

Invité à la cérémonie de remise du Prix 2004 de la Fondation culturelle franco-taiwanaise, le lundi 30 mai 2005, M. Lee Teng-Hui, ancien Président de la République de Chine (Taïwan), avait préparé un discours. N'ayant pu obtenir le visa qui lui aurait permis de répondre à l'invitation de l'Académie, il a remis copie de son propos à M. le Secrétaire perpétuel, en visite à Taïwan pour la réunion du jury de la Fondation, le jeudi 22 septembre 2005.

L'Académie des sciences morales et politiques s'honorant d'une longue tradition de libre expression, il a été décidé, en accord avec son auteur, de mettre le texte très personnel de M. Lee Teng-Hui à la disposition des internautes, dans la version anglaise originale.

Who Are We? The Path for the New Era Taiwanese

**By Mr Lee Teng-hui
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In 1789, the French Revolution gave birth to the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" which sets forth in Article I: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights," and in Article III: "The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation." As everyone knows, this great declaration established human rights and the rule of law as the pillars of modern politics. The billows of the French Revolution swept to Formosa in the East two hundred years later. In 1989, Taiwan formally entered the era of democratization, embracing the same ideals of promoting reform and the spirit of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.

As with its previous economic miracle, Taiwan's democratic reform is a success story that has won the attention of the world. During the democratization process, I led the KMT government administration to listen carefully to the people's demands, to respect the will of mainstream popular opinion, and to become the main force for



promoting reform. At that time, the opposition DPP also advocated reform and therefore both parties, though still competitors, worked together shoulder to shoulder on political reform. Through tenacious reform, authoritarian rule gradually gave way to the boulevard of democracy. The ethnic tensions that materialized from the 1940's also dissolved under the synchronization of democracy.

In the year 2000, Chen Shui-bian, the DPP candidate, won the presidential election. However, the victorious DPP government faced the predicament of a legislature controlled by opposition parties and consequent boycotts of its government policies. In addition, the DPP administration, lacking government experience, did not have enough tolerance, leading to major clashes between the political parties and re-igniting ethnic tensions. What is regrettable is that present ethnic tensions under the new political environment combined with China's divisive efforts aggravated have worsened into conflicts on national identity. Therefore, I put forward the "new era Taiwanese," an idea that expounds using democratic spirit to overcome internal disparity.

During the last decade of the 20th century, the tidal "third wave democratization" that began early in the 1970s swept over Taiwan. We accepted baptism into this third wave democratization through a "quiet revolution" without bloodshed, though with some inevitable social tensions and conflicts. Taiwan's democratic experience earned the attention of Professor Samuel P. Huntington, a renowned expert on this topic. Nevertheless, as Professor Huntington had noted, some of the countries that were part of the third wave of democratization may not successfully become a democracy. To demonstrate this point, he cited the "Comparative Survey of Freedom for 1995," published by Freedom House, which had identified 114 countries as being democracies, but also classified 37 countries as being only "partly free." He concluded that

some of the countries included in the third wave of democratization had already begun to face pressures of reorganization and consolidation.

From where do the threats to third wave democracies come? According to Professor Huntington, they come first from the participants in the democratic process, second from the electoral victories of political parties and movements clearly committed to antidemocratic ideals, third from executive arrogation and last, from the governments in new democracies that do not hesitate to limit political rights and civil liberties.

Of course, this conclusion is general in nature and each country must be analyzed individually.

Indeed, there are certain political parties in Taiwan that are antidemocratic, choosing to rely on ideology rather than the people's choice. Nevertheless, I am happy to say that those political parties or interests groups did not gain political power. On the contrary, along with losing two presidential elections, the supporters of their ideologies have also gradually decreased in number. However, Taiwan's national predicament varies from the rest of the world. China, across the Taiwan Strait, has unhesitatingly wanted to annex Taiwan and continuously tries to unsettle Taiwan's independent sovereignty. The interplay of these internal and external factors has led to complexity and confusion of Taiwan's national identity.

In Asia, leaders of some of the countries deemed as being third wave democracies such as Singapore and Malaysia continue to adhere to the concept of "Asian values." Asian traditions are not irreplaceable, yet the political arguments of these countries demonstrate that "Asian values," hailed as an alternative to democracy, have become a major stumbling block in their path to full democracy. Fortunately, for Taiwan, the influence of Confucian traditions is not entrenched enough to create

this problem. Currently, the major issue for Taiwan to resolve in its path toward full democracy is the confusion in its national identity.

Various surveys show that more and more Taiwanese people see themselves as being Taiwanese or do not deny that they are Taiwanese. This is proof of the assimilation of different ethnic groups in Taiwanese society under democracy. Regrettably, those political groups that have been rejected by the voters use political manoeuvres to fracture social harmony and stir dissensions on national identity. They want to adopt the "Greater China" ideology, used in the authoritarian period to amass power, to subvert the current nativistic and democratic Taiwan. Today, their largest support comes not from domestic voters, but from the threats of military force, economic warfare and hegemonic arguments of China across the Taiwan Strait. Undeniably, Chinese national power is growing and using such "bringing Ching soldiers to enter the gate" or Trojan horse tactics to cooperate with the communists to control Taiwan worsens Taiwan's predicament.

For the Taiwanese to overcome these challenges, they must first strengthen national identity. If we look closely at Taiwan, we find that the Taiwanese people from over fifty years ago and the Taiwanese people of fifty years later have undergone a qualitative change. In the past, after being brainwashed by outside regimes, Taiwanese people had no other choice but to deem themselves as Chinese. Today, more and more people have come to realize that it was both a factual and historical fiction. In reality, during the process of democratic reforms in the last decade of the 20th century, we frequently asked ourselves, "Who am I? Who are we?" Professor Huntington also mentions in his new book, *Who are We?*, that many countries face various national identity issues. Although their forms and substances may differ, the national identity of Taiwan currently is in the midst of dissolution and reconstruction.

Here, I would like to recount my contemplation process. From the age of fifteen or sixteen, I pressed to find answers to questions on "self and "death." I discovered that it is possible to live a truly affirmative "life" only through "death" of the self. As for what happens to the "self after "death of the self," it is elevated to the level of existence.

From my perspective as a Christian, today, I am no longer my self, but the Lee Teng-hui who has Jesus Christ in him. As Paul said in Galatians, 2:20 "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." This is what I mean when I say: "I am no longer my self. I am not Lee Teng-hui's Lee Teng-hui."

The source of this kind of thinking began with the philosophy books I read in my youth. Let me cite a few inspirations. The German philosopher Nietzsche had said: "The present day man anxiously asks: How can man justify its existence? However, Zarathustra is the only one to ask, " How can man be surpassed?" Another German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, noted in his study of Nietzsche, "Nietzsche does not see the meaning of life in self existence (competitive existence), but in surpassing the self to discover the true meaning of life. Therefore, as a condition of life, values must of necessity be determined as such that carries, promotes and stimulates life to its highest potential."

The French philosopher Sartre said: "...man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on its shoulders; he is responsible for the world and himself as a way of being." He further reminded us: "Imbedded in man's attempt to surpass himself, transcendence, is the meaning he has been looking for in his life." If a footnote is necessary, I would say the pursuit of "not being my self," is putting before myself the possibility of taking life to a higher level.

Speaking of which, I cannot help but think of the philosophy System established by Immanuel Kant's three major critiques. My

inspiration from his philosophy is - Humans must understand their own limitations in order to manage self-reliance and motivation so that life is elevated to higher purpose and becomes more worthwhile. If we take his analysis to an absolute level, we find what Kant has said, "that one should never act in a way that one could not also will that this maxim should be a universal law," to be very significant. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1966 undoubtedly represent modern interpretations of this proposition. It is therefore the obligation of the Taiwanese people toward themselves and the world to strive for the realization of the international human rights standards delineated in these covenants.

The "new era Taiwanese" ought to engage in such philosophical analyses and take action to practice them. Starting from "I am not my self as the launching point, every "new era Taiwanese" should invigorate their minds to realize the 'devaluation of all values (Umwertung aller Werte)," shaping an all-encompassing spiritual transcendence and cultural renewal. Owing to the combination of free will and civism, it would not be difficult for such an enlightened new era Taiwanese to breakaway from the situation of being shackled by historical fabrications toward developing a firm and resolute national identity for democratic Taiwan. Only upon this new foundation can democracy eradicate lingering ethnic conflicts, prevent antidemocratic political forces from stirring unrest for their own self-interests, and keep the political warfare of hegemonic greater China ideology from gaining an inadvertent advantage.

Developing a national identity through the avenue of democracy is the best guarantee for Taiwan's democracy. Like some of the countries included in the third wave of democracy in recent years, Taiwan also lapsed into a worrisome democratic cadence. This is a situation that

cannot be ignored by friends who are concerned about Taiwan's democratic development. In the future, whether the democratic fruits Taiwan obtained from "the third wave" will further consolidate or unfortunately take the road backwards certainly will affect the expansion or contraction of global democratic values and deserve everyone's close monitoring. Nevertheless, I would like to make an optimistic prediction that the threats to Taiwan's democracy are not fatal as long as we do not lose confidence in democratic values and as long as our democratic functions do not go off track. At some point in the future, democratic Taiwan will march toward the goal of becoming a normal country with even firmer footsteps and finally develop into a fully democratic country.

