Taiwan's Nationalistic Politics and Its Difficult 'Status Quo'

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Abstract

Taiwan's growing calls for independence have provoked China and heightened the risk of military conflict in the region. This paper addresses two issues: first, it seeks to provide a short historical overview of the development of Taiwanese nationalistic self-assertion; second, it questions the commonly held notion of keeping the 'status quo', which is in effect always changing and dynamic. The paper uses a historical-institutional framework for its interpretation. It explores the origin and rise of Taiwanese nationalism in its relationship to Taiwan's past, and the changing geo-political contexts in which it is situated. It then analyses the importance of electoral institutions and the struggles to broaden political participation and legitimation. Several disparate sources of Taiwanese identity are also discussed, namely: (i) Taiwan as a frontier territory of the Manchu Empire, which was later colonized and modernized by the Japanese; (ii) unification with the Republic of China under authoritarian rule since 1945; and (iii) the transformation of the ROC regime, its indigenization and grounding in Taiwan in the context of its long separation from China and its international isolation. This indigenization process has been gradually accomplished through electoral struggles and by revising the electoral system and the constitution.[1]

Introduction

The recent growth of Taiwanese nationalist sentiment has caused widespread alarm and raised the spectre of military conflict in the region. It is not that Taiwan's nationalism is expected to lead to strategic or territorial expansion, but that in the eyes of the Beijing government, it is seen as a 'provocative' step in the direction of 'permanently separating' from China. During the last decade, Beijing's efforts to subdue Taiwan's move towards independence, which have included the use of military exercises and threatening remarks, have been unsuccessful in dampening its growth. Sometimes stern reactions from the PRC vis-

a-vis Taiwan's domestic politics just helped to add fuel to the fire. The dark cloud of war has been looming since 1996 over the Taiwan Strait (Friedman 1999).

Beijing has offered Taiwan the terms known as 'Peaceful Unification, One Country Two Systems'.[2] Very briefly, this means that Taiwan could enjoy a very high degree of autonomy, including maintaining its military force, but must remain a special territorial government under the PRC. Hong Kong was at one time the often-cited model to persuade Taiwan to accept this concept, though less so now, partly caused by rising discontents among Hong Kong citizens for their government. The PRC firmly believe that if Taiwan were to accept this offer, both sides of the Taiwan Strait would benefit from a peaceful and prosperous future, a true 'win-win' situation. One needs to enquire why the political trend in Taiwan has been edging in the opposite direction by choosing to promote independent sovereign statehood, 'separating' from China. Why is it that more and more Taiwanese people and their political leaders have, in their political manoeuvrings, continuously declined China's unification proposal, and defied China's warning of war? Political analysts also wonder why Taiwan does not grasp the opportunity while it still has the chance, since time is on the side of China, whose economy is booming and which is swiftly rising to become the major regional player.

One simple answer to these questions is that Taiwanese nationalism is 'protected' by the US in the name of maintaining peace in the region and defending democracy. In the eyes of its opponents, Taiwan has been regarded as the 'protectorate' of the US since the 1950s, when the Korean War broke out. At that time, Taiwan was occasionally referred to as an 'unsinkable' carrier of the West Pacific to contain the spread of communism. And now it is vital to the strategic interests of the Japan–US alliance in the region to balance and check the surging Chinese influence. Despite its affirmation of the 'One-China' policy, and its assertion that it does not support Taiwanese independence, the US has a vested interest in a 'separate' Taiwan, especially when engaging with China. Opponents of Taiwanese nationalism question its authenticity, and believe that without US backing, Taiwan would have lost its status quo and caved in very quickly.

From the viewpoint of realpolitik, this explanation may not be far from reality. But this is also an oversimplistic view because it takes little account of what the citizens of Taiwan actually practise in their routine political life: namely what the concepts of 'democracy' and 'nation',

'independence'and 'unification'actually mean to them for their identity-making process. It also overlooks how different historical trajectories and political institutions have exerted various influences on Taiwan's nationalism and capacity for self-assertion, and how this has ironically divided and united Taiwan at one and the same time.

It is fair to argue that Taiwan has developed its own zig-zag nation-building course under the geo-political constraints set by global and regional powers beyond its borders. Though the nation has many adversaries, including the recent threat of incursion by China, Taiwan is *defacto* an independent country. Indeed, in 2003 it ranked as the 17th largest trade country of the world, boasting a fully-fledged democracy and government. Though it does not have enough power to shake up the big geo-political picture, significant events do take place within Taiwan's domestic political agenda, such as combining a disputed referendum with a heated presidential election at the same time, proposing to revise its constitution and its national title, lobbying to enter UN as a nation-state at the Assembly, and revising the curricular of history and geography in national education contents. All these developments have the potential to exert a significant pressure on concerned parties and people, both inside and outside of Taiwan, and to impact on its neighbouring countries through 'provoking' Chinese military actions and hence forcing the US and Japan to take a stand on the issue.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to provide a 'balanced'interpretative framework to examine Taiwanese politics and its significance. The paper attempts to look at issues that concern many Taiwanese, and explain why have they been occupying a salient position in Taiwan's political arena.[3] I contend that Taiwan's nationalistic drive has its origin in the complex and powerful functions and influences of colonialism, nationalism and the state apparatus. The pursuance of national modernization and development has been confined to geo-politics. And nationalism, be it Taiwanese or Chinese, has been a crucial element in the institutional formulation of the ROC's constitution and in the evolution of its electoral politics. It cannot be discredited as political manoeuvring and strategic mobilization by some cunning political elites and opportunist political parties. Nationalism, once it has arisen, develops and transforms itself through major events and critical historical conjunctures. Its capacity to grow is also constrained by the range of probable actions set by the constraints in institutional politics. According to its relative strength at a particular juncture, it may either follow or contravene the rules of the game imposed at that time by

powerful interests. Thus its developmental course is often non-linear and not predetermined; rather it is path-dependent, meaning that the latter developments are led and influenced by earlier developments or events with a degree of uncertainty.

The framework of this paper will be mainly historical-institutional. I wish to demonstrate the impact of the past on the present, and that the present can only play itself out within the boundaries set by the past. In other words, when political change takes place, it tends to occur incrementally, unless the power structure or major institutions have been seriously disrupted. Moreover, incremental changes, some big and some small, are also completed through the pre-existing institutional set-ups. Besides regulating the possibilities and providing rationalizations for political actions, institutional set-ups are also situated at the centre-stage of contentious politics, becoming the target for political struggles. Thus they constrain and energize political changes almost simultaneously.

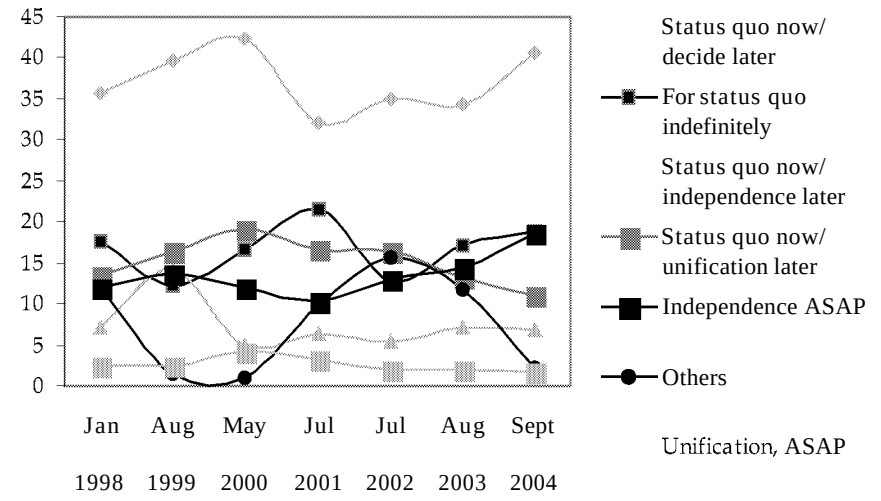
The first part of this paper explores the historical background of Taiwanese national self-assertion. For most people, trying to make sense of the present and look toward the future, the past can provide rationalization and meanings either through direct lived experience (of the older generation) or through narrating and using the past to educate the younger generation. What we see in today's Taiwanese nationalism has a long historical trajectory, originated in its colonial legacy of the early 20th century. This legacy persists in the current political scenario, and is repeatedly narrated by today's political actors. The paper then focuses on three major sources of political energy to explain Taiwan's drive for nationalism and independence: (i) the early phase of Taiwanese national self-assertion under the Japanese, (ii) the historic building of nationalist authoritarianism in Taiwan by the ROC government, and (iii) the movement from the grassroots to transform the regime into a representative polity through the struggles to enlarge the existing electoral system and for 'political indigenization'. But first, it is helpful briefly to examine the current complexities surrounding the issue of nationalism in Taiwan.

The Complexities of the Current National Status

Figure 1 gives an indication of the range of Taiwanese attitudes (1998-2004) towards Taiwan independence versus unification with China. Over the years, compared to other choices, over 50 percent of the Taiwanese public favours preservation of the 'status quo'. The majority view helps

to stabilize the current regime and to inject a degree of self-restraint in domestic politics, as against any hasty move. The corresponding percentages for the pro-independence camp, consisting of those who want independence as soon as possible, and those who perhaps would prefer independence at some future date, have increased steadily in recent years, from under 20 percent to almost 26 percent. But the support for immediate independence is still relative low, hovering around 5-6 percent. On the other hand, the support for unification with China shows a more fluctuating and declining percentage. A recent 2004 poll suggests that about 11.4 percent favour unification some time in the future, with only 1.6 percent opting for immediate unification.

FIGURE **1:** Opinion Poll (1998-2004) on whether Taiwan Should Seek Independence or Unification with China (%)



Source: Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, and Taiwanese Government. The data were collected through telephone interviews by random sampling of the national adult population. The poll was done by the Center for Election Studies, National Cheng-Chi University, Taiwan, and a private polling company.

Another way to explain the complexity is to look at the formation of the 'status quo' in Taiwan. For many Chinese, the term 'China' is so natural that it appears to be unequivocal and seemingly eternal. But in reality and in history, 'China' has many different faces and meanings to different peoples. And the territory and people of 'China' throughout history have also varied according to the period in question. To

explain just how complicated the issue of national identity is in Taiwan today; we can begin with its official title and constitution. The official title of Taiwan today is still the Republic of China (the ROC), which was established in 1911 in Nanjing (in Mainland China), following the overthrow of the Manchu monarchy. And the constitution of ROC was passed only towards the end of 1948 in Nanjing a few months before the fall of the Nationalist government. This event occurred during the period of heightened civil war between the government and the 'rebel' communist army. Later, that constitution was taken to Taiwan when the central government went into exile. Never fully implemented (for obvious practical reasons), the constitution became a token for the 'legitimate and truthful China', which is also the pro-US and US-backed 'Free China'. The constitution was upheld as an intrinsic part of democracy, against the 'communist dictatorship regime'. And it was also used as a 'cosmetic disguise' for the authoritarian rule that persisted in Taiwan for nearly 40 years. In more recent times, the ROC constitution has become the focus of political contention. In the debate over which political model to adopt to set Taiwan on its future path, different political forces engaged in a power struggle to control the revision of the constitution, which needed to be attuned to the new political situation.'

Ironically, although the constitution can be viewed as an obsolete and ineffective instrument to confront the new political realities of present-day Taiwan, it remains the main legitimizing organ. This in respect to: institutional governance, the separation of powers, the structure of government, national representation, the national title and the requirement of loyalty from its citizens. Any violation of, or attempt to redraw the ROC constitution (especially those parts that are implemented, added and revised in Taiwan) can stir up political crises and cause serious protests over its legitimacy.

However, 'constitutionally' speaking, the ROC still holds territorial claim over the entire area of China, including Outer Mongolia (the Republic of Mongolia since 1946). This particular 'China', prescribed by the ROC constitution, therefore, is definitely not *the* 'China' that is prescribed by the Chinese Communist Party and the constitution of the People's Republic of China (the PRC).[5] This complexity is also fully illustrated in a recent interview given by Taiwan's pro-independence President Chen Shui-bian, in the midst of his tense presidential campaign for his second term. Describing the complicated historical process of confronting political realities, Chen said:

> A simple way to describe the status quo of Taiwan is this: First the Republic of China was on Mainland China, then the Republic of China came to Taiwan, then the Republic of China was on Taiwan, and now the Republic of China is Taiwan. ... Taiwan has never been part of Mainland China. Mainland China is Mainland China. Taiwan is Taiwan. Taiwan is part of the Republic of China, but not a part of Mainland China. Taiwan has always existed. It's just that the Republic of China before 1949 was on Mainland China, and then it came to be Taiwan. It existed on Taiwan, and now it is Taiwan.[16] (*Time*, 16 February 2004)

Chen's statement may accurately summarize his pro-independence party's official line: namely, to entrench the country's independent sovereignty while avoiding military confrontation with China by upholding the ROC's formal titles and constitution.

Even if Chen is correct in stating the 'reality', that Taiwan has never been part of the PRC, there is no justification in denying that, viewed from the Mainland Chinese perspective, Taiwan is an inseparable part of China. The Chinese people in general believe that the PRC has inherited and represents the entire China, as a timeless notion with boundaries always clearly drawn, while both pride and shame passed on to them along with its past. There is no question in their minds that Taiwan belongs to this seemingly eternal China; and that it was only taken away by imperialists in the past. Taiwan thus represents unfinished business left over from the civil war; it is about strengthening a unified country, and about redeeming the humiliation caused by foreign incursions on Chinese soil. In this regard, unification with Taiwan is equal to recovering the lost honour of the Chinese people. It is sacred, and is bound up with Chinese dignity in world affairs.

So the 'status quo' iterated by Chen Shui-bian may be one-sided, and not nearly as simple as it may at first appear. In defiance, since August 2002, Chen has re-appropriated Lee Teng-hui's 'two-country' argument, which originated in the late 1990s, by stressing the 'separation reality' of the two places.' In 2004, during Taiwan's heated presidential election campaign, Taiwan's pro-independence camp (led by the incumbent President Chen Shui-bian) for hoping to get more support for their campaign had manoeuvred to mobilize the independent sentiments to such an extent that Chen angered both Beijing and Taiwan's strongest ally—the US. President George W. Bush, who was prompted to send the strongest signal yet to discredit Chen's campaign strategy for holding an unnecessary referendum, suspecting that it was a plot to 'change the status-quo'.[18]

Just how did this head-on collision between the two places ever happen? What are the historical and institutional reasons that led to these current complexities?

The Beginning of Taiwanese Self-Assertion: Sandwiched between Traditional Roots and the Modern Japanese Empire[g]

Taiwan became the place of exile for some Ming loyalists after the Manchu conquered most parts of the Mainland around the 1660s. In 1683, Manchu, already the ruler of China, annexed a portion of Taiwan Island after it had defeated the last Ming resistance group holding in Taiwan. For most of the time, Taiwan was not a vital part of the empire's interests until the late 19th century. Then Taiwan's strategic importance increased because of the advancement of the western powers (e.g. the British and the French) and the ascendancy of Japan in the region. In 1885, the Manchu emperor granted Taiwan full provincial status to strengthen its maritime defences against other countries. Nine years later (1894) the Manchu dynasty went to war with Japan because of the political crisis that arose in Korea. Defeated by Japan, Taiwan was severed from the Manchu empire and given to Japan as part of the truce contained in the Shimonoseki Treaty of 1895.

Present-day Taiwanese national identity can be traced back at least to the resistance against Japanese colonialism in the early 1920s, when nationalistic and liberalizing ideas inspired colonized peoples throughout the world. In the early part of the 20th century, Taiwanese elites and educated youth were influenced by a progressive Japanese education system, and by a number of historic developments, such as the republican revolution in Mainland China and the Irish home-rule movement and its 'rebelling' against the Great Britain during in early 20th century, the Wilsonian call for self-determination in the 1920s after the First World War, and later by the communist and leftist calls for class warfare and national liberation from imperialism. The most important progressive ideologies of the early 20th century all contributed to different discourses and strategies of the Taiwanese resistance movement in one way or another (Chang 2003: 30-42; Wu 2004).

A famous Taiwanese activist, Jiang Weishui at one time said that the Taiwanese owed their ethno-cultural roots to their Chinese ancestors, but they were also citizens belonged to Japan, although treated with discrimination. Another Taiwanese writer, Wu Zhuoliu, who travelled

to Mainland China (and later became disillusioned) wrote a famous novel in Japanese in 1956 (recently translated in English; see Wu 2005) entitled Orphan of *Asia.* In this work he lamented the fate of Taiwan: its marginalization in the world, its lack of recognition, its search for belonging in a world torn by wars, resentments and discriminations.[10] Such was the moving and compelling novel derived from the 'sandwiched condition' felt by most enlightened and educated Taiwanese youth under Japanese colonialism.

But this early phase of Taiwanese nationalism did not evolve into its present form automatically. The resistance camp during the era of Japanese colonialism was divided between the left-wing movement (which made its appeal in name of revolution and liberation from imperialism) and the more moderate reform movement (which called for the establishment of a representative council though indirect election), although both camps were carefully monitored and suppressed by the Japanese authorities. The Japanese were relatively more successful in eliciting patriotism for the emperor among the younger generation through modernization measures. These included a broad and carefully crafted spectrum of plans ranging from modernizing the education system, to improving public health, extending life expectancy, and promoting industrialization and urbanization, which led to the rise of a new urban-based middle class. In the late 1930s, when the Second World War was at its height, efforts to promote Japanization also peaked. Some Taiwanese youth had chosen to side with the government because of practical needs and the influences from the carefully crafted 'Japanization' process. In the face of heavy competition, they eagerly tried to fulfil Japan'sstringent criteria to enter the armed forces and may well have felt pride in defending the Empire.[11] In an exemplary work on this period, Wu Rwei-ren (2003) argues that Taiwan could have been turned into another newly annexed territory (not a 'colony')like Okinawa, through Japan'sstrenuous efforts to integrate and absorb it, were it not for Japan's ultimate defeat and surrender in 1945 (See also Ching 2001).

It would be fair to say that the majority of Taiwanese people had not won their freedom from Japanese colonization by the end of the Second World War. Liberating Taiwan came with its return to the 'homeland' represented by the KMT and the nationalistic Republic of China in 1945.[12] Though some were confused and uncertain about their future status and identity, the Taiwanese people in general had high hopes for post-war peace and reconstruction, freedom and self-autonomy.

In 1947, less than two years after Taiwan's return to China, clashes broke out. The Taiwanese rose up in riots and formed guerrilla units to rebel against the Chinese government in Taiwan (appointed by the homeland) for its mistreatment, corruption, discrimination and mismanagement of the general socio-economic conditions. The nationalistic government in Nanjing, led by Chiang Kai-shek, sent in troops who brutally suppressed the uprising after the 'February 28 Incident', which is commemorated today as part of the long–suffering history of the Taiwanese, caused by 'outsiders' and 'colonizers'.[13]

These early experiences – including resisting but also collaborating with Japanese, the ensuing 'liberation' and confusion, the unification with the 'homeland', the illusion and the atrocities – left deep scars on the early generations of the Taiwanese people. Some activists and indigenous leaders, who were lucky enough to survive, felt so alienated that they relapsed into a long silence. Others went into exile and formed overseas organizations to campaign for Taiwanese independence by advocating the overthrow of the nationalistic Chinese government imposed upon Taiwan.

Thus, in a historical context, a combination of many factors rendered the situation conducive to the beginning of the modern Taiwanese national self-assertion that reiterates the fundamental 1920s nationalistic idea: that Taiwan should belong to the Taiwanese people. Today some Taiwanese still feel resentful at being mistaken as 'Chinese', or even at the mention of any 'unification with homeland', especially coming from the mouths of Mainlander Chinese or the Beijing government.[14]

Many identify the 'February 28 Incident' in 1947 as the watershed for the Taiwanese independence movement. But one should not think of this incident as 'the cause' of the modern Taiwan independence movement; indeed, the body of scholarship that has examined the causes of this incident have failed to prove this connection. The incident was rather the culmination of a clash between two different historical trajectories, which had projected Taiwan and Mainland China on different roads to modernization, nation-building, and self-identity since 1895. In that year, Taiwan and China had been forced to split and to embark on different and unknown routes. Taiwan and China even waged war against each other because of Japan's intensified military actions in China since 1926. Being separated from each other, the combined forces of wars, revolution, colonialism, nation-building, and the pursuit of modernization in general, had propelled both the people and the society in different directions and imbued them with different outlooks. The

practice of institution-building, the formation of cultural codifications (such as different languages), and the symbolic power for defining patriotism, developed differently in two separate, albeit historically related geographical locations. In 1945, when Japan surrendered, Chinese nationalists went into Taiwan with the power and legitimacy to rule. When the two were reassembled, victorious Chinese nationalism was clearly positioned above the 'sandwiched' and differently imbricated Taiwanese identity, thereby depriving Taiwanese, especially the more educated of the population, of any opportunity for self-redemption. Resentful sentiments arose quickly as the Taiwanese found Taiwan's new overall social, economic and political order swiftly deteriorating, in contrast to their high expectations. Taiwanese political leaders were also angered by Chinese officials who either consciously or unconsciously discredited them as ill-equipped for home rule because they lacked the proper sense of patriotism or affinity towards China in their sentiments. In retrospect, clashes like the rebellion in February 28,1947 could hardly have been avoided.

However, since the 1950s the Taiwan independence movement has been largely a movement in exile. It could hardly survive in Taiwan under the authoritarian regime. The movement was unorganized and had little resources or practical means to overthrow the ROC government that retreated to Taiwan in 1949. The growing support for the development of present-day Taiwanese nationalism came into existence at a later time, roughly during the late 1970s after the so-called 'Formosa Magazine Incident' (which will be discussed later). Its evolution has its roots in specific historical conditions, in the struggles between political activists and the authorities within the confines of institutional politics, and it centres on partisan struggles and on revisions to the electoral institutions.

In the following three sections, I shall discuss first, the establishment of an imposing socio-political structure on Taiwan; second, the reasons for the lack of recognition of the ROC as the true and authentic China in international regime, and third, the institutional setting of the intricacy of electoral politics and the push for democracy 'from the local to the national'.

The Establishment of Authoritarian Chinese Rule on Taiwan, 1949-70

When Chen Shui-bian said that 'the ROC came to Taiwan', he was referring to the vast and violent structural changes occurring in China during

1948-50, which Taiwan was impotent to resist but only could accept the consequences. Losing to Chinese communists in the Mainland, the ROC's central government, including the KMT party, the military, the National Assembly, legislators and loyal intellectuals, which became the so-called '*fatong*' (a reference to the authentic legitimacy and the holy codes of the Chinese grand tradition) withdrew to Taiwan. Exiles regrouped on the island under the dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek. The newcomers numbered between one and one and a half million, while Taiwan's original population was about six million. Today they are identified as the first generation of the 'Mainlander' group in Taiwan. Mainlander elites in Taiwan enjoyed relative advantages, privileged access and monopoly to government power and the national cultural apparatus, such as the media and education.

The basic power structure of politics was framed in two tiers. One was the national or central government, the ROC, sitting on the top rungs of the political hierarchy, with the KMT controlling the army and security, and directing economic development. The other was the local and regional Taiwan tier prescribed to support the nationalistic mission of the central government. The former (i.e. the ROC tier), representing the whole of China and dominated by the Mainlanders, was not accountable to the local people. Since Taiwan was seen as just a part of China, the political and cultural priorities, national symbols and significant historical meanings were assigned to the whole of China, and Taiwan was assigned a base position for national restoration, to pay back the homeland, and to retake Mainland China. Taiwan was thus regarded as a local or a portion that could not represent the whole. And it is thus on the 'lower' position vis-a-vis the symbolic making of China.

With US backing, coupled with the Cold War ideology, the ROC's rule in Taiwan from 1950 to 1978 was viewed as 'hard' authoritarianism (Winkler 1984). The constitution was frozen in the name of national emergency and martial law was decreed for internal security. People were only allowed limited room for political participation at the local government level. The Party controlled education and the media in order to portray itself as genuine guardian of the country. Loyalty to the Party and patriotic love for the country were strongly promoted in an almost indistinguishable way. The government promulgated the absolute importance of unity. Representative government, separation of powers, and freedom of expression were interpreted as not befitting Chinese culture and societv. Dissidents such as the leftists and independent activists were tracked down, punished or expelled overseas.

A small number of the Taiwanese elites were recruited by the KMT, but as they were considered to have only 'local' importance, they were relatively marginal to the centre of power.

During this period, the two Chinese governments on either side of the Taiwan Strait had proclaimed their respective determination to accomplish the unification mission by eradicating the other. They engaged in hostile actions despite the nationalistic dream they shared. They used not only propaganda warfare tactics, but also military manoeuvrings to intimidate the other side. However, because the ROC was under the military umbrella of the US, and the PRC was preoccupied with domestic troubles in building 'socialist new China', the regional remained relatively uneventful up until the late 1970s.[15]

Continuous Setbacks on the International Front and the 'Softening' of Authoritarianism, 1971-86

From the 1970s onward, the KMT–ROC government began to remove some of the constraints that had deterred Taiwan's grassroots opposition, though apprehensively. 'Authoritarian softening' meant that the government would allow local Taiwanese interests to participate in national politics providing this was conducted under careful scrutiny. In this tactic there was, to be sure, a gradual shift in the mode of domination, from brutal suppression to more sophisticated legal punishment and harassment, using blatant propaganda to smear the enemy (Rigger 1999,2001; Wu 1995: 78-80; Dickson 1996: 53-8).

This change in ruling tactics was prompted by the continuous setbacks, which the government suffered in international affairs. The KMT-ROC government was gradually losing its long-term legitimacy claim to represent the whole of China in international business, and the rationale for upholding the hierarchical relation between the central and the national government of the ROC and local government of Taiwan. By far the most debilitating setback was the ROC's loss of its seat in the UN (1971). This was confirmation of the international shift that now recognized the PRC as the legitimate government of China.

This frustration was complicated by the fact that the US was redirecting its foreign policy and normalizing its relations with the PRC to contain the threat from the Soviet Union. President Nixon visited Beijing in 1972. Coming in the wake of this dramatic *volfe face* in US foreign policy was the sudden upsurge in Chinese nationalistic and patriotic sentiment in both Taiwan and Mainland China. It was stirred up by

a territorial dispute with Japan over a small and uninhabited island called *Diaoyufai* (or Senkagu) which was situated between Taiwan and Okinawa. These two events galvanized the call for increased national assertiveness, dissatisfaction with the government, and for greater political reforms. Combined with the rise to power in 1970 of Chiang Ching-kuo (who was about to succeed his father) as leader of the next generation, the government hesitantly responded, with liberal measures in handling new political demands, and by allowing intellectuals and activists more freedom of expression.

This was not the end of ROC's legitimacy problem. After years of behind-the-scene negotiation, the PRC and the US finally agreed in 1978 to establish formal diplomatic relations. The US announced this to the rest of the world and agreed to comply with the PRC's insistence on its 'one-China'claim. The simplistic version of this claim is that there is one China, represented by the PRC, of which Taiwan is an inseparable part, and therefore a domestic concern of Beijing. After this came the severance of the mutual defence treaty between the US and the ROC, and the US agreement to phase out its weapon sales to Taiwan. This constituted a serious crisis for the ROC government, since the US was a powerful ally and the only country left in the world still backing up its claims.[16]

These changes impacted on Taiwan's domestic politics. Now the previous excuses for preventing the Taiwanese people from having a 'normal' political system and 'accountable' central government for Taiwan (and only for Taiwan, not including Mainland China) drew heavy criticism. The demand for political reform arose in association with the continuing social pluralism since the mid-1970s, which followed on the heels of rapid economic development. The relationship between economic development and democratization in the third world (or in the socialist countries) cannot be dealt with here. Suffice it to suggest that at early stages of economic growth, early beneficiaries were more likely to support the government for moderate political reforms in order to further or protect their hard-earned interests. And later, if economic success continues to be sustainable, then people are more likely to demand large-scale systematic and institution reforms, either because of rising social inequality or relative deprivation.

The last incident of brutal suppression against political dissidents – the 'Formosa Magazine Incident'—took place in December 1979. Mass arrests and courts martial were handed out to Taiwanese dissidents accused of treason and subversion, linked to Chinese communists.[17] The 1979 crackdown, ironically, helped to boost overseas Taiwanese

independence groups, attracting younger Taiwanese (overseas students and businessmen) who became sympathizers for Taiwan's independence. The incident also 'awakened' some of the post-war generation of Taiwanese youth. Sympathizers interpreted this incident as a brutal assault on Taiwanese identity by an outside regime. But this did give the younger generation of Taiwanese activists first-hand experience of the suppression previously meted out to the older generation of Taiwanese activists? Because of the Formosa Magazine Incident, the domestic dissidents and the overseas activists could now finally support each other in questioning the legitimacy of the ROC. Thus, together they obtained in 1991 the freedom to openly express support for Taiwan independence.[19]

The weakness of the authoritarian measures forced the government to comply with increased demands for political liberties, social justice and accountable politics. In the period 1980-86, Taiwan's opposition continued to grow with a blend of three sets of interrelated discourses. The dominant one was of course, democratization, for example, protecting human rights, legalizing party politics and broadening the scope for political participation. The second discourse was for social reform, which comprised a mix of progressive grassroots social movements from women to aborigines, and some pro-labour and farmers' leftist ideas. And the third discourse was self-determination:the right for Taiwanese people to decide their own future. This last one was not yet a blunt statement for Taiwan independence, since this was still strictly forbidden. Advocates for self-determination resorted to the phrase 'Taiwanese need to be their own master' in a suggestive and milder way, to test the regime's tolerance levels.

'Long Live the Election!'—The Characteristics of Taiwan's Democratization Process

Taiwan's democratization process since the 1970s is generally seen as relatively peaceful and incremental (Tien1989; Chu 1992; Copper 1998; Rigger 1999; Alagappa 2001). But this also reveals the painfully slow process through which the KMT yielded to the democratic movement. The institutional reason for this slow process was the continued existence of elaborate election schemes established since early 1951. In the beginning it was designed to suppress communist insurgents and to enhance the dominant position of the KMT government. But soon it evolved into setting the 'game rules' that would prescribe the probable political actions to take place. It served two important functions: one,

to provide a relatively practical (though still very risky) instrument of last resort and the only possible venue to challenge the authority, compared to going underground or into exile to advocate toppling the government. Two, it worked to help the KMT to stabilize the regime by letting the pressures and discontents to go off periodically under close watch during election times. A comparison between Taiwan, the Philippines and South Korea would reveal the extent to which Taiwan's political changes have been surrounded by revisions to the regulations governing electoral institutions and the winning of significant posts in major elections. It is fair to say that Taiwan had election(s) long before it had democracy; and elections even as it helped the push for democracy from the bottom-up during the authoritarian era, excluding other more radical means to topple the regime.

This is not to say that elections in Taiwan had thus far been fair or that political participation was guaranteed. In fact, the building of electoral institutions has been a difficult and contentious political process. Every election has been fought not only as one battle to win a post, but also as a battle to enlarge the theatre of war, meaning to test the tolerance limits set by the authorities for full political participation and protection of human rights. Elections have also provided the opportunity to challenge the system, in the face of a legacy of monopolistic and unfair practices wielded by the KMT's supreme power.

Table 1 provides a chronology of changes in electoral institutions since the 1950s. Several conclusions can be drawn from the changing process. First, it should be noted that these institutions have developed bottom-up, from levels of low significance and competition, to those of high significance and party competition. This trend is reflected in the gradual expansion of the electoral system and an increased number of posts at the higher levels.

By 1992, the public had elected all their representatives to different congresses. Former 'permanent' congressional members were finally forced into retirement. By 1994, all significant city-provincial magistrates' positions were open for competitive election also. And by 1996, after waves of political struggle, the office of the head of the state became an elected one. The paper will later elaborate on the significance of this change.

Second, we should take note that the significance of elections for different political activists and parties has developed differently. It would be fair to say that in the period before 1970, elections were more like window dressings of the ROC. Even when supplementary election(s) to the ageing congress began in 1969 and 1972,[20] and was further extended

TABLE **1:** The Evolution of Electoral Institutions in Taiwan, 1950-2000[21]

Years	**Posts Open to Political Competition**	**Significance for the Ruling Party, the KMT (until** 20001	**Significance for Opposition (later the DPP in 1986) until** 2000
1950-71 (Only local elections)	1) Village and district head, district representative 2) County-city magistrate and councils (excluding the two major cities, Taipei and Kaohsiung since 1966) 3) Taiwan provincial council	1) Showcases democracv for 'free China' 2) Co-opting and control rural farmers after land reform success 3) Pacifying the landlords 4) Expanding local support for the Party	1) Isolated and mild protest, unorganized dissidents 2) Slim chance for winning and high personal costs to compete against the KM
1972-90 (Gradual opening at the national level)	Supplementary elections for national representatives since 1972; expanded in 1981 (but old congress members remained in the majority)	1) Improving KMT's legitimacy claim by allowing Taiwanese representatives entering the central level 2) Recruiting more Taiwanese politicians in the ruling party	1) Expansion in election holidays. Forming organized opposition movement, leading to the founding of the DPP (1986), demanding political freedoms 2) Elevating the opposition from local to the central government 3) Advocating fundamental rights to the Taiwanese people to decide on their own future
1991-92 (Establishing the new representative congress	New National Assembly and Legislature (replacing the old members elected in 1949)	1) To compete to win and to retain power 2) To transform from a vanguard party into a democratic party 3) To become indigenized and rooted in Taiwan 4) Internal power struggle leading to break-uo	1) Pressing social and political changes for better and more accountable government 2) Indigenization and promoting Taiwanese identity 3) Competing for the majority for self-legitimating
1994 (Three more important posts)	1) Taipei and Kaohsiung City Mayors 2) Taiwan Provincial Governor	1) Deepening indigenization of KMT and internal power struggle 2) Competing for leading Taiwanization (the silent revolution')	1) Competing for the majority 2) Competing for leading Taiwanization
1996-2000 (Presidential Election)	President and Viceoresident	1) Deepening indigenization of the KMT and internal power struggle 2) Competing for leading Taiwanization (the silent revolution') 3) Spinning off the two ends of the extreme from the KMT	1) Self-transformation, inclining to the middle to win 2) Competing for leading Taiwanization to guarantee the room for self-determination 3) Competing for presidency, looking to regime change hand, and win Taiwan back from 'outsider' 4) Resisting incorporation into the 'Greater China'.

in 1983, the KMT was still in complete domination and no election result could topple the power structure.[22] The KMT used elections to recruit younger-generation Taiwanese into the ruling party, and therefore to legitimize the regime's authoritarian sway. But this new supplementary electoral system was viewed differently way by the opposition. Now they not only had room to manoeuvre but also influence at the national level to strive for. They took the opportunity to speak out to test the limit of the authorities' tolerance and their determination for reform (and for suppression as well).

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the results of supplementary elections, though skewed, were used as political barometers, to measure how 'unpopular' (not 'popular') the KMT was among Taiwanese people. Thus, during this period, the KMT government felt compelled to mobilize its security and propaganda machine to intimidate and smear its adversaries (Tien 1989). During the late 1970s, the opposition alliance in Taiwan was networking as a semi-political party, emerging in the name of *Dangzoai* (meaning outside the KMT party). They seized the brief and periodic interstices of political openness during the election season. This was the background for well-known expressions like 'election holidays' and 'long live the election' slogans of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The 'holiday' metaphor was to suggest the temporary slacking in repression by the government during election time. Thus the dissidents used these interludes to express their ideas and political positions with less fear and restraint. The second expression suggested the importance of the election, and the striving for election fairness, as a time for the dissidents to challenge the authority and to push for reform.[23]

By 1986, the opposition had gained about 30 percent or more of the votes in most of the quasi nationwide elections, despite the KMT's manipulation and smears against the *Dangzoai* members. As support for the opposition grew, in a daring move, it formed the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in September of that year. Much to the surprise of the electorate, dictator Chiang Ching-kuo decided to lift martial law to allow the DPP to exist (asserting that they should adhere to the policy of 'one China', without supporting independence for Taiwan). Thus, the 'liberalization' process speeded up in his last two years of his office. The political momentum in Taiwan shifted towards democratization and the DPP.[24]

It is still a mystery why Chiang chose to liberalize; he left no personal records to explain his decision. But it is possible to view the context in which Chiang was governing as offering few alternatives. One of the main reasons lay in Taiwan's continuous downslide in international

status, despite its economic success. Added to that was of course the PRC's increasing pressure for peaceful unification along its new national course in the pursuit of modernization and self-transformation.[25] The KMT acutely felt the pressure of propaganda emanating from the Chinese Communist Party. Also the US government had often criticized Taiwan for its mistreatment and suspected murder of political dissidents. But, in the final analysis, it must be Chiang's unsurpassed power that made him secure enough to almost single-handedly change the course of KMT.

The death of Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988 marked the beginning of the end of the *Fatong* of the ROC in Taiwan, and triggered more demands for electoral political reform in the name of democratization and indigenization. Chiang left his presidency, including the ROC's legacy, to Lee Teng-hui who succeeded him from the position of vice-president. Lee came from the Taiwanese background of a Japanese family. He became the first native Taiwanese to assume such a top position. According to Lee himself, the succession was not carefully designed or promoted by Chiang, but took place as a passing event along the institutional chain of succession.[26]

Lee, though a native Taiwanese, was an 'outsider' of the old KMT ruling circle dominated by Mainlanders. In Lee's early years of government, he co-operated with the old circle by following Chiang's previous strategy in dealing with the opposition (Chang 1994). He manoeuvred to fence off the DPP, trying to keep the KMT and the *Fatong* to preserve its dominance, and he yielded to pressure only when strictly necessary. But he and the KMT party were now facing not only a rising, stronger and more defiant DPP, but also other social movements demanding progressive ideological reforms for 'self-determination', democracy, environment protection and welfare reforms. The self-determination principle was inserted into the DPP's various party planks, upholding the statement that Taiwan's future was to be decided by the people of Taiwan. For instance, in 1987, it said that people of Taiwan should have the right to pursue national independence. In 1988, it stated that Taiwan was a sovereign independent nation, which did not belong to 'the PRC led by Beijing'.[27] In 1990, it stated that Taiwan's sovereignty would not extend to Mainland China or to Outer Mongolia. At the same time, the political power of the KMT's old circle was pushed back because of rising domestic pressures, especially by the 'March Movement' (or March Student Movement) of 1990, and also indirectly by the suppression of the democratic movement in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Taiwan'sopposition movement rose to another level in March 1990. A burgeoning social protest from college students, various organizations and DPP supporters galvanized the movement. They objected to the attempted manipulation of the presidential election by the permanent members of the National Assembly (consisted of mostly Mainlanders elected in 1949, who never retired). These members were part of the *Fatong,* who supposedly possessed the institutional power to elect the president on behalf of the entire people of China. The old guards had networked to favour a particular pair of candidates instead of its chairman, Lee, the incumbent and the popular Taiwanese president. Waves of students and the general public protested in uproar. But the drama ended peacefully as the old National Assembly caved in at the last minute under mounting pressure. And Lee Teng-hui was elected as the more popular new president as the victor emerged out of the chaotic situation.

By comparison, ten months earlier the *Tiananmen* democratic movement, also led by the youth, emerged in Beijing. If it appeared familiar and seemed to parallel the movement in Taiwan, the overall result was strikingly opposite. The mass killing of demonstrators had repercussions on Taiwan. Though the lesson may have many meanings to different people, the consensus of opinion was that the Communist Party could be 'deadly'serious if it was threatened. After years of propaganda from the KMT, most people in Taiwan had finally experienced an eyewitness account of the brutal suppression committed by the Chinese Communist Party. In comparison, Taiwan has earned its democracy through civil disobedience, and Taiwan and Mainland China are worlds apart. Now the call for national unification with China looked even more unconvincing because of the comparison.

These movements and changes in both Taipei and Beijing politics set the background for the following major revisions in the ROC constitution, including the removal of the old guard in the central representative bodies after some 42 years in power. After the old Mainlander representatives loyal to the KMT were retired, more vacant posts to be filled by elections created sudden opportunities for upward political mobility (Chang 1994).

This trend was a welcome one for the newly rising Taiwanese within the KMT. And the newer and younger KMT members felt free from the burden of defending the Party's unjustifiable old legacy. In fact, despite the retiring of the old guard, the KMT was always able to win in the national elections because of its tremendous resources and vested inter-

ests amassed throughout the years. The Taiwanese voters for some time were concerned with the images of the DPP and their lack of credibility to manage the country's national security and economy. The inability of the DPP to obtain a sweeping victory throughout the 1990s must be accredited to the leadership of KMT, or the 'silent revolution' led by Taiwan's former president and KMT chairman, Lee Teng-hui.

Now we turn to a final important point that emerges from Tablel: the 'silent revolution' linked to the direct election of the president of the ROC since 1996. ROC's first Taiwanese president Lee served as the KMT's party chairman from 1988 until 2000 before his forced expulsion from the Party by mostly Mainlander loyalists in mass protests.[28] Lee in many ways described the process for the transformation of the ROC, Taiwan, under his leadership as a 'silent revolution'. This could be interpreted to mean all-out and co-ordinated efforts to make the KMT, the ROC and its constitution, adapt to the new political, economic and global situation. It also included aggressive diplomacy, lobbying foreign dignitaries for their support, programmes to re-socialize the general public in the name of 'love of community and soil', and to build the 'common fate of the community' among all the people of Taiwan.

The political and cultural transformation of the 'silent revolution' was the 'indigenization' process, which had no precise meaning. Lee used it interchangeably with 'democratization'. Broadly speaking, 'indigenization' could be understood as affirming Taiwanese interests, historical sentiments, and self-identity in contrast to those that had previously been imposed by Chinese nationalistic traditions. Specifically, it was about shifting political power and cultural domination from the Mainlanders' hands and Chinese interests to that of the native Taiwanese. It also entailed assigning the cultural and historical experiences of Taiwan to a prominent position in framing the people's passionate love for the land and the country of Taiwan. It was also therefore known as the 'de-Sinicization' process, which meant replacing 'China' with 'Taiwan' in substance and in name. And this was done also in the context of expanding and intensifying electoral politics, democratization and ousting the defensive old KMT constituency from the political centre.

The most important change on the institutional level, besides the election of national representatives and legislators in the early 1990s, was the direct election of the president in 1996. Like the other institutional changes that had taken place throughout the democratization period, this change succeeded amidst much protest and political conflict. On the one hand, the pro-DPP and pro-Taiwan independence camp thought that

this change would give them the long-awaited opportunity to rule the country through winning the presidency. On the other hand, the KMT conservatives criticized the proposed change as violating the symbolic representation of the whole of China, and of yielding to the Taiwan independence cause. Lee Teng-hui accomplished this major reform with shrewd strategic moves, allying his support from outside of the KMT, especially with the DPP's constituency, to overcome opposition, which mainly existed within his own party.

Lee's success also boosted his already high popularity among Taiwanese voters. He became the first directly elected president of the ROC in 1996 with a decisive majority.[29] Because of Lee and his silent revolution, the KMT, which originated from the Mainland, now became indigenously transformed, and was therefore able to rule Taiwan continuously between 1994 and 2000.[30] It has been argued that without this indigenization process, which began in the early 1990s, the KMT would have lost its legitimacy and domination much sooner. Moreover, Taiwan would have been plunged into a more chaotic situation with further political turmoil.

Allowing citizens to choose their own president in 1996 through direct voting can be seen as a decisive turning point in the ROC government's drive to become fully 'Taiwanized', for the ROC to become fully merged into Taiwan, although this was not achieved without creating internal divisions. Now all parties and candidates, despite their nationalistic tendencies, would have to join the institutionalized political system if they wanted to be taken seriously. And a president of the ROC directly elected by Taiwan citizens definitely legitimized the ROC's existence in Taiwan. From now on there could be no alternative other than to take part in institutional politics, unless more radical means were resorted to, such as toppling the ROC government.

So far we have outlined the uneven course of present-day Taiwanese nationalism. It started out primarily as a domestic conflict, resisting the domination of the Taiwanese by the KMT–ROC polity; later forcing the ROC government to become accountable to Taiwanese. But soon after political liberation and democratization began, Taiwanese nationalism became a viable option for partisan struggles for national representation and power structures. Of course, these changes did not occur overnight; they were achieved gradually through major electoral struggles, the expansion of elections, geo-political changes, and regional events related to changes occurring in Mainland China. One led to another, incrementally. Taiwanese nationalist supporters would now have to

directly face the CCP-PRC's intimidation against pro-Taiwan independence parties. And to do this and to forge itself a secured political future, the pro-independence parties would need to win continuously and decisively in nationwide elections against its arch nemesis—the traditional constituency of the old KMT-China still existing in Taiwan. (So far they have not been able to accomplish this at all).

Repercussions of Taiwan's 'Indigenization': Domestic and Cross-Strait Politics

By the 1990s, the political changes discussed in this paper, including democratization and indigenization, had resulted in two serious repercussions. The first, on the domestic front, was that the issue of Taiwan's national identity began to rise to the top of major policy debates, overshadowing routine politics and other social activities. Not surprisingly, the 'silent revolution' and Taiwanese affirmation drew counter-attacks from Mainlander constituencies in Taiwan from both the liberal and the conservative camps. The battlefield of Taiwan's domestic politics thus became much more ruthless and vicious.

For instance, the power struggle within the KMT, the expulsion and marginalization of Mainlander elites from influential positions, and the de-Sinicization process resulted on two occasions in the break-up of the KMT. On the first occasion this led to the emergence of the New Party in 1993, which allowed the DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian to win the post of mayor of Taipei City. The second occasion in 2000 was marked by an acrimonious split between its die-hard supporters, which allowed the DPP candidate, Chen Shui-bian, once again to win the presidential elections in March of that year. The DPP not only encouraged but also benefited from the KMT-promoted indigenization campaign. They allied with Lee Teng-hui in his intra-party squabbles, tactically criticizing the 'old' China power base on important issues.

By March 2004, after three national presidential elections in eight years, party politics became much more complicated (albeit also simplified since all political parties now are divided and measured on a simple political gauge marked by their standings on Taiwan's future and identity issues. Two new political parties surfaced because of the dissolution of the power base of the KMT in 2000-01, related to the presidential election of 2000. Losing the presidency to DPP's Chen Shui-bian forced the KMT to hand over the government to the DPP. This marked the first ever regime transition in Taiwan, drawing loud applause for the

success of the democratization process. But Lee was criticized heavily and held responsible for 'destroying the KMT and selling out the country (to the DPP)'[31] after this second major loss. Protesters rallied and force him to quit from the Party and he stepped down as party chairman with bitterness. Later his supporters and sympathizers regrouped to form a new party, the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), which has been the most outspoken party for Taiwanese independence and for de-Sinicization. In 2004 the TSU held 13 seats, or 6 percent of the total seats in the Legislature Yuan.

The second spin-off was the People's First Party (PFP), also formed in 2001. The PFP was represented by some hardliners of the KMT who strongly opposed Taiwanese independence. They first felt betrayal by Lee Teng-hui's nomination of Lien Chan, rather than their own favoured candidate, James Soong, who had represented the KMT in the presidential elections of 2000. They believed that Soong, who had enjoyed high popularity in pre-election polls, should have been nominated and that his victory would have been assured. Because of this intra-party conflict and Soong's determination to run as an independent candidate outside of the KMT, which effectively split the vote, both Soong and Lien lost to the DPP's Chen Shui-bian. Afterwards, they blamed Lee for forcing them to walk out from the KMT in the 2000 elections, which had disgraced the ROC and had opened the way for the DPP to take power. Consequently, in 2001 the PFP was established with Soong as their chairman. They managed to win 46 seats, or 20 percent the total seats in the Legislature in 2004.

Entering the 2004 presidential elections, Taiwan's political map was clearly marked with two colours: the pan-Blue and the pan-Green. The former, KMT loyalists and the hardliners of the People First Party, become the Blue camp. They spoke strongly and passionately against surging Taiwan independence, and proposed a more practical approach towards the PRC, aimed at improving cross-Strait relations. As for the Green camp, represented by the DPP and TSU, both are firm supporters of the pro-Taiwanese independence movement, opting for strong defence and Taiwanese nationalism to resist the PRC's unification tactics.

The second major repercussion centres on the worsening and hostile relationship with the PRC. This formed the backdrop to the Taiwan Strait crisis from August 1995 to March 1996 (Zhao 1999a, 1999b; Chen 1999). The trigger was Lee Teng-hui's unprecedented visit (dubbed as 'ice-breaking') to the US in June 1995. This was followed by Lee's abrupt change in tone when speaking of the future of China. The media

nicknamed his new standing on cross-Strait relation as the 'two-country statement', which denied 'one-China' ever existed and claimed the ROC's long existing sovereignty since 1911. He also refused to accept 'one-China' as the presupposition or the predetermined result for the two sides to negotiate with each other.

Fearing that the US may be reneging on its commitment to 'one-China', and angered by Taiwan's move and Lee's remarks on sovereignty, China decided to chastize Taiwan by sending stern warnings. The crisis was marked with four large-scale military exercises in southern China in less than a year, combined with the launching of ballistic missiles into areas close to Taiwan's waters. China made grave threats to invade if Taiwan should delay unification or pursue independence. China's warning came at a time when Taiwan's first presidential campaign was just about to take place.

The crisis ended with the US sending in two carrier battle groups near Taiwan waters, and publicly reaffirming its support for the 'one-China' policy but also its commitment to its domestic Act, the *Taiwan Relations Act*. On the other hand, the intimidation had to end since it proved to be a misreading of Taiwanese public opinion and its political culture. Lee Teng-hui was able to win with a strong majority over other candidates (including those who looked more acceptable to Beijing). The victory represented a robust endorsement for Lee's policy, and some believe that China may even have indirectly helped Lee by attacking him for being a 'villain'.

Following Lee's victory as the people's first elected national leader, Beijing intensified its campaign known as *wen gong wu he* (verbal attacks plus intimidating actions). It launched a global campaign known as *fan du cu tong* (oppose independence and support unification) against the Taiwanese government, Lee, the DPP and other political factions that favoured separatism. To back up its warning, Beijing has since stepped up the modernization of its military machinery, obtaining a new military arsenal from the former Soviet Union in an attempt to deter US intervention if an invasion of Taiwan became necessary.

China's tough stance appears to have given them few positive political gains as far as national unification is concerned. It could not even stop the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party and its leader Chen Shui-bian from winning the presidential elections twice in 2000 and 2004. But Beijing has something to look forward to: the sharp divisions of interests and worldviews existing among Taiwanese citizens. On the one hand, Beijing has been successful in isolating Taiwan on the international

stage by playing up its hostility against the Taiwanese government. International isolation can hurt Taiwan's business interests and Taiwan is clearly anxious not to become marginalized from the international community in this age of globalization. How are the Taiwanese to solve this isolation and political hostility? So far the Taiwanese government has elected to maintain its opposition and to break through the imposed constraints, trying (without much success) to direct its business interests to South East Asian regions instead of Mainland China. But the citizens are divided; some are willing to adopt a more pragmatic and conciliatory position to negotiate with Beijing, and to renounce what they see as a hopeless drive for Taiwanese independence.

This pragmatic stance is based on Taiwan's growing economic dependence on China. Beijing has attracted Taiwanese capital (into the PRC) and is alluring as a market. In 2003, about one-quarter of Taiwan's trade surplus came from trade with China (including Hong Kong), and about one-half of Taiwan's foreign investment went to China. Thus, China has gradually (and ironically) become Taiwan's most valuable trading 'partner' since the mid-1990s, when it was also under the constant threat of a Chinese incursion. To complicate matters further, it is estimated that there are a million Taiwanese (out of a population of 23 million) living, studying, doing business or travelling to China every day, while some have chosen to live there permanently. Cross-Strait marriages are also on the rise and are becoming quite a sensitive political issue.

These two opposing forces, political hostility and economic interdependence, are creating divergent interests and dividing public opinion in Taiwan. At one extreme, there are those who wish to defy China, resist the pressure emanating from Beijing, and go all the way to strive for Taiwan's national status and independence. The other practical view supports a more moderate position towards China. And Taiwan's political parties and their representatives are about equally divided.

Since political hostility and economic need, or national security and economic interdependence, contradict each other, China can now play Taiwan's domestic political ball game more easily by both manipulating people's vested interests (or future interest) in China by playing with Taiwan's internal politics and political rivalries, and by exerting pressure on the Taiwanese government on questions of national identity and unification.

Conclusion: Defining and Resolving the Difficult 'Status Quo'

In this paper I have presented an outline of Taiwan's resistance to 'China'. The word has at least two faces: one relates to the lingering legacy of the ROC, the 'old China', and the other relates to the PRC China, the 'new China'. From a historical-institutional framework, I have discussed reasons that have led to the ROC-Taiwan being what it is today. I have also focused on the interactions between the international environment, Taiwan's national status, and domestic politics. The crucial point is Taiwan's long-established self-assertion through its early history, its democratization movement and Lee Teng-hui's 'silent revolution', which is now largely inherited and capitalized upon by the Green camp. These factors read together have transformed the ROC which settled in Taiwan since 1949. And during this transformation process, two major historical developments are crucial. One is the ROC's dwindling international status since the 1970s; and the second is China's emergence as a major player in world affairs and in the global marketplace since the late 1980s. There is little here that Taiwan could have changed, since both contingencies were created beyond Taiwan's (or ROC's) border by bigger and stronger global movers.

And this analysis has also found that Taiwanese nationalism has not always been a viable choice or the prime driver in the political agenda. It surfaced slowly in late 1970s, developed quickly in late 1980s, and became a fully-fledged force only in the late 1990s. Its growth is embedded in Taiwan's electoral and partisan struggles, and hence its progress has been incremental through political re-shufflings, especially in important elections.

There is little doubt that Taiwan has nearly completed its sovereignty construction process from its own internal political viewpoint. It has built a clear political hierarchical system with an elected, accountable and democratic leadership. What is surprising is the ROC's constitution, which is still in effect and is regarded as the foundation of power, even though it is constantly criticized for being 'foreign' and 'out of date'. The many elections and reforms of electoral institutions that have taken place under the umbrella of the constitution have allowed the people participating in these processes to build an 'imagined community' of a *de facto* Taiwan.

Today, international relations analysts and politicians believe that retaining the 'status quo' may be the best bet for keeping peace in the

region for some time. Public opinion in Taiwan also supports this idea. But what 'status quo' has ever been static? It is dynamic in global affairs, regional relations, geo-politics and, of course, domestic politics. What is the 'status quo' after all?

Recent official statements from the US have rendered the meaning of the term, status quo, intriguing if not problematic. In December 2003, President Bush stated that he opposed Chen Shui-bian'scampaign strategy by holding a referendum calling on China to remove its missiles aimed at Taiwan, since he saw Chen intending to 'change the status quo unilaterally'. Later, in May 2004, when testifying in the US Congress, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, James Kelly, stated that the Bush administration would 'oppose any unilateral move from Taipei or Beijing aiming at changing the status quo', adding that the status quo should be 'as we define it' (Devan 2004).

As Kelly understood and admitted, the 'status quo' is not an object reality out there, but is defined and framed from the viewpoint of different interests. And this has worked well as far as the US interests are concerned. The US has said it would support 'one China' since 1972 but has not aided and abetted unification. It has been more positive in dealing with China except insisting on its arms sales and commitment to defend Taiwan, which really irritates Beijing. The US also warned Taiwan not to provoke Beijing on the issue of sovereignty, or not to count on US support as unconditional (Pan 2003).

The PRC has its own idea of status quo, though this is much more transparent than that of the US though. From its unique historical perspective, Taiwan has 'always' belonged to China. At present, the PRC represents the whole of China governed by the Chinese Communist Party, and Taiwan is a renegade province of PRC. The status quo is, therefore, not regarded as normal. It would become a great humiliation for Beijing if it could not resolve this problem. The PRC leaders have had little option other than proclaiming that Taiwan should and must be reunited, regardless of cost. If peaceful means are not enough to carry out unification, then forceful means must be used. Thus, any political moves from Taiwan, the US, any other countries or international organizations, multinational companies, even individuals (such as academicians or scholars) are carefully watched and monitored. So the CCP-PRC's basic assumption of 'status quo' is biased in favour of its interests in the unification with Taiwan, or the stopping of Taiwan independence. Any move against this interest is seen as an intention to change the 'status quo', and therefore to be rebutted.

The ROC, or Taiwan government under Chen Shui-bian, has its own idea of 'status quo'. The status quo is ROC, and that is Taiwan. To be sure, the ROC title and legacy it carries is not something the Taiwan president wants to embrace, but it is far more acceptable compared to other alternatives. And, to the DPP and his administration, Taiwan has no need to declare independence since it already enjoys independent sovereign status. Chen Shui-bian has promised more than once that Taiwan would keep the ROC as its national title unless Beijing decides on invasion. But the status quo also means that Taiwan is not recognized as a sovereign nation by most of the countries of the international community. It is excluded from many of the world organizations, and sidelined in matters that may affect its trading prospects in the global marketplace. It also needs to invest a high proportion of its GDP for national self-defence, suffers from inefficienciesin government for lack of a suitable constitution, and, without decisive national direction, is politically rent asunder by internal divisions. Though most Taiwanese support a 'status quo', some feel this is also not normal; that the remedy should be either building a completely sovereign and independent Taiwan, or accepting the 'One Country Two Systems' deal offered by Beijing. It is certainly unrealistic to expect Taiwanese citizens to feel indifferent to the issue of determining their country's future and forging a clear national direction, or to be insensitive to necessary reform of its political institutions through democratic processes. In short, to expect them not to do anything to change the status quo—not to negotiate the possibilities, and not to struggle against the limits imposed by the PRC—may be asking too much.

Since both the PRC China and many in Taiwan believe that this so-called 'status quo' is really not desirable, and since the US's notion of the 'status quo' accords with its own interests, attempts to modify and redefine the term are bound to occur. For Taiwan's domestic politics, forceful attempts in this direction are most likely to be drawn up in the next election battle.

Epilogue

In March 2005, during submission and revision of this paper, the National People's Congress of the PRC passed the Anti-Secession *Law,* which especially targeted Taiwanese independence. The law reiterates the PRC's position against Taiwan's independence, and the 'non-peaceful means' (now legalized and prescribed in codes) it will use against Taiwan

if other peaceful measures fail. Taiwan government's official reaction was moderate, heeding to the advice of the US government, for fear of heightening the tension, while hundreds of thousands of citizens, some responding to the call by the DPP and the TSU, marched into Taipei City to protest against PRC's threat by expressing their belief in democracy and support for Taiwan patriotism.

Given this new development, the main thesis of this paper still holds true. Taiwanese nationalism is here to stay, to transform, within the range of the possibilities inscribed in Taiwan's domestic politics, which are also structured by geo-political powers outside of its borders. Peace may be preserved against all odds, but the status quo is always dynamic.

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NOTES

[1] I began this paper during my visit to the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden University. I am grateful to all concerned for the friendly working environment and the opportunity to organize and participate at the Workshop on the National Self-Assertion of East Asian Countries. I must thank also the generous support of the *NWO* (Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research) from 1 December to 30 May 2004. Colleagues (too many to name) at the Sinology Institute of Leiden University have been very helpful and supportive during my stay there. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions and critiques, which have resulted in major revisions to the original paper.

[2] This idea of *'heping* tongyi, *yiguo liangzhi'* [Peaceful Unification, One Country Two Systems] was originally attributed to Deng Xiaoping in 1983, and was formalized in 1984 in Deng's Government Report to the PRC's People's Assembly. The guidelines of this principle have been elaborated or modified by various high-ranking leaders such as Jiang Zemin in 1995, which includes the famous 'Eight Points', and by Qian Qisen in 2003. From Beijing's standpoint, this guideline is flexible and generous, and extends to 'all' Chinese people.

[3] I wish to emphasize the importance of taking a 'balanced' view. Partisan or national political interests, either hidden or professed, always affect interpretations of the past and current conflicts. No one is immune. But I think pursuing an analytical purpose and maintaining logical argument can help to evoke a more balanced view, which prevents one from falling into chauvinistic, ethno-centric and opportunistic biases and misinformation. My adopted position centres on interpreting the Taiwanese condition. Some reviewers may suggest that I need to cover the PRC's or the US's view more fully. I would agree if it were not for the limits of space and the specific focus of this paper. And I think the PRC's view will be presented fuller in Phil Dean's article, which also appears in this special issue. For recent publications on Chinese nationalism, see also: Zheng (1999), Zhao (2004) and Gries (2004).

[4] For instance, the ROC constitution has gone through six revisions since 1990. And

each revision has entailed a major political battle associated with a continuous power struggle.

5 Likewise, though the PRC does not recognize the ROC and its constitution, it was also ambivalent about the extent to which Taiwan could revise the ROC constitution. For instance, when Taiwan's pro-independence president Chen Shui-bian suggested that the ROC constitution needed re-drafting in order to abandon its territorial claims over the entire mainland of China, Beijing reacted with outrage and warned against such moves would be a step moving from *defacto* to *de jure* independence.

6 The emphasis is the author's.

7 Lee's notion of 'two countries' in the late 1990s still held out the idea for a unified China in the future. He set the recognition of the ROC as an equal political entity by the PRC as the premise for negotiating the future. In the second half of 2002, Chen stepped up its criticism against China. Chen was quoted as saying that 'Our country cannot be bullied, dwarfed or marginalized, and we are not a part or a province of another country', and that 'there is one country on each side' *(Taipei Times,* 4 August 2002). His rhetoric is much stronger and held little room for negotiating a future one-China.

8 I am referring to the event when President Bush 'chastized' Chen for wanting to 'change the status quo unilaterally'. This took place during a joint press conference with PRC's Premier Wen Jiabao on 9 December 2003.

I have written on this topic in a different article (see Chang 2003) In this paper I will only outline and address the key points of the early phase of Taiwanese nationalism. The point is that present-day Taiwanese nationalism is different from the earlier one in both discourse and strategies. But the past can always help to explain and rationalize present political actions. In this regard, the past serves to influence the present.

10 Wu Zhuoliu (1900-76) was a Taiwanese writer who grew up under Japanese rule, his most famous novel being *The Orphan of Asia* (1956). It is a first-hand account of a Taiwanese youth who found himself stranded in a hostile world shaped by a variety of influences: Japanese colonialism, Chinese nationalism, traditionalism and enlightenment. The main protagonist of the novel went insane and finally committed suicide. The novel has recently been translated into English (see Wu 2005).

11 The Japanese government reported that about 17,000 young men who had competed to meet the rigorous screening to join the ranks of voluntary soldiers. One of them, now listed in the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, was the elder brother of Taiwan's former president, Lee Teng-hui. The total number of Taiwanese that served in the Japanese military units, either voluntarily or drafted, reached 200,000 or more.

12 For many Taiwanese independence supporters, Taiwan was not returned to China, but was *occupied* by China. The legality for the 'return' to the motherland is based on the Portsmouth Declaration (August 1945), which supported the Cairo Conference Agreement (December 1943), which stated that territories such as Manchuria, Taiwan, and the Pescadores Islands, which had been 'stolen' from China by Japan, should be returned to China. But Taiwan independence advocates who argue for 'Taiwan status undecided' suggest that these declarations were not ratified by the more formal and more comprehensive San Francisco Peace Treaty signed in 1951. That peace treaty stated that Japan should renounce its previous occupied territories but did not specify to whom they should be returned. This was caused by the turmoil and political uncertainty associated with the civil war in China.

13 For an apologetic account of the incident, from the government's perspective, see Lai Tse-han *et al.* (1991).

14 On 28 February 2004 an estimated one and half million people in Taiwan turned

out to form a human chain to express their 'love for Taiwan', and the need for 'self-salvaging' to commemorate their previous sufferings. The high turnout was also triggered by a very intensive presidential campaign between the pro-independence candidates of the DPP and the anti-independence candidates of the other camp.

15 The last major battle fought between the PRC and the ROC was in 1958, when Quemoy (Jin-men) was besieged with heavy shelling.

16 To compensate its breach of the security of Taiwan, and the potential loss in the region, the US passed the *Taiwan Relations Act* in 1979 very swiftly. The Act is defined as a domestic law, prescribing the US responsibility toward Taiwan's defence capability and its need for prosperity and development. Today, this Act is regarded as one of the cornerstones of US diplomacy in dealing with both the PRC and Taiwan, despite its public acknowledgement of the 'One-China policy' (see Metzger and Mvers 1996).

17 Forty-five arrests were made. Eight of those arrested were sent to military court on charges of treason. These eight received heavier sentences ranging from 12 years to lifetime imprisonment.

18 Readers can consult Hsiau (2000) for an exposition of the significance of the incident on the rise of Taiwanese sentiments.

19 In that year the Taiwanese government abolished the infamous 'Criminal Law Article 100', which had provided the legal basis for charging with treason against those giving speeches and organizing for Taiwan's independence.

20 Taiwan began its first 'supplementary' election in 1969. Members elected were still given life-long guarantee for the posts they won, but this was modified in 1972. Unlike the older members, all 'supplementary' members were now given limited terms of office and subjected to re-election.

21 There are at least two useful sources for comprehensive analysis on this subject: Tien (1996) and Wu (1995).

22 Take the Legislature Yuan (the most influential representative body in real politics in the ROC constitution). For example, even in 1989, the newly elected Legislature members occupied less than one-third of the seats.

23 'Long Live the Election' was a title of a book written by a well-known opposition leader Hsu Hsin-Liang in 1979. He was campaigning for the importance and morality of having fair and large-scale elections. More importantly, he described the strategy to challenge the authoritarian government by using 'edging toward close to violence' tactics; by which he meant using mass rally and legal campaign tactics as much as possible until violent clashes were about to happen.

24 It should not be lost sight of that even in 2004, when the DPP had been the 'ruling party' of Taiwan for four years, it still could not manage to win a decisive majority.

25 In January 1979, Ye Jianying (1897-1986) gave an important speech on terms for peaceful unification with Taiwan (dubbed the 'Nine Points'), immediately after China and the US had established formal diplomatic relation.

26 Lee was not Chiang's 'unquestioned' heir, according to Lee's own interpretation (Lee, Teng-hui 2004). The fact is that Chiang let Lee succeed him as vice-president by default, and left other matters open to interpretation and struggle without any clear instructions.

27 This refers to 'Decision Statement item 417', stating the 'Four Ifs': the DPP will advocate Taiwan independence if KMT and the CCP join for unification talks by themselves; if the KMT sell out the interests of Taiwanese people; if the CCP unify Taiwan; and if the KMT refuses to implement true democracy in Taiwan.

[28] Lee admitted in 1994 that he thought of himself as Japanese until he was 20 years old. This confession quite angered his Mainlander opponents from both sides of Taiwan Strait.

[29] Lee won with 54 percent of the vote. Peng Ming-min of the DPP, the closest contender, received 21.1 percent of the vote. About 25 percent of the votes supported other independent candidates.

[30] Some critics will say that this period was also the high tide for 'black-gold' politics, meaning rent-seeking behaviour by politicians through illegal means such as inside information and privileged financial practices. Losing the moral high ground in ruling Taiwan, the KMT became reliant on corrupt politicians and cronies to win seats in the Legislature to maintain its political majority.

[31] After his forced resignation from the KMT party, Lee Teng-hui switched from ex-KMT party chairman to become the prime spokesman for Taiwanese independence. He also accepted the role of honorary chairman of the newly formed Taiwanese party, the Taiwan Solidarity Party, which has been both a strong ally and a competitor of the DPP.

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