

BOOK REVIEWS

As a new service to our readers, *Issues & Studies* is adding a book review section. Beginning this issue, we will now include reviews of recent books on the domestic and international affairs of China, Taiwan, and East Asia. Relevant manuscripts may be sent to the *Issues & Studies* Book Review Editor, Shu KENG <skeng@nccu.edu.tw>, for consideration.

The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan. By LINDA CHAO AND RAMON H. MYERS. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. 390 pages, 6 illus. Hardcover: US\$49.00, ISBN: 0-8018-5650-7.

Taiwan's recent progress toward democracy has attracted attention from scholars of comparative politics and area studies in Western intellectual communities as well as in academia on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Two established specialists on Taiwanese politics, Linda Chao (蔡玲) and Ramon Myers, have amassed materials on Taiwanese politics since 1989. After nine years of scholarly endeavors sponsored by the Kuomintang (KMT, or the Nationalist Party) government, Chao and Myers have published this comprehensive account of Taiwan's political history from 1945 to the year in which the very first general presidential election was held in Taiwan's history, 1996.

Tracing political development on Taiwan in five different phases, their work attempts to tackle the old question: How did a Chinese society like Taiwan undertake a peaceful but rapid transition toward democracy in the second half of the twentieth century while other parts of China have remained undemocratic? To answer this question, the authors adopted a typology developed by Thomas Metzger and based on Edward Shils' con-

cept of the "political center," defined as the "legally most powerful roles and collectivities in a society, along with their subordinates and centripetal elites" (p. 7). Based on the relationship between the political center and the rest of society, the authors categorized the political center into "subordinated political center," "inhibited political center," and "uninhibited political center" which represent different levels of democracy. Comparing the configuration of Taiwan's ruling elite with that of mainland China, the authors claim that the inhibited center of Taiwan in the 1950s had transformed into a subordinated center in only four decades while mainland China's uninhibited center did not start to evolve to an inhibited center until the 1980s (p. 8).

After laying out the analytical framework in Chapter 1, the rest of the book is divided into four parts following Taiwan's path toward democracy. Part I is devoted to the period under the rule of martial law. It covers the timespan from 1945 to the early 1980s when the opposition emerged to challenge the regime. Quoting impressive amounts of official publications by the KMT, Chapter 2 gives a detailed account of how the Nationalist Party was revitalized after moving to Taiwan in the 1950s. Interestingly, the authors challenge the views by Hung-mao Tien (田弘茂), Tun-jen Cheng (鄭敦仁), and James Myers that the KMT is a Leninist or semi-Leninist party. They claim that although the KMT was organized like the Bolshevik party, its goals, leadership conduct, and party behavior were different. The authors characterize the elite of this period as an inhibited center because they presented constitutional adjustments, introduced martial law that preserved the KMT's power, repressed the opposition while at the same time opening limited electoral competition, and allowed for an ideological marketplace to evolve.

The two chapters of Part II explore in depth the critical period in which martial law was lifted, with special focus given to Chiang Ching-kuo's (蔣經國) role in deciding to democratize. This section quotes heavily from the *Collected Works of Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo* (蔣經國先生全集) published by the ROC government, yet only mentions the international pressure from the United States and domestic financial scandals in disproportionately few pages. In footnote 87, the authors further cite Hao Pei-

tsun's (郝柏村) diary (郝總長日記中的經國先生晚年, 台北: 天下文化, 1995) to confirm their views. This attempt contributes new evidence, albeit not convincingly, in crediting Chiang Ching-kuo for his role in the reform decision. If readers look more carefully at Hao's diary, they will find that Chiang was under enormous pressure after the assassination of Liu Yi-liang (劉宜良; alias Chiang Nan 江南) in November 1984. The diary (Hao 1995, Chapter 5) mentions repeatedly that Chiang Ching-kuo was seriously bothered by the event, concerned not only with the damage to his own and the Taiwan government's reputation but also with the uncertainty for continued U.S. arms sales to Taiwan caused by the new crisis (Hao 1995, p. 214). Whether Chiang's decision to reform was due to his beliefs in democratic values or a reaction to domestic and international pressure is still an unsettled question.

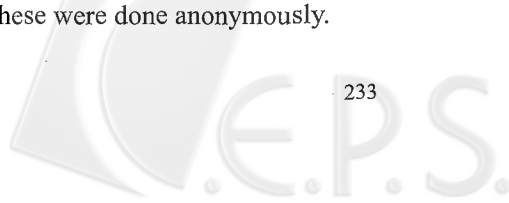
Part III and Part IV examine the period from Taiwan's lifting of martial law to the completion of its first general presidential election in 1996. These sections describe the turmoil within the KMT that led to the breakup of the party into two camps. The authors highlight the crisis that arose from the challenge of conservatives in the KMT to Lee Teng-hui's (李登輝) leadership. The crisis was overcome by Lee's tactics in engaging major political elite in political deliberation at the National Affairs Conference (NAC). The authors borrow the idea of "elite settlement" from John Higley and Richard Gunther (*Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and interpret the NAC as a partial settlement among elites that forged consensus on major areas of political reform.

Chapter 13 wraps up the book with conclusions concerning the patterns of Taiwan's democratization that are distinguishable from those of other democratizing nations. The authors are optimistic about Taiwan's future given that they perceive the existence of democracy's key requisites— a responsible opposition, a political culture compatible with democracy, competing political parties participating in free elections, and respect for a constitution (p. 296). One of the patterns of Taiwan's democratization that the authors mention has important significance for current debates on characterizing Taiwan's democracy: the authors' claim that the "ruling party

willingly engaged in a top-down, guided democratic process and tolerated an opposition-driven, bottom-up approach to democratization."

The book contributes to the study of Taiwan's democracy in two respects. First, being different from literature on Taiwan's democratization that mostly utilizes the concept of authoritarianism, the authors adopt an analytical framework based on the relationship between ruling elite and the rest of society. Second, from a theoretical perspective, this approach provides an answer to the debate over what was the major force leading to Taiwan's democratization. Also noteworthy is the thoroughness of the data included in the book. Having devoted themselves to the research of Taiwanese politics for over a decade, the authors amassed enormous amounts of original data and have effectively presented this information to the readers. They took advantage of their connections in the KMT government and accomplished interviews with an unprecedented number (over fifty) of top elites across the different political spectrum. This greatly enhances the credibility of the authors' arguments and significantly increases the value of this work.

Despite such strengths, the book is lacking in certain areas. First, the theoretical framework is underdeveloped. In the first chapter, there is only one page examining the three types of political centers; the authors have not clearly specified the conceptual boundaries of the different types of political centers. This lack of conceptual operationalization leads to inconsistent selection of evidence to support the authors' arguments in the later chapters. The second weakness of this book lies in its shortage of dialogue with previous studies. Instead of providing a coherent literature review at the beginning of the book, the authors merely briefly discuss different approaches in a footnote in Chapter 13. Without effective comparisons to previous studies, the book's contribution to the broader theoretical debate on Taiwan's democratization is much less visible. The third deficiency of this book deals with methodology. The authors never explained their research methods—how they constructed the sample for interview, and why they chose some leaders and not others to be interviewed. Although they conducted more than fifty interviews, only about one-third of the interviewees were quoted and about half of these were done anonymously.



Overall, this is a well-crafted narrative of Taiwan's political development. Like many other pieces of literature, the book's interpretation of the events in a country will please some readers and offend others. "Pan-KMT" supporters may, for instance, like the analysis, while the "pan-DPP" camp may perceive it as a narrative through KMT's lenses. Due to the large timespan covered by the book and the authors' in-depth analysis, this book will not only find its way into classrooms on modern Taiwanese politics but could also be very useful for scholars in Taiwanese political history and Taiwan studies. Comparative political scientists may also find this case study useful as well, although they may deem the theoretical discussions in the book to be insufficient.

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