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Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity*

Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin

In the 20th century, Taiwan has experienced two cycles of regime evolution, during which the Japanese colonial regime and the Nationalist émigré regime consecutively dominated its political history each for about half a century.¹ The two regimes, each wrestling with the challenge of subordinating the native society to its authoritarian rule, vision of nation-building and state-building agenda, travelled a comparable trajectory of institutional adjustment and adaptation. Each had shifted its heavy reliance on extensive use of coercive measures during the installation stage to selective co-optation, and to limited electoral opening as the incumbent elite tried to consolidate and partially institutionalize its rule. Both met with strong societal resistance as they tried to suppress the indigenous cultural identity and impose a cultural unity between the ruler and the ruled through state-sponsored cultural programmes. Both were initially highly autonomous and insulated from the native society, but over time the interests of the state elite became more enmeshed with the native elite, who turned out to be the indispensable intermediary for effective social control. Both regimes, at the zenith of their rule, exhibited exceptional effectiveness in organizing popular compliance and allegiance, controlling and mobilizing the society, and regulating political participation, elite recruitment and access to the policy-making process. Both fundamentally transformed Taiwanese society through state-building and state-sponsored modernization projects. For that reason, both regimes were also substantially transformed by the very society they governed as the incumbent elite came to encounter a steadily more politicized society and a more resourceful as well as diversified native elite. Thus, the state's transformative capacity in socio-economic modernization was both an important source of the regimes' legitimacy and their eventual undoing.

The two cycles of regime evolution, despite their comparability, produced substantially different outcomes in terms of the development of

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1. For our analysis, a political regime is defined as an ensemble of patterns that determines the methods of access to the principal public offices; the characteristics of the actors admitted to or excluded from such access; the strategies that actors may use to gain access; and the rules that are followed in the making of publicly binding decisions. See Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What democracy is ... and is not," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1991).

political society² and the construction of collective identity. Towards the end of colonial rule, the aspiration of the native Taiwanese for a limited home rule was only partially fulfilled. Under the KMT rule, in contrast, a “national political system” gradually took root in Taiwanese society and the citizenship was redefined in full accordance with the state’s *de facto* territoriality. At the close of colonial rule, there was no tangible social support for a political struggle for national sovereignty and Taiwan had not yet emerged as a self-contained political community with a distinctive political identity. In stark contrast, with the demise of KMT authoritarian rule came a vibrant Taiwanese nationalist movement with growing and broad-based social support. The popular aspiration for an independent Taiwan became increasingly crystallized and cohesive at the close of the 20th century. Most significantly, with the indigenization of the KMT power structure, the state was eventually converted from a cultural agent of Chinese nationalism into an incubator of a “re-imaged community” based on a new Taiwanese identity.³

This article sets out to analyse the transformation of the two émigré regimes and the formation of Taiwanese identity – the two developments that principally defined the political experiences of the Taiwanese people in the 20th century – and their mutual influences. The two cycles of regime evolution are considered in terms of the initial historical conditions for their installment, the strategies that the incumbent elite employed to consolidate and partially institutionalize its rule, and the political processes as well as the changing structural conditions that led to their eventual transformation. The article explains why the two regimes employed a different mixture of political co-optation (versus suppression), social integration (versus segregation) and economic inclusion (versus exclusion) at various stages of their rule in terms of the constraining and enabling structural conditions, the nature and level of threats to their political security, and their state-building and nation-building agenda. In acting, they made mistakes and generated unintended consequences, in some instances changing their very identity below the level of consciousness.

For each political cycle, special attention is paid to how different aspects of Taiwan’s state-building process constrained the historical path of both regime transformation and the development of new political identities. The article investigates how the state politicized society by tightening state–society relations and by caging its subject on to a “national political terrain.”⁴ In particular, the growing dependence of

2. Political society refers to the arena in which a political community specifically arranges itself for political contest to gain control over public power and state apparatus. On the concept of political society in a democratic setting, see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), ch. 2.

3. The expression “imagined community” is adopted from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, revised edition (Verso, 1991).

4. For the notion of “social caging,” see Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume II, The Rise of Classes and Nation-State, 1760–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 61.

society on the state for its capacity to provide a co-ordinating framework, regulatory regimes and supportive infrastructures for the emerging capitalist economy made the latter a growing object of political contention as more local social groups and classes tried to shape state actions to suit their own interests. Next, it examines how the colonial boundaries, socio-economic segregation and hierarchical political order provided the key conditions for the formation of modern ethnic and national identity, and how the modern state, which possessed the most encompassing material and symbolic infrastructure for the construction of a social and cultural entity more homogeneous internally and more distinctive externally, became instrumental in the development of full-blown national identity.⁵

Taiwan's unique history of modern state-building also prompts an investigation of how the process of indigenization and consolidation of a "transplanted state" influenced regime evolution and the development of new political identities. The twin processes provide the necessary conditions for a dependent, subordinate and non-sovereign political unit to evolve into an independent and self-contained sovereign entity with a distinctive national identity.

The article examines the bargaining and mutual accommodation between the local and incumbent elites within the broader context of state-building and changing state-society relations. It identifies the forces behind the formation of new political identities, which were shaped by the inherited pre-modern myths, memories and symbols, deliberate projects pursued by political elites, and the unintended consequences of the state-building process. The incumbent state elite designed and pursued their state-building project in accordance with their knowledge and vision of state-building, on the basis of the existing state apparatus they inherited, and in response to the need for controlling their domestic political environment and to the security and economic imperative imposed by the larger international context.

The Evolution of the Japanese Colonial Regime (1895–1945)

In 1885 the Qing government declared Taiwan a province and appointed Liu Mingchuan its first provincial governor (*xunfu*). Liu was assigned a difficult mission: to modernize the island and make it a blockhouse against foreign incursion of China. However, Taiwan, as a frontier settlement for poor Chinese immigrants, had been tossed aside by Chinese governments for centuries.⁶ For much of the Qing period, the island was governed by absentee Mandarins based primarily in Fujian,

5. For the view that the establishment of national identity should be understood as an explicit political project pursued by elites, see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

6. For an analysis of how Taiwan was incorporated into the Chinese empires, see Edwin A. Winckler, "Mass political incorporation, 1500–2000," in Edwin A. Winckler and Susan Greenhalgh (eds.), *Contending Approaches to the Political Economy of Taiwan* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1983).

who spent little time on the island and regarded Taiwan as a chaotic and plague-ridden periphery.

Thus depreciated, Taiwan was ceded to Japan through the Treaty of Shimonoseki in April 1895 after the Sino-Japanese war. The Japanese took over Liu's truncated business of modernization, but within a very different political framework. The challenge faced by the Japanese was twofold. On the one hand, armed resistance must be crushed for the colonial government to be installable.⁷ On the other, incorporating some 2.5 million Chinese immigrants politically, economically and culturally into the emerging Japanese imperium remained a daunting task. Opinions varied over how the new colony should be managed.

To many of Japan's colonial theorists, who were conversant with Western colonial thoughts and experiences, the colonized people belonged to an inferior race and should be acculturated through guidance. The colony was separate from the homeland, and should not be governed as its prolongation.⁸ However, the Western model does not fit into Japan and Taiwan nicely. Geographical proximity and racial affinity between the Japanese and the residents of Taiwan allowed the colonial rulers to chain the new colony closely to the homeland, implying a more equal treatment of the colonized people.

This dilemma was reflected in a report presented by Hara Takashi, an under-secretary of the Foreign Ministry, to the Bureau of Taiwan Affairs in 1896. He outlined two alternatives of colonial policy, assimilation or non-assimilation, and asserted the first one. Under his "principle of homeland extensionism" (*naichi enchō shugi*), the Taiwanese should be treated equally as Japanese. This policy, though not officially denied, turned out to be impractical. The occupation of Taiwan was dominated by political and military considerations, under which the Taiwanese were treated as potential challengers rather than as equal citizens. In addition, the Japanese did not find Taiwan's climatic and sanitarian environments favourable to large-scale emigration. With a handful of colonizers clustering in the cities, the assimilation policy was simply unrealistic.

The colonizers were thus left with only one viable option: to build an elite-steered colonial state that was penetrative and efficient. It is generally agreed that the major architect of this scheme was Gotō Shinpei, the civil administrator (*minsei chōkan*) of Kodama Gentarō who was the fourth Taiwan governor-general (*sōtoku*) in 1898. A German-trained medical doctor, Gotō was keenly aware of the racial difference between the Taiwanese and the Japanese, and adopted the "biological principle" to guide colonial rule. This premise was that the Taiwanese are biologically distinguishable from the Japanese, and must be governed

7. With the withdraw of the Qing officialdom, the remaining officials waged their feeble resistance by declaring the founding of the Taiwan Republic (*Taiwan minzhu guo*) in May 1895, which was the first modern republic in Asia, but lasted for less than five months. Nevertheless, armed revolt continued for another two decades.

8. For more detailed analysis, see Mark R. Peattie, "Japanese attitudes toward colonialism, 1895–1945," in Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 80–127.

according to local conditions. Under this policy, extensive surveys were conducted between 1898 and 1903 on Taiwan's geography, land, traditional customs and population. These investigations helped the colonial government to usurp unclaimed properties, reassign land ownership, implement tax reform, monopolize key industries and reach financial independence.⁹

Taiwan's regime structure was transformed under the same principle. Basically, the colonial government kept Taiwan's social structure intact,¹⁰ but subjected it to close surveillance. With an extensively built police network that was fused with the traditional *baojia* system, the government infiltrated every corner of Taiwanese society,¹¹ while itself remaining well protected and imperious. Based on Law No. 63 (adopted by the Imperial Diet in 1896), the Taiwan governor-general can issue law-like decrees and remain unchecked by any other institution.¹²

As the biological principle triumphed, a conundrum arose. Although discriminated against by the Japanese government, the Taiwanese lived under Japan's jurisdiction and must have an identity in the Japanese imperium. In accordance with the Treaty of Shimonoseki (Article 5), Taiwanese residents were allowed to choose nationality in the first two years of occupation. Only a few thousand left for China, and the remainder became Japanese subjects. Even so, the Taiwanese far from enjoyed complete Japanese citizenship. They were excluded from the government and representative bodies, did not even hold partial suffrage, were vulnerable to police abuse, and had no right to serve in the military.¹³

It was the First World War that compelled Japan to re-examine its colonial policies. In the Japanese homeland, the moribund oligarchic system finally gave way to the parliamentary parties, a transition that

9. As a result, the Taiwan colonial government became the richest property-owner on the island. By the end of Japan's colonial rule, 66.8% of Taiwan's land was state-owned. See Taiwan sōtokufu, *Taiwan tōji Gaiyō (Summary of the Governance in Taiwan)* (Taipei: Taiwan sōtokufu, 1945), p. 501.

10. The Taiwan colonial government not only preserved the literati-gentry class, but also sponsored meetings for Chinese poem composition, and conferred a "gentleman's badge" to collaborators.

11. In 1905, there were 4,817 police officers in Taiwan, each taking charge of an average of 617 native Taiwanese. In 1905 the total number of public servants was only 13,207. See Taiwan sōtokufu, *Tōkeisho (Statistical Books)* of each year, compiled by the Xingzheng zhangguan gongshu (Office of the Administrator-General) in *Taiwansheng wushiyanianlai tongji tiyao (Statistical Summary of the Taiwan Province in the Past 51 Years)* (Taipei: Xingzheng zhangguan gongshu, 1946), pp. 352, 1321. This density was higher than those in other Japanese colonies. For the police system in colonial Taiwan, see Ching-chih Chen, "Police and community control systems in the empire," in Myers and Peattie, *The Japanese Colonial Empire*, pp. 213–239.

12. Although the governor-general's decree must be approved by the advisory council (*hyōgikai*), the procedure is mainly ritualistic because the governor-general appointed the council members. For the evolution of Taiwan's legal system in the Japanese colonial period, see Wang Tay-sheng, *Taiwan falushi de jianli (The Establishment of Taiwanese Legal History)* (Taipei: Sanmin chubanshe, 1997), pp. 183–230.

13. In 1905, only 0.28% of the native Taiwanese served in the government, in contrast to 17.4% of the Japanese. See Xingzheng zhangguan gongshu, *Statistical Summary*, p. 134.

created both competition and chaos. Economically, Japan experienced a temporary boom when the Europeans withdrew from their Asian colonies during the war. Economic expansion boosted Japanese demand for rice, for which Taiwan was the major supplier, and helped incubate a commercialized landholding class in Taiwan. In keeping with their rising economic status, the landed class wanted more political autonomy and launched various political movements. This time they were armed with modern ideologies, such as democracy and self-determination, that the colonial government could not easily counteract with violence.

In the meantime, Taiwan had become much more accommodating to the Japanese than two decades earlier, and Japanese was no longer a foreign language to Taiwan's educated class.¹⁴ Armed resistance was totally eradicated, and Japan's international status was affirmed by its participation in the war. By September 1918, with Hara Takashi now Japanese prime minister, a major transformation of colonial policy was on the way. In March 1921, the Hara cabinet proposed the "Law concerning the ordinances to be enforced in Taiwan" (usually called Law No. 3) to replace Law No. 31.¹⁵ With this, the laws of the Japanese homeland were in principle to be enforced in Taiwan, under the condition that the Taiwan governor-general's law-making power was to be recognized.¹⁶

Institutionally, the structures of local government and the Taiwan government were both renovated. Since 1919, the office of the Taiwan governor-general was no longer assumed by military officers. Other institutional changes deprived the civil governor-generals of the omnipotence enjoyed by their predecessors. First, the military power of the Taiwan colonial government was redirected to the Taiwan army commander. Since the governor-general and the army commander had different homeland supervisors and career interests, a potential conflict loomed, and actually broke out in wartime.¹⁷ Secondly, the governor-general must accept interrogations of the Diet members, and share his power with the chief administrator. Thirdly and most importantly, as a backbencher in the cabinet, the governor-general was fettered by Japan's chaotic dom-

14. In 1920, the percentage of Japanese in Taiwan was almost triple that in 1905, while the number of Japanese working for the colonial government declined sharply. *Ibid.* p. 136.

15. Law No. 31 replaced the previous law in 1907, the only difference being that the governor-general's decrees could no longer violate Japanese laws.

16. Incidentally, Law No. 3 was almost identical to the law plan that Hara once proposed based on assimilation policy. For the relationship between Hara Takashi and Japan's colonial policy-making, see Haruyama Meitetsu, "Kindai nihon no shokuminchi tōji to hara takashi" ("Modern Japanese colonial rule and Hara Takashi"), in Haruyama Meitetsu and Wakabayashi Masahiro (eds.), *Nihon shokuminchi shugi no seijiteki tenkai (1895–1934) (The Political Development of Japan's Colonialism, 1895–1934)* (Tokyo: Ajia seikei gakkai, 1980), pp. 1–75.

17. In pre-war Japan, the ultimate source of military command was the Japanese emperor, whereas the ministers of army and navy took charge of the military administration. The Taiwan governor-general was supervised by the Bureau of Taiwan Affairs headed by the prime minister (1895–1929) or the minister of colonial affairs (since 1929).

estic politics. As a result, nine civil governor-generals of different partisan backgrounds served between 1919 and 1936.¹⁸

Although none the powers that checked the colonial government rested on native Taiwanese, the anti-government elite did find a greater leverage to affect policy-making. As long as public opinion in the Japanese homeland was divided, the Taiwanese elite, now fluent in Japanese, could find their sympathizers. It turned out that the real challenge for the Taiwanese leaders was how to balance between two strategies that were contradictory though both justifiable. By playing down their own identity and instead stressing that they were also Japanese citizens, the Taiwanese could ask for equal civil rights. Alternatively, they could emphasize their distinctiveness, but with the risk of losing the support of Japanese assimilationists. Self-determination and equal citizenship were both desirable goals, but not obtainable at the same time.

On the other side, the Japanese colonizers also hovered between assimilation and non-assimilation policies. Strategic interaction between the two groups thus created an interesting dynamics of identity politics. When Lin Hsien-t'ang, a prominent Taiwanese leader, espoused the strategy of "equalization through assimilation" and organized the Taiwan Assimilation Society (*Taiwan dōkakai*) in 1914, the colonial government ordered it to dissolve. When the Japanese government finally shifted to homeland extensionism in the early 1920s, the Taiwanese were no longer satisfied with assimilation. With the formation of the Taiwan Cultural Association (*Taiwan bunka kyōkai*) in 1921, the anti-government movement soon shifted to an emphasis on Taiwan's peculiarity and petitioned for the establishment of a parliament for Taiwan. Although implicit, the underlying assumption of the petition movement was the ethnic distinction of the people of Taiwan.

In retrospect, the aims of the counter-elite and the colonial government were rarely in tune, even though both sides once pursued compatible goals. Still, the nascent ethnic consciousness never made its way to a full-fledged nationalistic movement, because of the friction in other issue dimensions. To the conservatives, their interests could be better represented in a Taiwanese parliament than in the Japanese Diet, where they were destined to be a minority.¹⁹ Their emphasis on Taiwan's identity was therefore highly strategic. Interestingly, the radicals also viewed the identity issue strategically. The Taiwan Communist Party (formed in 1928) asserted "Taiwan racial independence" and "establishment of the Republic of Taiwan," but only in so far as the republic was a communist one.

Thus the issue of national identity did not even surface when the anti-government movement suffered from internal schisms and gradually dissolved. By the mid-1930s, even the moderate petition movement was

18. Thus, the average term for each governor-general was two years. By contrast, seven governor-generals served between 1895 and 1919 (each stayed 3.6 years in average), and three served between 1936 and 1945 (3.3 years in average).

19. *Taiwan minbao* (12 December 1926).

quenched. Disintegrated and defenceless, counter-elites of different camps faced a tough choice on national identity again. For the radicals, the problem was where to seek asylum after they were forced to go underground or abroad. Communist parties in Japan and China provided different opportunities and each held their own visions of nation building. The landed class had no choice but to accept the government's assimilation plan in exchange for security.

This dilemma came to an unexpected solution as war became imminent. By the mid-1930s, Japan was on the brink of a total war with China, and Taiwan had been transformed from a supplement to Japan's capitalist development into a factory of military supplies. With the upgrade of Taiwan's strategic values, measures were taken to strengthen the mobilization capacity of the colonial government. The exact measures involved a series of institutional transformations, developed in line with the assimilation policy. Especially notable is the institutional reform on self-government in 1935, a year after the petition movement ended. According to the new laws, province (*shū*) and city (*shi*) councils were given the power to make decisions that the executives could overrule. Partial and limited elections were introduced to select half the members of the city, street (*kai*), and village (*shō*) councils, who then elect half the members of the provincial councils.²⁰ Through several local elections held between 1935 and 1945, the Taiwanese leaders were fully incorporated into a new system in which they could participate but not dominate. Many of the anti-government elite not only joined the election and got elected, but also participated in other collaborative organizations in the years to follow.²¹

When Japan found the battlefield in the Chinese mainland a quagmire and tried to break out through the sea, Taiwan's role was changed into a naval military base. The colonial regime was transformed again, leaving a deep mark on identity formation that was to exert a traumatic imprint after the war. Kobayashi Seizō, a retired navy admiral who became the 17th governor-general in 1936, outlined three policies for the colonial government: to "Japanize" the Taiwanese people, to build military industries and to turn Taiwan into a base for southward advance.

Kobayashi's assumption of office marked a new phase of regime transformation: the restoration of the military governorship. Unlike their counterparts in the early occupation period, however, the wartime military governor-generals no longer ruled by the biological principle, but implemented the assimilation policy in an assertive way. With the movement of "converting (the colonial people) into the imperial subjects"

20. The electoral law adopted the multi-member district single nontransferable vote system, still in existence today. As the law imposed strict constraints on the right to vote, the percentage of eligible voters was very low. Nevertheless, it was enough to include most landlords and professionals, hence the elite class.

21. Chen Ming-tong and Lin Jih-wen, "Taiwan difang xuanju zhi qiyuan yu guojia shehui guanxi zhi zhuanbian" ("The origin of Taiwan's local elections and the transformation of state-society relations"), in Chen Ming-tong and Zheng Yongnian (eds.), *Liang'an jiceng xuanju yu zhengzhi shehui bianqian (Local Election on Both Sides of the Straits)* (Taipei: Yuedan chubanshe, 1998).

(*kōminka*, that is “Japanization”), the colonial government enforced the adoption of Japanese customs, religion, language and even names. The number of school children accepting Japanese education rose sharply during this period, indicating the progress of the movement. Classical Chinese was totally removed from the curriculum in 1937 and all private schools for Chinese education were banned in 1940, whereas the percentage of Taiwanese pupils in elementary schools rose to 71.17 per cent by the end of the war.²²

Meanwhile, native society was fully politicized to ensure the success of the new policies. Not only was the colonial government turned into a command post, but also every street corner was caught in the war machine. At the top of the state apparatus hierarchy was the governor-general, served by the navy admirals between 1936 and 1944 and sharing power with the Taiwan army commander. Both posts received commands from their homeland superiors, and clashed when Japan’s marine and continental strategies came into conflict. The military, even in wartime, had a limited and cryptic presence on the island. It was the police who carried the baton for the colonial state and kept watchful eyes on the native communities. To the ordinary Taiwanese, the police formed the major interface between the colonial government and their neighbourhoods.

The colonial government intensified its penetration into local communities as Japan enlarged its battlefield. In 1940, it installed the “Public Service Association of the Imperial Subjects” (*kōmin hōkōkai*) to promote the movement of spiritual mobilization. Headed by the executive of each administrative level, the Association monitored even minute details of the everyday life of ordinary Taiwanese. Taiwanese elites, including many who had participated in the anti-government movement a decade earlier, had no choice but to assist the Association as local agents.

By the end of the Second World War, the colonial government had been enforcing assimilation policies for more than two decades. The impact on identity formation, however, varied across age and social class. For the old and uneducated, the Japanization movement came too late to lead their socialization. Aged gentry with a Chinese education might find the Japanization movement an embarrassment, but had to remain submissive to protect their class interests. The younger members of the local elite, irrespective of their earlier response to colonial rule, were apt to think and act like their Japanese counterparts. They could detect the politics behind the Japanization movement but were also sensitive to political risks and, when no other alternatives existed, chose to become collaborators. The most vulnerable target of the Japanization movement turned out to be the social marginals who reached their adolescence during the war. The Japanese imperium gave these youngsters not only hopes but also education and job opportunities. It is therefore not

22. Taiwan sōtokufu, *Statistical Books* (1945), p. 39. For the impact of Japanese education, see E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan, 1895–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).

surprising that the aborigines became the most loyal warriors of the Japanese imperium, even though their tribes were ruthlessly demolished in Musha (*Wushe*) in 1930.

Overall, the state of national identity in Taiwan around the end of the Second World War was nebulous, but several elements remain evident. With a shared resentment of colonial rule and the development of a common social space, sub-ethnic categories gave way to the concept of Taiwanese (*Taiwanren*) in public discourse. Still, few people questioned their Han Chinese identity. Politically, Taiwan residents lived with their (partial) Japanese citizenship with little difficulty. It is groundless to declare the Japanization movement a big success, just as it is impossible to extract from the inchoate Taiwanese consciousness a firm base of national identity. For both sides, identity formation had been a highly politicized process. The colonizers designed their policies along two dimensions: to use force or not, to assimilate or not. The Taiwanese elite also wandered between two identities: a secondary Japanese who enjoys some political powers, or a non-Japanese who is disenfranchised. The final outcome was determined by the strategic interaction between the two sides and the constraints each faced.²³

Despite the precarious state of national identity in the late colonial period, one thing is certain: the regime in Taiwan had been completely transformed, from one based on repressive mechanisms²⁴ into one relying on information superiority.²⁵ The colonial infrastructure was inherited by the Nationalist government after the war, and played crucial roles in the KMT's regime instalment. It was the unsolved issue of national identity that pushed Taiwan into another turbulent cycle of nation-building.

The Evolution of the Nationalist Émigré Regime (1945–1996)

With Japan's unconditional surrender in August 1945, Taiwan was once again war booty. Under a plan drawn up by Allied leaders, the island was retroceded to China, now under the Nationalist government. The retrocession was virtually pre-ordained to have tragic consequences, as the Chinese on the mainland and the native Taiwanese had experienced distinctively different modern state-building and nationalist struggle over the previous half century. The social, political and cultural gaps between

23. A way to see the strategic nature of the Japanization movement is to compare Taiwan and Korea. In Korea, the movement was promoted more intensively but incurred a more negative response. See Wan-yao Chou, "The Kōminka movement in Taiwan and Korea: comparisons and interpretations," in Peter Duus, Mark Peattie and Ramon Myers (eds.), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 40–68.

24. During the final phase of armed resistance, 1,435 persons were gaoled under the Decree of Bandit Punishment. Since the Decree was replaced by the Security Maintenance Law, the number imprisoned was reduced to less than 100 each year. See Xingzheng zhangguan gongshu, *Statistical Summary*, pp. 494–95.

25. The colonial regime underwent gradual evolution and expansion. The ratio of Taiwan residents to government officials was 230 in 1905 and 99 in 1940. In the meantime, the number of divisions in the Taiwan colonial government tripled. *Ibid.* pp. 348–49, 354. The Taiwan government also centralized the control of the mass media in the last days of its colonial rule.

the two groups were huge. The island had experienced a protracted period of stable social and economic development and, as a consequence, was more modern than most of the Chinese mainland. The whole island shared a unified system of administration, law, education, commerce and agriculture under a repressive and ubiquitous colonial state. The colonial boundaries and rules were instrumental in shaping a shared sense of social space and identity among the residents of Taiwan. Colonial rule had also introduced new cultural values and world views, under which Taiwan was accorded a semi-peripheral status superior to China within the Japanese imperium. In particular, the second-generation islanders groomed under the colonial rule had acquired a sense of history and cultural identity intrinsically different from the historical consciousness of mainland Chinese.

The abrupt ending of colonial rule turned the world upside down for a great majority of the native Taiwanese elite, whose newly acquired language and cultural skills and political credentials were suddenly degraded into a potential liability under a returned Chinese regime. The Nationalists took over the island without a carefully-prepared retrocession plan as Taiwan was only a sideshow to their grander effort to recover all of China after the war. The new administration under the administrator-general and garrison commander Chen Yi paid little attention to the aspiration for equality of the disoriented native elites. Mainlanders and half-mountains²⁶ were favoured over native Taiwanese in filling up the vast government vacancies left behind by the Japanese. The economy deteriorated rapidly. Taiwan's resources were siphoned off to the mainland by the Nationalists to fuel their military struggle with the Communists and by corrupt carpetbaggers to enrich themselves. The transmission of hyper-inflation from the mainland to Taiwan had a devastating impact on the war-torn island economy. Also, a myriad of disputes erupted over the confiscation of the assets formerly owned by the Japanese.²⁷ By the time a large number of frustrated and jobless Taiwanese conscripts from South China and South-East Asia returned in late 1946 and early 1947, the island was already at boiling point.

On 28 February 1947, a single event of police brutality sparked an island-wide popular uprising.²⁸ The Nationalists responded with a harsh military crackdown. Thousands of native Taiwanese, including numerous well-educated and well-respected social elites, were persecuted and purged. Many lives were also lost as a result of internal strife among faction-based security and intelligence organs during the crackdown. After the incident, the Nationalists made some attempts to placate the

26. Half-mountains (or *banshan*) were viewed by the native as token Taiwanese who had spent the war years in China and were recruited by the Nationalist government. For the origins of half-mountains and their role in post-War retrogression, see Bruce Jacob, "Taiwanese and the Chinese nationalist, 1937-1945," *Modern China*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (January 1990), pp. 84-118.

27. A major source of the dispute arises from the token transfer of assets from private Japanese to their native Taiwanese friends on the eve of the hand-over.

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

local people. They upgraded Taiwan from a special military zone to a province and called for immediate local elections. Chiang Kai-shek also replaced Chen Yi with Wei Tao-ming, a civilian. But these measures were too late and too little.

The tragic event had a profound and lasting effect on the Taiwanese people. It became a lightning-rod event that constantly reminded them of their “common sorrow.” It transfigured a latent Taiwanese nationalism into a burgeoning independence movement, launched first by the native elites who went into exile in Japan after the incident. This lasting scar also complicated the efforts by the Nationalists to reconstruct a cultural and ethnic unity between the mainlanders and native Taiwanese through state-sponsored resinicization programmes in later years. The only tangible benefit of the incident to the Nationalists was that it drove a generation of politically conscious social elites into self-imposed political passiveness. The political acquiescence of the native elites created the conditions for a sweeping three-phased land reform, which was first introduced in 1948 to pre-empt communist insurgency in the countryside and, inadvertently, laid the foundation for post-war economic reconstruction and a more equitable pattern of economic growth.

When Chiang Kai-shek retreated from mainland to Taiwan with his mainlander followers and million-strong troops around the end of 1949, everyone, including the Truman administration, anticipated that his days were numbered as the Chinese Civil War was entering its final stage. Then, however, came another dramatic twist for the people of Taiwan. The outbreak of Korean War on 25 June 1950 suddenly extended the lease on the life of the Nationalists for another half century. The resumption of U.S. military and economic aid helped the Nationalist state apparatus and armed forces stay afloat. Soon after the formal partition of Vietnam in 1954, the United States institutionalized its security commitment to Taiwan by signing the U.S.–ROC Mutual Defence Treaty. Thus, a new security demarcation in East Asia gave the Nationalists a historic chance to consolidate a one-party authoritarian regime on new social soil.

The post-1949 KMT authoritarianism was constructed on a quadripartite foundation – an elaborate and centralized party apparatus, a system of extra-constitutional legal arrangements and emergency decrees, a controlled electoral pluralism implemented at the local level, and structural symbiosis between the party and the state. Learning from his disastrous defeat on the mainland, Chiang Kai-shek responded to the challenge of political reconstruction with an ambitious party reorganization plan, officially launched on 5 August 1950.²⁹ Factionalism in the security and intelligence apparatus was eliminated. The system of political commissars for the military was re-established. Between 1950 and 1952, party leadership was drastically re-composed. Hierarchical party organs were installed at all levels of the state apparatus and representative bodies.

29. For an excellent analysis of the political background of the party reorganization plan, see Chia-Lung Lin, “Paths to democracy: Taiwan in comparative perspective,” Ph.D dissertation, Department of Political Science, Yale University (1998), ch. 3.

Party cells reached into all organized social sectors, such as labour unions, youth groups, religious groups, professional associations, business associations, farmers' associations, women's associations, schools and mass media.

Party membership grew by more than 150 per cent between 1950 and 1954, from 168,719 to 403,260 (one KMT member for every ten adult males). It was concentrated disproportionately in the military and state bureaucracy (especially at the level of central government), in the urban social sectors, and among the mainlanders, who still accounted for 73.6 per cent of total membership.³⁰ This indicated that penetration of the party apparatus into the countryside and among the native Taiwanese was relatively weak during the initial phase of regime installation. Nevertheless, the party reorganization of the early 1950s created a structure of personified power centralization anchored on the paramount leader, secured a stable, homogeneous and non-competitive process of elite recruitment, and laid the organizational foundation for the KMT to establish its hegemonic presence in society.

The KMT's re-organizational task was made easier by the proclamation of a general state of siege on Taiwan on 19 May 1949. The imposition of martial law greatly expanded the scope of power of Taiwan garrison command and suspended the protection of civil rights guaranteed in the 1947 ROC Constitution.³¹ Furthermore, many important provisions of the constitution were replaced or superseded by the so-called "Temporary Articles" and a series of special legislation under the rubric of "During the Period of Mobilization and Combating Rebellion." Together, they threw the country into a permanent state of emergency. These extra-constitutional arrangements were steadily expanded during the 1950s and 1960s.³² In their final form, they provided the president with extensive emergency powers, invalidated the two-term limit on presidency, suspended the re-election of the three national representative bodies – the National Assembly, the Legislative Yuan and the Control Yuan – extended the tenure of their incumbent members for life, and deferred the election of provincial and municipal heads indefinitely.

The KMT introduced elections for township head, county/city council and country/city magistrate in 1950, and popular election for the Taiwan Provincial Assembly in 1954 to incorporate a diversified local elite into the process of party-building and to provide the authoritarian system with a modicum of democratic façade. The KMT leadership discovered a proven formula for controlling a limited popular electoral process by employing the old trick of "divide-and-rule." At the grass-roots level,

30. *Ibid.* pp. 75–77.

31. The mainland elite chose freezing, not abolishing, the 1947 Constitution. For them, the ROC Constitution is irreplaceable because it is the quintessential legal embodiment of the one-China principle. It was adopted when the Nationalist government still exercised effective governance over a majority part of China, including Taiwan, and was internationally recognized by all major powers.

32. Fu Hu, "The mutation and reconstruction of the constitutional structure," *National Taiwan University Law Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1987), pp. 1–32.

existing patron–client networks were incorporated into the party structure. Within each administrative district below the provincial level, the KMT nurtured and kept at least two competing local factions striving for public offices and other electoral offices in many quasi-state organizations, such as farmers’ associations and irrigation associations, and more importantly, for a share of region-based economic rents in the non-tradable goods sector to be distributed by the party-directed local spoils system.³³

The local factions and central party leadership developed a mutual dependence. On the one hand, the smooth functioning of the vote-buying mechanism, irregular campaign practices and the local spoil system depended on the indulgence of the various state regulatory and law-enforcement agencies, which were under the influence of the party. On the other hand, the patron–client networks helped the party to extend its reach into local communities. Also, the fierce competition among the factions crowded out opposition candidates in local elections. On top of this, the central leadership could claim the overall electoral victory delivered by disparate local factions. Thus, the combined mobilizing strength of the KMT party and the local factions virtually without exception delivered more than two-thirds of popular votes and three-quarters of seats in all elections, especially the more significant country magistrate and Provincial Assembly elections, for more than three decades until the political opening of the late 1980s (see Table 1).

From the very beginning, there existed a structural symbiosis between the party and the state. This manifested itself at three levels of state-building. First, it meant a fusion of party and state, in both organizational and personnel terms. Secondly, it meant mutual dependence between the two over key functional areas. The party provided the only co-ordinating mechanism among disparate arms of the state. It also helped maintain the ideological coherence of state through a system of elite recruitment and training programmes for the appointment and promotion of senior government officials and military officers. In addition, the party regulated the access of social actors to the state. On the other hand, the party relied on the resources and coercive power of the state to preserve its institutional prerogatives and to squash any attempt to form an alternative power bloc. Under the rule of martial law, the security authority was prepared to suppress even a hint of political stirring. The state privileged the party in controlling the organizational bases for interest intermediary. The party dominated the selection of leadership for all state-sanctioned corporatist organizations and provided the only organizational link across different social sectors. The party also relied on a vast array of state-owned enterprises to cushion the economic security of loyalist mainland followers.

Thirdly, symbiosis meant that the legitimacy of one-party authoritari-

33. See Joseph Bosco, “Taiwan factions: *guanxi*, patronage and the state in local politics,” in Murray Rubinstein (ed.), *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994).

Table 1: Local Factions and KMT Shares of Votes and Seats in Provincial Assembly and County Magistrate/City Mayor Elections (1954–1994)

Year	<i>Taiwan Provincial Assembly elections</i>				<i>County Magistrate/City Mayor elections</i>			
	<i>KMT's share of votes (%)</i>	<i>KMT's local factions' share of seats</i>	<i>KMT's share of seats</i>	<i>Total seats</i>	<i>KMT's share of votes (%)</i>	<i>KMT's local factions' share of seats</i>	<i>KMT's share of seats</i>	<i>Total seats</i>
1954	68.8	27	48	57	71.8	17	19	21
1957	67.8	28	53	66	65.0	16	20	21
1960	65.4	29	58	73	72.0	16	19	21
1963	68.0	32	61	74	–	–	–	–
1964	–	–	–	–	73.1	16	17	21
1968	75.5	27	60	71	72.4	15	17	20
1972	68.9	23	58	73	78.6	9	20	20
1977	64.1	32	56	77	70.4	7	16	20
1981	70.3	25	59	77	59.4	12	15	19
1985	69.8	34	59	77	62.6	13	17	21
1989	64.0	30	55	77	56.1	13	14	21
1993	–	–	–	–	47.3	8	13	21
1994	51.0	26	48	79	–	–	–	–
Average	66.7	39.08 %	76.78 %	–	66.2	62.83 %	82.74 %	–

Source:

Data provided by the Political System and Change Workshop, Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University

anism was ultimately tied to the legitimacy of the state structure. The justification for a system of extra-constitutional legal arrangements and emergency decrees and the revolutionary mandate of the KMT party were both founded on the so-called “one-China” principle, which sustained the claim that there is only one China, Taiwan is part of China, and the ROC government is the sole legitimate government representing the whole of China. The mismatch between the ROC’s *de jure* jurisdiction (China) and *de facto* one (Taiwan) was meant to be transitory. This precarious sovereign claim turned out to be the most unsettling legitimating pillar for the émigré regime. First, the sovereign status of the ROC faced the challenge of the PRC’s conflicting claim and its unceasing threat of forced retrocession. Both Beijing and Taipei sought an exclusive representation of all of China in the international community. The ROC’s precarious sovereign status, for an extended period following the outbreak of the Korean War, was sustained essentially by American hegemony. It was the United States-initiated international recognition, including membership of the United Nations and a seat on Security Council before 1971, that elongated KMT’s fictional sovereign claim until the end of 1979.

The initial structural characteristics as well as institutional arrangements of the one-party authoritarianism had profound implications for its adaptation, evolution and eventual transition. First, the political security of the émigré regime was highly susceptible to pressure from the international system, especially a redirection in American China policy and/or the PRC’s reunification strategy. External developments and interventions defined a number of critical junctures for its evolution. The steady consolidation of the North-East Asian security demarcation during the 1950s was the driving force behind the shift in the *raison d’être* of the Nationalist state from “recovering the mainland” to “building the anti-communist bastion (Taiwan).” During the 1958 Quemoy and Matsu crisis, Chiang Kai-shek succeeded in rejecting the American demand to abandon the offshore islands, but he was eventually persuaded to give up any plan for waging military operations on the mainland under intense pressures from the Kennedy administration in 1961–62.³⁴ As a consequence, the KMT leadership had to update its historical mission, from anti-communist crusade to securing the island’s self-defence, international standing and economic prospect.

The American intervention was also instrumental in the economic reforms of the early 1960s, which set the island on a path of export-oriented industrialization. It took an American threat to reduce the aid package to expedite the centrepiece measure, the 19-point programme of economic and financial reform, through the bureaucracy in 1960.³⁵ The success of export-oriented industrialization defined a new arena for co-operation between the émigré regime and the native society, gradually shifted economic power from the state to the private business community,

34. Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship* (Brookings, 1992), pp. 32–33.

35. Neil Jacob, *U.S. Aid to Taiwan* (New York: Praeger, 1996), pp. 134–35.

and created a new outward-looking business elite comprised primarily of owners of small and medium-sized enterprises.

A crisis of international legitimacy provided the initial impetus for the demise of authoritarianism and eventually transition to democracy. The PRC–U.S. rapprochement in the early 1970s pulled the rug from under the feet of the KMT leadership. The official one-China principle crumbled amid diplomatic setback, the loss of the UN seat to the PRC in 1971 and de-recognition by major allies throughout the 1970s. The de-recognition crisis was immediately followed by a series of peace overtures initiated by Communist China starting in 1979. In the early 1980s, the *détente* atmosphere in the Straits began to melt down the siege mentality among the public and weakened the rationale for retaining martial law. The KMT leadership felt compelled to respond to the crisis by enhancing its own democratic legitimacy at home through a steady opening of the electoral process. Opening of elections to national representative bodies was first instituted in 1972, and it was expanded in 1980 and again in 1989.³⁶

Finally, in the transition to a post-Cold War era, the political and territorial integrity of many existing states was seriously challenged. In many instances, the international community was receptive to claims of rights to self-determination, autonomy or secession. At the same time, the emerging structural configuration of the Asia-Pacific security order has made more room for Taiwan's diplomatic manoeuvring as the long-term goals of China, as the major power aspirant, would be potentially in conflict with that of a defending hegemony (the United States) and a regional rivalry (Japan). These developments have evidently lifted the hopes of the pro-independence camp and shifted internal debate in favour of an independent Taiwanese statehood.³⁷

As it turned out, the structural symbiosis between party and state was as much a source of strength as a root of vulnerability for the KMT regime. As the transplanted state deepened its dependence on Taiwanese society for fiscal revenue, and supply of military conscripts and rank-and-file state personnel, the incumbent elite necessarily became more susceptible to local demand and concern. With the steady drain of American aid after the early 1960s, the incumbent elite was compelled to place more emphasis on local economic accumulation. The Nationalist government launched its military conscription in Taiwan as early as 1951, but the real reproduction crisis began to surface when most mainlander soldiers reached decommission age in the early 1960s. For the professional officer corps, large-scale replacement by native Taiwanese came much later as the military academies recruited more rigorously from the offspring of the mainlander veteran families, and the native Taiwanese consciously avoided military careers. But the trend of increasing indigenization was

36. For an narrative account of the gradual electoral opening, see Yun-han Chu, *Crafting Democracy in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1992), ch. 3.

37. Yun-han Chu and Chia-lung Lin, "Democratization and growth of Taiwanism: competing nationalisms and national (in)security," paper delivered at the Second Annual Conference of the EU-China Academic Network (ECAN), Centro de Estudios de Asia Oriental, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Spain, 2–22 January 1999.

inevitable and accelerated over time. For the state bureaucracy, native Taiwanese accounted for 56.5 per cent of the overall civil service and only 37.3 per cent of the civil servants working for central government in 1959. By the end of 1991, their percentage in the overall civil service was 71 per cent and among those working for central government, 66.2 per cent.³⁸ The indigenization of the state necessarily transformed the profile of the KMT membership and eventually the outlooks of the party leadership.

Practising a functional sovereign state on Taiwan over time had by itself done more damage than anything else on the official one-China claim. When the Nationalists moved their capital from Nanjing to Taipei in 1949, they essentially endowed Taiwan with a *de facto* sovereign status. Growing political and ideological cleavage between Taiwan and the mainland further confused a local population already disenchanted with the concept of Chinese reunification. Long-term separation across the Taiwan Straits also precipitated the assimilation of the mainlander group steadily into local society. Finally, recurring war-preparation against possible PRC aggression fostered alienation from mainland China and a shared sense of destiny between the mainlander and native Taiwanese. The jurisdictional boundaries and legal order set by a *de facto* sovereign state quietly fostered a popular aspiration for a separate statehood. Thus, the KMT's nationalistic vision was in fact undermined by the intrinsic mismatch between the *de jure* state structure and its actual practice of a sovereign state on Taiwan over more than four decades.

Another important source for the transformation of one-party authoritarianism was the inherent contradiction between the political imperative to limit electoral pluralism and the success in state-sponsored economic modernization. First, the nature and significance of the electoral mechanisms were bound to change amid rapid socio-economic transformation. They were transformed from a sideshow to the authoritarian order into a primary legitimating device. During the 1960s and 1970s, local elections steadily evolved into a major institution to assimilate emerging economic and social forces into the political system, and an indispensable vehicle for the political ascent of the native elite.

Secondly, as the legitimating function of the electoral mechanism rose, the power equation between the party leadership and local factions gradually shifted in favour of the latter. Unfortunately, the KMT could not find viable alternatives to local factions in mobilizing electoral support. A deliberate effort by Chiang Ching-kuo to replace them with young native cadres groomed by the party in the early 1970s met with stringent resistance and was eventually abandoned.³⁹ At the same time,

38. Civil servants include bureaucrats, public school teachers and state-owned enterprises employees. See *Statistical Bulletin of the Ministry of Civil Service*, various years.

39. This policy backfired in the 1977 election, in which an unprecedented number of dissidents were elected to the Provincial Assembly because the defiant local factions refused to support party-nominated candidates. See Ming-tong Chen, "Local factions and elections in Taiwan's democratization," in Hung-mao Tien (ed.), *Taiwan's Electoral Politics and Democratic Transition: Riding the Third Wave* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995).

the leverage of the party over local factions declined as the local administrative apparatus and quasi-state organizations were increasingly staffed by native bureaucrats affiliated with local factions. Thirdly, the social transformation brought about by the rapid industrialization and the accompanying demographic changes tended to enhance the mobilizing capacity of opposition candidates. The opposition found a growing number of ready ears among an increasingly politically conscious and economically secured middle-class electorate and among the economic laggard groups.

By the late 1970s, a new cohort of post-war generation political opposition emerged. Unlike most of the previous independent candidates, who had no national political aims, or the vocal mainlander dissidents of the 1960s,⁴⁰ whose influence was largely confined to the intellectual circle, the new opposition established political identity as well as built electoral support on a platform emphasizing democratic reform and Taiwanese identity. This development led to a major breakthrough in the local election of 1977, in which a loosely co-ordinated opposition group, *Tangwai*, literally outside the (KMT) party, made considerable gains in contesting local offices and Provincial Assembly seats. In the vigorously contested election of the Taoyuan county magistrate, a riot in Chungli stopped the KMT local officials from vote-rigging. In retrospect, the Chungli incident epitomized the beginning of a protracted demise of the authoritarian regime. The restraining of the KMT leadership in the use of coercive measures during the incident helped the opposition to overcome an important psychological threshold. Thus, the 1977 election set in motion a drive to form an island-wide alliance among the opposition candidates based on an updated belief about the vulnerability of the regime. The momentum of the opposition movement was temporarily disrupted by the arrest of some *Tangwai* leaders in the aftermath of the Kaohsiung (Formosa) Incident of December 1979. But *Tangwai* soon regrouped and renewed its drive to form a quasi-party after the 1983 supplementary legislative election. This time the opposition movement was reinforced by a mushrooming of social movements, representing all kinds of socio-economic laggard groups and newly awakened environmentalists and consumer rights activists. The social movements of the 1980s loosened the firm grip of the authoritarian state on the civil society and provided a mobilized soil in various social sectors for the political opposition to take root.⁴¹ Finally, on the eve of the 1986 election, a new opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was declared in defiance of the official ban.

The one-party authoritarianism also suffered from its internal weakness. The KMT's power structure, like any other dictatorship-for-life, was

40. The vocal mainlander dissidents of the 1960s were best represented by many of the associates of the Free China Journal. See Mab Huang, *Intellectual Ferment for Political Reforms in Taiwan* (Ann Arbor: Center of Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1976).

41. See Yun-han Chu, "Social protest and political democratization in Taiwan," in Murray Rubinstein (ed.), *Other Voices/Other Visions: Responses to Directed Political and Socio-economic Change in Taiwan, 1945-1991* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

liable to succession crises. Many institutional mechanisms might cease to function properly without the paramount leader. When power transferred from Chiang Kai-shek to his oldest son, Chiang Ching-kuo, in the late 1960s, the succession was initially relatively smooth as Chiang Ching-kuo had been groomed by his father for the post for well over two decades. Nevertheless, without the historical stature of his father and foreseeing the legitimacy crisis of the regime, Chiang tried to broaden his social support by recruiting more native Taiwanese to the party and state leadership and upgrading the industrialization process with large-scale infrastructure projects. This culminated in his decision to nominate Lee Teng-hui, a native, as the vice-president and his official successor in March 1984. A succession crisis loomed after Chiang's deteriorating health became publicly known in 1985. During the last few years of his tenure, he initiated a series of political reforms to prevent a future deeper crisis. His decision to tolerate the forming of the DPP in 1986 and the subsequent announcement, only a week after the birth of the DPP, of his intention to lift martial law and many long-time political bans, were a watershed in Taiwan's regime transition. They essentially pushed the process of authoritarian breakdown over the point of no return.

However, the incumbent-initiated political liberalization was initially intended to be a directed political change. The KMT and the KMT-affiliated local factions still retained enormous electoral resources. In addition, the party continued to enjoy a firm grip on the organized sectors of the civil society and had under its direct control substantial financial and media resources, giving it a certain flexibility in responding to the opposition's demand for democratic reform.⁴² It was further helped by the fact that society had little divisive socio-economic cleavage which might be exploited by the opposition and translated into polarized political cleavage. This strengthened the hands of the incumbent elite in setting the limits on the scope and speed of democratic reform.

The passing Chiang Ching-kuo in January 1988 hastened the breakdown of the one-party authoritarian rule. The built-in succession mechanism put Lee Teng-hui in charge of political reform. The intra-party power struggle between the so-called mainstream and non-mainstream factions⁴³ inadvertently accelerated the trend of Taiwanization, provided the impetus for abandoning the KMT's core commitment to Chinese nationalism, partially checked the natural tendency of the entrenched incumbent elite to restrict the scope of democratic reform, and facilitated ideological accommodation with the opposition on the issue of democratic reform and national identity. On his way to power consolidation, Lee skilfully shifted the burden of defending the orthodox lines – defending the extra-constitutional arrangements amid a global wave of democratization,

42. See Jih-wen Lin, "Democratization under one-party dominance: explaining Taiwan's paradoxical transition," *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 6 (1999).

43. See Hung-mao Tien and Yun-han Chu, "Taiwan's domestic political reforms, institutional change and power realignment," in Gary Klintworth (ed.), *Taiwan in the Asia-Pacific in the 1990s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

insisting on the one-China principle when virtually all major nations had shifted their diplomatic recognition to the PRC, and upholding a Chinese identity in the wake of a re-emergence of Taiwanese identity – to his rivalry.

The accumulation of animosity and distrust simply hardened the resolve of Lee and his allies to accelerate the trend of Taiwanization and speed up institutional reforms, especially in the direction that would effectively undermine the power base of his rivals. After the abolition of the Temporary Articles in May 1991 and three phases of KMT-directed constitutional revision in the first half of 1990s, most of the legal obstacles that hindered a normal functioning of representative democracy were removed. The December 1992 Legislative Yuan election brought in a new parliament wholly elected for the first time by the people of Taiwan. It was also the first time that the KMT formally surrendered its governing position to a democratic contest, and signalled the end of the mainlanders' dominance in national politics. Hau Bei-tsun was forced to resign from the premier post after the election, and, as a consequence, the non-mainstream faction was thoroughly marginalized from the power centre.⁴⁴ From this point on, Lee enjoyed the full control of the state as well as the party apparatus. He introduced more constitutional change to move the system away from parliamentarism to semi-presidentialism and redefine the cultural orientation of the state, from cultivating Chinese identity to endorsing the burgeoning Taiwanese consciousness.⁴⁵

Lee has accomplished two seemingly impossible tasks. First, he engineered a graceful extrication from one-party authoritarianism, making Taiwan the only Third Wave democracy in which a quasi-Leninist party not only survived an authoritarian breakdown but capitalized on the crisis to its advantage. Secondly, he helped construct a new foundation for the legitimacy of the ROC state structure without violent internal polarization and external military intervention. Lee was able to refurbish the KMT's electoral dominance by moving the centre of electoral gravity away from representative bodies to executive offices.⁴⁶ He was able to harness the independence zeal with a gradual defection from the one-China principle and with a sensible alternative to the pursuit of *de jure* independence by launching a concerted diplomatic effort to join the United Nations and its related agencies since 1993 and promoting the so-called "Republic of China on Taiwan" formula that anchors on a two-China model, culminating in his announcement of "special state-to-state" relation in July 1999.

44. See Tien-hung Mao and Yun-han Chu, "Building democratic institutions in Taiwan," *The China Quarterly*, No. 148 (December 1996), pp. 1103–32.

45. In his most revealing interview with Ryōtaro Shiba, a well-known Japanese writer, in autumn 1994, Lee spoke of "the misery of being a Taiwanese," implying that Taiwan has, for hundreds of years, been ruled by different foreign regimes and never got a chance to determine its own fate. This widely-cited line came very close to a tacit endorsement for the principle of self-determination.

46. See Yun-han Chu, "A born-again dominant party? The transformation of the Kuomintang and Taiwan's regime transition," in Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins (eds.), *The Awkward Embrace: One Party Domination and Democracy* (London: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999).

Toward the end of 1990s, a new consensus on consolidating the sovereign status of the ROC on Taiwan emerged.⁴⁷ Recurring political participation under a democratic regime helped develop a sense of collective consciousness among the people, transforming the term “Taiwan” from a geographic unit to a political community and the term “Taiwanese” from an ethnic term for native Taiwanese to a civic term for citizens of Taiwan. Most significantly, through indigenization and democratization, the society managed to transform the *raison d’être* of the state in a fundamental sense. The state was re-engineered to foster the growth of Taiwanese nationalism and to consolidate the “re-imagined community” both at home and in the international system.

Conclusion

Contrasting the two regime cycles. The milestones of Taiwan’s political development in the 20th century are highlighted in Table 2. During both regime cycles, new developments in the international system as well as redirections in the policies of great powers in the region generated the most important impetus for change at all major junctures of regime evolution and transformation. But over time, the unintended consequence of modern state-building exerted the most profound impact on state–society relations. Initially the incumbent’s state-building project was driven by the security and survival imperatives as well as the incumbent elite’s nationalistic vision. But as the state became more dependent on the native society for essential resources, it faced the task of local capitalist accumulation. Towards the end of both cycles, the native society invariably gained greater access to government positions and decisions through broadened scope of citizenship and expanded avenues of interest articulation, political representation and recruitment. Also, both regimes were compelled to look for a way out of their imminent legitimacy crisis. In the case of Japanese rule, the process of regime transition did not get the chance to run its full course as it was abruptly truncated by the post-Second World War settlement. In the case of the KMT rule, the incumbent elite exercised a graceful extrication from one-party authoritarianism with an early adoption of the Taiwanization policy and an orderly multi-phased instalment of democratic reform. Finally, a step-wise consolidation and indigenization of a modern sovereign state structured the path of regime evolution and laid the material and structural foundation for the development of nationalist aspirations beyond the comprehension of the incumbent elite.

The regime cycles, despite their underlying similarities, produced substantially different outcomes in terms of the development of political society and the construction of collective identity. At the end of colonial rule, home rule remained an aspiration, not a political reality; Taiwan had not yet emerged as a self-contained political community with a distinctive political identity, and the native elite had not yet forged a coherent

47. Chu and Lin, “Democratization and growth.”

Table 2: Milestones in Taiwan's Political Development (1895–1999)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Major political issues</i>	<i>Taiwan's international status</i>	<i>Legal-institutional framework; government structure</i>	<i>Important policies</i>	<i>Representative bodies; opposition parties</i>
1895	Armed resistance. Transition between social systems. Infrastructure building. Monopoly system.	Special legal zone in the Japanese Imperium.	Law No. 63. Decree of Bandit Punishment (1898). Military governor-generals.	Biological politics of Gotō Shinpei. Extensive investigations. Infrastructure building.	Government-appointed Councils.
1907 1918	Nationalization of unclaimed land. Subjugation of aborigines. Establishment of sugar industry.		Law No. 31. Decree on Police Authority.		
1921 1922 1927 1928 1930	Non-violent political movements. Competition between rice and sugar crops.		Civilian governor-generals. Military power transferred to the Taiwan Army Commander. Law No. 3.	Assimilation policy. Homeland extensionism.	Taiwan Cultural Association (1921). People's Party of Taiwan. Taiwan Communist Party. Alliance of Self Government.

1934					
1935	Turning Taiwan				
1938	into war base.		Wartime-legal system. Military governor-general.	Japanization movement. Military industrialization. Wartime mobilization.	Partially elected local Councils. Limited suffrage. SNTV.
1944		Scheme to normalize Taiwan's administrative status. A province of the ROC	Compulsory conscription applied to Taiwanese. Administrator-General. ROC constitution. The Five Powers constitutional structure. ROC constitution frozen by the Temporary Provisions. Martial Law suspended. Freedom of speech and association. Party state under CKS.		
1945				Violent suppression of riots.	
1946	Political and economic takeover in factional strifes and cultural rift.				Elections for Village and Township Representatives. Elections for County/City Councils and County/City magistrates.
1948					
1949	Settling down of the émigré regime.	De jure a province of the ROC; de facto an independent state.		Land reform (~ 1953). Four-year economic plan (1953). Encourage of Foreign Investment Regulations (1954). Repression of unyielding elites. Building of patron-client network.	
1951	Cold War. US aid. Political and economic stabilization.		Law on Police Authority revised to authorize Police intervention of civic life.		
1954	PRC's military invasion.				

Table 2—*continued*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Major political issues</i>	<i>Taiwan's international status</i>	<i>Legal-institutional framework; government structure</i>	<i>Important policies</i>	<i>Representative bodies; opposition parties</i>
1969	End of US aid. Diplomatic isolation and legitimacy crisis. Challenge from ethnic Taiwanese.		National Security Council.	Programme of Economic and Financial Reform (1960). Economic Processing Zone (1966).	Elections for the supplementary members of the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan.
1973			CCK chaired the KMT (1975) and assumed presidency (1977).	Ten Major Construction Plan (1973). Taiwanization policy. The Hinchu Industrial Zone (1980).	
1979 1986	US recognized PRC. The Formosan Incident. Upsurge of social protests.				Democratic Progressive Party.
1987	PRC's economic opening. Cross-strait interaction. Impetus of Taiwanization and democratization.		Martial law lifted.	Travel to the mainland allowed.	

1988			Lee Teng-hui chaired the KMT and assumed presidency.		
1989			Party formation permitted.	National Affairs Conference (1990).	
1990	Post-Cold War new world order. Faction-circumscribed political competition.		Law on Police Authority abolished. Temporary Provisions terminated. Criminal Code Art. 100 revised.		
1991	Money politics and corruption.	De facto recognition of the PRC through the terminations of the Temporary Provisions and Period of Mobilization.		Six Years Construction Plan.	
1992				Plan to restore UN membership. Koo-Wang Talk.	Complete reelection of the Legislative Yuan. New Party.
1993					
1996	PRC's military threat. Strategic alliance between the US and the PRC. Economic integration with the PRC.	Lee Tenghui's remark on the special state-to-state relation with the PRC.	Lee Teng-hui directly elected president. Post-Lee power transition.	Lee's Taiwanization policies.	Direct presidential election.
1999					

nationalist vision among themselves. In contrast, under KMT rule, the electoral avenue was eventually expanded to allow full representation of the island's citizens in an emerging national political system and access by the native elite to all principal public offices through open multi-party competition; Taiwan emerged as a closely bound community with a distinctive ethnic, cultural and historical identity.

The two regimes were never equal. In the first instance, the overwhelming influence of the Japanese colonial legacies to a great extent preordained the KMT regime to follow a different path of regime transformation and the mainlander elite to confront formidable local resistance to its nation-building agenda. Next, the KMT took Taiwan as a province and used direct rule, while Japan took it as a colony and used indirect rule. Also, there were significant differences in the nature and progress of indigenization and consolidation between the two externally-imposed states. The Japanese colonial state, for most of its existence, used the interstate system as a subsidiary of the modern Japanese nation-state and was never under any pressure to undertake a fully-fledged indigenization strategy, not even during the height of the Pacific War when the island colony was expected to be fully self-reliant.⁴⁸ In contrast, the transplanted Nationalist state, which was at first principally manned by the minority mainlander group, was forced to adopt a full-blown indigenization strategy as it was totally cut off from its home base, territorially confined to the island, confronted with an acute reproduction crisis in the recruitment of state and military personnel, barred from instituting a *de jure* apartheid between the mainlander and native Taiwanese by its own notion of Chinese identity and citizenship, and steadily more dependent on successful local economic development for meeting its military and fiscal requirements. At the same time, while the sovereign status of the transplanted Nationalist state was never firmly constituted within the post-1949 interstate system, over time other sovereign states increasingly engaged Taiwan as a *de facto* sovereign state in functional if not strictly legal terms. The consequences of full indigenization of a transplanted state and the long-term practice of a functioning sovereign state were perhaps beyond the comprehension of the émigré elite. In time, the indigenization process blurred the artificial divide between the local (provincial) and national politics and thus redefined the political terrain on which the émigré and native elites engaged with one another, compelled the state to redefine the scope of citizenship in closer accordance with the *de facto* territoriality, and subtly undermined the official one-China claim while fostering popular aspiration for an independent statehood.

While the Nationalists suffered from a much more fragile international legitimacy from the very beginning, their rule was more advantageously cushioned by an elaborate party apparatus that had been firmly in place well before the island became fully industrialized. This apparatus, with its

48. For instance, the colonial state introduced universal conscription, a watershed event on its movement toward indigenization, as late as January 1945.

intermediary function between the state and native society, helped the incumbent elite assimilate the newly emerged socio-economic elite into the political system, controlled the scope of political contestation in electoral process, and harnessed the politicizing effect of capitalist development. However, there was a limit to the working of party apparatus in obstructing the growth of the political opposition and in retarding the emergence of a civil society amid rapid socio-economic transformation.

Taiwan at fin-de-siècle. Taiwan in the 20th century has been transformed from a loosely governed peripheral province and frontier settlement for Chinese immigrants under China's imperial administration, into a centrally administered and semi-autonomous colony under a modern Japanese state, and into a self-contained sovereign entity under a transplanted Nationalist party-state. Over the century, the people of Taiwan have also lived through a tortuous search for their collective identity. They have been enmeshed in a century-long struggle with state-sponsored cultural programmes, from "desinicization" at the early stage of colonial rule, to "Japanization" at the subsequent stage, and to "re-sinicization" under the KMT rule. Despite many inherent tensions and contradictions, in the second half of the 20th century there was a clear trend towards a growing aspiration for a separate Taiwanese identity in both cultural and political terms.

At the end of the century, Taiwanese society is moving away from a state-centric and state-dominant mode of state-society interaction. With the installation of democratic institutions, society is now able to arrange for political contest to gain control over public power and state apparatus. With the stunning defeat of the KMT in the year 2000 presidential election, the resiliency of Taiwan's new democracy has passed its last test. But the emerging consensus over national identity is by no means consolidated. Into the next century, the people of Taiwan will continue to wrestle with competing claims to their political allegiance and cultural identity. The deepening of economic interdependence between Taiwan and mainland China, the settlement of an increasingly larger number of Taiwanese businessmen and migrants in the mainland,⁴⁹ and the emergence of a Mandarin-based media industry across the Straits will certainly complicate the consolidation of Taiwanese identity. Most fundamentally, an elite-orchestrated Taiwanese nation-building project will inevitably run into a head-on collision with a state-orchestrated Chinese nationalism on the mainland, putting the security and well-being of the Taiwanese people at grave risk.

49. According to the internal document of Mainland Affairs Council, it is estimated that there are currently at least 200,000 Taiwanese expatriates living in China.