

TAIWANESE IDENTITY AND THE MEMORIES OF 2-28: A CASE FOR POLITICAL RECONCILIATION

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This article examines how the native Taiwanese identity has been formulated in the 20th century, and how this identity affects the relations between the native Taiwanese and Mainlander minorities. During the Kuomintang's (KMT) authoritarian rule on Taiwan, Mainlanders considered themselves distinct and enjoyed more privileges than the natives. The 2-28 Massacre of 1947 and the following oppressive policies toward the natives by the KMT regime reinforced the distrust and animosity between native Taiwanese and Mainlanders. This article finds that it is very difficult to achieve reconciliation and rebuild a common identity among all groups in Taiwan, as neither the KMT nor the following government of the Democratic Progressive Party was able to build a new Taiwanese identity on the basis of ethnic reconciliation. Yet efforts by both sides to uncover the truth and seek justice about the Massacre have made progress. Taiwan's attainment of "transitional justice" appears in the later part of the article.

Key words: Taiwanese nationalism, national identity, 2-28 Massacre, transitional justice

Introduction

Taiwan boasts a young and vibrant democracy consisting of two major political camps, a pro-China “pan-Blue” camp, led by the Kuomintang (KMT, the Nationalist Party), and a pro-Taiwan independence “pan-Green” camp under the guidance of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Although the two camps disagree on virtually every political and ideological issue, they do have one thing in common: Every year on February 28, DPP and KMT politicians attend island-wide memorial ceremonies and the like to commemorate the victims of the “2-28 Massacre” in 1947. Even the president attends the memorial events to express condolences to the families and descendents of the victims.

This scene was unimaginable three decades ago, when Taiwan was still under the KMT’s authoritarian rule, and the term “2-28” was taboo. Public discussion of the event was forbidden, and history textbooks made no reference to it. Newspaper archives from 1947 contain scarcely any mention of the incident. Nonetheless, the collective memory of 2-28 was deeply etched into the hearts and minds of the many Taiwan residents who experienced the massacre directly or indirectly.

The 2-28 Massacre and the KMT’s authoritarian rule have been a key element affecting the relations between the native Taiwanese people (*benshengren*), the Han Chinese who have resided on the islands for centuries, and the ruling elites of the KMT government, many of whom were “Mainlanders” (*waishengren*) who came to Taiwan in the late 1940s. For many years there was open hostility and distrust between these two groups. The authoritarian regime once effectively prevented the majority of natives from launching revolt against the Mainlanders. When democratic experiments commenced in the late 1980s, the political barriers separating both groups were suddenly removed. Invariably, political parties exploited identity issues to mobilize popular support. Why did the identity issue resonate with the voters? And why did these identity clashes between the native Taiwanese and the Mainlanders not cast society into ethnic mayhem?

Studies on the subject of ethnic politics in Taiwan often

focus on how political identities (being Taiwanese or Chinese) continue to shape people's political views on the island's political future. These studies address the issue of whether political agendas resemble their identity preferences, such as the perception that those who support independence are mostly native Taiwanese, whereas Mainlanders are keen for unification with the mainland.¹ To understand the dynamics of identity politics in Taiwan, some scholars employ statistics and public surveys to examine the connections between identities and their political preferences.² Others focus on how the growing Taiwanese identity affects the government's policies toward Beijing and reshapes the strategic relations among Taiwan, China, and the United States.³

From these perspectives, conflict or reconciliation between opposite identities becomes an important element in understanding the direction of Taiwan's political development. Yet these studies narrowly focus on the political identities of Taiwanese people in the context of Taiwan-China interactions, and conclude that national identities have often been manipulated by political parties. How such identities were formulated, and how they evolved during the authoritarian and later democratic eras, is rarely explored.

In this article we examine how the native Taiwanese identity

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1. Lowell Dittmer's article provides an excellent overview of how scholars look at the identity issue in the studies of Taiwanese politics and Taiwan-China relations. See Dittmer, "Taiwan and the Issue of National Identity," *Asian Survey*, vol. 44, No. 4 (July-August, 2004), pp. 475-83.
 2. Emerson M. S. Niu, "Understanding Taiwan Independence and Its Policy Implications," *Asian Survey*, vol. 44, No. 4 (July-August, 2004), pp. 555-67; T. Y. Wang and I-chou Liu, "Contending Identities in Taiwan: Implications for Cross-Strait Relations," *Asian Survey*, vol. 44, No. 4 (July-August, 2004), pp. 568-90.
 3. John Fu-sheng Hsieh, "National Identity and Taiwan's Mainland Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 13, No. 40 (August, 2004), pp. 479-90; Yun-han Chu, "Taiwan's National Identity Politics and the Prospect of Cross-Strait Relations," *Asian Survey*, vol. 44, No. 4 (July-August, 2004), pp. 484-512; Yu-Shan Wu, "Taiwanese Nationalism and Its Implications: Testing the Worst-Case Scenario," *Asian Survey*, vol. 44, No. 4 (July-August, 2004), pp. 614-25.

has been formulated in the 20th century, despite the fact that all main groups did not share the feeling of being in the same *ethnic* group, and how this native identity has affected relations with the Mainlanders, who for many years considered themselves distinct and enjoyed more privileges than the natives. Our assumption is that the 2-28 Massacre of 1947 and the following oppressive policies toward the natives by the KMT regime reinforced the distrust and animosity between native Taiwanese and Mainlanders. It is very difficult to achieve reconciliation and rebuild a common identity among all groups in Taiwan. Yet efforts from both sides to uncover the truth and seek justice (e.g., 2-28 Massacre) have made progress toward this end. Taiwan's attainment of "transitional justice" appears in the later part of the article.

Formation of Taiwan Identity/ies and the February 28 Massacre

Identity Formation Among the Major Ethnic Groups

There are four major ethnic groups in Taiwan: Indigenous Peoples (*Yuanzhumin*, 2 percent), Mainlanders (*Waishengren*, 13 percent), Hakkas (*Kejiaren*, 15 percent), and Hoklos (*Fulaoren*, 70 percent). Having lived in Taiwan for centuries, indigenous peoples are the earliest inhabitants; they are ethnically and culturally distinct from the Chinese. The remaining three groups are basically Han Chinese: Hoklos and Hakkas are descendants of Han settlers/immigrants who migrated to Taiwan from southern China between the early 17th and late 19th century, when Taiwan was under the rule of the Qing Empire of China.⁴ Mainlanders are Chinese who migrated to Taiwan between 1945 and 1949. Most of them were soldiers and refugees who fled their

4. Taiwan was colonized by the Dutch East Indian Company from 1624 to 1662 and then, until 1683, came under the rule of Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong), a military leader loyal to the Ming Dynasty. Parts of northern Taiwan were shortly occupied by the Spaniards in the mid-17th century.

homeland because of intensified civil war between the KMT and the communists.

The differences among these three groups lie in languages, customs, and ancestral birthplaces. Hoklos came from Fujian (Hokkien) Province of southern China and spoke a southern Fujian dialect. Most of them settled down in the plains and urban areas, and engaged in trade, business, or farming. Hakkas originally came from Guangdong (Canton) Province and southern Fujian; they speak the Hakka dialect. They settled in rural and hilly areas, and were predominantly farmers. Relations between early Hoklo and Hakka settlers were hardly peaceful. Prior to Japanese colonization, Taiwan was plagued with armed conflicts between these groups.

Mainlanders migrated to Taiwan only after World War II. Their collective identity was firmly secured by the state's practice of registering a citizen's "place of origin" (*ji guan*). Some of these people may not be Han Chinese (e.g., Manchurians, Mongolians, Muslims, Tibetans, or other ethnic minorities from China), but as they all shared bitter memories of fleeing from communist rule and taking refuge in Taiwan, intentionally or unintentionally, a unique Mainlander identity developed and transcended ethnic lines. Until recently, a great number of Mainlanders lived in designated areas called "military dependents' villages" (*juancun*) as they or their relatives were professional military personnel.

Upon first glance, it appears that there is ample space for coalition making and reconciliation among all four ethnic groups, since the differences are not visible and Hoklos, Hakkas, and Mainlanders are all Han Chinese by ethnicity. However, owing to differences in language, self-identity, and interpretations of history, ethnic cleavages in Taiwan have so far manifested themselves, initially in the form of clan feuds, and in recent decades in electoral competition. The most serious ethnic disputes are found in the extended power struggle between Mainlanders and the other three groups. Two historical events played significant roles in shaping and consolidating such inter-group cleavages: Japanese colonization from 1895 to 1945 and the

KMT's authoritarian rule after 1945.

Early Hoklo and Hakka settlers on Taiwan built their identities based on birthplaces and kinships. After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, the defeated Qing Empire decided to cede Taiwan to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. This transfer of sovereignty without local people's consent generated two effects: first, all Han settlers suddenly lost their connections with the mainland, and were forced to become Japanese citizens; and second, Japanese rulers imposed discriminatory policies of separating the local Taiwanese. This encouraged Hoklos and Hakkas to form a new collective identity—for the first time Han Chinese in Taiwan saw themselves as a distinctive ethnic group different from Japanese.⁵

In the 1930s, when Japan began conquering mainland China, the colonial government on the island introduced new laws to assimilate local Taiwanese. The assimilation policies were quite effective: Many young Taiwanese even proudly joined the Japanese armed forces during the world war to show their loyalty to the imperial government. Yet most Taiwanese still resisted and maintained a clearly non-Japanese identity.⁶ Growing literacy and forced education during the Japanese era also spawned a large number of intellectuals, including professionals, teachers and medical doctors. These intellectuals showed tremendous frustration under the colonial rule as they excelled in various fields in the society but were still treated as secondary-class citizens by the colonizers. Many of them later became the pioneers of Taiwanese nationalistic movements.

5. During the Japanese colonial era, certain terms were created to classify the different ethnic groups in Taiwan. Taiwanese (Hoklos and Hakkas) called themselves Islanders (*honto rin*) and called Japanese Inlanders (*naichi rin*). Japanese rulers sometimes used a discriminatory term, "slaves of Manchurians," (*chiangolo*) to refer to Han Chinese in Taiwan. Japan treated the aboriginals as a different group from Han Chinese and called them mountain people (*takasago zoku*).

6. Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2004), p. 9.

Origins and Explanations of 2-28

After Japan's surrender in 1945, the Allies unfortunately ignored the Taiwanese people's right to self-determination and chose to hand Taiwan over to the KMT government of China. At first the local Taiwanese welcomed KMT officials and troops as liberators, but they soon learned these Chinese compatriots viewed Taiwan as newly conquered territory. They not only substituted Mainlanders for Japanese in all political institutions; they also exploited the resources of the island to rebuild war-torn China. The local elite were excluded from power because the KMT officials distrusted these "Japanized" intellectuals.

Years of war with Japan made KMT officials and Mainlanders extremely hostile toward all vestiges of Japanese influence, but after fifty years of Japanese colonization, the native Taiwanese had gained certain Japanese cultural characteristics, unintentionally or intentionally. For young generations of Taiwanese who had yet to develop a strong native identity, imperial Japan was a far clearer image than motherland China. For instance, Dr. Li Yuan-che, a Taiwanese scientist who won the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1986, once recalled that as a child he never recognized he was a Chinese when Taiwan was returned to China, as his family was greatly assimilated into the Japanese society and he could only speak Japanese.⁷ It was therefore not surprising that Mainlanders tended to treat the natives as Japanese subjects with suspicious eyes.

Moreover, the local people found that many KMT officials were corrupt and the troops undisciplined. This was in contrast to the colonial period, when Japanese rulers endeavored to turn the island into a modern and efficient society. Corruption and mismanagement by the KMT government created serious inflation and unemployment across the island. In early 1947, tensions between the native Taiwanese and the Mainlanders suddenly escalated and finally led to the outbreak of the "2-28 Incident."⁸

7. "Interview with Dr. Lee Yuan-che," *Yuanjian Zazhi* (Global View Monthly), August 1994, pp. 122-26.

8. Kho Ket-tun, *Taiwan jindai fazhan shi* (The Development History of Modern Taiwan) (Taipei: Chien-Wei, 1996), pp. 455-58, 461-64, 471-74, 485-98.

On February 28, 1947, people gathered in Taipei to protest the accidental shooting of a civilian by the police. The protest soon turned into an island-wide uprising against the KMT regime. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek sent fifty thousand troops to Taiwan to suppress the revolt. Local people were arrested and executed without public trials. For many years there has been no accurate count of the total number of people killed. The most frequently cited figure is somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 casualties, many of whom were intellectuals and professionals.⁹ The term “2-28 Incident” strengthened the native consciousness and became a rallying point for the Taiwanese struggle for liberation from alien rulers (i.e. the KMT government).¹⁰

Next, we employ both primordialism and structuralism to explain the identity transformations of Hoklos and Hakkas under Japanese colonization and the KMT’s oppressive rule.¹¹ Primordialists assert that collective identity is based on some core feature, such as lineage, cultural characteristics (language, religion, tradition), or physical traits (such as skin pigment, hair color/texture, or genetic attribute). Accordingly, if one decides to define an ethnic group, or a nation, or prove its existence, he needs to unearth those preexisting essences, the view of which leads to so-called essentialism. Advocates of structuralism (also known as instrumentalism), on the other hand, argue that cultural traits do not necessarily establish a common group identity. Only when these

9. Lee Shiao-feng, “2-28 Incident,” *Taipei Times*, February 28, 2004, at www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2004/02/28/2003100472.

10. Readers who are interested in the history of 2-28 Massacre may refer to the following books: George H. Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965); Lai Tse-Han, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Wou, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991); Steven E. Phillips, *Between Assimilation and Independence: The Taiwanese Encounter Nationalist China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003); Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), ch. 3.

11. For discussions of both theoretical approaches, see John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994).

people begin perceiving a common destiny in the form of deprivation of political power, economic resources, social status, and/or cultural values do they start forming a collective identity. At this juncture, while ethnic differences may be coterminous with ethnic discrimination, they are reinforcing each other within an ethnified state. Oppressed by ethnic elites, the masses acknowledge their common fate and awaken to their collective identity. In short, the primordial perspective focuses on racial/cultural interpretations of identity formation, while the instrumental approach emphasizes how structural arrangements have contributed to the creation and development of group identity.

In Taiwan's case, the most common approach is how an ethnic Chinese identity emerged (a primordialist view) and then strengthened during oppressive rule by alien rulers (a structuralist view). In the eyes of both Hoklo and Hakka elites in the 19th century, the "Western barbarians" (Europeans) who conquered the Chinese Empire and "Eastern barbarians" (Japanese colonizers) who occupied Taiwan were alien rulers regardless of their racial (i.e., Caucasian or Mongolian) stock. The Taiwanese would have appeared to share the view that alien regimes were either the Dutch, Spanish, or Japanese colonial governments.

Further, for Ming Dynasty loyalists, the Manchurian Qing Dynasty that defeated General Koxinga was also denounced as an alien regime. As a result, not only anti-Japanese revolts, such as the Yee-wei Resistance in 1895 and the Chiao-bar-nian Event in 1915, are noted Han nationalist uprisings. The anti-Manchurian Chu-yee-guei (Zhu Yigui) Event in 1721, the Lin swang-wen (Lin Shuangwen) Incident in 1786, and the Dai-chau-chueng (Dai Chaochun) Event in 1862 are also pro-Han uprisings. In other words, in the eyes of the Han settlers in Taiwan, not only were there Western barbarians and Eastern barbarians, but also non-Han Manchurian rulers, judged as alien.¹² As a result, this Han nationalist sentiment is akin to the idea of "Expelling the Barbarians and Recovering Zhonghua" (*quzhu dalu, huifu zhonghua*) espoused by

12. During Dutch rule, there was a Guo-whai-yee Uprising in 1652. Historians estimate 5,000 Han males and their 4,000 spouses were massacred.

the modern Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen.¹³

From the perspectives of Hoklos and Hakkas, waves of alien rule over the past four hundred years have led to the growth of a unique Taiwanese identity. The saying that “every three years witnesses a minor revolt, and every five years beholds a major rebellion” (*sannian yi xiaofan, wunian yi daluan*) applies to Taiwanese resistance to uninvited rulers. For those whose ancestors sailed across the Taiwan Strait and endured onslaughts waged by the indigenous “barbarians,” the island belongs to them only. And they are not to tolerate any unjustified deprivation of the land. It is obvious that this position deliberately ignores the indigenous peoples, as they are the original residents of the island. Nevertheless, as Hoklos and Hakkas have together formed Taiwan’s majority, this pro-Han argument has become the standard interpretation of Taiwanese nationalism and identity in the late 20th century.¹⁴

By the end of World War II, Taiwanese national identity was still caught between the interwoven relationship of primordial Han-Chinese attachment and structural anti-alien reaction. It was not until the outbreak of the February 28 incident in 1947 that the Taiwanese were faced with the reality that Chinese compatriots were more malevolent than the previous Japanese colonizers. After a half-century of one-way yearning for the motherland, the descendents of earlier Han settlers, disillusioned by the ensuing white terrors in the 1950s, began to reflect upon their

13. For anti-Manchurian thoughts in late Qing Dynasty, see Kauko Laitinen, *Chinese Nationalism in the Late Qing Dynasty: Zhang Binglin as an Anti-Manchu Propagandist* (London: Curzon Press, 1990). For the idea of Chinese national identity, see Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, *China’s Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

14. Only Taiwanese nationalist scholars and historians illustrate the island’s history from this perspective. Publication of these books in Taiwan was prohibited before the 1990s as the KMT government considered them anti-China propaganda. See, for instance, Ong Lo-tek (Wang Yu-de), *Taiwan, kumen de lishi* (Taiwan: A Sullen History) (Taipei: Qianwei Chubanshe, 2002); Shih Ming, *A History of Taiwan for the Past Four Hundred Years* (San Jose, Calif.: Formosa Culture, 1980); and Yang Bee-chuan, *Jianming Taiwan shi* (A Concise History of Taiwan) (Kaohsiung: Diyi Chubanshe, 1987).

primordial Han affinity. When they finally realized that the Chinese compatriots were actually new colonizers, their collective destiny evolved into a sense of being “the Orphan of Asia” (*yaxiya de guer*), resulting in a forsaking of their ancestral link with China.¹⁵

Intensified Inter-ethnic Mistrust

In 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the People’s Republic of China in Beijing, the defeated KMT government, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, retreated to Taiwan. After four years of “unification,” Taiwan was separated from China again. Defeated by the communists and compelled to take refuge in Taiwan, the KMT government, still carrying the formal title of “Republic of China,” faced a two-front battle. While struggling to fend off Mao Zedong’s threat to “liberate Taiwan with force” (*wuli jiefang Taiwan*), Chiang Kai-shek also had to keep an eye on his restless Taiwanese subjects.

The KMT government soon declared martial law and imposed severe restrictions on all civil and political activities. In addition, the KMT regime imposed Chinese culture and an anti-Communist ideology on society. Schools were only allowed to teach the history of China, not Taiwan. Students were forced to worship Chiang Kai-shek and participate in KMT campaigns. The ruling KMT also controlled the mass media and censored all printed materials.

Meanwhile, Chiang had to accommodate his two million followers. The military, bureaucracy, and educational institutions vacated by the Japanese colonists were handed over to

15. The term “Orphan of Asia” was originally the title of a novel written by Wu Zhuo-liu, a famous journalist and writer in Taiwan who experienced both Japanese and KMT rule. The author used it to imply the miserable history of Taiwan. The English translation of the novel was recently published: Wu Zhuo-liu, *Orphan of Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

these Mainland refugees. Just as the Japanese had dominated the island's political and economic apparatus before 1945, the Mainlanders were now in the shoes of the former overlords. Moreover, local landlords were forced to give up their lands in the name of "land reform." A small but emerging middle class was bankrupted following "monetary reforms." The masses struggled under tight economic command. Some surviving intellectuals chose to flee overseas. Structural inequalities began overtaking any remaining perceptions of primordial similarities.

Mainlanders had also been discriminated against by the natives. For fear of penetration and potential economic takeover by the Mainlanders, native-owned firms had in the past been reluctant to hire Mainlanders. Usually they would not overtly specify that they did not want any Mainlanders. Instead, they required that potential job candidates be proficient in Taiwanese (i.e., Hoklo). Since most Mainlanders had either been unwilling to learn Taiwanese or lacked any practical opportunity to learn it due to residential segregation, the linguistic stipulation excluded them from entering many native firms.

Language played an important role in strengthening inequalities between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. The so-called National Language Policy (*guoyu zhengce*), a plan to encourage native Taiwanese to learn Mandarin Chinese, was originally designed to promote mutual understandings between the Mainlanders and their reunited "Taiwanese compatriots" after the war. But it was also one of the KMT's attempts to assimilate the natives, whom the elite viewed as vulgar and inferior. Since Hoklo and Hakka were discounted as "dialects," those native students who spoke their mother tongues in schools were punished. To the dismay of the natives, the hours of programming in native languages were severely rationed when television became popular in the 1970s. Further, corrupt Mandarin spoken by the natives had long been ridiculed as Taiwanese Mandarin (*Taiwan guoyu*), with the intention of humiliating the natives and depriving them of collective self-pride.¹⁶ For example, Taiwanese TV figures were

16. A former chair of the Department of Agricultural Economy, National

portrayed as those who spoke clumsy Mandarin. These cultural satires and prejudices created alienation, and eventually helped to bolster separate identities.

While it is not yet entirely clear whether the KMT government purposely used Mandarin to subordinate the natives, cultural hegemony may have been a protective shield erected by the KMT/Mainlander government in the face of a hostile majority. The latter interpreted this as nothing but the continuation of colonialism. Most of the natives spoke only their mother tongues and Japanese, and barely understood Mandarin after having been colonized by the Japanese for half a century.¹⁷

The primary demarcation between the Mainlanders and the natives is not so much based on linguistic differences, but on their dissimilar degrees of attachment to the island. Most Mainlanders tended to view Taiwan as their temporary residence, particularly during the reign of Chiang Kei-shek, who advocated “recovering the mainland” (*guangfu dalu*). Consequently, the possibility of identifying themselves with the island was impeded by their status as provisional residents. For those prosperous Mainlanders, the prospect of a CCP invasion of Taiwan had prompted them to send their descendants overseas, mostly to the West. Their fears had further been aggravated by the antici-

Taiwan University, a Mainlander, once recalled that former President Lee Teng-hui’s application for a teaching position to the department after he had received the doctorate degree from Cornell University in the 1960s was almost rejected. The reason was that “his Mandarin was too poor to be qualified as a college teacher.”

17. The most readily recognizable differences between Hoklo/Hakka and Mandarin are found in pronunciation and tone. As Mandarin is based on the dialect of Beijing, Mongolian and Manchu influence is significant. In contrast, both spoken Hoklo and Hakka are archaic versions of Han Chinese preserved by refugees from northern China when they migrated southward. First, both languages also retain more tones than Mandarin does. Another feature of Hoklo is that there are often two different languages for literary and colloquial uses. Third, there is no proper character for the colloquial word, or the use was lost somehow. When the Hoklos and the Hakkas migrated to Taiwan years ago, they must have borrowed some terms and vocabularies from the indigenous peoples.

pation of a possible native takeover. By wielding military suppression, political domination, and cultural hegemony, the KMT helped crystallize the native identity, which led to anti-Mainlander ethnic nationalism. Prior to democratization, anti-Mainlander and anti-KMT sentiments included racial and xenophobic tendencies, and were packaged in the pro-democracy and Taiwan independence movements.

Attempts to Rebuild a New Identity

The Rise of Taiwanese Power

By the early 1980s, the KMT had succeeded in maintaining an authoritarian grip on the island for three decades. Yet Mainlanders as a minority group faced increased challenges from native Taiwanese who not only demanded more political power but also the right to assert their Taiwanese identity. Until this point, the official nationalism of the country was still largely established on the basis of Mainlander identity. Understandably, the natives did not appreciate the Chinese national identity forged by the KMT.

Having reestablished the Republic of China government on Taiwan, and taken military measures to ward off possible rebellion, the KMT adopted three pillars to guarantee political loyalty: defense against the threat of invasion from China, material affluence from economic development, and legitimacy as the only ruler of all of China. Taiwan, being an independent political entity outside of PRC control, did create a new sense of collectiveness among all the residents on Taiwan. They had only themselves to rely upon in case of a communist attack, and a sense that the destiny of the island was in the hands of all residents, whether Taiwanese or Mainlanders.

President Chiang Ching-kuo, son of Chiang Kai-shek, realized the KMT could not claim legitimacy while the majority of native Taiwanese were excluded from power sharing. In February 1984 Chiang recruited more Taiwanese elites into the stand-

ing committee of the KMT's Central Committee, raising the number of Taiwanese to twelve out of thirty-one members, 39 percent of the total.¹⁸ But the Taiwanese were not satisfied. In 1986, anti-KMT activists formed the first opposition party in Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Because the DPP self-identifies as a political party representing native Taiwanese, it soon developed into the major force challenging the KMT's authoritarian rule. DPP leaders made public speeches in Taiwanese (Hoklo or Hakka) rather than in Mandarin. Later, the DPP adopted a party platform calling for self-determination of Taiwan's political status (*Taiwan zhumin zijue*) and rejoining the international community in the name of Taiwan.

To preempt any possible retribution from the Taiwanese, Chiang publicly claimed that all Mainlanders should identify themselves as Taiwanese. He also handpicked Lee Teng-hui, a native Taiwanese trained as an agricultural economist, as his successor, a decision many believed to have created conditions for future ethnic reconciliation.¹⁹ When Lee came to power unexpectedly in 1988, the KMT began to undertake a series of naturalization processes. He promoted more native Taiwanese technocrats into high government positions traditionally secured for Mainlanders; he forced senior representatives to retire from the legislature and National Assembly; and he called for elections that enabled many Taiwanese to gain seats.

Likewise, inside the KMT central leadership, political power was redistributed so as to give Taiwanese more seats and influence.²⁰ In order to court native voters, Lee openly spoke of

18. Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 381.

19. Jay Taylor (*ibid.*, p. 379) said Chiang decided as early as 1983 that his successor would be a native Taiwanese. Chiang had a very favorable impression of Lee Teng-hui when the latter served as governor of Taiwan Province and successfully solved some practical problems that his predecessors had not.

20. In fact, the power struggle between Taiwanese and Mainlanders inside the KMT was one important fault line during Lee's tenure as president and party chairman in the late 1980s. As Denny Roy argues, Mainlanders

“Taiwanese sufferings” (*Taiwan ren de beiai*) and called the KMT government an “alien regime” when interviewed by Japanese journalist Shiba Ryotaro.²¹ Lee’s remarks angered many Mainlanders, who condemned him for his anti-China and pro-Japanese predispositions. Lee Teng-hui responded to those criticisms by advocating the concept of “community of fate” (*shengming gongtongti*), meaning that both natives and Mainlanders are the residents of Taiwan, and that all policy priorities would be for all of Taiwan’s residents. This implicitly made him a territorial Taiwanese nationalist, since the nation would be conceived as a community of fate embedded in its status as a sovereign state.

Some Mainlanders’ fear of a native takeover forced them to break away from the KMT and form new political parties, including the New Party (NP, *Xin Dang*) and later the People First Party (PFP, *Qinmin Dang*). The greatest challenge for Mainlanders, however, is that they faced a new identity crisis. In the past their status was secured by showing loyalty to the KMT. Now they had to search for ways to defend their interest as well as redefine their collective identity, both ethnic and national. They still considered themselves “Chinese” without conscious understanding of what constituted “Chinese.” Those first-generation Mainlanders who were allowed to return home when the cross-Strait travel ban was lifted in 1987 suddenly discovered that they had become “Taiwanese brethren” (*Taibao*) in the eyes of their Chinese relatives. For some, “China” may symbolize their attachment to historical, cultural, or geographical China. Of course, it cannot be denied that a few may be true believers for identification with the current Chinese political regime.

Later Lee came up with the concept of “New Taiwanese”

were hostile toward the reforms that appeared to be more supportive of Taiwan independence, while Taiwanese were more attentive to business interests. Such divisions also exist between older and younger generations, between rural and urban members, and between liberal and conservatives, but the divisions were more visible within KMT’s central leadership. See Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History*, p. 184.

21. Shiba Ryotaro, *Taiwan ji hsing* (A Recording of the Taiwan Tour) (Taipei: Dong-Fan, 1995), p. 531.

(*xin Taiwan ren*) to appease the Mainlanders in the 1998 Taipei mayoral election. If they were willing to accept this newly created all-inclusive identity, the Mainlanders could be relieved from the convergence of national identity and ethnic identity. Nonetheless, while the long awaited reconciliatory design was widely welcome, the newly coined term remained both vague and ambiguous for both Mainlanders and natives. If “New Taiwanese” is meant to embrace all residents of Taiwan, it is too all encompassing to offer any discriminative utility in practice. The natives already are “Taiwanese,” so the term is futile for them. On the other hand, if “New Taiwanese” is reserved for the Mainlanders, there is no real value added.

Although Lee followed an “Independent Taiwan” (*du Tai*) line during his tenure as president, he refrained from articulating Taiwanese nationalism.²² This deliberate ambiguity eased the identity crisis for the Mainlanders. Throughout the 1990s, Lee promoted Taiwan as a culturally Chinese state, and interpreted Taiwan’s democratic experiences as a successful case of Chinese democracy. In other words, while retaining the Chinese cultural identity, Lee upheld Taiwanese political identity. In this regard, Lee acted like an “ethnic Han,” if not a political Chinese loyalist. Since there is no easy way to reconcile cultural and political facets of national identity, Lee’s “official nationalism” was at most a Janus-faced “reform nationalism.”

Dealing with China, and Chinese-ness

Some Mainlanders identify themselves as “Taiwanese,” but the majority still clings to their Chinese identity. Most consider themselves “Chinese” first and Taiwanese second, or rather “Chinese on Taiwan” (*Zhongguo ren zai Taiwan*)²³—much the same as the state is considered the “ROC on Taiwan” (*Zhonghua*

22. The term is slightly different from “Taiwan Independence” (*Tai du*).

23. A Buddhist Master Sheng Yen, when invited to speak at the United Nations Millennium World Peace Summit, reportedly introduced himself to the audience as “Chinese” and to Secretary General Kofi Annan as a “Chinese from Taiwan” (*United Evening News*, 2000/8/31).

minguo zai Taiwan). “Taiwanese” is relegated to a territorial regional identity, while “Chinese” is advanced to a national identity. This identity definition explains why Lee’s government interpreted Taiwan-China relations as “One China, two regions, and two equal political entities,” or simply as “one country, two governments” (*yiguo liangfu*).

In March 2000, Chen Shui-bian, the presidential candidate of the DPP, was elected president of Taiwan. The DPP’s victory signified the end of the KMT’s one-party dominance in Taiwanese politics, and put the identity issue in a new light. Chen adopted a conciliatory attitude toward China in his inauguration speech by appealing for the so-called “Five No’s” principle, and pledged to embark on economic and cultural integration with China. During the following two years Chen made several similar proposals to Beijing, hoping that the semi-official talks between both sides that had been interrupted by Beijing since July 1999 could be resumed.²⁴ None of Chen’s proposals received a positive response from Beijing because the latter kept demanding that Taiwan accept the “One China” principle. Facing a powerful anti-unification voice within the DPP, it is not difficult to imagine why Chen was unable to make any formal commitment on ultimate reconciliation with China. He also refused to recognize the existence of the “1992 consensus on One China,” which Beijing considered a prerequisite for resumption of cross-strait talks.²⁵

As a native-born Taiwanese and a DPP politician, Chen was not very interested in settling identity clashes between native Taiwanese and Mainlanders. In fact he rose in politics by openly

24. In 1993, both Taiwan and China started a series of informal talks to deal with practical issues across the Strait. The talks last six years and resolved a number of disputes between both sides, such as those involving the return of illegal immigrants and fisheries. The talks were interrupted in 1999, when Lee Teng-hui publicly used the term “special state-to-state” relationship to describe the nature of Taiwan-China relations.

25. The 1992 consensus refers to a principle agreed to by representatives from Taipei and Beijing during their first meeting in Hong Kong in 1992. Both sides agreed that there is One China, but also agreed to use their own definitions in referring to one China.

advocating for Taiwanese identity and criticizing the KMT's pro-China stance. After his reelection in 2004, Chen further highlighted the Taiwanese identity by implementing a series of policies to remove political symbols carrying the name of China or Chinese, and challenged Mainlanders' loyalty to Taiwan during local elections. This strategy was severely criticized by KMT leaders and some Mainlander groups; but it was indeed a smart way to consolidate popular support, as many voters considered themselves Taiwanese rather than Chinese.

A survey conducted by Taiwan's *United Daily News* in October 2003 revealed that 62 percent of the respondents said they were "Taiwanese" while only 19 percent of respondents identified themselves as "Chinese." A similar survey conducted in 1989 found that only 16 percent of respondents said they were Taiwanese, whereas 52 percent said they were Chinese.²⁶ A series of surveys conducted by the Election Studies Center of National Chengchi University, also shows that those who identify themselves as Taiwanese exceeds the number of those who consider themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese.²⁷ DPP leaders were able to reject the Chinese identity preserved by the former KMT regime as the majority of Taiwan's residents consider themselves Taiwanese instead of Chinese.²⁸

The new national identity of Taiwan, some scholars believe,

26. "Candidates' National Identities: 67% of Votes Considered," *United Daily News* (Taipei), October 20, 2003 (in Chinese).

27. In the most recent survey conducted in June 2010, 52.4 percent of respondents considered themselves as Taiwanese, 40.4 percent as both Taiwanese and Chinese, and only 3.8 percent as Chinese. Election Studies Center, National Chengchi University, *Taiwanese/Chinese Identification Trend Distribution in Taiwan (06/1992-06/2010)*, at <http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/english/modules/tinyd2/content/TaiwanChineseID.htm>.

28. How Mainlanders and their decedents today identify themselves is an interesting topic and deserves further examination. Some recently published books have tried to record their feelings and experiences as a distinctive group on Taiwan over the past half century. See Long Ying-tai, *Da jiang da hai 1949* ("Big River, Big Sea—Untold Stories of 1949") (Taipei: CommonWealth Magazine, 2009); Chang Mao-kuei, ed., *Guojia yu rentong: yixie waishengren de guandian* (Nation and Identity: Perspectives of Some "Waishengren") (Taipei: Chunxue Chubanshe, 2010).

is the critical factor driving the DPP government's rejection of Beijing's call for unification and favoring radical steps toward independence.²⁹ Perhaps a better way to understand this trend is through the idea of "Taiwanese subjectivity" (*Taiwan zhutixing*), a task of cultivating self-consciousness to new generations by way of education and rewriting of the island's history.³⁰ New history books and curricula have nurtured new generations of Taiwanese, whether natives or Mainlanders, to identify themselves as Taiwanese and consider the island home sweet home.

Today identity remains an important issue in politics, and voting preferences largely match voters' identities. From its inception in 1986, the DPP has been a Taiwanese party, meaning the ethnic, if not nationalist, party for the native Taiwanese. After Chiang Ching-kuo's and Lee Teng-hui's reforms of "localization" (*bentuhua*), the KMT safely retains the central ground as a mechanism of ethnic consociation between the Taiwanese and the Mainlanders. Other smaller parties, including the New Party and the Taiwan Solidarity Alliance (TSA) also have their identity preferences, but their influence has rapidly diminished in recent years.³¹

The striking difference between the two major parties is

29. As Yun-han Chu noticed: "During Taiwan's democratization, two inter-related developments have frightened Beijing. The first was stepped-up efforts by Taiwan leaders to cultivate popular aspirations for separate nationhood at home and push for Taiwan independent sovereign status abroad. The second was raising support for Taiwan independence and the corresponding decline of Chinese identity among the Taiwanese population." T. Y. Wang and I-Chou Liu also claimed that "Taiwanese national identity" and "pro-Taiwan identity" are clearly dominant in the society, while very few respondents display a "greater China identity." See Yun-han Chu, "Taiwan's National Identity Politics," p. 498; T. Y. Wang and I-Chou Liu, "Contending Identities in Taiwan."

30. For discussions of Taiwan subjectivity, see Daniel C. Lynch, "Taiwan's Self-Conscious Nation-Building Project," *Asian Survey*, vol. 44, No. 4 (July-August, 2004), pp. 513-33.

31. The only exception is the People's First Party (PFP). Its leadership has gone all out to make it a non-ethnic party by engaging in coalition formation with native politicians, which makes its location along the ethnic spectrum difficult. The PFP merged with the KMT in 2008.

reflected in their attitudes toward Beijing. KMT leaders still consider Taiwan a part of “China,” and assert that Taiwan should seek reconciliation with Beijing, believing it will greatly benefit Taiwan’s economy and reduce tensions in the region. KMT leaders do not rule out the possibility of an eventual reunification between both sides, but stop short of offering a clear timetable. DPP supporters consider Taiwan to be a sovereign nation, and believe that any decision concerning Taiwan’s political future should be decided by all of the residents. Therefore, any closer relations with China will only harm Taiwan’s autonomy. The different interpretations on Taiwan’s status (i.e., a sovereign state or a part of China) are embedded in one’s identity. This gap also makes it extremely difficult for major political parties to create a common policy toward Beijing.³²

Transitional Justice and the Case of 2-28

Even if a new Taiwan identity emerges and inter-ethnic tensions greatly subside, how should a democratic government address the mistakes of the previous authoritarian government? Do citizens believe it necessary to pursue legal measures to bring previous authoritarian leaders to justice? Should the victims of the 2-28 Massacre receive compensation? These questions fall within the theme of transitional justice. Any attempt to gain transitional justice and achieve true reconciliation between the natives and the Mainlanders is a reflection of people’s attitudes toward the 2-28 Massacre.

32. In June 2010, Taiwan’s top envoy represented the current KMT government to sign the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with the representative from Beijing, a move signaling Taiwan’s further economic integration into the Chinese market. The opposition DPP strongly opposed the ECFA deal, saying that Taiwan would be more economically dependent on the mainland, thus giving Beijing leverage over Taiwan. But the KMT insisted on signing the deal and had it passed by the Legislative Yuan on August 17.

Seeking the Truth

As the 2-28 Incident becomes a collective memory of all Taiwan residents, whether supporters of the KMT government, Mainlanders, or the local Taiwanese, it is an ideal case for us to examine the achievements and challenges of transitional justice in Taiwan. Transitional justice can be defined as a legal response to confront wrongdoings by previous repressive regimes during political transitions.³³ Andrew Rigby argues that transitional justice consists of three elements: a need for truth, a quest for justice, and a desire for reconciliation. All three aspects are interrelated: seeking truth is the best way to achieve justice, and attaining justice is the only way to accomplish true reconciliation.³⁴

According to Ruti Teitel there are two approaches to transitional justice: a realist and an idealist position. The realist view assumes that a state's response to justice is the consequence of political developments; it is institutional by nature, and the purpose of imposing transitional justice reflects the relations and power balancing among different political forces in the process of democratization. An idealist view, on the other hand, suggests that full redistributive and corrective justice is necessary to change society.³⁵ Despite their contrasting perspectives, both approaches agree that legal and political responses to past wrongdoings by previous oppressive regimes are key developments in the process of democratization. A post-authoritarian society usually adopts the following procedure to achieve transitional justice: retribution, purging, seeking truth, reparation, and impunity. Taiwan's experience shows that democratic governments (under both the KMT and the DPP) emphasized truth seeking and reparation toward attaining transitional justice.

Before democratization, the KMT government defined the "2-

33. Ruti G. Teitel, "Transitional Justice Genealogy," *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, vol. 16 (Spring, 2003), p. 69.

34. Andrew Rigby, *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), p. 12.

35. Ruti G. Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-4.

28 rebellion” as a conspiracy organized and conducted by the Chinese communists. Some of the leaders during the incident were indeed communists, and some fled to the mainland after 1947. The PRC government in Beijing perceived the incident as an uprising of the local people against the oppressive KMT regime.³⁶ Both sides looked at the issue from the perspective of the Chinese civil war, and deliberately ignored the feelings and roles of the local people, who were actually the victims of the massacre.

In February 1987, when Taiwan was still under martial law, human-rights activists under the leadership of Chen Yung-hsing, Lee Sheng-hsiung, and Cheng Nan-rong “illegally” formed the “February 28 Peace Day Promotion Association” (*ererba heping ri cujinhui*). The group openly called for releasing documents about the massacre and for rehabilitation of the accused. The KMT government did not respond until the following year, when Chiang Ching-kuo died and Lee Teng-hui was inaugurated as the new president. Lee, a witness to the massacre and the white terror thereafter, provided a moderate response in his first press conference by calling the 2-28 Incident “a tragedy.” But he warned opposition politicians not to use the issue to mobilize people’s hatred toward certain groups.³⁷ Yet the campaign to seek the truth of 2-28 continued, and in 1989, the association successfully built the first memorial monument in Chiayi City, where some of the most horrifying killings of 1947 occurred.

Under tremendous pressure from society, the KMT government responded by first releasing classified documents from the ministry of national defense with promises of further investigation. However the KMT still stood by the assertion that the incident was organized by communists.³⁸ When President Lee was

36. Chang Yan-hsien, “Review of Interpretations on 2-28 Incident Studies,” paper presented at the Conference on 2-28 Incident Studies (hosted by 2-28 Foundation), Taipei, Taiwan, June, 28, 2003 (in Chinese).

37. February 28 Peace Day Promotion Association, *Zouchu 2-28 de yinying: 2-28 Heping Ri cujin Yundong shilu 1987-1990* (Walking Out of the Shadow of 2-28: Records of 2-28 Peace Day Promotion Campaign 1987-1990) (Taipei: February 28 Peace Day Promotion Association, 1991), p. 56.

38. “Who is Responsible? Different Interpretations,” *United Daily News*,

reelected in May 1990, he formed a task force inside the government to spearhead reinvestigation and compensation.

In 1991, the Executive Yuan (the cabinet) set up a “research group” to review the 2-28 incident. The group released a final report three years later, Report of the 2-28 Incident (*ererba shijian yanjiu baogao*), defining the incident as a tragedy.³⁹ In 1995, representing the KMT government, Lee formally apologized to the victims and their relatives, and encouraged the Legislative Yuan to pass the Regulations for Handling Compensation for Victims in the “2-28” Incident.⁴⁰ According to the regulations, the government set up a foundation in 1996 to deal with compensation to the victims and their families.

The 1994 report of the 2-28 Incident was heavily criticized as it did not point to any former KMT officials, nor did it define Chiang Kai-shek’s role before and during the massacre. It simply attributed the tragedy to mishandling of escalating tensions between Taiwanese and Mainlanders by certain government leaders.⁴¹ General Chen Yi, chief executive of the Taiwan Provincial Government and garrison commander of the Chinese armed forces in Taiwan from 1945 to 1950, was blamed for ordering the crackdown on the uprising. As he was executed by Chiang Kai-shek in 1950 for attempted spying for communists, there was no need for further punishment.

Determining Responsibility

Why didn’t President Lee and the KMT government respond to public demands for transitional justice sooner? One plausible explanation is that Lee in the early 1990s was still worried about conservative factions inside the KMT, many of which strongly

April 22, 1989 (in Chinese).

39. 2-28 Incident Research Group, Executive Yuan, *2-28 Shijian Yanjiu Baogao* (Report of the 2-28 Incident) (Taipei: Shibao Chubanshe, 1994).

40. The related archives are accessible through the website of the National Archive Administration, <http://theme.archives.gov.tw/human/08/list.htm>.

41. 2-28 Incident Research Group, *Report of the 2-28 Incident*, pp. 3-44.

opposed any retribution. Lee therefore adopted a cautious approach to the issue by reinvestigation and formulation of compensation measures.

The DPP chose a markedly different way of dealing with the 2-28 Massacre. Throughout the 1990s, DPP leaders devoted significant effort to unearth the truth and to revive people's awareness of the incident by organizing a series of conferences and memorial services. In 1996, then Taipei Mayor Chen Shui-bian renamed a park at the center of the city the "2-28 Memorial Park," and erected a monument and a memorial museum in the park. When the DPP defeated the KMT and became the ruling party in 2000, it continued to focus on investigation and identification of responsibility.

A real breakthrough occurred in 2006, when the Memorial Foundation of 2-28, the investigative organization established by the KMT government a decade earlier, published a new report. The "Research Report on Responsibility for the 2-28 Massacre" identified Chiang Kai-shek as the main person responsible for the massacre:

We think that Chiang Kai-Shek, president of the Nationalist government, should bear the biggest responsibility for the 2-28 Massacre. He not only was oblivious to warnings by the Control Yuan prior to the Massacre, he was also partial to Chen Yi afterwards. None of the provincial military and political officials in Taiwan were punished for the Massacre. Furthermore, he deployed forces right after the Massacre. In a letter by Chen Yi to Chiang Kai-Shek dated March 13: "Unless Your Excellency mobilizes troops rapidly, one could not imagine how far this massacre will lead." Chiang Kai-Shek, despite all the information he gathered from the party, government, army, intelligence, and representatives of Taiwanese groups, still chose to send troops right away. He summoned the commander of the 21st division, Liu Yu-Cing, and gave him 600 pistols, all of which caused the situation to deteriorate.⁴²

In addition to the above official reports, various academic institutions and independent scholars have collected and pre-

42. Memorial Foundation of 2-28, "Research Report on Responsibility For The 2-28 Massacre: A Brief Report" (2006), ch. 2, at www.228.org.tw/ResponsibilityReport/eng/index.php.

served historical records relating to 2-28. The Wu San-lien Foundation for Taiwan Historical Materials published a series of oral history records from 1992 to 1996. It is so far the most comprehensive collection of memoirs by witnesses to the massacre.⁴³ The Institute of Modern History in Academia Sinica, a research institution that preserves many government archives from the 2-28 Massacre, published six volumes of official documents from 1992 to 1997.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the main difference between the KMT and DPP lies in their interpretations of the history and Chiang Kai-shek's involvement in the massacre. DPP leaders insist upon blaming both Chiang and members of the KMT government for the massacre. Former president Chen Shui-bian stated in 2006 that "then highest leader Chiang Kai-shek was the main culprit in the Massacre and should therefore shoulder most responsibility for the Massacre. Chen Yi, Ke Yuan-fen, Peng Meng-ci, and other military personnel are also guilty."⁴⁵

Although DPP leaders publicly advocated transitional justice, they were unsuccessful because the KMT, or pan-Blue camp, controlled the majority of seats in the national legislature. In 2007, a DPP lawmaker, Wang Sing-nan, proposed a law to affix the responsibility of 2-28 on former KMT leaders, but the idea was rejected by both major parties. DPP Chairman Yu Shyi-kun admitted in 2007 that the party had "encountered many difficulties in dealing with transitional justice since it came to power in 2000 as a result of its failure to hold a legislative majority."⁴⁶

KMT politicians, in contrast, tend to see the incident as a result of misrule and poor judgment by certain KMT leaders

43. For a list of publications on 2-28 oral history by Wu San-lien Foundation, see www.twcenter.org.tw/.

44. See the Institute of Modern History website: www.mh.sinica.edu.tw/eng/index.htm.

45. Chen Shui-bian, keynote speech delivered at the new book presentation, 228 Memorial Foundation, www.228.org.tw/ResponsibilityReport/eng/index.php.

46. Flora Wang, "DPP Vows to Push Transition Justice Laws," *Taipei Times*, February 8, 2007.

after recovering the island from the Japanese. But they avoid identifying Chiang Kai-shek as the chief culprit. Current President Ma Ying-jeou of the KMT apologized to the families of the victims when he attended memorial services on February 28, 2010. The focus of his speech was on the future avoidance of such a tragedy.⁴⁷ “Uprising against an oppressive government” (*guanbi minfan*) became the official position of KMT in handling the 2-28 issue. In other words, the KMT wisely used the argument of “state violence” (*guojia baoli*) to avoid taking full responsibility for the 2-28 massacre.

Perhaps the greatest achievement during the process of reviewing the 2-28 tragedy is that the major political parties have deliberately refrained from further punitive action against any distinctive group. The human-rights activists who initiated the 2-28-Peace-Day campaign were careful not to blame all Mainlanders for the massacre. The KMT government, particularly during Lee Teng-hui’s presidency, did not misinterpret the calls for transitional justice as a form of mass revenge against the ruling elites. This explains why most debates related to the 2-28 issue concentrate on paying pecuniary compensation to the victims and promoting reconciliation between Mainlanders and Taiwanese. Although there is little trust between the KMT and DPP, particularly on the issues of national identity and policy toward China, the distinction between Mainlanders and native Taiwanese has been blurred. The 2-28 Massacre has become part of the collective memory of all Taiwan residents and lays the foundation for a new Taiwanese identity.

Conclusion

In the eyes of political observers, democratic practices on Taiwan are far from perfect. The Legislative Yuan, the national parliament of Taiwan, has been ridiculed by foreign media for

47. “Officials Observe 2-28 Anniversary,” *Taipei Times*, March 1, 2010, at www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2010/03/01/2003466897.

sporadic brawls among lawmakers; furthermore, the two main political parties are engaged in a constant struggle over political and ideological issues and corruption is still found among politicians and civil servants. Yet one cannot deny that the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Taiwan has been largely peaceful, and despite the fact that identities are still a political factor, hostilities between ethnic groups have greatly declined in recent decades. Today it is unimaginable that a politician or party would openly advocate discriminative action against any group, and all parties are careful to maintain equality among ethnic groups, thus nurturing further reconciliation.

This article argues that modern Taiwanese nationalism is a mix of a primordial Han-Chinese attachment with a structurally anti-alien rule response. This unique national identity was reinforced by the 2-28 Massacre of 1947 and became the cause of long-lasting cleavages between majority Taiwanese and minority Mainlander elites. In the 1980s, President Chiang Ching-kuo and his successor, Lee Teng-hui, carried out a series of localization reforms to save the KMT government from being overthrown by the natives. The reforms evolved into the democratization experiment and transformed Taiwan society into a full-fledged democracy. Yet neither the KMT nor the following DPP government was able to build a new Taiwanese identity on the basis of ethnic reconciliation. A native Taiwanese identity is now the predominant view in politics, but no political party can claim credit for this successful identity transition.

By utilizing the concept of transitional justice, the authors find that the attempts to redress past mistakes, particularly the atrocities conducted by the KMT government during the 2-28 Massacre, were relatively moderate and passive. The government did not seriously respond to calls from society for reinvestigation until the early 1990s. Civilian human rights groups and certain DPP leaders played more active roles in truth seeking and compensation legislation. The many memories of 2-28 have now become a collective identity preserved by all ethnic groups, serving as a profound reminder that any social inequality or political segregation of any ethnic group is unacceptable.

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