



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

**Taiwan – TWN35981 – Taipei – Kuomintang Party –
Reunification – Political opinion – Families from China
– Internal relocation**

10 February 2010

1. Please advise about moves to reunify the People's Republic of China.

In March 2008, the Kuomintang (KMT) was elected as the government of the Republic of China (referred to here after as Taiwan). The current President of Taiwan, Ma Ying-jeou, promised during his election campaign that “as president he would advocate “three noes”: no negotiations on unification with the PRC; no pursuit of de jure independence; and no use of force by either side.”¹ President Ma has asserted that reunification was “unlikely in our lifetime”. Instead, the government would follow a middle course some described as “one China, two interpretations.”²

Since Taiwan became a democracy, the issue of reunification between Taiwan and China (being separate from the PRC) has featured in the political debate within Taiwan. There are two major coalitions or alliances present in Taiwanese politics and the fundamental divide that exists between these two coalitions is the issue of unification versus independence as demonstrated below in an article from the *Taiwan Review*:

Voters in Taiwan's national-level elections can be divided into two major camps: “traditional KMT” supporters, and “traditional DPP” supporters...The forming of these two major camps...is based essentially on people's different perspectives on the issue of Taiwan independence versus reunification with China.³

Currently, there are two alliances that dominate Taiwanese politics as discussed in the *SBS World Guide* 2005, “the Blue Alliance consisting of the Kuomintang (KMT), People's First Party (PFP) and the small New Party whilst the Green Alliance comprises the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU).”⁴

The history of Taiwan assists in providing an understanding of the relationship between Taiwan and the PRC in terms of the reunification debate.

History of the establishment of the Republic of China, Taiwan

The KMT was defeated in a civil war with the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in that year.⁵ Upon KMT's defeat it moved

¹ Dumbaugh, K. 2008, ‘Congressional Research Service Report for Congress: Taiwan's 2008 Presidential Election’, Federation of American Scientist website, 2 April

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS22853.pdf> – Accessed 5 February, 2010 – Attachment 1.

² Banks, Arthur & Muller, Thomas C. (eds) 2009, ‘China: Taiwan’, *Political Handbook of the World Online Edition*, CQ Press, Washington DC

http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_ChinaTaiwan&type=toc&num=39 – Accessed 9 February 2010 – Attachment 2.

³ Hwang, J. 1999, ‘Let Someone Else Try’, *Taiwan Review*, 2 January

<http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=1368&ctNode=1348> – Accessed 2 February 2010 – Attachment 3.

⁴ *SBS World Guide* 2005, Hardie Grant Books, 13th ed., Prahran, Attachment 4.

⁵ ‘Timeline: China’, *BBC News*, (undated) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1288392.stm – Accessed 4 February 2010 – Attachment 6.

to Taiwan and established the Republic of China (ROC). The US Department of State (USDOS) *Background Note – Taiwan* dated 2009 states:

Starting before World War II and continuing afterwards, a civil war was fought on the mainland between Chiang Kai-shek's KMT government and the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong. When the civil war ended in 1949, two million refugees, predominately from the Nationalist government, military, and business community, fled to Taiwan. In October 1949 the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) was founded on the mainland by the victorious communists. Chiang Kai-shek established a "provisional" Republic of China (R.O.C.) capital in Taipei in December 1949.⁶

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office report dated 2010, states that the Nationalist KMT administration maintained its claim as the legitimate government of mainland China:

In December 1949, following the Nationalists' defeat on the mainland, the government of the then 'Republic of China' under President Chiang Kai-shek moved to Taiwan, together with approximately two million supporters. The Nationalist (KMT) administration on Taiwan maintained its claim to be the legitimate government of the whole of China and set up a national central government on the island.⁷

Political System of Taiwan

As stated in the USDOS *Background Note – Taiwan* dated 2009, Taiwan was an authoritarian one-party system under the KMT from 1949 to 1986:

Until 1986, Taiwan's political system was controlled by one party, the Kuomintang (KMT), the chairman of which was also Taiwan's top leader. As the ruling party, the KMT was able to fill appointed positions with its members and maintain political control of the island.

...Before the 1986 island-wide elections, many "non-partisans" grouped together to create Taiwan's first new opposition political party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Despite an official ban on forming new political parties, Taiwan authorities did not prohibit the DPP from operating, and DPP and independent candidates captured more than 20% of the vote in the 1986 elections. In 1987, President Chiang Ching-kuo ended the nearly four decades of martial law under which dissent had been suppressed. Since then, Taiwan has taken dramatic steps to improve respect for human rights and create a democratic political system, including ending almost all restrictions on the press.

...In addition to the Kuomintang (KMT) the other major political party is the DPP, whose membership is made up largely of native Taiwanese, and maintains that Taiwan is an entity separate from mainland China⁸

In 1996 the first democratic presidential election was held, as reported by the USDOS *Background Note – Taiwan 2009*:

In 1996, the KMT's Lee Teng-hui was elected President and Lien Chan Vice President in the first direct presidential election by Taiwan's voters...in March 2000, DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian became the first opposition party candidate to win the

⁶ US Department of State 2009, *Background Note: Taiwan*, October, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35855.htm> – Accessed 4 February 2010 – Attachment 7.

⁷ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2010, *Taiwan – Country Information*, 6 January <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/asia-oceania/380taiwan?profile=all> - Accessed 4 February 2010 – Attachment 8.

⁸ US Department of State 2009, *Background Note: Taiwan*, October, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35855.htm> – Accessed 4 February 2010 Attachment 7.

presidency. His victory resulted in the first-ever transition of the presidency from one political party to another, validating Taiwan's democratic political system.⁹

Taiwan and China's Recent Relationship

Taiwan's relationship with China greatly depends on the political party in power. For example, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2009 *Taiwan – Country Information* report states that:

In the same way as the KMT promoted a China-centric ideology in the period of single party rule, so the DPP pushed a Taiwan-centric consciousness during its eight years in power. Politically this meant increasing use of "Taiwan" in the names of state-owned enterprises and applying to the UN in the name of Taiwan.¹⁰

The DPP, however, which was in power from 2000 to 2008, developed strained relations with China. In a paper by an academic Bogdan S. Zemanek from Jagiellonian University, dated 2006, the situation between Taiwan and China during this time was discussed:

At the moment situation in the Taiwan Strait is a stalemate: China wants to incorporate the island, at best granting it Hong Kong-style autonomy. Taiwan wants to remain separate, either preserving the status quo, or declaring formal independence.¹¹

With the KMT returned to office in 2008, tensions have eased with China as the DPP's idea of an independent Taiwan was not in accord with the Chinese Government's 'One-China' principle. In July 2009 the leaders of China and Taiwan exchanged direct messages for the first time in more than 60 years. China's attitude towards reunification with Taiwan is covered extensively in *Research Response CHN34732*, dated 2009, and states that following the 2008 success in the Taiwanese presidential and parliamentary elections, it appears that tensions may be easing between China and Taiwan. This is supported by reports of the strengthening of economic ties between the two countries.¹²

2. What action does the Taiwan government take against persons who are known to support reunification?

No evidence was found to suggest any adverse treatment of persons who are known to support reunification.

Sources consulted indicate that there are no political prisoners in Taiwan and there is freedom of speech and assembly. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office *Country Information – Taiwan* dated 2010, states that:

Taiwan has undergone a remarkably smooth transition from an authoritarian one-party system to a fully-fledged democracy. It now has a fully functioning parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and movement and freedom of the press. There are no

⁹ US Department of State 2009, *Background Note: Taiwan*, October, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35855.htm> – Accessed 4 February 2010 – Attachment 7.

¹⁰ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2010, *Taiwan – Country Information*, 6 January <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/asia-oceania/380taiwan?profile=all> – Accessed 4 February 2010. – Attachment 8

¹¹ Zemanek, B.S. 2006, 'We are not Chinese: the Taiwanese self-image as presented by the pro-independence media' 20 March, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London website <http://www.soas.ac.uk/taiwanstudies/eats/eats2006/file46645.pdf> – Accessed 5 February 2010 - Attachment 9

¹² RRT Research and Information 2009, *Research Response CHN34732*, 1 May, p.6 – Attachment 10

political prisoners or exiles. Serious human rights concerns are limited to the use of the death penalty and occasional reports of police or military brutality¹³

The 2009 USDOS *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008 – Taiwan* also states that “There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees... The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the authorities generally respected these rights in practice.”¹⁴ The USDOS report for 2007 does not suggest any adverse treatment to pro-unification activists and states that there were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.¹⁵

3. Is there more support for reunification in Taipei, in Northern Taiwan?

Research indicates that traditionally Taipei has been more politically aligned with the KMT and so there is likely to be more support for reunification there. The *Taiwan Review* identifies the historic existence of an informal political ‘North-South’ divide of Taiwan at the Jhuoshuei River as stated below:

In recent years, the psychological distance between southerners and northerners has produced a sharp division in voting trends in northern and southern Taiwan. The Jhuoshuei River, which runs between Changhua and Yunlin counties in central Taiwan, is the celebrated dividing line between voters who support KMT and other opposition party candidates who favor closer ties with China, and those who support Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and other pro-independence parties. Currently, all elected leaders of counties or cities south of the Jhuoshuei--with the exception Chiayi City--represent the DPP, the leading party in the “green” bloc. All local governments north of the Jhuoshuei are headed up by KMT representatives, who along with other parties that identify more closely with China, are color-coded “blue.”¹⁶

A media article from the *Taipei Times* dated 2009, further reiterates the Jhuoshuei River as the border between the pan-blue and pan-green alliance:

At the local level, the DPP did lots of good work post-Morakot at the grassroots level, but this was in the south where support is already strong. The DPP really needs to build on this and formulate a concerted, long-term effort to make inroads into areas north of the Jhuoshuei River taking the battle against the KMT into the pan-blue heartlands. This will not be easy.¹⁷

Information demonstrates that this historical, political divide is shrinking as seen in the outcome of the most recent presidential election of 2008.

For example, in the southern city of Kaohsiung City, the KMT gained nearly 52% of the votes:

¹³ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2010, *Taiwan – Country Information*, 6 January <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/asia-oceania/380taiwan?profile=all> – Accessed 4 February 2010. – Attachment 8

¹⁴ US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008 – Taiwan*, 25 February <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119038.htm> – Accessed 10 February 2010 – Attachment 11

¹⁵ US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2007 – Taiwan*, 11 March – Attachment 11.

¹⁶ Gao, P. 2007, ‘Taiwan’s Marginalized South’, *Taiwan Review*, 11 January <http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=24773&ctNode=1357> – Accessed 2 February 2010 – Attachment 12.

¹⁷ ‘DPP needs coherent policies to win’ 2009, *Taipei Times*, 6 November <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2009/11/06/2003457739> – Accessed 8 February 2010 – Attachment 13.

...DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh...garnered over 48 percent of the votes in Kaohsiung City, while his Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) rival Ma Ying-jeou gathered nearly 52 percent.¹⁸

These results are similar to the overall national results from the election were “Ma secured 58.45 percent of the ballots, or over 7.5 million, with the DPP ticket garnering 41.55 percent, or about 5.4 million”.¹⁹ Therefore, support for the KMT does exist in southern Taiwan.

4. Are the authorities less strict against re-unificationists in Taipei?

There is no evidence to suggest any action is taken against people who support reunification in Taipei or Taiwan more generally. For further information, please see question two of this response.

5. Would there be any hindrance to people moving to Taipei, especially families originally from the mainland?

No evidence could be obtained to suggest any hindrance to people moving to Taipei.

The descendants of people from mainland China (usually with a KMT following) are called *waishengjen*. (Please refer to question six for a detailed explanation.) In an article from the *Taiwan Review* dated 2002, the percentage of ‘Mainlanders’ or *waishengjen* based in Taipei is discussed:

Wang estimates that mainlanders currently account for about 26 percent of the population in Taipei City, higher than anywhere else in Taiwan and nearly double the island wide proportion of around 14 percent. “Mainlander” in this context refers to those born in mainland China as well as those whose fathers came from the other side of the Taiwan Strait. In Mandarin, these people are called *waishengjen*, which means “people from outside provinces.”²⁰

6. Please provide any other information available.

Ethnicity

From the research conducted, sources indicate that ethnicity plays a major factor in the political affiliation/alignment of the Taiwanese and therefore impacts on the reunification debate between ROC, Taiwan and Mainland China as stated below:

Today, Taiwan’s inhabitants are usually divided into four main ethnic groups: indigenous people comprising nine major tribal groups; Hakka people, mostly from Guangdong province; Southern Min people from south of the Min River in Fujian province; and “mainlanders,” who followed the Nationalist (KMT) government to the island after Chinese Communists gained control of the mainland in 1949. Southern Mins (the largest single ethnic group on the island) and Hakkas account for more than 80 percent of the population, while mainlanders occupy over 16 percent and indigenous people less than 2 percent.²¹

¹⁸ Shu-ling, K. 2008, ‘Extent of DPP election loss surprises many’, Taipei Times 25 March <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2008/03/25/2003406988> – Accessed 5 February 2010 – Attachment 14.

¹⁹ Shu-ling, K. 2008, ‘Extent of DPP election loss surprises many’, Taipei Times 25 March <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2008/03/25/2003406988> – Accessed 5 February 2010 - Attachment 14.

²⁰ Chung, O. 2002, ‘Not as a Stranger’, *Taiwan Review*, 5 January, <http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=718&ctNode=205> – Accessed 5 February 2010 – Attachment 15.

²¹ Chung, O. 2002, ‘Not as a Stranger’, *Taiwan Review*, 5 January, <http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=718&ctNode=205> – Accessed 5 February 2010 – Attachment 15.

Regional differences in voting preference have been reinforced by historical tensions between ethnic Taiwanese, or Holo, and Hakka groups. People who identify themselves as Hakka are concentrated in the northern counties of Taoyuan, Hsinchu and Miaoli. Residents of these areas have to date voted overwhelmingly in favour of the KMT and against the Holo-dominated DPP.²²

According to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

During the years of KMT single party rule, 75% of the people in Taiwan identified themselves as Chinese, despite only 15% had direct contact with the mainland. Since the 1990s and democratisation in Taiwan a sharp shift led to a small minority (6%) declaring themselves Chinese, with most accepting a dual Chinese/Taiwanese identity (45%). At the same time those who previously accepted a dual identity have increasingly seen themselves as just Taiwanese (44%).²³

Benshengren and Waishengren

In Taiwan people are identified as either *benshengren* which means ‘locally born’ and refers to people whose forefathers came before 1895 or *waishengren* – ‘born outside’ recent newcomers from the mainland, mainly KMT followers and soldiers.²⁴ A thesis by a Doctor of Philosophy student at Bond University further describes the term *waishengjen*:

The *waishengjen* came to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek’s KMT forces and, despite comprising no more than 15 percent of the population, they acquired privileges across many sectors, including politics, economy, society, and culture, over a prolonged period of time. This led to the *waishengjen* and local people forming two distinct societies; although some inter-marriages did occur, it was difficult to cross the gap between the two identity groups. To many *waishengjen*, their paramount political value system comprised loyalty to President Chiang Kai-shek and later President Chiang Ching-kuo, loyalty to the Chinese KMT, and protection of the Republic of China. Under the nationalism of the Republic of China that positioned the leader, doctrines, and country as one entity, the identity of *waishengjen* had won supremacy. Moreover, the *waishengjen* rulers had separated *waishengjen* and the local people of Taiwan in terms of where they lived, worked, and were educated.²⁵

An article in the *Taiwan Journal* addresses two issues – language and identity cards – that in the past could be used to identify *waishengjen*:

Not so long ago, most Taiwan residents could be identified fairly accurately as “yams” from Taiwanese-speaking families or “taros” who were more likely to speak Mandarin as a first language and have closer family ties to the Chinese mainland. However, like many other aspects of society, the state of ethnic relations on the island has come to bear little resemblance with previous circumstances.²⁶

²² Gao, P. 2007, ‘Taiwan’s Marginalized South’, *Taiwan Review*, 11 January <http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=24773&ctNode=1357> – Accessed 2 February 2010 – Attachment 12.

²³ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2010, *Taiwan – Country Information*, 6 January <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/asia-oceania/380taiwan?profile=all> – Accessed 4 February 2010 – Attachment 8.

²⁴ Zemanek, B.S. 2006, ‘We are not Chinese: the Taiwanese self-image as presented by the pro-independence media’ 20 March, School of Oriental and African Studies website, University of London <http://www.soas.ac.uk/taiwanstudies/eats/eats2006/file46645.pdf> – Accessed 5 February 2010 – Attachment 9.

²⁵ Chiung-Ni Liu, J. 2004, *From Chinese National Identity to Taiwanese Consciousness: An examination of the Cultural Elements in Taiwan’s Democratization during the Lee Teng-hui Era and its Legacy 1988-2004*, Bond University website p. 223 <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/theses/ching-ni/> – Accessed 4 February – Attachment 16.

²⁶ ‘Blurring the lines of ethnic division’ 2000, *Taiwan Journal*, 3 October <http://taiwanjournal.nat.gov.tw/site/Tj/ct.asp?xItem=17847&CtNode=122> – Accessed 4 February 2010 – Attachment 17

...Another major step was taken to blur the lines of ethnic division and facilitate indigenization when the Ministry of the Interior modified the format of the national identification cards possessed by all Republic of China citizens living in Taiwan. A space is provided on the back of each card to list the holder's "native place"--meaning the location on the mainland or in Taiwan where his or her father was born. Only since 1986 has a space been provided for recording the cardholder's own place of birth. For the vast majority of people today, this is a location in Taiwan. As of 1992, the "native place" information is omitted on newly issued cards. The change implies a de-emphasis of ties to the mainland and a closer linking of personal identity with Taiwan.²⁷

List of Attachments

1. Dumbaugh, K. 2008, 'Congressional Research Service Report for Congress: Taiwan's 2008 Presidential Election', Federation of American Scientist website, 2 April
<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS22853.pdf> – Accessed 5 February, 2010.
2. Banks, Arthur & Muller, Thomas C. (eds) 2009, 'China: Taiwan', *Political Handbook of the World Online Edition*, CQ Press, Washington DC
http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_ChinaTaiwan&type=toc&num=39 – Accessed 9 February 2010.
3. Hwang, J. 1999, 'Let Someone Else Try', *Taiwan Review*, 2 January
<http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=1368&ctNode=1348> – Accessed 2 February 2010.
4. *SBS World Guide* 2005, Hardie Grant Books, 13th ed., Prahran. (RRT Library).
5. Deleted.
6. 'Timeline: China', *BBC News*, (undated) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1288392.stm – Accessed 4 February 2010.
7. US Department of State 2009, *Background Note: Taiwan*, October,
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35855.htm> – Accessed 4 February 2010.
8. UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2010, *Taiwan – Country Information*, 6 January
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/asia-oceania/380taiwan?profile=all> – Accessed 4 February 2010.
9. Zemanek, B.S. 2006, 'We are not Chinese: the Taiwanese self-image as presented by the pro-independence media' 20 March, School of Oriental and African Studies website, University of London website <http://www.soas.ac.uk/taiwanstudies/eats/eats2006/file46645.pdf> – Accessed 5 February 2010.
10. RRT Research and Information 2009, *Research Response CHN34732*, 1 May.
11. US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2008 – Taiwan*, 25 February <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119038.htm> – Accessed 10 February 2010.

²⁷ 'Blurring the lines of ethnic division' 2000, *Taiwan Journal*, 3 October
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12. Gao, P. 2007, 'Taiwan's Marginalized South', *Taiwan Review*, 11 January
<http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=24773&ctNode=1357> – Accessed 2 February 2010.
13. 'DPP needs coherent policies to win' 2009, *Taipei Times*, 6 November
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14. Shu-ling, K. 2008, 'Extent of DPP election loss surprises many', *Taipei Times* 25 March
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15. Chung, O. 2002, 'Not as a Stranger', *Taiwan Review*, 5 January,
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16. Chiung-Ni Liu, J. 2004, *From Chinese National Identity to Taiwanese Consciousness: An examination of the Cultural Elements in Taiwan's Democratization during the Lee Teng-hui Era and its Legacy 1988-2004*, Bond University website
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17. 'Blurring the lines of ethnic division' 2000, *Taiwan Journal*, 3 October
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