

The end of World War II in 1945 marked the end of Japan's colonial rule over Taiwan. Instead of becoming independent as the Koreans did, Taiwan was occupied by the Republic of China (ROC).

At first, it was ruled in a quasi-colonial fashion by the Taiwan provincial administration of then-chief executive Chen Yi (陳儀). The Taiwan Provincial Government was established in 1947, following the 228 Incident. In 1949, the ROC was ousted from China by the People's Republic of China (PRC), creating a situation in which the rival Chinas of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) faced each other across the Taiwan Strait. The two parties maintained a "Chinese standpoint" with regard to Taiwan. In historical terms, this was a tragic beginning to a complex situation that has dragged on for more than 70 years.

During the party-state era under former presidents Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) and his son Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國), the "Chinese standpoint" in Taiwan was embodied in the slogan "Retake the mainland and save our compatriots." Martial law, formalized by the Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion, remained in place for 38 years. The full re-election of the National Assembly and the first direct presidential election took place under then-president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), almost half a century after the end of World War II.

The "Chinese standpoint" of the KMT in Taiwan was originally a way for the Chiangs' party-state establishment to keep its monopoly on power. The warning expressed in A Declaration of Formosan Self-salvation, published in 1964 by National Taiwan University professor Peng Ming-min (彭明敏) and his students Hsieh Tsung-min (謝宗敏) and Wei Ting-chao (魏廷朝), was answered with political persecution. The proposals put forward by some elite "mainlanders" for democratization and national transformation also resulted in imprisonment for their proponents. In 1971, the ROC's right to represent China at the UN was supplanted by the PRC, but the KMT still clung to the "Chinese standpoint."

The name ROC was eventually only heard in Taiwan.

After the PRC was established in 1949, the ROC should have no longer been in a position to define the "Chinese standpoint." When Taiwan was under KMT rule, led in turn by the two

Realizing a ‘Taiwanese standpoint’

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Chiangs, the PRC’s incessant propaganda about Taiwan was formulated in terms of “liberation,” a favorite slogan of the communist revolution in the 20th century. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and China tried to export revolution. It was not until the liberalization of eastern Europe and the breakup of the Soviet Union that a new era of globalization and economic cooperation arose and there was less talk of “liberation.”

The capitalist-style rise of the PRC and its new expansionist strategy — the Belt and Road Initiative — have seen dark clouds gathering once more. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine is a similarly sinister move.

The “Taiwanese standpoint” is the political line that Lee expounded in his 1999 book *With the People Always in My Heart* (心心相印). It is quite different from the KMT’s and CCP’s “Chinese standpoint” for Taiwan. The “Taiwanese standpoint” is rejected by the KMT, but it is the line followed by the Democratic Progressive Party and other Taiwan-centric parties, and it can be traced back to Peng’s Declaration.

Following Taiwan’s democratization, its political disputes largely arise from the conflict between the “Taiwanese standpoint” and the “Chinese standpoint.” The ROC on Taiwan has been independent of the PRC since 1949, yet KMT politicians oppose the idea that it is an independent state.

Of course an independent state can adopt juridical measures to protect its existence, including those affecting the nation’s title and distinguishing symbols, if they are controversial in terms of identity and belonging.

The political efforts of Taiwan’s political parties should be directed at realizing the “Taiwanese standpoint.” If the Chinese KMT does not change itself into a Taiwanese KMT, it can be seen as a party that exists only for the sake of the “Chinese standpoint” and places itself outside Taiwan. As such, there is no need for the KMT to exist in Taiwan, and it cannot compete as a normal political party.

Taiwan’s democratization was for the country owned by those who live in Taiwan to move toward the civilized world, not for it to revert to being a colony of an authoritarian, tyrannical state. The KMT used its martial-law regime to force Taiwanese to submit to its national policy

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of “retaking the mainland,” but since Taiwan became a democracy, the KMT has turned its national policy completely around. Today’s KMT wants to deceive Taiwanese into following its path of aligning with the CCP and surrendering to China.

As long as the KMT follows such a path, it is no longer worthy to exist in Taiwan.

Lee Min-yung is a poet.

Translated by Julian Clegg

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