

## **The Origins and Development of Advocacy for an Independent State of Taiwan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The so-called “Independent State of Taiwan” or “Independent Taiwan” for short refers to the establishment of Taiwan (including Taiwan and Penghu Islands or Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Machu Islands) as an independent sovereign state. The concept of sovereignty originated in modern Europe, it is thus natural that Taiwan began to have a relatively clear, persistent and modern advocacy for an independent state only after the Second World War. However, are the pre-modern instances of an Independent Taiwan cited by the activists well justified? Furthermore, can one regard the liberalization and democratization of “the Republic of China on Taiwan” as a realization of an Independent Taiwan? Opinions on these two issues vary widely.

This article holds the view that the 228 Incident has always been the most important origin of the twentieth-century Taiwan Independence Movement. Under the strict and harsh conditions after the imposition of Martial Law in 1949, the Movement split into two different paths of development. One was shaped by intellectual exiles in Japan and America, such as Liao Bun-gei, Wang yu-de, Huang chao-tang, Jay Loo, Tsai Tung-zong, who made significant contributions to the organization and theory of the Movement; while the other geared toward staging continuous political events for that cause within Taiwan. With the exception of the “Proclamation of Self-Salvation” put forward by Peng Min-ming and his students, which bore theoretical significance, other advocates did not have the opportunity to promote concretely independence for Taiwan. The meaning of their existence lay more in shouldering the hardship of the time, manifesting that the KMT government represented an “unfree China” and a “foreign regime”.

The uplifting of the Martial Law, the abolishment of restriction on party formation, and the era of Li Teng-hui all contributed to the evolvement of Taiwan as what many people considered an already independent sovereign state. After their respective transfor-

mation in the 1990s, both the KMT and the DDP put forward a plethora of ideas such as “the already Independent State theory”, “the not-yet Independent State theory”, “the American dominion theory” and “the Independent State of the R.O.C theory”. These many schools of thoughts reflected mainly the contemporary complicated and confusing situation across the Straits as well as the intricate relationship between Taiwan, America and China. Nevertheless, the basic political tone of the KMT and the DDP is Chinese nationalism vs. Taiwanese nationalism, though for the sake of winning votes, they have to take a more neutral rather than extreme stance.

In the light of historical context and with reference to political science and international law, this article explores previous perspectives and analyzes the present controversy, attempting both to clarify and evaluate the origins and development of the Taiwan Independence Movement.

**Keyword:** 228-incident, provisional government of the “Republic of Taiwan”, Liao Bungei, Su Beng (Shih Ming), Peng Min-ming, Chen Lung-chi, World United Formosans for Independence