



Taiwan Communiqué

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Two events change political landscape

Two recent events in Taiwan – on the surface unrelated – are having significant political repercussions for the political climate and landscape on the island. In July 2009 the Southern port city of Kaohsiung hosted the World Games, an Olympics-equivalent for sports which don't make it to the regular Olympics. It went very well, and reflected very positively on Ms. Chen Chu, the DPP mayor of the city.

Then, a few weeks later, typhoon Morakot hit on August 8th 2009, bringing heavy rains and devastation to Southern Taiwan, where whole villages were inundated and more than 500 people killed. It resulted in increasing anger at the KMT administration of President Ma Ying-jeou for its slow and lackadaisical response to the disaster. A brief summary, starting with typhoon Morakot.

Photo: Formosa Television



Shiao Lin village before and after typhoon Morakot

Morakot brings devastation to Southern Taiwan

In the evening of Friday, August 7th 2009, typhoon Morakot made landfall in Hualien County, on the East coast of Taiwan. It was not the strongest of typhoons, packing sustained winds of “only” some 140 kph (90 mph). However, after it arrived, it lingered over Southern Taiwan for some three days, unloading torrential rains which caused massive landslides, in one case burying the village of Shiao Lin, a mountain village in Kaohsiung County.

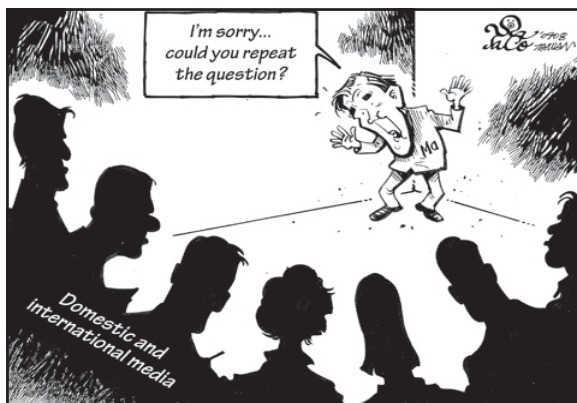
Copyright: Taipei Times

The three-day downpour – totalling an astonishing 2 meters (80+ inches) of rain — turned normally placid streams into raging rivers, destroying everything in their path and inundating river banks. One TV-image, which was played over and over in news reports around the world, showed a ten-story hotel in Taitung simply toppling into the river.

The extent of the damage already became visible on Saturday August 8th and Sunday the 9th. However, there was hardly any response from the central government: the military – which could have been mobilized right away – was “waiting for instructions” for more than four days. One soldier in the hardest-hit area told reporters that his unit had heavy equipment and was ready to move, but was told to wait for instructions from Taipei.

Anger at the government exploded when it became known that as late as Tuesday August 11th, the foreign ministry in Taipei had turned down requests from foreign governments, including the US and Japan, and had sent a cable to its overseas posts that there was “no need at present” for assistance.

The matter resulted in a storm of protest. In an editorial on August 17th, the **Taiwan News** referred to “*the complete self-destruction of the Ma government’s touted claims of professional and competent government in the wake of typhoon*



President Ma at press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club: *I am sorry ... could you repeat the question?*

Morakot...”, while on August 10th the **Taipei Times** already highlighted the inefficiency and slow response of the Ma administration to the events.

Mr. Ma himself compounded the errors by first blaming the Central Weather Bureau for failing to make accurate predictions, then telling newsmen that rescue and relief operations were the primary responsibility of the local governments and that the central government only played an “auxiliary role”, and finally – in an interview with Britain’s Independent Television News — blaming Morakot victims for their own fate: *“they were not fully prepared. If they were, they should have evacuated much earlier. They didn’t realize how serious the disaster was.”*

There was significant political fallout: on Tuesday August 19th, Deputy Foreign Minister Andrew Shia – on whose watch the “no need at present” cable had been sent out -- stepped down, while the next day Defense Minister Chen Chao-min and Cabinet Secretary-General Hsueh Hsiang-chuan offered to resign. Prime Minister Liu Chao-shiuan said that he would not make a decision after an overall review by the Cabinet in early September.

The events had severe repercussions for President Ma Ying-jeou himself too: opinion polls by two pro-government news media showed his popularity rating dropping sharply. The **United Daily News** reported that the President’s popularity rating dropped to a low of 29%, while the TV station **TVBS** – also a strongly pro-government station – reported an even much lower popularity rating of 16%.

In the meantime, on August 17th 2009, CNN reported that in an internet *Quickvote* it had conducted, 82 percent of voters said **yes** to the question: *“Should Taiwan’s leader stand down over delays in aiding typhoon victims?”* while only 18% said no.

As we went to press, relief efforts were still ongoing, while the political fallout was also continuing.

Photo: Taiwan News

US sends relief and helicopters

The United States played an active and visible role in the relief efforts. While the first offer for help – on August 10th – had been turned down by the KMT authorities, the US moved quickly after Taipei made a 180 degree turn on August 13th: on August 16th and 17th



US C-130 unloading relief supplies at Tainan

two Marine C-130s based in Okinawa flew to Tainan Air Force Base in Southern Taiwan to deliver supplies, while the amphibious transport ship Denver dispatched four helicopters on August 17th, two heavy-lift MH-53E Sea Dragons, and two MH-60S Knight Hawk medium lift helicopters.

The Sea Dragons were particularly useful in lifting heavy equipment to devastated villages, as the typhoon had washed away many roads in the mountainous terrain.

The Dalai Lama visits hard-hit areas

In a late development, it was announced on August 27th that the Dalai Lama would visit Taiwan from August 29th through September 4th 2009. He had been invited by a group of seven heads of the local governments hit hardest by typhoon Morakot. The purpose was for him as a major Buddhist leader to console the victims of the typhoon and pray for the souls of those who perished. The majority of the population in Taiwan is Buddhist, a smaller percentage is Taoist, while the Presbyterian Church also has a strong presence in the South, especially in aboriginal villages.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The Ma administration highlighted the non-political nature of the visit, stating that it was purely based on religious and humanitarian considerations. Not unexpectedly, China strongly denounced the visit. The Xinhua news agency quoted the Beijing Taiwan Affairs Office as saying “*No matter under what form or identity the Dalai Lama uses to enter Taiwan, we resolutely oppose this.*”

Taiwan Communiqué comment: *The Ma administration had little choice: for the past two weeks it had been at the receiving end of the wrath of the villagers in the affected areas over the slow response to the typhoon. Its popularity was way down, and there was no let-up in the criticism in the press. Against that background it decided that allowing the Dalai Lama to visit was the wisest thing to do.*

World Games brings joy and pride to Kaohsiung

A few weeks earlier, from July 16th through the 26th, the eighth International World Games took place in the Southern port-city of Kaohsiung. The games — a collection of sports like korfbal, skydiving, lifesaving and a great variety of other sports which didn't make it to the regular Olympics — brought some 4,000 athletes from 105 countries to Taiwan. It was the largest international sports event ever on the island.

Photo: Taipei Times



Opening ceremonies at Kaohsiung World Games

Especially the dazzling display of the opening ceremony on July 16th impressed visitors and filled the Taiwanese with pride. The two-and-a-half-hour opening ceremony involved a mesmerizing visual display featuring hundreds of colorfully

dressed dancers and performances from a star-studded line-up of singers, equaling the opening ceremonies of recent regular Olympics.

The ceremonies included a symbolic handover taking place between children from Taiwan and the 2005 host, the German city of Duisburg, Taiwanese performers featuring dancing water droplets, giant eagle kites and dances from Tao and Amis Aborigines, as well as from many other countries.

The entrance of the athletes was marred by the fact that the Chinese team stayed away from the opening ceremonies, reportedly because President Ma decided to attend in his capacity of head of state of the country. The evening was concluded with a spectacular six-minute firework display.

The closing ceremony on July 26th was equally spectacular, with an array of performers and musicians adding to a festive atmosphere. International World Games President Froehlich called the Games the “best ever”, while Kaohsiung mayor Ms. Chen Chu said the World Games would “*be engraved into the hearts of Kaohsiung residents.*” She also paid tribute to the thousands of volunteers who had helped make the Games such

a success, before calling for Taiwanese to “fight in unity for the dignity of our country.”

The games reflected very positively on DPP mayor Chen, who had worked hard to bring the event about and make it a success.

Is Taiwan drifting into China’s orbit?

What is the agenda behind Ma’s policies?

Developments over the past few months have raised questions about the long-term goals of the Nationalist Chinese KMT government of President Ma Ying-jeou. While the recurring theme of the government in Taipei of “reduction of tension in the Taiwan Strait” is generally applauded – also by the opposition of the DPP – there are increasing concerns that Ma is moving “too far and too fast”, and is not getting much in return from China.

Copyright: Taipei Times

In the view of many in Taiwan, this drift of Taiwan in China’s sphere of influence represents a surreptitious change in the *status quo*, from the present “*de facto independent*” status to a “*de facto unification*” status. Over the past year, President Ma has given a number of signals indicating he wants to draw Taiwan even closer to China.



Mr. Ma zigzagging through the political landscape

This is evident from his drive to move towards an Economic Comprehensive Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China, but also from decisions to accredit Chinese degrees, allowing Chinese investments in major infrastructure projects and in major media organizations such as the **China Times**, the ordering of civil servants to study the Chinese Constitution, and stating that people in Taiwan should start studying simplified characters, etc.

At the same time Mr. Ma has downplayed Taiwan's sovereignty: in major events such as the opening of the Kaohsiung World Games and in events with Chinese officials, such as the November 2008 meeting with Chinese envoy Chen Yunlin, Mr. Ma did not refer to his position as "president." More seriously, on several occasions he referred to relations between Taiwan and China as "region-to-region" relations, implying they were part of one country.

Interestingly, in his statements Mr. Ma reverted to the lingo of the old Kuomintang prior to President Lee Teng-hui's 1991 constitutional reforms: he said that "*within the framework of our ROC Constitution, I would define the Mainland as the "Mainland Region" and Taiwan as the "Taiwan Region"....*" He added that "*... we cannot recognize that there is another country on the mainland, which is part of the ROC.*" Thus Mr. Ma was denying the existence of the PRC.

Ma's focus on improving ties with China has disregarded Taiwan's own interests, and has relegated Taiwan's populace and its concerns to a second rung of importance, as was apparent from the slow reaction to the devastation brought to Taiwan's South by typhoon Morakot described earlier.

President Ma becomes Chairman Ma, too

Another peculiar move which has raised eyebrows, was the recent decision by President Ma to become chairman of the Chinese Nationalist Kuomintang party too. For many months, Mr. Ma had denied that he wanted to become party chairman, but in mid-June 2009 it became apparent that then Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung would step aside, and that Mr. Ma would "run" for the position. His election was a foregone conclusion since Mr. Ma ran unopposed, and on July 26th 2009 he was elected with some 93.9% of the vote – the remaining 6% of the ballots being invalid.

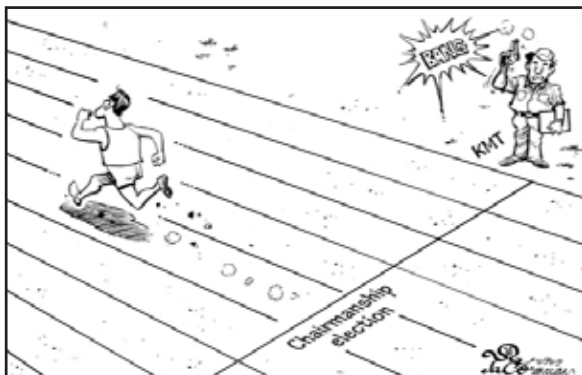
Ma's takeover of the party position was ostensibly designed to ensure a closer cooperation between the party and the executive branch: Ma reportedly wanted to have a tighter grip on the party in the preparation of the upcoming county and mayoral elections planned for the end of 2009 and the end of 2010. There are also reports that he wanted to rein in the freewheeling members of the Legislative Yuan.

However, it is evident that the main reason is the "China agenda": during the past year and a half, the KMT party had become a prime interface in the budding relations with China, with some four CCP-KMT meetings since April 2008, just after Ma was elected President. That the party apparatus was driven by – and loyal to – some of the old guard like Wu Po-hsiung and Lien Chan perhaps did not sit so well with Ma.

Another reason for President Ma to take on the mantle of KMT chairman is that in that capacity he can meet China's Hu Jintao as 'equal', since Hu is chairman of the CCP.

Copyright: Taipei Times

China would never agree to any meeting with Mr. Ma as "president" since that would mean acknowledgement of the existence of two separate states – a real fact of life which is still being denied by the old Kuomintang and the Chinese in Beijing alike.



President Ma, running for KMT Chairman

Taiwan's democracy endangered

During the past months, we have presented evidence that Taiwan's democracy is increasingly being endangered by the moves of the Ma administration to accommodate China at the expense of human rights, democracy and judicial independence (see *Taiwan Communiqué* issues no. 121-124, November 2008 through July 2009). In particular the use of the judicial system against present and former members of the DPP, and the increasing sidelining of the Legislative Yuan were the prime examples.

According to sources in Taiwan, a total of some 150 DPP members have been questioned and investigated by the High Prosecutor's Office, and a number of these indicted, and – like former President Chen Shui-bian – imprisoned. At the same time, many cases of obvious corruption and embezzlement by Kuomintang officials are ignored.

To this long list of problems, we must now add two more issues which seem intended to stifle opposition to the rule of the Chinese Nationalists: the *Civil Servants Neutrality Act* and the recently-revised *Assembly and Parade Act*. We present a brief summary of each issue:

The Civil Servants Neutrality Act

On 10 June 2009, the Kuomintang government of President Ma Ying-jeou enacted the **Civil Servants Neutrality Act**, a new law regulating the participation of civil servants in political activities. The initiative had initially been started by the DPP under President Chen Shui-bien, which wanted to ensure fair play and professionalism in the political environment.

However, in an unexpected move very late in the legislative approval process, the Kuomintang suddenly added a provision – in Articles 9 and 17 – which prohibits any political activity (even in one’s own free time) by “*teachers or professors with administrative responsibilities in public schools*” and “*research personnel in public academic research institutions.*” Since almost every professor or researcher has some administrative responsibility, this covers just about everybody.

The move prompted widespread protests in the academic community: thirtyeight members of the highly-regarded Academia Sinica issued a joint statement voicing strong opposition, while many individual academics wrote editorials criticizing the new law.

Even the usually pro-government **China Times** blasted the new law in a strongly-worded editorial on 20 July 2009: *It is beyond our understanding why the Examination Yuan would initiate such an anachronistic law more than two decades after Taiwan lifted martial law.*

Amending the Assembly and Parade Act

In November 2008, when the “Wild Strawberry” students protested against the restrictions placed on free expression during the visit of Chinese envoy Chen Yunlin, an important focus of the protest was the **Assembly and Parade Act**. The students urged the Kuomintang government to ease the restrictions imposed by the law, which prohibits any peaceful assembly at public locations until specific permits have been granted by the police (see *Taiwan Communiqué* no. 121, pp. 10-12).

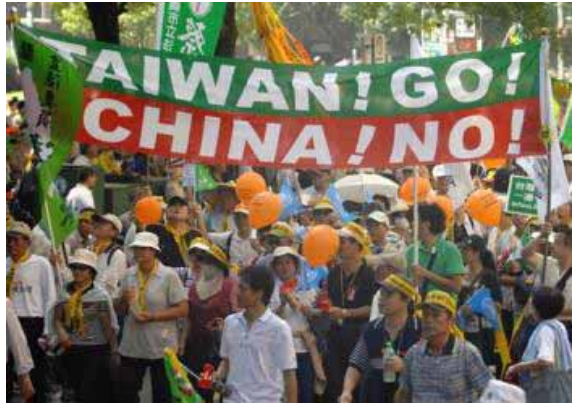
During the first half of 2009, the debate seesawed back and forth, with very little result. But then – just before the summer recess – the KMT caucus in the Legislative Yuan put a draft amendment on the table, claiming that it had been extensively discussed with civic groups and opposition parties.

However, many civic groups denied that any consultations had taken place and stated that the draft actually changed very little and would mean that most of the restrictions would remain in place. A few examples:

1. Instead of a specific permit from the police, the draft stipulates that “advanced notice” must be given by the organizers. However, this “advanced notice” would need to include an agreement signed by the organization responsible for the venue

where the demonstration is held: e.g. if the demonstration is in front of the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry (or the City?) would have to sign an agreement.

Photo: Taipei Times



2. Article 4 of the draft law states that religious organizations do not need to give prior notification of the route of a planned procession, but organizations of a political or social nature do. Observers in Taiwan feel this is unequal treatment, and point out

November 2008 protest against visit of Chinese envoy Chen Yunlin

that the processions honoring the goddess Matsu often involve tens of thousands of people, causing a major disruption of traffic.

3. Article 6 of the draft law stipulates that no demonstrations or assemblies can be held within 300 meters of the building of the Executive Yuan. As the Executive Yuan is the country’s highest executive body, it would be obvious that people would want to express their dissatisfaction with policies not to their liking. So why would the Executive Yuan be shielded in this way?
4. Article 24 of the law gives police broad powers to disperse a gathering, even if it has obtained a permit and has remained peaceful. The law allows the police to decide that a gathering or march “disrupts traffic or threatens national security”, and – after three notifications – allows the police to use force.

Taiwan Communiqué comment: We believe that it is of utmost importance to preserve Taiwan's freedom and vibrant democracy: it is one of the few beacons of democracy we have in East Asia. We worked hard to achieve it and should work hard to maintain it. That democracy in itself is one of America's most important strategic assets in the region. If Taiwan were to slide of into a Hong Kong type of situation, then Japan and South Korea might feel more isolated, and consider it incumbent on them to loosen their ties with the US and draw closer to China.

Judicial persecution continues

Chen trial to come to verdict on September 11th

In June and July 2009, the judicial proceedings against former President Chen Shui-bian and his family continued to drag on. Chen had first been arrested on November 11th 2008, then detained for about a month, released by one judge, but — after a mysterious switch to another judge — detained again at the end of December 2008. Pre-trial proceedings had started in February, while the formal trial got under way in March 2009.

Photo: Taipei Times



Supporters of former President Chen Shui-bian protest his continued detention

As we reported in the previous issue of *Taiwan Communiqué* (no. 124, page 17) the prosecutors heaped charges upon charges, adding new ones along the way. In the meantime, Chen was kept in detention, making it difficult for him to plan an

adequate defense with his lawyers. The meetings Chen did have with members of his legal team were recorded, while an official of the Prosecutor's Office was always present, listening in on the conversation.

The sham proceedings prompted Chen to dismiss his defense team in early May 2009 in protest against the “judiciary circus.” Several court-appointed lawyers continued the defense after that.

The proceeding drew to a close at the end of July 2009, when the court announced that the verdict would be handed down on September 11th. The closing arguments were done in a final hearing on July 28th. Former President Chen himself spoke for some four hours, acknowledging that he had made mistakes, but maintaining his innocence on the charges against him. He said the entire trial had been “*unfair and politically-motivated.*”

Interestingly, the top prize for theatrics went to the chief prosecutor Lin Chin-kiang, who was reduced to tears, staging an hour-long sobbing presentation on how Chen Shui-bian had “lost his way” and therefore betrayed his ideals. However, at several points along the way, he suddenly stopped crying in order to give instructions to the court stenographer on where to put commas in the presentation or move to a new paragraph – after which he proceeded his crying performance.

Scholars urge release of former president from detention

The shoddy proceedings against Chen and unfair decisions by the court prompted several groups to express deep concern about the political bias and lack of judicial independence and impartiality.

On June 25th 2009, a group of ten prominent scholars, lawyers and civil rights activists in Taiwan issued a joint statement calling for judicial reform and for an immediate release of former president Chen. The ten included Nobel Physics Prize recipient Lee Yuan-tseh, Taiwan Bar Association President Wellington Koo and DPP Chairperson Dr. Tsai Ing-wen.

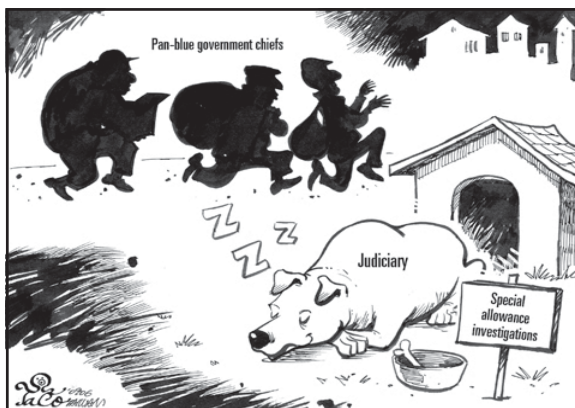
In the joint statement, the ten scholars and lawyers said that the system of “pre-trial detention” caused “*irreparable damage to the personal freedom of defendants.*” They asked that if the legal rights of the former head of state are not protected “*...how can we ever ensure that the rights of ordinary citizens will not be violated?*”

The ten said that the court decisions to continuously keep President Chen in pretrial detention for many months were “*unreasonable and unnecessary*”, and that these decisions have “*severely damaged the credibility of our judicial system.*” The ten scholars and lawyers said that respecting Chen’s legal rights to a fair trial should be a “*fundamental value shared by our society*”, and that the mishandling of his case “*highlighted the deficiencies of the system.*”

The prolonged incarceration of former President Chen was also strongly criticized by fifteen major Taiwanese-American organizations, who issued a statement on July 8th 2009, calling the incarceration “*unjustifiable legally and unconscionable on human rights grounds.*” One of the co-signers, FAPA President Prof. Bob Yang, stated that the issue is not whether Chen is guilty or not, but whether his trial meets “*the highest standard of judicial independence and impartiality.*”

Copyright: Taipei Times

The appeals failed to sway the strongly partisan judges: on Monday July 13th the District Court ruled to extend Chen’s detention for another two months, while this decision was upheld by the Taiwan High Court on Tuesday, July 21st 2009. This decision means that Chen will continue to be incarcerated until the verdict is handed down on September 11th.



Judiciary watchdog sleeping as pan-blue government chiefs haul in their loot

Taiwan Communiqué comment: To close observers of

political developments in Taiwan it is clear that the proceedings against Chen are part of a broader effort of the ruling Kuomintang to drive the DPP into the ground. The handling of the case bears all the marks of a political vendetta against Chen, whose real “crime” is that he pushed the Kuomintang out of office after its 50+ year rule in 2000, and that he moved Taiwan away from the sino-centric policies of the prior administrations.

This is not to say that Chen is not guilty of some of the charges against him. He may well have been careless, and he didn’t keep a tight rein on his family’s financial dealings. But many of the practices he is being accused of – certainly with regard to the “state affairs fund” and discretionary fund — were standard procedure in previous governments. The vindictiveness of the prosecution is very much an indication of political bias.

This state of affairs is regrettable: the KMT government could have moved Taiwan in the right direction by conducting a fair trial which could have become a showcase

of judicial independence and impartiality. Unfortunately they did the opposite, creating a deeper political divide in Taiwan that will be increasingly difficult to bridge.

An appeal of the people of Taiwan

Presbyterian Church in Taiwan sends President Obama a letter

On July 17th 2009, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan addressed an Open Letter to US President Barack Obama, in which it appealed to Mr. Obama to “review its policy toward Taiwan and China, to recognize that Taiwan and China are two separate countries.”

The letter was signed by Rev. Leonard Tsung-Jeng Lin, moderator of the 54th General Assembly, and Rev. Andrew Te-Chien Chang, General Secretary, and adopted by the General Assembly as a whole on July 17th, 2009. Below follows the full text of the letter:

Dear Mr. President:

Your upcoming meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao, and the possibility that Taiwan may be discussed, raises again the dilemma of Taiwan’s uncertain status and is compounded by the changing situation in the Taiwan Strait. The future of Taiwan and our destiny as a people in Taiwan may be in jeopardy.

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan has been identified with the people here for almost a century and a half; we feel the anxiety of the people of this island. Believing that the Church is the fellowship of God’s people, called to proclaim the salvation of Jesus Christ, called to be ambassadors of reconciliation, rooted in this land and identified with all its inhabitants, and through love and suffering called to be a sign of hope, we issue this appeal to you.

Under the daily threat of over thirteen hundred Chinese missiles, the yearly expansion of its military forces, and its constant obstruction of Taiwan’s participation in the international organizations, the people in Taiwan feel the threat to our personal lives, the violation of our national sovereignty and basic human

rights. We are concerned that, if Taiwan were taken over by dictatorial China, not only would the hard earned democratic system in Taiwan be destroyed, but the welfare of people here would be sacrificed, and the peace and stability of Asian Pacific region would be threatened.

Taiwanese people heartily love freedom and cherish deeply our democratic achievements. We do not want to live under totalitarian rule. This can be seen in the results of a recent poll that over eighty per cent of people in Taiwan are opposed to unification with China. The people of Taiwan will adhere to the principles of justice and peace, and will steadfastly defend the right of self-determination.

We believe that human rights are God-given. The right of self-determination is a principle stated in “The Charter of the United Nations,” and is a basic right guaranteed by “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

Therefore, we appeal to the Government of the United States to review its policy toward Taiwan and China, to recognize that Taiwan and China are two separate countries, and cooperate with all peace and justice loving countries in the world to prevent China from taking over Taiwan by force or any other means.

We also appeal to the international community to be attentive to the wishes of Taiwanese people, assisting Taiwan to participate in international affairs as an independent country, so that the people of Taiwan will be given an opportunity to contribute to the justice, peace, and welfare of the whole human race.

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

*The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,
July 17th, 2009, in Tamsui, Taiwan.*

The case received wide international attention because of the subsequent revelations that the murder was committed by three Bamboo Union underworld figures from Taiwan on the order of top-officials of the Military Intelligence Bureau (MIB) of the Ministry of Defense. The head of the MIB, vice admiral Wang Hsi-ling, was subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment, but released in 1992.

Another case that was never resolved is that of the murder of the mother and twin-daughters of then Provincial Assembly member Lin Yi-hsiung on 28 February 1980 (see *Taiwan Communiqué* no. 123, pp. 11-13).

How to Lai with statistics

Mainland Affairs Council chairperson fudges the numbers

In mid-July 2009, the Chairperson of the KMT government's Mainland Affairs Council, Ms. Lai Shin-yuan, came to Washington to present the case in support of the Kuomintang's pro-China policies to US policymakers, members of Congress, and think-tanks. We of course don't know what she discussed in the closed-door meetings with policymakers and members of Congress, but in a public presentation at the Brookings Institution she made the astonishing claim that "92 percent of the Taiwanese agree" with the KMT Administration's policy towards China.

While her office later corrected the statement, saying that she had meant to say that 92 percent "support the status quo", even that number is highly dubious. We checked the results of opinion polls published by Ms. Lai's own Mainland Affairs Council, and – based on the numbers published in April 2009 – arrived at the following:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Independence as soon as possible: | 6.7% |
| 2. Status quo now, independence later: | 15.0% |
| 3. Status quo indefinitely: | 27.0% |
| 4. Status quo now, decide later: | 35.0% |
| 5. Status quo now, unification later: | 7.6% |
| 6. Unification as soon as possible: | 1.2% |

Traditionally the numbers have been grouped in three categories: 1) and 2) together for independence, 3) and 4) together for "status quo" and 5) and 6) together for unification.

However, Ms. Lai seems to have taken a “broader” definition of the *status quo*, and grouped 2) through 5) together. However, even then the numbers only add up to 84.7%.

Perhaps Ms. Lai based herself on an earlier poll, published in December 2008, in which the numbers for 2) through 5) indeed added up to 91.8%. Still, that begs the question of what happened between December 2008 and April 2009? If those numbers are compared, then we see actually a drop of the people supporting the status quo (defined in the “narrow” sense – only 3) and 4)) from 66.4% down to 62.0%, while support for unification decreases too (from 11% to 8.8%), while support for independence remains virtually the same at roughly 22.0%. But that was perhaps an inconvenient truth for Ms. Lai.

Aboriginal politics in Taiwan

SCIENCE: Malay-Polynesians originated in Taiwan

The January 2009 issue of **Science** contained two interesting articles demonstrating that Taiwan was one of the principal locations of origin for the Austronesian/Polynesian people. Earlier studies using DNA analysis had indicated similar conclusions, but these two articles show from very different perspectives that as early as 5,000 years ago, aboriginal tribes from Taiwan started to spread out onto every inhabitable island in the Pacific, areas of Southeast Asia and all the way across to Madagascar. These two recent articles are:

Gray, R.D., A.J. Drummond, and S.J. Greenhill. 2009. “*Language Phylogenies Reveal Expansion Pulses and Pauses in Pacific Settlement.*” **Science** 323, 5913 (January 23):479-483.

Moodley, Yoshan et al. 2009. “*The Peopling of the Pacific from a Bacterial Perspective.*” **Science** 323, 5913 (January 23):527-530.

It would go too far for us to try to summarize or analyse these scientific articles here, so we simply refer to their titles, and hope that our readers will take a look at them.

The reason why we bring up this issue is that there are strong indications that the Ma administration is now attempting to force the Taiwan aborigines to cut their ties with

their Pacific brethren, and intends to forge artificial links with China-based minority groups with whom the Taiwan aborigines have no historical links whatsoever. On this and several other aborigine issues, hereby a summary by Prof. Scott Simon, a Canadian expert on aborigine issues.

The Ma government disregards aboriginal rights

By Prof. Scott Simon, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Ottawa

In 2005, the Taiwanese government promulgated the *Indigenous Peoples Basic Law* to protect the rights of Taiwan's indigenous nations. This law promoted indigenous autonomy and self-governance on many levels. Article 25 stipulated that *"The government shall establish a natural disaster prevention and relief system in indigenous peoples' regions and natural disaster prevention priority zones to protect physical and property safety of indigenous peoples."* Article 31 legislated that *"the government may not store toxic materials in indigenous peoples' regions in contrary to the will of indigenous peoples."*

Photo: Pasang Tuli



Taiwan aborigine protest meeting

This law was promoted by the DPP government, but passed by a Legislative Yuan that was dominated by a KMT majority.

Yet President Ma appears disengaged from indigenous Taiwan. During his campaign, he disregarded Basic Law provisions on autonomous regions, promising only to establish one or two "trial" versions. Since he took office, indigenous groups have been taken on lavish visits to China, but no progress has been made on autonomy. In January, indigenous people protested the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP) about hunting issues, nuclear waste, and the fact that the CIP's First Secretary was from Hong Kong. Inaction by the government has breathed new life into the indigenous social movement, including the formation of the Taitung-based Smoke Action Union which launched its first nation-wide protest on February 28.

One important issue is that Taipower proposes to store nuclear waste on Paiwan territory in Taitung. The anticipated site is on the southern coast – just across the river from Pingtung. Yet a planned referendum will be held only in Taitung, not giving Paiwan residents in Pingtung any say in the matter. This violates Article 31 of the Basic Law by which the government can only store toxic materials according to the will of *indigenous peoples*. The Smoke Action Union has thus led demonstrations against the project in Taitung and Taipei.

In August, slow reactions of the government after Typhoon Morakot – which destroyed entire indigenous villages and killed hundreds of indigenous people – further highlighted its disengagement with indigenous peoples. The government had not observed Article 25, which would have established disaster prevention and relief systems in indigenous regions.

The worst disaster, however, may yet be to come, as the proposed nuclear waste site lies right in the path of violent typhoons. President Ma must engage more with Taiwanese indigenous communities and implement the Basic Law approved by the Legislative Yuan. The indigenous people of Taiwan include some of the strongest supporters of the KMT, but their support cannot be taken for granted.

Report from Washington

In Memoriam Senator Ted Kennedy

In the evening of August 25th 2009, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) passed away in his home in Hyannis Port after battling a brain tumor with which he was first diagnosed in May 2008. In the early and mid-1980s, Kennedy played an important role in Taiwan's transition to democracy: he initiated many hearings and held press conferences to highlight Taiwan's martial law – which had been in force since 1949 – and lack of democracy.

He worked closely with Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI) – who passed away in January 2009 — and Congressmen Jim Leach (R-IA) and Stephen Solarz (D-NY). Together, they were affectionately referred to as the “Gang of Four” in support of democracy and human rights in Taiwan.

He also frequently called on the Kuomintang authorities to release the political and religious leaders who were imprisoned after the **Kaohsiung Incident** of December 1979, including reverend Kao Chun-ming of the Presbyterian Church, and then Provincial Assembly member Lin Yi-hsiung, whose mother and daughters were murdered when he was in prison (see *Taiwan Communiqué* no. 123, pp. 11-13, and *Formosa Betrayed, the Movie* on pp. 16-17).



Senator Edward M. Kennedy (1932-2009)

At a press conference on May 20th 1982 on the occasion of 33 years of martial law in Taiwan, Kennedy stated: *“...it is clear that too many citizens are jailed in Taiwan for expressing their political views and defending their human rights. I therefore call on the leadership of Taiwan to take immediate action to release political and religious prisoners and to improve the human rights situation on the island.”*

The efforts by Senator Kennedy and his colleagues in the US Congress helped bring about the transition to democracy and strengthened the democratic opposition on the island, which coalesced and led to the formation of the Democratic Progressive Party in September 1986, and eventually to the end of martial law on July 14th 1987. However, it wasn't until 1992 that democratic elections were held for all seats in the Legislative Yuan, and not until 1996 that the Taiwanese were able to directly elect their own president.

The Taiwanese-American community and the people in Taiwan fondly remember Senator Kennedy as one who stood with them in one of the most difficult periods in the island's history. We will miss him.

Book Review

Democracy in Peril: Taiwan's Struggle for Survival

By J. Michael Cole, Reviewed by Gerrit van der Wees

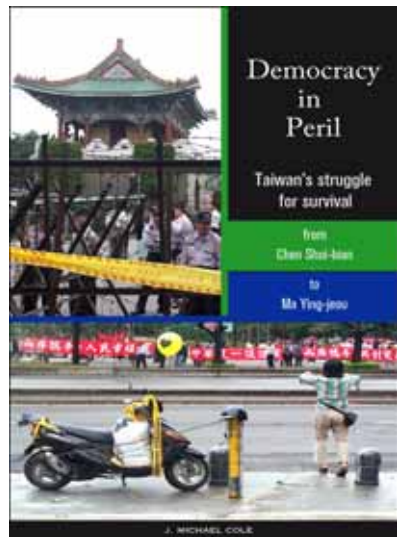
This book is highly timely: it covers the last few months of Chen Shui-bian's DPP administration and the first year of Ma Ying-jeou's KMT government. It presents razor-sharp insights into the events that unfolded during the past two years, and – as stated in the introduction – “...*very much reflects the realities, struggles and challenges that are specific to that historical period in the nation's history.*”

J. Michael Cole is a former Canadian intelligence officer, who resigned from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service in 2005 and moved to Taiwan with his Taiwanese wife. Since 2006 Mr. Cole has been writing for the Taipei Times and is maintaining a blog titled Far Eastern Sweet Potato: <http://fareasternpotato.blogspot.com/>

The intention of the book is to contribute to the readers' understanding of the great debate that was – and is — going on in Taiwan during the transition from the Chen administration (when the focus was on the struggle for inter-

national survival) to the present Ma administration, marked by rising fears of Chinese encroachment as the ruling KMT initiates a series of “peace” initiatives with Beijing.

The book starts with an overview of key events in modern Taiwan history. Cole's premise is that — particularly in the West — very little is known about the island's history, and that a fuller acquaintance would help readers get a better appreciation of the present developments and aspirations for the future. He aims at international readers, and hopes that the book will enhance understanding of the underlying political, cultural and social dynamics on the island.



He then presents a series of essays under the general theme “*The Struggle: the last months of the Chen Shui-bian administration.*” Each essay is a snap-shot, either discussing a particular event or highlighting an issue of the day. Together, they present an important insight into how life for the Chen administration was made difficult, not only by the relentless attacks by the Kuomintang and its media, but also by the sidelining of Taiwan by the Bush administration, which increasingly sided with Beijing.

The second set of essays cover the first year of the Ma administration, and is titled “*Fear and uncertainty: the Ma Ying-jeou presidency.*” It delves into a wide array of issues, and presents a critical analysis of the moves made by the Ma administration and the policies it pursued.

In the conclusion of the book, Cole presents a good overall analysis of the transition from Chen Shui-bian to Ma Ying-jeou. He states that while it was true that Chen’s strong personality sometimes ruffled feathers, “... *what the KMT, media and Chen critics failed to note was that no matter what Taiwan did, China continued to build up its military. Irritant or not, it was Beijing rather than Taipei that made the Taiwan Strait a potential flashpoint...*”

Cole continues: “*Chen did indeed “anger” Beijing and make Washington’s diplomatic balancing act in the region more difficult. But in the end he was reflecting the wishes of the majority of Taiwanese, regardless of whether the US or Beijing agreed or not.*”

At the very end of the book, he makes a very interesting “out-of-the-box” observation: “...*Taiwan does not threaten China. But should it ever be forced to become part of China, Taiwan could easily become the greatest threat to stability China has seen since the Japanese invasion in the 1930s and the civil war. Ironically, and despite Beijing’s rhetoric, China’s future stability could very well be contingent on Taiwan not becoming part of it.*”

In conclusion: Cole’s work is an excellent contribution to the understanding of present-day Taiwan. Keen insights into the developments on the island, and an excellent grasp of the political sensitivities and realities as they appear to the Taiwanese themselves. Highly recommended!

The complete title of the book is ***Democracy in Peril: Taiwan’s Struggle for Survival from Chen Shui-bian to Ma Ying-jeou***, by J. Michael Cole. Publisher: www.iUniverse.com, New York, NY and Bloomington, IN. June 2009.

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The goals of FAPA are: 1) to promote international support for the right of the people of Taiwan (Formosa) to establish an independent and democratic country, and to join the international community; 2) to advance the rights and interests of Taiwanese communities throughout the world; and 3) to promote peace and security for Taiwan

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