

Chinese centennial raises question about Taiwan future

Written by Michael Richardson
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The recent centennial anniversary of the Chinese revolt that ended rule by centuries of imperial emperors was celebrated in both Beijing and Taipei. Both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China in-exile commemorated the Wuhan uprising of October 10, 1911, which began a revolution that ended the Qing dynasty.

Both Chinese governments honored revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen and laid claim to his legacy in ceremonies held in China and on the island of Taiwan. However, the People's Republic of China communist regime did not come into existence until 1949 when it defeated the Kuomintang government of the Republic of China which had replaced imperial rule.

After the Chinese civil war ended in 1949, the Republic of China was forced into exile on the island of Taiwan, then commonly called Formosa. The United States, which acquired responsibility for the island after the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II, permitted Chiang Kai-shek to move his defeated Kuomintang government to the island as a haven. The Cold War was raging and the United States was not eager to see "Red China" join the international community.

For many years the United States propounded the pronouncement that its ROC proxy was the legitimate government of China. As a consequence of American geopolitics the Formosans were denied self-determination allowing the exiled Chinese to impose a brutal martial law on the islanders for forty years.

In 2009, the District of Columbia U.S. Court of Appeals called Taiwan's plight a condition of "political purgatory" in the case *Roger Lin, et al, vs. United States*. The court said in *Roger Lin* that Taiwan's unresolved international status was the result of an intentional "strategic ambiguity" advanced by the United States and encouraged President Barack Obama to resolve the matter expeditiously. Roger Lin has followed his lawsuit with the formation of a group called Taiwan Civil Government that urges self-determination for Taiwan using international law.

Under terms of the 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty that officially ended World War II between the United States and Japan the fate of Formosa was left undetermined. The United States was named "principal occupying Power" over the former Japanese territory. However, because of Cold War politics, the United States allowed the Republic of China in-exile to

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govern the island and ignored decades of harsh martial law imposed by the exiled Chinese.

Meanwhile, the People's Republic of China has declared Taiwan to be a renegade province and militarily threatens the island keeping the Taiwanese independence movement at bay. The United States responded to the mainland Chinese threat by selling weapons to the exiled ROC creating an arms race across the Taiwan Strait.

The communist Chinese government threatening Taiwan has now built up sufficient military resources that outdate the "strategic ambiguity" in the view of many observers. The recent decision by the United States to not sell F-16 warplanes to the ROC triggered a debate on Taiwan's future in Washington, D.C. that continues to rage.

While Washington wavers on Taiwan's future, the Chinese campaign to take over the island has advanced into diplomatic and political arenas and has tagged Taiwan as "Chinese Taipei" while declaring a "one China" policy that leaves no room for self-determination.

With the backdrop of ambiguity, intrigue, and power-plays now clouding the island's future the Chinese centennial celebrations by the two Chinese regimes left many confused about the identity of the 23 million inhabitants of Taiwan. Incumbent ROC President Ma Ying-jeou has embraced the "one China" doctrine and has worked to move the island closer to mainland Chinese control. Ma has said in campaign speeches that it is time for a "peace pact" with the People's Republic of China. Ma's challenger in the upcoming 2012 ROC elections is Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party who has adopted her own version of ambiguity.

Meanwhile, former ROC President Lee Teng-hui, a Taiwanese independence proponent, is facing a long term in prison as his corruption trial proceeds. Lee is accused of diverting secret funds from the Union of South Africa provided to Lee under a dollar diplomacy bid by the then apartheid government. Lee is charged with diverting the ROC money into his own think-tank, the Taiwan Research Institute. Defenders of Lee say the trial is an effort by Ma to silence critics.

Taiwan Solidarity Union, a pro-independence political party founded by Lee, has entered the fray with a lawsuit against Ma Ying-jeou for treason. TSU maintains that the so-called 1992 Consensus relied upon by Ma is a fiction and is being used to foster Ma's "one-China" policy.

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Koo Kwang-ming, a senior Taiwan independence advocate took a half-page ad in *Taipei Times* that said Tsai Ing-wen “dangerously legalized and rationalized” the ROC with her campaign statement that “Taiwan is the ROC, the ROC is Taiwan”.

Koo says the ROC stays in power using “two big lies”—the ROC Constitution and the Taiwanese media. Many on the island do not know the six-decade history of Taiwan’s “political purgatory” and the population is divided on the future of the island.

Ambiguity remains the order of the day while the Chinese parades and celebrations in Beijing and Taipei only masked an increasingly fragile status quo. The long-standing “Taiwan question” remains unanswered.

For more about Taiwan independence advocate [Koo Kwang-ming](#)

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