



Language

As Chiang Kai-shek was driven out of mainland China by the Communists in the late 1940s, he consolidated Kuomintang (KMT) rule over Taiwan (Formosa), whilst looking to the future reunification of China on KMT terms. From the end of 1949 until the mid-1980s Taiwan was effectively ruled by a one-party dictatorship with the help of martial law. It was also the rule of mainland Chinese over native Taiwanese. In 1987, after a year's discussion, martial law was lifted and the regime under Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo, began to take steps towards liberalization: e.g. easing restrictions on the press, freeing many imprisoned dissidents and allowing opposition parties. The ossified structure of the Leninist-style KMT and the legislature also underwent reform. Democratization could be seen in part as an adjustment to an increasingly prosperous capitalist economy, a response to US pressure and as enlightened reform from above. But it also reflected strong pressure from below, and the regime discussed reforms with leaders of the opposition.

In the early 1970s the changing international context and US recognition of Communist China sparked a major debate among intellectuals and students. After Chiang Kai-shek's death in 1975 there was renewed intellectual ferment, and dissent intensified after the KMT tried in 1977 to rig the election of a local magistrate against an independent candidate, prompting 10,000 people to attack the local police station. National opposition, centred on new dissident periodicals, included moderate and Marxist groups, but was spearheaded by the radical 'Formosa' group. This wave ended in 1979, when a mass rally in Kaohsiung on December 10, Human Rights Day, was bloodily suppressed, and leaders of 'Formosa' jailed.

During the 1980s, however, a moderate opposition regrouped and used the loophole of independent individual candidacies for elections to gain electoral support, won seats for the wives of jailed dissidents and other independents, and laid the basis for an opposition party. Growing liberalization after 1986 encouraged marches, demonstrations, strikes and boycotts on a range of political, economic and environmental issues, and between July 1987 and July 1988 there were over 1,400 reported protests, many by students, workers and farmers.

Kaplan, John, [The Court Martial of the Kaohsiung Defendants](#) [1], Berkeley CA, Berkeley University Press, 1981, pp. 79

Long, Simon, [Taiwan: China's Last Frontier](#) [2], Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 264

After sketching in Taiwan's earlier history and the evolution of the KMT, chapter 3 describes Taiwan's political development up to 1986, including a brief summary of the birth of opposition (pp. 66-72). Chapter 8 looks at political reform in 1986-89, the founding of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party and the rise in protest.

Rigger, Shelley, [Taiwan's best-case democratization](#) [3], Orbis, Vol. 48, issue 2 (spring), 2004, pp. 285-292

Discusses factors promoting relatively smooth and successful transition, including democratic elements, such as local elections, even under KMT rule, and international pressure to democratize after the US and international recognition of the People's Republic of China. Examines how 'evolutionary, peaceful, and protracted' transition also resulted in compromises that created problems for future. Latter part of article examines obstacles to a fully satisfactory democratic system.

Roy, Denny, [Taiwan: A Political History](#) [4], Ithaca NT, Cornell University Press, 2003, pp. 255

Chapter 6 examines the opposition's struggle and breakthrough.



Tun-jen, Cheng ; Haggard, Stephen, [Taiwan in transition](#) [5], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 1, issue 2 (spring), 1990, pp. 62-74

Discusses models of democratization, opting for an emphasis on processes rather than preconditions. Examines rather dismissively role of protest in 1970s, but notes evolution in the 1980s, and concludes that although 1986 did not mark a Philippine-style people power transition, it was a 'tacit negotiation' between the regime and the opposition. Cheng Tun-jen provides a similar analysis in Cheng Tun-jen, [Democratizing the quasi-Leninist regime in Taiwan](#) [6] World Politics, 1989, pp. 471-489 .

Yangsun, Chou ; Nathan, Andrew J., [Democratizing transition in Taiwan](#) [7], Asian Survey, Vol. 27, issue 3 (March), 1987, pp. 277-299

Source URL (retrieved on 26/04/2024 -

23:18):<https://civilresistance.info/section/e-resisting-oppressive-dictatorial-military-or-authoritarian-rule/e-ii-asia-and-18>

Links

[1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1981/court-martial-kaohsiung-defendants> [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1991/taiwan-chinas-last-frontier> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2004/taiwans-best-case-democratization> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2003/taiwan-political-history> [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1990/taiwan-transition> [6] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1989/democratizing-quasi-leninist-regime-taiwan> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1987/democratizing-transition-taiwan>