing professional research, education, and development related to Arendt's thought in Taiwan.
2. Organizing academic activities focused on Arendt studies.
3. Facilitating international exchanges of Arendtian scholarship between Taiwanese and overseas scholars.
4. Enhancing communication and collaboration among the members of the society.
5. Promoting matters related to the objectives of the society.

Hao Yeh was elected as the inaugural chairperson of the Society.

5. Conclusion

In summary, although under the military threat from China and internal disputes on Chinese legacy, Arendt studies in Taiwan have progressed significantly since the island's democratization, encompassing advancements from academic research to the Mandarin publication and translation of Arendt's works. The recent establishment of the Hannah Arendt Society of Taiwan further underscores this notable progress. Based on this overview, it is evident that Arendt is, and will likely continue to be, an influential figure among both Taiwanese scholars and the general readership in the future.

Reference⁶³

62 The link of HAST is https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61566905911699&sk=about_details [Search date: June 3, 2025]

63 I translate all Chinese and Japanese reference into English with an attachment of their original title, name of the author, and name of the publisher in the square brackets.

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