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Negotiating National Identity in Taiwan: Between Nativisation and De-Sinicisation

Christopher R. Hughes

Since the Chen Shui-bian administration came to power in May 2000, the charge that the state has been consolidating Taiwan's separation from China by systematically purging the island of Chinese influences through a process of 'de-sinicisation' (*qu zhongguo hua*) has increasingly been made on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. It will be argued below that this is an over-simplification of the unavoidable challenge of replacing the KMT's version of Chinese nationalism with a more participatory vision of politics. At the centre of this is a discussion of the nature of 'nativisation' (*bentu hua*) that has been integral to Taiwan's democratisation that goes back much further than the Chen administration.

It is quite appropriate to take the critical view of identity politics in Taiwan that is presented by Chao, Lee and Chiang in this volume. History is replete with examples of nativist movements being appropriated to legitimise militarist, ultra-nationalist and fascist regimes. One need look no further than the Chinese and Japanese forms of nationalism that were imposed on Taiwan in the past to find such cases. Focusing on the concept of 'civic culture' is also certainly useful for explaining why excluding segments of the population from political life due to ethnic loyalties or characteristics is essentially un-democratic. Almond and Verba thus provide one of the most convincing explanations for how even a state that practices universal suffrage and has institutions such as political parties and an effective legislature can be totalitarian if its values are not drawn from a participatory civic culture.¹

Yet if the civic culture model is applied to Taiwan, it can just as easily be argued that democratic erosion had not occurred precisely because the need to increase political participation has been a dominant theme in the discussion of the relationship between identity and the state. This is because democratisation has entailed unravelling the way in which the politics of Chinese nationalism reduces citizens to the passive status of what Almond and Verba would call 'participant subjects'. In Taiwan this took the particular form of excluding the majority of citizens from political life by suspending democracy until the Chinese nation was united and nation-wide elections could be held. In terms drawn from nationalist theory, the process of recognising that sovereignty is practiced by the residents of Taiwan could thus be described as an attempt to replace Chinese 'ethnic' nationalism with a form of 'civic' nationalism. Whereas the former emphasises that the nation is a community of birth with a native culture, the latter is a territorial and legalistic concept that stresses the existence of an historic territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology.²

¹ Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 8.

² Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 11.

The argument over de-sinicisation

The accusation that a process of ‘de-sinicisation’ is occurring in Taiwan has arisen in the context of a general re-orientation of identity that has been supported and shaped by state policies under the Chen Shui-bian administration. As pointed out by Chao, Lee and Chiang in this volume, this involves initiatives to rectify Taiwan’s name, changes to institutions designed to promote unification with mainland China and attempts to change the ROC Constitution.

Sometimes this has been highly visible, as with the removal of the placards in front of the Presidential Palace that advocated the unification of China under the Three Principles of the People and the departure of slogans urging a renaissance of Chinese culture and opposition to Taiwanese independence from military bases. The Government Information Office (GIO) has taken an active part in changing public symbols, such as the addition of ‘Taiwan’ and a map of the island to the front cover of the English version of the 2001 *ROC Yearbook* and the relocation of the map of China to the back. These modest steps have now developed into a more positive presentation of Taiwan itself. The 2006-7 edition of the yearbook features the five winning symbols of an on-line poll called ‘Show Taiwan to the World’, which asked netizens to select which images they think best symbolize their ‘country’. These are the Taipei 101 skyscraper (the world’s tallest building), Jade Mountain (the highest peak in Asia east of the Himalayas), the folk art of glove puppetry, Taiwanese cuisine and the endangered Formosan landlocked salmon.³

The ‘movement to rectify Taiwan’s name’ (*Taiwan zheng ming yundong*) has involved dropping references to ‘China’ and the ROC when referring to the state and its various organisations. Chao, Lee and Chiang note examples such as the renaming of Chiang Kai-shek airport as Taiwan International Airport in 2006 and renewed efforts as of early 2007 to make state-owned enterprises such as China Petroleum Co, China Post Ltd and China Ship Building change their names. Name rectification is particularly sensitive, however, when it directly impacts on foreign relations,, such as when Chen Shui-bian announced to a meeting of the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) early in 2002 that a new ROC passport was to be produced with the name ‘Taiwan’ added and listed as the place of issue.⁴ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has extended this attempt to re-orientate identity to foreign policy by pressing for ‘Taiwan’ to be used in the names of its overseas missions. The launching of a campaign for membership of the United Nations under the name ‘Taiwan’ in 2007 and attempts to make this the topic for a referendum in tandem with the March 2008 Presidential election has brought the issue of name rectification to a new head.

Among the transformation of institutions, the abolition of the National Unification Council (NUC) has drawn most attention due to its direct impact on cross-Strait relations. Concerns have also grown over the way in which the re-orientation of identity is taking place in more subtle ways, especially through changes of personnel in key cultural institutions such as the National History Institute (*guo shi guan*) and the National Palace Museum. Prof Zhang Yanxian was appointed to head the former,

³ *Taiwan Yearbook 2006-7* online at: <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/yearbook/cover.html>. Consulted 10 June 2007.

⁴ The new passport began to be issued in September 2003.

a native of Chiayi County with a PhD from Tokyo University. He is an expert on the relationship between the Han and aboriginal groups in Taiwan, social movements during the Japanese occupation and after, the 228 Incident and political cases from the 1950s.⁵ Under his leadership, the Institute has produced books under titles such as *From Martial Law to Lifting Martial Law* (*Cong 'jieyan' dao 'jie yan'*) and the biographies of prominent Dang Wai and DPP figures.

The appointment of Professor Tu Cheng-sheng (Du Zhengsheng), an LSE alumnus as head of the National Palace Museum in May 2000, has been even more controversial. Tu had in fact been singled out as one of the chief architects of ‘de-sinification’ well before the Chen administration came to power because he had been influential in steering a re-orientation of the school curriculum and teaching materials to learning more about Taiwan and less about China in the late 1990s.⁶ Having stewardship over the museum that was once used by the KMT as a kind of cultural umbilical chord linking Taiwan to China’s grand tradition, Tu incurred the wrath of many critics when he proceeded to label the Chinese artefacts as ‘Chinese’ and established a gallery devoted to Taiwanese culture.

The reorientation of education that Tu had begun under Lee Teng-hui also continued under the Chen administration. Already in March 2001 the Ministry of Education had produced a policy on ‘Nativisation of Education’ (*bentu hua jiaoyu*), according to which junior and middle school pupils have to select to learn a ‘native language’ (*xiangtu yuyan*) from Hokkien, Hakka and an aboriginal language. The controversial *Know Taiwan* (*renshi Taiwan*) textbooks became teaching material for history, geography and social studies from the academic year beginning in August. A Native Education Committee (*bentu jiaoyu weiyuan hui*) began to revise the *Know Taiwan* curriculum in 2002 and the following year published a draft outline for a new high school history curriculum in which Chinese history since the mid-Ming Dynasty became part of ‘World History’. An increasing emphasis on native culture can also be seen in the way that the Ministry of Education has actively promoted and funded the establishment of departments of Taiwan Literature in national universities since 2000. When Tu Cheng-sheng was appointed Minister of Education at the start of Chen’s second term in May 2004, accusations of ‘de-sinification’ reached a new height of intensity.

This re-orientation of education has not been confined to schools and universities, moreover. The military has also moved away from its old practice of inculcating its staff and recruits with anti-independence indoctrination. Civil service examinations have been changed too, with the ‘Chinese History’ paper now combined with ‘Theories of Historical Methodology’, while ‘History of the Chinese System’ has been replaced by ‘Modern Taiwanese History’. There has even been the addition of a paper on ‘Japanese Modern History’. The Examination Yuan decided that examinations for promotion on ‘National Literature’ (*guo wen*) and the ROC Constitution should be abolished. National examinations on National General Knowledge (*guojia chang shi*) were also scrapped.

⁵ Online at National History Institute (*Guoshi guan*) website:
<http://www.drnh.gov.tw/www/page/A/page-A.aspx>. Consulted 10 June 2007.

⁶ On national identity and the education reforms of the Lee Teng-hui era see Hughes, C. and Stone, R. ‘Nationalism and Curriculum Reform in Hong Kong and Taiwan’, *China Quarterly*, No 160, Dec 1999, pp. 977-91.

Even foreigners have not been spared from identity politics, as can be seen in the argument over what system of Romanisation system should be used for Chinese characters. In July 1999 a decision had been made to adopt the Pinyin system used in mainland China and recognised by the United Nations. In September 2000 this was overturned by the Ministry of Education's Committee for Promoting the National Language (*jiaoyu bu guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui*) which revived the idea of adopting a new form of Romanisation called 'Tongyong Pinyin' that would more accurately reflect the way that Chinese is pronounced in Taiwan.⁷ Unfortunately, as some foreign critics of this policy were the first to point out, very few people know how to use this special Taiwanese system.

These steps affecting Taiwan's identity are bound to be at the centre of political controversy because they are supported by those who wish to see Taiwan consolidate its political independence from China on the one side, while they are treated with mixture of anger and disdain by those who believe that the island is a part of China on the other. They have been made more controversial, however, because they were taken at the same time that Chen Shui-bian was taking measures affecting cross-Straight relations. Most notable among these has been the launching of Chen's doctrine of the formula of 'one country on each side' (*yi bian yi guo*) of the Strait in August 2001 and the passing of a referendum law in time to hold the island's first ever referendum in conjunction with the 2004 presidential election.

Such initiatives have been condemned by observers in Taiwan, mainland China and even the United States as symptomatic of a movement towards achieving Taiwanese independence and upsetting the 'status quo' across the Taiwan Strait. As a result, there has been a tendency to conflate charges of 'de-sinicisation' and 'nativisation' in a general barrage of criticism against Chen Shui-bian's 'secessionist policies'.⁸ This, however, obscures the way in which the argument over 'de-sinicisation' is one manifestation of the complex attempt to negotiate Taiwan's identity within the constraints of domestic politics and international relations that has been part of Taiwan's democratisation for many decades. To unravel this it is necessary to look at how 'de-sinicisation' is related to the longer-term discourse on 'nativisation'.

The consensus on nativisation

The attempt to develop a participatory civic culture based on nativisation in Taiwan has a long history, going back at least as far as the rejection of KMT authoritarianism by dissidents who formed the opposition 'Dang Wai' movement under martial law.⁹ Leading figures in this movement explicitly rejected the KMT's Chinese nationalism with a form of ethnic Taiwanese nationalism because this would be destabilising in a fragmented society like Taiwan's. If the state was to be based on homogeneous ethnic identity, they could ask, what would become of the many individuals who did not fit

⁷ This system was largely devised by Dr. B.C. Yu (Yu Boquan) of the Academia Sinica and approved in 1996 by the Educational Reform Council (*jiaoyu gaige weiyuanhui*) led by the Nobel laureate Dr. Lee Yuan-tseh (Le Yuanzhe), then head of the Academia Sinica.

⁸ Taiwan Affairs Office, *Zhongguo Taiwan wenti waishi renyuan duben* (Reader on China's Taiwan Problem for Non-Specialist Personnel), (Beijing: jiuzhou chubanshe, 2006) pp. 138-47.

⁹ A more extensive account of the emergence of thinking about identity from the Dang Wai to the KMT can be found in Christopher Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

in, such as the unfortunate Manchurian who was labelled a ‘Han traitor’ in mainland China because he had worked for the Japanese, fled to Japan where he was called by a derogatory epithet for ‘Chinese’, moved to Shanghai where he was called a ‘Manchurian’, then eventually settled in Taiwan where he was called a ‘Mainlander’?¹⁰

The way in which this concern to develop an inclusive political culture led to the articulation of a kind of civic nationalism can be seen quite clearly in the work of the leading theorist of the independence movement in exile, Professor Peng Ming-min. Peng was most influenced by Ernest Renan’s view that ‘neither race, language, nor culture form a nation but rather a deeply felt sense of community and shared destiny’ (*mingyun gongtongti*). His determination to break the link between ethnicity and the state is clear to see when he argues that the Chinese should learn:

... to distinguish clearly between ethnic origin, culture and language on the one hand, and politics and law on the other, and to abandon the idea that those who are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically Chinese must be politically and legally Chinese as well.¹¹

Advocating this contractarian view of state and society was a much more effective way of undermining the ethnic nationalism of the KMT than advocating an exclusive ethnic Taiwanese nationalism. It enabled Peng to refer positively to examples from history, such as the Anglo-Saxon nations, where people of a similar background and heritage had established separate political entities and, conversely, cases where people of different origin and background constituted a single state.¹²

This vision of national identity was eventually appropriated by the KMT as it sought to find a more democratic foundation for its own legitimacy. The primary reason was the erosion of the party’s Chinese nationalist ideology by the crises that rocked Taiwan in the 1970s. These include the failure of the KMT to assert Chinese sovereignty when the Diaoyu/Senakaku Islands in the East China Sea were transferred to Japan by the United States, the departure of the ROC from the United Nations, the death of Chiang Kai-shek and the growing international isolation that culminated with the breaking of diplomatic relations with Washington on 1 January 1979. The acceleration and deepening of nativisation that took place in the decades that followed, however, was shaped primarily by the domestic dynamics of political liberalisation.

When Lee Teng-hui became the first Taiwan-born president and chairman of the KMT in 1988 he presided over a party and a state that were already undergoing a process of nativisation in terms of the ethnic composition of its personnel, thanks to reforms introduced by his predecessor, Chiang Ching-kuo. By the mid-1980s more than 70 percent of the KMT’s members were ‘native’ Taiwanese, as in being born in Taiwan before the armed forces of the ROC took the Japanese surrender in 1945 or being the descendants of such people.¹³ As this nativisation met increasing resistance

¹⁰ Liu Feng-sung (Liu Fengsong), *Formosa*, 1979 No. 3, p. 76.

¹¹ *A Taste of Freedom*, (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, 1972), p. 244.

¹² *A Taste of Freedom*, (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, 1972), p. 239.

¹³ Lucien Pye, ‘Taiwan’s Political Development and Its Implications for Beijing’, *Asian Survey*, June 1986, pp. 618-9.

under Lee from a ruling elite that was dominated by those who had come from mainland China after 1945, he consolidated his power base by looking for support outside the party. In doing this he could appropriate the idea that Taiwan was a ‘community of shared destiny’ that had already become part of common political discourse thanks to the activities of the Dang Wai and the recently established DPP. He could also develop a more inclusive vision of politics as a way to address concern among academics that a Taiwanese ultra-nationalism might emerge if people were not clear about the difference between ethnic and civic nationalism.

Above all, Lee was also aware that identification with Taiwan was unavoidable if the KMT was to survive as a popular party in a democratic system. As he put it himself in 1994:

Anybody facing the enthusiastic competition of party politics in Taiwan, if they cannot sincerely identify with Taiwan as the paramount objective, definitely cannot survive. Moreover, there are priorities [literally, things have roots and ends, prior and latter], the reasoning is plain to see. If you go beyond identifying with Taiwan, and just strive to identify with something at an even higher level, the result must definitely be the loss of both.¹⁴

By moving in the direction of ‘nativisation’, Lee was responding not only to politics at the elite level but also the burgeoning demands of a stronger civil society. A good example of this is the way that the increasingly controversial education reforms that emerged during his administration grew out of a movement that originated in calls by students for campus democracy and autonomy that appeared at National Taiwan University as early as 1982. Other groups began to push for a more pluralistic school education, to be achieved through autonomous teacher and parent associations and the private production of text books. As political liberalisation proceeded, links were created between educational pressure groups and broader elements of civil society, such as welfare groups and human rights organisations, in the context of a deteriorating social situation characterised by a rise in youth crime, suicides and drug abuse.¹⁵

Additional space and support for this kind of movement was provided as the DPP took control of local governments. In September 1989, for example, Ilan County decided to stop schools from holding daily flag-raising ceremonies and hanging portraits other than those of the National Father in classrooms. On 8 January the following year, a number of DPP local authorities announced their intention to practise bi-lingual teaching.¹⁶ Pressure groups began to gain more access to the central-government policy-making process too after elections were held for the National Assembly in 1991 and the Legislative Yuan in 1992. The alliance of welfare and human rights organisations reached a peak in 1994 with a wave of protests involving some 210 pressure groups. Demands made by this movement for pluralism, teaching about Taiwan itself, taking ideology out of education and even instilling a

¹⁴ *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*), 31 December 1994.

¹⁵ Pi Hsiao-hua (Bi Xiaohua) *Taiwan minjian jiaoyu gaige yundong: guojia yu shehui de fenxi*, (*Taiwan's Civil Movement for Education Reform: Analysis of State and Society*), (Taipei, Qianwei chubanshe, 1996), pp. 128-98.

¹⁶ Pi, p. 377.

sense of Taiwan consciousness in the young¹⁷ received parliamentary support from both the DPP and elements of an increasingly ‘nativised’ KMT.

As the reform movement expanded it became increasingly difficult to divorce problems of academic autonomy and the mental and physical health of children from the ideological use of education, especially in courses such as the Three Principles of the People and the Thought of Sun Yatsen, and in the standardisation of textbooks. Other groups were more outspoken on the issue of nationalism, accusing the KMT of using education to ‘brainwash’ the residents of Taiwan in the ideology of Chinese unification, dissipating their identification with Taiwan and making them not dare to recognise that Taiwan is an independent sovereign state. Some teachers’ groups even began educational work to promote an independent Taiwan and a strong sense of Taiwanese history and culture.¹⁸

Balancing domestic and external constraints

In responding to such pressures for nativisation, however, Lee Teng-hui always had to keep one eye on the management of cross-Strait relations. Beijing’s unchanging interpretation of China was reiterated in its 1993 white paper on *The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China*,¹⁹ which merely stated that ‘There is only one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and the seat of China’s central government is in Beijing’. Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council tried to find a way to satisfy the growing domestic demands for change while not provoking Beijing by asserting that while Taiwan and the mainland could both be described as ‘Chinese’ territory, ‘It is an undeniable fact that the two have been divided and ruled separately since 1949’.²⁰ Its description of China as an entity with ‘multifaceted geographical, political, historical, and cultural meanings’,²¹ was an obvious attempt to break the relationship between ethnic identity and the state.

While this was not appreciated by Beijing, it is easy to overlook the way in which Lee Teng-hui tried to use Taiwan’s ‘special’ relationship with a de-politicised vision of Chinese identity in a positive way. When, in December 1991, he stated that, ‘We cannot break our relations with the rest of the Chinese people, nor can we cut our links with Chinese culture’,²² he was reminding the people of Taiwan that it would not be in their interests to develop an exclusive sense of their own identity that might alienate the island from the benefits that could be accrued from tapping into the Chinese political and cultural world. In this respect, one could be both Taiwanese and Chinese, as Lee explained:

Identify with Taiwan, cherish Taiwan, struggle hard for Taiwan, that is a Taiwanese; do not give up the hard work and hope of unifying the country and reviving the nation (minzu), that is Chinese . . . This view of identity, is the understanding that “with survival is hope, only with

¹⁷ Pi, pp. 268-9.

¹⁸ Pi, pp. 183-90.

¹⁹ *The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China*, (Beijing, Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office State Council, 1993).

²⁰ *There is no ‘Taiwan Question’ There is Only a ‘China Question’*, (Taipei, Mainland Affairs Council, 1993), p. 4.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Lee Teng-hui, ‘Love and Faith’, *Creating the Future*, p. 133.

survival is there development". Only by advocating this view of identity can the nationalism of the Three Principles of the People serve the new significance of the age.²³

Lee was also aware of the immense economic and political capital that could be tapped into by maintaining good relations with the Chinese overseas. While his constitutional reforms disenfranchised these communities, they still maintained the appearance of representation in the ROC's parliamentary chambers through the allocating of a small number of seats filled according to the proportion of votes won by parties in elections held in Taiwan. As with relations with the people of the Chinese mainland, political disenfranchisement was not meant to preclude the cultivation of special economic, social and cultural links.

Finally, Lee also had to develop a mode of nativisation that was compatible with a vision of the post-Cold War international order that posed a challenge to Beijing's hard version of state sovereignty. It is within this context that we find the idea of Taiwan's identity being articulated in ways that make it compatible with the vision of a 'global village' established on respecting democracy and human rights, replacing the use of military force with negotiation, promoting a mixed market economy and strengthening collective security.²⁴ Of course this international vision offers more room for Taiwan to carve out a new identity and status for itself because recognition is based not on the congruence of nation and state, but on the moral criteria of democratic and economic achievements. Rather than resist what Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong would have considered to be the imperialist forces of the global economy, Taiwan had everything to gain by diving in head first, joining NAFTA, working with multinationals and entering the GATT/WTO, becoming a hub for international air transportation and establishing itself as a major Asian financial centre.²⁵

It is within these domestic and external constraints that developing an inclusive, civic form of nationalist identity was useful for Lee. It would have been far too controversial for him to use the exiled Peng Ming-min's vocabulary of the 'community of shared destiny'. As early as August 1991, however, he could tell a group of university professors that there was a need for 'grafting the concept of "Gemeinschaft" (*shengming gongtong ti*) onto the traditional family ethic and morality'.²⁶ While he traced this concept to Goethe and Kant, it shares the fundamental proposition with Peng that political community arises out of the subjective identification of the individual through the practise of politics. Lee thus explained the relationship between this concept and his emerging doctrine of locating 'sovereignty in the people' (*zhuquan zai min*) as follows:

The establishment of the ideal of sovereignty in the people is to stir up every citizen to use his consciousness of being master of his own

²³ Complete text in *China Post* (Taipei), 31 December 1994.

²⁴ Lee Teng-hui, 'Towards the 21st Century Arm in Arm -- The Republic of China and the New Asian-Pacific Situation', *Creating the Future*, pp. 121-27.

²⁵ Lee Teng-hui, 'From Uncertainty to Pragmatism -- The Shape of the Age to Come', *Creating the Future*, p 116.

²⁶ Lee Teng-hui, 'From Uncertainty to Pragmatism', p. 117. The term 'shengming gongtong' is translated in English texts as 'Gemeinschaft'. Lee does not mention Ferdinand Tonnies, who is usually associated with developing the concept for sociology.

country (*guojia*), contributing his wisdom and strength, realizing the respect that should be given to a complete individual. And the cohesion of a Gemeinschaft, is to mutually integrate the free will of the individual with the whole wealth and good of society, to establish a civilized society with individual freedom social harmony and prosperity.²⁷

That Lee's vision of Gemeinschaft is again quite distinct from any notion of purging Taiwan of Chinese influences can be seen in the way that he emphasises the need for the state to encourage a pluralistic identity as follows:

Among the 21 million people in Taiwan, there are aborigines, and there are the compatriots who have come from the mainland over several hundred years. Between us, there should be no argument about ethnic division. We are all Chinese. Only identify with Taiwan, give your heart to preserving and developing Taiwan, no matter what ethnic group, no matter whether you came to Taiwan early or late, then all are Taiwanese.²⁸

The implications of this vision of identity for policy-making in areas related to culture can be seen when the raft of proposals for changes to the school curriculum and teaching materials drawn up under the guidance of Tu Cheng-sheng appeared in 1997. While the overall effect of this package was to include learning about Taiwan's own geography, history and culture rather than focusing mainly on China, Tu stressed how the reforms were not aimed at cleansing Taiwan of Chinese influences but at teaching identity in multiple layers that move out from the local community of Taiwan, through the national community (*guojia*) of China and into the pluralistic 'world village'. He explained that this had become possible due to political changes since the 'Chinese people in Taiwan' had acknowledged the existence of the mainland regime and were no longer concerned with politics based on Chinese nationalist claims to legitimacy. He explicitly denied that this amounted to following fashionable trends of developing a 'Taiwan consciousness', pointing out that China still had a special place in the new curriculum as the second circle of learning, both because it was the key to understanding Taiwan's culture and history and because it posed the biggest threat to Taiwan's security. Moreover, he argued, it would be a shame to waste the academic achievements in Chinese studies that Taiwan had built up over the decades.²⁹

Under Lee Teng-hui, therefore, it would be a gross over-simplification to describe the movement for nativisation as an attempt to purge Taiwan of Chinese influences. The preservation of ethnic and cultural links with China was clearly seen as good for both domestic stability and maximising Taiwan's economic and political advantages.

²⁷ Speech to KMT conference held to examine performance in the elections for provincial governor and city mayors. Full text in *Zhongguo shibao (China Times)*, 31 December 1994.

²⁸ Complete text in *Zhongguo shibao (China Times)*, 31 December 1994.

²⁹ Tu Cheng-sheng, 'Bentu-zhongguo-shijie' ('Native – China – World'), *Zhongguo shibao (China Times)* 25 May 1994, p. 11; 'Lishi jiaoyu yao ruhe songbang' ('How to Relax History Education'), *Lianhe bao (United Daily News)*, 23 January 1995, p. 11; "Yi ge xin shi guan de dansheng" ('The Birth of a New Idea of History'), *Dangdai*, No. 120, 1 August 1997, pp. 20-30. 'Cong "renshi Taiwan" zuotan lishi jiaoyu' ('Discussing History Education from "Know Taiwan"'), *Dangdai*, No. 120, 1 August 1997, pp. 55-67.

Rather than the de-politicisation of ‘China’ being an attempt to exclude a section of the population from politics and society, it was supposed to ameliorate the concerns of disaffected ‘Mainlanders’ by moving away from the politics of ethnicity. It was also supposed to minimise friction with the PRC and present a positive image to the liberal-democratic states upon which Taiwan depends for its security.

Within the overall scheme articulated by Lee Teng-hui, the residents of Taiwan were encouraged to identify themselves politically with Taiwan’s destiny, but were left free to build beneficial relationships with other communities if they so wished. As unification with China was maintained as the long-term aim of the KMT under the Guidelines for National Unification and with the existence of the NUC, the breaking of the link between statehood and ethnicity left the choice of developing future political formations between Taiwan and China open to the democratic process. Overall, the emphasis was on a full democratic participation of all citizens of the island, based on a contractarian relationship between individual, society and the state.

Building a cross-party consensus on identity

Contributing to this emerging consensus on identity politics was not a big problem for the DPP, given that its principles were drawn largely from the party’s own intellectual heritage. Moderation was also increasingly attractive for a party leadership that was aware that the DPP had tended to succeed in elections when it appealed to the growing swell of disenchantment over the KMT’s bad governance, rather than stressing identity politics. On the relationship with China, there was even a growing sense of impatience in society over Lee Teng-hui’s cautious ‘no haste, be patient’ policy. This was fuelled by Beijing’s appeal to interest groups in Taiwan, most significant being the business community, many of whom were openly calling for more flexibility in opening up the Three Contacts.

Beijing’s diplomatic efforts in Central America and Africa were also chipping away at the small number of states that formally recognized the ROC. Most important of all was the way in which attempts to mend the relationship between Beijing and Washington after the 1995-6 Taiwan Strait crisis were beginning to affect domestic politics in Taiwan. When a stream of recently retired high-level American officials had visited top leaders in Beijing and Taipei they also visited DPP leaders, including Chen Shui-bian, who was then mayor of Taipei. The tone of these meetings that was conveyed by the media in Taiwan was one of increasingly firm pressure for a restarting of cross-strait dialogue, an optimistic assessment of Beijing’s sincerity, and the importance of maintaining the one-China principle.³⁰

The DPP responded to these pressures under the chairmanships of the two veteran Dang Wai members, Shih Ming-teh (Shi Mingde) and Hsu Hsin-liang (Xu Xinliang). The first step in this process was to join with the KMT in a National Development Conference in December 1996, from which emerged the principle that Taiwan does not need to declare independence because it is already an independent state. This is the principle that was formalised as DPP policy before Chen Shui-bian came to power with the passing of the ‘Resolution Regarding Taiwan’s Future’ in May 1999, which has remained at the core of DPP policy-making since.³¹

³⁰ See reports on Perry’s comments to Lee on Jan 17, *Free China Journal*, 23 February 1998, p. 2.

³¹ Online: <http://www.dpp.org.tw/> (consulted 10 August 2007).

The next step in preparing the DPP for power was Hsu Hsin-liang's initiative to build credibility with the public by convening a DPP conference in full view of the media in February 1998. This brought together 36 high-ranking members of the party,³² and its findings were submitted to the Central Standing Committee as a reference for drafting the DPP's election strategy. The resulting compromise was encapsulated in the slogan 'strong base, westward advance' (*qiang ben, xi jin*) that combined the New Tide faction's concern with strengthening Taiwan's identity and economy, with the Formosa faction's advocacy of the urgent need for greater economic integration with China.

The 'westward advance' position presented by the Formosa faction centred on the argument that growing interdependence across the Taiwan Strait would minimise the risks of talking to Beijing and opening up the Three Links, while also helping Taiwan to upgrade its own economy by moving out sunset industries. This made good sense as a way to counter the image of Taiwan as a regional trouble maker in a post-Cold War international order of growing interdependence and the development of a 'strategic partnership' between Washington and Beijing. Rather than Taiwan being absorbed into a Greater China, increased transactions in the context of globalization would link Taiwan not only with China but also with the leading industrialized states. In this context, Taiwan's Chinese identity would be a positive advantage, because its historical, linguistic and cultural links would make it a good base for managing international enterprises in China, and even helping China to develop and become integrated into the global economy.³³

The 'strong base' view advocated by the New Tide faction opposed such a view as being dangerously naïve in an international system characterised by a neo-realist balance of power within which Taiwan would be pressured to hold talks with China. National security would thus best be³⁴ balanced by better diplomacy and efforts to strengthen Taiwan's economy by improving the island's investment environment. Of most relevance for identity politics, increasing economic integration with China was said to pose a serious threat so long as there was little sense of solidarity and much indecisiveness over what the national interest was in Taiwan. When outside powers had to be dealt with, especially China, civic consciousness might just melt away and the status of the nation would become blurred. One of the main tasks for the DPP, therefore, was to strengthen Taiwan's civic consciousness.

Although both the Formosa and New Tide factions were to fall from grace after Chen Shui-bian rose to power in the DPP, the 'strong base, westward advance' strategy that emerged in 1999 represented a consensus within the party that offered continuity with the policies and principles that the KMT had developed under Lee Teng-hui. When Chen Shui-bian was elected President in 2000, continuity was further strengthened by

³² 'DPP China Policy Symposium'. Online: http://taiwan.yam.org.tw/china_policy/e_bg.htm (consulted 10 August 2007).

³³ Hsu Hsin-liang and Chen Chong-hsin, 'Zai guohi guanxi xin zhixu geju xia chongzhi liang an guanxi xin jiyuan' ('In the Situation of the New International Order Open Up a New Era in Cross-Strait Relations'). Online: http://taiwan.yam.org.tw/china_policy/c_shu-c.htm (consulted 10 August 2008).

³⁴ Lin Cho-shui (Lin Zhuoshui), 'Qiangben qian jin de Zhongguo zhengce' (Strong Base and Gradual Advance China Policy). Online: http://taiwan.yam.org.tw/china_policy/l_lin.htm (consulted 10 August 2008).

the way in which many of the architects of the previous policy continued to be politically active. Lee Teng-hui, for example, remained highly influential out of power, transformed by his most dedicated followers into the spiritual leader of the independence movement. Tu Cheng-sheng became head of the National Palace Museum and was later appointed Minister of Education.

The continuity of Lee Teng-hui's balancing act can be seen quite clearly in Chen's 2000 and 2004 inauguration speeches.³⁵ Both of these reiterate Lee's strategy of building constructive relations with China and the US on the one hand, while strengthening Taiwan's nativisation on the other. Chen's statement in the 2000 speech that he did not intend to abolish the National Unification Guidelines or the National Unification Council emphasised this continuity. His promise not to add include in the constitution Lee's 1999 position that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are two separate states enjoying a special relationship, known as his 'two states doctrine' (*liangguo lun*) could even be seen as backtracking from his predecessor's increasingly bold position on cross-Strait relations.³⁶

Concerning the relationship between Taiwanese and Chinese identity, however, Chen moved the balance decisively towards consolidation of the former. He thus described Taiwanese culture as the result of the activities of grassroots organisations working to explore and preserve local history, culture, geography and ecology. This clearly remained in the context of advocating a pluralistic model of society, however, as he warned that cultural development had to be 'accumulated bit by bit' through a process of tolerance and respect, 'so that our diverse ethnic groups and different regional cultures communicate with each other, and so that Taiwan's local cultures connect with the cultures of Chinese-speaking communities and other world cultures, and create a new milieu of 'a cultural Taiwan in a modern century'.³⁷

The implication was clearly that the Chinese cultural presence was welcome, albeit as something distinguishable from Taiwan's native culture and reduced to being on a par with 'world cultures'. Chen's explanation for the differences in political systems and lifestyles on the two sides of the Strait was based on their separate historical narratives over the past hundred years, rather than a cultural antipathy. While he accepted that 'The people across the Taiwan Strait share the same ancestral, cultural, and historical background', instead of seeing this as meaning that there is 'one China', he saw it as being a condition, along with the principles of democracy and parity, that would allow the leaders on both sides to 'possess enough wisdom and creativity to jointly deal with the question of a future "one China"'.

³⁵ 'Taiwan Stands Up: Towards the Dawning of a New Era'. Online at: <http://www.taipei.org/chen/chen520c.htm> (consulted 10 August 2007); 'Paving the Way for a Sustainable Taiwan', <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/pi2004/> (consulted 10 August 2007).

³⁶ This was one of Chen's promises included in his 'Four Nos' formula of 'not announce independence, not include Lee Teng-hui's "two states doctrine" in the constitution, not change the name of the country, not change the status quo by having a referendum on independence'. He also added that 'the abolition of the National Reunification Council or the National Unification Guidelines will not be an issue'.

³⁷ The official English translation 'so that Taiwan's local cultures connect with the cultures of Chinese-speaking communities and other world cultures' does not completely reflect the Chinese version, '*rang lizu Taiwan de bentu wenhua yu huaren wenhua, shijie wenhua ziran jiegui*'. This would more accurately be rendered as 'Allow the establishment of Taiwan's native culture to naturally connect with the culture of the Chinese people (huaren wenhua) and world culture'.

The DPP in power: Between Nativisation and De-sinicisation

Given the range of options open to Chen between the ‘strong base’ and ‘westward advance’ balance that he inherited, several factors can be proposed to explain why accusations that he presided over a process of ‘de-sinicisation’ grew after he came to power, despite attempts to maintain the inclusive vision of identity inherited from Lee Teng-hui and his own party’s traditions.

First of all, attempts to shift state support away from privileging the grand tradition of Chinese culture in favour of allowing space for Taiwan’s own history, traditions and innovations had already provoked criticisms of ‘de-sinicisation’ from sections of the political elite, media and academia during the Lee Teng-hui era. The event that triggered this was the release of plans for the reform of the school curriculum and teaching materials that had been drawn up under the guidance of Tu Cheng-sheng, the most concrete manifestation of which was the *Know Taiwan* series of textbooks produced by the National Institute of Compilation and Translation (NICT, *guoli bianyi guan*).³⁸ These initiatives were attacked by critics inside Taiwan and mainland China for ‘de-sinicisation’, promoting a Taiwanese national identity, lacking academic rigour, adopting a Japanese perspective on history that revealed a ‘colonial mentality’ on the part of the authors, eroding Taiwan’s links with the Chinese mainland and using education to separate the people of Taiwan from Chinese consciousness.³⁹ Critics also disliked the way in which the new historical narrative was confined to the 400 years that began with the Portuguese naming the island ‘Formosa’ and ran through a ‘tragic history’ (*bei qing de lishi*) during which the people of Taiwan had not been ‘masters of their home’.⁴⁰

It is not hard to see how the complaints about the education reforms largely stemmed from an attempt to defend ethnic Chinese nationalism. This is clear, for example, in anger over the way in which the whole population was no longer referred to as ‘Chinese’ in the political sense (*zhongguo ren*) or ethnic sense (*hua zu*). Instead, the textbooks merely stated that some of the population are ‘people of Chinese culture’ (*zhonghua ren*).⁴¹ An attempt to defend the historical narrative of Chinese nationalism on political grounds can also be seen in the condemnation of the description of Japan’s surrender of Taiwan to ROC forces in 1945 as merely ‘the end of the war’ instead of the ‘glorious retrocession’ (*guang fu*). This is even more clear in the way that critics were angry that Taiwan was openly referred to as the ‘ROC on Taiwan’, something they claimed was inconsistent with the official policy that the ROC is the sovereign government of the whole of China, which was only temporarily limited to Taiwan.⁴² In all these respects, those who were angry over the education reforms were lagging well behind political and social changes that were taking place under democratisation,

³⁸ In August 1997 the National Institute of Compilation and Translation (NICT) produced three standard textbooks for “Know Taiwan”: *Renshi Taiwan lishi pian* (*Know Taiwan History Volume*), *Renshi Taiwan shehui pian* (*Know Taiwan Society Volume*), and *Renshi Taiwan dili pian* (*Know Taiwan Geography Volume*).

³⁹ Wang Hsiao-po et al., “‘Renshi Taiwan’ lishi pian xiuding” (‘Corrections to the History Volume of “Know Taiwan”’) in *Taiwan shi yanjiu hui* (ed.), *Renshi Taiwan jiaoke shu* (*The Know Taiwan Textbook*), (Taipei: Taiwan shi yanjiu hui, 1997), pp. 9.

⁴⁰ NICT, *Renshi Taiwan shehui pian*, p. 63.

⁴¹ *Renshi Taiwan: shehui pian*, pp. 11-14.

⁴² Wang Xiaopo et al., “‘Renshi Taiwan’ lishi pian xiuding”, p. 53.

The charge that ‘de-sinicisation’ was being used to privilege the position of a new political elite and legitimise the concentration of power in the hands of Lee Teng-hui was not so easy to refute, however. This can be seen, for example, in the way that the new historical narrative of democratisation culminated with the popular election of Lee Teng-hui as President in 1996.⁴³ Lee’s influence could also be seen when the purpose of the reforms was said to be the consolidation and promotion of a Taiwan ‘*Gemeinschaft*’.⁴⁴ Elements in the text books such as the proclamation in the final chapter of the *Society* volume of the blueprint for ‘creating a “new Taiwan”’⁴⁵ were also seen as part of a political programme rather than elements of education appropriate for the classroom. All of this added fuel to the charge that “Know Taiwan” was more of a political manifesto than a course devised for true education.⁴⁶

The Chen administration also inherited a political climate within which issues of ethnicity had been given a new salience in politics by the overspill of events that surrounded the KMT’s traumatic fall from power. The main reason for the party’s failure had been the split between the ‘native’ Lee Teng-hui and Lien Chan on the one side and the ‘mainlander’ James Soong on the other. Out of this emerged a more intense struggle over the nativisation of the KMT and of Taiwan in general. The polarisation of identity politics was further institutionalised when Soong established the People’s First Party (PFP), drawing his support largely from disaffected ‘Mainlanders’ and advocating a pro-unification policy. Inside the KMT, the politics of ethnicity continued to simmer.

At the other end of the political spectrum, the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) was established by those who took on themselves the responsibility for taking forward Lee Teng-hui’s policies, claiming Lee as their ‘spiritual leader’ and proclaiming the new party’s mission to be scrutinising whether the DPP was truly ‘taking the line of Taiwan’s nativisation’.⁴⁷ It must be said that the TSU was still careful to define ‘nativisation’ in the inclusive, subjective terms of ‘identifying with Taiwan, contribution to Taiwan, and being willing to work for Taiwan’s future’. It even maintained the position that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are separated by politics but share the same language and culture.⁴⁸

At the same time, however, the TSU has been able to perform acts that are highly controversial and provocative within Chinese political culture, such as the visit to Tokyo’s Yasukuni Shrine made by the TSU chairman Su Jinqiang on 5 April 2005. This kind of activity not only radicalises identity politics inside Taiwan, it also raises the profile of the island as a symbol in the much broader struggle between Chinese

⁴³ NICT, *Renshi Taiwan shehui pian*, p. 63.

⁴⁴ Jiaoyu bu, *Guomin zhongxue kecheng*, (1994), pp. 854-5.

⁴⁵ NICT, *Renshi Taiwan shehui pian*, p. 90.

⁴⁶ This point is made by Wang Chung-fu (Wang Zhongfu) of the Department of History at National Taiwan Normal University, among others, in ‘Dui yu “renshi Taiwan” jiaoke shu zhi ying you de renshi’ (‘Concerning What Should Be Known About ‘Know Taiwan’’), in *Taiwan shi yanjiu hui* (ed.), *Renshi Taiwan jiaoke shu*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁷ This is a liberal (but I think accurate) translation of the Chinese ‘jiandu zhizheng dang shi fo zou Taiwan zhuti luxian’. TSU website:

http://www.tsu.org.tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=28

⁴⁸ TSU website:

http://www.tsu.org.tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=28

and Japanese nationalism that was given a new degree of animosity after Junichiro Koizumi became Prime Minister of Japan in 2001. Precisely because this is anathema to Chinese sentiments, it can also appeal to a core DPP constituency that has never accepted that anybody who is associated with China can have a legitimate role to play in Taiwanese politics, who have refused to speak Mandarin or even associate with dissidents who had their origins in the mainland since the earliest days of the party.⁴⁹ This tendency has occasionally emerged in wider social circles too under democratisation, as in the spate of violent attacks against mainlanders and their property that occurred at the time of the provincial and city mayor elections at the end of 1994.⁵⁰

The emergence of the TSU thus presented a new challenge for a President who had only been elected with 39 percent of the vote. Not only did the Chen administration have to compete with the TSU to maintain its core base of electoral support, it also had to rely on the new party to gain a majority in the Legislative Yuan after it won 13 seats there in the 2001 election and 12 seats in 2004. In short, Chen was in danger of being outflanked on the issue of consolidating Taiwan's identity.

Some weight also has to be given to the way in which the actions of the PRC have shaped the 'de-sinicisation' debate. Much attention has been given by observers of recent developments to the soft hand of Beijing's strategy of using the United Front to achieve 'peaceful unification' under 'one country, two systems', namely winning over the hearts and minds of key groups in Taiwan through economic and cultural transactions. Yet the United Front is also dedicated to isolating and neutralising what the CCP deems to be advocates of Taiwanese independence. The increasing penetration of this policy inside Taiwan has only tended to politicise the already existing tension between 'Taiwanese' and 'Chinese' as doing business with the mainland has been transformed into a question of political loyalty by both sides.

It was probably never feasible to expect anything other than a hostile reaction from Beijing to the attempt to build a new consensus over nativisation inside Taiwan. Beijing never accepted the attempts to find a compromise formula that began under Lee Teng-hui. Accusations that Lee denied that Taiwan is a part of China by locating sovereignty in the people⁵¹ and that he lacked the 'sentiments of a Chinese person' (*zhongguo ren de ganqing*),⁵² only encouraged demonstrators in Taiwan to assert a distinctive ethnicity. When Beijing launched a propaganda barrage against Lee in the run-up to the 1996 presidential election, ethnic polarisation became visible as

⁴⁹ Sun Ch'ing-yu (Sun Qingyu), *Min jin dang de xian xiang (The DPP Phenomenon)*, (Taipei, 1992), p.12. Senior opposition activists Lin Cheng-chieh (Lin Zhengjie) and Fei Hsi-p'ing (Fei Xiping) were singled out in particular for criticism and were subjected to what Lin described as 'Taiwan-independence fascism'. *Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily News)* 4 June 1991. Both eventually withdrew from the DPP.

⁵⁰ The complex nature of the politicisation of identity is made clear from the letters pages of the daily newspapers. A telling case is that of the 'middle class', 'floating voter' woman whose family had been in Taiwan for eight generations and whose Hakka grandmother was ejected from a Taxi because she spoke Taiwanese with 'an accent' she picked up from her mainland husband. *Lianhe bao (United Daily News)* 2 December 1994. See also the revulsion felt by popular figures from the arts world towards the antagonism released by the elections, in the report 'Yi ren kan xuanju' ('Artists Look at the Elections'), *Lianhe bao* 4 December 1994.

⁵¹ *Wenhui bao*, 16 June 1994.

⁵² *Wenhui bao*, 16 June 1994; *Renmin ribao (People's Daily)*, 16 June 1994.

demonstrators took to Taiwan's streets proclaiming 'I am Chinese', while counter-demonstrators insisted 'I am Taiwanese'.

The ratcheting up of the CCP's United Front that has characterised Taiwan policy under Hu Jintao's leadership goes some way to explaining the new salience of the argument over 'de-sinicisation' that has taken place under the Chen administration. Initiatives such as meeting opposition leaders Lien Chan and James Soong and targeting the DPP's core vote by providing economic concessions to Taiwanese agricultural exports to the mainland have been accompanied by a tightening of restrictions and the imposition of penalties on the activities of supporters of Chen. Generous offers have been made to discuss a range of issues, including Taiwan's room for international manoeuvre, so long as 'one China' under the so-called '1992 consensus' is accepted. Those who are categorised as independence activists are isolated from this process and are to be resolutely struggled against.

Even when Beijing has tried to adopt a more moderate approach to unification, it usually demonstrates a failure to comprehend just how much identity politics has shifted since its Taiwan policy was established in the late 1970s. The furthest it has managed to go in addressing the nativisation issue in this respect has been Hu Jintao's recognition that it is quite understandable for the islanders to be attached to their 'native' culture', while explaining that this is the same as people in mainland China identifying with their local cultures.⁵³ This equation of Taiwanese identity with that of Guangdong or Fujian is only seen as belittling by many in Taiwan as is giving them the same status as the former colony of Hong Kong under the 'one country, two systems' formula. Faced by Beijing's growing attempts to isolate opponents of unification with China, it is not surprising that many in Taiwan respond by increasingly putting a distance between 'native' Taiwanese identity and Chinese identity.

As political actors inside Taiwan respond to this polarisation they are often tempted to see the emotions generated by ethnic politics as a political resource. As early as a campaign speech of 2 September 1995, Lee Teng-hui could be seen giving in to this when he stressed that those who do not want to contribute their strength to Taiwan and want to emigrate, should 'quickly emigrate'.⁵⁴ By the late 1990s candidates in DPP primary elections also began to speak in the Hokkian dialect, effectively excluding Mandarin speakers from the democratic process. Many of the key initiatives described as a process of 'de-sinicisation' under the Chen administration have been direct responses to attempts by Beijing to step up its United Front tactics and isolate the Taipei government. A clear example of this is the way in which Chen announced his doctrine of 'one country on each side of the Taiwan Strait' (*yi bian yi guo*) and his intention to implement referendum legislation after Beijing persuaded Nauru to break diplomatic relations with Taipei just as he became chairman of the DPP in 2002. Similarly, Chen explained his decision to scrap the NUC on 27 February 2006 as a response to the continued arms build up by the PLA. The way that this was used in the domestic context can be seen from the announcement of this position the day before the anniversary of the 228 Incident. This allowed Chen to

⁵³ 'Hu Jintao he Lian Zhan juxing zhengshi huitan jiu fazhanglian an guanxi ti chu si dian zhuzhang' ('Hu Jintao and Lian Zhan hold formal talks and propose four principles for developing cross-Strait relations'), *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), 30 April 2005.

⁵⁴ *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News), 2 September 1995.

make an emotional address to a memorial ceremony the next day, during which he asked in Mandarin, ‘Is A-bian wrong? Is A-bian wrong by returning the right of choosing their future to the 23 million people of Taiwan?’ The rest of his speech was in the Hokkien dialect.

In some respects, then, democratisation can be said to have increased the temptation to resort to the politics of ethnicity. This is most evident in election campaigns at all levels. James Soong had to spend a disproportionate amount of his time and energy on proving his loyalty to Taiwan as he campaigned to be Lien Chan’s vice-president in the 2004 presidential election campaign after the DPP focused its fire on his origins in mainland China. Even Chen seems to have realised that this was taking politics in a dangerous direction, as is evident from the candid admission in his inauguration speech that the DPP and he himself needed to undertake a degree of ‘candid self-reflection’ on the issues of identity and ethnicity. He also reiterated the inclusive conception of civic society, this time at somewhat greater length than in his previous inauguration speech and even mentioning the need to incorporate ‘immigrant workers who labour under Taiwan’s blazing sun’ for the first time into the ‘New Taiwan’ family.

Despite this confirmation of the consensus on an inclusive civic society, however, the continuation of the attempt to consolidate Taiwanese identity by remove vestiges of the KMT’s Chinese nationalism from public spaces served to perpetuate and deepen the argument over ‘de-sinification’ in Chen’s second term. Moreover, the temptation to politicise identity politics during even local elections has proven too strong to resist even at the local level, as when Chen Shui-bian portrayed the December 2006 election for the mayor of Kaohsiung as a struggle between Taiwan and China. A repetition of ethnic politics in the presidential election can also be seen in attempts to undermine the candidacy of the Hong Kong-born Ma Ying-jeou for the 2008 contest. It is such attempts to exclude individuals from legitimate political activity due to their ‘Chinese’ ethnicity that fuel the broader accusations of ‘de-sinicisation’ in the cultural field above all else.

Towards a new consensus

When assessing responses to identity politics by Taiwan’s political elites, however, it would be wrong to propose that there is a clear cut division between parties on the choice between ethnic and civic nationalism. As Anthony Smith points out, every nationalism does in fact contain both civic and ethnic elements in varying degrees and different forms.⁵⁵ Accusations of ‘de-sinicisation’ levelled against the Chen administration tend to obscure initiatives that have had a counter-impact on identity politics. The influence of the continuation of the incremental but steady liberalisation of transactions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait that began in the 1980s, for example, can be in phenomena such as the huge numbers of Taiwanese travelling to mainland China for work and recreation and the growing number of mainland spouses in Taiwan. In the cultural field it is also evident in the penetration of the island’s publishing market, with a proliferation of bookshops selling mainland Chinese works now threatening the native industry. Rather than try to stop such tendencies, the Chen administration continued to search for an optimal balance not only through strengthening Taiwan’s civic consciousness as the base but also through initiatives

⁵⁵ Smith, *National Identity*, p. 13.

such as widening the study of English language in order to facilitate Taiwan's role in the processes of globalisation.

On the other side of the political divide, ethnic politics has continued to characterise power struggles inside the KMT. This came to a boiling point when the popular mayor of Taipei, Hong Kong-born Ma Ying-jeou, competed with the Taiwanese-born parliamentary speaker Wang Jyng-pin in the contest to elect a new party chairman who would be candidate for the 2008 presidential election. Part of Wang's campaign involved claiming that many people thought it was not right for an ethnic minority to rule over the majority in Taiwan. More optimistically, however, the continuing attractiveness of the cross-party consensus on an inclusive sense of identity that was developed under the Lee Teng-hui administration can be seen in the way that the Pan-Blue camp has contributed to the exploration and articulation of the discourse on 'nativisation'.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the monograph *Original Native Spirit: the model story of Taiwan*,⁵⁶ published by Ma Ying-jeou in June 2007 to mark out his position on identity politics in time for the March 2008 presidential election. Ma's book is an important contribution to the argument over 'de-sinicisation' because it presents an extensive re-interpretation of 'nativisation' by emphasising the positive contributions made by China to Taiwan's economic and political development. He thus challenges the narrative of the '400 years of tragedy' under foreign occupation that is promoted by the pro-independence movement by describing the achievements of figures from China from the reforming Qing Dynasty governor Liu Mingchuan, through key political actors in the Republican period, such as the philosopher and cultural commentator Hu Shi, the early critic of the KMT dictatorship in Taiwan, Lei Chen (Lei Zhen), and Chiang Kaishek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo. He also tackles the existence of a distinctive Taiwanese consciousness before 1945 by pointing out that many natives of the island joined the Chinese in the resistance against Japan, both in Taiwan and the mainland. He also disputes the accusation that the Taiwanese were not consulted about their future status after World War Two by observing that the island sent delegates to take part in the National People's Congress in Nanjing when it drew up and promulgated the 1947 ROC Constitution. He even undermines the privileged ethnic position bestowed on figures such as Chen Shui-bian by reminding readers that his ancestors were colonisers from mainland China too.

It is important to stress, however, that Ma is not trying to revive the KMT's old version of an ethnocentric kind of Chinese nationalism that can be used to suspend democracy until unification is achieved. Instead, his deconstruction of nativisation is firmly committed to reinforcing democratic principles. He differs from the DPP, however, in emphasising that Taiwan's democratisation has to be seen as part of a broader process that inevitably involves mainland China. This argument is partly pragmatic, proposing that Taiwan is dependent economically on the mainland market and that democratisation in China is therefore the best way to ensure Taiwan's future security. Yet it is also idealistic, insofar as Ma draws attention to the potential for Taiwan to be a beacon for political transformation on the other side of the Strait, drawing encouragement from the modernising spirit of the May 4 movement that began in the mainland in 1919 and the democracy movement that was crushed in 1989.

⁵⁶ Ma Ying-jeou, *Yuanxiang jingshen: Taiwan de dianfan gushi*, Taipei, tianxia yuanjian chuban.

Ma's commitment to unification with China under the umbrella of future democratisation has thus moved a long way from the ideology of a party that once imprisoned people for speaking non-Mandarin dialects and actually censored the works of many of the Taiwanese intellectuals that he praises for having resisted Japan.⁵⁷ This is made clear from the lengthy exploration of nativisation that appears in the introduction to his book, written by Yang Tu (Yang Du), a senior journalist at the Chinese-language *China Times* newspaper.⁵⁸ Yang challenges the attempt to build an exclusive Taiwanese identity based on the ethnic characteristics of the majority of the population who came from Fujian province in mainland China before 1949 by stressing the diversity of a society that has been formed by seven waves of immigration and that is now being shaped by the forces of globalization. In this context, he argues that the only people really entitled to call themselves 'native' are the tiny number of aboriginal peoples who have survived this colonization, and that 'nativisation is inclusiveness, it is the integration of immigrant culture, it is a process of constant addition, constant rejection and constant renewal'.⁵⁹

This commitment to the development of an inclusive civic culture might well be understood as arising from the fears of exclusion from political life on ethnic grounds faced by a figure like Ma. Moreover, the positive views of Taiwan as a pluralistic, multi-cultural, immigrant society can actually be found in a DPP document such as Chen Shui-bian's 2004 inauguration speech. Having said this, any critique of the dangers of exclusive ethnic politics should be considered a welcome contribution to the development of democracy and a warning to political actors tempted by populist politics to depart from the consensus on inclusiveness. When Ma and Yang reveal the fallacy of a DPP that is dominated by descendants of immigrants from China attempting to purge Taiwan of Chinese influences, they are thus consolidating the consensus on the need to build an inclusive form of civic nationalism that goes back to the days of the Dang Wai. After all, as Yang points out, real 'de-sinicisation' would mean changing the name of the island itself, because the origins of 'Taiwan' can be traced to the Hokkien dialect of China's Fujian province. To be consistent, given that people like Chen Shuibian are descendants of Han mainlanders, they should purge the island of themselves!

Maintaining a culture fit for civic nationalism

It has been argued above that calling all changes made to the old symbols of KMT-era authoritarianism 'de-sinicisation' amounts to a caricature of the complex negotiation of identity politics that has to take place under Taiwan's democratisation. While many people have angrily reacted to the idea of renaming the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in central Taipei as 'Taiwan Democracy Hall', for example, this is quite different from renaming it 'CSB Hall'. The proposal to pull down the traditional-style Chinese walls that surround this monument might well jar on one's aesthetic sensibilities, but

⁵⁷ This point about how the KMT used to treat Taiwanese intellectuals lauded by Ma for having resisted Japan is made with reference to the debate over Lai He (1894-1943), the 'Father of Taiwanese literature, who was listed as 'dangerous' by the KMT in 1958 due to his left leaning political views', in Hsu Wei-te (Xu Weide) 'Jiedu Lai He guozu rentong suo sheji de jidian zhengyi' ('Interpreting Some Points of Contention that Touch on Lai He's National Identity'), *Gonghe* (*The Republic*), 2007:55 (June), pp . 6-13.

⁵⁸ Yang Tu (Yang Du), 'Xin Taiwan ren, xiang qian xing' ('New Taiwanese, Moving Forward'), in Ma, pp. 1-38.

⁵⁹ Yang, p. 27.

more is required to show that this is a deliberate policy to purge Taiwan of Chinese influences rather than just a tasteless project to create a more accessible public space.

The potential of the state to manipulate national identity should also not be exaggerated. As of writing, signposts in Taiwan remain a confusing mixture of various types of Romanisation. That the government position on nativist education recognises the complex ethnic composition of Taiwanese society and the special role played by Han culture has been spelt out on numerous occasions by a figure like Tu Cheng-sheng.⁶⁰ Yet this did not shield him from the wrath of the TSU in the summer of 2007, when 67 percent of the content of the National Literature (*guo wen*) university entrance exam was concerned with classical Chinese literature. The very fact that the TSU was not satisfied by Tu's explanation, in his capacity as Minister of Education, that he had deliberately commissioned the independent Examination Centre to deal with such sensitive issues,⁶¹ shows just how difficult it is for the state to get identity politics right. Even if the state does accelerate the building of a new Taiwanese identity with a vengeance, the failure of the KMT to instil a sense of Chinese national identity in Taiwan when it did not have to worry about the complications of democratic politics may well be the best precedent for showing why the prospects for the success of such a project are limited.

Rather than concluding that an erosion of democracy is occurring due to desinicisation, therefore, it has been proposed that a consensus has in fact emerged between the main political parties on the need to develop a politics of identity that is based on an inclusive, participatory form of civic culture. This has its origins in a democracy movement that realised how destabilising it would be to replace Chinese nationalism with an exclusive form of Taiwanese nationalism based on ethnicity.

Yet it has also been suggested that the civic culture paradigm is rather limited when it comes to dealing with the way in which identity is negotiated in Taiwan. This is because it is not directly concerned with the questions of *national* identity that are forced on the island by its relationship with China. Almond and Verba, for example, are concerned with exploring the 'balance among the parochial, subject and participant roles',⁶² which can take place in a wide variety of states, some of which are highly decentralised. Putnam's work is an exploration of Italian *regional* democracy.⁶³ In principle, therefore, the proposition that Taiwan should a participatory civic culture that draws its values from native traditions might be compatible with it being part of a greater entity called 'China', just as Tuscany is part of Italy. While this might fit the model of 'one country, two systems' advocated by Beijing, it would not do justice to the way in which the arguments over nativisation

⁶⁰ On Tu's theory of education see Hughes and Stone, 'Curriculum Reform in Hong Kong and Taiwan'. For a more recent personal exposition of Tu's views see his speech 'Taiwan's Educational Reform and the Future of Taiwan' delivered on 10 January 2007 at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Online: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEPublicLecturesAndEvents/events/> (consulted 10 August 2007).

⁶¹ 'Zhi kao wen yan wen bilie gao tailian: dakao zhongxin zhuren mei guankong ying xia tai daoqian' ('High Proportion of Classical Chinese in Exam TSU: University Exam Centre Director Should Stand Down and Apologize for not Controlling'). *Zhongguo shibao (China Times)*, 4 July 2007. Online: <http://www.tol.com.tw/> (consulted 10 August 2007).

⁶² Almond and Verba, *Civic Culture*, p. 440.

⁶³ Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N. J. : Princeton University Press, 1993).

and ‘de-sinicisation’ in Taiwan unavoidably involve the issue of how to consolidate the island’s sovereign independence and have it recognised as such by international society.

Taiwan’s identity politics thus has to be understood as shaped by the wider transformations of identities in Northeast Asia, too. Serious repercussions are generated in this region whenever attempts are made to address the legacies of the Chinese and Japanese versions of nationalism that moulded the island’s identity in the past. In particular, it has not been possible to present the nativisation project in a way that is acceptable to a Chinese government and Communist Party that still bases its unification policy on the politics of ethnic nationalism, from the appeal to the ‘descendants of the Yellow Emperor’ that is made in the Letter to Taiwan Compatriots sent by the National People’s Congress in 1979, down to Hu Jintao’s insistence that solving the Taiwan problem and realising unification of the ‘motherland’ (*zu guo*) is ‘the shared desire of Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad’.⁶⁴

In this respect, it is useful to draw on the distinction between ‘ethnic’ and ‘civic’ nationalism to explain the arguments over ‘de-sinicisation’ and ‘nativisation’. Taiwan is certainly faced by the possibility of a contest between harshly opposed Chinese and Taiwanese versions of ethnic nationalism that would divide wreak both internal and external havoc. The discourse of nativisation, however, presents a third possibility. This is closer to the kind of civic nationalism that has emerged as the foundation of the Western liberal-democratic state. In principle, this is participatory and inclusive, because it is based more on legal and territorial definitions and subjective loyalty than it is on pre-determined culture, blood-line or origins.

Despite the heated rhetoric generated by the argument over ‘de-sinicisation’, encouragement should be drawn from the way in which democratisation has so far constrained ‘nativisation’ within the participatory framework of civic nationalism. If the literature on ‘civic culture’ is to be useful in explaining this kind of development, it should be through reminding us how the type of democratic culture that developed as the foundation for the liberal-democratic Western state is ‘neither traditional nor modern but partaking of both; a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it.’⁶⁵

⁶⁴ ‘Hu Jintao tichu xin xingshi xia fazhan liang an guanxi si dian yijian’ (‘Hu Jintao proposes four opinions on cross-Strait relations under the new situation’, *Renmin ribao* (*People’s Daily* (overseas edition)), 5 March 2005).

⁶⁵ Almond and Verba, *Civic Culture*, p. 8.