

# **The Enduring Influence of the Republic of China on Taiwan Today**

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Taiwan's society today has been shaped primarily by four streams of influence: the traditional China stream, the Japanese stream, the Republic of China stream, and the cosmopolitan stream. The traditional China stream gave the people of Taiwan their language and their basic culture and customs. After 1895 the Japanese stream flowed into Taiwan for 50 years, causing many significant modifications to its society and cutting the people of Taiwan off from the critical changes that occurred in Chinese mainland society during that period. In 1945 the Republic of China (ROC) took over Taiwan, bringing from the mainland its ideology, its educational system, its constitutional structure, its political and social institutions, and a governing elite, most of whom spoke a different dialect of Chinese from the people of Taiwan. The purpose of this article is to identify the principal elements of this ROC stream of influence. The cosmopolitan stream, representing primarily the influence of the West, flowed into all the other streams, to some extent influencing traditional China before the fall of the Qing dynasty, but much more powerfully influencing the ROC on the mainland and Japan. Since 1945 the cosmopolitan stream, at first largely American, has also poured into Taiwan, gaining momentum and diversity with each passing year.

What was the nature of the ROC that fled the mainland in 1949 to establish its capital on the island of Taiwan, a small offshore province of China? It was a one-party state, still claiming to be the legitimate government of all China and committed to the goal of recovering the mainland from its rival, the People's Republic of China (PRC), established in 1949. The ruling party, the Kuomintang (KMT), was organized along Leninist lines and followed the principle of democratic centralism. It was a highly centralized, hierarchical structure with the party chairman and the central standing committee at the top supervising the central committee, the provincial and local committees, and party cells averaging six members at the grass roots level.

The KMT monopolized power in the government, the military and the security services. The great majority of government officials were party members; thus party and government overlapped to a substantial extent. Moreover, the party controlled the schools and most of the media, as well as mass organizations such as trade unions, farmers' associations and chambers of commerce. The KMT was a large party; by 1988 it had 2.4 million members, about one-fifth of the adult population. It differed, however, from other Leninist parties in allowing a capitalist economic system and in subscribing to the principles of Sun Yat-sen, which

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envisaged a transformation from political tutelage by the party to a democratic system.<sup>1</sup>

The KMT had a strong military and security component because, from the time of its reorganization in 1924 by Sun Yat-sen as a Leninist party, it was continually engaged in warfare, with the Chinese Communist Party, with local warlords and with the Japanese. The title “Generalissimo” conferred on the party chairman, Chiang Kai-shek, highlighted the importance of his military responsibilities. His overriding mission at the time of his withdrawal to Taiwan was to defend it against an expected Chinese Communist invasion.

ROC influence is here defined as changes effected in Taiwan by individuals who arrived after 1945 from mainland China and the ideas, institutions and modes of behaviour they brought with them. As time passed, the influence of the newcomers, readily identified in the early years, became increasingly difficult to distinguish. The newcomers gradually merged with the local population and the more recent changes in Taiwan cannot be attributed to either group, but to both groups working together.

### *Preserving a Sovereign State in Taiwan*

The ROC's most immediate influence on Taiwan was to transform the island into the seat of a national government, still recognized by most of the world at that time as the legitimate government of China. A national government was superimposed over a provincial government, with jurisdiction over the same area plus a few small islands off the China coast. For the next two decades the ROC on Taiwan fought a losing battle to retain its seat in the United Nations. Despite the loss of that seat and the severance of diplomatic relations with all but 31 countries, the ROC on Taiwan has functioned in the world as a *de facto* sovereign state, today the 14th largest trading nation. It no longer claims jurisdiction over mainland China; its position is that China is divided, with a separate political entity governing each part. Taiwan under the ROC has survived and prospered in the world community. As an Australian analyst put it in a recent book: “There is an emerging international consensus on one China and one Taiwan. Taiwan is now viewed primarily for what it has become – a separate, independent sovereign entity of considerable importance to the Asia-Pacific community, and not least to China.”<sup>2</sup>

### *Political Ideology*

When the government of the ROC moved its capital to Taipei in 1949, it traced its origin to the establishment of the ROC on 1 January 1912 with Sun Yat-sen as its provisional president. The ROC subsequently

1. Hung-mao Tien, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1989) pp. 1–2, 66–72.

2. Gary Klintworth, *Australia's Taiwan Policy* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1993) p. 132.

endured many vicissitudes, contesting for the control of China with warlords, the Japanese and eventually the Chinese Communists, who drove the government of the ROC and its ruling party, the KMT, off the China mainland. The KMT adopted as its official ideology the teachings of its founder, Sun Yat-sen, embodied in the *Sanminzhuyi*, or Three Principles of the People, the principles of nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood.

Sun's ideology, while not followed by the KMT in every detail, had an important effect on political and economic development in Taiwan. Most important was his commitment to the establishment of a democratic system in China, following a period of "political tutelage," during which the people would be educated and prepared for democracy. Consequently, even though the government had decreed martial law and had suspended many provisions of the constitution before moving to Taiwan, the official ideology offered hope that the authoritarian system would be succeeded by a democracy. Critics of the political system, both outside and within the KMT, drew attention to the gap between the government's democratic rhetoric and reality, basing their criticisms on the KMT's own ideology. The ruling authorities had to justify their departures from democratic practices as wartime expedients. Everyone had to voice support for the principle that sooner or later Taiwan would have a genuinely democratic system, a sharp contrast with the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology of mainland China which projected the rule of the Chinese Communist Party in perpetuity.

Another important element in Sun's ideology was the stress on *min sheng*, or people's livelihood.<sup>3</sup> Many of his general propositions were followed in the ROC's economic policies, such as giving a high priority to economic modernization, recognizing the critical role of agriculture in producing the resources to support industrialization, carrying out land reform (reduction of rents, "land to the tiller") to increase agricultural production and improve the living conditions of farmers, and promoting foreign investment and participation in international trade.

Ideology provided a link between past and future. It evolved out of the revolution that overthrew the Qing dynasty, it undergirded the successful economic and political development on Taiwan, and it held out the promise to the people of Taiwan that reunification of Taiwan with mainland China under the Three Principles of the People would be possible once democracy and a free market system had emerged there.

References to Sun Yat-sen and the Three Principles of the People in presidential statements have declined substantially, however, since the

3. A. James Gregor, in his study *Ideology and Development: Sun Yat-sen and the Economic History of Taiwan* (Berkeley, CA: Center for Chinese Studies, 1981) traces the influence of Sun's thinking on Taiwan's economic development under the ROC. He feels that most studies of Taiwan's economic development have underestimated Sun's influence (pp. 2–5). See also Chen Cheng, *Land Reform in Taiwan* (Taiwan: China Publishing Company, 1961), pp. 10–17. General Chen Cheng, who as governor of Taiwan began the land reform in 1949 with reduction of land rents to 37.5% of annual crop yield, gives credit to Sun's ideas. While at the Whampoa Academy in the early 1920s, Chen had been leader of the Society for the Study of Sunyatsenism.

death of Chiang Ching-kuo. In his speeches Chiang frequently stressed the progress made in Taiwan based on the Three Principles of the People, contrasting it with what he viewed as the total failure of Communism in mainland China. In his will, written in January 1988 shortly before he died, he called on the people to complete the reunification of China under the Three Principles. Lee Teng-hui in his speeches refers only occasionally and rather perfunctorily to Sun Yat-sen and the Three Principles of the People, reflecting a decline in recent years in the attention paid to Sun's ideology.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Constitution*

When the national government moved to Taiwan in 1949 it brought with it the constitution of 1946 under which it had been formed. Following Sun Yat-sen's concept, the constitution provided for a government of five branches, or Yuan, the Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Examination and Control Yuans. The first three are roughly comparable to the three branches of the U.S. government; the Examination Yuan conducts civil service examinations and the Control Yuan investigates malfeasance by government officials.

Although many provisions of the constitution were suspended during "the period of bandit suppression" which lasted until 1991, the existence of the constitution and general acceptance of the principle of constitutional government made possible orderly change at critical points:

- After the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988, the vice-president, Lee Teng-hui, succeeded to the presidency without incident, as provided by the constitution.
- In 1991 the Council of Grand Justices, designated by the constitution to interpret it, decreed that members of the Legislative Yuan and the National Assembly, who had been elected on the mainland in 1947, would have to retire by the end of the year to clear the way for elections in Taiwan of new members for these bodies.
- In 1991 and 1992 the National Assembly amended the constitution to reflect changes in the government's situation and in public opinion since the adoption of the constitution in 1946. Amendments provided for changes in the size, terms of office and methods of election of the three national elective bodies and for the election of the president and vice-president by the people of Taiwan rather than the National Assembly.

4. Compare, for example, Chiang Ching-kuo's address to the fourth plenary session of the 11th KMT Central Committee, 1 December 1979 (*Chairman Chiang Ching-kuo's Opening Address to the KMT Plenum* (Taipei: Kwang Hwa Publishing Company, 1979)) and his address to the third plenary session of the 12th Central Committee, 29 March 1986 (*President Chiang Ching-kuo's Selected Addresses and Messages 1986* (Taipei: Government Information Office, June 1987) pp. 7–21) with Lee Teng-hui's report on the state of the nation to the National Assembly in January 1993 (*A Report on the State of the Nation* (Taipei: Government Information Office, March 1993)) and his speech to a KMT conference on 30 December 1994 (*Lee's Speech at KMT Year-end Confab*, Central News Agency, 9 January 1995).

Vigorous debate took place concerning the changes needed in the constitution after the abrogation of martial law and the repeal of the temporary provisions giving emergency powers to the president. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) favoured drawing up a new constitution, but the KMT wanted to retain the existing one in order to demonstrate the continuity of the ROC and to bolster its legitimacy, amending the constitution only as required by the changed circumstances. The DPP strongly urged popular election of the president and was joined by enough KMT members to overcome opponents within the KMT who would have preferred the original method of election by the National Assembly. The constitution provided a stable framework for Taiwan's transition from one-party rule to a multi-party system.

### *Educated, Experienced Elite*

Among the two million or so exiles from the China mainland, the proportion of educated, skilled, experienced persons was exceptionally large for a developing country with a per capita GNP of less than \$200. They included civilian and military officials, scientists, engineers, lawyers, teachers, doctors, businessmen and skilled and semi-skilled workers. A sizeable number had advanced degrees from foreign universities. This ruling mainlander elite made important contributions to Taiwan's development.

### *Repression of Dissent*

Not all the contributions of the ROC to Taiwan were benign. The brutal suppression of Taiwanese opposition in 1947 decimated the leadership of the Taiwanese and created deep and lasting animosity among them towards the KMT.<sup>5</sup> For several decades the large and elaborate security system of the ROC on Taiwan maintained firm control over the press, the universities and social organizations. No opposition parties were permitted and many individuals were gaoled on charges of pro-Communism or advocating Taiwan independence.

Much has changed in recent years, however. Beginning in 1987 martial law was lifted, opposition parties were legalized, controls on the press were lifted, sedition laws were abrogated or relaxed, and the Taiwan Garrison Command was abolished. The KMT, now mostly led by native Taiwanese, has begun to make amends for the 1947 killings, authorizing a detailed report on what took place, expressing regret and supporting payments to the families of victims. These improvements in the political climate were not, of course, voluntary acts of liberalization by the ruling KMT. Courageous and persistent opposition leaders fought vigorously for change, willing to suffer gaol terms for their beliefs. Gradually, pressure

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

from without and from moderates within the KMT itself brought about the elimination of most oppressive laws and behaviour.<sup>6</sup>

### *Elections*

Beginning in 1951 the ROC on Taiwan instituted a system of local elections in which the provincial assembly, city mayors, county magistrates, and city and county councils were elected by popular vote. This system provided a much greater degree of popular participation than the carefully restricted local elections introduced by the Japanese in 1935.<sup>7</sup> Although the government banned the formation of opposition parties, it allowed individuals to run as independent candidates against KMT candidates. Some independent candidates defeated the official nominees, despite the KMT's great advantage in organization and financing.

These local elections laid the foundation for the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, especially after 1969 when they were supplemented at the national level by elections to seats added to the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan. During this period of more than 30 years, voters, the KMT and the independents gained invaluable experience in the conduct of elections. Taiwanese recruited by the KMT as candidates for local positions served as mayors and magistrates and gradually moved up in the government and party hierarchies. In the late 1970s the independents began to co-ordinate their political activities, coalescing into a shadow political party known as *dangwai* (outside the party) that became the core of the DPP, founded in 1986.

Elections provided the main avenue for the DPP to become the principal opposition party. In 1991 it won 20 per cent of the contested seats in the National Assembly and in 1992 it won 31 per cent of the contested seats in the Legislative Yuan.<sup>8</sup> In the 1994 election of the governor of Taiwan and the mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung, the DPP candidate became the mayor of Taipei.

In the December 1995 Legislative Yuan election, the KMT lost ground, dropping from 96 to 85 seats, a bare majority of three. The DPP made a small gain, from 50 to 54 seats, but the big winner was the New Party, which tripled its seats from seven to 21. The New Party split off from the KMT in 1993 because of differences with Chairman Lee Teng-hui over his leadership methods and his policy towards mainland China. Thus the electoral system has produced two substantial opposition parties challenging KMT rule. The KMT now experiences difficulties in getting its way in the Legislative Yuan, as demonstrated in the election of the speaker on 1 February 1996. The KMT candidate won over DPP chairman Shih

6. Tun-jen Cheng and Stephan Haggard, "Regime transformation in Taiwan," in Cheng and Haggard, *Political Change in Taiwan* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991) pp. 1–27; Hung-mao Tien, "Transformation of an authoritarian party state," in *ibid.* pp. 33–53.

7. George Kerr, *Formosa: Licensed Revolution and the Home Rule Movement 1895–1945* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1974) pp. 170–71.

8. John Copper, *Taiwan's 1991 and 1992 Non-supplemental Elections* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994) pp. 35, 58.



Ming-te by only a single vote, because DPP legislators were joined by the New Party and by several independents and KMT defectors.

The first popular election of the president on 23 March 1996 brought about a further split of the KMT. Two KMT vice-presidents, Lin Yang-kang, a long-time Taiwanese rival of Lee Teng-hui, and Hau Pei-tsun, a mainlander who served as minister of defence and later as premier after a career in the military, announced their intention to run against Lee Teng-hui and his vice-presidential running mate, Lien Chan. The New Party, which had benefited from Lin and Hau's campaigning for their Legislative Yuan candidates, withdrew their own presidential candidate and threw their support to Lin and Hau. Another KMT defector, Control Yuan president Chen Lu-an, also entered the race. Thus Lee was confronted by two sets of opponents from former KMT colleagues as well as by the DPP candidate, Peng Min-ming.

The presidential election marked a climax in the transformation envisaged by Sun Yat-sen, from an authoritarian system under the sole tutelage of the KMT into a fully democratic system with opposition parties vigorously contesting for power. Some 76 per cent of those eligible turned out to vote. President Lee Teng-hui won re-election with an impressive 54 per cent majority. His closest rival, Peng Min-ming of the DPP, received only 21 per cent of the vote and the two independents, Lin Yang-kang (15 per cent) and Chen Lu-an (10 per cent), were far behind.

Thus the ROC on Taiwan, by introducing a system of elections in 1951, set the stage for the eventual emergence of two opposition parties. Growing pressure from opposition figures, from external forces and from within the KMT itself forced the ruling party to make the concessions that brought about today's democratic system. Although the opposition charges, with some justice, that the electoral playing field is still not level and that the KMT has an unfair advantage, a democratic electoral system seems firmly established in Taiwan. The KMT has acquiesced in political reforms that may eventually threaten its own ruling position.

### *Leadership*

During the past 50 years the KMT has had three leaders, Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo, and President Lee Teng-hui, who has served as chairman of the party since 1988. The two Chiangs had a "strong-man" style of leadership in which they made all the high-level personnel appointments and major policy decisions. While their rule had harsh and repressive features, as noted above, they imparted to Taiwan a degree of political stability exceptional among developing countries. They presided over Taiwan's remarkable economic growth and the social change that accompanied it. Much of this economic progress can be attributed to the industriousness and skill of Taiwan's farmers, workers and entrepreneurs and to the recommendations of a group of talented senior technocrats, but there was often vigorous debate over which course of action to follow. Ultimate responsibility for appointing the technocrats and for making the final policy decisions on their recommendations lay

with the two Chiangs. Thus Taiwan's rapid economic progress and the rising standard of living of its people can be credited in some measure to their leadership.

Chiang Kai-shek never abandoned his determination to recover the mainland. This commitment dictated his refusal to give up the offshore islands. It also affected the size and structure of the armed forces, the educational system and economic policies. Had he not been so dedicated to the impossible goal of preserving the position of the ROC on Taiwan as the only legitimate government of China, he might have been able in the late 1950s, with U.S. support, to retain a seat for Taiwan in the UN General Assembly. By the time that Chiang Ching-kuo had assumed power in the 1970s, although mainland recovery remained a rhetorical goal, he had to concern himself with preserving the momentum of Taiwan's economic growth in the face of a weakening diplomatic position that culminated in 1979 in the severance of diplomatic relations with the ROC by the United States.

### *Bulwark Against Chinese Communist Takeover*

A fundamental contribution of the ROC on Taiwan was to prevent the conquest of Taiwan by the Chinese Communist Party. Withdrawing with some 800,000 troops and the nation's gold reserve, Chiang Kai-shek prepared for a last-ditch struggle to defend Taiwan against invasion by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), planned for 1950. He ferreted out Communist spies and reorganized the military forces. Whether his demoralized and poorly equipped army and airforce could have thrown back a determined PLA assault is questionable, but American intervention in June 1950 made invasion impossible. Thereafter, with advice from the United States and large amounts of military aid, the defences of Taiwan and the offshore islands were greatly strengthened.

Acquiring American support, through military and economic aid and a mutual security treaty, was the greatest contribution of the Chiang Kai-shek administration to the security of Taiwan. Chiang and his senior civil and military officials became skilled at exploiting American determination to contain the Sino-Soviet bloc, thereby maximizing benefits for Taiwan, which the U.S. government came to view as an indispensable link in the chain of containment.<sup>9</sup> Personal links between the United States and ROC militaries forged during the Second World War facilitated the modernization of ROC armed forces during the 1950s through a large military aid programme, administered by an American military advisory group of over 2,000 officers and men. Thousands of ROC military personnel went to the United States for training.

On the mainland severe strains had developed between the United States and ROC militaries, primarily because of differences over how

9. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945–1992* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), ch. 3.



Chinese forces should be used in the conflict with Japan.<sup>10</sup> By the end of the subsequent civil war, the U.S. military had become thoroughly disillusioned with Chiang Kai-shek's military leadership,<sup>11</sup> but Taiwan offered an opportunity for a fresh start. Sino-U.S. differences arose there, too, because of American unwillingness to support a force equipped and trained to recover the mainland.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the willingness of the Chinese military and of Chiang himself to avoid the mistakes made on the mainland made possible close collaboration between the Chinese military and their American advisers, producing by the mid-1960s a modernized force that would give a good account of itself in a clash with the PLA, as demonstrated in the battle for Jinmen and Matzu in 1958.<sup>13</sup>

Military officers from the mainland made an indispensable contribution to the building of a modernized military deterrent in Taiwan. After the introduction of conscription in the late 1950s, the majority of the rank and file were young Taiwanese, serving two or three years, but for several decades mainlanders formed the bulk of the senior officer corps.

Close personal connections between ROC officials and Americans, especially members of Congress, engendered friendly feelings towards Taiwan and prompted concern for its fate after the abrogation of the mutual security treaty in 1979. In drawing up the Taiwan Relations Act, members of Congress added to the State Department draft strong language expressing American concern with the security of Taiwan and committing the U.S. government to continue to supply defensive arms.<sup>14</sup> Thus the possibility of American intervention has continued to serve as a deterrent to the use of force against Taiwan by the PRC.

The two Chiangs not only relied on American support to prevent a Communist takeover, but also used their control of the educational system and the propaganda apparatus to cultivate pervasive anti-Communist attitudes among the people of Taiwan. A principal task of the security system, including the general political department of the armed forces, was to prevent the infiltration of Communist agents and ideas from the mainland. Both Chiangs adamantly rejected negotiations with the Chinese Communists, with whom they had had bad experiences in the past and which would have exposed them to the suspicion among the people of Taiwan, especially the native Taiwanese, that they were preparing to sell them out.

10. Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1970); Claire Chennault, *The Way of a Fighter* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1949).

11. Lyman P. Van Slyke (ed.), *The China White Paper, August 1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967).

12. Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, pp. 62–72.

13. Ralph N. Clough, *Island China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 17–18, 102–106.

14. Lester Wolff and David Simon (eds.), *Legislative History of the Taiwan Relations Act* (Jamaica, NY: American Association for Chinese Studies, 1982).

*Success in Economic Development*

Taiwan's rapid economic development and its relatively equitable income distribution have been widely acclaimed. Scholars debate the extent to which this success should be attributed to government intervention in the market or to the workings of an untrammelled free enterprise system.<sup>15</sup> As indicated in the section above on leadership, much of Taiwan's economic success must be attributed to the intelligence and industriousness of its people: workers, farmers and businessmen. Nevertheless, government bureaucrats, mostly from mainland China in the early years, provided the vision, planning and execution of policies that made possible rapid economic growth. Well-timed provision of infrastructure, removal of obstacles to progress and creation of incentives all served to stimulate the process.

The decision made in 1959 by mainlander technocrats, after vigorous debate and with the approval of Chen Cheng and Chiang Kai-shek, to shift from import substitution to export promotion had a decisive impact on the shape of Taiwan's economy and the pace of its economic growth. The long-term effects of that decision can be seen in Taiwan's economy today. The timing of the decision was excellent. World trade was expanding and the U.S. market, in particular, readily absorbed Taiwan's rising exports. Rapid expansion of Taiwan's economy made possible the phasing out of American economic aid in 1965.

Taiwan's export-oriented trade policy has made it today the 14th largest trading nation in the world and the seventh largest trading partner of the United States. It has close to \$100 billion in foreign exchange reserves. Investments in mainland China by Taiwan's experienced manufacturers and exporters have helped the PRC to increase rapidly its production and exports. The growing economic bonds between Taiwan and mainland China have been the most important factor in the reduction of tension in the Taiwan Strait.

Beijing's harsh response to Lee Teng-hui's visit to Cornell in June 1995 and its effort to intimidate the people of Taiwan by holding military exercises during the presidential campaign caused some decline in the rate of growth of trade and investment on the China mainland by Taiwan's entrepreneurs, but did not halt or reverse the process. Immediately after the election, leaders on both sides of the Strait indicated a desire to resume a dialogue. The complementary nature of the two economies exerts strong pressures for greater economic co-operation and a reinstituted dialogue would encourage such a trend. Today Taiwan is in the process of drawing on its economic capability and its connections with mainland China to turn the island into a regional operations centre for transnational corporations.

15. Edwin A. Winkler and Susan Greenhalgh (eds.), *Contending Approaches to the Political Economy of Taiwan* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1988); Robert Wade, *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

*Identification with the China Mainland*

The ROC had a long history on the China mainland and for a while, after its removal to Taiwan, maintained the hope among mainlanders that it would recover the mainland from the Chinese Communists. Through the schools the government sought to inculcate an attachment to the mainland among the rising generation. Children were taught that all the people of Taiwan were descendants of the Yellow Emperor. They learned the history and geography of China; Taiwan's history and geography were slighted. Courses were taught in Mandarin, the national language; the principal local dialect, Minnanhua, was not taught in schools.<sup>16</sup>

Sentimental attachment to the mainland led to Chiang Ching-kuo's decision to allow travel there, originally prompted by the demands of aging servicemen to visit relatives in the homeland before they died. Native Taiwanese soon followed, some of them to visit their ancestral villages, others to do business in Fujian. The ability to speak Mandarin, acquired in school in Taiwan, facilitated trade and investment by Taiwan's entrepreneurs in more distant parts of China.

Official emphasis on Taiwan's attachment to the China mainland and neglect of Taiwan's own history, language and culture had a counter-productive effect on many Taiwanese, however, given the animosity toward mainlanders that stemmed from the 1947 killings. During the past few years political liberalization and the Taiwanization of the KMT and the government have resulted in a widening use of Minnanhua and greater emphasis on Taiwan's history and culture.<sup>17</sup> A shift has occurred from stressing Taiwan's identification with the mainland to a stress on the distinctiveness of Taiwan.

These two strands in recent developments in Taiwan – identification with the China mainland and emphasis on Taiwan's distinctiveness – have been reflected in the official policies of the ROC on Taiwan. On the one hand, the government encourages the expansion of trade and investment on the mainland and cultural interchange across the Taiwan Strait, and asserts a long-term goal of unification with the China mainland. On the other hand, it pursues "pragmatic diplomacy" in an effort to gain for Taiwan greater international respect and influence as a political entity separate from the PRC.

*An Institutionalized Political Party*

When the ROC moved its capital to Taipei in 1949, the KMT had been the ruling party in China for more than 20 years and had become highly institutionalized. The nature of the KMT's contribution to Taiwan is

16. Alan M. Wachman, "Competing identities in Taiwan," in Murray A. Rubenstein (ed.), *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994) pp. 40–41.

17. Joseph Bosco, "The emergence of a Taiwanese popular culture," in Rubenstein, *The Other Taiwan*, pp. 392–403.

controversial. Some would stress the beneficial aspects of authoritarian, one-party rule, such as providing a political stability unusual among developing countries, a solid base on which economic development could prosper. South Korea rivalled Taiwan in rapid economic growth, but Taiwan was spared the military coups and political turmoil that afflicted that country. South Korea had a multi-party system but little true democracy. Its political parties lacked the KMT's institutionalization; when a party leader was deposed or assassinated, his party disintegrated. The KMT, however, has survived three changes of leadership. The party has also been lauded for having permitted the peaceful transition from authoritarianism to democracy.

Critics of the KMT point to the repressive nature of the one-party authoritarian system discussed above. Some, especially those who spent years in gaol on political charges, would assert that the benefits of stability provided by an institutionalized political party are outweighed by its repressive nature. In recent years, however, political reform has greatly weakened the KMT's former domination of Taiwan's society. It still has many advantages over the DPP in organization and funding, but some of its leading members left to form the New Party and the rest have split into factions for and against Lee Teng-hui.

### *Education and Chinese Culture*

Under Japanese governance the local people had little access to education beyond primary school. In 1937, while more than 500,000 children attended primary school, only 4,117 Taiwanese were studying in higher institutions. In 1939, of the 283 undergraduate students registered at Taihoku Imperial University, only 90 were Taiwanese.<sup>18</sup> The arrival of the ROC produced an explosion in the number of schools and students, as shown in Table 1.

A significant number of the mainlander elite arriving in Taiwan had received advanced degrees in the United States. Many of their children sought higher education in the United States, beginning in the 1950s. Later the children of Taiwanese also began going in large numbers. At first, the great majority of students remained in the United States after receiving their degrees, but in recent years increasing numbers have been returning to Taiwan to take advantage of the job opportunities and rising standard of living on the island.

For 50 years the people of Taiwan had been cut off from the mainstream of Chinese culture and pressured to learn the Japanese language and culture. Among the mainlanders who arrived in Taiwan after 1945 were a considerable number of intellectuals, including writers, historians, archaeologists, painters, calligraphers, Chinese opera performers and other devotees of traditional Chinese culture who began to practise their skills in Taiwan. In addition, the ROC shipped to Taiwan 3,000 boxes

18. Kerr, *Formosa*, pp. 177, 179.

Table 1: The Effect of the ROC on Taiwanese Education

	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Students</i>
<i>Primary education</i>		
1952–53	1,251	1,003,304
1993–94	2,501	2,104,713
<i>Secondary education</i>		
1952–53	214	139,388
1993–94	1,102	2,048,707
<i>Higher education</i>		
1952–53	8	10,037
1993–94	125	575,391

*Source:*

*Taiwan Statistical Data Book, 1994* (Taipei: Council for Economic Planning and Development, June 1994) pp. 260, 263.

containing the cream of Chinese art from the Palace Museum in Beijing.<sup>19</sup> In 1965 a National Palace Museum was opened on the outskirts of Taipei where many of these priceless objects were placed on display. The collection not only attracted streams of tourists and local viewers but became a centre to which specialists in Chinese art from various parts of the world came to study.

By opening travel to mainland China in 1987 the ROC on Taiwan re-established links between practitioners of Chinese culture in Taiwan and their counterparts on the mainland, links that had been severed during the Japanese occupation and for several decades of KMT rule on Taiwan. Thus the traditional Chinese stream of influence upon the people of Taiwan, to the extent that it still existed on the mainland, flowed again on to the island. Specialists in traditional Chinese medicine lectured in Taiwan and people from Taiwan went to schools of Chinese medicine on the mainland for training. Beijing opera troupes performed in Taiwan and artists and musicians from both sides of the Strait visited the other side.

Not even the political strain following the PRC's missile-firing military exercises in the summer of 1995 halted the cultural exchange. For example, a group of private collectors of Chinese art in Taiwan sent 136 of their most precious possessions to be exhibited at the Palace Museum in Beijing during September and October 1995. The month-long exhibit attracted 500,000 visitors, including Politburo member Qiao Shi.<sup>20</sup> In December 1995 a delegation of eleven presidents of fine arts associations on the mainland made a nine-day visit to Taiwan and in January 1996, 43 university presidents from the China mainland and Taiwan institutions

19. Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, p. 84.

20. *China Times Magazine* (U.S. edition), 3–9 December 1995, pp. 40–44.

met in Taiwan to exchange views on the development of higher education on both sides of the Strait.<sup>21</sup>

Folk religion, which had been suppressed both by the Chinese Communists and by the KMT, has flourished on the mainland and in Taiwan with the relaxation of official controls. It has developed into another link across the Strait, as thousands of worshippers of Mazu, the goddess of seafarers and one of the principal deities of Taiwan, have made the pilgrimage to Putian *xian* in Fujian, Mazu's birthplace. The KMT, initially hostile to local folk religions, reversed itself in later years as KMT politicians began to use religious organizations and ceremonies to build popular support. In 1980 Chiang Ching-kuo even presented an image of Mazu to her principal temple in Taiwan at Peikang.<sup>22</sup>

### *Continuity and Change Under Lee Teng-hui*

The pace of change in Taiwan has accelerated since Lee Teng-hui became the paramount leader. He is a very different type of leader from the two Chiangs. He was born in Taiwan and educated in Japan and the United States. He worked his way up to a leading position in the KMT, serving as minister of state, mayor of Taipei and governor of Taiwan, and in 1984 was selected by Chiang Ching-kuo as his vice-president. Lee has presided over a complex and difficult transition from the authoritarian system under the Chiangs to a democratic system. Of course, Chiang Ching-kuo gave the initial impetus to that transition when he approved the abolition of martial law and the formation of opposition political parties. Whether Lee would have had the stature and authority to overcome the resistance among Chinese conservatives to these decisions is doubtful. But once the transition had been launched, Lee demonstrated notable political skill in carrying it through.

Another radical policy change by Chiang Ching-kuo, bequeathed to Lee to follow up, was his decision in late 1987 to legalize travel from Taiwan to mainland China. This also would have been difficult for Lee to initiate. Two primary policies of the Lee administration have been the management of cross-Strait interaction and the effort to strengthen the ROC's international position through "pragmatic diplomacy." Over the past eight years cross-Strait trade, investment, travel and many other forms of interaction have expanded rapidly, encouraged by both the Beijing and Taipei governments. In the international arena, however, the hard-won gains of the ROC on Taiwan have been fought at every step by the PRC. Judging by public opinion polls, the public has approved in general of Lee's leadership in the transition to democracy, in managing cross-Strait relations and in promoting Taiwan's international position.

The influence of the ROC on Taiwan through its ideology, its constitution and its ruling party has been discussed above, but some additional

21. *Beijing Review*, 22–28 January 1996, p. 29; *China Post*, 18 January 1996.

22. Joseph Bosco, "The emergence of Taiwanese popular culture," in Rubenstein, *The Other Taiwan*, pp. 396–97.



comments will help to illustrate the impact of continuity and of change under the Lee administration.

*Ideology.* The Three Principles of the People, which provided the ideological basis for Taiwan's rapid economic growth and its transition to a democratic system, do not exert an important influence on the Lee administration. Its policies are pragmatic, influenced much more by the pressures of domestic politics and by the demands of the world economy than by such lingering ideological concepts. Anti-Communism, however, remains a strong ideological compulsion because of the threat to Taiwan's security posed by the PRC, the principal remaining Communist state. The Lee administration seeks to align itself with what it sees as a world-wide trend towards free market economies and democratic political systems. Many in Taiwan embrace the hope that the weakening of Communist ideology in the mainland, which has already produced a pronounced shift toward a free market system, will eventually permit the rise of a democratic system there. Lee has declared that when that happens, the unification of Taiwan with mainland China will be possible.

*The constitution.* The 1946 constitution continues to underpin the Lee administration's claim to legitimacy and to prescribe the basic structure of the government. Lee's chief constitutional action was the abrogation of the temporary provisions that suspended many articles of the constitution and gave extraordinary extra-constitutional powers to presidents Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo. In that respect Lee has restored the effectiveness of the constitution, giving substance to Taiwan's claim to be a constitutional democracy. The most important amendment of the constitution, as mentioned above, was the provision for popular election of the president.

*The KMT.* Although the KMT remains the ruling party, it has changed radically under Lee Teng-hui. The influence of the native Taiwanese within the party increased to the point where some of the leading mainlanders felt marginalized. Some withdrew to form the New Party in 1993; others, such as Hau Pei-tsun, remained within the KMT but rejected Lee's leadership. Hau and Lin Yang-kang were expelled from the KMT for supporting New Party Legislative Yuan candidates and running against Lee and Lien in the presidential election.

Hence the KMT is in disarray. Although it retained its hold on the presidency and has held on to a small majority in the Legislative Yuan, it suffers from factional divisions, with a "mainstream" faction supporting Lee and a smaller "non-mainstream" faction opposing him. During the presidential election campaign, Lin and Hau viciously attacked Lee, calling him "a traitor" to the country and claiming that they, not Lee, represented the true KMT.<sup>23</sup>

23. *China Post*, 11 December 1995; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 December 1995 and 4 January 1996, p. 23.

Still, the KMT remains by far the largest party in Taiwan. Its party-owned enterprises, with assets of more than \$1 billion, give it a firm financial base. It controls radio stations and television channels, publishes a newspaper, and operates a world-wide news agency. It continues to maintain its hierarchical structure, but could hardly be called Leninist. Lee is not a "strong-man" leader in the pattern of his two predecessors and he has great difficulty in enforcing discipline on party members. "Democratic centralism" no longer prevails. Moreover, the corporatist network, which gave the KMT control over labour unions, farmers' associations, chambers of commerce and other organizations, is much weakened. Considerable overlap between party and government exists and will probably continue, but in a declining mode, so long as the KMT is the ruling party.

*The military.* The maintenance of a strong armed force as a deterrent to an attack by the PRC has continued to be a prime objective of Lee Teng-hui as it was for Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo. As president, Lee appoints the top military officials, but he lacks the close association with the military that his predecessors had. The armed forces have less influence in the KMT than in the past; only two of the 31 members of the KMT's central standing committee chosen in August 1995 had a military background. The abolition of the Taiwan Garrison Command has greatly reduced military influence on civil affairs and the increased power of the Legislative Yuan has imposed limitations on the ability of the president and the executive branch (and of the ruling KMT) to make decisions in the military area.

Since the top-level split in the KMT, the party can no longer count on the "iron votes" of the military and its retirees in election campaigns. During the December 1995 Legislative Yuan election, Hau Pei-tsun, who had much greater influence among the military than Lee Teng-hui, campaigned effectively for New Party candidates in military retirees' villages, accounting to some extent for the exceptional gains by the New Party in that election.

In short, the close links that existed in the past between the KMT and the military have been weakened and the armed forces are well on the way to becoming a fully professional, non-political body.

### *Conclusions*

Few would dispute that the people of Taiwan have achieved remarkable progress during the past 50 years and are generally better off than they were then. There have been advances in the economy, the political system, the military forces, education and the arts. In only a few respects are they worse off: the degradation of the physical environment, crowding in the cities, an increase in violent crime and, some would argue, a decline in social values. How much of this progress can be attributed to the influence of the ROC is difficult to determine. To some extent the progress is fortuitous. If the North Koreans had not attacked South Korea

in 1950, if the United States had maintained its “hands-off” policy towards Taiwan and if the PLA had conquered the island, its history would have been totally different.

Given the American decision to intervene, however, Chiang Kai-shek and his military and civilian officials in the government and the party were granted a breathing space which they could use well or badly. For the most part, the decisions they made in the early years, decisions on the economy, the armed forces, the educational system and elections, laid the foundation for later progress. Of course, the people of Taiwan, 85 per cent of whom were native Taiwanese, played their part, responding intelligently and industriously to the opportunities afforded them.

Despite the progress resulting from decisions by its leaders, the KMT has been criticized for maintaining a repressive, one-party system for so many years. Some political scientists have argued, however, that “a strong one-party system appears to meet certain functional needs for a society in the early to middle phases of modernization.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the KMT has accomplished the rare feat of managing a peaceful transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system.

Few developing nations have been as open to outside influence as Taiwan has been. Thus, from the beginning the “ROC stream of influence” was diluted by the “cosmopolitan stream.” Through economic and military aid programmes American advisers influenced decisions in these areas. Later, American and Japanese firms made their contributions to Taiwan’s economic growth through direct investment and technology transfer. American universities and foundations contributed to education, public health and scientific research.<sup>25</sup> By the 1990s foreign influences were pouring into Taiwan through innumerable channels: books and magazines, satellite television transmissions, films and compact discs, travel abroad each year by hundreds of thousands of people from Taiwan, visits to Taiwan by hundreds of thousands of foreigners, the return to Taiwan of thousands of those educated in the United States, trade and investment by Taiwan’s entrepreneurs throughout the world, especially in the United States, South-East Asia and mainland China, trade and investment in Taiwan by foreign transnational firms, competition in international sport, and attendance at international scholarly conferences. Thus it has become increasingly difficult to isolate and identify the ROC’s influence on today’s Taiwan. The KMT continues as the ruling party, but it is increasingly challenged by the DPP and the New Party and by divisions within its own ranks. Changes in Taiwan’s economy and society are driven less by government decisions than by a multitude of other factors. The ROC on Taiwan initiated the process of change in the 1950s, but has had decreasing influence over it.

24. Samuel P. Huntington, “Social and institutional dynamics of one-party systems,” in Huntington and Clement H. Moore (eds.), *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society: The Dynamics of Established One-Party Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 12. See also Robert E. Ward (ed.), *Political Development in Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 590.

25. Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, pp. 80–87, 116–120, 186–194.

Taiwan has become an integral part of the world community, in spite of the PRC's efforts to deny it official concourse with other countries. Its future will be determined increasingly by its international interaction. The democratization of Taiwan has transformed the government of the ROC into a government of the people of Taiwan and further changes on the island will be brought about by people born and brought up in Taiwan.