



# CHIANG-KAI SHEK MEMORIAL HALL

## Taipei, Taiwan

24.84155, 121.2937

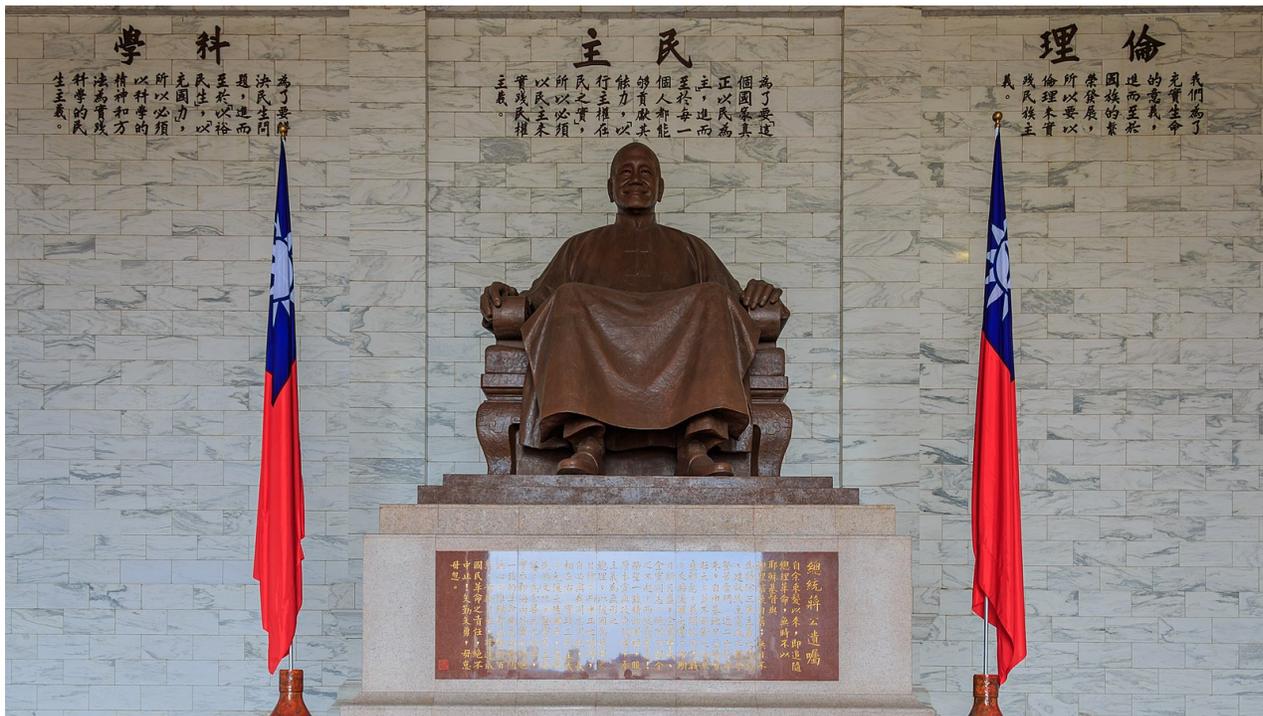


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## Executive Summary

The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei City, Taiwan opened to the public in 1980, five years after Taiwan's first president Chiang Kai-shek's death, in honor of Chiang's legacies after he established rule over Taiwan from 1949 onwards. Since Taiwan's democratization in the late 1980s, the Memorial Hall and many of Chiang Kai-shek's statues have become sites of heated contestation. In 2007, the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall was renamed Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall by the Democratic Progressive Party government. This renaming was reversed in 2009 by the nationalist Kuomintang government. In 2017, the Transitional Justice Act was passed in Taiwan which stipulates removal, renaming, or repurposing of authoritarian symbols. Ever since then, the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, along with other Chiang statues in the public space, have been undergoing a new process of transformation.

## Introduction

Chiang Kai-shek (October 31, 1887 - April 5, 1975) was a Chinese nationalist leader of the Republic of China (ROC) first in mainland China until 1949, later in Taiwan until his death in 1975. After the mainland-Taiwan separation after the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949) from 1949 onwards, Chiang and the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) under his leadership established authoritarian rule in Taiwan. Chiang's governance was a mixed journey of rapid socio-economic development and draconian political control through martial law.

The legacy of Chiang Kai-shek's authoritarian rule (1949-1975) has been an ongoing source of contention throughout Taiwan's journey of democratization and transitional justice development. The long and complicated processes of how Taiwanese society acts and reflects upon Chiang's authoritarian rule and his steadfast pro-unification, one-China stance have been vividly reflected in the transformation of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall. Under the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) rule from 2000 to 2008, Taiwan began removing many of the estimated 43,000 Chiang Kai-shek statues from schools, military bases, and other public spaces. The leaving and remaining of Chiang's statues, however, are caught between interchanging party politics between the pro-Taiwan DPP and the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) governments.

As an authoritarian symbol, the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall is now legally required by the Transitional Justice Act to be removed, renamed, or repurposed. Beyond party politics, there have been increasing voices from the Taiwanese society to transform the Memorial Hall from an authoritarian symbol to a site of historical reflection and civil participation in Taiwan's democratic development.

## Background

The construction of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall was initially ordered by the KMT government in 1975, the same year of Chiang's death, which was headed by his eldest son Chiang Ching-kuo, and was opened to the public in 1980. The Memorial Hall was built in remembrance of Chiang's great political contribution to both Taiwan's post-war development and his role as the primary nationalist leader against Japanese invasion in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945).

Drawing inspiration from the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing, mainland China, the Memorial Hall is made from white concrete and capped with a curved roof of dark blue tiles (see Figure 1),<sup>1</sup> which is deliberately meant to establish a connection between Chiang and Sun as key figures in the Chinese Nationalist movement.<sup>2</sup> Inside the Memorial holds a large bronze statue of Chiang Kai-shek sitting in the main hall, that stands at 6.5 meters tall and rests atop a raised concrete and marble base of 3.5 meters given the statue a total height of 9.8 meters. The statue is flanked by

<sup>1</sup> Charles D. Musgrove, "Taking Back Space: The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and Taiwan's Democratization," *Twentieth-Century China* 42, no. 3 (2017): 302.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Taiwanese flags on both sides, and towering over visitors. The Memorial Hall park was intended to serve as a site of reverence to Chiang and simultaneously revived aspects of Chinese culture, creating a stark contrast with the Cultural Revolution underway in mainland China during the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> The complex is an open space for public relaxation and enjoyment, with adjoining gardens and recreational space, a theater, and a concert hall.<sup>4</sup> Over time, the Memorial Hall park's dual roles both as an authoritarian symbol and an open and public space have made it a key venue for many milestone public demonstrations of Taiwan's democratic movements.



**Figure 1:** The 'Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall' Image by CEphoto, Uwe Aranas via Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 3.0.

The Memorial Hall was established in line with the long-term cultivation of Chiang's personality cult in Taiwan through increasing his visibility in the public space since the nationalist KMT government retreated from mainland China and obtained control over Taiwan in 1949. In 1950, with the support of Chiang's son, Chaing Ching-kuo, the General Political Department was established. Being responsible for the propaganda work to glorify Chiang, this organization commissioned portraits, visual representations, texts, and other sources of information to mythologize, legitimize, and instill a leadership image of Chiang in the public mind.<sup>5</sup> Statues of Chiang were gradually erected. Streets and public places were renamed in honor of Chiang to

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 303-4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 300.

secure KMT's legitimacy and wipe out vestiges of the Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan (1895-1945) in the public space.<sup>6</sup>

The initial public response towards the Memorial Hall was one of respect and reverence. In addition to the overall culture of deference to Chiang, many people genuinely respected his contribution to furthering the pro-unification nationalist cause and developing post-war Taiwan to be one of the 'Asian four little dragons' of huge economic success.<sup>7</sup> There was an outpouring of public grief when Chiang died in 1975. Hundreds of thousands of individuals went to attend the official funeral.<sup>8</sup> Later, masses flocked to visit the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall upon its immediate establishment in 1980. On special occasions, such as anniversaries of Chiang's death and the Chinese traditional Tomb Sweeping Day, large groups of people would visit the Memorial and pay respects to Chiang.<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 2:** The "Taipei 228 Monument" Image by rheins via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremy Taylor, "The Production of the Chiang Kai-shek Personality Cult, 1929-1975," *China Quarterly*, no. 185 (2006): 101-3.

<sup>7</sup> Shiao-Feng Lee, "The 228 Incident," *Taipei Times*, February 28, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Charles D. Musgrove, "Taking Back Space: The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and Taiwan's Democratization," *Twentieth-Century China* 42, no. 3 (2017): 300.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

As it has been warmly welcomed by the public, the Memorial became a center of local life and recreational activities.<sup>10</sup> It has been an integrated site that served both daily purposes of recreation and cultural celebration, and most importantly, epitomized Taiwanese society's continuous expression of reverence and respect for Chiang and his political legacies. However, the role and perceived image of the Memorial have later undergone major shifts in times of rising democratic movements in the late 1980s as Taiwanese pro-democracy groups began to reshape its symbolic value and use it as an important venue for dissidents and protests.<sup>11</sup> New political developments during Taiwan's democratization have transformed the Memorial into a contested public space that embodied divergent political understandings and reflections of Chiang's authoritarian rule and Taiwan's future.

## History of the Contestation

As Taiwan embarked on democratization in the late 1980s, Chiang's authoritarian rule and his political legacies became central subjects of historical reconciliation and transitional justice in Taiwanese politics. Later, when Taiwan independence movement began in the 1990s, a call for acknowledging and cultivating Taiwanese subjectivity in the international space and independent Taiwanese national identity became widespread, thus further putting into question Chiang and his KMT successors' pro-unification, 'One China' stance. The emergence of Taiwan independence movement was alongside the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) gradual rise to become one of the two biggest political parties in Taiwanese politics and the direct competitor to KMT since 2000. As political rivalries, the DPP is commonly seen as pro-Taiwan independence and stands firmly on a radical cleansing of Chiang's authoritarian past, whereas the KMT carries forward Chiang's political lineage and regards unification as the ultimate goal of the mainland China-Taiwan separation since 1949. Therefore, the transformative process of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall is heavily influenced by and develops in tandem with partisan rivalries and power transitions.

Newly emerging political developments have led to heated disputes in Taiwanese society regarding how to reconfigure Chiang's presence in the public space. The problematic history of Chiang's authoritarian rule has been the primary impetus behind the '*QuJianghua*' or otherwise known as the 'de-Chiang-Kai-shek-ification' trend which refers to the cleansing of vestiges that reflect his personality cult.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, like many of his statues, the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall became an embodied site of Taiwan's political challenges to act upon and reconcile with its authoritarian past and steer its future amid prolonged cross-Taiwan Strait conflicts. There are two main challenges to be discussed here: 1) The 'White Terror' period (1947-1987) and Taiwan's

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>11</sup> National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, "History of the Memorial Hall," 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Taylor, "QuJianghua: Disposing of and Re-appraising the Remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's Reign on Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 1 (2010): 181-96.

democratization, and 2) Chiang and KMT's pro-unification stance and the Taiwan independence movement.

### *Chiang's Authoritarian rule and Democratisation in Taiwan*

Notably, public controversy over the personage of Chiang Kai-shek points directly at his authoritarian rule in post-war Taiwan. Similar to many post-war East Asian countries that recently gained their independence from colonialism,<sup>13</sup> an authoritarian regime led by Chiang Kai-shek, and subsequently succeeded by his son Chiang Ching-kuo, was established in Taiwan from 1949 to 1987. Moreover, Taiwan was governed in martial law order in the 38 years of the two Chiangs' authoritarian rule since May 20, 1949. Martial law was widely used as an abusive tool by the authoritarian regime to counter communist penetration, violently suppress and purge dissidents and party enemies, and most importantly, consolidate its own political power in Taiwan.<sup>14</sup> Four decades of Taiwanese history after the installation of Martial law until the early 1990s is now commonly known as the 'White Terror' period. Many incidents of severe human rights violation, especially the '228 Incident' in 1947, later became focal points of Taiwan's burgeoning democratic movements since the late 1980s to challenge the authoritarian rule and re-open contestation upon Chiang Kai-shek's personage and political legacies.

The '228 Incident' or 'February 28 Incident' is one of the most severe incidents of human rights violation during the authoritarian rule. It refers to the massacres of Taiwanese civilians committed by the KMT army from February to April 1947.<sup>15</sup> On February 27, 1947, six official agents from the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau confiscated a cigarette vendor's illegal cigarettes during which they assaulted the vendor and shot a passer-by to death. This violent incident of official power abuse aroused huge public anger and led to mass protests the next day. However, on February 28, demonstrations were met with brutal suppression by the army who turned their guns against people and marked the start of massive killing until late April. This incident of official violence was reported to the rest of Taiwan through radio broadcasting.<sup>16</sup> In the coming few days, the whole situation began to escalate as more locations beyond Taipei started protests, demonstrations, and riots.

'228 Incident Committees' were organized from Taipei to more places as mobilized civil organizations that demanded government response to the massive killing. Apart from political negotiations, grassroots military resistance was also widely mobilized to attack government buildings and police stations. Many of these violent actions were targeted especially at mainlanders who embodied the hatred from Taiwanese people owing to their perceived invasion of the mainland Chinese Nationalist Army.<sup>17</sup> Amid escalating conflicts between the government

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<sup>13</sup> Eva Hansson, Kevin Hewison & Jim Glassman, "Legacies of the Cold War in East and Southeast Asia: An Introduction, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*," 50, no.4 (2020): 493-510.

<sup>14</sup> Shiao-feng Lee, "Types of political cases during Taiwan's martial law period," November 23, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Stolojan, "Transitional Justice and Collective Memory in Taiwan: How Taiwanese Society Is Coming to Terms with Its Authoritarian Past," *China Perspectives*, no. 2 (2017): 27.

<sup>16</sup> Shiao-Feng Lee, "The 228 Incident," *Taipei Times*, February 28, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

and the public, the KMT government, headed by then-governor of Taiwan General Chen Yi, declared a state of emergency on March 9, 1947 and sent the army to violently crack down on civil resistance. In addition, Chen requested military backup from Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing. Upon arrival, the 21st Division of the Chinese Nationalist Army sent by Chiang further added on to the ongoing crackdowns and massacres from Taipei to the south. Despite the lack of accurate count, the most frequently cited total number of fatalities and injuries during the 228 Incident is between 10,000 to 20,000.<sup>18</sup> As it marked the start of the 'White Terror' period, many Taiwanese people affiliated with the uprisings were later arrested, imprisoned, and executed, thus prolonging the authoritarian regime's control by fear within the population.<sup>19</sup>

As Chiang was not present in Taiwan during the Incident, nor did he permit the KMT army's brutal retaliation against Taiwanese people,<sup>20</sup> his involvement and responsibility for the tragic consequences were a subject of long-time, partisanly divided debate. On the KMT's side, it tends to attribute the tragedy to the disobedience and power abuse of local officials to Chiang's order of strictly no retaliation and downplay his involvement in the Incident.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, DPP politicians are more inclined to emphasize Chiang's military leadership and his decision to send in troops which was not made hastily but carefully evaluated with his knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Such partisan divides over historical understandings of Chiang and the 228 Incident are vividly present in the renaming, repurposing, and other transformative actions on the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and many of his public statues.

Apart from the acute military-civilian confrontation since the 228 Incident, the immediate background of Chiang Kai-shek's decision to impose Martial law order on May 20, 1949 was the then-ongoing Chinese Civil War between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party. After its defeat, Chiang led around two million Chinese Nationalist military and ordinary people to retreat to Taiwan in December, 1949. It was Chiang's unchanged military goal to take back the mainland that not only justified that Taiwan remained to be in a state of war, but more importantly, the essentiality of the Army's strict control over people's rights and freedom through Martial war order.<sup>23</sup> Chiang's ambitious plan was, however, not materialized. Moreover, since the 1949 mainland-Taiwan separation, prolonged cross-Taiwan Strait conflicts became one of the major dispute frontlines of the Cold War in Asia. Chiang's authoritarian control enabled by the martial law order was primarily targeted at alleged communists and communist penetration in Taiwan. In fact, during the 'White Terror' period, the government's control and infringement on people's political rights were full-round and well beyond the anti-communism agenda. Numerous cases of violent crackdowns and secret killings on pro-independence advocates, elites and leaders of indigenous people, democratic dissidents, writers, and intra-party enemies, existed amid a political

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Shattuck, "Taiwan's White Terror: Remembering the 228 Incident," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, February 27, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> National Archives Administration National Development Council, "The 228 Incident," 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Craig Smith, "Taiwan's 228 Incident and the Politics of Placing Blame," *Past Imperfect* 14, (2008): 158.

<sup>22</sup> Vladimir Stolojan, "Transitional Justice and Collective Memory in Taiwan: How Taiwanese Society Is Coming to Terms with Its Authoritarian Past," *China Perspectives*, no. 2 (2017): 29-30.

<sup>23</sup> Shiao-feng Lee, "Types of political cases during Taiwan's martial law period," *Taipei Times*, November 23, 2000.

atmosphere of silence and terror.<sup>24</sup> It is estimated that there were around 29,000 cases of political crimes and 140,000 people were affected and criminalized, among which 3,000 to 4,000 people were executed.<sup>25</sup> The authoritarian rule of 'White Terror,' immediately after the 228 Incident, has marked one of the most oppressive and traumatizing political times in contemporary Taiwanese history.

Many authoritarian leaders are hugely debatable characters, and Chiang was no exception. Under his governance, post-war Taiwan has achieved astonishing success in the economic realm. In the early 1950s, the KMT government introduced land reform and currency reform measures to restart the Taiwanese economy from war-time destruction. In the following decade, it set import substitution as the primary industrial strategy and transformed the economy to be export-oriented.<sup>26</sup> Owing to the US-Taiwan alliance, Taiwan continuously received a great amount of foreign direct investments (FDIs) from the US, further accelerating its industrialization, until 1965. With its economic success internationally recognized as a 'Taiwan miracle,' Taiwan was one of the fastest-growing newly-industrialized economies (NIEs) and became one of the 'four Asian little dragons' in the 1970s.<sup>27</sup> Although the US economic aids and the industrial legacies from Japanese colonial occupation have played an important role, Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo governments' industrial policies and bureaucratic arrangements have made Taiwan a very successful model of state-led economic development.<sup>28</sup> Beyond the economic realm, Chiang's political and military leadership in the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion (1937-1945), as well as his role as a pro-unification Chinese Nationalist leader have made him an important national figure in Chinese history. It is hard to generalize historical evaluation over Chiang's personage into simple terms of good or bad. Public contestation on this matter was open since democratization in the 1980s and became more heated in the 2000s when a new political party, the Democratic Progressive Party, vehemently pushed for the 'de-Chiang-Kai-shek-ification' agenda in Taiwan's public landscape.<sup>29</sup>

In 1987, then-president Chiang Ching-kuo put an end to the 38-year martial war order owing to domestic and international pressure for democratic development. A new, relaxed political environment shed light on the heavily repressed democratic movements during two Chiangs' authoritarian rule and enabled Taiwan to re-open old wounds, especially regarding cases of human rights violations such as the 228 Incident. The first opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was founded in 1986 and won the island's second democratic presidential election in 2000. In Taiwanese society, the 228 Incident is widely taken as an extremely painful lesson that the whole region needs to thoroughly study, reflect upon, and avoid

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid ; Thomas Shattuck, "Taiwan's White Terror: Remembering the 228 Incident," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, February 27, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Shiao-feng Lee, "Types of political cases during Taiwan's martial law period," November 23, 2000.

<sup>26</sup> Min-Hua Chiang, "The U.S. Aid and Taiwan's Post-War Economic Development, 1951-1965," *African and Asian Studies* 13, no. 1-2 (2014): 100-120.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Wan-wen Chu, "Industrialization and the State: The Changing Role of the Taiwan Government in the Economy," *China Journal* 50, (2003), 214-216.

<sup>29</sup> Jeremy E. Taylor, "QuJianghua : Disposing of and Re-appraising the Remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's Reign on Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 1 (2010): 181-96.

any recurrence as it strives for democratic development. On February 28, 1995, the 228 Peace Monument was established in Taipei City, and the then-KMT leader and Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui publicly apologized for the government's responsibility to the people.<sup>30</sup> A 1990 Commission established that the head of state at the time was moderately responsible for the 228 Incident, and largely responsible for giving too much trust to the governor of Taiwan.<sup>31</sup> Widespread public anger blaming Chiang Kai-shek as the primary culprit for the 228 Incident led to acts of vandalism to his statues in the public space on February 28 each year.<sup>32</sup> For example, in February 2018, a group of young activists splashed paint on the Chiang Kai-shek Mausoleum.<sup>33</sup> Historical research aiming to delineate the culprit and responsibility for the 228 Incident has been ongoing in democratizing Taiwan. In 2006, during the rule of the DPP Chen Shui-bien government, the official report came out and accused Chiang should take the primary responsibility. The reason was that, as the highest military commander, Chiang dismissed Taiwanese voices for political reform as acts of treason and violence incitement and sent in troops for further brutal crackdowns.<sup>34</sup> Resting blame for the Incident with Chiang, this publication directly led to the DPP's renaming of the Memorial Hall to be Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall in 2007.

During Taiwan's democratization, the political roles of the Memorial Hall were remade from merely a site of remembrance and deference to Chiang to one of the most iconic and popular places for public gatherings and demonstrations.<sup>35</sup> It has witnessed many milestone events as democracy developed and democratic values flourished in Taiwan. Some of these events were: solidarity protests against the June Fourth Massacre in Beijing, Wild Lily student movement in 1990, Wild Strawberries Movement in 2008, Sunflower Movement in 2014, advocacies for same-sex marriage legalization in 2014, the self-determination protests for indigenous rights in 2015, and so forth.<sup>36</sup> At a venue of authoritarian symbol, it is walking through these democratic milestones that political meanings and spirits attached to the Memorial Hall have been constantly reshaped towards democracy, justice, and inclusiveness and transitional justice for those whose lives and human rights were deprived by the authoritarian regime.

### *Taiwan Independence Movement and Partisan Divides*

Although democratization is a key enabler for correcting historical wrongdoings, the recognition and reconciliation with authoritarian legacies are highly politicized matters heavily influenced by party rivalries and are intimately intersectional with other political trends and movements in Taiwan. In particular, one of the greatest influences of the 228 Incident on Taiwanese society was the making of huge, painful divides between mainlanders (arriving in Taiwan along with the KMT's

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<sup>30</sup> Craig A. Smith, "Taiwan's 228 Incident and the Politics of Placing Blame," *Past Imperfect* 14 (2008): 158.

<sup>31</sup> Vladimir Stolojan, "Transitional Justice and Collective Memory in Taiwan: How Taiwanese Society Is Coming to Terms with Its Authoritarian Past," *China Perspectives*, no. 2 (2017): 29.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Stacy Hsu, "Paint Hurlled on Chiang's Sarcophagus - Taipei Times," *Taipei Times*, March 1, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Memorial Foundation of 228, "Responsibility For The 228 Massacre: A Brief Introduction," 2006.

<sup>35</sup> National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, "History of the Memorial Hall," 2021.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

retreat in 1949) and native Taiwanese residents.<sup>37</sup> Massive crackdowns and killings of mainland Chinese Nationalist forces on local resistance were seen as a prolonged rule of violence and oppression in the eyes of native Taiwanese residents, which was greatly contradictory to the sense of national pride and belonging after ending Japanese occupation in Taiwan.<sup>38</sup> To native Taiwanese residents, the new KMT government was no different to the Japanese in monopolizing bureaucratic positions through nepotism and imposing full-round limitations to their civic participation.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the 228 Incident was an early defining time for the development of localized Taiwanese identity and the Taiwan Independence Movement that later went into full bloom in the 2000s.<sup>40</sup>

The fierce tensions between pro-independence and pro-unification stances have existed for a long time and permeate many aspects of Taiwanese politics. Inevitably, it is within such a context of political standoff that Chiang Kai-shek's legacies as a steadfast nationalist leader are trapped in constantly swaying party politics. Taiwan's political parties have a complicated relationship with Chiang Kai-shek. For the KMT, Chiang had the longest leadership of the party and it needs to continue to memorialize and highlight his contributions to Taiwan and the Chinese nation, while simultaneously decreasing the negative impacts of his authoritarian rule. On the other hand, as a party supporting an ethnic, native Taiwanese agenda,<sup>41</sup> the DPP has played a significant role in support of the 'Taiwanization' of national identity and leading the Taiwan Independence Movement.<sup>42</sup> The DPP's pro-independence agenda goes in tandem with its active campaigns to seek justice for the victims of the 228 Incident and the 'White Terror,' arguing for the breakdown of the Chiang Kai-shek personality cult.

The Taiwan Independence Movement first developed into one of the political mainstreams when former president Lee Teng-hui introduced the new narration of 'special state-to-state relations' between Taiwan and mainland China in 1996 after winning Taiwan's first democratic presidential election.<sup>43</sup> Lee claimed Taiwan being a state as default, thus there was no need for an independence movement. His new narrative creation, however, has aroused serious concern from both Chinese and American sides and led to heightened military confrontation with mainland China. When DDP candidate Chen Shui-bien won the next election in 2000, he carried forward both the theoretical construction and policy practices of Taiwan's claim for self-determination and independence free from mainland Chinese influence. At the same time, Chiang iconography in the public space began to be renamed, repurposed, and recontextualized as the new Taiwanese national identity developed.<sup>44</sup> In 2001, the Ministry of Defense removed references to Chiang in places under its control. Uncle Chiang Road/Jiang Gong Lu was renamed Mazu Road. In 2006, the

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<sup>37</sup> Vladimir Stolojan, "Transitional Justice and Collective Memory in Taiwan: How Taiwanese Society Is Coming to Terms with Its Authoritarian Past," *China Perspectives*, no. 2 (2017): 30.

<sup>38</sup> National Archives Administration National Development Council, "The 228 Incident," 2013.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Cheng-Feng Shih and Mumin Chen, "Taiwanese Identity and the Memories of 2-28: A Case for political reconciliation," *Asian Perspective* 34, no. 4 (2010): 99.

<sup>42</sup> Shale Horowitz, and Alexander C. Tan, "The Strategic Logic of Taiwanization," *World Affairs* 168, no. 2 (2005): 87-95.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Jacobs, "Lee Teng-hui and the Idea of 'Taiwan,'" *The China Quarterly*, 190 (2013): 375 - 393.

<sup>44</sup> Jeremy E. Taylor, "QuJianghua : Disposing of and Re-appraising the Remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's Reign on Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 1 (2010): 191.

Chiang Kai-shek International Airport was renamed Taoyuan International Airport.<sup>45</sup> Statues were removed from public spaces and deposited at Cihu Memorial Sculpture Park.

On the contrary to the DPP, Kuomintang actively protested the renaming of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall to the National Taiwan Democracy Hall. It cited the change as a DPP campaign plot that would have the ultimate effect of sewing a divide within the Chinese nation and rehashing ethnic strife.<sup>46</sup> The KMT also opposed the re-designation on legal grounds that it was an abuse of power by the Education Ministry of Taiwan to rename the Memorial hall through administration order.<sup>47</sup> In order to muster sufficient support for the change, the DPP placed the memorial hall under the authority of a smaller, lower-level department in the government.<sup>48</sup> This caused significant inter-party controversy. Upon its return to power in 2009, the KMT once again reinstated the former name of the Memorial Hall. The fact that the KMT conducted operations at night, and that a promised public forum on the issue was not held, led to significant backlash from the DPP.<sup>49</sup> The KMT has been reluctant to endorse the erasure or removal of parts of Chiang's legacy, and beyond the memorial hall, it has also criticized the removal or breakdown of Chiang statues, arguing that it is a destruction of cultural heritage.

Since the 1990s, the awakening of Taiwanese national identity has been widespread among the public as people take pride in Taiwan's culture and democratic development, long for more freedom and flexibility in identity articulation, and fight for independent space in the international arena despite mainland China's full-round blockage.<sup>50</sup> According to surveys by the Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, from 2020 to June, 2021, around 64% of respondents have chosen to identify themselves as 'Taiwanese' in comparison with 30% self-identified as 'Chinese,' which is the largest recorded gap between the two national identities since 1992.<sup>51</sup> Among many factors, the sharp contrast between the promising progress of Taiwanese democratic development vis-a-vis mainland China's increasingly stringent political control, which especially can be seen from its intervention in Hong Kong politics, has largely accounted for the rising popularity of Taiwanese national identity. The prominent trend of full-round Taiwanization of political and socio-cultural development has a significant impact on the fate of Chiang Kai-shek's public iconology when his political legacies are seemingly incompatible with more and more people's pro-Taiwanese and pro-independence stances. At the same time, as public preferences for Taiwanese/Chinese national identities change, they have also led to shifting power dynamics among political parties. Under the DPP Tsai Ing-wen government from 2016, removal of Chiang's

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>46</sup> Marc André. Matten, "The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei: A Contested Place of Memory," In *Places of Memory in Modern China: History, Politics, and Identity* (Leiden: BRILL, 2012), 74-5.

<sup>47</sup> Taiwan Today, "Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall renamed," *Taiwan Today*, May 25, 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Marc André. Matten, "The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei: A Contested Place of Memory," In *Places of Memory in Modern China: History, Politics, and Identity* (Leiden: BRILL, 2012), 75.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 81-3.

<sup>50</sup> Shale Horowitz, and Tan Alexander C., "The Strategic Logic of Taiwanization," *World Affairs* 168, no. 2 (2005): 87-95.

<sup>51</sup> Election Study Center, "Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU," National Chengchi University, July 20, 2021.

public statues and transformation of the Memorial Hall have not only been resumed but become a legal mandate and a core component of her transitional justice agenda.<sup>52</sup>

## Decision-Making Processes

Transforming the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall is a long and circuitous process. The removal and later restoration of Chiang's name to the Memorial Hall have vividly epitomized its transformation throughout three administrations from the Chen Shui-bien government (2000-2008) to the present. As the primary commemorative symbol of Chiang, it is situated in the flux of diverse and contrasting public opinions and party interests sparked by a widespread awakening in Taiwanese society to critically reflect upon the authoritarian past and restore justice for those who suffered. In general, the decision-making over the Memorial Hall has been a top-down process led by political parties, especially the DPP.

Public contestation on transforming the Memorial Hall so far has mostly centred on whether to remove or keep Chiang Kai-shek's name. As the key advocate for reducing Chiang's public symbols and renaming the Memorial Hall, the DPP has been actively using legal measures to realize its goals. Initially, the memorial hall was founded under the Organic Statue of the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall Management Office.<sup>53</sup> If the government was to rename it by using an executive order, this would contradict the existing law and bypass the legislative branch,<sup>54</sup> otherwise it would have to go through the legislative body to repeal or amend the law. In order to circumvent these legal constraints, the DPP government declared the memorial a national historical monument, but drawing fierce protests from the KMT on grounds of dubious legality and attempts to surpass the local Taipei government.<sup>55</sup> In 2007, the renaming was successfully done by the DPP Chen Shui-bien government. However, in 2009, the Executive Yuan led by the newly-elected Ma Ying-jeou government was instructed to reverse the renaming and restore Chiang's name on the Memorial Hall.

Upon the new party transition in 2016, public support for the two parties has once again shifted and the DPP has won a majority in the Legislation Yuan election. Control over both the legislative and executive branches enabled the DPP Tsai Ing-wen government to resume the transformation agenda of the Memorial Hall. In 2017, the government passed the Transitional Justice Act which, among other transitional justice measures, calls for the removal, renaming, and addressing of authoritarian symbols.<sup>56</sup> The KMT has criticized the bill, arguing that it is not sufficiently wide in scope for not including symbols from Japanese, Dutch, and Spanish colonial periods and that the mandate given to the Truth and Justice Committee under the bill is unconstitutional as it combined

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<sup>52</sup> Ernest Caldwell, "Transitional Justice Legislation in Taiwan Before and During the Tsai Administration," *Washington International Law Journal* 27, no. 2 (2018): 475-80.

<sup>53</sup> Marc André. Matten, "The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei: A Contested Place of Memory," In *Places of Memory in Modern China : History, Politics, and Identity* (Leiden: BRILL, 2012), 77.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Taiwan Today, "Legislature passes bill promoting transitional justice," *Taiwan Today*, December 7, 2017.

executive and judicial powers.<sup>57</sup> However, hit by the 2016 Illicit Assets Act, or the Act Governing the Handling of Illicit Assets of Political Parties and their Affiliates,<sup>58</sup> the KMT's abilities to contest the DPP's removal of Chiang Kai-shek's legacies have been greatly restricted and its moral grounds to shape the course of Taiwan's transitional justice development are challenged owing to the direct lineage of Chiang. It remains to see how Tsai and her DPP leadership lead the transitional justice efforts in Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall's transformation.



**Figure 3:** The "Cihu Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Sculpture Park" Image by lienyuan lee via Wikimedia Commons CC BY 3.0.

Apart from the Memorial Hall, other Chiang's statues have undergone removal or repurposing. New practices, such as the establishment of the Cihu Memorial Sculpture Park (see Figure 3) that offers a place for the relocation of over 200 Chiang statues from all over Taiwan to Taoyuan, have emerged to open up new spaces for the commemoration and continuous discussion of Chiang's legacy amid nationwide disputes. Sitting adjacent to the Chiang Mausoleum, the park aimed to collect discarded statues from the early Nationalist era, and a majority of its pieces are statues of Chiang.<sup>59</sup> The park was established in 1997 under the leadership of the Daxi Mayor Zeng

<sup>57</sup> Ernest Caldwell, "Transitional Justice Legislation in Taiwan Before and During the Tsai Administration," *Washington International Law Journal* 27, no. 2 (2018): 475-80.

<sup>58</sup> This Act targets assets obtained by the KMT during its authoritarian monopoly on political power (1945-1987), in an attempt to level the political playing field and further realize objectives of transitional justice. While not directly pertinent to the Chiang Kai-shek legacy, it addresses the impact of the KMT authoritarian period as a whole.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Allen, *Taipei: City of Displacements*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 152.

Rongjian. While more research is needed to identify the motivations of the mayor of Daxi, previous Daxi leaders hoped to promote the region through Chiang-oriented tourism due to the presence of Chiang-related sites (the Chiang family often vacationed there) and strong KMT support in the region. As the park became ready to receive statues, Mayor Zeng indicated that the city would accept any statue donated to the park and pay for its shipping.<sup>60</sup>

The park seeks to commemorate the legacy of Chiang Kai-shek, but it also has a substantial historical focus. Many of the busts and statues are described with plaques that give information about their original installation or the artists who designed them. Some have also argued that the sheer presence of so many statues, all similar in nature, reduces them to a more common object and that the alignment of 'Chiang statues standing around and looking at themselves' creates a quizzical, and almost comic effect.<sup>61</sup> In this way, several very different emotions towards Chiang are conveyed. On one level, there is reverence and commemoration, outlined in a plaque accompanying entry to the park.<sup>62</sup> On another level, there is a celebration of the historical value of the statues, with recognition for the artists and history of the statues themselves.<sup>63</sup> Lastly, the placement and sheer number of the statues lend themselves to inviting questioning or discussion, which is further enhanced by the presence of a reconstructed Chiang statue that overlooks the others. Some of the statues arrived were broken and not in a complete piece due to public protests and destruction. For instance, one of Chiang's statues given by the Kaohsiung Cultural Center was completely dismantled. It was later re-assembled in the form of an art installation, with a metal frame supplementing the missing parts.<sup>64</sup> In this way, it creates a space for the re-interpretation of Chiang's legacy. The Cihu Memorial Sculpture Park is thus an amalgamation of the different perspectives to Chiang, all of which are embedded in the broader debate over transitional justice in Taiwan.

## Summary and Conclusions

As a commemorative symbol to Taiwan's most-known authoritarian and nationalist leader, the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall is an embodied site of constant interactions, conflicts, and contestations among various trends of political development in the region. The painful memories of the 228 Incident and almost four-decade-long martial law order of 'White Terror,' both of which were historical wounds of Chiang's authoritarian rule, are very much alive in Taiwanese society as it strives to consolidate democratic development and yearns for the freedom of self-identification as Taiwanese. The transformation of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall is thus situated in the ongoing agenda of transitional justice and socio-political Taiwanization in the post-authoritarian eras.

Reshaping the roles of the Memorial Hall from an authoritarian symbol expressing public deference to Chiang to a contested site where democratic movements flourish and proudly

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 153-4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 152-3.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 154-5.

present to the world is a long, enduring, and fluctuating process. The rise and fall of political party rivalries between the DPP and the KMT correspond with the deprivation and subsequent restoration of Chiang's name to the Memorial Hall. These power relations foreground a primarily top-down approach in which political parties not only take lead in the decision-making but also are the main sources of disputes and oppositions that politicize Taiwan's journey of pursuing transitional justice. With the Transitional Justice Act introduced in 2017, it remains to be seen how the legally mandatory removal, renaming, and addressing of authoritarian symbols, including the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, will be conducted in the future and how democratic and transitional justice values are to be materialized in the islandwide process of historical remembrance, reflection, and reconciliation

Research contributed by Natalie Dabkowsky and Chunkai Kao

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## About Contested Histories

In recent years, there have been many contestations over memorials, street names, and other physical representations of historical legacies in public spaces. These contestations often reflect deeper societal tensions whether triggered by political transitions, demographic shifts, inter-ethnic strife, or a growing awareness of unaddressed historical injustices.

The Contested Histories project is a multi-year initiative designed to identify principles, processes, and best practices for addressing these contestations at the community or municipal level and in the classroom. Conflicts about history, heritage, and memory are a global phenomenon, and, although each case is different, comparative cases can indicate lessons learned and reflect best practices.

## About IHJR at EuroClio

The Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation (IHJR) is a research centre at EuroClio - European Association for History Educators in The Hague, The Netherlands. The IHJR works with educational and public policy institutions to organise and sponsor historical discourse in pursuit of acknowledgement and the resolution of historical disputes in divided communities and societies.

## Contact information

Marie-Louise Jansen  
Program Director  
+33 66828327  
contestedhistories@euroclio.eu  
www.contestedhistories.org

EuroClio Secretariat  
Riouwstraat 139  
2585HP The Hague The  
Netherlands  
secretariat@euroclio.eu  
www.euroclio.eu

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