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Taiwan

The Four Critical Junctures of Taiwan DPP's Transformation from Democratic Reformers to US Client

- Features -

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Taiwan's social and political structure are facing greater division and confrontation as the US-China conflict intensifies. [1] During the course of this confrontation, the successive administrations of Tsai Ing-wen and Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), along with various groupings in its camp, have increasingly bent to the US anti-China strategy, and are calling for “defending democracy” against the looming threat from China. As part of this, the DPP regime has made several moves to tighten control on the society, like the Anti-Infiltration Act, the proposed Digital Media Services Act, and the All-out Defense Mobilization Readiness Act.

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[1] See our article, [“Taiwanese Society Torn Apart — The ‘New Normal’ of Three Party Strife.”](#)

[2] Ibid.

[3] In fact, by the end of 2023, labor groups had already put forward the slogan [“All three parties failed; the ruling party is the most arrogant”](#), giving a failing grade to the labor rights programs of all three presidential candidates, and highlighting the ruling DPP itself should bear the greatest political responsibility.

[4] [“On the Road to Independence”](#) (1991), ch. 7. “Mass movements have already been proven as the most effective means of opposing the KMT, and so the parliament is only a means...”.

[5] From Lin Cho-shui’s 1989 article “Strengthen Mass Line Movements, Actively Prepare for the Overall Decisive Battle,” which noted: “Since Taiwan simultaneously faces three levels of issues — nation-building, political democratization, and fair social distribution — which are different yet interconnected and cannot be separated... and since the entire KMT system is used to manipulate native society, the opposition activists cannot avoid promoting mass movements outside the system, allowing the people to free themselves from the old system and old values...”

[6] [“New Tide Faction and the Democratic Movement of 1980s Taiwan”](#) (2016).

[7] Chien Hsi-chieh’s 1993 article [“Only Labor Movements Outside the System Are the Main Force.”](#)

[8] The 2014 article [“Historical Review of the DPP’s ‘Encircle the Center from the Local’ Strategy \(1989–2000\)”](#).

[9] The Lee Teng-hui Phenomenon: Political Leadership and Party Transformation (1996).

[10] In the fully re-elected Legislative Yuan in 1992, the DPP won 51 seats, bringing leaders of various DPP factions into the legislature and thereby strengthening the DPP’s turn toward electoralism. See the 1993 article [“When Will the Honeymoon Between Lee Teng-hui and the DPP End?”](#)

[11] See Lin Hou-jun’s preface to Marxism on the Labor Movement (2005).

[12] Same as Note 8.

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[13] See the 2010 article "[The DPP Only Learned Half of the lesson of the KMT](#)".

[14] For example, Chen Ming-wen, who joined the DPP in 2001.

[15] See a 2002 BBC report: "[Taiwanese Elites Swear En Masse to Join the DPP](#)." Among the most representative figures was Tsai Ing-wen, who had served as an official in the Mainland Affairs Council during Lee Teng-hui's administration and later joined the DPP in 2004.

[16] For example, loosening government controls over the media, and enacting the Act of Gender Equality in Employment and the Indigenous Peoples Employment Rights Protection Act to protect the rights of women and indigenous people.

[17] For example, the United States opposed the referendum on joining the UN proposed by Chen Shui-bian and the DPP in 2008. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Thomas J. Christensen even stated: "[Any course of action that would put at risk Taiwan's peace and stability is also directly contrary to the interests of the United States and... the interests of the people of Taiwan...](#)".

[18] During the Sunflower Movement, the US State Department stated that it "[supports Taiwan's vibrant democracy](#)".

[19] For example, Lin Chuan's Cabinet included David Lee (Lee Ta-wei), Feng Shih-kuan, Hochen Tan, etc. In 2015, Tsai Ing-wen also said: "[In appointing officials, we look at ability, not party color](#)."

[20] Consequently, former DPP Secretary-General Lo Wen-jia criticized that Tsai Ing-wen's government "[had degenerated into just another secular political party](#)."

[21] In her [2016 inaugural address](#), Tsai Ing-wen said: "...I have a responsibility to safeguard the sovereignty and territory of the Republic of China... We will also strive to maintain the existing mechanisms for cross-strait dialogue and communication."

[22] See Yang Bi-chuan's 2001 Basic Reader, appendix: "What Kind of Taiwan Card Is the US Playing?"

[23] See our article, "[Legislative Reform Splits the Ruling Class, The Left Should Not Drift Along](#)."

[24] See a 2014 special article, "[Resolving the Sunflower Generation's Economic Anxiety](#)".