

DEMOCRACY IN CHINA
PART 2
TAIPEI STYLE

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This is the second in a two-part series of discussions on the prospects of democracy in China.* Last week, we considered political reform on the mainland, focusing on the recent student demonstrations, the orthodox Marxist backlash, the resignation of Hu Yaobang, and the probable impact these events will have on Deng Xiaoping's economic reform program.

The consensus of the panel last week was that the reforms had suffered a significant setback and that democracy as we know it, which includes a recognition of the right of the individual to challenge the direction of government policy, would remain an elusive goal so long as PRC leaders insist that everyone accept the so-called Four Cardinal Principles. These principles are adherence to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought, to the People's Democratic Dictatorship, and to the socialist road. In effect, the PRC leadership has decided that economic progress is less important than the absolute political control of the Communist Party. Nonetheless, there is evidence that Premier Zhao Ziyang is attempting to move the economic reforms forward.

Today we are going to examine the status of democracy in the other China, the Republic of China on Taiwan. Political events there have been moving at least as fast as those on the mainland. The most visible of these events occurred last year with the lifting of martial law by President Chiang Ching-kuo and the decision to allow the creation of new political parties to challenge the ruling Kuomintang.

It is important to keep in mind that political developments on Taiwan have ramifications far beyond the island. For example, there are many within the PRC who believe that the process of political evolution on Taiwan is one that the mainland should follow to a certain extent. If political liberalization on Taiwan can be carried out while social stability and economic prosperity are maintained, Taiwan's success with democracy may pressure Beijing into instituting another round of political reform.

Another example is the improved image Taiwan has gained in the U.S. Congress. This may have an important impact on current trade disputes and on implementation of the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. A democratic Taiwan is far less likely to be abandoned by the United States in time of crisis than a Taiwan dominated by a single party or individual.

A final example of the far-reaching consequences of political reform on Taiwan is the impact on China's reunification. Despite the rhetoric, there is little doubt that the term "self-determination" used by the Democratic Progressive Party means a political existence

*The first was "Democracy in China, Part 1: Beijing Style," Heritage Lecture No. 98, February 4, 1987.

for Taiwan separate from the mainland. This is a development PRC officials have told me explicitly they will preempt.

To help us understand the significance of political developments on Taiwan and their potentially profound implications for Sino-American relations, we have invited a panel of experts to share their views. The first panelist is Dr. Ma Ying-jeou, Deputy Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang in Taiwan. Dr. Ma has law degrees from both New York University and Harvard. He has worked very closely with President Chiang Ching-kuo in orchestrating political liberalization in the ROC. Dr. Ma will explain why the political reforms have taken place, and their likely pace and direction in the future.

Dr. Ma Ying-jeou

On October 7, 1986, President Chiang Ching-kuo told Mrs. Katharine Graham, Chairman of The Washington Post and Newsweek, that his government would soon lift the emergency decree that had activated martial law on Taiwan for 37 years and that the government would legalize the formation of new political organizations, including political parties, after relevant laws were made or revised. He also said this would be done as soon as possible.

A week later, on October 15, the Kuomintang (KMT) Central Standing Committee adopted two resolutions along these lines, calling for the enactment of a National Security Law to fill security vacuums created by the lifting of martial law and the revision of the Civic Associations Law and Election and Recall Law to accommodate the formation of new political parties and their participation in elections.

These dramatic developments were the fruits of a twelve-man task force within the Central Standing Committee, which had been studying six political reform issues since April 9, 1986, shortly after the conclusion of the Third Plenum of the 12th Central Committee at the end of March. The six issues were:

- 1) lifting the emergency decree that activated martial law;
- 2) legalizing the formation of new political organizations;
- 3) strengthening the system of local self-government;
- 4) reinvigorating the National Parliament;
- 5) internal reform of the KMT; and
- 6) the rising crime rate and declining social morals.

Conclusions on two of the six issues have been made public so far; the task force is still working on the other four.

Meanwhile, the task of drafting the new National Security Law and revising the existing Civic Associations Law and the Election and Recall Law has been entrusted with the Executive Yuan (Cabinet). This branch of government has already submitted a ten-article draft National Security Law to the Legislative Yuan (National Parliament) for approval. The draft of the revised Civic Associations Law and the Election and Recall Law will soon

follow. The National Security Law and, hopefully, the revised Civic Associations Law are expected to pass the Legislative Yuan before the end of its current (79th) session, by mid-July 1987. Then the emergency decree will be lifted shortly and new political parties will be allowed to form according to these new laws. However, since the newly formed opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has vowed to boycott these new laws, their passage, and hence, the lifting of the martial law could be delayed as a result.

A related reform, believed by some to be even more significant than lifting martial law and legalizing new political parties, concerns the removal of certain restrictions on the publication of newspapers and on the number of pages in the existing 31 newspapers. On February 5, 1987, Premier Yu Kuo-hua instructed the Government Information Office (GIO) to submit plans to implement this reform, paying due regard to the needs of a free press and its social responsibility. This move will bring dynamism and pluralism to the emerging free and open political system in the ROC.

The KMT has three objectives in making these far-reaching changes toward political democratization in Taiwan. First, to further implement Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Principle of Democracy. In view of Taiwan's booming economy, universal education, growing middle class, and increasingly pluralistic society, the economic and social conditions for a more advanced stage of political democracy and individual freedom have clearly emerged. Second, to enhance the political stability and social harmony, which have been the keys to Taiwan's miraculous economic achievements in the past decades. Third, to polish the Republic of China's international image. It takes foreign critics only two words--martial law--to smear the ROC's image. It takes Taiwan two thousand words to explain the so-called martial law, which is entirely different from the martial law in Poland, for instance. Moreover, the impact of martial law on the people's daily life in Taiwan and their basic rights is limited. Thus, the need for continuing limited martial law is diminishing, despite the fact that in past decades it has contributed greatly to the maintenance of national security and political stability in the Taiwan area.

President Chiang's decision to lift the emergency decree and allow the formation of new political organizations was well received by the press and intellectuals at home and abroad. But an island-wide poll conducted two weeks after the announcement showed that 68 percent of the people surveyed did not understand why the government wanted to lift martial law and legalize new political parties. This tends to confirm that the majority of people in Taiwan either do not know the existence of martial law or do not feel its impact.

Taiwan's political opposition movement during the post-1949 period has gone through several stages. The most recent began in 1969 with parliamentary and provincial elections. Yet the individual opposition politicians who normally ran as independents did not team up to form a coalition until the 1977 provincial elections. Since then, they have started to identify themselves as "Tangwai," literally meaning "outside the Kuomintang." In the following four elections in 1980, 1981, 1983, and 1985, the Tangwai set up a centralized organization to coordinate campaign operations, put forward a common platform, and recommend their own candidates.

It is fair to say that the opposition acted as a de facto political party, albeit in a loosely organized way, for nine years before they decided to formalize their organization on September 28, 1986, and call it the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). That occasion was not intended for this purpose originally, but only to decide upon the list of

recommended candidates for the December 6 parliamentary elections. The lack of a party charter and political platform at the time showed how hastily the decision was made. The two documents were not ready until November 10, when they held their first party congress. Although technically the new party was still not recognized legally, it was allowed to participate fully in the December 6 elections, including the campaign period beginning November 21, without any interference from the government.

The DPP has a very centralized organizational structure and strict party discipline. On paper, the DPP parallels the KMT. According to the party charter, a National Congress elects members of the Central Executive Committee and the Central Advisory Committee. The Central Executive Committee members elect, among themselves, eleven standing members, who elect among themselves a chairman. All local party organizations follow directions from the Central Executive Committee, which also has the authority to disapprove local activities or publications that cross regional boundaries. The DPP adopted a party flag with a white cross on green background and the picture of Taiwan in the middle of the cross.

With less than 2,000 members, the DPP remained largely an elitist party, despite its electorate performance. It has been recruiting new members since January 15, 1987, and claims that its number will increase by 100,000 each month. Whether this ambitious target can be attained remains to be seen. In the city of Taipei, for instance, less than 10 percent of the 1,000 people who requested application forms from local DPP offices returned completed applications as of mid-February.

The DPP has both a basic platform and an action platform. The former deals with political ideology while the latter consists of concrete policies. The following are some policy highlights:

- ◆◆ Allow all residents of Taiwan to determine Taiwan's future. Oppose any talks between the Chinese Nationalists and Communists on this issue as a violation of the principle of self-determination by the Taiwan people.
- ◆◆ Cease confrontation between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. They should compete with each other on an equal footing to preserve peace in the region.
- ◆◆ Adopt more flexible and active measures to rejoin the United Nations.
- ◆◆ Support the destruction of all nuclear and chemical weapons on earth.
- ◆◆ Cut the size of the nation's armed forces and shorten the length of compulsory military service.
- ◆◆ Close down all existing nuclear power plants within ten years and develop alternative sources of energy.
- ◆◆ Adopt a national health insurance program and an unemployment insurance program covering all citizens.

The most controversial item in the DPP platform is the idea of "self-determination," which, according to international practice to date, applies only to colonies or

nonselving-governing territories. Taiwan is neither. If self-determination means the permanent separation of Taiwan from China, this is considered unconstitutional by legal scholars since the Constitution permits no division of either the ROC's sovereignty or its territory, which the separatist Taiwan Independence Movement would effect. Thus, the DPP clearly owes the general public an explanation on just what "self-determination" means in the Taiwan context and whether they intend to stay clear of separatism.

The results of the December 6 parliamentary elections for members of the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan representing the voters in the Taiwan area were such that both the KMT and the newly formed DPP claimed victory. KMT candidates received 69 percent of the votes and over 80 percent of the seats in both parliamentary chambers. The figures showed a 3 percent decline compared to the results of the 1983 elections, but were well within the range of percentages that KMT candidates had received in other elections over the last decade.

DPP candidates received 21 percent of the votes and 15 percent of the seats in both parliamentary chambers. These figures showed a 5 percent gain in votes compared to the DPP performance in the 1983 elections, which had been its worst showing in many years. The DPP thus was able to double its seats from six to twelve in the Legislative Yuan. The DPP is expected to make some impact on that lawmaking body over the next three years.

The rest of the votes (10 percent) and seats (5 percent) went to the other two existing political parties, the Young China Party and the China Democratic Social Party, as well as to independents. The latter took 9.7 percent of the votes and 4 percent of the seats.

The Control Yuan election on January 10 was conducted under the indirect, multiple-vote system where 22 members were elected, according to the Constitution, by members of the Taiwan Provincial Assembly. The results showed that the KMT candidates won 18 seats (82 percent), while DPP candidates won one seat. Young China Party candidates got one seat, and the remaining two seats went to the independents.

A few observations about the December 6 elections are in order.

◆◆ The elections were conducted in such a fair and open way that ROC credibility was greatly enhanced at home and abroad. There were a few violent disturbances during the campaign period, but they had limited impact on the elections, and election day saw only peace and order. Most results, which were computerized and televised live by all networks, came out before midnight on the same day.

◆◆ The fact that the KMT received nearly 70 percent of the votes indicates the voters' strong endorsement of its policies and performance in general. But the KMT must accelerate its political and administrative reforms to continue enjoying such popular support and to keep the current percentage from sliding down. The KMT now has organized competition from the DPP and, in the future, can expect more from other new political parties.

◆◆ As far as the December 6 elections are concerned, the campaign and the results demonstrated effective two-party competition. The degree of polarization between the

two parties greatly reduced the room for other parties and independents to maneuver. This could have both positive and negative effects on the ROC's political stability. This will not, however, necessarily lead to a two-party system. A number of new parties are expected to emerge after the Civic Associations Law comes into effect later this year.

◆◆ The DPP's gains are largely attributable to the integrating effect of forming a new party based on the warring factions of the Tangwai and its followers. Party identification did play a significant role in the DPP's gaining the support of independent voters. Independents constitute 41 percent of the voting public, according to a China Times poll in October 1986. Most observers agree, however, that many of these votes were cast to register protest against some of the government policies and to maintain the checks and balances necessary in a functioning democracy. The votes did not necessarily endorse DPP's policies such as "self-determination." Self-determination, in fact, did not emerge as a campaign issue.

◆◆ Not unlike past elections, the voting behavior was still very much candidate-oriented. Not much policy debate took place between opposing candidates. This seemed inevitable, given the general failure of the opposition to offer attractive policy alternatives to those of the KMT. In many political rallies, traditionally the major forum for candidates during elections, the opposition candidates simply attacked government policies without offering alternatives.

Encouraged by the positive reaction to the elections at home and abroad, the KMT is determined to continue implementing its political reform programs as scheduled, taking advantage of the next three "election free" years. In addition, having received the message from the election results, the KMT will accelerate administrative reforms to strengthen its grass-roots constituency and increase support from independent voters.

Specifically, on December 24, 1986, Chairman Chiang Ching-kuo proposed, and the Central Standing Committee approved, the establishment of a new Labor Bureau to take better care of the more than four million workers in Taiwan. Immediate reforms were to be undertaken on seven types of government services including company registration, tax collection, land administration, and environmental protection. The Executive Yuan (Cabinet) followed suit by including these reforms as its priority work to be implemented by all levels of government. Meanwhile, the KMT itself is undergoing a thorough internal examination in preparation for challenges in the new parliament as well as in the next elections in 1989.

It was predicted by some commentators even before the December 6 elections that, ironically, the DPP's gains could accelerate its division along the lines of the old Tangwai rivalries between the ideologues (young intellectuals) and realists (politicians) and between national and local politicians. Events in the past three months since the December 6 elections seem to have borne this out.

The decision of DPP's Central Executive Committee to boycott the Control Yuan election by requiring its members not to vote, in protest of the allegedly unfair multiple-vote election system, met with stiff resistance from local politicians. Seeing chances of being elected, the politicians argued the lack of a moral and legal rationale for a boycott. Having failed to prevent these rebellious provincial assemblymen and Taipei and Kaohsiung city councilmen from voting by physical means and violent picketing, the DPP's

