

TAIWAN AS UTOPIA?  
MAINLAND CHINESE PERCEPTIONS  
OF TAIWAN'S POSTWAR TRANSFORMATION  
IN THE HISTORY MONTHLY *YANHUANG CHUNQIU*

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“China has not yet entered into a reform stage that puts political reform at the top of the agenda. When exactly this stage will be reached will depend on further societal and economic developments, but it will most certainly come.”  
— Zheng Yongnian 鄭永年 2011, 13 (my transl.)

Introduction<sup>1</sup>

China's development model has increasingly been seen in a more critical light. Social pressures, which began even before an unprecedented economic slowdown exposed structural flaws in the Chinese party-state's institutions during 2015, have been mounting at an “alarming rate”.<sup>2</sup> Among the most blatant symptoms of rising institutional tension were problems establishing the rule of law within the context of a socialist party state, the protracted fight against official corruption initiated by Xi Jinping's new administration in 2012, and the build-up of a bubble economy in the stock and real estate markets.<sup>3</sup> Outwardly, the heavy clouds of air pollution have loomed large over China's metropolises. This sight, combined with public worries over food safety, has made the Chinese growth model's systemic problems increasingly tangible to the average Chinese citizen.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Ni Shaofeng for his comments on my translations from the Chinese; to my students, who studied various *Yanhuang chunqiu* articles on topics other than Taiwan during coursework, and commented on them; and to Christopher Reid for copyediting this article.
  - 2 Cf. the data given and discussed in Göbel and Ong 2012, 8.
  - 3 Senior Chinese officials readily acknowledge these issues. On the problem of establishing sustainable modes of production in China, see a recent interview with the Chinese ambassador to Germany Shi Mingde as quoted in Marschall 2013.
  - 4 Cf. the discussion of this “China model” (*Zhongguo moshi* 中国模式) and its implications in Fewsmith 2011.

In the context of partly growth-induced and partly institutional challenges, some reform-minded mainland Chinese intellectuals have begun to study Taiwan's postwar transformation experience in more detail. This is not unexpected, given that a) Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT) was originally a sister party of China's Communist Party (CCP); b) that Taiwan, like fellow "tiger state" Singapore,<sup>5</sup> belongs to the Chinese cultural sphere; and c) that the eventual reintegration of Taiwan is deemed one of only three so-called "core interests" (*hexin liyi* 核心利益) that are consistently named in official Mainland Chinese discussions of the nation's grand strategy.<sup>6</sup>

According to Gilley, however, the official Chinese discourse unsurprisingly maintains that "a repeat of Taiwan's democratic transition, like all democratic transitions, is to be avoided." Likewise, Chiang Ching-kuo's "initiation of democratic reforms, like Gorbachev's, is represented as a serious violation of Leninist organizational principles" in mainstream political writings.<sup>7</sup> Another tenet put forward regarding Taiwan's democratic transition is the notion that it was "the result of nefarious 'independence' forces in Taiwan or of Cold War strategists in Washington" rather than a combined achievement of Taiwan's societal forces and political leadership.<sup>8</sup> Whether these official interpretations are credible to mainland Chinese observers is another matter. According to Gilley, the "official rhetoric [...] is not expressed with much conviction by any scholar in China."<sup>9</sup>

In light of the official line regarding the causes of Taiwan's transformation, it is quite remarkable that Chinese reformers in recent years have begun a serious discussion about Taiwan's transformation. They have done this not only in internal publications, but by starting what can be termed a "counter-discourse", in which select issues of Taiwan's postwar transformation, including its democratization, are debated in a few outspoken public media organs.

In order to illustrate this trend, this paper presents a cursory analysis of Taiwan-related articles that were published in the Beijing-based history monthly *Yanhuang Chunqiu* 炎黄春秋, one of China's most outspoken media organs until Chinese authorities in July 2016 dismissed its entire editorial board and took over operations of the magazine,<sup>10</sup> during the past thirteen years. As will be shown, a wide variety of mainland Chinese experts, scholars, functionaries and journalists from various educational backgrounds

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5 Chinese leaders, starting with Deng Xiaoping, have been highly interested in Singapore's development experience. Deng stressed the importance of learning from Singapore's authoritarian system during his famous "Southern Tour" (*nansun* 南巡) talks in 1992 (Zheng 2011, 288).

6 Rigger 2014, 36. For a thorough discussion of China's "core interests", see Swaine 2011, 8.

7 Gilley 2008, 239.

8 Gilley 2008, 240.

9 Gilley 2008, 239.

10 Cf. Choi 2016 and Jun 2016.

and age groups seem to have taken an interest specifically in those aspects specifically relating to how a structurally Leninist<sup>11</sup> party state was able to bring about fundamental democratic and economic change. Specifically, the contributors explore how such a state could first successfully manage a state-guided economic development strategy often described as an economic miracle, then engineer an inner-party democratization process, before finally allowing a peaceful democratic transition to take place by reducing oppression of opposition forces. Remarkably, the formerly autocratic state party, the KMT, not only presided over this whole process, but preserved its chance to rule by winning democratic elections.

A transition to democracy without major disruption or violent conflict that did *not* immediately result in the former state party's loss of power is indeed an historical anomaly. From the point of view of China's CCP, the extraordinary adaptability of the quasi-Leninist KMT to changing external circumstances has no doubt been an interesting point of reference, not least due to a shared political history.<sup>12</sup> The question, however, remains: What aspects of the process have received the most attention from mainland-based observers, and how are they related to mainland China's current political situation?

## 1 Taiwan's Post-War Transformation from the Point of View of Mainland Chinese Reformers

Notwithstanding its precarious international status and worrisome economic dependence on the Chinese mainland, Taiwan has long been regarded by a clear majority of observers as a model case of successful economic development and democratic transition. Recently, the London-based weekly *The Economist* described Taiwan as a former dictatorship that “has budded amazingly into a mature democracy, a country with stable institutions and impressive prosperity, ranking 33rd in the world by income per person, richer than Portugal or Greece.”<sup>13</sup>

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11 Though primarily found in Communist organizations, “Leninism”, in contrast to “Marxism-Leninism”, denotes a set of organizational principles rather than a particular political ideology. These principles can be employed by various types of organizations (from revolutionary movements over secret societies to state parties) to enhance effectiveness and control regardless of the ideology adhered to by that organization. This made it possible for the non-Communist Kuomintang to nevertheless undergo a Leninist restructuring several times. Leninism's central tenets, termed “democratic centralism”, were first laid down by Lenin in his 1902 pamphlet *What Is To Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement*.

12 For a discussion of the notion of the KMT as a “quasi-Leninist” party, see Dickson 1997, 3; Chao and Myers 1998, chs. 1 and 2; Schubert 1994, ch. 1; or the summary provided in Kirchner 2004, 90–102.

13 “Taiwan's Remarkable Election” 2016, 8.

This view seems to aptly summarize predominant Western evaluations of Taiwan's transition. They are supported by numerous comparative indices that measure e.g. the state of democratization, economic freedom, human development, press freedom, gender equality, and other milestones of successful socioeconomic and political development across a wide variety of countries. Within many related indices that include a measure for Taiwan, the island regularly scores highly.<sup>14</sup> In the latest edition of the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index* (BTI), a bi-annual index specifically devoted to “developing and transition countries”, Taiwan even ranks as the most successful among all 129 countries surveyed worldwide, with a near-perfect score of 9.53 points out of 10, ahead of EU-member states Estonia and the Czech Republic.<sup>15</sup> Having by now completed several peaceful transfers of executive power through popular elections, the status of Taiwan's democracy is considered “consolidated” by most observers, despite some lingering issues.<sup>16</sup> This unlikely achievement seems to have made Taiwan an inspirational model for the Chinese cultural sphere at large, and for mainland Chinese reformers in particular.<sup>17</sup> Foreign scholars had already noted this theoretical possibility for some time.<sup>18</sup>

## 2 Discussing Taiwan's Transition in Mainland Chinese Mass Media

Not least due to a history of enmity between the two sides following an unresolved civil war, and especially in light of the unresolved national question, Taiwan remains one of the top taboo topics under the strict control of China's media censorship authorities, along with others like the Tibet question and the Tian'anmen incident.<sup>19</sup> Within the context of

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14 Cf. Fell 2012, 41, 181, 210, 227.

15 Cf. “BTI 2016: Taiwan Country Report”. The BTI is a qualitative index published by the Bertelsmann Foundation that measures progress towards the normative ideal of a fully liberalized market economy and political democracy in 129 countries. Its project homepage is <http://www.bti-project.org/en/home/>.

16 Cf. the discussions in Fell 2012 (35–41), Mattlin 2011 (13–14), and the entire analysis by Chin 2003.

17 Some observers maintain that Taiwan cannot serve as a model for mainland China due to its much smaller size. The same point could then, however, be made regarding the much smaller city-state Singapore, which has been cited by Deng Xiaoping himself as a source of inspiration. Moreover, the PRC has a long history of small-scale localized political experiments that later served as blueprints for the whole country, as in the case of the Special Economic Zones or the introduction of the Household Responsibility System in agriculture. In this context, the argument that Taiwan's size makes its experience irrelevant to China seems moot.

18 Cf. the various related chapters contained in Gilley and Diamond 2008.

19 Shirk 2007, 90.

China's Party-controlled mass media, and with censorship rules intentionally formulated vaguely in order to induce a tendency towards self-censorship in journalists and editors, publishing positive accounts of Taiwan's post-war transformation, especially its democratization, remains a problematic endeavor.<sup>20</sup> One would thus expect the strict party line regarding Taiwan to preclude overly positive evaluations of current Taiwanese politics. It would also not seem likely that the Chiang Kai-shek administration's post-War development successes could be extolled, that controversial figures such as Taiwan's publicly elected, Taiwan-born, and more or less openly pro-independence presidents Lee Teng-hui [Li Denghui] 李登輝 and Chen Shui-bian 陳水扁 could be described positively, or that Taiwan's current democratic institutions could be endorsed. Barmé notes a political trend in China since the 1980s of "wooing" Taiwan, mainly through a "re-evaluation of Chiang Kaishek and the Nationalist Party". According to him, this has led to "radical changes in popular perceptions of the past and helped clear the way to fostering a positive view of Taiwan today, and of everything the island represents: democratization, a market economy, and so on". Still, Barmé suggests, this trend also seems to have had an "unexpected and unsettling effect on the mainland".<sup>21</sup>

Soon after Barmé's analysis was published, the mid-1990s witnessed a marked setback in political reporting about Taiwan after Taiwan's president Lee Teng-hui made his controversial "private" visit to Cornell University in the USA. This resulted in Chinese attempts to intimidate Taiwanese voters with a series of live fire exercises in 1996, which brought China and the U.S. to the brink of war.<sup>22</sup> Lee's successor as president, DPP member Chen Shui-bian, further aroused Chinese anger by seeming to reject the notion of an eventual Chinese unification. Especially during the years of his presidency, mainland news media either tended to avoid the issue or to focus on more negative aspects of Taiwan's reform process such as corruption, mobster politics, legislative violence, street demonstrations, political bickering, and other failings.

It is therefore quite interesting to note that Taiwan's political affairs have nonetheless received remarkably more positive coverage in a few more progressive media organs. This could be observed even before Taiwan's new KMT president Ma Ying-jeou [Ma Yingjiu] 馬英九 ushered in a new period of rapprochement with the Chinese mainland in 2008 that culminated in the first-ever personal talks between a Chinese and a Taiwanese head of state (albeit in a "private" capacity) in late 2015.

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20 Frenkiel 2015, 24.

21 Barmé 1993, 285–286.

22 Shirk 2007, 187–190.

### 3 The History Monthly *Yanhuang Chunqiu*

Before a government-ordered crackdown directed against its editorial board in July 2016 destroyed its original editorial policy, the history monthly *Yanhuang Chunqiu* was foremost among the PRC media organs discussing sensitive political topics. According to Fewsmith, it was “perhaps the most liberal-minded periodical in contemporary China”.<sup>23</sup> *Yanhuang chunqiu* had been founded in 1991 by retired CCP functionaries, and reached a circulation of about 190,000 by mid-2015, with a large portion of approx. 150,000 magazines each month sold through subscriptions alone.<sup>24</sup> Despite being a high-profile magazine among Chinese intellectual elites, this journal had received surprisingly little scholarly attention in Western countries, with only a few fleeting remarks in the academic literature<sup>25</sup> and a few newspaper articles until its hostile takeover gave rise to more detailed news coverage.<sup>26</sup> Many of *Yanhuang chunqiu*’s older generation editors and contributors are former associates of reformist CCP leaders Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦 and Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳, whose ideas and activities have been described and researched by Merle Goldman (1991 and 1994), among others. Hu Yaobang’s untimely death in the spring of 1989 after being ousted from power two years earlier had been the immediate cause of the Tian’anmen mass protests, which subsequently led to Zhao Ziyang’s downfall. These events resulted in a nation-wide crackdown on reform-minded functionaries associated with Zhao’s and Hu’s intellectual networks and think tanks (Frenkiel 2015, 124). From 1991, some of these reform-minded intellectuals used their newly founded history magazine *Yanhuang chunqiu* as their major discussion platform to continue debating the most salient points of Hu’s and Zhao’s reform agendas – albeit under the guise of discussing

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23 Fewsmith 2007, 5. The German journalist Bernhard Bartsch (the only foreigner to attend *Yanhuang chunqiu*’s twenty-year anniversary celebration) gives an excellent overview of *Yanhuang chunqiu*’s founders, the magazine’s program, and its level of influence in a 2013 German-language magazine article. This piece remains one of the best descriptions of the magazine in the West.

24 Numbers reported in Erling 2015.

25 Apart from Fewsmith’s short discussion containing quotes from *Yanhuang chunqiu* texts in his 2007 article discussed below, Goldenstein (2011, 61–63) fleetingly mentions *Yanhuang chunqiu* in connection with outspoken media organs in his PhD dissertation on internet development in China, but without discussing any of its content. Gilley (2008, 239) gives a few short excerpts from a *Yanhuang chunqiu* article on Taiwan, but without discussing the journal itself. Astonishingly, in a new book about China’s contemporary debate on political reforms containing numerous interviews with, and excerpts from, the writings of Chinese reform-minded intellectuals, E. Frenkiel (2015) never seems to mention *Yanhuang chunqiu* at all, and lists none of the magazine’s numerous articles on related topics.

26 Cf. e.g. Bartsch 2013, Erling 2015, Lorenz 2009, Staas 2011.

history. Due to the editors' political clout, *Yanhuang chunqiu* was able to publish far more outspoken materials than, for instance, the much better known weekly newspaper *Nanfang zhoumo* 南方周末 (Southern Weekend), often named as one of the most liberal and outspoken news organs in China. *Yanhuang chunqiu* has on occasion even printed articles that *Nanfang zhoumo* or other liberal news media were forced to retract due to censoring, illustrating *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s special role in the Chinese media system at the time.<sup>27</sup>

Paradoxically, it is a privately run and privately funded publication organ founded by retired high-level CCP cadres who were in some cases originally functionaries in leading state news media and censorship organs. Over the years, the magazine *Yanhuang chunqiu* has enjoyed the protection of a few high-ranking veteran leaders, including such notable figures as Mao's erstwhile personal assistant Li Rui 李锐 (\*1917) who until July 2016 was listed as an "advisor" 顾问 of the magazine's editorial board. Li has meanwhile become one of China's foremost proponents of press freedom. Another *Yanhuang chunqiu* supporter was the late Xi Zhongxun 习仲勋, the current state president Xi Jinping's father.<sup>28</sup> The protection of a few other similarly influential party elders has allowed the editors to cover a wide variety of taboo topics. Judging from the topics discussed extensively on its pages over an extended time, *Yanhuang chunqiu* consequently seems to have become a nexus of humanism and liberalism among China's non-dissident intellectual elite. Moreover, it appears to have served as a platform for those forces within the CCP and China's intellectual circles who still sympathize with Hu's and Zhao's original reform agendas. Judging from its published content prior to the recent takeover, it indeed seems to have been China's most outspoken public platform for critical political thinking.

Key figures on *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s editorial board included former Xinhua journalist Yang Jisheng 杨继绳 (\*1940), the author of a monumental study on the hunger catastrophe<sup>29</sup> of China's Great Leap Forward. In the spring of 2015, Yang was finally forced to leave his post as deputy editor-in-chief of *Yanhuang chunqiu*.<sup>30</sup> The magazine's founding

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27 The association of *Yanhuang chunqiu* with the reformist networks of the 1980s is also shown by the fact that Hu Yaobang's son Hu Dehua 胡德华 became part of *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s advisory committee in late 2014. Moreover, the frequent obituaries of deceased reformist cadres published in *Yanhuang chunqiu* read like a "Who's Who" of the reform current within the CCP.

28 After Xi Jinping's rise to power, *Yanhuang chunqiu* drew attention to this fact by publishing in its December 2013 issue a commemorative article on Xi Zhongxun entitled "Xi Zhongxun once proposed the promulgation of a law for the protection of dissenting opinions." In its first paragraph, it mentions Xi senior's explicit support for *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s work.

29 Yang Jisheng's book *Mubei* 墓碑 (Tombstone), which puts forward detailed evidence to support his estimation of approx. 36 million unnatural deaths during the Great Leap, was published in Hong Kong in 2012. For the English translation, see Yang 2013. The book is still banned in the People's Republic.

30 "Chinese Magazine Warned by Censors" 2015.

director Du Daozheng 杜导正 (\*1923) is a former head of the ministerial-level Press and Publication Administration (Xinwen chubanshu 新闻出版署, a leading state censorship organ under the State Council). He was an also an aide to Zhao Ziyang and among those who organized the publication of Zhao Ziyang's secretly recorded memoirs entitled *Prisoner of the State* (the tapes were smuggled out of his house arrest).<sup>31</sup> Du was forced into retirement in the wake of the July 2016 crackdown. The public intellectual Wu Si 吴思 (\*1957), an author of numerous books touching on questions of China's national identity, served as editor-in-chief of *Yanhuang chunqiu* until a forced reorganization of the magazine's editorial board in 2015. In a 2011 interview with the liberal German Weekly *Die Zeit*, Wu explained *Yanhuang chunqiu's* strategy of using history as a mirror for China's present-day problems. He also explicitly mentioned Taiwan as a possible source of inspiration for mainland Chinese reformers:

There are also democratic elements [...] within the communist tradition. Why should one not start from there? Another possibility is to search for liberal traditions within the history of the Kuomintang [...]. In this regard Taiwan, which embarked on a path towards democratization in 1987, could be a model.<sup>32</sup>

Over the past two decades, *Yanhuang chunqiu* has touched on many controversial issues. Just how far the magazine has been willing to stray from the party line becomes apparent when comparing its content to a recent list of taboo topics that were mentioned in a leaked central document entitled “Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere” (“Guanyu dangqian yishixingtai lingyu qingkuang de tongbao” 关于当前意识形态领域情况的通报) in 2013. This so-called “Document No. 9” (“9 hao wenjian” 9 号文件 or “Zhongban fa [2013] 9 hao” 中办发 [2013] 9 号) cites a number of “dangerous values” that include, among others, Western-style democracy, the separation of powers, judicial independency, universal human rights, press freedom, criticisms of past errors of the Communist Party (this is termed “historical nihilism”, *lishi xuwuzhuyi* 历史虚无主义), as well as the questioning of “Reform and Opening”. The document prohibits any public discussion of these issues.<sup>33</sup> Although the authenticity of the leaked document could not be officially confirmed, the fact that the female veteran journalist Gao Yu 高瑜 (\*1944) was deemed responsible by authorities for leaking the document to foreign media and rather harshly sentenced to seven years in prison (later reduced to five) is certainly highly suggestive.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Bartsch 2013.

32 Wu Si, quoted in Staas 2011 (my translation).

33 See “Document 9: A ChinaFile translation” 2013 for an English version of the leaked document.

34 Buckley 2015.

Against the backdrop of these leaked guidelines, even a cursory review of any particular *Yanhuang Chunqiu* issue's table of contents before July 2016 invariably reveals numerous potentially contentious articles. Over the years, various *Yanhuang Chunqiu* authors have explicitly argued in favor of a number of the so-called "dangerous values". For instance, they have pushed for press freedom; commemorated unjustly ousted political figures in often highly emotional personal memoirs; demanded the factual, not only nominal, rule of law by establishing an independent judiciary; recommended a separation of party and state organs; praised "democratic socialism", i. e. the politico-economic systems developed by the Scandinavian countries, as being the ones that truly realize Marxist ideals the most strongly in the world; and, finally, pointed out that past instances of violent oppression by government organs have to be publicly addressed, redressed, and commemorated if a healthy national identity is to be developed. A great deal of oral-historical documentation can also be found in the magazine, often including photographs of primary source materials such as letters and other original records.

One controversial article that received particular attention in Chinese political circles was a piece by the former deputy president of Renmin University, Xie Tao 谢韬 (1921–2010). The eight-page opinion piece was published in *Yanhuang Chunqiu*'s February 2007 issue and entitled "The Model of Democratic Socialism and the Future of China". Describing its content and style, and quoting from Xie's article, Fewsmith writes:

Xie quotes Brezhnev as once telling his [Brezhnev's] brother, "What communism. This is all empty talk to delude the people." The Soviet leaders (is Xie suggesting those of China as well?) had "used a theory they did not believe in as the official ideology to cheat the people".<sup>35</sup>

Xie continues to muse:

I often wonder, shouldn't the Germans be better than us at understanding Marx, and shouldn't the Russians be better than us at understanding Lenin, just like we are better than foreigners at understanding Confucius? If so, then why is it that when the Germans have developed and given up Marxism due to its not being useful for practical life, and when the Russians have discarded Leninism, that we should worship these things like deities, and treat them as a banner to be hoisted?<sup>36</sup>

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35 The original text can be found in Xie 2007, 7: 前苏共总书记勃列日涅夫的侄女柳芭发表回忆录, 其中谈到, 勃列日涅夫当年曾对自己的弟弟说: "什么共产主义, 这都是哄哄老百姓听的空话。" 前苏联领导人的错误不在于放弃共产主义目标——一旦发现这是不能实现的空想自然应该放弃——而在于拿自己不再相信的理论继续作为官方意识形态欺骗人民。Quote with translated passages by Fewsmith 2007, 6.

36 Xie 2007, 7: 我常常想, 德国人是不是应该比我们更懂得马克思, 俄国人是不是应该比我们更懂得列宁, 就像我们比外国人更懂得孔夫子一样。为什么德国人扬弃了的

These are controversial remarks indeed. According to Fewsmith, this single article triggered at least “four large academic symposiums” in China that “were held to discuss the ideas put forward in his article.”<sup>37</sup> Not every *Yanhuang chunqiu* article is this blatantly outspoken. Sometimes, the intended meaning must be read between the lines and is only apparent to an informed reader who has enough background knowledge of the topic to note any deviations from the official line, or from the official language normally used to present it.

The publication strategies the magazine has consistently employed to counter censorship attempts, while challenging the dominant political discourse, have so far included the following methods: a) the explicit mentioning of facts that are normally left unsaid; b) the deliberate leaving out of facts that are otherwise always mentioned; c) the description of facts and historical processes in otherwise different ways than usual, thus drawing attention to these small deviations; d) the putting of a “x” in the place of the name of a person who has been “erased” from the public record in other instances, instead of leaving the person out altogether as is usually done, thereby drawing attention to the act of censorship itself; and, finally, e) pointing to foreign (or historic) examples for reflecting upon present-day China, thus using the foreign (or the historic) as a mirror.<sup>38</sup>

Unsurprisingly perhaps given the harsher media climate since Xi Jinping’s ascension to power, *Yanhuang chunqiu*’s editorial board ran into even graver political problems than were the norm by the spring of 2015. According to an unnamed source, the editors of *Yanhuang chunqiu* were informed in April 2015 by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT) that “37 articles it has published since the beginning of the year are in breach of political guidelines” and that the magazine’s business license might be revoked. Yang Jisheng was subsequently pressured to retire after being visited at his home by a number of veteran officials from his former employer, the Xinhua News Agency (which is a quasi-ministry under the State Council) and from the CCP’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the CCP’s internal security organ responsible for investigating cadres. The magazine had to cancel its annual spring conference in March 2015, and Yang Jisheng was quoted as saying that “Xinhua news agency has ordered me not to speak to foreign journalists.”<sup>39</sup> During the following

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马克思主义不适合现实生活的部分，为什么俄国人抛弃了的列宁主义，我们要当作神物供奉着？当作旗帜高举着？(my translation).

37 Fewsmith 2007, 6.

38 These observations were collected during my course work at the University of Hamburg during 2012–2016, while analyzing *Yanhuang chunqiu* articles with Western and Chinese students covering a wide variety of topics. The observations of mainland born and raised Chinese students, i. e. people who are part of *Yanhuang chunqiu*’s target audience, were particularly insightful and enlightening.

39 “Chinese Magazine Warned by Censors” 2015.

months, government pressure on the magazine's editors steadily increased, until by July 2016, rather than shutting down the magazine as originally threatened, or allowing its editors to suspend operations and close the magazine on their own as they intended, China's leadership decided in favor of a hostile takeover, ousting the original editors and replacing them with hardliners, including figures such as the well-known militarist writer, Air Force colonel Dai Xu 戴旭.<sup>40</sup>

Given the crackdown on the *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s editorial board, its previous take on Taiwan's democratization seems particularly noteworthy.

#### 4 Who Portrayed Taiwan's Transition in *Yanhuang chunqiu* prior to July 2016, and How was This Done?

Altogether, between 2001 and 2015, *Yanhuang chunqiu* published at least 35 articles on Taiwan-related topics, with an average frequency of 2.3 articles per year (see exact distribution in the table below).

Table 1: Number of Taiwan- or Chiang Ching-kuo related articles published in *Yanhuang chunqiu* per year, 2001–2015

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
4/0	4/2	2/1	1/0	3/0	2/2	–	2/2	2/1	1/0	–	3/2	5/3	5/2	1/0

Total no. of articles / no. of articles by mainland Chinese authors discussing aspects of Taiwan's transformation

The first group of articles was discovered by conducting a full-text search of the *Yanhuang chunqiu* web archive ([www.yhcqw.com](http://www.yhcqw.com)) on June 16, 2013 with the search algorithms Taiwan 台湾 and Chiang Ching-kuo 蒋经国 and by manually inspecting the following issues' tables of contents. Later, scans of the printed articles were accessed via CrossAsia. The articles were read, classified, and analyzed by searching for statements expressing personal appraisals or criticisms regarding various aspects of Taiwan's transformation experience. All the articles that appeared to be relevant to the search are listed chronologically in the following table with short comments regarding content and type.

The majority of the pieces are on historical issues unrelated to the democratization process, such as Taiwan under the Qing dynasty, during the Japanese occupation, or during the Civil War. Three further articles are biographical in nature and dedicated to certain notable people: a female writer, a communist functionary who served as an aide to Chiang Ching-kuo during the war years, and a famous scholar.

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40 Cf. e.g. Choi 2016 and Jun 2016. These developments occurred while the present article was under review. Inadvertently it now seems to have become a swan song for *Yanhuang Chunqiu*.

Table 2: Articles in *Yanhuang chunqiu* mentioning “Taiwan” and/or “Chiang Ching-kuo”, 2001–2015

No.	Issue	Title	Author	Principal Content
1.	2001:7	The Taiwanese Underground Communist Martyr Zhang Zhizhong 中共台湾地下党张志忠烈士	Wu Ketai 吴克泰 (1925–2004). Taiwan-born CCP functionary on the mainland	Article commemorating a Taiwanese communist martyr executed in 1954 during the White Terror
2.	2001:9	The Xinhai Revolution and Taiwan 辛亥革命与台湾	He Biao 何标 (*1926). Taiwan-born CCP functionary and writer	Article describing historical events of Sun Yat-sen’s Xinhai revolution from Taiwan’s perspective, emphasizing Sun’s caring attitude towards Taiwan
3.	2001:11	Yu Lihua “Frozen” During the White Terror Years on Taiwan 于梨华“冷冻”在台湾白色恐怖年代里	Gu Yuanqing 古远清 (*1941). Expert on Taiwanese literature	Article on the female overseas Chinese American writer Yu Lihua (*1932) who spent her formative years on Taiwan, describing her memories of the White Terror
4.	2001:12	Exchanges Between Experts and Scholars From Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait after Taiwan’s Return to China in 1945 台湾光复后两岸交流专家学者	Shi Xipei 史习培. Professor at Fujian Party School	Historical article detailing beneficial aspects of scholarly and technical exchanges between well-educated experts from Taiwan and their counterparts in mainland China during the years 1945–1949
5.	2002:2	The Taiwanese Technocrats Who Navigated the Economy During the Chiang Dynasty 为蒋家王朝经济领航的台湾技术官僚	Sun Daiyao 孙代尧 (*1964). Jurist	Positive evaluation of the contribution of technical experts to Taiwan’s successful modernization and later democratization
6.	2002:2	Historical Facts About Kangxi’s Re-conquest of Taiwan 史实中的康熙收复台湾	Dai Yi 戴逸 (*1926). Historian	Historical article on the details of Qing Emperor Kangxi’s conquest of Taiwan after the Ming loyalist Koxinga era
7.	2002:6	Zhou Enlai’s Final Instructions on the Taiwan Question 周恩来临终对台湾问题的批示	Ji Min 纪敏	Commemorative article with account of events in 1975, when Zhou Enlai took action to save former KMT functionaries from investigation; contains a positive reference to Chiang Ching-kuo
8.	2002:6	A Short Study of the Adjustments Made Regarding the Party-State Relationship After the Kuomintang’s Flight to Taiwan 国民党退台后党政关系调整素描	Sun Daiyao 孙代尧 (*1964). Jurist	Positive appraisal of reforms regarding the relationship between party and state organs on Taiwan after 1949
9.	2003:1	Chiang Kai-shek’s Reflections After His Flight to Taiwan 蒋介石败退台湾后的反省	Niu Zhao 牛钊 (1928–2007). CCP functionary	Historical article describing Chiang Kai-shek’s self-reflections after losing the civil war, without any mention of later events

No.	Issue	Title	Author	Principal Content
10.	2003:3	The Beginning and End of the Life of the Female Taiwanese Writer Su Xuelin 台湾女作家苏雪林生命的起点和终点	Fu Ningjun 傅宁军 (*1955). Writer	Commemorative article on a female Chinese writer who worked on Taiwan, but had been born on, and then after her death at age 104, was also interred on the mainland. She was not a leftist; therefore it is remarkable that this commemorative article is highly positive
11.	2004:6	Martyrs of the "Literary Struggle" on Taiwan During the Japanese Occupation 日据时期台湾的“文斗”志士	Zhong Zhaoyun 钟兆云 (*1969)	Historical article detailing the lives of a group of writers from Taiwan who fought against Japanese rule; there is no mention of later events, but one of them was Lien Chan's grandfather
12.	2005:1	The True History of Taiwan Under Japanese Occupation 日据台湾的真实历史	Wang Yeyang 王也扬 (*1953). Historian	Historical article on the nature of Japan's colonial rule over Taiwan, with discussion of a book by Huang Jingjia on the subject; no mention is made of current events
13.	2005:2	The Wizard of Taiwan's Scholarly World, Lü Shipeng 台湾学界奇才吕士朋	Ma Shexiang 马社香 (*1955)	Commemorative article about the mainland-born Taiwanese historian Lü Shih-peng (*1928)
14.	2005:12	Chiang Ching-kuo's Assistant, the Communist Yu Zhijun 蒋经国的共产党员秘书余致浚	Ge Xian 葛娴	Commemorative article about the Communist Ge Luo (original name Yu Zhijun) written by his niece. She presents information from unpublished writings and conversations she had with him
15.	2006:5	Chiang Ching-kuo and the Democratic Transition of the Kuomintang 蒋经国与国民党的民主化转型	Wang Yeyang 王也扬 (*1953). Historian	Positive appraisal of Chiang Ching-kuo's contribution to Taiwan's democratization
16.	2006:11	Taiwan's "Three Peasant" Questions in Our Understanding 我了解的台湾“三农”问题	Li Changping 李昌平 (*1963) / Zhou Ting 周婷 (*1970). Economists	Reporting about a research trip to Taiwan, two young economists discuss possible applications of Taiwan's land-reform experience to the mainland
17.	2008:5	Realizing the Spirit of the Two Meetings Should Start With Reforming the Propaganda System 落实两会精神应从改革宣传开始	Peng Di 彭迪 (*1920). Journalist	Within the context of a discussion about the need to establish press freedom in China, Taiwan is mentioned as a positive example in contrast to the existing propaganda situation in China, which is harshly criticized
18.	(2008:8)	A Sober Look at Taiwan 冷眼向洋看台湾	Hai Long 海龙	Marked as an "external text" (外稿) published only on the website; polemic denying any progress of democracy on Taiwan

No.	Issue	Title	Author	Principal Content
19.	2009:9	The Taiwan Land Reform as I See It 我所了解的台湾农地改革	Kuang Cuijian 匡萃坚. Marxism scholar	A quasi-academic study of Taiwan's land reform in the 1950s based on author's fieldwork in Taiwan
20.	2009:10	Unveiling Taiwan's Underground Party 揭秘台湾地下党	No author named	Historical article outlining the development of communist underground work in Taiwan during the war and afterwards
21.	2010:3	Buddhist Lay Societies and the "Hsi-lai Temple" Incident 台湾斋教与“西来庵”事件	Yang Yanhui 杨炎辉	Historical article on the "Tapani Incident" of 1915, a bloody Taiwanese uprising against Japanese rule that was brutally suppressed
22.	2012:7	Taiwan's 100-year Road to Democracy 台湾百年民主路	Hang Zhi 杭之. Taiwanese writer	Description of Taiwan's political development since the Japanese occupation by a Taiwanese writer.
23.	2012:9	Looking at Taiwan's Transformation From a Civil-rights Perspective 从平民权利角度看台湾转型	Xiao Shu 笑蜀, (pen name of Chen Min 陈敏) (*1962). Historian & Civil Rights Activist	Positive appraisal of Taiwan's "civilized" way of dealing with past crimes, divergent ideologies, and public differences of opinion based on first-hand observations from a two-month-long trip to Taiwan
24.	2012:12	The Solving of Historical Problems During Democratic Transitions 民主转型中的历史问题处理	Rong Jian 荣剑 (*1957). Independent scholar; Marxism expert	Comparative study of the democratization processes in South Korea, Taiwan, and South Africa with regard to how human rights abuses were rectified
25.	2013:2	The Political Reforms During Chiang Ching-kuo's Later Years 蒋经国晚年的政治革新	Chu Jingtao 褚静涛 (*1966). Historian	Positive appraisal of Chiang Ching-kuo's reform strategy and his personal contribution to reform; reference made to his selection of Lee Teng-hui as part of an "inevitable" Taiwanization of the KMT
26.	2013:3	Chiang Ching-kuo and Taiwan's Political Transformation 蒋经国与台湾政治转型	Wang Tiejun 王铁群 (*1960). Historian	Positive appraisal of Chiang Ching-kuo's reform strategy and his personal contribution to reform
27.	2013:5	Chen Shui-bian as a Mirror 陈水扁这面镜子	Li Honglin 李洪林 (*1925). Emigré cadre based in Hongkong, exiled since 1989	Positive appraisal of Taiwan's corruption investigation and lawful handling of the Chen Shui-bian corruption case, which resulted in a former head of state's life imprisonment
28.	2013:9	Why Chiang Ching-kuo Failed in His "Fight Against Tigers" 蒋经国“打虎”为何失败	Yang Tianshi 杨天石. scholar, CASS	Historical article concerning the anti-corruption effort by Chiang Ching-kuo during the war
29.	2013:12	The Kuomintang's Defeat and Chiang Ching-kuo's Failure in the "Fight Against Tigers" Were	Wu Zhizhang 武之璋. Historian from Taiwan	Reply of Taiwanese historian to article no. 26 by Yang Tianshi

No.	Issue	Title	Author	Principal Content
		Unrelated 国民党败局与蒋经国“打虎”失败无关		
30.	2014:3	Did Soong Mei-ling Plan to Usurp Power After Chiang Ching-kuo's Death? 蒋经国身后宋美龄是否准备夺权	Wu Zhizhang 武之璋. Historian from Taiwan	Historical article by a Taiwanese historian on the power struggle after Chiang Ching-kuo's death
31.	2014:6	Chiang Ching-kuo's Decision-making Process When Dealing with the "Formosa Incident" 蒋经国处理“美丽岛事件”的决策过程	Fu Guoyong 傅国涌 (*1961). Writer	Positive appraisal of Chiang Ching-kuo's comparatively lenient reaction (in the view of the author) to the Formosa Incident
32.	2014:7	Aspects of Taiwan's Culture 文化台湾拾零	Xiong Jingming 熊景明. Mainland-born writer, resides in Hong Kong	Positive appraisal of Taiwan's vibrant culture and civil society based on a trip there in March 2014; critical remarks are made, however, on the lack of civility in Taiwan's political process
33.	2014:9	Chiang Kai-shek and the Sovereignty Dispute over the Diaoyu Islands 蒋介石与钓鱼岛主权争议	Yang Tianshi 杨天石. scholar, CASS	Historical article on the Diaoyu / Senkaku islands issue
34.	2014:11	The Founding and the Discontinuation of Taiwan's "Free China" Magazine 台湾《自由中国》的创办和停刊	Wu Zhizhang 武之璋. Historian from Taiwan	Article by a Taiwanese historian about Chiang Kai-shek's policy regarding the magazine "Free China" (1949–1960)
35.	2015:7	How Taiwan Used to Censor Literary Publications 台湾当年是怎样查禁文学书刊的	Gu Yuanqing 古远清 (*1941). Expert on Taiwanese literature	Discussion of the process and effects of literary censorship during Chiang Kai-shek's reign

Note: Prepared using the combined results of search algorithms 台湾 and 蒋经国 with the search engine on the *Yanhuang Chunqiu* website, [www.yhcqw.com](http://www.yhcqw.com), as of June 19, 2013 and by manually checking all further issues. Author data assembled with information from *Baike baidu* <http://baike.baidu.com>.

Especially after 2006, the increasing frequency of appraisals or analyses versus historical articles is quite striking. Altogether 15 articles published between 2002 and 2014 explicitly analyzed various aspects of Taiwan's political transformation. It is possible that the 2006 breakthrough in cross-strait contacts, specifically when KMT chairman Lien Chan [Lian Zhan] 连战 and CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 personally met and shook hands, created opportunities for more frank discussions of Taiwan's political affairs in China, above all of the KMT and its history. Since 2006, positive writings on the KMT, and especially on its late chairman Chiang Ching-kuo, have been published with greater frequency.

## 5 The authors of Taiwan-related *Yanhuang chunqiu* articles

An interesting question concerns the authorship of the Taiwan-related content in *Yanhuang chunqiu* and the sources and experiences the authors could draw upon. One rather unexpected finding at this stage of the analysis was the relatively high number of authors (only one unnamed) from a broad range of age groups and professional backgrounds — writers, historians, CCP functionaries, law specialists and economists — who wrote about Taiwan in some shape or form. Of the thirty authors in total, most contributed only one article to the sample, while only five authors contributed two articles (three in the case of one Taiwanese guest author, Wu Zhizhang). Their birth years appear to range between 1920 and 1970, with no single age group clearly predominating. At least two authors are Taiwanese public intellectuals (the historian Wu Zhizhang and the writer Hang Zhi 杭之) and two are older Taiwan-born but mainland-based communists. At least four articles explicitly mention travel or fieldwork personally undertaken by mainland authors on Taiwan (nos. 16, 19, 23 and 32). These texts are particularly interesting because they were written by people who personally visited the island and thus gained first-hand impressions of the affairs they comment on. Often, the authors describe in detail their interactions with their Taiwanese counterparts. In one instance, an article is a reply by a Taiwanese historian to another article published previously by a mainland historian (nos. 28 and 29), effectively starting a mini-dialogue.

While the fact that Taiwanese guest authors are present in the sample is illuminating in terms of the topics they covered and the *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s publication strategy of inviting guest authors to write on sensitive issues, their articles were nonetheless excluded from the following content analysis, as they do not shed any light on mainland Chinese perceptions of the discussed issues (this concerns nos. 22, 29, 30, 34). Within the sample of articles selected for further investigation, it is notable that mainland Chinese observers rarely simultaneously addressed multiple aspects of Taiwan's transformation experience. The articles typically concentrated on only a single factor or on a small group of related factors.

Another, rather surprising, observation concerns the nature of the mainland Chinese authors' evaluations. Nearly every aspect of Taiwan's transformation discussed or mentioned in their articles was evaluated positively. Only a single recent article (no. 32) from mid-2014 expresses some doubts regarding the lack of civility in Taiwan's political sphere in the wake of the "Sunflower Movement," which the author personally witnessed in Taiwan.<sup>41</sup> In order to fully appreciate how unusual these overwhelmingly positive evaluations are, it is useful to consider the only text included in the sample that was *not* printed in the paper edition of *Yanhuang chunqiu*, but was rather published on *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s website as an "external commentary on the web edition" (*wangkan waigao* 网刊外

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41 Xiong 2014, 86.

稿) in the August 2008 online edition. This suggests that political pressure was placed on the editorial board to publish this particular piece, while also implying the editors' desire to distance themselves from it. This article, entitled "A Sober Look at Taiwan" (no. 18), is a polemic penned by a certain Hai Long 海龙.<sup>42</sup> It reads like a chapter from the 1996 bestseller *China Can Say No*,<sup>43</sup> arguing that Taiwan's "pseudo-democracy"<sup>44</sup> is in such a horrible state that its only hope is to find salvation by seeking quick unification with mainland China and returning to the embrace of the motherland. With its emotional tone, created in large part through the frequent use of colorful but imprecise *chengyu*, alongside other literary and rhetoric devices, the style and content of this article stands in marked contrast to the almost scholarly treatments otherwise published by *Yanhuang chunqiu* before July 2016. These pieces are usually clearly formulated and comprehensive; they are also occasionally verbose and heavily annotated. Hai Long's text is nevertheless a good example of what might be considered politically "mainstream" writing on Taiwan's democratization in China – and perhaps, it is a harbinger of what may be expected from a government-installed magazine leadership under the helm of hardliner Dai Xu.

## 6 Analyses of Select Text Examples

Overall, the mainland Chinese writers in the sample seem especially interested in questions of political leadership and practical transformation management; the political performance of the KMT; and, lastly, modern Taiwan's attempts to learn from historical mistakes and to commemorate historical crimes. Their comments on these matters seem to offer insight into their perception of mainland China's ongoing reform debates on these issues, and also represent an interesting counterpoint to current cross-strait intellectual exchanges.

The following section will take a closer look at a few select articles with regard to the following aspects of Taiwan's post-war transition: the land reform of the early 1950s; the functioning of party and state organs within Taiwan's brand of Leninist organization; the transformation management exercised by Taiwan's last autocrat, Chiang Ching-kuo; the way of dealing with past human rights abuses; press freedom; and the fight against high-level corruption.

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42 A mainland Chinese interlocutor I met at a conference, who claimed to be personally acquainted with the Hai Long in question, informed me that the author was ordered by a superior at Renmin University to write this particular article. This supports the conclusion that the *Yanhuang chunqiu* editors were pressured into publishing his piece. I have so far been unable to verify the information regarding Hai Long's motivation for writing the article.

43 Song Qiang 宋强 et al. 1996, *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* 中国可一说不, Beijing.

44 The actual expression used here is *doufuzha side minzhu* 豆腐渣似的民主, which can approximately be translated as "shabbily-built democracy".

## 6.1 Discussing Taiwan's Post-War Land Reform

The success of Taiwan's post-war land reform during the years 1949–1953 has often been credited by political scientists as having laid the foundation for Taiwan's later economic miracle, and for its relatively equal income distribution in the following decades.<sup>45</sup> The question of fairness in farmland distribution has carried enormous political weight in Chinese history in general, but especially during the 20th century. Mainland China first witnessed a communist-led land reform after 1949. Then, during the 1950s, there was a collectivization of the previously distributed farmland into large "People's Communes" that effectively reversed that reform and, in combination with other questionable strategies, ultimately resulted in a monstrous famine during the Great Leap years. Finally, since the late 1970s, and beginning locally in poor backward areas, individual farming within the framework of the "Household Responsibility System" has been practiced, eventually becoming national policy. In recent years, numerous reports of the illegal expropriation and sale of arable land rights by local authorities to real estate investors have at times caused violent protests in the countryside. The village of Wukan incident in Guangdong Province during 2011/2012 is the most notorious example so far. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that mainland Chinese experts seem especially interested in studying Taiwan's relatively successful and sustainable post-war land reform strategy.

One article on this topic, published in the November 2006 issue by the economists Li Changping 李昌平 (\*1963) and Zhou Ting 周婷 (\*1970), is notable for its analytic style (no. 16). Their analysis summarizes the findings of a short research trip they conducted on Taiwan to study Taiwan's post-war land reform. Overall, the authors seem to have been left with a positive impression of the island's state of development. The introductory passage thus reads:

We are grateful to Mr. Chen Desheng 陈德升 of Taiwan National Chengchi University, whose kind invitation enabled us to spend ten days experiencing Taiwan in a fleeting manner. Taiwan has beautiful scenery and a substantial and vibrant society; these were the strongest impressions we were left with. But we didn't have any free time to gain a deeper understanding of these things. We had to concentrate our interest fully on Taiwan's "agricultural economy, rural villages, and peasant population" questions.<sup>46</sup>

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45 Schubert (1994, 75–78) gives detailed data on the development of Taiwan's land reform and its consequences. According to Mattlin (2011, 36, 69 fn. 19), who discusses various scholarly opinions of Taiwan's land reform, the overall consensus is that it was a political success.

46 Li and Zhou 2006, 58: 感谢台湾国立政治大学陈德升先生的邀请, 让我们有机会花 10 天的时间, 走马观花式的浏览台湾。台湾是一座宁静的森林公园, 台湾有一个务实而活力的民间社会, 这给我留下特别的印象, 但无暇去做深入的了解。我们的兴趣只能集中在台湾的“农业、农村、农民”问题上。(my translation).

The long (over 10,100 Chinese characters) article merits an analysis of its own. Here, however, only a very cursory overview can be given. Outwardly, the piece has four sub-headings: 1. “The three phases of Taiwan’s agricultural economy and their meaning for the development of mainland China’s agricultural industry – an interview with Chen Xihuang 陈希煌”; 2. “A visit to the Land Reform Memorial Hall”; 3. “Visiting representatives of the Farmers’ Associations of Gongguan and Xihu villages in Miaoli county”; and 4. “The administration of Taiwan’s rural society”.

Time and again, the authors draw comparisons to China’s rural economy, and arrive at observations regarding the collective ownership of some rural properties in Taiwan, a fact they deem odd because Taiwan is supposedly “anti-communist”:

Taiwan’s rural cooperatives possess much public property. This was unknown to us before coming to Taiwan. In the language of the Chinese mainland, this kind of property would be deemed as being under “collective ownership”. We patiently asked our Taiwanese friends why these “public properties” under “collective ownership” were not sold to private owners? Our Taiwanese friends always looked at us bemusedly, but answered quite resolutely: How could they ever be sold to private owners? We do not fully understand why they all maintained so strongly that they could never be sold to private owners, and our Taiwanese friends did not fully understand why we were so interested in the question of privatization. This puzzle appears to need further research.<sup>47</sup>

In their last paragraph, the authors give a strikingly positive evaluation of the current state of Taiwan’s rural society:

Taiwan’s rural society is not a society under strong state control. The government is elected by the people and administered by the people, and the relative forces are balanced out. No matter whether it is individuals or groups of people, all of them care especially for the accumulation of social capital. Our feeling is that the competition over the accumulation of social capital is even more heated than the competition over the accumulation of economic capital.<sup>48</sup>

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47 Li and Zhou 2006, 63: 台湾农会有很多财产, 这是我来台湾之前不知道的。这些财产用大陆的话语表达, 应该叫“集体所有制”。我经常不厌其烦的追问台湾朋友, “集体所有”的这些“公产”为什么不卖给个人? 台湾的朋友总是不解的望着我, 却坚定的回答: 怎么能卖给个人呢? 我不完全知道他们为什么坚定地认为不能卖给个人, 台湾朋友也不完全知道我为什么对卖给个人感兴趣, 也许这个问题需要后续的探讨。(my translation).

48 Li and Zhou 2006, 64: 台湾农村社会, 不是政府强力控制型的社会, 政府是民选、民管的, 各种力量相对均衡。无论是个人还是组织, 都特别重视社会资本积累, 感觉积累社会资本的竞争好像比积累经济资本的竞争更加激烈。(my translation).

In sum, the article presents a detailed account of the first-hand experience of two relatively young scholars doing fieldwork. They seem above all interested in faithfully relaying their observations and conclusions about agricultural policies to a mainland audience.

In an even longer (over 14,000 characters) and thematically somewhat similar piece entitled “Taiwan’s Land Reform as I Understand It” (no. 19), Marxism scholar Kuang Cuijian 匡萃坚 likewise reports the findings of a research trip to Taiwan, presumably shortly before the article was written. His treatment of the post-war land reform is also very detailed. He further cites numerous scholarly references, giving the piece a similarly balanced and neutral impression.

From the point of view of this study, an early paragraph stands out, in which Kuang describes the positive conditions under which he was able to undertake his research in Taiwan. Kuang describes his experience visiting the China Research Institute of Land Economics and the elderly scholar Hsiao Cheng 肖铮, who is credited with being the “father of Taiwan’s land reform”:

When I went to visit him, he was already in his 85th year, but still able to head the institute. He welcomed me warmly and gave me many of his own publications as a gift. He arranged for a professor from the Chengchi University to help me find my way around the institute and do research there. On the request of the old gentleman Mr. Hsiao, his colleagues brought me two journals published by the institute, *Tudi yu ren* and *Dizheng luntan*; of the other materials that they were unable to give to me, they helped me make copies.<sup>49</sup>

It is remarkable in the context of his article that Kuang would go to such lengths to describe the way he was treated and welcomed by his hosts.

Kuang’s own views regarding the Taiwan land reform are largely in line with those of the two scholars mentioned above. According to Kuang, the main driver for this political decision – a major departure from earlier KMT policies on the mainland – was a learning process:

By this time [after losing the war], the leadership of the KMT, with the exception of just a few individuals, had generally sobered up and realized that the defeat on the mainland had not only been a military defeat, but even more so a political defeat, especially a defeat of their strategies regarding the peasants and the land.<sup>50</sup>

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49 Kuang 2009, 48: 我去拜访时, 他已 85 岁高龄, 可依然坚持到研究所上班。他热情接待了我, 送了我几本他自己撰写的大部头著作, 后又委托政治大学一位教授陪同我在所里考察。按肖老嘱咐, 研究所的同仁为我取来了所内出版的两套杂志: 《土地与人》、《地政论坛》; 有些无法提供的资料, 则帮助我在所内复印。(my translation).

50 Kuang 2009, 48: 这时, 国民党上层除个别人士外, 较为普遍地清醒了起来, 认识到在大陆的溃败不只是军事上的失败, 更是政治上的失败, 尤其是在农民政策和土地政策上的失败。(my translation).

Kuang remarks that this was significant given that the KMT on the mainland used to favor land owners, and that many among the KMT elite also belonged to this interest group or “class.”

The general thrust of Kuang’s observations is that Taiwan’s land reform was a deliberate political strategy of the post-war Chiang regime that resulted from a painful learning process, and that it was largely successful. In addition, he suggests that Taiwanese agricultural experts today are by and large friendlier and more than willing to share their knowledge and resources with mainland researchers such as Kuang himself. Reading this as an implicit criticism of the comparative opaqueness often confronting researchers in mainland China does not seem all that far-fetched.

## 6.2 Discussing the Role of Technical Experts in Post-War Taiwan

In a relatively early piece on the influence of technical experts (or “technocrats”) on Taiwan’s socioeconomic development after the war (no. 5), printed in the February 2002 issue, Peking University law scholar Sun Daiyao 孙代尧 (\*1964) analyzes the impact of the KMT’s emphasis on technical expertise, and the relative political independence granted to its cadre of economic bureaucrats. This analysis is wholly positive in its assessment of the KMT’s cadre policy. Overall, Sun concludes that the high level of expertise among economic bureaucrats in post-war Taiwan, and the high level of decision-making autonomy they enjoyed, was in large measure responsible for Taiwan’s later economic miracle. Significantly, without even specifically mentioning the PRC’s cadre system, Sun examines the rather different variant of Leninism that was practiced within the post-war KMT:

After the [Leninist] reorganization of 1952, the Kuomintang established Party departments or small political groups in all the government branches. They were all headed by the same person who headed the respective executive organ on the same hierarchical level. Thus, there existed no separate “party committee” or “secretary” leadership system outside of the respective government organ. This still meant that the party organization pervaded everything; but, what it actually did was to “lead politics through the Party”, while the Party organization became “shadow-like”; this replaced the former approach of “substituting politics with the Party”.<sup>51</sup>

This observation can easily be decoded as a criticism of China’s more complicated and potentially less efficient system of creating “double” or “shadow” hierarchies within the

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51 Sun 2002a, 78: 1952年国民党改造后,国民党在政府各部门成立机关党部或政治小组,均由各级行政主管兼任同级党务系统的主管,行政系统之外并不存在一个“党委”或“书记”的领导系统。也就是说,党组织仍无所不在,实行的是“以党领政”,但党的组织“隐形化”,改变过去的“以党代政”。(my translation).

party and government organs. Unclear lines of authority and excessive political meddling in day-to-day government affairs are thus indirectly described here as detrimental to economic development by way of extolling Taiwan's alternative approach. As Sun continues:

Following the constant professionalization of public policy, the Party organization system was gradually pushed to the sidelines of policy formulation, especially in the field of economic strategy.<sup>52</sup>

Other factors that Sun mentions regarding Taiwan's success include: 1) government support for experts based on their qualification, regardless of their party affiliation; 2) foreign expertise, in large measure gained from American advisors during the early reform phase; and, finally, 3) measures for combating corruption among functionaries through positive incentives, such as relatively high salaries, and through constraints such as independent control organs. At the end of his article, Sun summarizes the influence of cadre quality within the bureaucracy on Taiwan's later democratization:

Because they [the cadres] had received a high level of education, their field of vision was relatively wide, and so they could deal with the calls for political democratization from within civil society in a comparatively rational way, and emphasize the necessity of adopting enlightened attitudes and measures.<sup>53</sup>

Significantly, the short article contains two easy-to-overlook references to the officially much-maligned Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui. He is innocently cited as an example of a Taiwan-born technical expert who was able to ascend within the KMT's government bureaucracy (p. 78). The same author wrote another article that appeared in the June issue of the same year (no. 8), in which he makes many similar points and elaborates further on the KMT's ability to learn from its mistakes after losing the mainland.<sup>54</sup>

### 6.3 Dealing with Political Dissent and Owning up to Past Crimes

Under his pen name Xiao Shu 笑蜀,, the writer, historian and activist in the "New Citizens' Movement" 中国新公民运动 Chen Min 陈敏 (\*1962) in September 2012 published an article on the quality of Taiwan's human rights development (no. 23). Chen was listed among the monthly's so-called "core contributors" *hexin zuozhe* 核心作者. The piece contains his personal impressions from a two-month-long trip to Taiwan. Chen writes:

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52 Sun 2002a, 78: 随着公共政策的日益专业化, 党务系统逐渐被隔离在政策决策特别是经济决策之外。(my translation).

53 Sun 2002a, 79: 由于他们受过高等教育, 视野较为开阔, 比较能够理性地接受民间社会要求政治民主的呼声, 主张采取一种开明的态度和做法。(my translation).

54 Sun 2002b.

In the past we constantly talked about its [Taiwan's] democracy, rule of law, and social security, and there is nothing wrong with that. But in my personal view, there is one characteristic that is the most fundamental, the most important, and that is its equal application of human rights.<sup>55</sup>

Chen proceeds to describe his own surprise at discovering a monument in Taipei dedicated to the memory of communist martyrs of the “White Terror,” located at the former execution ground at Machangding Memorial Park. After musing that, in a capitalist society such as Taiwan's, communism was long considered the ideology of the enemy, he remarks:

How does modern Taiwan deal with heretical or even rebellious ideologies and forces? Machangding is an example of this. Machangding Park is now called “Machangding Memorial Park”; the government spends money to maintain it; and each year in autumn the city's parliament holds a solemn ceremony of mourning there. They pay their highest respect and courtesy to the departed souls of former dissidents and rebels. An inscription on a stone tablet in Machangding Memorial Park describes the communists and left-wing individuals who were executed there as “ardent and morally outstanding seekers of social fairness”. This is how they evaluate communists, dissidents and rebels. This is not just a kind of reconciliation in the usual sense; it is the highest possible recognition and acceptance. Taiwan's society would certainly not want Taiwan to adopt communism. But that Taiwan's society is nevertheless able to treat the ideals of communism with the highest degree of fairness, that is equal application of human rights.<sup>56</sup>

It should be noted here that the erection in Taiwan of this monument and others for the victims of authoritarian persecution might just as well be connected to the ongoing political divide over Taiwan's national identity as “Chinese” vs. “Taiwanese”. Therefore, in addition to Chen's evaluation of the monument as evidence of an awareness of universal human rights, it could also be seen as an act of resistance against KMT-dominated narratives of Taiwan's post-war history and identity. This aspect is later also covered at length in the same article in a thorough discussion of the traumatic 2-2-8 incident of 1947 and its immediate and underlying causes.

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55 Xiao 2012, 56: 我们过去老是讲它的民主,它的法治,它的社会保障,这都没有问题。但在我个人眼里,还有一个最根本、最高的特点,就是人权上的平等。(my translation).

56 Xiao 2012, 56: 但今天的台湾是怎么对待异端乃至反叛的思潮和力量呢? 马场町算一个例子。马场町公园现在叫做“马场町纪念公园”,是政府出钱修建的,每年秋季都会举行非常隆重的悼念活动。对过去的异端和反叛者,对他们的亡灵给予了最高的尊重和礼遇。马场町公园有一块石碑,碑文称当年被枪杀的共产党人和左翼人士为“追求社会公正的热血志士”。这是他们对共产主义者、对异端和反叛者的定位,不只是通常意义上的和解,而且是最大限度的肯定和包容。台湾社会不可能想象台湾会接受共产主义,但台湾社会对共产主义理念给予最大限度的平等待遇,这就是人权上的平等。(my translation).

Chen's article proceeds to point out various other aspects of Taiwan's present-day civil society, and even draws a few direct, and for Taiwan favorable, comparisons to conditions on the Chinese mainland. Regarding the socioeconomic conditions, Chen writes:

Due to an even distribution of wealth, Taiwan has basically eradicated the lower classes and poverty, and has thus also eradicated the possibility of a proletarian revolution.<sup>57</sup>

Then, he praises the civility and friendliness of the general Taiwanese populace, which he attributes to Taiwan's overall satisfactory societal conditions. Examples include Taiwan's affordable, yet world-class health care and the comparative ease of making a comfortable living on Taiwan, especially when contrasted with the much higher cost and effort that needs to be expended on the mainland to obtain the same standard of living. To illuminate this point, Chen cites concrete sums of money.<sup>58</sup>

He furthermore points out that even emerging political conflicts never become especially violent in Taiwan. According to Chen, such conflicts are usually limited in scale, and even in the case of street demonstrations, they do not usually lead to any major bloodshed or vandalism (p. 60). The final point mentioned in the article, and one that is especially praiseworthy in the author's view, is the public behavior of Taiwanese elites. Chen writes:

On the mainland, I have met many arrogant and overbearing people, but on Taiwan I haven't met a single such person, even though I've interacted with many members of Taiwan's political, economic and cultural elites.<sup>59</sup>

Another article by a different author, Rong Jian 荣剑 (\*1957), published in the same year (no. 24), discusses Taiwan's experience of commemorating and redressing the 2-2-8 incident within the context of a three-country comparison. He considers how South Korea, Taiwan, and South Africa have dealt with historical crimes committed by their previous authoritarian governments. In its last paragraph of the Taiwan section, Rong asserts:

The ideals of transitional justice have already deeply penetrated the minds of the Taiwanese populace, and this is an important guarantee for the success of Taiwan's political transition.<sup>60</sup>

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57 Xiao 2012, 60: 因为均富, 台湾基本上消灭了底层、穷人, 也就消灭了无产阶级革命的可能。(my translation).

58 Xiao 2012 60 (my translation).

59 Xiao 2012, 60: 我在大陆碰到无数有教主气派的人, 但在台湾没见一个, 而我在台湾遇到了很多政治精英、经济精英和文化精英, [...]。(my translation).

60 Rong 2012, 69: [...] 转型正义的理念已深入台湾人心, 这是台湾政治转型取得成功的重要保证。(my translation).

#### 6.4 Analyzing Chiang Ching-kuo's Political Leadership

One aspect that receives especially strong attention within the analyzed writings is the quality of leadership during the critical phase of Taiwan's transition. Usually the *Yanhuang chunqiu* contributors writing on this topic credit Chiang Ching-kuo's farsightedness and political leadership ability with avoiding a potentially disastrous outcome. The fact that Chiang as a young man was a card-carrying communist and used to be friends with Deng Xiaoping while in Moscow in 1926<sup>61</sup> may have added to the mainland authors' apparent fascination with this particular Taiwanese leader (something also reflected in a surge of mainland Chinese Chiang Ching-kuo biographies in recent years). Particularly Chiang's "pure," i. e. non-corrupt leadership style, both on the mainland during the civil war and after his flight to Taiwan, seems to hold attraction.

The earliest piece on Chiang Ching-kuo's political reforms found in the sample is a text by CASS historian Wang Yeyang 王也杨 (\*1953), another "core contributor" of *Yanhuang chunqiu*, that appeared in the May 2006 issue (no. 15). The text is entitled "Chiang Ching-kuo and the Democratic Transition of the Kuomintang" and it even carries a photograph (a rare occurrence on the pages of *Yanhuang chunqiu*) of Chiang delivering his famous speech in which he announced the lifting of martial law on July 15, 1987.

In his first paragraph, Wang explains his reasons for writing this article. He also seems to want to offer a political justification for picking this potentially controversial topic:

Since General Secretary Hu Jintao and Chairman Lien Chan overcame the historic rift of 60 years last spring and shook hands, a vibrant contact and dialogue between the CCP and the KMT has been established.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, Wang writes, while the older Chinese might still have some knowledge of the KMT during the war years,

[...] the current people of the mainland have almost no idea of the KMT's situation after the flight to Taiwan. If one wants to explain the historical evolution of the KMT on Taiwan, one has to speak about the weighty historical topic of Chiang Ching-kuo and the democratic transformation of the Kuomintang.<sup>63</sup>

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61 Taylor 2000, 32–33.

62 Wang 2006, 25: 自去年春天胡锦涛总书记与连战主席穿越60载历史风雨, 实现握手以来, 国共两党的交流与对话热络起来。(my translation).

63 Wang 2006, 25: [...] 但现在的大陆民众, 却几乎都不大知道国民党去台后的情状。而要叙述国民党在台湾的历史变迁, 就不能不讲蒋经国与国民党的民主化转型这个重大历史话题。(my translation).

After summarizing the historical developments on Taiwan during the authoritarian era, in the article's second section Wang offers an entirely positive appraisal of Chiang Ching-kuo's authoritarian reign after his rise to power in 1975:

Chiang Ching-kuo's working style was practical and realistic; he often mingled with the population and was extremely clear-sighted. After stepping up to power, he conducted a so-called "political rejuvenation" (*zhengzhi gexin* 政治革新), fought hard against corruption and promoted righteousness, selected new people and enhanced government efficiency; at the same time, he employed relatively soft means of alleviating societal conflicts, and clearly promoted a style of making progress towards democracy and the rule of law "one step at the time". Taiwan could thus evolve from the dictatorial "White Terror" era towards a relatively civilized and progressive authoritarian era.<sup>64</sup>

Wang repeatedly emphasizes Chiang's strong moral convictions and his hatred of corruption and nepotism. He observes, for instance, that

Chiang Ching-kuo lived a simple life, he hated corruption and demanded that his own children steer clear of big business.<sup>65</sup>

Wang then proceeds to enumerate the major Taiwanese political scandals that erupted during the 1980s, such as the Cathay financial scandal of 1985 and the political murder of Chiang's critical biographer Henry Liu, a.k.a. Jiang Nan, in the USA in 1984, a crime in which Taiwanese security functionaries were directly implicated. But rather than placing at least part of the blame for such scandals on the Chiang administration itself, Wang Yeyang points out Chiang's personal disgust for such crimes, and describes the strong measures he took to punish guilty parties, even if they happened to be close family friends.

Wang also portrays Chiang Ching-kuo as a former close friend and classmate of Deng Xiaoping's at Moscow's Sun Yat-sen University during the mid-1920s, and as an ardent Chinese patriot. Revealingly, Wang Yeyang's text also makes mention of a secret exchange of messages between Chiang and Deng Xiaoping. It allegedly took place during September and October 1985 and consisted of written messages that were relayed through an intermediary, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew. As Deng was apparently worried about Chiang's declining health, and the possible consequences his imminent death could have on Taiwan's political situation, he invited Chiang to a personal meeting. It has come

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64 Wang 2006, 25–26: 蒋经国作风务实, 常深入民间, 头脑也清醒, 他上台后推出所谓“政治革新”, 大力反腐倡廉, 任用新人, 提高行政效率; 同时对社会矛盾, 采取相对温和的解决办法, 并明确提出以“一步一步来”的渐进方式向民主与法制过渡。这样, 台湾社会开始步出专制独裁的“白色恐怖”时代, 进入到比较开明的“威权政治”时期。(my translation).

65 Wang 2006, 26: 蒋经国生活朴素, 深恶腐败, 他要求自己的[...]. (my translation).

to light only recently that while Chiang did in fact reply to Deng via Lee Kuan Yew, he did not accept Deng's invitation, because he did not trust the Communists.<sup>66</sup> Wang nevertheless notes that the messages had an effect on Chiang's attitude towards mainland China:

[...] the message of greeting from Deng Xiaoping via Lee Kuan Yew to "my classmate in Moscow" Chiang Ching-kuo had already been delivered, and the enmity between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait had already been resolved somewhat. Chiang Ching-kuo told his aides that the expression "communist bandits" (*gongfei* 共匪) should no longer be used and that calling them the "Communist Party" would be sufficient.<sup>67</sup>

According to Wang, at that time Chiang also expressed his own commitment to the ideal of eventual reunification with the mainland to his aide Lee Huan (Li Huan) 李煥, saying:

We must grasp the initiative and step on the road towards unification. Taiwan and the mainland must in the end be reunited. If the two sides don't unite, I fear that Taiwan will find it ever harder to exist independently.<sup>68</sup>

The third and last section of Wang Yeyang's article is devoted to Chiang's measures during the actual process of democratization. Wang notes the difficulty of convincing conservative forces within the KMT that political reforms were in fact necessary, even though they meant a loss of power for the entrenched "mainlander" stakeholders. He further describes how the already seriously ill and handicapped Chiang made tireless efforts to communicate his ideas to various KMT elders in personal meetings at their homes. Wang notes,

Thus Chiang used his powerful leadership to reach a breakthrough for the reforms, and at the same time succeeded in maintaining political stability.<sup>69</sup>

In light of China's own experience with political turmoil in the late 1980s, it seems understandable that Chiang's feat in eradicating systemic resistance against his political reform course, while maintaining overall stability, is especially appreciated in Wang's article. Tai-

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66 See Ezra Vogel's 2011 Deng biography for more details on the contact in 1985 (Vogel 2011, 487). On the subject of Deng's and Chiang's personal relationship while in Moscow in 1926, cf. Taylor 2000, 32–33.

67 Wang 2006, 26: 此时,邓小平透过李光耀,向“我在莫斯科的同学”蒋经国问候的信息已经传到,两岸的敌意在化解,蒋经国告诉身边人,不要再说什么“共匪”,说共产党就可以了。(my translation).

68 Cited from Wang 2006, 26: 我们必须采取主动,踏上统一之路。台湾和大陆终究必须统一。两岸若不统一,台湾恐怕将越来越难独立存在。(my translation).

69 Wang 2006, 27: 这样,蒋经国以其强有力的领导权威,推动改革取得突破并保持了政局的稳定。(my translation).

wanese appraisals of Chiang, by contrast, are much more varied, with critics often drawing attention to the grave human rights abuses committed during most of Chiang's tenure.<sup>70</sup>

After enumerating the various steps and measures that Chiang took during the critical phase of the reforms until his death in 1988, the article closes with a short eulogy and clear endorsement, underscored by a quote from Deng Xiaoping:

China's Party Central sent a telegram [to Chiang's family on Taiwan] expressing its "sincerest sorrow" at his "unfortunate passing". Later on, Taiwan's situation evolved further. Deng Xiaoping once said in a visibly moved state, "If Chiang Ching-kuo were still alive and well, China's unification would not be in such a difficult and complicated situation right now. The KMT and CCP have experienced two phases of cooperation. I do not believe that a third cooperation between the KMT and CCP would be impossible. But, alas, Ching-kuo died too early."<sup>71</sup>

These words, attributed to Deng Xiaoping himself, are the very last lines of the article.

Another article on Chiang entitled "The Political Reforms During Chiang Ching-kuo's Later Years" published in *Yanhuang chunqiu* February 2013 (no. 25) was written by historian Chu Jingtao 褚静涛 (\*1966). It begins by enumerating the main influences that purportedly shaped Chiang Ching-kuo's political thinking:

Beginning in his youth, Chiang Ching-kuo received a traditional Chinese education in Confucian thought. He had a disposition to help people in need. While he was still young, he went to the Soviet Union to study and work, turned to Communism, publicly criticized the Chiang Kai-shek-government for betraying the revolution, was deeply influenced by the Stalinist system, yet also experienced many kinds of abuse through the Stalinist system.<sup>72</sup>

Much like Wang Yeyang, Chu then continues to summarize Chiang's government work in post-war Taiwan. He then characterizes Chiang's working style after he became Prime Minister in 1972 as follows:

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70 For an analysis of external assessments of Chiang, cf. Hook 1993. On Taiwanese views, see Gilley 2008, 240. For a balanced discussion of Chiang the reformer, see Nathan and Ho 1993.

71 Wang 2006, 27: 中共中央发了唁电, 对他的“不幸逝世”, “深表哀悼”。后来, 台湾局势日益演变。邓小平曾感慨地说, 如果蒋经国还健在, 中国的统一就不会像现在这样困难和复杂。国民党和共产党过去有过两次合作的经验。我不相信国共之间不会有第三次的合作。可惜, 经国死得太早了。(my translation).

72 Chu 2013, 60: 蒋经国自幼受到中国传统儒家思想的教育, 有着扶危济困的入世情怀。年轻时, 赴苏联求学、工作, 向往共产主义, 公开批判蒋介石政权背叛革命, 深受斯大林模式的影响, 也体验到斯大林模式的种种弊端。(my translation).

He [...] mingled freely with the masses, listened to the people's words, worked to improve the people's living standard, and the effects of this were evident.<sup>73</sup>

Chu also cites Chiang's "Taiwanization strategy" of rejuvenating the party state apparatus with local elites as a positive contribution, noting the boldness of such a move at the time:

As a political actor who had grown up within this system, Chiang Ching-kuo knew only too well the shortcomings and abuses of the Kuomintang's power structure. Therefore, he started the programme "Implementing Reform to Protect Taiwan" (*gexin bao Tai* 革新保台) and strongly relied on younger talents from Taiwan, something which met with distrust within the Party's conservative circles. Pushing boldly for reforms at a time when his own legitimacy was not yet established and his power base was not yet consolidated was something extremely dangerous.<sup>74</sup>

Today, Chiang Ching-kuo's Taiwanization strategy is often credited with breaking the old mainlander elites' hold on power. It is also recognized as having started an inner-party democratization process that led to a transformation of the Leninist KMT into a modern, democratic political party able to win democratic elections. On the other hand, the strategy is often simultaneously described as a shrewd attempt by Chiang to enlarge his political support base.<sup>75</sup> To mainland Chinese observers, Chiang's strategy of expanding the ruling party's membership by inviting formerly excluded local elites into the party may resemble the initiative started in 2002/03 by Jiang Zemin. His "Three Represents" (*sange daibiao* 三个代表) strategy can in effect be seen as an ideological umbrella for justifying the CCP's new policy of allowing private entrepreneurs (i. e. capitalists) to join the Communist Party.

The merits of Chiang's personal leadership abilities are extolled in another article from 2013 written, once again, by a different author (no. 26). Historian Wang Tiejun 王铁群 (\*1960) states the following in the first sentence of a piece entitled "Chiang Ching-kuo and Taiwan's Political Transformation" that appeared in the March 2013 issue:

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73 Chu 2013, 60: 他 [...] 与广大民众打交道, 倾听民众的呼声, 来改善民众的生活水准, 成效显著。(my translation).

74 Chu 2013, 61: 作为体制中成长起来的政治人物, 蒋经国对国民党政权体制的弊端认识颇深, 发起了革新保台运动, 重用台籍青年才俊, 引起党内保守势力的猜忌。在自身合法性未解决前、权力基础未稳固前, 贸然强推政治革新, 是十分危险的。(my translation).

75 Schubert 1994, 48–54; Dickson 1997, 117; Mattlin 2011, 45–46.

Taiwan's transition from an authoritarian polity towards a constitutional democracy has certainly been the result of combined effects. But nevertheless it was Chiang Ching-kuo who, during his last years, "acted on his own to terminate the authoritarian era".<sup>76</sup>

What is remarkable here is not only the emphasis placed on Chiang Ching-kuo's personal contribution to reform. The passage Wang quotes above is also attributed to a text written by Taiwan's then president Ma Ying-jeou entitled "The long shadow of Chiang Ching-kuo". It is additionally striking, therefore, that prominent space is given here in a mainland Chinese publication to an elected President of Taiwan and KMT chairman. Wang continues:

Chiang Ching-kuo could have acted like any dictator or authoritarian ruler and retained control of the "two kinds of sticks: rifles and pens", relied on the security organs to suppress all dissent, and held onto his "empire", enjoying his special authority until the end.<sup>77</sup>

And while Wang asserts that Chiang did in fact act like a dictator during the earlier phase of his reign, he nevertheless emphasizes that Chiang made a deliberate decision in the 1980s to leave behind a legacy of democratization to the entire Chinese people, not just to Taiwan. Indeed, Chiang made this declaration himself in a speech on October 10, 1986. Surprisingly, even the much maligned Lee Teng-hui, Chiang Ching-kuo's chosen successor, is quoted here in a positive light with statements he made in May 1987 that emphasize the historical meaning of Taiwan's decision to democratize. Wang summarizes his overall argument as follows:

It is just this spirit of a historical legacy, of a responsibility towards history, that caused Chiang Ching-kuo to pursue political reform and to lead a non-bloody "peaceful revolution".<sup>78</sup>

A further point made in Chiang's favor on the same page is his decision to firmly reject any continuation of the so-called "Chiang dynasty" after his death. On Christmas Day in 1985, he stated publically that none of his offspring would ever take part in government and asserted, at the same time, that military rule was likewise out of the question.

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76 Wang 2013, 69: 台湾从威权政体转变为宪政民主, 固然是合力作用的结果, 但蒋经国在生命的最后时光, "亲手启动终结威权时代的政治工程"。(my translation).

77 Wang 2013, 69: 蒋经国可以像一切专制者或威权者那样, 握紧"枪、笔两杆子", 利用军警宪特镇压一切异见人士, 固守"基业", 享尽特权。(my translation).

78 Wang 2013, 69: 正是这种向历史交代、对历史负责的精神, 使蒋经国力行政治革新, 领导了一场不流血的"宁静革命"。(my translation).

## 6.5 Freedom of the Press and Propaganda Work

Freedom of the press is a topic frequently raised on the pages of *Yanhuang Chunqiu*. Taiwan has been mentioned in this context as a positive example of a society in which the media is generally free of censorship. For instance, in an extended collaborative article on democracy (no. 17), published in May 2008, veteran Xinhua functionary Peng Di 彭迪 (\*1920) favorably compares the KMT's stance on propaganda with that of mainland China. Remarking that he has been a CCP member for more than 60 years at the time of writing, he goes on to observe:

In our country, “propaganda” is an official political power. This tradition started during the KMT's reign [...]. Taiwan has already demolished this system, but on the Chinese mainland, the official propaganda leadership system's power is growing ever stronger. Its problems are therefore relatively numerous.<sup>79</sup>

Other *Yanhuang Chunqiu* articles dealing with the history of media censorship in authoritarian era Taiwan include nos. 34 and 35. No. 34 was written by Taiwanese guest author Wu Zhizhang 武之璋. No. 35, published in July 2015, is a piece by Gu Yuanqing 古远清 (\*1941), a mainland Chinese expert on Taiwanese literature, and details the history of literary censorship in Taiwan before democratization. This article merits closer analysis in terms of its implications for literary censorship in mainland China than is possible within the scope of the present paper.

## 6.6 Conducting the Fight Against High-Level Corruption

The most blatantly dissident article found in the sample is without a doubt the text entitled “Chen Shui-bian as a Mirror” (no. 27). It was written by Li Honglin 李洪林 (\*1925), whom Beijing recognizes as a controversial figure. An exiled émigré cadre now based in Hong Kong, Li was formerly a reform-oriented deputy head of the CCP Central Propaganda Department's theory bureau. He left China after a period of imprisonment following the crackdown against Zhao Ziyang supporters in 1989. In his article on the Chen Shui-bian corruption case, Li favorably compares its outcome with China's seemingly less than effective fight against corruption among leading functionaries in China at the time. Chen Shui-bian, the former Taiwanese head of state, received a life sentence after being convicted of corruption while in office. Li concludes that only democratic politics can solve corruption problems at the top echelon of the state:

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79 Peng 2008, 19: 在我国,“宣传”是一种官方的政治权力。这种传统是在国民党统治时期开始的,共产党执政后也如法效仿,两家大概都是从苏联学来的,除了各自的机关报纸杂志等以外都有统管全民的官方宣传机构。台湾早已取消了这种制度,而在中国大陆,这种官方宣传领导机构的权力越来越大,问题也比较多。(my translation).

The solution of the Chen Shui-bian case proves to the whole world that the democratic system of government is superior. It also demonstrates that the Chinese do not lag behind other nations in terms of political civilization. Whatever Westerners can do, the Chinese can do as well.<sup>80</sup>

Given the unprecedented high-level anti-corruption campaign that Xi Jinping has unleashed in recent years, Li's main argument might not seem as convincing to mainland Chinese readers today as in 2013 – despite the fact that former heads of state still have not been targeted in China.

From this brief overview of *Yanhuang chungiu* contributions, it should now be clear that a closer analysis of the material would uncover many more illuminating details. It is therefore to be viewed in part as an invitation to future research.

### Concluding Remarks

China has a tradition of political magazines that served as discussion platforms for various reform movements. The most well-known examples include *Xin Qingnian* 新青年 and, on Taiwan, the short-lived *Meilidao zazhi* 美麗島雜誌 (*Formosa magazine*). The latter was published by the *Dangwai* oppositional movement in 1979 until it was banned.

In present-day China, *Yanhuang chungiu* seems to have fulfilled a somewhat comparable function in the sense that it served as a discussion platform for a certain intellectual current with a strong interest in political reform. In this case, the contributors are mostly, although not exclusively, CCP-affiliated reform-minded intellectuals of a wide variety of age groups and backgrounds who largely share the same ideals that were first proposed in the 1980s by Hu Yaobang's and Zhao Ziyang's intellectual networks: constitutionalism, the rule of law, a separation of party and state organs, universal human rights, media freedom, and the commemoration of historical crimes committed by China's national government. These values seem to imply that those who contributed to *Yanhuang chungiu* before July 2016 were predominantly members of two major currents of social thought in contemporary China that were identified by Ma Licheng in a 2012 study: "Social Democracy" (*shehui minzhuzhuyi* 社会民主主义) and "Liberalism" (*ziyouzhuyi* 自由主义).<sup>81</sup> By organizing regular meetings for its authors and holding annual celebrations, the

80 Li 2013, 30: 陈水扁事件的解决, 向全世界显示了民主制度的优越性, 也展现了中华民族在政治文明上并不比别人落后。西方人能办到的, 中国人一样能办到。(my translation).

81 The other six currents of thought identified by Ma are "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi* 中国特色社会主义 alias Dengism); Nationalism (*minzuzhuyi* 民族主义); Populism (*mincuizhuyi* 民粹主义); Old Leftists (*lao zuopai* 老左派); New Leftists (*xin zuopai* 新左派) and New Confucianists (*xin rujia* 新儒家), cf. Ma 2012, 1–3.

magazine *Yanhuang chungiu* provided physical forums for discussion and exchange. The magazine's website and digital archive were also available as a venue for research and discussion.

The analyzed *Yanhuang chungiu* articles on Taiwan suggest that the island embodies many of the contributing mainland Chinese authors' envisaged ideals, notwithstanding some shortcomings in its democratic institutions that are typically glossed over. One important question remains: Do these Chinese reform-minded intellectuals actually draw inspiration from Taiwan for any potential reforms of the mainland Chinese polity? Or, do they merely posit Taiwan as kind of political utopia and use the island's transformation experience as a mirror for reflecting upon China's current political woes?

According to the cursory analysis conducted here, there seems sufficient textual evidence for both possibilities. On the one hand, some features of Taiwan's transformation are portrayed as genuinely desirable from the point of view of the respective authors, and deemed in need of further analysis. Topics of interest include Taiwan's rural economy, its post-war "enlightened" authoritarianism, and its more efficient variant of Leninism, which put more emphasis on expertise and clear chains of command than on Party loyalty.

On the other hand, the absence of any reference to some of the more problematic features of Taiwan's young democracy is striking. Examples of criticisms that could have been named here (and which are often put forward by Western and Taiwanese analysts) include the propensity of Taiwan's semi-presidential system of government for political gridlock, a problem that was all too evident during Chen Shui-bian's tenure as state president; the persistent problem of "black-gold politics" (*heijin zhengzhi* 黑金政治), a term describing the ubiquitous connections between organized crime, big business, and political leaders; the economic clout of the reformed Kuomintang, which puts other parties at a marked disadvantage during elections; or, the frequent violent brawls erupting in Taiwan's legislature, a thing unheard of in more mature democracies during the past decades. Moreover, the political role and legacy of Chiang Ching-kuo and his leadership are evaluated much less favorably by some Taiwanese commentators, depending on their political orientation, than by the *Yanhuang chungiu*. For instance, DPP sympathizers typically downplay the merits of Chiang's transformation management in favor of emphasizing the transformative influence of social forces. They also deplore the Chiang government's human rights abuses. Consequently, the mostly positive evaluations made within the surveyed *Yanhuang chungiu* articles generally create an impression of Taiwan's political history and its current reality that is highly idealized. Indeed, they occasionally resemble utopian writing more than actual political analysis.

This is quite consistent, however, with *Yanhuang chungiu's* mission statement. The magazine's self-depiction on its homepage ([www.yhcqw.com](http://www.yhcqw.com)) contains clues about the magazine's deliberate use of foreign politics and world political history in general as a "mirror" with regard to analyzing current Chinese political affairs. In fact, both the name and the motto of the magazine allude to the classical Chinese scholarly tradition of using history as a "mirror for aid in government". Yan 炎 and Huang 黄, the two mythical

rulers referenced in the magazine's name, are cultural heroes of China's remote antiquity, while the word *chunqiu* 春秋 ("annals", literally, "spring and autumn") refers, of course, to the venerated *Spring and Autumn Annals*, traditionally assumed to be written by Confucius himself. In this work, he supposedly established the principle of indirect historical criticism called *baobian* 褒贬, "praise and blame".

The motto displayed in the website's top banner reads:

Seeking truth from facts; reporting the naked facts; using history as a mirror; and keeping pace with the times.<sup>82</sup>

In a short promotional text on the website's "about" section, the editors are even more explicit about the traditional Chinese function of historical studies as an aid to government:

The magazine *Yanhuang chunqiu* [...] [reports on] the old and the new, on China and foreign countries; it focuses on the major events of recent history since Revolution and Construction, and on the merits and the mistakes of key persons during these times. Based on historical sources, it reports facts without either whitewashing or demonizing; it seeks the truth and preserves historical reality; and it uses history as a mirror, uses history as an aid to government.<sup>83</sup>

It thus seems justified to conclude that *Yanhuang chunqiu* as it was before the latest crackdown of July 2016, at least in some respects, deliberately presented Taiwan as a kind of political utopia to point out the flaws in present-day China's reform process. Furthermore, the magazine's editors seem to have cast themselves in the role of traditional Chinese scholar-officials who loyally counsel their ruler against making mistakes by way of offering historical examples. What is more, by referring in their symbolism to the cultural heroes of Chinese antiquity, *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s editors emphasized the quality of Chineseness over an explicitly communist identity. Judging from the content of all the magazine's issues published over the past twenty-five years, it furthermore seems evident that *Yanhuang chunqiu* continued to propagate the aborted reform program of the mid-1980s. It, therefore, has not pledged unequivocal support for the political center and its Marxist-Leninist "Socialism with Chinese characteristics". Instead, the magazine's attitude may very well be reflected by Xie Tao's 2007 article on Scandinavian-style Demo-

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82 In the original, the banner reads: 实事求是, 秉笔直书, 以史为鉴, 与时具进。

83 Cited from the section "Kanwu jieshao" 刊物介绍 at *Yanhuang chunqiu*'s website [www.yhqw.com/html/gwym/gwym.html, acc. 14.04.2016]: 《炎黄春秋》杂志是以史为主的综合性纪实月刊。对古今中外、重点是当代革命和建设的重大事件和重要人物的是非功过, 依据翔实的史料, 秉笔直书, 不增美, 不溢恶, 求实存真, 以史为鉴, 以史资治。(my translation).

cratic Socialism that was briefly discussed at the outset. After all, from the point of view of an ancient civilization, is not Marxism-Leninism just another foreign ideology that was at some point imported from the West?

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