



Journal of Current Chinese Affairs

China aktuell

Ho, Ming-sho (2010),

Understanding the Trajectory of Social Movements in Taiwan (1980-2010), in: *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 39, 3, 3-22.

ISSN: 1868-4874 (online), ISSN: 1868-1026 (print)

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Published by

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies
in cooperation with the National Institute of Chinese Studies, White Rose East Asia
Centre at the Universities of Leeds and Sheffield and Hamburg University Press.

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Understanding the Trajectory of Social Movements in Taiwan (1980-2010)

Ming-sho Ho

For Taiwan, the 65 years since the end of the Second World War can be divided into three periods. The first 15 years saw the rule of a highly repressive regime, which took power shortly after the departure of the Japanese colonizers. The Kuomintang (KMT) (國民黨, Guomindang) consolidated its grip on the island by suppressing the native revolt in the February 28 Incident (二二八事件, *ererba shijian*) of 1947 and exterminating the clandestine communist movement in the early 1950s. The harsh political domination not only secured the survival of an émigré regime amid the disillusioned and hostile populace, but also facilitated its resource extraction for its military mission to re-take mainland China. Situated at the very frontline of the international Cold War, Taiwanese people experienced a period of regimented frugality, ubiquitous counter-espionage, and preparation for war – a highly sterile environment for social movements.

Economic transformation characterized the second period. In anticipation of the termination of the United States' aid, the Taiwanese government began to encourage foreign investment as well as domestic production for the international market. The founding of the Kaohsiung Export-processing Zone (高雄加工出口區, *Gaoxiong jiagong chukouqu*) in 1965, the very prototype that was subsequently emulated globally, epitomized this change. Initially, abandoning the inward-looking economic orientation was simply a means of making up for the deficit in foreign reserves, but the economic force of the move turned out to have far-reaching impacts. A sizeable sector of small and medium-sized enterprises mushroomed, and Taiwan became a major international export platform, first for labour-intensive commodities such as footwear, textiles and toys and later for technology-intensive computers and machinery. Peasants left their rural homelands for industrial jobs; ambitious workers advanced into the ranks of factory owners and merchants through the successful exploitation of their skills and social networks. The social image of the middle class also changed from one of government employees and shop owners to college-educated professionals such as lawyers, medical doctors and journalists. Inevitably, the KMT regime

underwent a gradual transition from militarism to developmentalism, as its anti-communist mission increasingly became a distant dream.

The suppression of an opposition demonstration on Human Rights Day in 1979 (the Kaohsiung Incident) (高雄事件, *Gaoxiong shijian*) ushered in the third period, during which democratization became the dominant force. In spite of the temporary setback, the opposition movement continued to challenge the KMT and successfully founded the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) (民主進步黨, *Minzhu jinbudang*) in 1986. Facing mounting pressure, the government announced the repeal of the 38-year-old martial law on 15 July 1987, thereby formally restoring the frozen political freedoms of speech, assembly and organization. Under Lee Teng-hui's (李登輝, Li Denghui) leadership, the KMT embarked on a series of political reforms and indigenization that incorporated the hitherto disfranchised natives. With the gradual opening-up of political seats to competition, the DPP grew, becoming a would-be ruling party in the 1990s. Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁, Chen Shuibian) victory in the 2000 presidential election marked the end of the political transition and resulted in the first peaceful and democratic power transfer in any Chinese society. In 2008 the DPP government lost power as Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九, Ma Yingjiu) led the rejuvenated KMT to reclaim the presidency.

In short, militarism, industrialization and democratization, in that order, have been the three major forces that have shaped the contours of Taiwanese society. In the English literature, scholarly attention has been devoted to the latter two themes. The making of the so-called “economic miracle” in a highly unlikely context has persistently intrigued researchers. Major monographs have focused on investigating the secret recipe for “growth with equality” (Kuo, Ranis, and Fei 1981) and the peculiar pattern of state-led industrialization (Amsden and Chu 2003; Wade 1990; Wu 2005) as well as its social consequences (Gold 1986; Bello and Rosenfeld 1990). Taiwan's relatively non-violent transition from one-party authoritarianism to liberal democracy might as well be called the second “miracle”. There already exist well-researched works that analyse government-opposition interaction (Cheng and Haggard 1992; Chu 1992), electoral competition (Rigger 1999; Tien 1996), the rise of the Taiwanese identity (Makeham and Hsiau 2005), and the changes in social policies (Wong 2006) and political culture (Weller 1999).

With respect to the development of Taiwan's social movements – an equally powerful process that has accompanied and reinforced demo-

cratization over the past three decades – there exists a conspicuous lacuna in the English literature on Taiwan. This special issue represents a long-overdue preliminary attempt to fill in this gap. Four articles on the topic – dealing with disability welfare, women’s rights, labour law and judicial reform, respectively – as well as a concluding reflection are collected here. Together they constitute a slice of the life story of the contemporary social activism that has sought to reform Taiwanese society in the light of equality, rationality and human rights. This special issue originates from a panel entitled “Democratizing Democracy: Politics of Social Movements in Contemporary Taiwan” presented at the 2010 annual conference of the Association for Asian Studies. The articles included here are based on the premise that Taiwan’s social movements are by no means a transient phenomenon that has originated from authoritarian crisis and is destined to fade away once political democracy has been established. Their persistence points to the unfinished nature of the democratization project as well as to the vitality of Taiwan’s civil society. In the following discussion I provide a brief historical account of Taiwan’s social movements from 1980 to 2010, drawing mainly on the periodization I have used elsewhere (Ho forthcoming; Ho and Hsiao 2010).

A Short History of Social Movements in Taiwan (1980-2010)

As a conscious and organized attempt to change society, a social movement is itself affected by the greater societal environment in which it operates. Social movement researchers use the term “political opportunity structure” to understand the shifting external influences that constrain and facilitate collective action (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1989). As argued in the preceding section, democratization is the most important force to have reshaped Taiwan over the past three decades. Hence, in tandem with the different stages of the political transition from authoritarianism to democracy, social movements have undergone processes of fermentation (1980-1986), popular upsurge (1987-1992), institutionalization (1993-1999), incorporation (2000-2007) and resurgence (2008-2010).

Fermentation (1980-1986)

By the time Taiwan entered the 1980s, new social discontents – environmental degradation, class exploitation and rural impoverishment –

that accompanied the rapid industrialization process were already perceptible, while the pre-existing grievances such as sexism and the plight of aborigines had become increasingly intolerable to the public as it became more informed and enlightened. These discontents were what stimulated the emergence of social movements in this period. The political atmosphere after the tragic conclusion of Kaohsiung Incident, however, was not felicitous. Although the KMT did not revert to the heavy authoritarian control by security agents that had been characteristic of the repressive 1950s, the basic martial-law framework remained intact. A vigilant censorship system was maintained; unauthorized public assemblies were outlawed; and any organization in an area where the government had pre-emptively set up a similar one was prohibited.

As the fruits of economic modernization, the new members of the middle class played the role of vanguard. Medical doctors, journalists, college professors and lawyers were instrumental in establishing pioneer social movement organizations such as the Consumers' Foundation (消費者基金會, *Xiaofoei zhe jijinbui* 1980, consumer movement), *Awakening Magazine* (婦女新知, *Funü xin zhi* 1982, women's movement), and *New Environment Magazine* (新環境, *Xin huanjing* 1986, conservation movement). The choice to establish a foundation or magazine publisher was a conscious strategy to circumvent KMT control: activists in the three issue areas had all been frustrated in their efforts by the existence of semi-official organizations whose only *raison d'être* seemed to be to forestall the growth of autonomous ones.

Class position clearly affected how these nascent activists pursued their movement's agenda. More often than not they assumed the role of public interest advocates and accentuated their image of impartiality and professionalism. By remaining circumspect when criticizing government policy, they anticipated cooperation with the more liberal segments of the KMT officialdom. In the early 1980s, for instance, the government recruited Taiwan's first-generation conservationists to plan national parks and disseminate the gospel of conservationism (Huang 2001). The activists in turn used their semi-official status to oppose some ecologically unsound projects promoted by the government. In some cases, they successfully captured and channelled public attention and forced the authorities in question to cancel their original plan. Nonetheless, it never occurred to the activists to speak directly to those people who might be negatively affected; nor did they regard their involvement as anything

other than offering constructive advice intended to help the government solve problems.

There was another group of middle-class activists which adopted a more direct approach and did not shun sensitive issues. Intellectuals, journalists and lawyers connected to the opposition movement established three organizations in 1984: the Taiwan Association for Legal Assistance to Workers (台灣勞工法律支援會, *Taiwan laogong falü zhibiyuanhui*), the Taiwan Association for Human Rights (台灣人權促進會, *Taiwan renquan cujinhui*), and the Taiwan Association for Promoting Aborigines' Rights (台灣原住民權利促進會, *Taiwan yuan zhu minquan li cujinhui*). In accordance with their more confrontational stance, these activists did not seek to register their organizations officially but instead concentrated their energy on providing assistance to the population targeted. In 1985/86, for instance, the lawyers associated with the Taiwan Association for Legal Assistance to Workers were deeply involved in a case of workers' self-management.

Grass-roots people who had been victimized by industrial pollution (Terao 2002) or prosecuted for their religious beliefs (Rubinstein 1994) also initiated the wave of so-called "self-relief" (自力救濟, *zili jinji*). Similarly to the "rightful resistance" that would experience an upsurge in China a decade later (O'Brien 1996), Taiwan's self-relief activism was basically a desperate attempt by the frustrated grass roots to protect their livelihood. Their tactics were often spontaneous and disruptive – an inevitable consequence of the absence of a strong organization and external sponsors.

Toward the end of this period, there were signs that the unorganized wave of self-relief activism had matured into a bona-fide social movement. In 1986/87 a protest initiated by community activists opposed to an investment project by US corporation DuPont took place. The anti-DuPont movement soon gained national attention and jump-started Taiwan's environmental movement. A formal organization was formed, and middle-class conservationists became involved for the first time (Reardon-Anderson 1992). Four months before the government repealed its martial law, DuPont decided to suspend its project in what was a sweet victory for both local opponents and social movement activists.

Popular Upsurge (1987-1992)

The lifting of the martial law in 1987 was fundamentally a political calculation to avoid the worst-case scenario of escalating challenges from the opposition party and the social movements that had come onto the scene around the mid-1980s. The longer the KMT incumbents procrastinated, the more unforeseeable and uncontrollable the consequences would be. Nonetheless, political liberalization further stimulated the growth of social movements by removing the invisible psychological fear (Chang 1989). This was demonstrated by the unusually large number of social movement organizations founded in the year 1987 alone: the February 28 Peace Day Promotion Association (二二八和平日促進會, *Ereberba bepıngrı cujinhui*) (the first “transition justice” movement organization to come into being before the term became widely adopted), the Association for Reforming University Law (大學法改革促進會, *Daxuefa gaige cujinhui*) (an inter-campus organization of student activists), the Taiwan Women’s Rescue Association (台灣婦女救援協會, *Taiwan funü jıuyuan xiehui*), the Taiwan Teachers’ Human Rights Association (台灣教師人權促進會, *Taiwan jiaoshi renquan cujinhui*), the *Hakka Magazine* (客家風雲, *Kejia fengyun*), the Farmers’ Rights Promotion Association (農民權益促進會, *Nongmin quanyi cujinhui*), the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (台灣環境保護聯盟, *Taiwan huanjing baohu lianmeng*), and the Humanistic Education Promotion Society (人本教育協會, *Renben jiaoyu xiehui*). They would play a leading role in the different categories of social movements in the years to come.

In addition, the right of public assembly was partially restored in 1988, and greater freedom to form civic organizations was legally granted in 1989. Meanwhile, the DPP also discovered the political utility of social protests, so that many politicians began to take a more active role. For the latter, sponsoring social protests was an indirect way of challenging the KMT hegemony, thus complementing their pursuit of electoral positions. They either used their official capacity to speak for the movements’ demands or initiated protests in their electoral district. Consequently, social movements became more and more widespread and radicalized toward the end of the 1980s – an explosive situation diagnosed by O’Donnell and Schmitter as a “popular upsurge” (1986: 53-54).

Prior to the lifting of martial law, the controversy concerning nuclear energy was mainly a “gentlemen’s disagreement”, with sceptical scholars, journalists and politicians voicing their opposition. In March

1988 anti-nuclear activism spread to the grass roots as local residents near the proposed fourth nuclear power station launched a protest that would be sustained for more than one decade (Ho 2003: 693-694). In early 1988 Taiwan witnessed a wave of wildcat strikes and work stoppages as workers demanded more compensation as part of their annual bonus (Ho 1990). Previously, employers had never expected that their seemingly docile workers would defy their authority. Taiwan's farmers had been the most conservative sector, and one that silently supported the KMT regime. Threatened by the import of agricultural products, they became increasingly politicized. On March 20 of the same year, the farmers launched a demonstration to demand reforms in social insurance, the farmers' association and the price of fertilizer. Unexpectedly, their protest turned out to be a nasty confrontation with the anti-riot police that ravaged the downtown area of Taipei for two days (Hsiao 1991). In September and October, fishermen whose livelihood had been devastated by a pollution incident blockaded the Linyuan Petrochemical Industrial Zone (林園石化工業區, *Linyuan shibua gongyequ*) for three weeks, virtually paralyzing the whole industry (Ho and Su 2008: 2409).

In addition to escalating their disruptiveness, social movements were raising the level of their protests. In response to the ascendancy of the conservatives within the KMT, which sought to derail the liberalization initiated by Chiang Ching-kuo (Jiang Jingguo) and followed by Lee Teng-hui, college students organized a protest in March 1990 to demand immediate democratic reforms. As part of the so-called Wild Lily Movement (野百合運動, *Ye baihe yundong*), students occupied the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial (which was derogatorily renamed the "Chiang Kai-shek Temple" (中正廟, *Zhong Zheng miao*) and requested direct dialogue with the political incumbents. The students' timely intervention tilted the balance of power in favour of the KMT reformist faction and was peacefully concluded with Lee's promise to expedite political reforms (Wright 1999).

The violent surge of social movements alarmed the KMT leadership, and hence a repressive stance gradually took shape. A systematic attempt to discipline movement activism emerged during Hau Po-tsun's (郝柏村, Hao Bocun) tenure (1990-1993). Hau's assumption of the premiership in May 1990 immediately provoked another round of social protest. Hau publicly identified social movement activists as "bullies" (流氓, *liumang*) and vowed to put them behind bars. In this period, the police forcibly cracked down on several anti-pollution blockades. Leaders

of the farmers, labour and environmental movements were jailed. The government sought to revise labour laws that were claimed to be “too friendly” to workers and railroaded several ecologically controversial projects.

Hau’s effort to “reassert public authority” was met with a partisan turn among movement activists. In the national elections of 1990 and 1992, many activists obtained DPP membership and joined the party’s campaign in an attempt to bring movement issues to the ballot box. In the end, the joint force of the social movements and the opposition party proved capable of resisting the authoritarian backlash. With the DPP’s 1992 victory in the legislative election, the antagonism between hardliners and reformists within the KMT became insurmountable. Hau’s resignation not only signified the hardliners’ decline but also defused the tension between the state and the social movements.

Institutionalization (1993-1999)

Institutionalization is often seen as being synonymous with de-radicalization and bureaucratization, which together effectively put an end to movement activism. But this is not what I mean here. Instead, I understand institutionalization as the process by which something becomes a permanent, routine, and legitimate feature in a newly democratized society. Social movements are institutionalized insofar as they are increasingly tolerated by officials, are accepted by the public, and become the modular way for a variety of societal interests to stake their claims.

Three aspects of the post-1992 political change in Taiwan were conducive to the institutionalization of social movements. Firstly, the era of preventive and politicized policing of popular protests was gone, as the central government relegated the command of the police to local executives. My evaluation of judicial data has confirmed a greater degree of government leniency in dealing with social protesters. The number of indicted persons per million demonstration participants fell from 24.1 (1988-1992) to 12.6 (1993-1999). The percentage of rejections of legal applications to demonstrate was 0.32 per cent and 0.00 per cent, respectively, for these two periods. Secondly, before the 1992 legislative election, only a small percentage of lawmakers were directly elected by Taiwanese people. Lawmakers from mainland China elected in 1947 were given the lifelong right to sit in the Legislative Yuan, and even when they died, the KMT simply appointed a successor. This undemocratic practice was criticized as “eternal parliament” (萬年國會, *wannian guohui*). With

the opening up of law-making channels, lobbying became an effective method for advancing the social movement agenda. Finally, the DPP's securing of a place in Taiwan's political arena triggered a chemical change in its relations with social movements. The close comradeship of the past obviously disappeared. As the DPP came to possess more electoral seats, it faced more diversified constituencies and had to balance the demands of social movement organizations with those of more conservative sectors. Symptomatic of this centrist turn was the decision to abolish the Department of Social Movements (社會運動部, *Shehui yundongbu*) in the DPP Central Headquarters in 1996.

Taking advantage of the more favourable political atmosphere, social movements were able to make some tangible progress. Overcoming opposition from economic officials, environmentalists succeeded in legislating environmental impact assessment in 1994. The women's movement achieved legal successes with the revision of the legal regulation on marriage (1996) and the legislation regarding sexual offenses (1997) and domestic violence (1998). Labour activists obtained the extension of the Labour Standard Law (勞動基準法, *Laodong jizhunfa*) in 1996, which meant that roughly two million white-collar workers were given minimum labour protection.

In addition to these breakthroughs, some social movements made inroads within the administrative structure by gaining the right to participate in some decision-making channels or obtaining official recognition as the legitimate and sole representative for their constituencies. The Wildlife Conservation Advisory Committee (野生動物保育諮詢委員會, *Yesheng dongwu baoyu zixun weiyuanhui*) (1995), the Gender Equity Education Committee (兩性平等教育委員會, *Liangxing pingdeng jiaoyu weiyuanhui*) (1997), and the Committee on Women's Rights Promotion (婦女權益促進會, *Funü quanyi cujinhui*) (1998) were the concrete fruits of these efforts. With these newly established consultative organs, movement activists attained insider status and were able to exert influence from within. Schoolteachers had mobilized for the right to organize a labour union since 1987. In 1995 their demand was partially met in that a compromised version of a Teachers' Association (教師會, *jiaoshihui*) was legalized to represent their interests. Thereafter, the Teachers' Association, organized at the school, regional and national levels, functioned as the de facto voice of teachers and continued efforts to legalize teachers' unionism. Independent labour unions also had local successes in breaking free

from corporatist control. Prior to 2000, eight local federations of industrial unions were recognized (Ho 2006a).

In some instances the KMT government adopted social movement demands into its policy in an attempt to boost its pro-reform image. This phenomenon was particularly visible in the lead-up to 1996 because it was in that year that Lee Teng-hui had to battle in the unprecedented presidential election by popular vote. In the wake of a successful demonstration for education reform in April 1994, the government quickly responded by setting up a Deliberative Committee on Education Reform (教育改革諮詢委員會, *Jiaoyu gaige zixun weiyuanhui*) (Xue 1995). Two years later, the final official report incorporated the humanistic values that had been championed by the activists. Roughly at the same time, the government promoted the “integrated community building” (社區總體營造, *She qu zongti ying zao*) project by directly sponsoring the community movement organizations that had mushroomed since the early 1990s. The resources from the central government enabled the community movement to play a more prominent role in local society and to challenge the hitherto existing monopoly of clientelistic politicians (Lu 2002).

While social movements were gaining political influence in this period, some activists turned their attention to their professional areas. In the mid-1980s liberal-minded professionals had appeared to be the altruistic champions of the underprivileged and their participation had facilitated the advent of social movements in Taiwan; now a new generation of ex-student activists began their working careers and spread the reform commitment into different arenas. The Association for Taiwan Journalists (台灣新聞記者協會, *Taiwan xinwen jizhe xiehui*) (1995), the Judicial Reform Foundation (民間司法改革基金會, *Minjian sifa gaige jijinhui*) (1997), the Taiwan Health Care Reform Foundation (台灣醫療改革基金會, *Taiwan yiliao gaige jijinhui*) (1999), and the Taiwan Media Watch Foundation (台灣媒體觀察教育基金會, *Taiwan meiti guancha jiaoyu jijinhui*) (1999) were representatives of these reform efforts. The pursuit of journalistic autonomy, judicial independence, better protection of patients’ rights, and media democracy was best described as “unobtrusive mobilization” (Katzenstein 1990) in that it rarely captured the national spotlight by mobilizing large-scale crowds in street actions. Nevertheless, it reflected the spillover effects of the institutionalized social movements that were growing to encompass more issues in everyday life.

Finally, in addition to this professional element, social movements representing marginalized people were a noticeable phenomenon in the

1990s. In this period gay and lesbian people came out of the closet and demanded their civil liberties (Chao 2001). Their activism culminated in the first gay parade in September 2000. Although the DPP was then still perceived as more friendly to social movements, the Taipei City government under Chen Shui-bian triggered two sustained and high-profile protests. Urban squatters who were facing eviction launched a protest movement in 1996/97. In 1997 the abrupt decision to revoke the licences of legal prostitutes gave rise to activism among sex workers, who demanded the full legalization of their trade.

Incorporation (2000-2007)

During Chen Shui-bian's presidential campaign in 2000, many pro-reform scholars and movement activists were recruited to formulate the policy proposals that were to be implemented once the DPP conquered the presidency. Although not many people actually expected Chen to succeed in the historical three-way race beforehand, his victory certainly raised hopes among social movement activists that they could become political insiders and thus realize their agendas. It turned out that some social movement organizations were included in the decision-making process, yet they were largely unable to produce structural changes. The DPP's eight-year term became a memory of disenchantment for those once-optimistic activists.

Under the DPP government, veteran activists were for the first time appointed to lead official agencies including the Environmental Protection Administration (環境保護署, *Huanjing baohushu*), the Ministry of Education (教育部, *Jiaoyubu*), the Council of Indigenous People (原住民委員會, *Yuan zhumín weiyuanhui*) and the National Youth Commission (青年輔導委員會, *Qingnian fudao weiyuanhui*). Less visibly but no less significantly, many younger activists obtained the opportunity to work as aides or assistants in the administrative echelon.

The procedural incorporation of social movements began in the mid-1990s, but the post-2000 evolution further consolidated this trend. New decision-making institutions created by the DPP government, such as the Council for Hakka Affairs (客家事務委員會, *Kejia shiwu weiyuanhui*), the National Human Rights Commission (國家人權委員會, *Guojia renlei weiyuanhui*), and the Committee for a Nuclear-free Homeland (非核家園宣導委員會, *Feihe jiyuan xuandao weiyuanhui*), broadened the scope of participation. The official recognition of the Taiwan Confederation of

Trade Unions (全國產業總工會, *Quanguo chanye zonggonghui*) in 2000 was an important landmark in that it not only removed the monopolistic privilege enjoyed by the unrepresentative China Federation of Labour, but also opened up many labour administration organs to independent unionists. Among the pre-existing channels, the DPP government also made possible the nomination of bona-fide movement activists. This happened in the Environmental Impact Assessment Committee (環境影響評估委員會, *Huanjing yingxiang pinggu weiyuanhui*), the Committee on Women's Rights Promotion, and the National Council for Sustainable Development (國家永續發展委員會, *Guojia yong xu fazhan weiyuanhui*).

Furthermore, there was an attempt to experiment with novel forms of decision-making in the interest of improving the quality of existing democracy. Under official auspices, 16 citizen conferences regarding national health care, surrogate motherhood, and so on took place between 2001 and 2006 (Chen and Lin 2008: 294-295). The principle of co-management with aboriginal people was introduced for the first time in the planning of the National Maqaw Park (馬告國家公園, *Magao guojia gongyuan*) (2001-2003) (Lin 2010).

Wong's (2003: 236) observation that "progressive politics, or what others call new politics, bec[a]me part of the mainstream political agenda" succinctly captured the growing incorporation during Chen's first term (2000-2004). In this period the increasing involvement of movement activists also brought about some legislative successes. The Protection for Workers Incurring Occupational Accidents Act (職業災害勞工保護法, *Zhiye zaihai laogong baohufa*) (2001), the Gender Equality in Employment Act (兩性就業平等法, *Liang xing juyue pingdengfa*) (2002), the Employment Insurance Act (就業保險法, *Jiuye baoxianfa*) (2002), and the Protective Act for Mass Redundancy of Employees (大量解僱勞工保護法, *Daliang jiegu laogong baohufa*) (2003) were the labour movement's concrete achievements. In 2002 environmentalists succeeded in passing the Basic Environment Act (環境基本法, *Huanjing jibenfa*), which enshrined the nuclear-free homeland clause.

That social movements scored some successes in the law-making arena did not mean they were able to leverage structural changes. The gains that movement activists achieved through their cooperation with DPP incumbents were often symbolic in nature, rather than genuine concessions that led to the substantial redistribution of resources and power. For instance, only after the DPP decided to give up the attempt to abolish the controversial fourth nuclear power plant in 2001 did it

allow the phrase “nuclear-free homeland” to be written into law (Ho 2005). Similarly, although the labour movement secured the passage of many desired laws, it was unable to dissuade the DPP government from continuing with its privatization policy, which was highly unpopular among the workers at state-owned enterprises (Ho 2006b: 137).

What was particularly frustrating for movement activists was the fact that their participation in no way stopped the DPP government from drifting towards social conservatism. Facing a rather severe economic downturn, Chen claimed that the need to “salvage the economy” (拼經濟, *pīn jīngjì*) was his top priority in 2001. With this policy reorientation, the DPP government effectively shelved its reform promises. Although Chen had pledged an ambitious expansion of welfare during his campaign, he later claimed that economic growth should take precedence over welfare redistribution. Existing environmental regulations were publicly criticized as being a disincentive to business investment, and some “relaxation” measures were introduced. What economic observers praised as the DPP’s wise decision to re-embrace the “growth-within-stability” (穩定中求發展, *wēndìng zhōng qiú fāzhǎn*) orientation constituted nothing less than a “betrayal” for movement activists (Thorbecke and Wan 2007: 69). In accordance with this conservative shift, the DPP no longer highlighted its reform commitment in Chen’s 2004 election; instead, it relied heavily on the Taiwanese identity to mobilize voters.

As a consequence of this procedural incorporation, the conflict between social movements and the government was no longer staged in the street but rather internal to the decision-making institutions. The DPP elites might have intended to co-opt social movements, either to neutralize opposition to the party or to embellish its social image; nonetheless, what appeared before the public was a nastier fight. Activists serving on the National Human Rights Commission threatened to resign in protest twice in 2005/06. The triggering events were the government’s attempt to make compulsory fingerprinting a precondition for receiving the new identity card and another proposal to introduce a “cooling period” before abortion. The activists ultimately prevailed in both incidents. However, the environmentalists who sat on the Environmental Impact Assessment Committee were not successful in similar efforts. Their walk-out failed to reverse the official endorsement of some controversial construction projects.

In Chen’s second term, financial scandals related to his personal aides and family members erupted. In July 2006 a group of liberal schol-

ars and intellectuals staged a signature campaign calling for Chen's voluntary resignation. In October, several rounds of large-scale mass demonstrations by Pan-Blue supporters virtually paralysed the government. By that time, the DPP government had been severely besieged, with both progressives and conservatives demanding Chen's resignation. The final two years of the party's term saw a slight return to the reformist policy orientation, as evidenced by the Big Warmth plan to increase welfare spending (2006); the decision to temporarily halt the Taipei Mass Rapid Transition work, which threatened the Lesheng Sanitarium (樂生療養院, *Lesheng liaoliangyuan*) (2007); the increase in the minimum wage by 9.1 per cent (2007); and the rejection of the Suao-Hualian Highway project (蘇花高, *Su Hua gao*) (2008). During the 2008 presidential campaign the DPP also stressed its commitment to social justice by emphasizing the priority of "the underprivileged people" and the eco-environment. Its candidate Frank Hsieh (Xie Changting) coined the slogan "happiness economy" (幸福經濟, *xingfu jingji*) – an explicit critique of the previous "salvage economy" course. Nevertheless, this belated shift was too mild to win endorsement from movement activists.

Resurgence (2008-2010)

When Ma Ying-jeou won the presidential election by a larger-than-expected margin of more than two million votes in March 2008, the KMT already possessed nearly three-quarters of the seats in the Legislative Yuan (Fell 2010: 190). The conservative hegemony boded dimly for movement activists. Furthermore, after several years of working within the government, many social movement organizations had lost the capacity to mobilize their mass constituencies. Large-scale demonstrations by union members, anti-nuclear crowds and the pro-education-reform middle class had become a distant memory of the 1990s. This raised the question of whether social movements were capable of "getting restarted" (Hsiao and Ku 2010).

More than two years after the second change in the ruling party, the question can be answered affirmatively. In November 2008 the student movement made an unexpected comeback to protest the police brutality that had occurred when the Ma government received China's emissary. Self-consciously following the precedent of 18 years ago, the student activists called their movement "Wild Strawberry" (野草莓, *Ye caomei*), and their protests were no longer limited to Taipei but spread into Xin-

zhu, Taizhong, Jiayi, Tainan and Gaoxiong. In September 2009 the intensive community canvassing by environmentalist activists bore fruit as they won the referendum on a casino in Penghu County. The liberalization of the casino industry had been promoted by local KMT politicians and endorsed by Ma, and the casino's defeat signified the fact that movement activists had not lost their know-how in connecting with the grass roots. After a long silence, the farmers' movement reappeared, and this time the issue was compulsory land acquisition to develop industrial zones. In June 2010 an amateur journalist videotaped the shocking image of a rice paddy being destroyed by excavators sent by the government. The video clip created a national sensation and galvanized the supporters into a much-publicized protest. In addition, furloughed workers, victims of the 2009 Morakot (莫拉克, *Mo la ke*) typhoon, consumers worried about contaminated American beef, and supporters of the Public Television Service became the new faces of social movements.

Sensing a growing political market, the DPP re-established its Department of Social Movements in February 2009. However, the involvement of DPP politicians remained minimal and was not always welcomed on the protest occasion. True, the DPP organized several large-scale protests on the issues of the People's Republic of China (PRC) emissary and economic integration with China. The opposition party did not offer resources to the re-emerging social movements – quite a different scenario compared to what had happened two decades previously. What, then, explained the unanticipated surge of social movements?

The question can be answered in two ways. Firstly, why did social movements react with such resilience and combativeness after the eight traumatic years under DPP rule? Although Ma Ying-jeou de-emphasized the ideological question during his campaign, his government quickly put forward many regressive policies that alarmed social movement supporters. The new KMT government condoned the business practice of furlough to save on labour costs, attempted to increase military officers on campus, tightened partisan control over the public media, used the judicial system to incriminate political opponents, restored a China-centred history curriculum, and intimidated critics who questioned its environmental policy (the Environmental Protection Administration gave me a phone call to express its concern over an op-ed article I wrote), to mention a few. In other words, while movement activists were disillusioned by the DPP's failure to promote progressive reforms, they simply could

not tolerate the reactionary attempt to restore the status quo ante. The threat – or “the cost it [a social group] expects to suffer if it does not take action” (Goldstone and Tilly 2001: 183) – prompted the activists to undertake aggressive actions.

Secondly, how did the resurgence of social movements come about? Even though committed activists might have the necessary intention to mobilize, movements could not be resuscitated without an effective mobilizing strategy. In the later years of the DPP government, many activists learned that they should look beyond the government as the only leverage for change and started to explore new avenues. After their 2006 resignations from official positions in environmental impact assessment, environmentalists launched a lawsuit in the Administrative Court to continue their opposition to the questionable Central Science Park (中部科學園區, *Zhongbu kexue yuangu*) project. In January 2010 their persistence was rewarded in that the Supreme Administrative Court annulled the environmental impact assessment’s conclusion. In addition, environmentalists adopted a new approach in their campaign to oppose the Guoguang Petrochemical Project (國光石化, *Guoguang shibua*). By highlighting the endangered white dolphin, they launched a drive to solicit donations in order to buy the precious tidal estuary in central Taiwan. By August 2010 more than 50,000 volunteers had signed up. The apparent success of this campaign resulted in a national spotlight on this issue, as the mainstream media and leading academics publicly expressed their support for the environmentalist camp.

While it is still too early to provide a definitive assessment of the new KMT government, social movements have clearly come back and reclaimed their customary role as advocates and organizers. Nevertheless, how much this wave of activism resurgence will ultimately achieve hinges on the evolution of the broader political context, in which social movements certainly play a significant, albeit seldom dominant, role.

Conclusion

This brief historical survey is intended to introduce the 30-year development of social movements for international readers. Just like the economic and political dimensions of modernization in Taiwan, the growth of this particular civil-society force has occurred within a relatively short period of time. In the early 1980s social movements were still a novel phenomenon that produced fear and a sense of uncertainty among many

people. There seemed to be limited public vocabulary to describe this phenomenon, and hence the awkward term “self-relief” emerged as ersatz. Now social movements have become an established and permanent feature of Taiwan’s democracy, regardless of who presides over the Presidential House. Over the long haul, social movements have experienced repression, co-optation, and disillusionment; yet they continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience in their pursuit of social reforms.

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