



FOREWORD

Democracy in Taiwan and Mainland China-Taiwan Relations: Updates and Prognoses

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In 1949, Kuomintang 國民黨 (KMT)¹ leader Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 retreated with a significant amount of gold and approximately 2 million Nationalist refugees to the small island of Taiwan where he established a hard-line authoritarian regime, shortly following the 228 Massacre of 1947 (二二八大屠殺). The White Terror (白色恐怖) to which Taiwan was consigned after the massacre was one of the longest martial law periods in world history, as tens of thousands of Taiwanese were imprisoned and executed under the grim eye of the Taiwan Garrison Command secret police body. Who in that era could have predicted the day would come when four decades later President Chiang Ching-kuo 蔣經國 (son of Chiang Kai-shek) and Taiwan's ensuing leaders would successfully facilitate a bloodless and relatively peaceful democratic transition by imposition for their nation and turn the *de facto* independent island state into one of the most vibrant democracies in the world and a best-case paragon of civil liberties and political rights-respecting free society?

With the democracy of Taiwan 臺灣, officially the Republic of China (ROC, 中華民國), continues to stand in intriguing, defiant contrast to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP²)'s ruthlessly maintained political monopoly in the People's Republic of China (PRC, 中华人民共和国) on the mainland, Taiwan tends to present itself as a perfect





textbook validation of the modernization theory, for she has proven to be one of the most successful later industrializers in the history of the twentieth century as well as a “best-case” democracy³. When Chiang Ching-kuo came into power in the 1970s, he was taking command of a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing Taiwan, whose increasingly educated and politically conscious people had begun to chafe under the repressive yoke of the hard-line authoritarian policies since Chiang Kai-shek’s era. It is at this point that the predictions of the modernization theory begin to appear validated, as can be seen from the events which followed. Local elections were held in an effort to increase the political participation of the native Taiwanese. Four new members, all of whom were highly educated and had no significant connections to the military or the Chiang family, were elected to the KMT’s top decision-making body, i.e. the Central Standing Committee in 1986.⁴ Most importantly, the KMT convened with intellectuals and opposition leaders in discussions which eventually led to the end of martial law and the formation of a major national opposition party, i.e. the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) whose establishment on 28th September 1986 in defiance of restrictions imposed by the authoritarian KMT regime truly represented a watershed in Taiwan’s gradually moving from an authoritarian political structure towards today’s full-fledged multiparty electoral democracy. In short, over those critical early years, many governmental reforms were launched which enabled the system to transition gradually away from hard-line authoritarianism to partial democratization⁵, and these liberalizing measures not only involved the political realm, but fed back into the economic one as well. Taiwan’s economic freedom has steadily increased since 1975, i.e. the year Chiang Ching-kuo fully came to power. This has paid off well, and thus in 1986 Taiwan was credited as a top nation by global standards in terms of economic performance⁶, and when Chiang Ching-kuo’s successor, the native Taiwanese Lee Teng-hui 李登輝 came onto the scene in 1988, modernized Taiwan was ready for his efforts to facilitate her evolution into a full-fledged constitutional democracy. More than twenty years on, today Taiwan has matured into the most democratic free society in East Asia and indeed also one of the most vibrant democracies in the whole





of Asia and even the world. It is to look deep into the detailed working of this democracy that the first four papers in this issue of the *International Journal of China Studies* are devoted.

Huo-yan Shyu, Chiung-chu Lin and Yujen Chou, taking Taiwan's most recent presidential and Legislative Yuan (立法院) elections in 2012 as a case in point, in their respective papers "Exploring the Ambivalent Voter in Taiwan's 2012 Presidential and Legislative Yuan Elections", "Party Competence and Vote Choice in the 2012 Election in Taiwan" and "Constitutional Implication of the 2012 Elections in Taiwan" analyze the impact of ambivalence and perception of party competence on vote choice, and the constitutional implication of these first jointly-held presidential and legislative elections since Taiwan's direct presidential election began in 1996. These are followed by a paper by Eric Rong-yang Huang, Chun-yuan Wang and Yan-yi Chang, "The Government Performance System Reform in Taiwan: Localized Focus and Citizen Participation", which focuses on the performance management in Taiwan's local governments and the improvement of citizens' participation in local governmental performance management efforts.

No country exists in a vacuum; the consequences of the smallest decisions or actions generated through global interactions can affect a country's trajectory dramatically. It is hence impossible to analyze the political trajectory of Taiwan without touching upon the critical role that the international environment has played not only today but also in impacting her history, especially in the wake of the Chinese Civil War. The defeat of the Nationalist army by the Communists in 1950 had been keenly felt as a blow to the anti-Communist portion of the international community. Critics howled that then-US President Harry Truman had failed to provide sufficient support to their Free China allies and as a result, the United States was presumed responsible for "losing" China to "the Reds". Such a proportioning of blame had the indirect effect of heightening international sympathy for the KMT regime. Thus, when the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949-50, it did so with the consoling knowledge that it still possessed powerful allies which recognized the ROC as the true government of all China and opposed the dominance of the CCP





over the mainland.

Many pessimistic predictions were made forecasting Taiwan's eventual fall to the control of mainland China (hereinafter "China"). Recognizing the high costs of directly engaging the CCP army in combat, the international community was reluctant to furnish Taiwan with offensive support or directly assist the KMT's quest to recover the mainland. Even so, "there were few spokesmen, even in neutralist countries, who [...] advocated turning Taiwan over to the Communists" and thus the international community willingly provided defensive support instead.⁷ The United States proved to be a particularly valuable ally in that it provided both military aid in the form of stationing the US Navy's Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait and economic aid in the form of "Development Loans" to finance new economic projects which must be approved by the US government, "Development Grants" to provide technical assistance against obstacles to economic development, and farm surplus commodities under "Public Law 480".⁸ Simultaneously, the US built up a bitter enmity with China, whose switch to Communism and involvement in the 1950 Korean War were regarded as personal affronts, while Washington "took a hard line by toughening the U.S. economic embargo against the PRC, [...] firming up support for the Nationalist government in Taiwan [and] blocking the PRC's membership in the UN, and further isolating the PRC politically"⁹. All this, alongside the problems of the deteriorating Sino-Soviet alliance as well as internal instability in China, served to weaken China's strategic position against that of Taiwan's within the global arena for a time. In short, it would not be amiss to conclude that the KMT's survival in Taiwan subsequent to the Civil War was more an indicator of the tremendous sway Western and US opinion and actions had over international politics than a testament to the KMT's own strength.

As the years passed, however, the international community inevitably realized the unlikelihood of the ROC ever returning to the mainland and re-assuming the status of a world power. Slowly but surely, pragmatism won over idealism, and the balance of power gradually tipped in favour of the PRC. A key character expediting the erosion of Taiwan's international standing was, in an ironic twist of fate,



none other than then-President of the US, Richard Nixon. Prior to 1970, Nixon had been appreciated as one of Taipei's favourite American allies, given his past reputation as a formidable "red-baiter". This, however, changed when the Nixon administration enacted a grand plan to restructure the international order via initiating a strategy of triangular diplomacy to create a state of détente between China, the Soviet Union and the US. This strategy achieved its intended sub-goal of normalizing US relations with the PRC, but simultaneously, it effectively sidelined the ROC government and served as a harbinger of the derecognition to come. On 25th October 1971, the United Nations made the momentous decision to "expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang K'ai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nation" and accepted the PRC as the legitimate government of China.¹⁰

The significance of this decision cannot be understated. Not only did China gain all the international legitimacy which Taiwan lost, she also secured much more leverage and a better bargaining position than Taiwan could ever have hoped to hold. Owing to the disparities of size and geography between China and Taiwan, the former has always played a more critical role in the annals of world history as compared to Taiwan and, regardless of the international environment, shown that she is a player not to be trifled with. International support for Taiwan involved less potential risk but also less potential reward than international support for China, as may be derived from current conditions – even if the global community had continued to support the former rather than the latter, it is difficult to imagine Taiwan becoming the economic powerhouse and regional leader that China is today.

Thus, with the fateful 1971 verdict, Taiwan was demoted to becoming a political entity in possession of virtually all the trappings of a country, save for the vital last ingredient – formal recognition from other countries. She could only be seen as an object of trade and tourism in the global mind, as "the People's Republic of China (PRC) [...] made it clear that it [did] not object to European business activity in Taiwan if political overtones are excluded".¹¹ This was a precariously vulnerable position for any country to have, and it was to Taiwan's credit that her reaction "was not only controlled, but somewhat more receptive than



usual to suggestions for internal reform”, as Sheldon L. Appleton noted, “Observers on Taiwan when the Nixon trip to Peking and the U.N. China vote were announced reported concern, but no depression, panic or major demonstrations”.¹² Something, however, clearly needed to be done if Taiwan intended to retain her governmental autonomy. Thus set the stage for the next four decades of diplomatic tussle, often turbulent, between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait – technically still at war to date – with the third player, the US, as a deeply involved interest party. It is to this critical domain of the political economy of Taiwan that the next three papers and a review article are devoted.

Shang-su Wu in his paper “Taiwan in the Cross-Strait Arms Dynamics: Past and Present” looks at the changing scene of cross-Strait military confrontation and the multiple implications of Taiwan’s present perceived denial-oriented strategy against China’s attainment of aerial and naval superiorities. Also on cross-Strait relations, Hoo Tiang Boon’s paper “Cross-Strait Relations since 2008: Assessing Intra-position Politics” in turn examines the role of the US, as highlighted above, in the context of emerging rapprochement between Beijing and Taipei since the return of the Kuomintang to power in Taiwan in 2008. Shawn Shaw-fawn Kao, on the other hand, takes China-Taiwan relations beyond the Taiwan Strait into the South China Sea, presently the scene of continuous intense regional conflict between various claimants in the area, in his paper “Scarborough Shoal Dispute, China’s Assertiveness, and Taiwan’s South China Sea Policy”, with particular focus on the heated sovereignty contest between China and the Philippines over the Scarborough Shoal and China’s increasing assertiveness in the twin contexts of China’s and Taiwan’s South China Sea Policy. Finally, this part on cross-Strait relations and regional security is followed by a review article by Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh, “Chinese/Taiwanese Nationalism, Cross-Strait Relations and an Inevitable War? – A Review of Dong-ching Day’s *Inevitable War?! (2012)*”, which by linking Chinese and Taiwanese nationalism to cross-Strait relations inevitably points to the possibility of constructively conflating domestic political economy with foreign strategic relations, thus bringing together the two parts of this journal issue’s subject.



In this context, as observed earlier, Taiwan's particular international circumstances (*vis-à-vis* China's) were significant to her democratic development. The successful democratization of Taiwan has been significantly attributed to the Republic of China's loss of her seat in the United Nations in 1971 – being replaced by the People's Republic of China – followed by her marginalization in the Senkaku/Tiaoyutai (尖閣諸島 / 釣魚台列嶼)¹³ dispute, and adding insult to injury, the 1979 US derecognition. This sequence of humiliating events had served to trigger an unprecedented, major national crisis¹⁴, though Chu (1992)¹⁵ also brought in the decline in military tension with China in the late 1970s as a factor given that the said decline has greatly reduced the “siege mentality” of the Taiwanese people and in turn the legitimacy of a continuing authoritarian polity. All these had irreparably weakened the KMT's moral stance in maintaining an authoritarian grip upon the island state. Similar circumstance has occurred in Argentina as result of losing the war with Great Britain over the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). As a point in contrast, China has never been under such pressures to democratize. Although China has frequently come under severe Western criticism for her consistently violent stance against any form of political dissent within the country, the international repercussions which followed have not been as punishing to the Chinese government as they could have been¹⁶, and certainly resulted in nothing as damaging as the precariously isolated position observed above that Taiwan had found herself in.

Thus including both parts, this issue represents an excellent collection of selected papers, reviewed and duly revised, which were originally presented at the international conference “Democracy in Taiwan: Looking at the 2012 Elections – On Taiwan's Electoral Democracy and Its Sociopolitical Implications for Taiwan and Beyond” jointly organized by the Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya, Malaysia, and the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy on 24th-25th October 2013. Being the last in an uninterrupted series of biannual international conferences convened at the Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya, during my tenure as the director of the institute (13th March 2008 – 1st January 2014), this particular conference is



distinctive in the fact that it is the first to have a complete focus on Taiwan especially on its democracy and electoral system. We are grateful to the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy for its generous financial sponsorship and other forms of assistance and its vice-president, Professor Tsai Woei 蔡瑋, who traveled to Kuala Lumpur to be present at the conference. We are also grateful to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Malaysia and His Excellency Ambassador Lo Yu-chung 羅由中, representative of TECO, for the generous assistance and crucial help in arrangement and to His Excellency Minister Chuan-chin Jeffrey Kau 高泉金, deputy representative of TECO, for officiating the opening of the conference. We also thank Knowledge Venture for similar generosity. Dr Ngeow Chow Bing's crucial assistance in coordinating and liaising with the above partners and benefactors is deeply appreciated.

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Notes

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Political Leadership and State-Civil Society Relations in China” in *Culture and Gender in Leadership: Perspectives from the Middle East and Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and “Poverty Reduction, Welfare Provision and Social Security Challenges in China in the Context of Fiscal Reform and the 12th Five-Year Plan” in *Managing Social Change and Social Policy in Greater China: Welfare Regimes in Transition* (Routledge, 2014, printed October 2013). <Email: yeohkk@um.edu.my, emileyeo@gmail.com>

1. Or officially the “Kuomintang of China” (中國國民黨).
2. Or officially the “Communist Party of China” (CPC, 中国共产党).
3. Shelley Rigger, “Taiwan’s Best-Case Democratization”, *Orbis*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2004, pp. 285-292.
4. John Franklin Copper, “Taiwan in 1986: Back on Top Again”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1987, pp. 81-91.
5. It must be noted that only partial, not full democratization had been attained and so overcoming the lingering limits to KMT tolerance of opposition was still a work-in-progress. The DPP, for example, was founded in 1986 and allowed to compete in elections, but remained technically illegal until the enactment of the Law on Civic Organizations in January 1989 (*ibid.*).
6. *Ibid.*
7. Richard L. Walker, “Taiwan’s Development as Free China”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 321, 1959, pp. 122-135.
8. David W. Chang, “U.S. Aid and Economic Progress in Taiwan”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1965, pp. 152-160.
9. Yafeng Xia, “The Cold War and Chinese Foreign Policy”, *e-International Relations*, 16th July 2008. <<http://www.e-ir.info/2008/07/16/the-cold-war-and-china/>>
10. Sheldon L. Appleton, “Taiwan: The Year It Finally Happened”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1972, pp. 32-37.
11. Reinhard Drifte, “European and Soviet Perspectives on Future Responses in Taiwan to International and Regional Developments”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 25, No. 11, 1985, pp. 1115-1122.
12. Appleton (*op. cit.*).
13. The Pinnacle Islands – a group of uninhabited islands currently controlled by Japan who calls them the Senkaku Islands 尖閣諸島, a part of Okinawa prefecture 沖縄県, but claimed by both the governments of the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China as the Tiaoyutai/Diaoyutai Islands 釣魚台列嶼 / 钓鱼台群島, part of the Taiwan



- province. The largest island of the group is the Uotsuri Jima 魚釣島 / Diaoyu Dao 釣魚島 .
14. J. Bruce Jacobs, "Taiwan 1972: Political Season", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1973, pp. 102-112; Hung-Mao Tien, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1989; Yun-han Chu, *Crafting Democracy in Taiwan*, Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research., 1992; Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998; and Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003 (summarized in Su-Mei Ooi, "The Transnational Protection Regime and Taiwan's Democratization", *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 9, Issue 1, 2009, pp. 57-85).
 15. Chu (*op. cit.*).
 16. After the Beijing massacre of 1989, for example, many OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) nations expressed their disapproval of the CCP government's violent actions via imposing economic sanctions which banned the transfer of high technology and governmental loans. These sanctions, however, lasted just a paltry two years, and by the mid-1990s, most of these Western countries had warmed up to China once more.
 17. Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh and Si-Ning Yeoh, "Taiwan and Mainland China: Impacts of Economic Progress and International Environment on Political Trajectory in Comparative Perspective", *International Journal of China Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2013, pp. 363-392.

