

## DPP victory in Taiwan raises danger of strategic conflict

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

The victory of the candidate of the pro-separatist Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in the March 18 Taiwan Presidential election, and the defeat of the Kuomintang (KMT) party after 55 years of uninterrupted rule, marks an historic shift in the situation across the Taiwan Strait, which is fraught with danger not only for the East Asian region, but potentially also the world as a whole.

For the moment, at least on the surface, tensions seem to have subsided. The Chinese government's outward reaction to what it must see as the worst of all possible outcomes of the election, has been extremely reserved. Official Beijing has merely signalled in terse statements, that it will "carefully observe" the ensuing developments in Taiwan, while repeating the warning, that China will not budge an inch on the "One China" principle and will not tolerate any move toward "Taiwan independence." In his visit to Beijing immediately following the Taiwan election, the United States' UN Ambassador Richard Holbrooke undoubtedly gave assurances, that the United States would bring its full weight to bear on Taipei, to prevent any separatist moves that might provoke a new, near-term Taiwan crisis. For his part, Taiwanese President-elect Chen Shui-bian has gone out of his way to emphasize his determination to "put the national interest ahead of any party considerations," declaring that to secure "eternal peace" across the Taiwan Strait is his highest priority, and offering to meet with Chinese President Jiang Zemin at the earliest possible opportunity "to discuss everything."

Unfortunately, all of this does not change the fact, that the rise of the DPP itself, and the whole process leading to its election victory, have been largely engineered by the very same British-linked forces in the United States and Japan, as well as in Taiwan itself, that have backed outgoing Taiwanese

President Lee Teng-Hui in his systematic wrecking operation against peaceful reunification with the mainland, and who are now working to provoke a potential military confrontation between the United States and China.

Lyndon LaRouche warned of exactly this in his article on "Puppet Emperor Lee Teng-Hui" (*EIR*, Jan. 21). We raised the point again in our recent article on "LaRouche's Enemies Push for Taiwan War" (*EIR*, March 10), identifying as exemplary the anti-China activities of such figures as Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), former Defense Secretary Sir Caspar Weinberger, and right-wing billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife's "Blue Team" in and around the American Congress. The accompanying article by Mary Burdman documents how the very same forces have been systematically backing the DPP and its international "support network" for many years. Unless quickly reined in, these forces will move to exploit the new situation, by orchestrating a series of provocations, each one more dangerous than the preceding. They will especially play on passions and divisions within mainland China itself, attempting to provoke a political destabilization or a rash military move which could serve as a pretext for an escalation of economic and political warfare against China.

### Disaster is not inevitable

This is not to say that a strategic disaster is now inevitable. In this situation, we should not forget the wisdom embodied in the Chinese language's expression for "crisis" — *wei ji* — which is composed of *wei*, meaning "danger," and *ji*, meaning "opportunity." The opportunity, in this case, flows ultimately from the fact, that the crisis being created around Taiwan is not a purely local or Chinese affair, but is part of a global

strategic crisis, centering on an eminent “blowout” of the entire U.S. and global financial system.

Exemplary of the opportunities available now, is Beijing’s new emphasis on the development of the vast western area of China—a challenge which Chinese scholars are comparing to the opening up of the West of the United States through transcontinental railroads and other infrastructure projects in second half of the 19th century. That challenge, which is an integral part of the broader “Eurasian Land-Bridge” policy (see “The Eurasian Land-Bridge: The ‘New Silk Road’ — Locomotive for Worldwide Economic Development,” *EIR Special Report*, January 1997), can only be achieved with the aid of dirigistic economic policies, of the sort which will be needed all over the world in the coming period, and with the kind of investment, technology, and know-how which Taiwan is in a special position to provide.

In our view, new agreements, providing for a drastic upgrading of Taiwan’s direct participation in mainland economic development, can provide the most advantageous context for overcoming the separatist tendencies which have been created, and building a positive identity for Taiwan as an organic part of a prosperous and developing China. This potential, positive direction of developments was at least symbolically indicated, in the immediate wake of the Taiwan elections, by the Taiwan Parliament’s decision to lift certain long-standing limitations on the direct trade, air, and postal connections to the mainland. Last year, despite the still-existing restrictions, two-way trade between Taiwan and the mainland topped \$25 billion, while the rate of Taiwan investments into the mainland nearly doubled in the first two months of this year, relative to a year ago. As one Beijing expert expressed it, “The mainland needs Taiwan and Taiwan needs the mainland.”

### The ‘One China’ issue

The crucial importance of the “economic flank” becomes all the more obvious, when we look at the suicidal conflict which has been created between Taiwan and the mainland, as a result of Lee Teng-hui’s deliberate abandonment of the traditional “One China” policy, which had been a common commitment of both Taiwan’s ruling KMT and the opposed, mainland Communist Party throughout the worst days of the Cold War.

Whatever Chen Shui-bian may do—and there is at least a hope that he may break away from the official ideology of the DPP—that official ideology goes even much further than Lee Teng-hui has dared to go, by declaring, essentially, that Taiwan has nothing to do with China, and that the 55 years of KMT rule represented a “foreign occupation” whose consequences must now be reversed, by Taiwan’s declaring itself, once and for all, a sovereign and independent nation separate from China. Exactly that has been identified by Beijing as an absolute *casus belli* for a military confrontation across the Taiwan Strait.

In fact, it is clear that Lee Teng-hui and his international backers played a crucial role in the rise of the DPP up to its recent victory, including Lee’s policy of covert support of Chen Shui-bian against both the popular independent James Soong and the candidate of Lee’s own KMT party, Lien Chan. According to the official results, Chen Shui-bian led Soong by a narrow 2.5% margin, of 39.2% to 36.8%, while Lien Chan received 23%.

Mainland commentaries have emphasized the unbridgeable difference between what Chen Shui-bian has proposed, in his post-election calls for immediate “peace negotiations” and meeting Jiang Zemin in Taipei or Beijing to “talk about everything,” on the one side, and the position of the Beijing government as expressed by Jiang Zemin, on the other. Chen Shui-bian proposes that the “One China” policy should be a topic for discussion, but not a principle or axiom of any negotiation. Jiang Zemin’s response is to insist that acceptance of the “One China Principle”—as set forward, for example, in the Beijing government’s recent White Paper (see *EIR*, March 17)—is the absolute precondition for discussion. Mainland commentators emphasize, that it is impossible for Beijing to make any compromise on the “One China” policy, because this would undermine the entire authority and credibility of the Chinese government at home and abroad, while at the same time, Chen Shui-Bian’s own background, and his party’s policy, make it virtually impossible for him to renounce Taiwan independence in some form. Correspondingly, the dominant tone of the mainland commentaries is extremely pessimistic.

### Historical background

A few historical reference-points should be recalled, in order to appreciate the implications of the recent turn of the events in Taiwan.

Taiwan’s Kuomintang Party, the KMT, which has just been defeated after 55 years of uninterrupted rule over the island, was originally created by the father of modern China, Sun Yat-sen, in 1912. The KMT was born in the context of Sun’s founding of the first Chinese Republic, as a milestone in the republican revolution ended over 2,000 years of imperial dynastic rule over the country. Later, after the emergence of the Communist movement, Sun advocated a close alliance between the KMT and the Communist Party, both seen as essentially patriotic forces sharing a common aim of developing a strong, unified, and independent Chinese nation-state.

Unfortunately, thanks in great part to outside influence by British and related forces, who wanted to keep the Chinese at each other’s throats in order to maintain a weak and divided China, Sun Yat-sen’s policy of a KMT-CP alliance was destroyed. Following the successful expulsion of the Japanese occupation forces in 1945, a bloody civil war broke out, ending in 1949 with an overwhelming military victory by Communists under Mao Zedong, Mao’s declaration of the Peo-

ple's Republic of China on Oct. 1, 1949, and the withdrawal to Taiwan of the KMT forces loyal to Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang refused to recognize the People's Republic; instead, he claimed that the government set up by the KMT on Taiwan, constituted the true government of all of China: a single, unified China of which Taiwan was self-evidently a part. Similarly, the Beijing government regarded itself as the only legitimate government of all China.

Thus, in all the ensuing Cold War conflicts, there was never a question about "two Chinas" or two sovereign countries, but rather only of two governments—one based in Beijing, and the other regarding itself as a government-in-exile in Taipei—claiming jurisdiction over a single sovereign country. Contrary to widespread misunderstandings, the recognition by the United States of the People's Republic of China in the 1970s was not a rejection of the "One China" principle, but rather a reaffirmation of it. Taking account of the evident reality, that the Beijing government was stable and was de facto the real government on the mainland, and that there was hardly a chance of the KMT returning to power, the United States reversed an earlier position in support of the KMT as the legitimate government of all of China, and recognized the Beijing government instead. Similarly, the Taipei government was removed, and the People's Republic government seated in its place, as the single legitimate representative of China in the United Nations. The hope was, then, that the issues left over from the Chinese civil war could be resolved by an eventual peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the mainland.

In fact, the "One China Principle" was not seriously called into question, in Taiwan, until the 1980s, when the "Taiwan nationalist" movement began to emerge, of which Chen Shui-bian's DPP is a major expression. Admittedly, this phenomenon has a certain organic basis in the popular reaction against the totalitarian excesses of Chiang Kai-shek's KMT (which ruled by virtual military dictatorship until the gradual democratization in the 1980s), as well as the KMT's notorious, rampant corruption (which had earlier been a major cause of its defeat in the mainland civil war). Nevertheless, there is no doubt that "Taiwan separatism" has been orchestrated in an artificial manner, by international forces committed to the destruction of sovereign nation-states in general, and the destruction of China in particular. This is evident from the key features of "Taiwan nationalist" ideology and the *modus operandi* and international connections of the Taiwan forces backing the DPP.

### **Artificial 'Taiwan nationalism' vs. the true nation-state**

Essentially, the argument of the DPP ideologists is to say, that Taiwan was never really a part of China and that the inhabitants of Taiwan are an "oppressed people" that have a claim to "self-determination." They assert that the KMT government, which had ruled Taiwan for the last 55 years, actually represented a foreign occupation of the island, by the

Chinese forces under Chiang Kai-shek. To back this view, the separatists emphasize the Treaty of Shimonoseki, signed in April 1895 after the Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894. In that treaty, the hopelessly weak and defeated Qing Dynasty of China, officially ceded Taiwan to Japan. From that point on, the legalistic argument continues, China lost any claim to Taiwan, which in any case at best had only a loose relation to the mainland in earlier centuries. After the defeat of Japan, which had occupied Taiwan from 1895 until 1945, Taiwan should have been permitted self-determination. Instead, in 1949 Chiang Kai-shek moved in, beginning a half-century of "Chinese oppression" of the island.

Admittedly, it has been difficult, even for the most avid separatists, to define a really convincing non-Chinese ethnic identity for Taiwan. Although there does exist a remnant of what is claimed as the "authentic" aboriginal population of the island, with its own language, these constitute today only a tiny minority of the population. The present Taiwanese population is the result of centuries of intermixture with Chinese coming from the mainland. Despite the impact of Japanese-language schooling during the 50 years of Japanese occupation, the language-culture of Taiwan today is unquestionably and unambiguously Chinese.

Looking beyond the specific arguments of the Taiwan separatists, the underlying world outlook behind them is essentially the same as that which is being used to split and destroy nation-states around the world—including, ultimately, the United States itself—with the help of ethnic and similar conflicts. That outlook denies any real historical purpose or universal contribution of a nation or people to the development of humanity as a whole. Instead, what is proposed is a mere "egotistic" identity based on "being different" from more or less arbitrarily defined geographical, cultural, or ethnic entities.

The author considers, that a fully successful resolution of the Taiwan issue, can only be reached on the basis of a truly adequate conception of the sovereign nation-state as an indispensable vehicle for the development of mankind as a whole. It was exactly from this standpoint that Sun Yat-sen, with support from certain republican circles in the United States and notably also in Japan, took the first great steps, a century ago, toward creating the New China as a modern, sovereign nation-state.

Interestingly, Taiwan was one of the earliest bases for Sun's organizing of the revolutionary process leading eventually to the first Chinese republic. Later, in the 1920s, it was Sun Yat-sen who set forth the program for railroad and other infrastructural development of China, modelled in part on the United States, which is a forerunner of the Eurasian Land-Bridge and the present plans to develop China's western region. To the extent people in Taiwan, as well as on the mainland, come to understand their own positive role in the world as a whole from the standpoint of what Sun Yat-sen stood for, peaceful reunification and a glorious common future, will become inevitable.