



Sun Yat-sen (front center), pictured with the staff of the Presidential Office, assumes office as the Provisional President of the Republic of China. The ROC was founded in Nanjing on January 1, 1912. (Courtesy of Kuomintang Party Archives)

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At a Glance

- Republic of China celebrates its 100th birthday
- Founding ideals of the ROC fulfilled in Taiwan
- Building peace across the Taiwan Strait

The Republic of China has undergone profound transformation since its founding a century ago, which brought to an end China's millennia-old tradition of feudal monarchy and launched the process of forging a just and prosperous society able to meet the challenges of the modern world. In the first half of the 20th century, the ROC struggled to cope with internal instability and external aggression. Since the relocation of the ROC government in 1949 from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan, the ROC has matured into a free-market, multiparty democracy that plays key roles in the global economy and in maintaining regional peace and stability.

In 2010, the ROC marked the 65th anniversary of the retrocession of Taiwan from Japanese colonialists and saw the signing of the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement—a milestone pact that will not only enhance economic ties between Taiwan and the mainland but also promote peace in the broader region. The 100th anniversary of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, which gave birth to the ROC, as well as the 145th birthday of the nation's founding father Sun Yat-sen, will be observed in 2011.

Birth of the Republic of China

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Qing-dynasty 清朝 government in Beijing ruled territories stretching from the Pacific in the east to Central Asia in the west, from Siberia in the north to the Himalayas in the south. By then, it had been weakened by decades of domestic strife and foreign aggression, and a number of groups dedicated to overthrowing the Qing government had arisen. Among them was the Revive China Society 興中會, founded by Sun Yat-sen in Honolulu in 1894 during the First Sino-Japanese War 甲午戰爭. In Tokyo in 1905, while Sun was in exile there, the society joined with other groups to establish the Revolutionary Alliance 中國同盟會.

After 10 failed attempts, on October 10, 1911, revolutionaries launched an uprising in the city of Wuchang 武昌, Hubei Province 湖北省, which quickly spread throughout the country. By January 1, 1912, the Revolutionary Alliance groups controlled 16 of the then-existing 22 provinces. On that date, they established the Provisional Government of the Republic of China in Nanjing, with Sun Yat-sen as president. Later, the ROC government declared its sovereignty over all of the territories that had recently belonged to the Qing Empire.

The Xuantong 宣統 Emperor (Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi 愛新覺羅·溥儀, most often referred to as Pu Yi) of the Qing Empire abdicated on February 12, 1912. Soon thereafter, in the interest of national unity, Sun relinquished the office of provisional ROC president in favor of Yuan Shi-kai 袁世凱, commander of the powerful Beiyang Army 北洋軍 in northern and northeastern China since 1895.

Uncertain Beginnings

Soon after being formally elected to the ROC presidency by the National

Assembly 國民大會 and being inaugurated on October 10, 1913, Yuan assumed dictatorial power, dissolved the National Assembly and sought to disband the Revolutionary Alliance. Heedless of widespread opposition and foreign governments' advice, Yuan arranged to have himself elected by a puppet assembly as the "Great Emperor of China" on December 11, 1915. The next day, he declared the establishment of the Empire of China.

These actions sparked widespread revolts. Just weeks later, politicians and generals in Yunnan Province 雲南省 proclaimed an independent Yunnan state and created a National Protection Army 護國軍 to counter the Beiyang Army under Yuan's Beijing-based government. In the spring of 1916, six additional southern provinces declared their independence.

Amid such intense opposition, and after troops dispatched to suppress the rebellion were defeated, Yuan renounced monarchy and reaffirmed the republican system in March 1916. Thereafter, he fell gravely ill and died on June 6. General Li Yuan-hong 黎元洪, vice president of the Republic that Yuan had sought to dismantle, assumed the presidency, while Yuan's protégé General Duan Qi-rui 段祺瑞 retained his post as premier.

In February 1917, when the American government severed diplomatic ties with Germany, it pressed the ROC government to do the same. President Li strongly opposed the move, but Premier Duan and his supporters pushed through a declaration of war on Germany in August.

In World War I, over 100,000 ROC citizens served in work battalions at the Western Front in France, and thousands were killed. Despite this, and although the ROC was accorded a seat at the Paris Peace Conference, no provision was made in the wording of the ensuing treaty recognizing the ROC's revocation of Germany's mining and other commercial

concessions in Shandong Province 山東省. Japan had seized the German leased territories and occupied Shandong Province when World War I broke out in 1914, and the Western powers acceded to Japan's claims to them as a reward for its participation in the war.

On May 4, 1919, students in Beijing demonstrated against this decision. Violence ensued and many of them were arrested. Protests spread to other major cities, merchants closed their shops, banks suspended business and workers went on strike. Finally, the authorities were forced to release arrested students and discharge officials who had collaborated with Japan. Ultimately, the ROC government refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

The protests sparked an intellectual revolution known as the May Fourth Movement 五四運動, which promoted critical scrutiny and reform of virtually all aspects of Chinese culture and traditional values. The movement was energized by a new generation of intelligentsia who, after the imperial examination system was abolished in 1905 and educational reforms were instituted, had gone abroad for advanced studies in such practical fields as science, engineering, medicine, law, economics, education and military science. Upon returning from Japan, Europe and the United States, they dedicated their lives to the mission of transforming China into a modern nation. Through their writings, lectures and work, they exercised a powerful influence on the next generation of intellectuals.

Guided by the ideals of freedom and equality, scientific inquiry and pragmatic innovation in confronting challenges, the new wave of intellectuals sought reform of the nation's institutions more profound than had been accomplished through the Self-strengthening Movement 自強運動 of the late Qing period or efforts made in the early Republican period.

Under the leadership of its chancellor, Cai Yuan-pei 蔡元培, Peking University became China's most prestigious center for forward-looking scholarly research and reform advocacy, and a source of inspiration to educators nationwide. Among its most influential reform-minded scholars was Hu Shih 胡適, professor of philosophy. In particular, Hu played a seminal role in promoting vernacular literature in place of the classical Chinese writing style that had long been the mark of an educated person.

Important economic and social changes occurred during the first years of the Republic. With the outbreak of World War I, competition from foreign firms abated, and domestic light industry experienced rapid growth. By 1918, the industrial sector employed 1.8 million workers. Meanwhile, modern banks were able to meet expanding financial demand.

At the Washington Naval Conference (1921-1922), attended by the ROC, the world's major powers—the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan among them—agreed to respect China's sovereignty, independence, and territorial and administrative integrity; to give it the space necessary to develop a stable government; to uphold equality of commercial opportunity in China for all nations; and to refrain from seeking exclusive privileges there. They separately agreed to respect China's tariff autonomy and to work toward abolishing extraterritorial privileges dating as far back as 1689.

The Warlord Era

Following Yuan Shi-kai's death in 1916, China was fractured by the establishment of regional military governments. Viewing as illegitimate the internationally recognized "Government of the Republic of China" in Beijing controlled by the Beiyang military regime, Sun Yat-sen returned to his southern

home province of Guangdong 廣東. There, in August 1917 in the city of Guangzhou 廣州, he began the work of rebuilding an ROC government faithful to the ideals that had inspired the 1911 Revolution.

In support of that larger task, in 1919, Sun and his confederates completed a thorough reorganization of the Kuomintang (KMT) 中國國民黨—the Chinese Nationalist Party, which had been formed in Beijing in 1912 by merging elements of the Revolutionary Alliance and various other political groups. And in 1921, he assumed the presidency of the Guangzhou-based government.

When conflict between regional warlords erupted in 1922, Sun issued a manifesto calling for the unification of China. Under his leadership, the ROC government in Guangzhou established the Whampoa Military Academy 黃埔軍校 to train an officer corps dedicated to accomplishing that mission by force if necessary. In 1924, Sun appointed Chiang Kai-shek 蔣中正 as commandant of the academy.

On November 10, 1924, Sun called for a “national people’s convention” to bring China’s regional leaders together and negotiate unification. Two weeks later, Duan Qi-ru became the provisional chief executive of the Beijing-based government. Sun, in his capacity as head of the Guangzhou-based government, traveled north to hold talks with Duan. While in Beijing, however, Sun died of cancer on March 12, 1925, at the age of 59.

Sun’s untimely death left the southern government in the hands of a 16-member steering committee. The committee established a revamped national government in July 1925 and, 11 months later, appointed Chiang Kai-shek commander-in-chief of the National Revolutionary Army 國民革命軍. In this capacity, Chiang led a military expedition to subdue warlords in central and northern China and unify the nation.

This Northern Expedition 北伐 lasted less than three years.

On March 22, 1927, troops of the National Revolutionary Army entered Shanghai and, two days later, captured Nanjing, where a reorganized national government was established on April 18, 1927. Soon thereafter, the ongoing Northern Expedition brought the remaining provinces into the fold. With the elimination of the rival Beijing-based government, the government in Nanjing became internationally recognized as China’s legitimate government.

Second Sino-Japanese War, Civil War

Much of the northeastern territory known to the world at that time as Manchuria 滿洲, however, remained under the effective control of Russia and later Japan. The latter also continued to exercise effective control over Shandong Province. Threatened with having to relinquish its hegemony over Manchuria and its economic privileges there and in other regions of China, Japan in effect annexed Manchuria in 1931 and, in 1932, created a puppet state known as Manchukuo 滿洲國, installing Pu Yi as emperor.

Meanwhile, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) 中國共產黨 rebels challenged the ROC government’s legitimacy. Beginning in 1927, the CCP fomented uprisings in a number of cities, and established a breakaway “liberated zone” in Jiangxi Province 江西省. While the KMT-led ROC government focused on “unity before resistance against foreign aggression”—i.e., resolving internal political disputes before dealing with Japanese imperialism—the CCP promoted a “united front” strategy against Japan.

On July 7, 1937, a shooting incident between Japanese and Chinese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge 蘆溝橋 near Beijing marked the beginning of the War of

Resistance Against Japan, or the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), which arguably may be called the opening chapter of World War II. During the early years of the war, Japan won successive victories. The ROC capital of Nanjing fell in December 1937, and Japanese forces killed some 300,000 people there in seven weeks of unrelenting carnage known as the Rape of Nanjing.

A month earlier, in response to fighting at Shanghai, the government had withdrawn from Nanjing and moved up the Yangtze River to Chongqing 重慶. There, the government worked to rebuild its armed forces and equip them with weapons purchased from abroad. When World War II broke out in Europe, shipments decreased dramatically. In 1941, however, before the United States entered the war, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered shipments of large quantities of arms and equipment to China and dispatched military advisors. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States and Britain declared war on Japan and developed close ties with the ROC as a member of the Allied Powers.

In late November 1943, Chiang met with Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in Cairo to discuss the postwar disposition of Japanese territories. On December 1, their governments released a joint communiqué known as the Cairo Declaration. In part, the document reads, “The Three Great Allies are fighting this war to restrain and punish the aggression of Japan. They covet no gain for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion. It is their purpose that ... all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa [Taiwan], and the Pescadores [Penghu Islands 澎湖群島], shall be restored to the Republic of China.”

On August 6, 1945, U.S. forces dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Three

days later, a second one was dropped on Nagasaki. On the following day, Japan notified the Allies via neutral Switzerland of its intention to surrender.

On August 14, Japan announced its formal surrender in accordance with the terms of the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945, which stated that “the terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out.” The Japanese government also accepted inclusion of this provision in the instrument of surrender concluded on September 2, 1945 between Japan and the Allies. The Japanese forces in mainland China surrendered to the ROC government on September 9, 1945 in Nanjing.

Postwar Developments on the Chinese Mainland

Before Japan’s surrender was formally announced, CCP rebel troops had moved into Japanese-held territory and seized Japanese arms. The KMT-led government held peace talks with the CCP, culminating in an agreement on October 10, 1945. The agreement called for convening a multiparty political consultative conference to plan a liberal, democratic postwar government and to draft a constitution to be submitted to a national assembly for ratification. Conciliation efforts ultimately came to naught, however, and fighting between government and communist troops resumed, with communist Russia supplying the CCP via Manchuria.

Nevertheless, a new constitution was promulgated on January 1, 1947. In the following year, members of the National Assembly, the Legislative Yuan (Legislature) 立法院 and the Control Yuan 監察院 were elected. And in April 1948, the National Assembly elected Chiang Kai-shek president of the Republic.

Setbacks in the war against communist rebels, however, combined with war debts and runaway inflation, undermined the ability of the central government in

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Nanjing to maintain social order. In early 1949, President Chiang began removing troops to Taiwan. After communist forces pushed across the Yangtze River from the north, ROC government personnel began relocating to Taiwan. In all, some 1.3 million civilians and soldiers moved to the island.

History of Taiwan

Obscure Origins of Taiwan's Original Inhabitants

Taiwan's first inhabitants left no written records of their origins. Anthropological evidence suggests that its indigenous peoples are descended from proto-Malayans. Their languages belong to the Austronesian language family (see Chapter 2, "People and Language").

The majority of prehistoric artifacts found at over 500 sites—including flat axes, red unpolished pottery, decorated bronze implements, megalithic structures and glass beads—indicate an Indonesian connection. Some items—including painted red pottery, red polished pottery, chipped stone knives, black pottery, pottery tripods, stone halberds and bone arrowheads—suggest that Taiwan's earliest settlers might have come from what is now the southern part of mainland China.

European Trading Bases in Taiwan (1624-1662)

It is said that when a Portuguese ship on its way to Japan sailed by Taiwan in 1542, the sailors were struck by the beauty of its mountains and dubbed it "Ilha Formosa," meaning "beautiful isle." It was under the name Formosa that Taiwan was known to the Western world until after World War II.

The first Westerners to establish communities in Taiwan came from the

Netherlands via bases in the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia). In 1622, the Dutch East India Company established a base in the Penghu Islands off Taiwan's southwest coast, but was promptly driven away by Ming-dynasty 明朝 Chinese forces. Then, in 1624, it set up a base in Taiwan in the vicinity of today's Tainan City 臺南市, from which it extended its hegemony over the island's southwestern coast.

Meanwhile, in 1626, a rival Spanish consortium based in the Philippines occupied areas in northern Taiwan corresponding to today's Keelung City 基隆市 and Danshui District 淡水區 of New Taipei City 新北市, only to be driven out by the Dutch in 1642. Under Dutch control, Taiwan's seaports became important entrepôts for maritime trade and the transshipment of goods between Japan, China, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Europe.

The Dutch East India Company hired laborers from China to work its sugarcane and rice plantations in southwestern Taiwan. This marked the beginning of large-scale, intensive farming in Taiwan, as well as of a sizeable permanent presence of Han 漢 Chinese. The sugarcane and rice cultivation initiated by the Dutch continued to be mainstays of the island's economy and export business until as recently as half a century ago.

While the Dutch were active in Taiwan, Ming-dynasty China underwent a series of rebellions as well as widespread devastation and social upheaval as the consequence of invasion by Manchu conquerors from the northeast. The resultant toll in human suffering, exacerbated by famine and banditry, prompted thousands of Chinese in the coastal provinces of Fujian 福建 and Guangdong to risk the dangers of crossing the Taiwan Strait, or "Black Ditch" as they called it, to reach the island. By 1662, an estimated 40,000 of them had successfully done so.



Chihkan Tower, formerly Fort Provintia, was built in 1653 by the Dutch in the city of Tainan. Statues in the foreground depict Ming-loyalist Zheng Cheng-gong in 1662 negotiating a treaty under which the Dutch left the island.

Reign of the Zheng Family (1661-1683)

As troops poured into northern China from Manchuria beginning in 1644, Ming loyalists fled southward, where they resisted Manchu incursions for over two decades. One of the best-known leaders of armed resistance was Zheng Cheng-gong (Koxinga) 鄭成功. The offspring of a Chinese father and a Japanese mother, he inherited his father's position as the "godfather" of a syndicate of traders, pirates and private armies whose operations ranged from Japan to Southeast Asia.

In 1661, when forces loyal to the Ming dynasty were on their last legs in their fight against the Qing conquerors, a naval fleet and army commanded by Zheng laid siege to the Dutch East India Company headquarters in Taiwan. In 1662, the two sides negotiated a treaty whereby the Dutch left the island. With Zheng's forces came a number of Ming nobility, officials and literati.

Under the rule of Zheng Cheng-gong, his son Zheng Jing 鄭經 and grandson Zheng Ke-shuang 鄭克塽, these refugees created a mini-kingdom with a Chinese-style political system, which lasted for

22 years before it was annihilated by the Qing Empire in 1683.

Qing-dynasty Rule (1683-1895)

During the two-plus centuries of Qing rule over Taiwan, hundreds of thousands of impoverished people in China's Fujian and Guangdong provinces flouted the Qing court's ban on travel to the island and migrated there to make a fresh start. The bulk of these people were farmers who, like those hired by the Dutch East India Company, mainly engaged in rice and sugarcane cultivation. Most of their steadily growing volume of agricultural exports were shipped to China.

As a consequence of the Second Opium War (1856-1860), the Qing government opened four ports in Taiwan—Keelung, Danshui, Anping 安平 (now part of Tainan City) and Takau 打狗 (today's Kaohsiung City 高雄市)—to Western traders. Thereafter, tea and camphor, which enjoyed great global demand, became major cash crops. Northern Taiwan, the primary source of these products as well as of coal, thus overtook the southwest as the island's economic and political hub.

The growing demand for land by the Chinese newcomers brought them into conflict with the indigenous peoples defending their ancestral homelands from invasion. This was exacerbated by the international demand for tea and camphor, which could be produced only in highland areas inhabited by indigenous peoples.

By the mid-19th century, foreign powers were challenging the ability of the Qing-dynasty government in Beijing to assert its sovereignty over Taiwan. In 1841 and 1842, during the First Opium War (1839-1842), for example, British forces attempted to occupy the northern seaport of Keelung and the western

seaport of Da-an 大安—near today’s Taichung City 臺中市—but were repulsed. And just before the Second Opium War, U.S. Commodore Matthew C. Perry dispatched the *U.S.S. Macedonian* to reconnoiter the vicinity of Taiwan’s northern port city of Keelung, map the harbor and evaluate the potential of nearby coal mining operations to supply U.S. steamships.

Not to be outdone by its Western counterparts, Japan dispatched a punitive expeditionary force to southern Taiwan in 1874 as the first-ever projection of military force beyond Japan’s national borders. While Tokyo’s publicly stated objective was to punish southern Taiwan’s

Key Events in Taiwan’s History (1624-2011)

European Activities

- 1624 The Dutch East India Company occupies southwestern Taiwan.
- 1626 A Spanish consortium sets up bases in northern Taiwan.
- 1642 The Dutch drive out the Spanish.

Reign of the Zheng Family

- 1662 Ming-dynasty loyalist Zheng Cheng-gong (Koxinga) drives out the Dutch East India Company.

Qing-dynasty Rule

- 1683 The Qing Empire takes control of Taiwan.
- 1885 Taiwan is declared a province of Qing-dynasty China.

Japanese Colonial Rule

- 1895 By the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Qing government cedes Taiwan to Japan in perpetuity. Japan rules the island for the next 50 years.
- 1930 Sediq warriors under chieftain Mona Rudao stage an uprising in Wushe.
- 1943 The Cairo Declaration is issued, stating the intention of three Allied Powers—the Republic of China, the United States and the United Kingdom—to restore Taiwan to the ROC.

The Republic of China on Taiwan

- 1945 The ROC assumes control of Taiwan.
The ROC becomes a founding member of the United Nations.
- 1947 The February 28 Incident snowballs into an islandwide uprising.
- 1949 The ROC government relocates to Taiwan.
- 1951 By the Treaty of San Francisco, Japan renounces all right, title and claim to Taiwan and the Penghu Islands.

Note: For a comprehensive chronology of the ROC (1911-2010), see Appendices I and II.

indigenous Paiwan 排灣 people for killing shipwrecked Japanese sailors in 1871, Japanese government documents indicate that its real objective was to establish a permanent presence in eastern Taiwan.

In response, the Qing government in Beijing shored up the island's defenses and expediting development of its economy and infrastructure. Qing administrators expanded the budding coal mining industry and laid telegraph lines between northern and southern Taiwan as well as an undersea telegraph cable between the island and Fujian Province.

Finally, in October 1885, soon after the Sino-French War (1884-1885), in

which French forces invaded parts of northern Taiwan, the Qing government declared Taiwan a province of the Empire, appointing Liu Ming-chuan 劉銘傳 as its first governor.

Japanese Colonial Rule (1895-1945)

In 1894, war broke out between the Qing Empire and the Japanese Empire after the latter invaded Korea, which the Qing court regarded as its satellite state. Under the terms of the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki that concluded the conflict, known as the First Sino-Japanese War,

1952	In the Treaty of Peace between the ROC and Japan, Japan acknowledges the people of Taiwan as nationals of the ROC and that the disposition of property of Japan and its nationals in Taiwan and the Penghu Islands shall be determined by special arrangement between the ROC and Japanese governments.
1971	The ROC government withdraws from the United Nations in anticipation of a General Assembly vote to give the China seat to the communist authorities in Beijing.
1979	Diplomatic ties between the ROC and the United States are severed. A democracy rally in Kaohsiung City turns violent in an event known as the Kaohsiung Incident.
1986	The Democratic Progressive Party is established in defiance of a ban on the formation of new political parties.
1987	Martial law, in effect since 1949, is lifted; the ban on private visits to mainland China is repealed.
1996	The ROC's first direct presidential election is held.
2000	The second direct presidential election results in the first transfer of ROC government executive power between political parties.
2002	The ROC becomes a member of the World Trade Organization.
2004	The third direct presidential election and the first national referendums are held.
2005	Constitutional amendments provide for ratification of future amendments through referendum, and for overhaul of the system for electing legislators.
2008	The fourth direct presidential election results in the second transfer of power between political parties. Several economic and other technical agreements are signed with mainland China, marking a new era of détente.
2009	ROC health minister leads an observer-status delegation to attend the World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization under the name "Chinese Taipei."
2010	The ROC inks the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement with mainland China.
2011	The ROC celebrates its centennial in Taiwan.

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Taiwan was ceded to Japan. Rejecting this outcome, Taiwanese intelligentsia proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Taiwan 臺灣民主國. This bid for self-rule failed, however, as Japanese troops crushed all resistance offered by local militias within half a year.

Pacification and Special Governance (1895-1919)

In addition to “hard” measures taken to suppress and deter rebellion, the Japanese colonial government instituted a number of “soft” measures designed to ease the transition from existing conditions to those deemed more desirable. These included a phased ban on opium smoking and a land reform program whose main feature was “one person, one farm.” In addition to taking control of opium distribution, the colonial government nationalized the production and marketing of camphor, salt and a number of other commodities. It also strove to expand sugar and coal production.

Assimilation of Taiwan as an Extension of Japan (1919-1936)

Tokyo proclaimed that the Taiwanese enjoyed the same legal rights as Japanese citizens in the home islands. Compulsory Japanese-language education was enforced, while programs for cultural assimilation were promoted and the pace of economic development accelerated.

Kominka or Japanization (1937-1945)

After the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, the Japanese colonial government promoted a Japanization Movement (Kominka 皇民化運動) by encouraging Taiwanese to adopt Japanese names and customs, including Shinto religious practices. To meet wartime demands, the development of heavy industry was stepped up, and Taiwanese were recruited into the Japanese Imperial Army.

By the time the United States declared war against Japan in December 1941, Taiwan boasted what some scholars describe as the most modern industrial and transportation infrastructure in Asia outside of Japan, and its agricultural development was second to none. Public health programs had eradicated diseases common in many places in Asia, sophisticated banking and business practices were in place, and literacy levels had greatly improved.

Despite such admirable material progress, persistent discrimination, which denied Taiwanese positions of authority throughout society, led to protests against Japanese rule. Promoted mainly by Taiwanese university students in Japan, a movement seeking autonomy for Taiwan and the establishment of a “Taiwan Assembly” 臺灣議會 was launched in the 1920s and continued into the 1930s; however, its efforts ultimately came to nothing.

The Wushe Incident 霧社事件, a short but bloody conflict, began in October 1930 in the mountain village of Wushe in today’s Nantou County 南投縣. In outrage at Japanese colonial administrators’ humiliating treatment of the Sediq 賽德克 people (see Chapter 2, “People and Language”), their chief, Mona Rudao 莫那魯道, led hundreds of warriors in an all-out

The Origin of the Name ‘Taiwan’

It is generally believed that the name “Taiwan” came from an indigenous, Austronesian-language name for a locale in the vicinity of today’s Tainan City. Literature from the late Ming dynasty contains several written variations of the same name, including Ta-yuan 大員, T’ai-yuan 臺員, Ta-yuan 大圓, Ta-wan 大灣 and T’ai-wan 臺灣. The island’s official appellation became Taiwan in 1684 during the reign of the Kangxi 康熙 Emperor of the Qing dynasty.

war against the Japanese. Ultimately, the uprising was crushed not only by virtue of superior numbers, but by the use of poison gas bombs dropped from aircraft.

Japanese colonial rule of Taiwan came to an end as a result of Japan's defeat in World War II. After Japan announced its surrender in August 1945, ROC troops and officials assumed administrative authority over Taiwan and received the surrender of Japanese troops in Taiwan on October 25, 1945.

The ROC on Taiwan (1945-)

After taking control of Taiwan, the Nanjing-based ROC government incorporated Taiwan as a province of the ROC in line with the Cairo Declaration. October 25, the date upon which Japanese troops in Taiwan surrendered to ROC administrators, became "Retrosession Day" 光復節.

Over the six decades since the ROC government relocated to Taipei in 1949, it has exercised jurisdiction over Taiwan and a number of other islands, while the Beijing-based CCP regime has exercised jurisdiction over the Chinese mainland. During that time, the two societies have developed in radically different directions: Taiwan has joined the ranks of democracies while the mainland has remained under authoritarian rule.

The February 28 Incident and Martial Law

The first years of the Nanjing-based ROC government's rule over Taiwan were marked by rampant corruption, controversial expropriation of property, galloping inflation, outbreaks of contagious diseases and shortages of essential commodities. On February 28, 1947, protesters demanded that Governor Chen Yi 陳儀 institute reforms. When the demands went unmet, people throughout the island

rebelled against the government. In the succeeding weeks and months of turmoil, referred to as the February 28 Incident 二二八事件, military reinforcements dispatched from the Chinese mainland killed thousands of people.

The ROC government's relocation from the mainland marked the formal beginning of martial law. This period officially lasted from 1949 to 1987, although the island had in effect been in a state of martial law since the February 28 Incident. Under martial law, the KMT-controlled government imposed press censorship, banned the establishment of new political parties, and restricted the freedoms of speech, publication, assembly and association.

Political Developments and Reform

Upon the death of President Chiang Kai-shek in 1975, then Vice President Yen Chia-kan 嚴家淦 served as president until 1978, when he was succeeded by Chiang's son, Chiang Ching-kuo 蔣經國.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the formation and development of an informal coalition of opposition politicians and political activists known as the *Dang-wai* 黨外 ("party outsiders," alluding to the fact that they were not affiliated with the KMT).

In December 1979, a rally in Kaohsiung City organized by leading *Dang-wai* figures to observe International Human Rights Day turned violent when thousands of participants were hemmed in by military police. In connection with this event, known as the Kaohsiung Incident 美麗島事件, prominent dissidents were detained, convicted of sedition by a military tribunal and imprisoned.

Ultimately, however, the incident and the repression that followed added steam to the democracy movement. In



During a 1986 interview with *The Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham, President Chiang Ching-kuo (left) indicates that the martial law imposed nearly four decades prior would be lifted. Chiang's English secretary Ma Ying-jeou (center), elected president in 2008, later described this historic moment as "electric." (Courtesy of Academia Historica)

September 1986, *Dangwai* leaders established the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) 民主進步黨, in defiance of the ban on formation of new political parties.

President Chiang Ching-kuo rescinded martial law in 1987 shortly before his death. His successor, Lee Teng-hui 李登輝, took vigorous action to reform the political system and dismantle the party-state machinery that had been in place in Taiwan for the preceding four decades. Under his administration, bans on the establishment of new political parties and news publications were lifted; private visits to the Chinese mainland increased dramatically; and the ROC Constitution was amended to require direct election of the president and all legislators by citizens residing in its effective jurisdiction.

In 1995, President Lee made the first formal apology on behalf of the government for the February 28 Incident tragedy and the decades-long repression that followed. That year, the February 28 Incident Disposition and Compensation Act 二二八事件處理及賠償條例 was enacted to compensate victims and their surviving relatives.

In 1996, incumbent President Lee was voted in as Taiwan's first popularly elected president. Previously, the ROC president and vice president had been elected by the National Assembly (see Chapter 4, "Government"). In 2000, DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian 陳水扁 was elected president, marking the first-ever transfer of governing power between political parties. He was re-elected in March 2004.

Under the Chen administration, the Referendum Act 公民投票法 was enacted in 2003, the first national referendums were conducted in 2004, the National Assembly was abolished, and its power to ratify constitutional amendments was transferred to the people through the mechanism of referendum in 2005.

Recent Developments

The inauguration of the KMT's Ma Ying-jeou 馬英九 as the Twelfth-term President of the Republic of China on May 20, 2008 marked the nation's second democratic transfer of power between political parties.

Since the Ma administration came into office, tensions between Taiwan and mainland China have eased as the consequence of resuming long-suspended institutionalized talks between Taiwan's semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation 海峽交流基金會 and its mainland counterpart, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits 海峽兩岸關係協會 (see Chapter 6, "Cross-strait Relations"). As a complementary aspect of the Ma administration's determination to promote peace and prosperity regionally and globally, the government has pursued a diplomacy aimed at ending counterproductive cross-strait rivalry in the international arena and redirecting resources to worthy ends, while at the same time integrating Taiwan more fully into the Asia-Pacific regional economy (see Chapter 5, "Foreign Relations").

In May 2009, the ROC became an observer at the World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization under the name "Chinese Taipei." This marked the country's first significant participation in the activities of a U.N. agency since the "China" seat was transferred to the CCP regime in 1971. This offers hope that Beijing now sees the wisdom of no longer opposing Taiwan's active participation in other international bodies.

On June 29, 2010, Taiwan and the mainland signed the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) 海峽兩岸經濟合作架構協議, regarded as the most significant pact to

have been concluded between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait since they became separately governed more than six decades ago (see Chapter 6, "Cross-strait Relations"). The ECFA, more than an agreement on trade and economic relations, underlines the understanding on both sides that fostering cooperation and building trust will usher in a new era of peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait and in East Asia.

Nevertheless, with the possibility that Beijing might resort to force to settle the sovereignty issue, the Ma administration has stressed the imperative for Taiwan to maintain military preparedness and enhance national security (see Chapter 7, "National Defense").

Taiwan's democratization, the threat of war and flourishing economic and cultural ties with the Chinese mainland highlight both profound differences between, and the common interests of, people on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. While public debate concerning the ROC's future and Taiwan's relationship with the mainland continues, what unites ROC citizens is their affirmation of the imperative to protect and nurture their hard-won freedom, democracy and prosperity.

In 2011, the ROC celebrates the 100th anniversary of its establishment. Having realized its founding ideals on Taiwan, it will continue to strive for greater peace and prosperity and serve as a beacon of democracy to Asia and the world.



- Academia Historica (Chinese only): <http://www.drnh.gov.tw>
- Taiwan Historica: <http://www.th.gov.tw>