Taiwan: Between Two Nationalisms

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Contents

Abstract

This paper examines the two views of nationalism present in Taiwan, namely "Chinese" nationalism and "Taiwanese" nationalism, each of which is based on a competing interpretation of history and which, together, pose a "crisis of identity" for people living in Taiwan. Chinese nationalism advocates reunification with the mainland; Taiwanese nationalism advocates independence for Taiwan. The paper looks at where the various political parties and politicians in Taiwan line up on this spectrum of nationalism, and discusses the impact of Taiwan's two nationalisms on electoral dynamics. The author argues that the gap between these two irreconcilable positions is widening, leaving Taiwan with the prospect of an erosion of the political centre. The March 1996 presidential election was an important step, marking the completion of the process of transition towards democracy by Taiwan. Nonetheless, the strategy of navigating between the extremes of reunification and independence is likely to be inadequate over the long run.

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I. Introduction[1]

The direct popular election for the presidency of the Republic of China in Taiwan on March 23, 1996 represented the culmination of a democratization process launched less than ten years ago under the leadership of the late President Chiang Ching-kuo.[2] Continuity with the previous regime, rather than replacement of the ruling party by the opposition, stood out as the most salient dimension of this transition, and also one of the preconditions for its success. This was the case because the alternatives to the re-election of Lee Teng-hui, and the centrist faction of the *kuo-min-tang* ("Nationalist Party," hereafter KMT) he leads, posed challenges detrimental to the future of democracy in Taiwan. The opponents to the ruling party have based their opposition to the regime on two mutually irreconcilable versions of national identity, neither of which can muster enough support from the population. However, these conflictual versions of national identity taken together were compelling enough to prevent the formation of a stable government. This situation, in turn, put Taiwan in a very precarious position vis-à-vis mainland China, which has repeatedly stated that "chaos" within the island is one of the three reasons that would justify resort to force against Taiwan by the People's Republic of China.[3] Although the centrist faction of the KMT remains in control of the main Taiwanese parliamentary organs after the March 23rd vote, it remains to be seen how long the current regime will be able to survive future crises.

To discuss this issue, I will first introduce the elements of the identity crisis faced by people living in Taiwan. I define analytically this crisis of identity as a contradiction between two views of ethnicity, each of which is based on competing interpretations of history. These two views, labeled for the sake of clarity *Chinese* nationalism and *Taiwanese* nationalism, point to two poles in the Taiwanese political spectrum. The major feature of the Taiwanese party system is the claim of most actors to represent the centre of this spectrum while their adversaries stand at one pole. The second section of this paper presents those identified with the two poles of Taiwanese politics. In the last section of the paper, I look at the evolution of the party system during the last five years and comment on the relative strength of the poles.

II. The Taiwanese Crisis of Identity

The politics of the Republic of China are hostage to the question of identity.[4] Of course, pressing problems in areas of environmental degradation, resource management, care for the elderly, educational reform, infrastructure development, corruption, etc., mobilize the attention of the three major political parties in Taiwan. However, cooperation between the parties has long been linked with a resolution of this

[1] The author extends his gratitude to the Republic of China's Ministry of Education and the Canadian Department of National Defence, which helped make possible his stay in Taiwan from November 1993 to August 1995 to pursue language training, and to the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for its financial support to undertake field work from September 1994 to August 1996.

[2] Note on transliteration: for the references, I use the Hanyu Pinyin system, which is becoming the norm worldwide. However, for the body of the text, I use the Wade-Giles transliteration, since it is the system used most widely in Taiwan. Hence, I keep the spelling "Lee Teng-hui" throughout the text, since it is the one with which we are more familiar, but write "Li Denghui" if his name is part of a paper or book title written in Chinese and for which I offer a transliteration.

[3] The other pretexts for a PRC intervention in Taiwan include perceived moves towards Taiwanese independence or any foreign power's involvement in Taiwanese affairs.

[4] For a relevant discussion on the concept of national identity in China and Taiwan, see Lowell Dittmer and Samuel Kim, eds., *China's Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), especially the two contributions by the editors.

problem of national identity: that is, whether Taiwan is a part of China and should eventually reunite politically with the polity established on the mainland, or whether Taiwan should be recognized as a sovereign state.[5]

Many analysts have noted that the Taiwanese political class is not defined by a left-right cleavage.[6] This may be partly explained by the fact that most Taiwanese identify themselves with the middle class and that the level of socio-economic inequity within the island is very low. But most important, the labels "conservative," "liberal" and "progressive" fail to capture the stakes of the electoral competition in Taiwan, as well as the programs of the main political parties. When political analysts use these words, it is usually to define where one stands on a continuum from authoritarianism to democracy. However, as the Republic of China emerges as one of the most dynamic democracies of East Asia, this taxonomy is likely to be rendered obsolete. Notwithstanding the fact that politicians in Taiwan do debate important issues in the realm of health care reform, environmental protection, extension of civil rights, etc., the future of democracy in Taiwan depends on the resolution of the rift between the advocates of Taiwanese independence and the proponents of reunification with China.[7]

A significant proportion of Taiwan's inhabitants believe that the island is run by an immigrant government and that the inevitable conclusion of any democratic process should be the replacement of that authority by a government representing the native population.[8] The vast majority of those who hold this view, not surprisingly, claim ancestry in Taiwanese soil for three generations or more. When one hears in Taiwan about the "Taiwanese," it is generally to this group that the reference is made. On the other hand, an important segment of the Taiwanese population believes that Taiwan is part of China and that the destiny of the island is to some day be reunited with the continent. Most of those who hold this view came from the continent to Taiwan in the aftermath of the KMT's defeat at the hands of the communists in 1949. For the "Taiwanese," they are called "people from out of the province (*wai-sheng-jen*)," or even "Chinese," implying that Taiwanese are not Chinese. Since English-language literature commonly uses the expression "mainlander," I will use it for the remnant of this paper.

Strictly speaking, the distinction between "Taiwanese" and "mainlanders" is more based on a generational gap than on ethnicity. Taiwanese and mainlanders both belong to the same Han ethnic group, inasmuch as Germans, Austrians and two-thirds of the Swiss population belong to the same German ethnic group. The place of origin of most Taiwanese is China, not any other country. The stock of folk traditions, religions, culinary habits, etc., found in Taiwan are all related to China. Of course, there exist many differences between the Taiwanese mores, customs and culture and those of their counterparts in the other provinces of mainland China. But those differences are not greater than the differences within the Han cultural area. In fact, although Taiwanese are different from Beijing mainlanders, they do share many characteristics with Southern Fujienese living on the mainland.

In addition, the "Taiwanese" themselves do not represent a homogeneous ethnic group. Since the Ch'ing dynasty, intra-ethnic competition has been endemic on the island.[9] Most inhabitants of the island speak *min-nan-hua* and relate to the Southern Fujienese or Hokkien people. But within the group defined as Taiwanese (as opposed to mainlanders), 17% identify themselves as Hakka, a group that is spread throughout Southern China and that speaks another sinitic language, *k'e-chia-hua*, which is as distinct from *min-nan-hua* as *min-nan-hua* is from Mandarin. In addition, members of both linguistic communities used to further identify with their place of origin. Neither do mainlanders constitute a

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[5] See Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994); Simon Long, *Taiwan: China's Last Frontier* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Harvey Feldman, Michael Y.M. Kau and Ilpyong J. Kim, eds., *Taiwan in a Time of Transition* (New York: Paragon, 1988).

[6] Thomas B. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1986).

[7] Tien Hung-mao, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1989), 253.

[8] Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, 123.

[9] See Harry J. Lamley, "Subethnic Rivalry in the Ch'ing Period," in Emily Martin Ahern and Hill Gates, eds., *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), 282-318.

homogeneous ethnic entity, since they come from every corner of China. In addition, for children born within a Taiwanese-mainlander family, or for "second generation mainlanders" who can speak *min-nan-hua* and don't feel any particular attachment to the mainland, the label is absurd.[10] Finally, to complicate the picture even further, about half a million aboriginals live on the island. Inhabiting Taiwan for centuries before the first migrants from Fujian reached the shores of Taiwan, these groups related to Malayo-Polynesian populations might be identified as the "real" Taiwanese.

With the preceding qualifications in mind, the fact remains that for most of those living in Taiwan, the salient ethnic cleavage pits Chinese established generations ago on the island against mainland Chinese immigrants who came after the end of Japanese rule. These two ethnic groups are not defined by classical markers of identity such as language, religion, mores, etc., but by their position within the state structure. Under *de jure* control of the Chinese central government after 1945, Taiwan became in 1949 the seat of a government-in-exile. As such, the Republic of China remains officially as an institution supporting an immigrant group intent on returning one day to the continent, not as an instrument for the self-rule of the population on the island. Although growing political participation by the native Taiwanese make this claim increasingly meaningless, the Republic of China must uphold that vision if it does not want to incur the dire consequences of intervention from the People's Republic of China.[11] In sum, the cleavage between "Taiwanese" and "mainlander" is the salient divide within the Republic of China, notwithstanding the arbitrary nature of the construct.

For a large number of Taiwanese, the idea that there is "One China" and that Taiwan is part of China is unacceptable. They marshal historical as well as socio-political evidence to prove their point. Supporters of Taiwanese independence assert that Taiwan was not part of the Chinese state for most of it history. They point to a long tradition of resistance to foreign and Chinese rule, half a century of Japanese colonialism, and the existence of Taiwan as a separate political entity since 1949. Advocates of Taiwanese independence add that the gap in the realms of cultural, social, economic and political development between the two countries has grown too wide to contemplate reunification. Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, a vast movement of cultural renaissance that emphasizes the "local" at the expense of the state-sponsored ideal of a "pan-Chinese" culture has further reinforced the perception that Taiwan is different from China.[12] But, as is often the case with nationalist movements, the thesis of the Taiwanese nation's specificity retrieves facts that support its stand and overlooks those that cast doubt on the veracity of its claims.

The historical arguments advanced by the proponents of a Taiwanese national identity are complex. On the one hand, claims about the "ancient lineage" of the Taiwanese national identity are exaggerated. The sense of a distinct Taiwanese identity did not emerge in the first centuries of Chinese occupation of the island, which was not overseen by any state, but was rather sporadic and spontaneous. Until 1875, most of those who crossed the Taiwan Strait were seen as "renegades" and "outlaws" by the

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[10] The situation of the three main candidates for the last gubernatorial election gives an idea of the extent to which inter-ethnic unions have become accepted. Soong Chu-yu, a mainlander running for the KMT and married to a Taiwanese, criticized the duplicity of his opponent, Ch'en Ting-nan, a Taiwanese married to a mainlander, for asking "Taiwanese to vote for Taiwanese." See John F. Copper, "Taiwan's 1994 Gubernatorial and Mayoral Elections," in *Asian Affairs* 22, No. 2 (Summer 1995), 97-118.

[11] Hence the continued existence of a four-tiered government. At the apex, the central government, which claims to represent "the free area of China;" then the provincial government of Taiwan and the special cities of Taipei and Kaohsiung; the city and county levels; and, below, the town and borough levels. Although the first two levels of government almost coincide, abandoning them would mean renouncing the claim to represent the Republic of China and amounts in effect to a declaration of independence. See Steve Tsang, "Introduction," in Steve Tsang, ed., *In the Shadow of China: Political Developments in Taiwan Since 1949* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1993), 5.

[12] On the crafting of a Taiwanese identity through the development of popular culture, see Thomas B. Gold, "Taiwan's Quest for Identity in the Shadow of China" in Steve Tsang, *In the Shadow of China*, 183-92.

central government.[13] Most of the migrants on the island were colonists in a frontier region, busy fighting among themselves and against aborigines as well as foreigners.

The island was claimed in the early seventeenth century by Spain and the southern part was briefly occupied by the Dutch. The latter were expelled from the island in 1661, when the Ming loyalist Koxinga decided to retreat from his base on the southern coast of Fujian and took refuge in Taiwan. The resistance to the new regime in mainland China from Taiwan was thus not a war of national resistance against colonial masters, but one of the last episodes in a dynastic quarrel.[14] The regime ruled by Koxinga's son in Taiwan was defeated by the Ch'ing shortly after in 1683. From then on until the late nineteenth century, the central government showed no interest in the development of the island, which it considered unruly and unfit for colonization. During this whole era, it remains doubtful whether the few migrants to Taiwan ever felt a special sense of nationhood.[15]

This was also the case in 1895, when the Ch'ing rulers relinquished possession of the island "forever" to the Japanese under the clauses of the Shimonoseki treaty. The acting governor of Taiwan, Tang Ching-sung, and the Ch'ing military commander, Liu Yung-fu, decided to resist and established the short-lived Formosan Democratic Republic. Although often hailed as the first "Republic of Asia" and the forerunner of later movements for Taiwanese independence, the resistance movement was in fact a Chinese loyalist response to Japanese imperialism. The goal of the movement was to elicit sympathy from other countries, in the hope that the island could eventually revert to Chinese rule.[16]

The fifty decades of Japanese rule completely cut off Taiwan from developments within mainland China. The Taiwanese did not experience the upheavals of the Nationalist revolution, the May Fourth movement, and the Communist takeover. Between 1895 and the second decade of the twentieth century, the Japanese colonial authorities wanted to make sure Taiwan would benefit the Empire and would not represent a drain on the resources of Japan. In addition, they wanted to use Taiwan as a showcase of pan-Asian collaboration superior to Western domination. Out of this self-interested motivation, the colonial authorities modernized the island and further accentuated the disparity between Taiwan and the rest of China.[17]

After the Japanese defeat, Taiwan came under the jurisdiction of the nationalist authorities in Nanjing. The Taiwanese population initially welcomed the new Chinese administration. However, a major cultural chasm quickly appeared: the mainlanders mistrusted the natives, whom they accused of harbouring sympathy for the colonial rulers.[18] Continental Chinese still thought of the island as a "barbarous dependency."[19] Conversely, many Taiwanese were shocked to find out that the mainlanders appeared on the whole less sophisticated and more incompetent than their former rulers. In addition, the governor dispatched by Chiang Kai-shek to rule the island plundered the place: a system of monopoly was introduced, the economy dislocated, and the province fell under a military government.[20] It is in this context that the events of February 28th erupted. Up until that time, it can be argued that the Taiwanese considered themselves as Chinese. However, the traumatic events of 1947 changed radically this perception.[21] After the KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949 to avoid total defeat at the hands of the

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[13] Peng Ming-min, *A Taste of Freedom: Memoirs of a Formosan Independence Leader* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 2.

[14] John F. Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 19-20.

[15] Maurice Meisner, "The development of Formosan Nationalism," in Mark Mancall, ed., *Formosa Today* (New York: Praeger, 1963), 148.

[16] *Ibid.*, 150-1.

[17] On Japanese rule and native resistance, see George Kerr, *Formosa: Licensed Revolution and the Home Rule Movement, 1895-1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974).

[18] Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, 82.

[19] Peng Ming-min, *A Taste of Freedom: Memoirs of a Formosan Independence Leader*, 61-2.

[20] Maurice Meisner, "The Development of Taiwanese Nationalism," 153-4.

[21] Lai Tse-han, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Wou, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 192-3.

communists, the island was again cut off from the continent. In sum, Taiwan has been under effective Chinese rule for a little more than four years during this century: hardly enough to nurture brotherly bonds.

In the summer of 1948, leaders of the February 28 revolt flew to Hong Kong and organized a League for the Re-liberation of Formosa. After the communist takeover, some went to mainland China, others to Japan. The former were purged in 1958 as rightist counter-revolutionaries, the latter founded in 1950 the Formosan Democratic Independence Party and established in 1955 a provisional government. However, the movement failed because it was undermined by pressures from the KMT and the Communist Party. Taiwanese separatists then concluded that political action should be pursued at the level of the provincial assembly, where some political competition was still possible. And within this restricted context, advocacy of independence was bound to be limited.

The closest thing to a successful party opposition to KMT rule in Taiwan emerged briefly in 1960, when a mainlander liberal, Lei Ch'en, founded the Chinese Democratic Party (hereafter CDP). Lei Ch'en reasoned the collapse of the KMT regime was inevitable if the regime persisted with its intent to reconquer the mainland and thus appeared unconcerned with the population on the island. He concluded that to prevent the collapse of authority in Taiwan, it was necessary for the regime to co-opt Taiwanese. Accordingly, the proportion of Taiwanese to mainlanders in the organizational committee of the CDP was eight to two, which reflected the Taiwanese-mainlander ratio on the island. However, this was too much for the authorities, who looked at the CDP as a separatist organization in all but name. The government thus sentenced Lei Ch'en and banned his party.[22] The nature of Lei's party suggests the independence movement of that era was not defined by ethnic criteria, but premised on the realization that KMT rule violated the rights of the entire island population to self-determination.

During the next two decades, opposition to KMT rule and advocacy of independence by an organized political party were impossible. Nonetheless, politicians opposed to the ruling party could run as individuals in local elections.[23] Known collectively as *tang-wai* (literally, outside of the Party, that is, outside of the KMT), their candidates won one-third of the votes in the Provincial Assembly elections of 1977. Emboldened by this success and later victories in local elections for Taipei City Council, mayors and county magistrates in the province of Taiwan, the *tang-wai* politicians established in 1978 a "*Tang-wai* Campaign Corps," which coordinated campaigns by the opposition. In 1979, the opposition went further and launched the magazine *mei-li-tao* or "Formosa," whose editorial board included representatives of almost every opposition group.[24]

Activists rallying around *mei-li-tao* held several pro-independence rallies, which turned in December of that year into an episode of violence known as the Kaohsiung incident. The confrontation led to the arrest of most leaders of the *tang-wai* and it seemed then that the opposition's initiatives had been curbed for good. But in a remarkable act of defiance to the regime, the attorneys and the relatives of the detained activists were elected to office for the Legislative Yuan in the ensuing elections of 1980.[25] Following that incident, the regime came to the conclusion that it was futile to clamp down on the opposition and a policy of tacit tolerance was adopted by Chiang Ching-kuo. In the 1983 by-election,

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[22] On the history of opposition to KMT rule from an independentist perspective, see Ong Joktik, "A Formosan View of the Taiwanese Independence Movement," in Marck Mancall, ed., *Formosa Today*, 163-70.

[23] According to the ideals set by Dr. Sun Yat-sen's theory of the three stages of government, the Republic of China ought to have a constitutional government after the early stages of revolution under a military government, and national reconstruction under the political tutelage of a revolutionary party. The imposition of martial law, justified by the communist victory of mainland China, interrupted democratization in the ROC at the level of the central government. However, a certain measure of pluralism in local politics was desired, to both bolster the KMT claim that the ROC has a constitutional government and to co-opt local elites.

[24] Jurgen Domes, "The Kuomintang and the Opposition," in Steve Tsang, ed., *In the Shadow of China*, 123-4. The name of the magazine itself amounted to a political statement in favor of independence: "Formosa," or *mei-li-tao* (which means in Portuguese and in Mandarin "beautiful island"), repudiated the official mainland Chinese taxonomy for *tai-wan* ("terraced bay" in Mandarin).

[25] Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, 139-41.

30% of the vote went to opposition candidates. Encouraged by these results, *tang-wai* politicians decided to form in 1984 a "*Tang-wai* People's Representatives' Association for the Study of Public Policy," followed in 1985 by the "*Tang-wai* Association for Campaign Assistance." The process culminated in September 1986 with the founding of an organization that put Taiwanese independence as its top priority, the *min-chu chin-pu tang* (Democratic People's Party). In the election for the Legislative Assembly of that year, the opposition won one-third of the vote, with one-quarter of the voters casting their ballot for the DPP.[26] By the end of the 1980s, a party defending Taiwanese nationalism was fully established along with the old party promoting Chinese nationalism.

In the meantime, it was becoming inaccurate to argue that the Taiwanese were deprived of political clout, or to label the KMT as a mainlanders' organization. The KMT realized early on that its regime could not stand the double pressure of foreign threat from mainland China as well as hostility from within. Inclusion of the indigenous population in the political structure up to the highest levels emerged as a necessity for regime survival. The KMT leadership wanted to make sure co-opted Taiwanese elites would have a vested interest in the preservation of the ruling party's supremacy.[27] Proceeding slowly and only after the regime became secure enough, the process received a formidable impetus under the presidency of Chiang Ching-kuo. His policy of "Taiwanization" led to a massive infusion of native talent within the rank-and-file of the ruling party. In 1969, 60.6% of KMT members were mainlanders. In 1992, the proportion was turned upside down, with 69.2% of the party membership being Taiwanese.[28] In addition, the positions of President, Prime Minister, and Chairman of the Legislative Yuan were all held by Taiwanese. The state structure as well as the dominant party are coming close to reflecting the ethnic cleavage within society. The major pay-off of this policy is that it has undermined substantially the appeal of the separatist opposition to the ruling party. The KMT elites reason it is useless provoking mainland China with irresponsible calls for independence when the Taiwanese population already enjoys home rule within the context of the Republic of China.

But the KMT is now a victim of its own success. The present government of the Republic of China comes very close to being a government representing the population of Taiwan. In the aftermath of recent elections and the passing away of the mainlander elites identified with a constituency on the continent, the fiction of the Republic of China is becoming obvious. This provides the KMT, or any other future government in Taiwan, with a very interesting dilemma: should Taiwan's *de facto* status be recognized *de jure*? The Taiwanese separatists wish for that recognition. However, the conventional wisdom is that there is no leader in mainland China who could possibly contemplate this situation without resorting to force. Mainlanders in Taiwan as well as many Taiwanese think that the threats issued in Beijing are credible and thus that the maximalist demands of the separatists are dangerous. The KMT faction in power in Taipei seems for the moment content with adopting an extremely ambiguous position. The present leadership continues to hold the line that Taiwan is part of China, while giving Taiwanese most of the instruments for self-rule. This situation is viewed with a certain nervousness in Beijing, where it is interpreted as playing with independence, and enrages the opponents of Taiwanese independence on the island because it seems to endanger the ROC. Thus the team led by President Lee Teng-hui is currently caught between two competing nationalisms: Chinese nationalism, which rallies under the slogan of reunification, and Taiwanese nationalism, which advocates independence for Taiwan. For how long will the present government be able to navigate between those two solutions to Taiwan's crisis of national identity? To help assess this possibility, we have now to look at the main actors defending these two positions within the political system of the ROC.

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[26] Jurgen Domes, "The Kuomintang and the Opposition," 125-7.

[27] Chu Yun-chan, *Crafting Democracy in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1992), 30.

[28] Huang Teh-fu, "Electoral Competition and the Evolution of the Kuomintang," *Issues and Studies* 31, No. 5 (May 1995), 103.

III. The Two Nationalist Visions of Taiwan

The Proponents of Chinese Nationalism

The official position of the KMT is that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China. Under former president Chiang Kai-shek, taking this position also entailed assuming that the Republic of China that took refuge in Taiwan was the sole representative of the entire Chinese people and that the communist regime established in Beijing was illegitimate. The avowed goal of the generalissimo was to reconquer the mainland and reunify China. Although recent scholarship has shown that Chiang Kai-shek did not believe in his own rhetoric, the "One China" policy was necessary to bolster the legitimacy of his regime on the island.[29] Under President Chiang Ching-kuo, the maximalist position of the KMT was reiterated, but in practice the regime accommodated itself to the reality of communist control on the continent.

Today, no defender of the "One China" thesis advocates reunification within the coming decade. Everyone in Taiwan sees that the gulf in socio-economic conditions between the two countries is too vast and that Taiwan would lose in the process. Under the present administration, the official line is that although there is "One China," there are "Two Governments" representing the country and both should be considered as equals prior to the ultimate goal of reunification. President Lee and Premier Lien Chan have repeatedly stated that reunification can only be achieved under three conditions: when China is a free market economy, when it becomes a democracy, and after it has renounced the use of force to achieve reunification. As the evolution of the KMT policy suggests, there are many ways to look at the issue of reunification and the "One China" principle. The present line held by President Lee represents for his supporters a pragmatic variant of the "One China" policy. But for the President's adversaries within and outside the ruling party, it is the closest thing to an admission that Taiwan is already an independent state and, as such, it is unacceptable.

The New Party: The most articulate proponents of reunification have joined the *hsin-tang* ("New Party," hereafter NP).[30] This organization succeeds the New KMT Alliance, a minority group of disgruntled KMT members critical of Lee Teng-hui. The New KMT Alliance rejected Lee Teng-hui's advocacy of direct popular election for the presidency and blamed the President for not cracking down hard enough on the proponents of independence. The candidates identified with the New KMT Alliance did rather well during the December 1992 Legislative Yuan Elections, while ten candidates identified with the mainstream failed to get re-elected.[31] The New KMT Alliance tried to use these results to push for a policy change but met with opposition from the mainstream faction, which still held a significant majority within the ruling party. As a result, members of the New KMT Alliance, such as Jaw Shau-kong, a major vote-getter, and Wang Chien-shien, a former Finance Minister, quit and founded the NP. Until January 1996, Wang Chien-shien, the NP leader, intended to run as candidate for the March 23 presidential election. However, "for the sake of the country," Wang decided to drop out of the race and asked party members to rally around Lin Yang-kang, a maverick KMT candidate with whom the NP has ideological affinities and who seemed more likely to win.

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[29] Steve Tsang, "Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang's Policy to Reconquer the Chinese Mainland" in Steve Tsang, ed., *In the Shadow of China,* 48-72.

[30] As is the case with most political biographies published in Taiwan, many works published on the NP tend to be polemical in tone. They either lambaste or laud the organization and a monograph of academic standard has yet to be published. But since this type of publication severely criticizes the ruling party and the government without any obvious consequence, it also testifies to the existence of freedom of expression on Taiwanese soil. For a monograph that has been written by opponents of the NP, see Xiao Yuchen and Chen Qimai, *xin dang zhendang* [The New Party Effect] (Taipei: xiwang chuban, 1995).

[31] Shao-chuan Leng, and Cheng-yi Lin, "Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?" *The China Quarterly* 136 (December 1993): 825-6.

The mainstream press generally labels the NP as a conservative grouping. This denomination does not mean much, however, unless one considers "independence" a progressive stand. On some issues, the NP is undeniably to the right, but on some others it might be labelled as liberal. For instance, Jaw Shau-kang, the NP candidate for mayor in Taipei, was first known as a prominent "Young Turk" within the KMT because of his opposition to the old legislators from mainland China who refused to retire voluntarily from their positions.[32] Some critics also accuse the NP of catering to mainlanders, and thus of reinforcing ethnic divisions. Although it is undeniable that the NP appeals primarily to the mainlanders, the NP cannot count on a "mainlander bloc of votes." Comparative results between constituencies with a sizable mainlander minority and support for the NP clearly show that mainlanders do not always support the NP and, conversely, that non-mainlanders support the NP. For instance, 23% of the population in Taichung city supported the NP, even though the mainlanders represent only 8.2% of the constituency. Conversely, only 5.14% of the voters supported the NP in Hualien county, although the area counts as many as 16% mainlanders.[33] It is certainly more accurate to affirm that the NP's constituency is mostly urban, upper middle class and well-educated.

The KMT non-mainstream faction: The present policy of the Republic of China, as mentioned before, is crafted by the KMT mainstream faction, led by President Lee Teng-hui. For the opposition advocating Taiwanese independence, the KMT is still a party advocating reunification with China and President Lee is its chief proponent. However, for those who advocate reunification, President Lee cannot be relied upon to defend the interests of a reunified China. Within the party, the mainstream faction is faced with a group of politicians who accuse President Lee of selling out to the separatists. This non-mainstream faction was led by Hau Po-ts'un, Premier from 1990 to 1993 and, until late 1995, Vice-Chairman of the KMT and Senior Adviser to the President.[34] Hailed as the "hero of Quemoy" for defending the island in 1958, Hau became Chief Aide to President Chiang Kai-shek between 1965 and 1970 and rose to become Chief of the General Staff and Minister of National Defense from 1981 to 1989.

Hau may command respect within the military and the veterans' families, but his position on reunification had implications for the democratization of Taiwan that reminded many of the island's authoritarian past. Hence, Hau prefered election through an electoral college and disapproved of direct presidential election on the grounds that a popular election in Taiwan would be read in mainland China as a *de facto* act of sovereignty inviting military intervention.[35] Hau has cleverly orchestrated his opposition to President Lee on this matter, mitigating the divisive effect of this rather controversial stand by advocating other policies receiving broader support. Hence, Hau often criticized the authorities for not being strong enough on issues of "law and order," and denounced the reliance of local party bosses on criminal elements, as well as corruption and vote-buying.

Until 1992, Hau could use his position as Premier to criticize the President. However, the 1992 constitutional reforms increased presidential powers at the expense of those of the head of the Executive Yuan (the Premier) and, under pressure from both the KMT mainstream faction and the DPP, Hau was forced to resign. Knowing that his identification with mainlanders represented a major handicap, Hau did not consider running as a presidential candidate in 1996. However, he did become a candidate for the vice-presidency.

Like his running mate and several NP leaders, Lin had opposed the mainstream faction within the ruling party. KMT Vice-Chairman from 1993 until his ouster from the party in 1995, Lin was also

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[32] Of course, Jaw's policy was primarily based on pragmatic considerations, since the "Young Turks" knew they would not stand a chance of winning elections as long as they were associated with leftovers from KMT rule on the continent.

[33] Lu Dongxi, "wazou guomindang waishengpiao, xindang zhengzhi bantu minglang [The KMT dig for the mainlander votes, the NP domain expands]," *heibaixinwen zhoukan* [Taiwan Weekly], 4-12 December 1995, 15-7.

[34] See Cora Wang Lixing, *wugui: hao peicun de zhengzhi zhi lu* [With a Clear Conscience: Hau Po-ts'un's Political Journey] (Taipei: tianhua wenhua chuban [Commonwealth Publishing], 1993).

[35] *ziyou shibao* [Liberty Times], 18 November 1995, 2.

President of the Judicial Yuan since 1987.[36] After a career as a magistrate in Nantou county in Central Taiwan, he became Mayor of Taipei City from 1976 to 1978, Governor of the Taiwan Provincial Government, from 1978 to 1981, Minister of the Interior from 1981 to 1984, and Premier from 1984 to 1987. Such a prestigious career path pointed to Lin as the most credible successor to the late President Chiang Ching-kuo. However, Lee Teng-hui emerged as the KMT favourite.

Lin had a good reputation within the population and was also more presidential than Hau because of his background as a Taiwanese. When Lin decided in the summer of 1995 to challenge the incumbent President for this year's presidential election, he decided to run as a maverick candidate representing the ruling party. In a move that irritated many KMT members, Lin refused to quit, banking on the support of other members such as Hau, as well as on the enormous resources owned by the party. Lin also believed that a move by Lee Teng-hui's faction to expel him from the KMT would lend credence to his view that the mainstream faction is authoritarian. But in December, Hau and Lin went too far in their opposition to President Lee by supporting candidates for the NP against those representing the KMT mainstream faction.[37] Consequently, the party decided to expel both Lin and Hau, a move which the two leaders have decided to fight in the courts.

Lin hoped the combined numerical strength of Hau's constituency within the military, the civil service and the teaching community and his own base of support among Taiwanese farmers would help them defeat the Lee Teng-hui-Lien Chan team. Observers have, however, noted that their respective constituencies hampered rather than helped each other because of their often conflicting interests.[38] In addition, by banking on the support of rural voters as well as the military and the civil servants, Lin and Hau demonstrated that they fail to grasp the profound mutations of Taiwanese society during the last decades. The Republic of China in Taiwan is now a heavily urbanized and post-industrial society: in 1992, the service sector already accounted for 55.01% of GDP, followed by the industrial sector with 41.38% and the agricultural sector with 3.54%.[39] Although leaders of the NP have thrown their support behind Lin and Hau, the middle class supporters of the party did not necessarily identify with them and what they stand for. For those of the younger generation rejecting independence, who reject P'eng Ming-min but also do not trust Lee Teng-hui's real motives, and don't want to support Lin because of his identification with the "old guard," there exists a fourth option.

Ch'en Li-an, a politician "above the fray": On August 17, 1995, another important figure within the KMT, Ch'en Li-an, had announced his intention to oppose the incumbent Lee in the presidential campaign.[40] Ch'en had accumulated considerable experience within the government as well as within the Party: formally Chairman of the National Security Council from 1984 to 1988, Minister of Economic Affairs from 1988 to 1990, Minister of National Defense from 1990 to 1993, and from that

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[36] For Lin Yang-kang's political philosophy in action during his career as President of the Judicial Yuan, see Guan Meijia, *cheng xin: lin yanggan huiyilu* [Public Trust: the Memoirs of Lin Yang-kang] (Taipei: tianxiawenhua chuban [Commonwealth Publishing], 1995). For a rendition of interviews where Lin exposed his views, Huang Zhenghua, *wo xin heping: agangbo zai sifayuan de rizi* [My conscience is clear: the days of Yang-kang in the Judicial Yuan] (Sanzhong, Taipei county: xinxinwen wenhua, 1995).

[37] *ziyou shibao*, 19 November 1995, 1.

[38] *ziyou shibao*, 17 November 1995, 2.

[39] *The Republic of China Yearbook, 1994* (Taipei: Government Information Office, 1994), 198-9.

[40] No less than eight books on him have been published since Chen Li'an declared his intention to run for the presidency. Chen Li-an has generated more interest among Taiwanese readers than Lin Yang-kang and Hau Po-ts'un taken together. These works, however, are either summaries of his political philosophy and religious beliefs or sympathetic biographies. For an example of the former, see Wang Zhipan's compilation of some of Chen Li-an's speeches and talks, *chen lu'an de neixin shijie* [Chen Li-an's Inner World] (Taipei: zhongsheng wenhua chuban, 1995); Wang Feng, *chewu xishuo chen li'an* [For a Thorough Understanding: A Detailed Account of Chen Li-an's Views] (Taibei: shangzhou wenhua faxing, 1995); or Xie Jianping's account, *chen lu'an zhenhan* [The Chen Li-an Effect] (Taipei: yaxiya chubanshe, 1995). For an example of the latter, see Li Xiaozhuang, and Zhang Jueming, *chen li'an juexingde xin* [Chen Li-an's Enlightened Compassion] (Xindian, Taibei county: shuhua shuban, 1994).

year until his resignation last September, President of the Control Yuan. His father is the illustrious Ch'en Ch'eng, who oversaw the radical land reform of the 1950s, largely credited for laying the ground of the Taiwanese economic miracle. Ch'en quit his position as President of the Control Yuan as he made his bid for the presidency, and resigned from the KMT one month later, arguing that he wanted to run a non-partisan campaign. Ch'en's announcement came as a surprise because for the past five years he had studied Ch'an Buddhism and many analysts took it as a sign that he had no political ambition behind his function as head of the Control Yuan. Not being Taiwanese himself, Ch'en was handicapped from the beginning, but tried to counter this problem by carefully cultivating an image as a leader who was both populist and well-educated. Ch'en ran on a platform of moral renewal and received the support of his spiritual mentor, Master Hsing Yun, who founded an influential Buddhist organization, the fo-kuang-shan Order. Widespread rumours contended Ch'en was sent by Lee Teng-hui himself to weaken and divide those who opposed the President within the KMT. Although the charge is exaggerated, it is nonetheless clear that Lin Yang-kang and Ch'en Li-an were vying for the same source of support.[41]

Taiwanese with a mainlander background rally massively behind the reunification thesis. This should not come as a surprise: they fear they would lose a lot if an independentist movement came to power. Their concerns are not entirely unfounded: a disproportionate number of teachers, officials in government and officers in the army are mainlanders, and pressure to redress this imbalance may prove impossible to resist for an eventual government with a nationalist agenda. However, the ethnic imbalance should not be exaggerated either; over the years, massive Taiwanization has been achieved within government and other sectors of society, including the armed forces. Nonetheless, the incendiary language employed by some figures in the opposition keep the mainlanders uneasy and most of them cannot afford to trust the Taiwanese nationalists. The NP is heavily supported by mainlanders with higher education, but since that constituency is not substantial enough to ever win power, many mainlanders prefer to lend their support to the KMT, hedging their bets that the non-mainstream faction can either prevail or at least put the pressure on President Lee Teng-hui.[42] However, the numerical strength of the organizations supporting reunification suggests that many Taiwanese also reject the separatist option. Their motivations range from enlightened self-interest to fear about the alternative. Many Taiwanese have personally benefited under the present regime and figure they cannot risk the uncertainties coming with too drastic a change. Many officers, academics and civil servants owe their present situation to the policies of the ruling party, and for many urban dwellers who were born in the countryside, there is no doubt that the increase in their standard of living relates to KMT policies. Many Taiwanese also support the thesis of reunification on the grounds that should Taiwan declare independence, the threats of intervention from mainland China are credible. Finally, another significant segment of the Taiwanese population supportive of the reunification stand is the business community. Many Taiwanese investors have been drawn to mainland China's opportunities. Most of them are weary of uncertainty in cross-strait relations and are concerned that President Lee may go too far in his "flexible diplomacy."

The Advocates of Independence

Many KMT members thanked Hau Po-ts'un and Lin Yang-kang for relieving them of the burden of trying to please the mainlander conservatives.[43] For them, the ruling party's real adversary was the *Min-chu chin-bu tang* (Democratic People's Party, hereafter DPP), the organization formed in September 1986 to represent those who advocate independence. To remain in power, the KMT mainstream faction

[41] *China News*, 14 November 1995, 2.

[42] But with the revocation of Lin Yang-kang and Hau Po-tsun's KMT membership, it is likely that mainlanders who maintain links with the KMT will be those who already approve of President Lee's policy. After all, there are still many of them who are members of the Cabinet, such as Justice Minister Ma Ying-chiu and Governor James Soong.

[43] Julian Baum, "One Party, Two Systems," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 November 1995, 18-20.

knows the party should not spare efforts in courting the voters who are sympathetic to the DPP's promotion of "Taiwaneseness" but who nevertheless reject outright independence. The implementation of the Taiwanization policy promoted by late President Chiang Ching-kuo and vigorously pursued by Lee Teng-hui has undoubtedly helped the party achieve that goal. As mentioned before, the preponderance of Taiwanese in the local echelons of power, up to the supreme office in the country, strengthens the plausibility of the KMT's claim to represent the Taiwanese population. It weakens significantly the argument that the KMT represents the interests of the mainlanders and thus debunks the opposition thesis that the KMT represents a foreign government.

In a series of controversial public declarations, President Lee has gone even further in courting the support of those leaning towards Taiwanese independence. He has argued publicly that since Taiwan has remained as a sovereign state for a long period, it is not necessary to proclaim Taiwanese independence.[44] Finally, in a move reminiscent of the DPP's own campaign for the recognition of Taiwan at the United Nations, President Lee and Premier Lien Chan have launched a "pragmatic foreign policy" of "One China, two governments," seeking representation for Taiwan within the United Nations. Wooing so obviously at the electoral base of the DPP, of course, is not without problems: it lends credence to the accusations directed against President Lee for his alleged support for separatism. In sum, even though mainland China's pressures make sure the DPP cannot control the political process any time soon, this party indirectly plays a major role in Taiwanese politics, since it compels the KMT mainstream faction to soften its opposition to independence.

In contrast to the proponents of reunification, which were asked to choose during the presidential election among three candidates officially defending the principle of "One China," the proponents of independence did not face the prospect of a split vote, since P'eng Ming-min was the only candidate defending this option openly. However, this strategic advantage was offset by major external and internal constraints. In addition to the external and obvious pressure represented by the open hostility of mainland China to the fundamental option defended by the DPP, another external factor limits the influence of that party: the advantage accumulated by the incumbent after almost fifty years of one-party rule. The DPP did not benefit from the support of local networks of power, neither from the financial resources, nor from the control over several media all enjoyed by the KMT. Among the internal constraints hampering the DPP, factionalism ranked as the most important. The party was from the beginning even more factionalized than the KMT. Its divisions were primarily based on the best strategy to adopt for achieving the goal of independence, as well as different sets of priorities for governing a newly established "Republic of Taiwan." Since the presidential election, the proponents of Taiwanese elections have institutionalized these divisions further. The advocates of immediate independence have quit the DPP to establish the *chien-kuo-tang* (or nation-building Party).

The most important divisions within the DPP centre on the differences between the *mei-li-tao* (Formosa) and the *hsin ch'ao-liu* (New Tide) factions. The *mei-li-tao* faction, led by Hsu Hsin-liang, represents most of the older generation *tang-wai* politicians. It has long opposed calls for independence in the party platform, on the grounds that this would play into the hands of the conservatives within the ruling party and trigger hostility from mainland China. *Mei-li-tao* militants argue the proclamation of a Taiwanese Republic is not even necessary, owing to the fact that Taiwan is already de facto a sovereign country. Simply asking the international community to recognize this fact should constitute the main goal of a DPP government's foreign policy. In practical terms, this objective is almost indistinguishable from President Lee's approach of "One China, two governments." However, this pragmatic approach amounted to a sell-out of the independence goal for many militants of the *hsin ch'ao-liu*. Members of that faction, headed by party Chairman Shih Ming-te, were for the most part young intellectuals who became radicalized in the wake of the Kaohsiung incident. Their goal was to call for a plebiscite on the establishment of a "Republic of Taiwan," independent from China, after the party comes to power.[45]

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[44] Jurgen Domes, "The Kuomintang and the Opposition," 131.

[45] Peter R. Moody, Jr., *Political Change in Taiwan: A Study of Ruling Party Adaptability* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 162-4.

Three other factions vied for influence within the party. The *cheng-i lien-hsien* (Justice League), headed by Taipei mayor Ch'en Shui-pien, espoused the moderate line of the *mei-li-tao* on independence, and emphasized issues of clean government. The *fu-li-kuo lien-hsien* (Welfare State League), as its name suggests, favoured a social-democratic approach to public policy. It stood between the *mei-li-tao* and the *hsin ch'ao-liu* on the issue of independence, but did not retain enough clout to influence the balance of power between the main factions. Finally, the *t'ai-tu lien-meng* (Independence Alliance) represented the most radical members of the party. Although politicians like Ch'en Shui-pien contributed to DPP popularity, the evolution of party policy on independence is determined primarily by shifts in the balance of power among the two major groups. After the Fifth Party Congress of October 1992, for instance, six seats out of eleven in the Standing Committee were occupied by *hsin ch'ao-liu* representatives and four by the *mei-li-tao* faction.

The radicalism of the New Tide was often singled out by the KMT to show the irresponsible character of the opposition. As such, it is a liability if the party wants to form a governing majority. Conversely, the pragmatism advocated by the *mei-li-tao* line has paid off with the success of the DPP candidate, Chen Shui-bian, during the 1994 mayoral election in Taipei, whose success has been largely attributed to the fact that he did not discuss the issue of independence during his campaign. Members of the *mei-li-tao* faction also pointed to the large gap between the DPP's popularity and the enthusiasm for independence in their advocacy of a more gradualist policy. Surveys continually showed that at most only a quarter of the Taiwanese population would opt for independence.[46] Considering the 40% of the popular vote received by the DPP in 1995, it was clear the party is more popular than its option. This was even admitted by Shih Ming-te himself, who stated in September 1995 that if his party won a majority in the legislative Yuan, the DPP would not be compelled to declare independence since Taiwan has already been a sovereign state since 1949.[47] In view of what has been said before about the gap between support for the DPP and approval for independence, it is unlikely that the DPP majority would cave in to the demands of its more radical elements. The party would not only lose the confidence of voters, but would also lend itself to serious attacks from the KMT for endangering the security of the nation in light of the recent threats reiterated by mainland China.[48] But as the position of the *mei-li-tao* faction was becoming over the years indistinguishable from that of the KMT mainstream faction, many voters came to fear either a defeat of the KMT mainstream faction at the hands of conservatives, or a victory of radical independentists which might incur the wrath of mainland China. These voters were thus tempted to throw their support to President Lee and the KMT mainstream faction in 1995 and 1996. The consequence of such calculations has been a better showing of *hsin ch'ao-liu* politicians than *mei-li-tao* candidates, while the DPP overall support was declining slightly.

The choice of P'eng Ming-min as candidate for the presidential election has only aggravated the problem. Although sometimes hailed as the godfather of the independence movement, P'eng Ming-min has been in exile abroad for twenty years and waited until February 1995, when party chairman Shih Ming-tes personally asked him to do so, before joining the DPP. Although P'eng defeated Hsu Hsin-liang in the party primary of that year and thus gained a higher profile, he was still seen by the rank-and-file of the DPP as an outsider picked by the establishment. Within the population at large, many voters fell victim to what the local media called the "drop P'eng, protect Lee" syndrome, as their best bet to avoid a comeback by the KMT old guard represented by Lin Yang-kang and the NP.[49]

How do these political rivalries and divisions played themselves out in the political system? As argued previously, the centre, represented by President Lee Teng-hui and the mainstream faction he leads, is challenged from both sides of the *tong-tu* (reunification or independence) debate. On the one hand, partisans of reunification with mainland China try to muster the votes of mainlanders and of middle class Taiwanese fearing the consequences of Taiwanese independence. On the other hand, advocates of

[46] This figure was culled from the *Economist*, 29 July 1995, 18. Taiwanese figures are much lower.
[47] *Free China Journal*, 22 September 1995, 2.
[48] *Ibid.*, 165.
[49] *China Post*, 27 February 1996, 16.

independence try to muster the support of Taiwanese whose ancestors came to the island centuries ago. The KMT has managed to appeal to all constituencies through a network of local factions, the achievements of the "Taiwanese economic miracle." However, pervasive problems of corruption of local elites associated with the ruling party, the anger of mainland China directed at the present government, and a slowing down of the economy have all eroded the popularity of the KMT over the years. While proponents of reunification seek a solution through a return to the status *quo ante*, supporters of independence want to move forward. The DPP remains short of a majority within all parliamentary organs and the NP has no chance of forming a government. However, the growing lack of party discipline within the KMT, caused by the dissatisfaction of non-mainstream members sympathetic to the NP, threatens to undermine the ruling party majority and pave the way for the constitution of a coalition government. As the next section documents, the Republic of Taiwan is thus faced in the near future with an erosion of its centre and the emergence of a widening gap between irreconcilable positions. That such an evolution is unfolding is clear when one examines the evolution of electoral politics over the last five years.

IV. The Impact of Taiwan's Two Nationalisms on Electoral Dynamics

In December 1991, elections were held for the National Assembly. The task of the National Assembly is to review the constitution and its most pressing mandate in 1992 was to define the powers of the President, redefine the role of the Control Yuan, determine the mechanism for the presidential election, and reform the mode of selection for the legislators.[50] Especially divisive for the KMT was the issue of presidential election, which pitted those, led by Lee Teng-hui, who favored direct popular elections, against those, led by Hau Po-ts'un, who preferred election through an electoral college. Until 1991, most delegates to the National Assembly were old politicians elected on the mainland in 1947, who have never since had to face the electorate. Numbering more than a thousand in the 1950s, the organ saw its membership constantly declining, due to "natural attrition." On December 31, 1991, the veteran parliamentarians of the First National Assembly stepped down, leaving the organ with only 80 members, which were directly elected in 1986.

Although the dominant theme of the election was not a choice between independence and reunification, it remained a competition between the two parties associated with those respective positions.[51] Among the novelties introduced during the electoral campaign were better coverage by the media and the stepped-up participation of scholars, either as aides or candidates themselves.[52] The election was a major disappointment for the DPP, who received only 24% of the popular support, compared with 27.3% in the 1989 legislative election.[53] Part of the DPP's poor showing can certainly be attributed to the party's decision during its October 1991 convention to advocate the formation of an independent Republic of Taiwan decided by plebiscite. This platform received fierce criticism from

[50] Occupational constituencies have been eliminated and mechanisms devised to help ensure more proportional representation. See Shao-chuan Leng and Cheng-yi Lin, "Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?" 810-9.

[51] "zhuanti: xuanzhan yiyingde celue [Special Report: Winning Strategies for the Electoral Battle]," *jiushi niandai yuekan* [The Nineties], December 1991, 26.

[52] Shi Jingqiu, "yichang renaode guodu xuanju [A Lively Election]," *jiushi niandai*, December 1991, 31-3.

[53] "ba ziji he bierende jiu weiba dou yiqi kandiao! [Get rid of those useless elderly politicians, ours as well as theirs!]" *xinxinwen* [The Journalist], 23-9 December 1991, 8-9; Chen Yuxin, "guomindang lantian fangCh'ing, minjindang ludi bianse [A rosy future for the KMT, but dark prospects for the DPP]," *xinxinwen*, 23-9 December 1991, 12-6.

mainland China's Yang Shangkun, who warned that "those who play with fire will be burned to ashes."[54] With the control of 318 seats in the National Assembly, the KMT was able to control the constitutional process and ignore the 75 DPP members.[55] The ruling party was all the more encouraged to do so because of the DPP's own views on constitutional change. Hence, in accordance with their goal of establishing a Republic of Taiwan, the independentists wished to abolish the National Assembly, as well as the Legislative, Control, and Examination Yuan, which are seen by them as the institutions of the Republic of China's "foreign rule."

In December 1992, the first non-supplemental elections -- without the participation of the senior parliamentarians elected in 1948 -- for the Legislative Yuan were held. Hitherto, this organ was a rubber-stamp institution that approved presidential decrees. But after the constitutional reforms enacted by the previously elected Second National Assembly, the Legislative Yuan was endowed with the power to propose, amend or reject legislation. The results were highly encouraging for the DPP and disconcerting for the KMT. The biggest vote-getters were candidates who fought money-politics such as Jaw Shau-kong and Wang Chien-shien. The DPP increased its share of the popular support and gained 31% of the vote.[56] Part of the DPP's success was attributed to its focus on social welfare, environmental issues and civil rights.[57] However, the DPP performance was problematic: the moderates of the *mei-li-tao* faction did rather poorly, with only 15 out of 28 candidates winning their seats. Meanwhile, 9 out of 10 of the more radical *hsin-ch'ao* faction candidates got elected.[58] These results suggested that the DPP was becoming more radical and unlikely to reach out in the future to moderate voters, whose support is essential if the opposition wants to be in power.

Meanwhile, the ruling party received its lowest level of popular support since 1969, with its nominees receiving only 53% of the vote.[59] The KMT defeat was especially severe in the city of Taipei, where the DPP score even surpassed the KMT's, and in Hsin-chu city, where the KMT gained only 38.7% of popular support.[60] The poor showing of the ruling party was attributed to bad campaign strategy, too much reliance on business, corruption, as well as internal squabbling.[61] Again, a closer look at intra-party politics revealed some disturbing trends. The candidates associated with the New KMT Alliance did better than those identified with the Mainstream faction, a fact that prompted Hau Po-ts'un to blame the President for the bad electoral performance of the KMT. It was in the aftermath of these acrimonious disputes that the New KMT Alliance seceded to form the NP. In sum, maximalists in both the DPP and the KMT did better than moderates.[62] Although the KMT still got 96 out of a total of 161 seats, the opposition came closer than ever to challenging the ruling party. The independentists were now in a position where they could defeat legislation proposed by the ruling majority if they could gather support from non-party politicians and KMT maverick politicians dissatisfied with the mainstream faction

[54] Shao-chuan Leng, and Cheng-yi Lin, "Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?" 826.

[55] Milton D. Yeh, "The Elections of the ROC's Second National Assembly," *Issues and Studies* 28, No. 1 (January 1992), 119-20.

[56] Jaushieh Joseph Wu, "The ROC Legislative Yuan Election of December 1992," *Issues and Studies* 29, No.1 (January 1993), 119-21.

[57] Shao-chuan Leng, and Cheng-yi Lin, "Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?" 822.

[58] Shi Jingqiu, "shuzi hui shuohua [Numbers Speak]," *jiushi niandai*, January 1993, 40-1.

[59] The KMT received 60.647% of the vote when accounting for those who ran under the banner of the KMT but were not nominated by the party. See Nan Fangshuo "xu xinliang yangmei suqi, li deng-hui choumei kulian [Hsu Hsin-liang Looks Elevated, Lee Teng-hui Looks Sad], *xinxinwen*, 20-6 December 1992, 21.

[60] *Ibid.*, 23.

[61] Shao-chuan Leng, and Cheng-yi Lin, "Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?" 823.

[62] Tang Yi, "li denghui, zhengsu haishi zhenghe? [President Lee Ponders: Purge or Consensus-building?]" *jiushi niandai*, January 1993, 37-9.

on specific policies.[63] Although an academic speculation at the time, this inter-party collaboration was to become reality three years later.

In December 1993, elections were held for county magistrates and mayors. The KMT downward slide continued. The ruling party failed for the first time to gain a majority and its share of the popular vote was only 47.47%. Conversely, the DPP established itself firmly as a credible opposition by gaining 41.03% of the vote. But despite its bad showing, the KMT managed to keep its majority rule throughout the island, gaining or maintaining control over 15 out of the 23 mayoral and county magistrate positions. The DPP managed to gain control of only six seats, since two independent candidates won seats previously held by the KMT.[64] One reason behind the relatively poor performance of the KMT was the creation of the NP, which gained a modest 3.06% of the vote, as well as the strong showing of independent candidates, who gained 8.41% of the vote from within traditional KMT constituencies.[65] The DPP failure to gain more seats was due to the party's greater popularity in the southern part of the island, where its source of support was more concentrated.

However, the KMT fortune changed dramatically a few months later, during the elections for county and city council speakers and vice-speakers. The ruling party then won all speakers positions and lost only four seats to independents in vice-speakers elections held in 23 cities and counties.[66] This success was however tarnished by then Justice Minister Ma Ying-jeou's revelation that more than a third of the 884 councilors elected in January 1994 were involved in vote-buying and intimidation, and that 62 of them had criminal records or connections with the underworld.[67] Nonetheless, the KMT mainstream faction could cheer the finding that its policy on national identity remained compatible with the sentiments of the majority. In polls conducted from November 1988 to May 1993, a maximum of 23.7% approved of independence and between 49 and 64.7% disapproved.[68]

In December 1994, elections were held for the provincial assembly and the cities of Taipei and Kaohsiung. This consultation marked another landmark in the Taiwanese democratic process because previously the governor of the province and the mayor were appointed by the President. While the KMT kept control of the provincial assembly and the city of Kaohsiung, it lost the city of Taipei to the DPP. For many observers, these results were heralded as the end of one-party politics, and the emergence of a three-party system.[69] The candidate for the Taiwanese independentist party, Ch'en Shui-pien, won with 43% of the vote, while the KMT candidate Huang Ta-chou suffered a humiliating set-back with only 25.8% of the vote, trailing behind the NP candidate, Jaw Shau-kang, who was supported by 30% of the electorate. It is widely acknowledged that the poor showing of the KMT in Taipei was due to the poor performance of Huang Ta-chou as mayor and the disproportionate importance of mainlanders and highly-educated voters in the capital. The ruling party was rather satisfied with the showing province-wide: apart from i-lan county, every constituency of the Taiwan provincial assembly was won by the KMT and

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[63] Candidates from the "third force," which included non-party candidates, received only 1.54 % of the vote. However, when one includes in these figures candidates running under the banner of one party but without its endorsement, the figure rises to 6.3%. See *Ibid.*, 22; *China Post*, 21 December 1992, 16.

[64] Chen I-hsin, and Wu Wen-cheng, "Good and Bad Election News," *Free China Review* , March 1994, 10-11.

[65] Nan Fangshuo "li denghui dangzhu le biantian zhekuai gupai [Li Teng-hui Prevents the Return to Rule of the Reactionaries]," *xinxinwen* , 28 November-5 December 1993, 14-20; "cong xuanju jieguo kan weilai zhengju [Looking at the Incoming Political Situation from the Perspective of the Election Results]," *jiushi niandai,* December 1993, 40-3.

[66] *China Post*, 12 March 1994, 2.

[67] *China Post*, 12 March 1994, 2; *China News*, 14 March 1994, 4.

[68] Shao-chuan Leng, and Cheng-yi Lin, "Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?" 825-6.

[69] Nan Fangshuo, "meige zhengdang dou you liyou kai xiangbin qinggong [Each Party is Entitled to Celebrate]," *xinxinwen*, 4-10 December 1994, 14; Sima Wenwu, "sange zhengdang de qizhi xianmingde cha zai ditushang [All three parties have received support]," *Ibid.*, 15; Zhou Tianrui, "mei you yige zhengdag keyi zai zhuzai minyi [From now on, no party can impose its will on the people]," *Ibid.*, 5.

governor James Soong Chu-yu received 56.2% of the popular mandate.[70] This was good news for President Lee Teng-hui, who can rely on the governor to side with him against the non-mainstream faction. The DPP's modest setback came in the midst of elections perceived by outside observers as fair and free. The media, especially cable TV (called the "Fourth Channel" in Taiwan), played a bigger role than ever before in informing the population about opposition candidates.[71] The decline in popular support for the DPP was generally attributed to the Qiandao Lake incident in mainland China. Although this incident, in which 24 Taiwanese tourists were killed in a boat fire, was not related to the independence issue per se, the attitude of the mainland authorities in handling the whole affair left Taiwanese with a bad impression.[72]

In December 1995 the second non-supplementary elections for the Legislative Yuan were held. This time the opposition had more opportunity to compensate for KMT ownership of the three national TV networks: 63% of the households had access to cable TV, compared to only 15% in 1991.[73] The campaigns of the DPP and the NP were by then more thoroughly reported by the recently established cable networks. The KMT got only 46.06% of the popular vote and saw its majority reduced to three seats. Among the causes of this setback the extent of corruption clearly stood out. Symptomatic of the extent of the problem was the election of ten KMT politicians previously suspected of bribery.[74] The DPP won 54 seats, which was slightly less than expected.[75] These results were especially disappointing because among the 16 defeated incumbents, half were DPP candidates, while only six belonged to the KMT.[76] The campaign of intimidation launched by mainland China in neighbouring Fujian province undoubtedly dampened the enthusiasm of those voters sympathetic to the anti-KMT stance of the DPP, but wavering on the issue of separatism.

Along with the two major parties' setbacks came the surprising performance of the NP, which trebled its representation to 21 seats and saw its popular support jump to 12.95% of the vote.[77] The NP emerged clearly as the winner, since it undisputably achieved status as third party. Taiwanese were now faced with the prospect of "*san tang pu kuo pan* (a parliament with three parties but no governing majority)" envisioned by pre-election analyses.[78] During the electoral campaign, speculations about a minority government were rife and the prospect of a hung parliament had already depressed stock prices.[79] Although the KMT did win the election, the results were uncomfortably close to *san tang pu kuo pan*. All that the leaders of the DPP and NP needed to achieve that goal was to lure four independent candidates into siding with them, as well as engineer the defection of only two KMT members. The selection of the Assembly speaker, one month after the election, concluded after two rounds of voting and decided by a simple majority of only one voice, was a sign of things to come. This event showed that the loyalty of many KMT members is questionable and that the mainstream faction of the party will have difficulty generating enough support for its policies in the Legislative Assembly. Even if the opposition is

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[70] Nan Fangshuo, "guomindang keyi fangxin, minjindang yi you jihui, xindang ye anwen zhuolu [The KMT can Relax, the DPP has a Chance to Prove its Worth, the NP can Look Forward with Confidence]," *Ibid.*, 18-26.

[71] Zhang Qikai, "yichangju gaodu keguanxingde xite xuanju [An Exceptional and Exciting Election]," *Jiushi Niandai*, December 1994, 44-6.

[72] *China News Analysis* 1524, 15 December 1994, 4-5.

[73] Teng Shufen, (w. transl. by Jonathan Bernard), "you xian xinwen, xuanju fa gaoshao [Cable News, Election Fever], *guanghua* [Sinorama], November 1995, 41.

[74] Zhuang Shenghong, "shiwei xinke liwei toushang longzhazhe shexian huixian yinying [Ten New Members of the Legislative Assembly Enter Into their Function Tarnished by Suspicion of Bribe-taking.], *xinxinwen*, 3-9 December 1995, 103-4.

[75] *China Post*, 3 December 1995, 1.

[76] Chen Jian, "sandang buguoban zheju zhouhua meitian dou jiang zai yichang changqi ["No Party with a Majority," a Curse Which we are Likely to Hear Over and Over Again]," *xinxinwen*, 3-9 December 1995, 14-21.

[77] *ziyou shibao*, 3 December 1995, 1.

[78] *China Post*, 30 October 1995, 20.

[79] *China Post*, 4 November 1995, 1.

not united -- although the DPP, the NP and non-mainstream KMT members can collaborate on specific policies -- the constitution of a viable governing majority at the centre of the political spectrum promised to be difficult. And one of the weaknesses of the present constitution of the Republic of China is that there exists no provisions if the President cannot muster a majority to support him in the Legislative Assembly. But the likelihood of a KMT break-up and the possibility of a split within the DPP suggest a way out of this quandary: a centrist alliance between the KMT mainstream faction and the DPP Formosa faction.[80] But such a solution, of course, may create even more problems: it would then be almost impossible to convince mainland China that such a government is not advocating Taiwanese independence.

The results of the presidential election, conducted under renewed threats from mainland China, unexpectedly clarified the situation. The most dramatic outcome to emerge from the vote was the extent of the victory for the Lee Teng-hui and Lien Chan ticket, and the disastrous performance of the independentist candidate P'eng Ming-min. Before the election, the Lee-Lien team was expecting between 45 and 52% of popular support. But with 54% of the vote, Lee's landslide was read as a convincing plebiscite for his pragmatic policy. Conversely, the figure of 23% in favour of candidate P'eng Ming-min demonstrated that the ideal of independence he defended was less popular than the reformist agenda his party was upholding. Meanwhile, the combined support for the opponents of independence (whether covertly sought by President Lee, as they believe, or openly advocated by DPP members), barely managed to exceed the figures for P'eng Ming-min: the turnout for Lin Yang-kang and Ch'en Lian, taken together, did not exceed 25% of the ballot cast.

It is clear that many proponents of independence decided to transfer their support for the DPP to the candidate Lee Teng-hui in the face of intimidation from mainland China. Their goal was to ensure that the advocates of reunification would stand no chance of defeating President Lee. It is however unclear to what extent supporters of candidates Lin and Ch'en were also in favour of reunification. As indicated before, the proportion of the ballot cast for both candidates exceeded the figures for those who support reunification.

The extent of the KMT mainstream candidates victory for the presidential election has led to a reordering of the political landscape in the ensuing months. The dismal performance of the DPP candidate vindicated the opinion of the moderates within the party who argued that the independence platform was a hindrance to further growth. After the vote, the organization was left with a rather unpalatable choice: give up on the issue that provided it with its *raison d'être*, or continue to push for an ideal, dooming the party to long-lasting marginalization. In October 1996, the crisis came to a head when the most radical pro-independentist members of the DPP left the party and established a new group, the Nation-building Party. Freed from the constraint of placating the Taiwanese nationalists, the DPP could contemplate the possibility of a centrist alliance with the KMT mainstream faction.

The candidates upholding the reunification thesis have had a very different fortune. Lin Yang-kang and Hau Po-t'sun remained determined to challenge the ruling expelling them from the KMT and have set up foundations to prepare an eventual political comeback. Ch'en Lian has announced after his defeat his intention to quit politics while his running mate Wang Ch'ing-feng continued to remain active as a social activist. The poor showing of the Lin-Hau ticket, which benefited from the logistical support of the New Party, suggest the option of "Chinese nationalism," is even less popular than "Taiwanese nationalism."

President Lee's popular election does not end the growing uncertainty over Taiwan's future. In the coming future, it is likely that the electorate will continue to distance itself from the mainstream team supporting the President. In addition, popular support for the ruling party is likely to diminish further unless the demographic characteristics of its constituency change. As a hegemonic party in the countryside, the KMT can perform well only as long as the majority of the population are rural dwellers. However, Taiwan is now fast moving beyond the stage of industrialization and emerging as a competitive post-industrial society. Although the present leadership of the KMT reflects this sociological transformation (many of the present government members received their Ph.D. abroad, for example), it

[80] *Ibid.*, 15.

remains to be seen whether this will translate into electoral support. So far, urban dwellers and highly-educated Taiwanese are split between the DPP and the NP. The only consolation for the present government is the broad support its pragmatic foreign policy enjoys: Gallop polls conducted in the fall of 1995 indicated that 61% of the population approve of the status quo with mainland China, while 16% would prefer reunification and a mere 9% would rather choose independence.[81] Taken at face value, these figures should inspire confidence in President Lee Teng-hui: they suggest that a majority of the population approve of his policy of carefully cultivating the status quo.

V. Conclusion

The direct popular election for the Presidency of the Republic of China on Taiwan represents the culmination of a democratization process that has enormous resonance abroad. First of all, it proves that democracy with "Chinese characteristics" is possible and that democratic values can also be "Asian" values. It also offers an important insight for those concerned by the success of any transitions towards democracy. It is the acceptance among all political actors of the "loyal opposition" concept, more than the replacement of a ruling elite by another, that represents the benchmark of a successful transition towards democracy.

This is certainly the case for Taiwan. Within the Republic of China, the government and the opposition as well have accepted the desirability of tolerating every political opinion, no matter how much they are mutually irreconcilable in principle. This openness extends as far as accepting the advocacy of ideas whose implementation into policy threatens the future of the country by inciting hostile intervention from abroad. The present elites in the Republic of China figure that by navigating between the extremes of precipitated reunification with mainland China and independence, they represent the consensus of the majority and can thus remain in power. However, as recent elections results have showed, this strategy is insufficient over the long run and poses interesting problems. The KMT popularity is vanishing thanks to a combination of demographic factors as well as to growing concerns over a series of social problems that the party seems unable to tackle. But to succeed, any alternative to the KMT will have to adopt a similar foreign policy: a halfway house between Taiwanese nationalism, or Taiwanese sovereignty, and Chinese nationalism, or Chinese suzerainty. Neither partisans of independence in the DPP nor advocates of reunification within the NP offer for the moment that kind of compromise, to which a majority of the population aspires. In sum, transition towards democracy is complete with the election of a new president in Taiwan. Whatever limitations to this process emerge, they have nothing to do with any deficiency within the constitution of the Republic of China, or even less with any incompatibility between so-called "Asian values" and democratic aspirations. Constraints on freedom of choice for Chinese living in Taiwan depend on external factors over which they unfortunately have no control.

[81] *zhongguo shibao* [China Times], 6 November 1995, 4.

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