

CHAPTER THREE:

Building a Taiwanese Republic:

THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT, 1945–PRESENT

STEVEN PHILLIPS

THE POSSIBILITY of Taiwan's formal and permanent independence from China is a source of international tensions in East Asia, the cause of Sino-American discord, and a heated issue in the island's domestic politics. The Taiwanese independence movement, however, can take only partial credit for these developments.¹ To date, changes to the island's relationship with China have resulted from conflicts having little to do with Taiwanese aspirations or loyalties: two Sino-Japanese wars, World War II, civil war between Communists and Nationalists, and the cold war.

For more than a century, control of Taiwan has reflected the balance of power among Beijing, Tokyo and, eventually, Washington. After a series of military defeats, the ailing Qing Dynasty ceded Taiwan to Japan in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki. For the next fifty years, as China endured a myriad of political, military, and social conflicts, Japanese colonial rule brought economic modernization and stability to Taiwan, albeit at the price of institutionalized discrimination and a brutal police state. America's entrance into another Sino-Japanese conflict raised Chinese hopes of recovering the island. With the establishment of Nationalist Chinese control in late 1945, the issue of Taiwan's status seemed to have reached a resolution.²

The Chinese Communists agreed, in part. They applauded the restoration of Chinese sovereignty, but called for the island's liberation from Nationalist rule. During the cold war, the Nationalists, Communists, and Americans dominated discourse over Taiwan through the one China policy, which stated that there existed one China and that Taiwan was a province of that China awaiting reunification with the mainland. Today, Beijing continues to insist on acknowledgement of its one China principle from any nation desiring trade ties or diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC)—a requirement that the vast majority of nations, including the United States and Japan, willingly meet.

Less noticed until recently were the individuals who built the Taiwanese independence movement (TIM). The movement grew in the context of the Nationalists' authoritarian rule and, until the 1990s, focused on overthrowing Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo as the first step toward changing the island's international status. Japan was the first center of Taiwan independence (*Taidu*) sentiment but, as more Taiwanese came to the United States to study or to avoid oppression, the movement's center of gravity shifted. Besides widespread acceptance of the one China principle in the international community, personal rivalries, Nationalist brutality and threats, apathy in the host countries, dispersion across several continents, and disputes over issues such as socialism or the necessity of violence all stymied the efforts of exiled Taiwanese. However, the collapse of the Republic of China's (ROC) international position, the gradual attrition of mainland-born leaders, and the first stirrings of political change on Taiwan in the 1970s heartened activists. The TIM's expansion on the island was due to democratization and Taiwanization, so that by the 1990s it was possible to advocate independence on the streets of Taipei. Elements of the movement's agenda have shaped the platform, if not always the actual policies, of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), now the ruling party. The island enjoys de facto independence, even though the mainland's threats of military action prevent Taiwanese from making a formal declaration. Further, *Taidu* advocates have proved unable to convince the majority of the island's population or the international community that announcing permanent independence from the mainland is feasible.³

During the final years of Japanese colonial rule, some Taiwanese called their island Asia's Orphan (*Ya xi ya de gu'er*), a place cast off by China and accorded second class status by Japan. The island was also an orphan of the cold war, as it remained trapped in the one China framework that precluded serious discussion of independence. This "bled over" into scholarship, and the island has not become a significant part of the academic literature on nationalism.⁴ For example, Benedict Anderson, a prolific scholar of nationalism

Thanks as always go to my wife Barbara Cavanaugh Phillips for reading my drafts and also to Nancy Bernkopf Tucker who commented on different versions of this paper.

best known for his discussion of the nation as an “imagined community,” does not address Taiwan in his work. Despite this lack of attention, the history of the TIM offers case studies of nation-building and politics in exile communities. The oft-quoted observation of the famous nineteenth-century historian Lord Acton that “exile is the nursery of nationality” fits perfectly with Taiwan’s experience.⁵ Anderson notes that exile communities are often among the most adamant, vocal, and well-funded.⁶ This, too, describes the TIM’s history. Anderson also points out the role of higher education in sparking and spreading nationalist sentiment.⁷ The Taiwanese movement was filled with overseas students and was often led by scholars until the 1980s.

Ironically, the TIM experience resembled Chinese exile movements. Ian Buruma’s *Bad Elements: Chinese Rebels from Los Angeles to Beijing* examines the fate of post-Tiananmen dissidents in the United States. He wrestles with the problem of whether personal rivalries and the lack of unity among these intelligent exiles represented an aspect of Chinese culture, the nature of all exile communities, or the specific personalities of individual activists. Buruma details how countless dissidents were unable to speak kindly about one another, much less cooperate: “Denunciation is the common poison within any dictatorship based on dogma. And paranoia is not a uniquely Chinese vice. Political exiles fight among themselves wherever they come from: Cut off from a common enemy, they tear into each other.”⁸ This, too, could describe the Taiwanese experience.

NATIONALIST MISRULE AND THE RISE OF THE TIM

The growth of the TIM illustrates the complex relationship between history and the nation. The events of Taiwan’s recent past spurred some Taiwanese to seek independence from China. At the same time, activists consciously sought to shape a version of history that “proved” an inexorable march toward nation-hood, and attempted to place the rise of a national consciousness as far into the past as possible.⁹ For example, independence activists at times point to Zheng Chenggong as proof of Taiwanese nationalism hundreds of years ago. In reality Zheng, a regional strongman and pirate during the Ming-Qing transition of the seventeenth century, used the island as a base to attack the mainland in the name of restoring a fallen dynasty. To him, Taiwan was less a homeland than a temporary refuge.¹⁰ Activists have hailed the short-lived 1895 Republic of Taiwan as a manifestation of the Taiwanese national consciousness, even though the Republic had little popular support.¹¹ The Taiwanese Communist Party (TCP), founded in 1928, also has been placed in the context of independence.¹² Al-

though some individual Party members did support independence, Taiwanese, Japanese, and Chinese factions all fought for influence, and the TCP proved one of the least successful communist parties in the region. Certainly, a sense of Taiwanese identity, an island-wide consciousness, grew under Japanese colonial rule, in no small measure due to the regime’s labeling of islanders—which ignored the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the population. This does not, however, prove the existence of nationalism. Only during the late 1940s did a true movement, with organizations dedicated to independence, espousing a coherent ideology and vision for the island’s future, appear.

Fifty years of Japanese rule laid the base for much of the conflict between the Taiwanese and the Nationalists. The Taiwanese endured the dual nature of colonialism: law and order in a brutal police state, economic development and exploitation, education and forced cultural assimilation. As important as what islanders experienced was what they missed: the key events that shaped the national consciousness of the Chinese, including the collapse of the Qing, Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary efforts, warlord depredations, the literary revolution of the May 4th Movement, the glory of the Northern Expedition, the epic suffering of the Long March, and the myth of national unity during the War of Resistance. Most Taiwanese were happy to see the end of colonial rule in October 1945, but there existed vast differences in political cultures and expectations on both sides of the Strait. In the latter half of the 1940s, Taiwanese views of their relationship with the Chinese nation and Nationalist state fell along a continuum. Some completely accepted and supported Nationalist rule, others called for greater local self-government, and a few advocated that federalism define Taiwan’s relationship with China. Independence, not communism, became the strongest manifestation of discontent with Nationalist rule on Taiwan.

More than any other event, the February 28 Incident of 1947 both created and justified independence sentiment. Taiwanese concerns over inflation, unemployment, corruption, and lack of political participation exploded in early 1947. Unemployed youth, workers, students, peddlers, and small-businessmen briefly wrested control of Taiwan from the provincial administration. Prominent Taiwanese moved initially to limit violence and to restore law and order, then used the opportunity to press for reforms under the broad rubric of local self-government. During negotiations with the provincial administration, islanders enlarged their demands to the extent that they threatened to weaken drastically Taiwan’s ties with the Nanjing government. After a week of increasing tensions, mainland reinforcements arrived and massacred thousands—those integrally involved in the Incident, those who had made enemies among the Nationalists, and others

unfortunate enough to be on the streets. This brutal retribution changed the face of the island's politics by killing many of the Japanese-era elite, cowering others into silence, and spurring a few to oppose the regime from exile. The memories of many Taiwanese would distill the Incident into proof of Nationalist brutality and illegitimacy, and evidence of the islanders' long-term drive for self-determination.

Even as the Nationalists consolidated control over Taiwan in the late 1940s, their government lurched toward collapse on the mainland. In the wake of defeat, in 1949 and 1950 the island faced an influx of approximately 2 million refugees who carried with them history, political goals, and ideology that grew out of their mainland experiences. As a result, the issues, organizations, and personalities of politics in Republican China came to dominate Taiwan. Chiang Kai-shek created a highly centralized political structure—a goal of the Nationalists on the mainland for almost half a century. The anti-communist paranoia that came with defeat accentuated his authoritarian tendencies. In December 1949, the island was placed under martial law. That, and the 1948 Provisional Amendments for the Period of Mobilization, which essentially set aside parts of the constitution and gave the president dictatorial powers, facilitated the regime's arrest and harassment of dissidents of all stripes. Based on control of political, educational, and cultural institutions, mainlanders dominated discourse over the history of the Chinese nation and Taiwan province for almost forty years. It became dangerous to discuss, much less question, the island's relationship with the mainland, as Taiwan had become the last bastion of the real, "free," China against the alien rule of Mao Zedong's Communists.

A complex combination of altruism and self-aggrandizement, a sincere belief in what was best for the island's people and frustration with a lack of personal success under Nationalist rule, drove many activists. Liao Wen-i (Liao Wenyi, 1910–1986), who often used the name Thomas when dealing with Americans, became the first prominent leader of an organized independence movement. He toiled in exile, attempted to highlight ambiguities in Taiwan's international status, combined calls for nationalism with promises of democratic reform, dealt with Nationalist threats to friends and family, struggled against a general lack of interest in his cause, and engaged in personal rivalries with other Taiwanese. Like many Taiwanese dissidents or Taidu leaders, Thomas Liao came from a Presbyterian family, in his case, landlords in southern Taiwan.¹³ He was one of the few Taiwanese before the 1950s to visit the United States, as he studied in Michigan and Ohio. He then moved to China to teach before returning to the island after his father's death in 1939. No friend of the colonial regime, he came under suspicion by the Japanese for alleged ties to the United States. Liao, like

many Taiwanese, did not immediately favor independence, but a combination of Nationalist misrule, the regime's brutal reaction to February 28, disappointment due to his failure to win an election, and his inability to shape the ties between the island and China (Liao favored a federal system) pushed him toward a more radical position. Liao was in Shanghai during the events of February 28, but his criticism of the regime led the highest-ranking Nationalist official on the island, Chen Yi, to brand him a rebel.

In late 1947, Thomas Liao formed the Formosan League for Re-emanicipation (*Taiwan zai jiefang lianmeng*), the first Taiwan independence organization.¹⁴ Based in Hong Kong, the League lobbied for a United Nations' trusteeship for Taiwan, followed by a plebiscite. The first years of the League proved difficult. The attempt to create a Taiwan branch in 1949 led to the arrest of one of Liao's brothers and the League's secretary. Liao vied with the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League (*Taiwan minzhu zizhi lianmeng*), led by Hsieh Hsueh-hung (Xie Xuechong). Hsieh, a Taiwanese communist, had fled to Hong Kong after leading a short-lived resistance to the Nationalists during the February 28 Incident. Her group strongly opposed trusteeship or independence, and had close ties to the Chinese Communists. Hsieh's League offered limited autonomy as a formula to win Taiwanese support. Neither group had much success. Hong Kong did not prove conducive to independence activists, as the Chinese community was divided between supporters of the Nationalists or Communists, and the British had little interest in antagonizing either Chinese faction with independence activity. Hsieh moved to China and Liao went to Japan, which had a sizable Taiwanese population. Taiwanese in the People's Republic found they had to accept completely the Communists' approach to the island, which emphasized the need for class struggle and liberation, not autonomy.¹⁵ The Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution on the mainland destroyed the careers of Taiwanese communists, who discovered that Beijing could not tolerate their relative moderation and focus on "local" issues. In Japan, Liao quickly found that there existed little sympathy for his efforts. He was imprisoned for seven months for entering the country illegally.

Liao and the Formosan League for Re-emanicipation helped create the ideology of independence that later activists would follow. Self-determination formed one pillar of the new movement, and League members would frequently evoke article 1 of United Nations charter of 1945: "The Purposes of the United Nations are . . . to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace." They also pointed to ambiguity in statements

on postwar Taiwan's fate to bolster their case. The problem was that, for every declaration suggesting the island's status remained undecided, there existed another that indicated the island was irrevocably China's. The Cairo Declaration of November 1943, where Franklin Roosevelt, Chiang, and Winston Churchill agreed that the Nationalists were to take control of the island at war's end, would seem to preclude debate:

It is their [the Allies] purpose that Japan shall be stripped of all the islands of the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of the First World War in 1914, and that all territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China.¹⁶

Statements by President Harry S. Truman in June 1950 and the peace treaties formally concluding World War II in the Pacific in 1951, however, suggested that the island's status awaited final resolution.¹⁷ Nevertheless, other than a short period of time when the survival of the Nationalist regime on Taiwan was in doubt, the Americans *acted* as though they accepted Chiang's control over the island, and that his government represented China.

The early champions of independence discovered that America's occasional ambiguity never translated into steady support. The nascent Taidu movement stood on the sidelines even as instability again threatened to weaken the island's ties with the mainland. In the late 1940s, rumors abounded about possible foreign intervention on the island or the overthrow of Chiang by other Nationalists.¹⁸ Other gossip suggested that the island would enjoy independence with United States support, a United Nations trusteeship, or even the return of the Japanese—none of which the Americans considered seriously.¹⁹ As early as August 1947, Special Envoy to China General Albert Wedemeyer reported to the Secretary of State:

There were indications that Formosans would be receptive toward the United States guardianship and United Nations trusteeship. They fear that the Central Government contemplates bleeding their island to support the tottering and corrupt Nanking machine and I think their fears are well founded.²⁰

Yet, the possibility of independence depended upon events across the Strait, not on the island itself, much less the wishes of a few Taiwanese. In December 1947, American officials considered the possibility of an inde-

pendent Taiwan only if the Nationalist government collapsed on the mainland and could not control the island.²¹

Three interrelated factors prevented Taiwanese separatists and American diplomats from cooperating. First, many Americans saw Chiang Kai-shek as the only figure with any chance of preserving a unified, noncommunist China. In effect, they accepted and approved of the Nationalists' political agenda for China both before and after the regime's mainland defeat. For example, in mid-1948, an American official in Nanjing wrote

It may conceivably get so bad that the Gimo may, by one means or another, be removed from the scene. Yet the Gimo seems to be the only element holding this vast country together, and should he go there would be a very strong chance that we would see a return to regionalism, making the pickings much more easy for the Communists.²²

Even as the Nationalists collapsed on the mainland, they continued to enjoy the support of staunchly anti-communist politicians and publicists in the United States. Most Americans accepted, or simply did not address, the Nationalists' political agenda as it related to the Taiwanese. Second, the United States felt publicly obliged to uphold the status of Taiwan as a territory returned to its rightful ruler after World War II.²³ For example, the Central Intelligence Agency stated that although technically Taiwan's fate was not final until a peace treaty was signed with Japan, the Cairo and Potsdam declarations made independence unlikely.²⁴ The United States was not eager to become embroiled in an issue of China's territorial integrity—a problem that could only invite comparisons to the era of unequal treaties.²⁵

Third, the Americans described the Taiwanese as “politically immature” and unlikely to overthrow the Nationalists.²⁶ Further, Taiwanese and Americans had little contact prior to 1945. Islanders usually spoke Japanese or one of several local dialects, not Mandarin (*Guoyu*), and thus had a difficult time communicating with America's China experts. In Tokyo, few Americans were interested in Taiwanese affairs or the machinations of a few exiles. Islanders had more specific “defects.” American military intelligence officials in Tokyo revealed that many Taiwanese in Japan had entered that country illegally and that “the activities of the League [Formosan League for Re-emancipation] in Japan are financed by large-scale penicillin smuggling.”²⁷ For the next five decades, American officials monitored the Taidu movement's activities and met with its leaders, but refused to make any commitments of support.²⁸

TIM IN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

Other activists would follow Liao's example as they struggled to organize while avoiding Nationalist pressure upon friends or relatives on the island, and to publicize their efforts in the face of apathy among non-Taiwanese. In 1950, Liao established the Taiwan Democratic Independence Party (*Taiwan minzhu dulidang*) in Kyoto. Most of his backing came from Taiwanese who had been educated during the colonial era, many of whom had hoped that retrocession would enable them to enjoy greater rights and influence than they had experienced under Japanese rule. Personal rivalries and issues of funding were constant problems.²⁹ In order to invigorate their efforts, Liao and his supporters formed a provisional assembly in 1955 and a Provisional Government for the Republic of Taiwan (*Taiwan gongheguo lishi zhengfu*) in 1956.³⁰ Liao would submit dozens of petitions to the United Nations or to American diplomats, all seeking support in the name of national self-determination. Reflecting a key aspect of separatist thought, he used history in the service of nation building.³¹ Liao, as president of the provisional government, declared that his was the third attempt at creating a Taiwanese nation and that his efforts built upon Zheng Chenggong's removal of the Dutch in the 1660s and the short-lived 1895 republic. In short, Taiwan was already a nation, the problem was recognition. Expanding upon ideas first expressed in Hong Kong, Liao often evoked America's independence struggle and Wilsonianism.³² However, it is impossible to know whether this was done out of sincere belief that Taiwan's experience was that similar to that of the United States, or out of more cynical motives. To the Americans, he took every opportunity to claim that Taiwan's status was "undecided" and that the people of the island would enthusiastically support independence: "We Formosans maintain that [the] independence movement for Formosa is absolutely not treason or criminal. It is a patriotic action." Liao recognized the cold war priorities of the United States, and he worked hard to convince the Americans that his anti-Nationalist efforts were in no way pro-Communist.³³ In light of President Truman's movement of the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait and President Eisenhower's mutual security treaty with the ROC, activists realized that America's relationship with the Generalissimo was growing stronger, not weaker, after the retreat to Taiwan.

Liao was attacked by the Nationalists as an American or Japanese puppet and by younger Taiwanese émigrés as one of the older gentlemen who came of age under Japanese rule—relics (*yiwu*) as one author calls them.³⁴ In fact, most independence leaders had to contend with charges

that they were pawns of foreign powers dedicated to containing or humiliating China. That these activists were often foreign educated and courted Japanese and American support only served as fodder for anti-independence propaganda. By the 1960s, Liao's movement seemed "tired" as new leaders with ties to students in Japan became more prominent. Contact between his government and supporters on Taiwan proved difficult, and Liao's relatives on the island were under constant surveillance or imprisoned repeatedly.³⁵ The president in exile was encouraged to return by Taiwanese supporters of the Nationalists, and was promised employment in the provincial administration and the release of family members.³⁶ In 1965, he agreed to come home.³⁷ The provisional government would continue for decades, but would slide into obscurity. Pro-independence historians have written that although Liao's endeavor failed, he created a legacy of resistance, and his surrender opened the door to the next generation of activists.³⁸

New voices in the Taiwanese community in Japan added social and economic concerns to the independence agenda. In Tokyo, Wang Yü-te (Wang Yude, 1924–1985) shifted the movement's focus from the Japanese era elite to a younger generation. He helped form the Formosan Youth Society (*Taiwan qingnianshe*, *Taiwan seimensha* in Japanese) in 1960, and began one of the important early independence publications, *Taiwan Seinen* (*Taiwan qingnian* in Chinese, translated as *Formosan Youth*).³⁹ His goal was to work among Taiwanese students in Japan and to influence international public opinion. The society, like all Taidu groups, sought to build its presence on Taiwan with little success.⁴⁰ By the mid-1960s, this organization demonstrated publicly as the Formosan Youth Independence League (*Taiwan qingnian dili lianmeng*).⁴¹ Shih Ming (Shi Ming) and other activists in Japan made socialism one facet of the independence agenda, a development that would provide an ideological framework for some Taidu supporters, but would drive others away. Like Liao's works, Shih Ming's *Four Hundred Year History of the Formosan People* (*Taiwanren sibainian shi*), first published in Japan in 1962, became an inspiration to many separatists (and was banned on the island itself). This book combined Marxist-Leninist analysis with nationalism. He explicitly connected Nationalist rule to capitalist exploitation, suggesting that national liberation and class struggle went hand in hand.⁴² Shih and other leftists encountered two problems with this approach. First, the Japanese Socialist Party and the Japanese Communist Party were eager to see their nation cut diplomatic ties to Chiang's regime, which meant party members had little reason to support an agenda that was sure to enrage Beijing. Second, land reform and other Nationalist policies brought economic development and a relatively

equitable distribution of wealth to the island. Most Taiwanese had little interest in class struggle or revolutionary violence.

During the 1950s, influence over the TIM shifted toward the United States as more Taiwanese studied or immigrated there. In 1955, Taiwanese students, including prolific Taidu author Loo Tsu-yi (Lu Zhuyi, pen name: Li Tianfu), organized America's first independence organization, Free Formosans' Formosa (*Taiwanren de ziyou Taiwan*). This group became the United Formosans for Independence (UFI, *Taiwan duli lianmeng*) in 1958 under chairman Ch'en I-te (Chen Yide). Membership in these and similar organizations was secret during the early years due to fears of Nationalist reprisals against family members on Taiwan, or possible arrest when members returned to the island. In 1961, because UFI activists saw the need to court support from the American media and public, and determined that returning home was impossible, they went public with their efforts. Ch'en organized United Formosans in America for Independence (UFAI, *QuanMei Taiwan duli lianmeng*) in 1965 in order to unify the growing number of groups, particularly Taiwanese student associations at major research universities.

Academia became a battleground for Taidu advocates. Universities were vital for the recruitment of supporters, offered a forum for meetings and employment for activists, and presented an opportunity to promote study of the island by American scholars. UFI began holding conferences at universities in 1961 and the University of Wisconsin became home to the Taiwan Studies Association (*Taiwan yanjiuhui*) in 1965. There existed constant conflict on campuses between Taiwanese and the better funded pro-Nationalist student groups. (By the 1980s, growing numbers of mainland-born students would join the fray.) Among the students and émigrés were Taiwanese who supported the Nationalists as well as Nationalist intelligence agents who monitored political activity. This led to the arrest of some Taiwanese upon their return to the island, limited the effectiveness of the groups on Taiwan, and deterred many from participating in the movement. The Nationalists constantly monitored overseas critics of the regime, preparing blacklists of dissidents banned from returning.⁴³

By the 1960s, the pursuit of independence expanded from organizing among Taiwanese to seeking support from the American press and public. In 1961, the first public protest occurred in the United States, as a handful of activists demonstrated during Vice President Chen Cheng's visit.⁴⁴ UFI led a series of protests at the ROC embassy in Washington on the anniversary of the February 28 Incident. Independence groups also began to demonstrate against the PRC and its claim to Taiwan in the 1970s. Publications represented another key aspect of separatist efforts. *The Independent Formosa*, a joint publication of Japan's Formosan Youth Independence

League, the Union for Formosa's Independence in Europe, and United Formosans in America for Independence, was indicative of the genre. This journal, and its successors, became one of the best ways to obtain information on the arrests of dissidents on Taiwan.⁴⁵ Independence publications reprinted any article or letter they could find that suggested backing for their cause.⁴⁶ Although a few Japanese or Americans, such as State Department official turned scholar George Kerr, voiced support for independence, most people knew little of Taiwanese aspirations for national self-determination.⁴⁷ Much of the American criticism of the Nationalists focused less on self-determination for islanders than on the authoritarian nature of the regime. As was the case in Japan, American leftists had more interest in building relations with the People's Republic than in supporting a small and struggling movement led by the Taiwanese.

Almost every significant independence group labored to establish an underground organization on Taiwan.⁴⁸ It is impossible to know to what extent Taiwanese favored independence during the martial law era, and organized activity was extremely dangerous. The Military Police, Military Intelligence Bureau, Taiwan Garrison Command, Investigation Bureau, and National Security Bureau searched for any sign of dissent and sent thousands to jail. Even possession of works by overseas activists such as Liao Wen-i or Shih Ming could lead to lengthy prison sentences. Next to allegations of communist conspiracies, independence plots were the main justification for arrests during the White Terror that began in the late 1940s. On a few occasions, however, Taiwanese took extraordinary risks by promoting Taidu on the island.⁴⁹ It is difficult, however, to connect the efforts of exiles to independence activity on the island during the martial law era. For example, in 1964, Peng Ming-min became one of the most famous leaders of the TIM. His life and writings offer an excellent example of the separatists' understanding of the island's history, and the difficulties encountered in their quest.⁵⁰ Like many independence leaders, he was born into a Christian family and educated in Japan.⁵¹ Under Nationalist rule, Peng transformed from politically apathetic professional to opposition activist. He became swept up in February 28, then went into political hibernation after the Nationalist troops reestablished their control. Peng enjoyed success under Nationalist rule, and became the youngest professor at National Taiwan University.

Peng's general impression of misrule and specific events like the arrest and harassment of intellectuals coaxed him back into politics. In 1964, he and two associates drafted the "Declaration of the Taiwanese Self-Salvation Movement" (*Taiwan ziji yundong xuanyan*), a damning indictment of Nationalist oppression and a demand for national self-determination. They

were arrested before the statement could be disseminated widely on the island. Taiwanese groups in the United States and Japan published Peng's statement, which seemed to inspire the activists for a brief time. His relatively prominent position enabled him to avoid execution or a long jail sentence, and he was released in 1965 under a special pardon. Constant harassment and surveillance, however, spurred him to flee Taiwan in 1970. Peng ended up in the United States, where he published the best-known English-language work on the TIM, *A Taste of Freedom*.⁵² In exile, Peng would prove one of the most media savvy advocates of Taidu by highlighting Nationalist brutality and the Taiwanese peoples' hopes for self-determination. At times, he overshadowed more established organizations and sparked jealousy from other activists.

Although open opposition to the Nationalists was impossible, one organization proved difficult for the government to control. The Presbyterian Church played a key role in Taiwan's politics by fostering many of the island's native-born elite, offering an avenue for dissemination of Western political as well as religious ideas, and providing a noncommunist framework for dissent against ruling regimes (whether Japanese or Nationalist).⁵³ The Church focused on the needs of the Taiwanese after the Japanese forced foreign missionaries to leave in 1940. Native-born Church members promoted—and thus helped to define—Taiwanese culture and language in the face of Japanese, then Nationalist Chinese, attempts to inculcate their own national culture on the island. The Church never formally allied itself with any Taidu organization, but a disproportionate share of its members became supporters of independence, including Thomas Liao, Peng Ming-min, many opposition leaders who remained on the island, and future President Lee Teng-hui.

The Presbyterian Church consistently supported greater political rights for those who advocated democratization or independence, but never endorsed violence. Three key statements by the Church illustrated this institution's dangerous dance under Nationalist rule. The December 1971 declaration, "Public Statement on Our National Fate" (*Guoshi shengming*) rejected the possibility of Communist rule and demanded that the island's fate be determined by its inhabitants. In 1975, these themes appeared again in "On Appeal," which called for freedom of religion and human rights. Finally, the 1977 "Declaration on Human Rights" called upon the United States to preserve the independence and security of Taiwan.⁵⁴ These statements, and the presence of so many dissidents in the Church, led to growing police surveillance and pressure in the 1970s. At times, the Presbyterian Church became more directly involved in opposition activities. Several Church members were arrested for their role in protecting Shih Ming-te

(Shi Mingde), a prominent opposition leader and general manager of *Formosa* magazine, who was sought by police after the Kaohsiung Incident of 1979.⁵⁵ Silencing the Presbyterian Church proved problematic for the Nationalists, as the arrest of Christians was certain to spark criticism in the United States.

Lack of unity, as much as Nationalist oppression, prevented progress. Activists could agree upon two broad goals: to overthrow Nationalist rule and to prevent the Chinese Communists from taking possession of the island. The question of means, however, sparked constant conflict. In an attempt to unify the movement, in 1970, representatives from the United States, Japan, Taiwan, Canada, and Europe established the World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI, *Taiwan duli lianmeng*), which became the most famous organization.⁵⁶ Independence advocates also worked in other places where Taiwanese students or immigrants lived, including the Philippines and South Korea, and established a South American branch of WUFI. Chang Ts'an-hung (Zhang Canhong) became the face of WUFI for almost two decades, as chairman from 1973 to 1987 and 1991 to 1995.⁵⁷ Chang, like many champions of independence, was born in southern Taiwan in 1936. After earning an engineering degree from National Taiwan University, Chang studied at Rice University, where he became active in the movement. His support of socialism during the 1970s (although by no means ardent) and his long tenure sparked controversy among other activists who wished to lead WUFI. WUFI's ability to bring discipline was limited as national chapters often went their own way, and many of the top leaders served as chairmen of their own organizations. Untangling personal egos from policy differences proved difficult. For example, Peng Ming-min led WUFI in 1972, and then tended to work in other, smaller, organizations, or independently. His relationship with WUFI would be difficult for decades.

Terrorism proved one of the most controversial issues in the history of the TIM. In the 1970s and early 1980s, many of those connected to WUFI called for revolution—usually defined as the overthrow of the Nationalist government.⁵⁸ The most infamous event of the TIM's violent period was the April 1970 attempt on the life of Chiang Ching-kuo during his visit to New York City. Shooter and WUFI member Huang Wen-hsiung (Huang Wenxiong) and an accomplice were quickly arrested. Both jumped bail, but were found guilty in absentia.⁵⁹ Officially, WUFI condemned the attack:

The incident connected with Chiang Ching-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek's son and heir apparent, on April 24, 1970, at the Hotel Plaza in New York is

unfortunate and deplorable. As we made clear immediately after the incident, the World United Formosans for Independence is in no way associated with or responsible for the vigorous and dramatic act.⁶⁰

However, WUFI also defended the two, claiming that Huang did not actually fire at Chiang Ching-kuo and that he and his accomplice were “assaulted by the N.Y. Police and Chiang’s personal security guard.”⁶¹ Criticism of the movement increased in 1973 when another independence supporter murdered a Nationalist official in Paris. Taidu leaders found themselves trapped between the respectability that came with rejecting violence and the legitimacy brought by militancy.

Independence publications illustrate the radicalism of the early 1970s. WUFI’s *Taidu yuekan*, first published in March 1972, printed speeches by Peng Ming-min, manifestos, and reports on activities as its predecessor, *The Independent Formosan*, had done. It also included items such as a self-quiz on guerilla warfare on Taiwan.⁶² WUFI’s “Taiwan People’s Independence Salvation Handbook” printed in *Taidu* in 1972, made clear that terrorism was acceptable. The handbook included instructions on bomb making and arson.⁶³ *Taidu* printed alleged reports from activists on the island itself, detailing attempts to assassinate Nationalist officials or Taiwanese who supported the regime, and to destroy property and infrastructure.⁶⁴ In 1976, WUFI’s Taiwan branch claimed responsibility for bombing a power line near Kaohsiung, and seriously wounding Taiwan Provincial Chairman Hsieh Tung-min (Xie Dongmin) with a letter bomb. In 1979, independence activists briefly took over the Nationalists’ diplomatic office in Los Angeles. There followed a series of small arsons and bombings on Taiwan in 1980, for which WUFI’s Taiwan branch claimed credit.

To what extent did WUFI control violence on Taiwan? Certainly, WUFI members and other independence supporters were involved in terrorism, but it is difficult to prove that leading figures in the movement initiated any attacks. WUFI was not a highly centralized or disciplined organization—at times it acted more as an umbrella for other groups around the world.⁶⁵ These acts did nothing to advance the cause of independence, frightened away potential Taiwanese supporters, and reduced Japanese and American support. The Nationalists saw bombings and attempted assassinations as justification for continued political oppression on the island. By 1982, WUFI had firmly renounced violence.⁶⁶ As had been the case with socialism, the attempt to use violence in the service of nationalism would accomplish little for the Taiwanese.

CONFRONTING POLITICAL CHANGE ON TAIWAN

Taiwanese independence activists would benefit from a series of political trends they neither caused nor controlled. First, the ROC’s growing international isolation raised questions about the regime’s legitimacy and the island’s future. Richard Nixon announced the secret talks with Beijing in July 1971, the ROC left the United Nations in October 1971, Japan switched recognition to the PRC in September 1972, and the United States formally switched recognition and announced the termination of the mutual security pact in January 1979.⁶⁷ Second, Chiang Kai-shek’s death in 1975 symbolized the decline of the mainland-born Nationalists and the waning of the ideology of the Three Principles of the People, staunch anti-communism, and promises of restoring Taiwan to China. Third, Taiwan’s “economic miracle” created a social base for political change as a growing middle class demanded increased attention to its concerns.⁶⁸ The terms of political debate shifted, as these prosperous Taiwanese had less interest in “saving” China, promoting anti-communism, or achieving unification with the mainland, a place few of them had ever been. Democratization, quality of life, corruption, and Taiwan’s international status became the principal political issues.⁶⁹

These developments emboldened the opposition on the island. Since the late 1940s, some Taiwanese who did not join the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) did compete in elections and attempted to influence state policies (or at least limit their harmful effects upon islanders). They made up a small portion of those elected to the county, provincial, or national assemblies. These politicians, who struggled against corrupt elections and a lack of resources, dared not discuss independence in public. Through the 1950s and 1960s, they were careful critics of the regime who attempted to obtain more resources for their constituents or to attack malfeasance by low-level Nationalist officials. The term *dangwai* (“outside the [Nationalist] party”) became popular in the 1970s to describe these Taiwanese, who were forbidden from forming their own political party.

In the late 1970s, some *dangwai* activists started to suggest publicly what had been safe to discuss only from exile. For example, articles in *Meilidao* (Formosa), a magazine by dissidents that began publication in 1979, tested the limits of Nationalist tolerance by demanding immediate democratic reform and by discussing Taiwan’s international status. Hsu Hsin-liang (Xu Xinliang), Lin I-hsiung (Lin Yixiong), and other future Democratic Progressive Party leaders who ran *Meilidao* magazine sought publicity for their

cause by organizing a demonstration on Human Rights Day, December 10, in Kaohsiung, a city on Taiwan's southwest coast. The rally focused on the need for democratic reform and the protection of human rights, but many of the speakers, including future Vice President Lu Hsiu-lien (Lu Xiulian, "Annette"), came very close to calling for independence by claiming that Taiwan's status had not been determined with finality. She suggested that mainlanders were outsiders, stating that only a "small minority" did not "regard Taiwan as their homeland."⁷⁰ In what became known as the Kaohsiung or Meilidao Incident, hostility between protestors and police soon degenerated into a riot, which the Nationalists claimed injured almost 200 police officers. In reaction, the Nationalists arrested leaders of the opposition movement and gave many lengthy prison sentences.⁷¹ This short-term victory for the government became a rallying cry for the opposition and sparked international criticism of the regime. With few exceptions, for the next two decades resistance to the Nationalists would be dominated by those involved in the events of December 1979.

As had been the case with Peng Ming-min's 1964 declaration, the Incident briefly united the far-flung branches of the pro-independence community. The major groups issued a joint statement denouncing the arrests and claiming that the Nationalists were perpetrating another February 28 "tragedy": Japan's Independent Taiwan Society led by Shih Ming; the remnants of Liao Wen-i's provisional government; the Overseas Alliance for Democratic Rule in Taiwan led by Kuo Yü-hsin (Guo Yuxin); Hsu Hsin-liang, who had recently come to the United States; WUFI chaired by Chang Ts'an-hung, and the Taiwan-American Society led by Peng Ming-min.⁷² The number of groups joining in the declaration of solidarity, however, indicated the fractured nature of the movement, where each major leader tended to have his own organization. Membership in many of the groups within this constantly shifting coalition was small. Personality, rather than policy, continued to shape the TIM.

Tensions persisted between those who focused on Taidu in exile, and those who had remained on the island and participated in electoral politics under the watchful eye of the Nationalist police or were arrested after the Incident.⁷³ For example, Kuo Yü-hsin and Hsu Hsin-liang, two well-known politicians turned exiles, had difficult relations with WUFI.⁷⁴ Both sought to link the movement in exile with the realities of electoral politics under martial law on Taiwan. They possessed strong credentials as dissidents but could not translate their legitimacy into effective organizations.⁷⁵ In 1974, Kuo, an independent politician and Presbyterian Church member, lost a close election to a Nationalist candidate. The protests over voting irregularities in this contest brought more pressure on Kuo from Nationalist of-

ficials, and he moved to the United States in 1977. His experiences initially gave him some credibility in the diaspora community. He formed the Overseas Alliance for Democratic Rule in Taiwan (*Taiwan minzhu yundong haiwai tongmeng*) in January 1979, but soon found himself criticized for his relative moderation and focus on democratic reform instead of immediate independence. Kuo announced that because the United States and the People's Republic normalized relations, Taiwan merited recognition as a political unit—a statement as close to advocating independence as he was willing to make.⁷⁶ One biographer claimed later that Kuo's organization had no mass base, but was a vital conduit for information about events on Taiwan.⁷⁷ Hsu took a more hardline stance on independence. He had been a successful Taiwanese politician within the Nationalist Party. In 1977, he ran for office and won without the party's endorsement, and thus moved into the ranks of the opposition. When the Nationalists made clear that they viewed Hsu as a trouble-maker and independence advocate, he fled to the United States in 1979. There, he would establish a plethora of groups while awaiting the opportunity to return to the island.⁷⁸

At a 1983 meeting at the University of Delaware, leading independence advocates demonstrated the conflicts endemic to the movement. Besides personal rivalries and personality clashes, the role of socialism and democracy were contentious issues. Hsu Hsin-liang, who focused on his future political career on Taiwan, emphasized that his goal was to advance the revolutionary resistance movement on the island itself.⁷⁹ He assured participants that the current stage of revolution was democratic, not socialist.⁸⁰ Longtime activist Shih Ming noted that the class conflict normally predicted in socialist theory was different on Taiwan, as it was a colony under Nationalist rule. The primary contradiction was the national (*minzu*) problem, not class conflict.⁸¹ Nevertheless, Shih was accused of supporting communism.⁸² The WUFI representative claimed that his organizations' main goal was "comprehensive warfare" (*zongtizhan*). Although not rejecting the possibility of armed struggle, he encouraged activists to engage in a legal, democratic, and foreign affairs struggle in order to promote the cause.⁸³ Hsu was subtly portrayed as an interloper. One WUFI leader claimed that officers in their organization were elected based on their ability, not their age or reputation.⁸⁴ He noted that Hsu advocated democracy, but that organizations with internal democracy, such as WUFI, provided the best example and guarantee of successful political change on the island.⁸⁵ WUFI participants also called attention to their long-standing dedication to the cause and systematic efforts to build up the organization on the island itself. As evidenced by the 1984 elections, however, WUFI was not democratic enough for some of its members. The organization split as

some of those who lost resigned, attacking Chang Ts'an-hung and other leaders as undemocratic and ineffective.⁸⁶

WUFI survived these conflicts to remain the largest and most prominent Taidu organization, and to expand its efforts. The “foreign affairs” struggle referenced by Li became a key aspect of the TIM even as Americans became slightly more receptive to Taiwanese dissidents. The end of official ties to Taipei in 1979 caused a few more Americans to acknowledge the possibility of the island’s permanent separation from China. The arrests after the Kaohsiung Incident, the brutal murder of opposition leader Lin I-hsiung’s family, and the Chiang Nan murder also sparked more criticism of the Nationalists and advocacy of democratic reform on the island.⁸⁷ In 1982, the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA, *Taiwanren gong-gong shiwu xiehui*) was established in the United States as an offshoot of WUFI. This group focused on lobbying American politicians to support democracy and self-determination for Taiwan.

The Association’s activities would highlight another shift in the TIM. The decline of the ROC’s international position and the PRC’s increasing power made Beijing’s claim to Taiwan a growing problem. FAPA’s goal, one spokesman noted, was to prevent the Chinese Communists from invading the island.⁸⁸ In 1983, one FAPA representative decried America’s acceptance of Beijing’s claim to the island while ignoring the desires of the Taiwanese people.⁸⁹ Whatever the logic of FAPA’s arguments, the island’s fate remained hostage to larger geopolitical and economic concerns. While the Nationalists’ China Lobby had largely faded away, a formidable array of business leaders, scholars, diplomats, and officials were determined to improve PRC-US relations by supporting the one China policy.

INDEPENDENCE ACTIVISTS IN POWER: PRAGMATISM AND COMPROMISE

Despite arrests after the Kaohsiung Incident and continued intimidation, non-Kuomintang politicians and intellectuals grew more vocal, and in 1986 formed the DPP (*Minzhu jinbudang*), the first meaningful opposition the Nationalists had faced since the retreat to Taiwan. The opposition’s assertiveness coincided with the Nationalists’ flexibility. Chiang Ching-kuo had recognized the need to legitimize the regime by bringing more Taiwanese into the Nationalist Party and government ranks, and by initiating steps toward political reform. Through a process known as Taiwanization, Chiang promoted native-born Nationalists, such as Lee Teng-hui (Li Denghui), to higher ranking positions.⁹⁰ With the end of martial law in

1987, wide-ranging reforms followed, including the relaxation of controls over the press, speech, assembly, and political groups.⁹¹ In this environment, the DPP expanded its influence upward from towns, to districts, to the province, and to national-level bodies.⁹²

Separatists played pivotal roles in establishing the DPP and provided some of its most adamant support. The new party, however, made independence only one of many issues in its platform, and its leadership fiercely debated how to prioritize the quest for international recognition, democratization, rule of law, economic development, environmental protection, and a host of other domestic problems. The party was divided between the Formosa faction and the New Tide faction—both of which were more firmly rooted on the island than most of the diaspora activists. The Formosa faction, which grew out of the leadership of *Meilidao* magazine, was more moderate on the independence issue, and instead focused on winning elections. More radical DPP leaders in the New Tide faction demanded a clear commitment to independence and took a less accommodating stance toward the Nationalist Party.

DPP leaders found that electoral victory, particularly in island-wide contests, often required downplaying separatism, as voters feared a military attack from the PRC would result from a declaration of independence. Although many Taiwanese were eager to vote for an alternative to the Nationalists, they rejected any action that might threaten their hard-won economic success. In particular, attracting the support of Taiwanese business leaders, many of whom wished to invest on the mainland, required that DPP leaders emphasize their ability to protect the economic growth brought by Nationalist policies rather than to risk a violent confrontation with the PRC. During the 1990s, DPP pragmatism on the independence issue appeared to grow with electoral success and the responsibility it brought, as well as a generational change to the post-*Meilidao* generation.⁹³ Of those arrested after 1979’s Kaohsiung Incident, only Annette Lu remains powerful. Nevertheless, the DPP became the single most important forum for further dissemination of separatist ideology, particularly as it used electoral victories to shape education, language, and cultural policies on the island.

TIM leaders lobbied the DPP more vocally to back independence, and to elect their strongest supporters.⁹⁴ After Chiang Ching-kuo’s death in 1988 the Taiwan branch of WUFI began to operate in public. In 1992, WUFI held its annual meeting in Taipei—the movement’s center of gravity had shifted from Japan and the United States to the island itself. The transition from adamant critics in exile to participants in the political process required compromises. Simply appealing to Taiwanese solidarity against the mainland-dominated Nationalist regime was no longer terribly successful.

WUFI, which changed its name to the Taiwan Independence Nation Building League (*Taiwan duli jian'guo lianmeng*) in 1987, expanded its agenda to include many of the issues present in the DPP platform. For example, its 1992 platform called for the expected, such as a One Taiwan and One China solution, the establishment of a Republic of Taiwan, and the promotion of a uniquely Taiwanese culture, and also advocated greater environmental protection, safeguarding the rights of aborigines, and expanded social welfare programs.⁹⁵ WUFI—the organization continued to use the English acronym—also toned down its anti-mainlander rhetoric by accepting the idea that the definition of Taiwanese is based on choice, not race or ethnicity: “Anyone who identifies with Taiwan, loves Taiwan, and wishes to be part of Taiwan’s destiny, regardless of when they immigrated or were born on Taiwan, all will be equal citizens of Taiwan after independence.”⁹⁶ By the 1990s most of the TIM had abandoned the old paradigm that portrayed all mainlanders as illegitimate intruders into Taiwan’s polity.

Those who had dedicated their lives to independence had to become part of the electoral process on the island. After the implementation of democratic reforms, Peng Ming-min returned to Taiwan in 1992 and ran for president under the DPP banner in 1996. Nothing better symbolized the dilemmas of the TIM than the fact that a pro-independence politician competed as the opposition party’s candidate for the presidency of the Republic of China, thus legitimating the very political system Peng and others had sworn to overthrow. The DPP platform reflected the separatist agenda, promising to “Promote Taiwan culture, incorporating modern and native cultural elements” and

Overcome diplomatic isolation, expand international activism, and elevate Taiwan’s national status. Taiwan must abandon the ‘one China’ policy and announce to the world that Taiwan is an independent sovereign state wishing to establish normal diplomatic relations with all peace-loving countries of the world.

The platform also directly contested the unifiers’ discourse on the island’s history: “The current system of standardized textbooks and curriculum in elementary and junior high schools should be abolished. Political ideology and propaganda premised on a ‘great China’ ideology must be strictly prohibited.”⁹⁷ Peng claimed that the election of 1996 offered Taiwanese an opportunity to further the struggle of the Taiwanese people, who have “withstood centuries of foreign domination, pogroms, and political terror.”⁹⁸ He lost the election to Lee Teng-hui primarily because the Taiwanese remained ambivalent over their future as a nation and unsure of the ability of this ar-

dent nationalist to lead the state.⁹⁹ Peng’s defeat strengthened those in the DPP who wished to focus on domestic issues, with independence as a long-term goal.

The TIM did not and does not control the DPP; rather it appears hostage to the party for influence. Those who felt that the party lacked dedication to independence proved unable to build a viable alternative. For example, in October 1996 the Taiwan Independence Party (*Jian'guodang*) was formed by disaffected DPP members who believed their former party lacked commitment to independence and who did not like then-chairman Shih Ming-te’s willingness to compromise with other parties, such as the pro-unification New Party, in order to advance the DPP agenda in the Legislative Yuan. The party, which lost many members after Chen Shui-bian won the 2000 election, was led by academics with limited experience in administration. It never seriously threatened the DPP’s base of support.

Even as the TIM struggled to define its role in a newly democratized Taiwan, a Nationalist made substantive moves toward independence. Whether out of sincere belief or more cynical motives, Lee Teng-hui undermined the movement by shifting close enough to independence to draw the mainland’s wrath and gain some TIM support, but not far enough to satisfy many of the most ardent activists, particularly those in exile. Lee quietly moved up the Nationalist hierarchy to become Vice-President in 1984, then President in his own right in 1988 after Chiang Ching-kuo’s death. He surprised observers not only by managing to remain in office, but also by engineering the retirement of the mainland-born premier, controlling the Nationalist Party and its vast financial resources, and winning re-election in 1990 and 1996. In both rhetoric and action, Lee drifted away from the mainlander vision of the Chinese nation and Nationalist state, but usually with carefully calculated ambiguity. Although economic, social, cultural, and political contacts with the mainland expanded dramatically during his tenure, the president antagonized Beijing with statements that cast doubt on his commitment to unification.

Lee expressed his ambivalence over unification most freely to foreign journalists, thus giving ammunition to those who associated separatism with outside interference. For example, in a November 1997 interview with an American reporter, he called Taiwan a sovereign independent state (*zhuquan duli de guojia*).¹⁰⁰ At least one magazine in Taiwan pointed out that his views seemed more radical than Peng Ming-min’s.¹⁰¹ In July 1999 Lee openly repudiated the one China principle in an interview with German correspondents, stating that the cross strait relationship was state to state (*guojia yu guojia*) in nature, or “at least a special *guo yu guo* relationship.”¹⁰² Although at first glance Lee appeared to accept the Taiwanese nationalists’

vision of the island and its ties to the mainland, the President's actual statement was less clear-cut. He emphasized that because the ROC has been an independent and sovereign state since 1912, there was no need to declare Taiwan's independence.¹⁰³ Rather than suggesting that the Taiwanese had become a nation through choice and common experience, as independence activists often do, he described the ROC on Taiwan as a political equal to the People's Republic based on the continuity of its government from the mainland. Thus a Taiwan-born Nationalist had effectively appropriated the independence issue.

Lee's formulation was largely adopted by Lien Chan (Lian Zhan), the Nationalist candidate for president in 2000, and his opponent, DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian.¹⁰⁴ As he had done during his earlier successful quest for the Taipei mayoralty, Chen took a relatively moderate position on independence during the 2000 contest. He accepted the DPP platform favoring independence and selected a staunch separatist, American educated Annette Lu, as his vice president. Chen, who won the election with a plurality of the votes, also reassured voters that stability and prosperity were his first priorities. His inaugural pledge of the Five No's (not to declare independence, not to change the national title, not to put state-to-state relations in the Constitution, not to promote a referendum on independence, and not to abolish the Guidelines for National Unification and the National Unification Council) dismayed TIM activists, but did not satisfy Beijing. The mainland state, party, media, and academia brought pressure upon the "leader of the Taiwan authorities" (the term most frequently used in the PRC) to enter into talks on political reunification on Beijing's terms. The leaders of the PRC and those on Taiwan who still support unification decried his refusal unconditionally to accept the '92 Consensus.¹⁰⁵

During the first Chen administration, WUFI focused less on demanding an immediate declaration of independence and more upon a series of smaller steps that would tend to make unification more difficult. In 2002 and 2003, WUFI sought to promote the Confucian concept of "rectification of names" (*zhengming*) in order to substitute "Taiwan" for China as the government's official title. It also continued long-term projects, such as advocacy of Taiwan's admittance into the United Nations as an independent nation, and the creation of a Taiwan passport.¹⁰⁶ WUFI and other related groups have urged Chen to take a hard line against the PRC and to resist any moves toward unification.¹⁰⁷ Ironically, their approach to expanding economic ties with the mainland resembles that of the "old" Nationalists, as they are concerned that trade and investment will create a dangerous de-

pendence upon Beijing. Lobbying efforts in the United States and Japan continue, and now focus on the potential threat from the People's Republic. Through the DPP, WUFI, and FAPA, independence supporters have taken up where the old China Lobby left off—emphasizing the need for vigilance against an aggressive Beijing.

In the run-up to the 2004 presidential election Chen began to take a more assertive stance toward independence, much to the dismay of Washington and Beijing. The President's policies seemed motivated by a complex mixture of cynical political opportunism and nationalist idealism. In light of a high unemployment rate and questions over his administration's competence, he sought to sway voters by goading the mainland government into threatening the island as it had done during the 1996 election of Lee Teng-hui. Chen, facing the last four years of his long political career, may have come to believe that he must secure his place in history by pushing the island toward permanent separation from the mainland. Further, he and other DPP leaders may feel that Taiwan consciousness has spread sufficiently as to support radical changes. Chen used an appeal to the democratic process, an island-wide referendum, to promote the principle that the island's people could vote on important issues—thus opening the door to a vote on independence in the future. After a great deal of heated debate, the president was able to include a referendum with the March 2004 presidential poll. Voters were asked to decide whether to increase Taiwan's anti-missile defenses if the PRC refused to remove hundreds of short-range missiles pointed at the island, and whether to enter talks with the PRC based on an ill-defined peace and stability framework. Chen eked out a narrow victory with 50.1 percent of the vote, although the referendum failed to obtain the required support of half of the registered voters.¹⁰⁸

Despite the lack of a clear mandate, Chen expressed greater determination to push ahead with measures that will sorely test Beijing's patience, including a new constitution, to be voted upon in a referendum in 2006 and to go into effect in 2008 (perhaps just before the Beijing Olympics). He claimed that this constitution would have no impact on relations with the mainland, but would focus on clarifying the duties of the president and the division of powers among branches of government.¹⁰⁹ PRC officials feared that the process of constitutional revision, once begun, would quickly grow to include pro-independence clauses such as changing the name of ROC to the Republic of Taiwan. To the mainland government, Chen's plans represented a clear timetable for independence. At the very least, the President is creating a framework for Taiwanese to make this choice.

CONCLUSION

Taidu supporters have endured a half century of disappointment. In 1967, *The Independent Formosa* noted that

The time for change should come when 1) Communist China enters into the United Nations, 2) Chiang Kai-shek dies, 3) Troops on the island of Quemoy and Matsu are withdrawn, or 4) America discontinues its military aid to the Nationalist Chinese Government. The fourth point is the least likely.¹¹⁰

Separatists witnessed all but one of these events, with few immediate results. The TIM experience is that of a disorderly, faction-ridden nationalist coalition lacking international support that is nevertheless stumbling toward success today. Political change on Taiwan did not meet independence advocates' expectations, as it was marked by gradual and peaceful reform rather than sudden revolution. TIM leaders have faced a difficult transition from exiled or underground conspirators to party politicians and lobbyists. For most of the movement's history, separatists assumed that a Taiwanese nation (here meaning a community of like-minded individuals) existed and that the Taiwanese would welcome a republic. Thus, independence required the overthrow of the Nationalist state. In the wake of democratization and Taiwanization, however, TIM advocates now influence the state through the DPP, and appear to have an increasingly confident Chen Shuibian to champion their cause. Democracy has proved a double-edged sword, as elections and survey data indicate that most Taiwanese remain ambivalent about their national identity. Even if islanders believe they are part of a Taiwanese nation, this does not necessarily mean that such sentiments will override concerns over the tangible dangers of a formal declaration of independence. In this context, the movement's leaders now find themselves working through the state in order to build or strengthen a Taiwanese national consciousness. Ironically, they utilize the same institutions that they previously attacked for forcefully Sinicizing the Taiwanese.

DPP politicians largely echo the TIM when they promote the idea of an island-wide identity that combines elements of aboriginal, Chinese, Japanese, and Western culture.¹¹¹ Policies designed to create, reinforce, or protect this culture could prove key to strengthening an imagined community and thus furthering the nation-building project. History, long a key tool of nationalists, is a good example of TIM efforts in this realm. Over the last two decades, Taiwan has experienced an explosion of interest and publica-

tions about the island's recent past. The most visible manifestation of this trend was the creation of an Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office within the Academia Sinica, the premier research institution in the Republic of China. This and similar organizations represented the fruits of political change, and provided an opportunity to disseminate a new version of Taiwan's history. History, in turn, offered an intellectual "sanction" for expanding support of independence. Backers of independence create their own narrative to illustrate the island's differences from the mainland, and a long-term drive for separation from outside political entities, be they Chinese or Japanese. Pro-independence scholars advocate studying the island with less reference to the mainland, and certainly not as a case study for other provinces of China.¹¹² Curricula and textbooks increasingly follow a "Taiwan-centered" version of the island's history, rather than the Nationalists' old narrative of the island as one province of China.¹¹³

From the end of World War II until the 1990s, the Nationalists' educational, cultural, and propaganda organs attempted to highlight one version of the island's history, that of Taiwan province, and to convince the Taiwanese that they were Chinese and that the government in Taipei represented China. This narrative was backed up by a brutal police state and international support. Today, the TIM is working through a democratic system to forge a new version of Taiwan's history and, by extension, identity. These gradual changes may not shift islanders toward demanding formal and permanent independence from China, but more than any single policy statement, public protest, or interest group, it might serve to make unification unthinkable to a new generation of Taiwanese. Should the island's population decide to court military conflict with the mainland by declaring independence, Chen appears to be preparing the path for that final, and fateful, break.