

# Liberalism in Hong Kong and Taiwan during the Cold War

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## Introduction: Republican-era Chinese Liberalism and the Triangular Relationship between China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the Late 20th Century

Modern China began with the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. As with other countries, modern China can be better understood through the prism of its constitutional history that represents a projection of both liberal and nationalist currents. No matter the actual constitutional setup, the mainstream of modern China is the history of republic: that of the Republic of China (ROC) which replaced dynastic rule with republican government, and that of the People's Republic of China (PRC). According to Nakamura [2018], although modern China has accepted various types of *-ism* such as socialism, but, at a more fundamental level, it has faced a vexing dichotomy of harmony and conflict between liberalism and nationalism.

The constitutional history of modern China provides a valuable perspective for understanding East Asia, both its history and present. Nakamura [2017] discusses this perspective in detail. This discussion can be summarized as follows. In Japan, the promulgation of the Constitution of Japan in 1947 heralded a fundamental shift from rule *by* law, as under the old Imperial Constitution, to rule *of* law. In China, the situation was more complicated: the ROC enacted its Constitution in 1947, and then the PRC enacted its own Constitution in 1954, creating two constitutional spaces—one of mainland China (by then under the PRC control) and one of Taiwan (where the ROC was now ensconced). This situation also transformed Hong Kong, which found itself caught between mainland China and Taiwan. Thus, “Constitution” is a useful concept in describing the dynamics of modern Asia.

A focus on constitutional history can also help to compare histories of human rights of post-war Japan, mainland China, and Taiwan. In Japan's case, the Constitution of Japan advanced the cause of human rights by safeguarding basic human rights. In other words, it promoted human rights by directly guaranteeing them. In modern China, the principle of directly guaranteeing human rights was called “Zhijie baozhang zhuyi” 直接保障主義 in early-20th century and it was embodied in the ROC's Constitution. Actually the ROC's constitutional provisions on human rights were a bit of a mixed bag, however, and it is the most important for us to recognize that at the start of the 1950s, there was a willingness, linked partly to the high regard for the Constitution of Japan, to preserve the principle in Taiwan. This point is clear from Zhang Zhiben's 張知本 constitutional discourse. Sidestepping the question of how well the ROC's Constitution has actually safeguarded human rights, insofar as the Constitution was tied, at least ideologically, with the Constitution of Japan, it stood antithetical to the PRC's Constitution when it came to human rights—the latter only added a provision

on human rights in 2004. Therefore, it became a source of ideological conflict in East Asia [Zhongcun 2012, 2014].

Thus, once we position the constitutional history of modern China in the broader context of East Asia, we begin to see how historical trajectories of liberalism in modern China reflect this history as they are intricately interwoven with it.

How have historians interpreted modern Chinese liberalism? Mainland Chinese scholars such as Zhang Qing [1996, 2004, 2006] have recognized the historical significance of modern Chinese liberalism, particularly that of the Republican-era (1912–49). Unsurprisingly, modern Chinese liberalism has also been enthusiastically investigated by Taiwanese and Hong Kong scholars such as Xue Huayuan, who espouse liberty, democracy, human rights, and constitutionalism. These scholars have focused on liberalism in the Republican-era as well as in their own territories of Taiwan or Hong Kong in the latter half of the 20th century. They have also examined liberalism as a cultural phenomenon. For example, they have focused on political ideas of Confucians who fled mainland China for Hong Kong or Taiwan, and on how Confucians' ideas intersected with liberalism [Xue 1993, 1996; Xie 2008; Kō 2018]. The topic of modern Chinese liberalism has also caught the attention of Japanese scholars. Japan historically reoriented itself from Eastern to Western values, moving from tradition to modernity. Perhaps reflecting this, these scholars have been inclined to view modern Chinese liberalism as a framework for contextualizing modern China in relation to nationalism, socialism, and revolution [Mizuha 2007; Murata, ed. 2011]. Western scholars, too, have often discussed the topic, focusing typically on the question of whether China can liberalize and democratize [Fung 2000].

Modern Chinese liberalism is, to put it bluntly, a rather nebulous concept—no less than Western liberalism. However, what term other than liberalism could be used to describe a political orientation that intersects multiple ideologies without belonging to any particular ideology, and which has always leaned more or less towards the cause of freedom? To help clarify matters, I use the term “universal liberalism” to describe the political thought of modern China which grapples with the essential issue of freedom and power (權力). This issue is none other than the fundamental dilemma of Western liberalism. That is, it transcends time, place, and language. On the other hand, I use the expression “liberalism-as-a-phenomenon” to denote a somewhat different sense of liberalism. Liberalism-as-a-phenomenon refers to a more localized form of liberalism, one that asserts the legitimacy of liberalism as a universal principle, but comes with the political and cultural trappings of a place and time. Against the backdrop of the Cold War between the US and USSR, China split into the PRC-ruled mainland and the ROC-ruled Taiwan in 1949. Both sides vied against each other, claiming themselves as the legitimate government of China. Meanwhile, Hong Kong was ruled by Britain, a liberal democracy, and would remain so until 1997. In such a situation, “liberalism-as-a-phenomenon” manifested, on one hand, as a localized cultural phenomenon, while on the other, it symbolized a broader ideological conflict between the two Chinas, with Hong Kong caught in the fray.

The chronology of modern Chinese liberalism can be summarized as follows. During the Republican-era, universal liberalism in modern China focused on the fundamental dilemma between freedom and power. It was represented by intellectuals such as Hu Shi 胡適 and Chu Anping 儲安平. In circa 1949, the Republican-era liberals split into two camps: one camp was opposed to the Chinese Communist Party's (Zhongguo Gongchandang 中國共產黨; CCP) rule (anti-CCP liberalism), while the other camp supported it (pro-CCP liberalism). Generally speaking, anti-CCP liberalism spread to Taiwan, where it was represented by Lei Zhen 雷震 and *Free China Journal* (Ziyou Zhongguo 自由中國). On the other hand, pro-CCP liberalism, which was represented by Gu Zhun 顧準 and Li Rui 李銳, went underground in mainland China. As for Hong Kong, both the anti- and pro-CCP camps spread to the colony, but so did a third liberal movement: This was a variant of anti-CCP liberalism advocated by the New Confucianism movement, whose key members included Zhang Junmai 張君勱, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, and others who wrote for *The Democratic Review* (Minzhu Pinglun 民主評

論). As this third movement opposed the CCP, it was a natural ally of Taiwan's establishmentarians who had vowed to free China from the reds. However, at the same time, as it focused on the question of whether traditional Chinese values were still relevant, it was one of the liberalism as a cultural phenomenon and differed from other liberal movements. On this issue, the New Confucians naturally opposed anti-traditionalists of the Chinese mainland. More importantly, they also disputed with Hong Kong's politicians and intellectuals who favored modern Western democratic values and had denounced Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石 for his despotism. They also opposed to members of the Chinese Youth Party (Zhongguo Qingniandang 中国青年党) and members of the China Democratic Socialist Party (Zhongguo Minshedang 中国民社党) such as Zuo Shunsheng 左舜生, *Freedom Front Weekly* (Ziyou Zhenxian 自由陣線) and *United Voice Weekly* (Lianhe Pinglun 聯合評論). Moreover they opposed some politicians and intellectuals in Taiwan who were against Taiwan's political establishment, such as the politician Yin Haiguang 殷海光 and the team at *Free China Journal*. Thus, the classic dilemma underlying Western liberalism, that of freedom versus power, had found its way into mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. And, at the same time, what prevailed throughout these three regions was also liberalism-as-a-phenomenon, which did not always correspond to the essential thrust of universal liberalism [Nakamura 2018].

Due to word count restrictions, my focus is only on the anti-CCP type of the liberalism-as-a-phenomenon that arose after China split into the PRC mainland and the ROC Taiwan, and I will examine how they shaped relations between Hong Kong and Taiwan. With this approach, I will demonstrate how relations between Hong Kong and Taiwan destabilized in the late 1950s and early 1960s, giving rise to a new state of affairs in Hong Kong. I will also evince how the situation in Hong Kong in the late 1970s sparked a new bone of contention in China (Beijing)-Taiwan (Taipei) relations.

## 1. How the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese National Party Regarded Hong Kong

During the 1950s and thereafter, East Asia played a major role in the Cold War. During this time, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese National Party (Zhongguo Guomindang 中国国民党; KMT) both had designs on Hong Kong. Beijing sought to foster pro-PRC opinion in the colony. To that end, the CCP clandestinely approached a number of groups in Taiwan. Naturally, these groups included anti-nationalists. They also included members of the Chinese Youth Party and the China Democratic Socialist Party, who fundamentally supported the ROC but had come to lament the KMT's autocratic turn. Additionally, it featured members within the KMT who supported their party and the ROC but were opposed to Jiang Jieshi's leadership. Taipei, for its part, wanted to prevent Hong Kong's politicians and intelligentsia from taking a stance that was pro-CCP and anti-KMT. Like the CCP, the KMT waged covert operations to achieve this. It also actively funded Hong Kong's cultural institutions in collaboration with the CIA, the Committee for Free Asia, and the Asia Foundation. It funded Hong Kong's Friendship Society (Youlianshe 友聯社) and pro-Youth Party publications such as *Freedom Front Weekly* and *United Voice Weekly*. The KMT also funded the New Confucians, whose anti-CCP stance rendered them amenable to the KMT's cause. Indeed, Qian Mu's 錢穆 New Asia College (Xinya Shuyuan 新亞書院), which later became the Chinese University of Hong Kong, procured part of its funding from the KMT and the US [Jiang 2014; Ichihara 2015; Zhou 2017; Jeans 2017; Huang 2019].

As a British colony, Hong Kong was under the Western Bloc. This geopolitical reality was a boon to the KMT, which generally aligned itself with the US. The merits and flaws of British rule in Hong Kong warrant serious debate, but few would disagree that it engendered a robust legal profession and that the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (now the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) helped embed values of constitutionalism

and democracy among Hongkongers. As such, Hong Kong was more ideologically attuned with Taipei than it was to Beijing. This fact meant that the CCP had fewer prospects of actively advancing its Hong Kong policy during the 1950s. Indeed, the party was painfully aware that Hong Kong's leftist circulations, such as *Dagongbao* 大公報, *Wenhuibao* 文匯報, and *Zhoumobao* 周末報, were in the doldrums.<sup>1</sup>

If Hong Kong's circumstances were drastically more amenable to the KMT than they were to the CCP, why did the KMT fail to drive home this advantage?

There are two points that must be considered here. The first is that Britain, eager to ensure smooth rule in Hong Kong, did not always follow America's lead. Faced with the need to accommodate Communist China, Britain had misgivings about the aggressive Hong Kong strategy adopted by Washington and Taipei. The second point is that ever since it founded the People's Republic, the CCP had always adopted a meek approach towards Hong Kong under the mantra "long-term planning and full utilization" (長期打算, 充分利用). Ostensibly, the CCP's passivity toward Hong Kong may have created an open goal for the KMT. However, all that while, Beijing was maintaining its clandestine operations in the colony, working through Xinhua News Agency (Xinhuashe 新華社) without incurring any significant response from British authorities. For example, the Marco Polo Club, a CCP outfit, continued operating into the 1970s even though Britain was cognizant of its activities [Lu 2011; Liang 2012; Jiang 2014].

In short, the People's Republic and Britain were allowing each other to operate in an increasingly large section of Hong Kong's political landscape. The 1960s saw some critical developments for Hong Kong. During that decade, the Sino-Soviet split became manifestly apparent, and the Vietnam War kicked off to the south of the colony. Consequently, the PRC found it necessary to seek rapprochement with the Western Bloc. On the other hand, circumstances in Hong Kong were proving beneficial for Beijing to prosecute its ideological campaign there. After China's Cultural Revolution began in 1966, the PRC started trumpeting the cause of anti-traditionalism and anti-colonialism and supported, more or less, the Hong Kong leftist riots of 1967, which were directed against British colonial rule (the anti-British struggle (反英抗爭)). It also found a great opportunity to promote Hong Kong's "patriotic left" which lauded the Cultural Revolution. The Anglo-Sino flexibility regarding Hong Kong undeniably dampened Taipei's ability to pursue its Hong Kong strategy.

However, these circumstances are not the main reason for the KMT's failure to effectuate its Hong Kong strategy. A critical factor was the growing hostility of liberals toward the KMT during the 1950s. In that decade, leading voices of anti-CCP liberalism in both Hong Kong and Taiwan, who spoke through *Free China Journal*, *Freedom Front Weekly*, and *United Voice Weekly*, increasingly turned up the heat on KMT's despotic rule. During this time, *The Democratic Review* (the mouthpiece of the New Confucian brand of anti-CCP liberalism) should seemingly have been allied with Taiwan's establishmentarians. However, among the publication's contributors was Zhang Junmai, a member of the China Democratic Socialist Party. Because the China Democratic Socialist Party had joined the Chinese Youth Party in denouncing the KMT, *The Democratic Review's* stance sometimes overlapped with that of the pro-Youth Party's *Freedom Front Weekly* and *United Voice Weekly*. Thus, in pursuing its Hong Kong strategy, the KMT had to be wary of criticism from both varieties of anti-CCP liberalism. This situation ultimately loosened the political foothold for the KMT's Hong Kong strategy; Taipei could no longer rely on anti-CCP liberalism as a bridge to Hong Kong. This point is discussed in depth in a later section.

## 2. Inheriting the Liberal Mainstream of the Republican-era: *Free China Journal*

*Free China Journal*, a Taipei-based publication that ran from November 1949 to 1960, was a mouthpiece of liberals, including members of the KMT and others who had played an active role in the Republican-era. There were three main figures backing the publication. The first was Hu Shi, who was never an official member of the Republican-era regime but had engaged with it. The second was Lei Zhen, who had advocated for liberalism from within the Republican-era regime. The third was Yin Haiguang, who once belonged to the regime but had later forsaken it. Hu Shi was the original editor of *Free China Journal*, but had resigned in 1952. Lei Zhen then took over editorial duties, becoming the de-facto chief of the publication. Yin Haiguang then became actively involved in the late 1950s, after clarifying his liberal credentials in Taiwan.

In its first issue, *Free China Journal* declared its purpose as follows.

我們在今天，眼看見共產黨的武力踏到的地方，立刻就罩下了一層十分嚴密的鐵幕。在那鐵幕底下，報紙完全沒有新聞，言論完全失去自由，其他的人民基本自由更無法存在。這是古代專制帝王不敢行的最澈底的愚民政治，這正是國際共產主義有計畫的鐵幕恐怖。我們實在不能坐視這種可怕的鐵幕普遍到中國。因此，我們發起這個結合，作為“自由中國”運動的一個起點。<sup>2</sup>

This mission statement reveals two things about *Free China Journal*: First, it had picked up the torch of Republican-era liberalism, which sought to reconcile freedom and order. Second, its liberal discourse was virulently anti-CCP, reflecting the new Cold War realities. Because of the second point, the publication provided a source of ideological support to the KMT, which had ostensibly shifted to constitutionalism by promulgating the ROC's Constitution.

However, *Free China Journal*'s support for the KMT was short-lived. The amity lasted from November 1949 to May 1951. The journal's enthusiasm for the regime gradually waned over issues published between June 1951 and December 1954 amid concerns about how the regime had executed a bold political reform (改造), granting Jiang Jieshi arbitrary powers. The issues from January 1955 to September 1956 took an increasingly pointed tone. The rift with the regime widened further in issues published between October 1956 and December 1958. Finally, the journal denounced the regime outright in issues published from January 1959 to September 1960. The final straw was Jiang Jieshi's attempt to amend the Constitution to allow himself to run for a third term as President [Xue 1996; Ren 1999]. The KMT did indeed have a liberal faction of sorts. This faction included Cheng Cangbo 程滄波, the former head of *Central Daily News* (Zhongyang Ribao 中央日報), and Cheng Bosheng 陳博生. In 1952, these members opposed the government's plan to toughen publication law. In 1953, the party expelled those suspected of being members of the liberal wing, such as Lei Zhen, Wu Guozhen 吳國楨, and Wang Shijie 王世杰 [Nakamura 2015]. *Free China Journal* would have resonated with these more liberal members of the KMT.

Thus, having started out as an anti-CCP liberal paper, *Free China Journal* broadened its critical scope to the ROC, becoming both anti-CCP and anti-KMT.<sup>3</sup> In relation to this development, Lei Zhen famously called for a new party (Zhongguo Minzhudang 中國民主黨), to oppose the KMT and its despotic rule and to restore a constitutionally-sound government.

我們希望這些相信民主政治的人，趕快的集合攏來，組織一個強有力的反對黨，以為下屆選舉的準備，以

打破國民黨這種獨霸的局面。這個黨的組成分子，除了包括無黨無派的人士之外，也可能包括國民黨籍及民青兩黨篤信民主自由之人士。這個新黨的功用，就是要用選舉的方式以求獲取政權為目的。<sup>4</sup>

Lei Zhen's political activities did not go unpunished by the KMT. The KMT, as it turned out, had no qualms about inflicting cruel punishment upon a hero of the Republican-era who had once played a central role in the party. For starters, the KMT refused to approve the new party.<sup>5</sup> Then, in September that year, Lei Zhen was arrested on two charges—harboring a communist and spreading communist propaganda—and sentenced to ten years of imprisonment with hard labor. The regime then shut down *Free China Journal* in what became known as the “*Free China Journal Incident*.”

### 3. Another Platform for Republican-era Liberalism: *Freedom Front Weekly* and *United Voice Weekly*

What about Hong Kong?

The US expected the ROC to emerge from the Second World War as the main nation of East Asia. When these expectations were confounded by the ROC's retreat to Taiwan, the US released a China white paper blaming the retreat on the Nationalists' ineptitude. Around the time when the CCP declared the People's Republic, some mainland liberals fled to Hong Kong, believing that neither the PRC nor the ROC held a future for them. These liberals interpreted the *US white paper* to mean that the US had abandoned the KMT. They therefore sought to create a new US-aligned Chinese stronghold in Hong Kong. Their aim was to revive Republican-era liberalism in the colony, creating a third force of Chinese liberalism, one affiliated with neither Beijing nor Taipei.

There were three notable Republican-era politicians who led this movement. The first was Li Zongren 李宗仁, who had served in the Nationalists' Guangxi-pai 廣西派 that took a stance of anti-Jiang Jieshi before decamping to the US via Hong Kong. The second was Gu Mengyu 顧孟余, who was from the left of the KMT. Gu had been a close ally of Wang Jingwei 汪精衛, whose collaboration with Japan during the Second Sino-Japanese War earned him the epithet *hanjian*, or “traitor to the Han Chinese.” The third politician was Tong Guanxian 童冠賢. Coming from the Central Club Clique, a rightist faction in the KMT, Tong had been appointed President of the ROC's Legislative Yuan when the ROC promulgated the Constitution. The movement also received backing from Zhang Fakui 張發奎, a member of KMT's anti-Jiang Jieshi faction. Thus, people in the new Hong Kong-based movement can be characterized as follows: Their belief in freedom meant that they had no association with the People's Republic or the CCP that ruled it; however, at the same time, they found they had no place in the ROC either, having concluded that they could no longer extend their full support to a Jiang-led KMT or, in Gu's case, because of the stigma of associating with a *hanjian*. Either way, they all saw Hong Kong as a refuge and a place where they could band together to carry forward Republican-era liberalism. The émigrés formed the Liberal Democratic League (Ziyou Minzhu Tongmeng 自由民主同盟); however, after it proved ineffectual, they reorganized as the Militant Liberal Democratic League of China (Zhongguo Ziyou Minzhu Zhandou Tongmeng 中國自由民主戰鬥同盟). This new alliance subsequently attracted some members of the Qingniandang, including Zuo Shunsheng, Li Huang 李璜, and Xie Chengping 謝澄平. It also attracted some China Democratic Socialist Party members such as Zhang Junmai. Bolstered by the new membership, the alliance appeared to be a worthy vessel to inherit the mantle of Republican-era liberalism [Chen 2008, 2009, 2011].

However, the alliance struggled to gain momentum. Although the US funded the party, Britain was reluctant to

back it, fearing repercussions for its relations with Beijing. The alliance was also targeted by the CCP, which sought to erode the group through Xinhua News Agency. Moreover, the Chinese Youth Party, a natural ally of the alliance, was increasingly torn by internal strife. Consequently, the alliance crashed and burned without gaining traction. At the 1955 Asian-African Conference (the Bandung Conference), Zhou Enlai 周恩来 called for Asian solidarity. Inspired by his message, many former alliance members extended friendship towards Beijing, and some even repatriated to the mainland. Among them were KMT's Guangxi-pai Cheng Siyuan 程思遠 and Luo Mengce 羅夢冊, the latter of whom was ideologically close to New Confucians such as Qian Mu.

To summarize, many anti-CCP liberals flocked from mainland China to Hong Kong, where they sought to organize a new liberal movement exploiting the Cold War rift between the two Chinas. However, they failed to build a strong enough organization for this purpose. What rescued their movement from the doldrums was *Freedom Front Weekly* (1949–59). The cover page of each issue of this publication displayed the same rousing message: “No freedom, no life. Together, we are powerful.” *Freedom Front Weekly* was a political periodical managed by Chinese Youth Party members Zuo Shunsheng and Xie Chengping and backed by China Democratic Socialist Party member Zhang Junmai. The editor was Sima Changfeng 司馬長風 (or Huyue 胡越), who built up a career in Hong Kong as a political commentator in the late 20th century. The opening articles were frequently penned by Chinese Youth Party member Zhang Baoen 張葆恩. The publication was backed by the Friendship Society, which itself was funded by the KMT and the US.

*Freedom Front Weekly* stood for political democracy, economic equality, and cultural liberty. In terms of its political position, the publication advocated freedom and democracy as an alternative to communism, and it identified the ROC, as opposed to the PRC, as the legitimate polity of Chinese civilization. In some articles, it identified with Japan as a fellow member of the liberal camp and called for cooperation with the country in advancing the cause of liberalism, at least in the sense of liberalism as a universal movement.<sup>6</sup>

However, *Freedom Front Weekly*'s political position took a turn in the mid-1950s in response to KMT's increasingly autocratic rule in Taiwan. Anti-KMT talking points started permeating articles, and the publication adopted the stance that the ROC must promote freedom and democracy. This new stand was met with fierce blowback in Taiwan, which only served to harden the publication's stance.<sup>7</sup> The anti-KMT talking points fomented a political narrative arguing that the bifurcation of China could only be healed with a free and democratic ROC based on anti-CCP liberalism.<sup>8</sup> The narrative then broadened into anti-Americanism, and contributors started considering US foreign policy as imperialist [Ou 2018]. Perhaps reflecting this broadened focus, *Freedom Front Weekly* sought to reach beyond the confines of Hong Kong and touch the hearts and minds of the Chinese in Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora with an aim to build a new global front.

For as ambitious as it had become in scope, *Freedom Front Weekly* was, however, limited in its actual reach. The political publication provided a forum for debating topics that were simultaneously contentious in Hong Kong and Taiwan, such as the relationship between Confucian and democratic values. All the while, the team behind the publication was seeking to transform liberal discourse in British-ruled Hong Kong, changing it from anti-CCP liberalism to a form of liberalism that was anti-Soviet and anti-CCP on the one hand and anti-American and anti-KMT on the other. Nonetheless, they made no real effort to voice the concerns of Hongkongers. If the plan had been to convey the value of liberalism to Hongkongers, then to achieve this objective, the publication would have had to go of its way to demonstrate just how important and relevant liberalism was to the cause of Hong Kong's autonomy. As it was, *Freedom Front Weekly* barely discussed the matter of Hong Kong's autonomy.<sup>9</sup> Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that it was unable to do so. After all, lacking the rhetorical clout of *The Observer* (Guancha 觀察) or *Free China Journal*, *Freedom Front Weekly* would

always have struggled to set forth a compelling apologia for liberalism that could resonate with Hong Kong's public.<sup>10</sup>

Unsurprisingly then, *Freedom Front Weekly* was discontinued at the end of the 1950s. Its operations were taken up by the Chinese Youth Party's Free Press Company (Ziyou Chubanshe 自由出版社), however, *United Voice Weekly* emerged as an effective successor.

At the time of its first issue, *United Voice Weekly*'s chief editor was Chinese Youth Party member Zuo Shunsheng. The publication's vision was clearly stated: the complete restoration of democracy in the ROC through the proper functioning of the ROC's Constitution.<sup>11</sup> Many of the journal's contributors were from *Freedom Front Weekly*. Moreover, its pages featured insightful commentary on local and global groups and movements. While the weekly was popular among readers in Beijing and Washington, it largely unnerved the KMT's leaders in Taipei.

*United Voice Weekly* was most notable for the fact that it went further than *Freedom Front Weekly* did in articulating a transformation in Hong Kong's liberalism, away from focusing solely on opposing the CCP. For example, the journal squarely denounced Jiang Jieshi's KMT for its despotic rule. Additionally, after the KMT suspended publication of Taiwan's *Free China Journal*, *United Voice Weekly* picked up the flag of liberalism and emitted constitutionalist discourse from Hong Kong. It averred that the restoration of a proper constitutional government would ensure a successful counter-offensive against the PRC. Stated differently, such a counter-offensive would not be possible until a democratic and constitutional government had stemmed in Taiwan.

Zuo Shunsheng squarely denounced the CCP,<sup>12</sup> but equally, he spared no effort when it came to Jiang Jieshi's autocratic antics, particularly his attempt to rewrite the Constitution to allow himself a third term in office. Arguing that the ROC could never make headway in its political reforms with Jiang pursuing a third term, Zuo called for a provisional government to safeguard the ROC Constitution.<sup>13</sup>

In response to Zuo's call for a provisional government, *Central Daily News* launched a staunch rebuttal alleging that any such action would itself be unconstitutional. To support its contention, *Central Daily News* cited statements of Hu Shi, who at that time was politically friendly to the KMT. It even took statements from Zuo's own comrades in the Chinese Youth Party and used them against Zuo.<sup>14</sup> Zuo doubled down on his position. *Free China Journal* then joined in the fray, accusing *Central Daily News* of ad hominem attacks against Zuo.<sup>15</sup> Specific arguments from each side are of limited concern here. What this war of words reveals is that the controversy over Jiang Jieshi's attempt at a third term, originally a matter that was confined to Taiwan and involved *Free China Journal* and the KMT, had now expanded to become a source of tension between Taipei and Hong Kong.

With Jiang's despotism now a central topic in liberal discourse, the KMT closed down *Free China Journal* in 1960. Unsurprisingly, *United Voice Weekly* staunchly condemned the KMT over the *Free China Journal* Incident.

However, it is important to note that even if *United Voice Weekly* had forsaken Jiang's KMT, it had not yet given up on the ROC as a whole. Following the First Taiwan Strait Crisis of the mid-1950s, the narrative of "two Chinas" began to permeate. In response, *United Voice Weekly* assumed the stance that there could only be one China, and that it could only be legitimately represented by the ROC's Constitution.<sup>16</sup> Upon this premise, the publication argued that Hong Kong should, along with Taiwan, offer refuge and succor to émigrés from the mainland, and in doing so, signal to the international community that the ROC was the legitimate government of China that could authentically represent the Chinese people.<sup>17</sup>

However, *United Voice Weekly* ultimately fared only slightly better than *Freedom Front Weekly*. Like its predecessor, it largely failed to articulate how liberalism was relevant to issues that concerned Hongkongers, such as autonomy of the British colony and its future beyond British rule. In fact, some contributors were skeptical about Hong Kong's



ripeness for democracy. For instance, despite being an opponent of colonial rule, China Democratic Socialist Party member Sun Baogang 孫寶剛 expressed his fear that if Hong Kong had democratized, immature Chinese nationalism might plunge Hong Kong into extremism.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, anti-CCP and anti-KMT liberal discourse inherited by *United Voice Weekly* had failed to gain as much traction in Hong Kong in the 1960s as *Freedom Front Weekly* had in the 1950s. An attempt to turn the situation around was made by a successor publication, *Chinese Democrats Forum* (Zhongguo Minzhu Luntan 中国民主論壇; 1965–67), but it too had limited impact.

#### 4. The Liberalism of the New Confucians: *The Democratic Review*

Now we turn to that other school of anti-CCP liberalism in Hong Kong, which the so-called New Confucians from the Republican-era brought with them to Hong Kong. What impact did this school have? Focusing on Xu Fuguan, a central figure in *The Democratic Review*, I will summarize the trajectory of the school as it relates to the discourse itself [Nakamura 2018].

After the Second World War ended, Xu Fuguan left the army and devoted himself to academic studies as a New Confucian. After moving to Hong Kong in 1949, Xu founded *The Democratic Review* (1949–66). The periodical's team included other New Confucians such as Qian Mu, Tang Junyi 唐君毅, and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三. Yin Haiguang (of *Free China Journal*) was initially among them too, but Yin and the New Confucians eventually parted ways. The first issue of *The Democratic Review* claimed that there was a global conflict between democracy and tyranny and that the latter would eventually succumb to the former.<sup>19</sup>

This issue contained no explicit references to the concept of traditionalism. However, contributors clearly regarded the CCP's rule over mainland China as both tyrannical and anti-traditionalist, and advocated maintaining and advancing traditional Chinese culture in Hong Kong and Taiwan. *The Democratic Review* became, in all respects, the spiritual home of the New Confucians in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In 1958, Xu Fuguan, together with Zhang Junmai, Tang Junyi, and Mou Zongsan, published *A Declaration to the World on Behalf of Chinese Culture*, asserting that New Confucians were the legitimate heirs of traditional Chinese culture, and raising concerns about what they considered were destructive acts against Chinese thought and culture.

Thus, what were the key attributes of the New Confucian blend of liberalism?

The first thing to note is that although Xu and the rest of *The Democratic Review* team gradually turned up the heat on Jiang Jieshi's antics, as the other anti-CCP liberals did, they also criticized the liberal discourse of those involved with *Free China Journal* such as Hu Shi, the founder of the journal, and Yin Haiguang, who played a key role in it. Essentially, the two sides were in a dispute over whether putting liberalism into practice meant an outright adoption of modern Western values. During the 1950s, Yin slanted towards such Westernization, while Xu sharply denounced him for the same. In this way, Yin and Xu drifted further over the matter of whether the spirit of liberalism was synonymous with traditional Chinese culture.

This bone of contention was inseparably linked to the second key attribute of this brand of liberalism. Taiwan's *Free China Journal* held that politics should be separated from morality (cultural values). Based on this premise, it loathed state interference in the lives of citizens and objected to the view that the state should exercise power freely.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, *The Democratic Review*'s position was that politics and cultural values are intertwined. Contributors argued that the state, as the arbiter of what is morally right and wrong, must be independent in order to safeguard citizens'

freedoms. And so the argument went, that such a state must guarantee itself the freedom to exercise power freely.

Despite the termination of *Free China Journal* in 1960 and Yin Haiguang's subsequent shift from his advocacy of Westernization, the debate over the Taiwan Strait continued, with Yin now involved with *Wenxing* 文星 (1957–65) and Xu still involved with *The Democratic Review*. Regardless, New Confucians' liberal discourse started to lose its pull, appearing too removed from Hong Kong's political and social realities. The fact was that New Confucians never explained how their brand of liberalism—the vision of reviving Chinese nationalism based on traditional Chinese culture—could contribute towards a prosperous and stable Hong Kong. To worsen matters, when the leftist riots erupted in 1967 against British colonial rule, CCP's influence in Hong Kong temporarily strengthened, and the anti-CCP liberalism of the New Confucians waned by the same measure. Thus, by the end of the 1960s, *The Democratic Review*'s turn in history had come to an end.

The KMT regarded *The Democratic Review* as friendlier to its cause than *Free China Journal*, *Freedom Front Weekly*, and *United Voice Weekly* had been. Hence, the regime collaborated with the US to fund the publication.<sup>21</sup> However, this raises another question: After the KMT cracked down on *Free China Journal*,<sup>22</sup> how did it treat similarly inclined Hong Kong journals *Freedom Front Weekly* and *United Voice Weekly*? In other words, how did the regime respond to the shift in Hong Kong's liberal discourse from anti-CCP to anti-CCP and anti-KMT?

## 5. The Liberal Dispute between Hong Kong and Taiwan

The KMT regime in Taiwan should theoretically have been in lockstep with Republican-era liberals who flocked to Hong Kong after East Asia fell under the shadow of the Cold War. Indeed, anti-CCP liberalism of New Confucians was a godsend to the KMT in its efforts to convince the international community of the legitimacy of Taiwan. However, the regime grew wary of other liberal voices in Hong Kong, such as *Freedom Front Weekly*, which were starting to bash the regime. The KMT initially prioritized a cultural strategy for Hong Kong. However, once Hong Kong liberals started pushing for a new third force of liberalism through *Freedom Front Weekly*, the regime found it necessary to be more circumspect of these heirs to Republican-era liberalism.

One example of this wariness can be observed in a 1959 issue of the pro-KMT publication *Political Review* (Zhengzhi Pinglun 政治評論), which featured a letter from a reader critiquing *Freedom Front Weekly* (Vol. 3–2, 25 September, 1959). It is unclear whether this letter was the reader's own initiative or whether the KMT had put the reader up to it. Either way, the fact that the KMT circulated the letter in an internal meeting demonstrates just how much the discourse from Hong Kong had spooked the party. The letter itself read as follows.

惡意攻擊政府：在「自由陣線」、中聲報及……上，對政府每多吹毛求疵，經常發表似是而非的謬論，影響反共人心。

The KMT's concern about Hong Kong's situation came to a head at a closed party meeting held in 1958. At this meeting, the KMT singled out *Freedom Front Weekly* and the Chinese Youth Party for censure. Evidently, the KMT had run out of patience in its efforts to curry favor with Hong Kong's anti-CCP liberalism.<sup>23</sup>

As the rift widened between Taipei and the anti-CCP liberals of Hong Kong, the latter started linking arms with anti-CCP liberals of Taiwan. Hong Kong's reaction to the *Free China Journal* Incident revealed just how strong this

solidarity was, and as such, it sounded alarm bells in Taipei.

Hong Kong's liberals welcomed the plan by Lei Zhen (editor at *Free China Journal*) to form a new opposition party. In Hong Kong, the Chinese Youth Party's Zuo Shunsheng declared, in *United Voice Weekly* that "we have precious little time to save the ROC" (搶救中華民國時間已經不多了). As if returning the favor, *Free China Journal* threw its weight behind *United Voice Weekly* when the latter came to blows with *Central Daily News*. Amidst growing solidarity between the two publications, the KMT feared that Lei Zhen's move to form a new party would have ramifications beyond Taiwan. The regime expressed the concern that the closer the two liberal forces grew, the easier it would be for the CCP to manipulate them.

The following document shows just how alarmed and anxious the KMT had grown by this stage. The document is an extract from a Hong Kong report circulated within the party.

一：海外分歧活動，近藉國大開會，又見積極。由香港左舜生等所主持之聯合評論為中心，以友聯集團作主幹，除刊登反修憲反連任等反調文章外，並醞釀發表一聯合宣言，造成聲勢。但以其內部意見不一，草稿四度修改，友聯胡越等並為此邀宴各方，促請簽名，原定於二月十日發出。因我有所部署，各方反應冷淡，報紙且有批評，故截止十五日，僅拼湊六十人，將延至十九日在聯合評論刊出，其聲勢殊為微弱。

二：此次分歧活動，完全以友聯出版社為主。該集團雖受美國亞洲基金協會資助，但份子複雜，並有受匪參透運用跡象，不僅言論偏激，亦一貫主張不與政府合作。……所謂海外中華，企圖挾張發奎左舜生等以與我對壘。張左等人固不無戒心，即孫寶剛黃宇人之流亦各有其私人企圖，以致所謂聯合行動，本身即存有矛盾，尤其許多人拒絕簽署，甚至起草人勞思光亦曾要求退出。故左舜生十五日告許孝炎同志，渠擬設法扭轉，雖未成功，但此項宣言不過大海中投一小石子，對政府無何影響。

三：共匪最近亟圖利用海外此項分歧活動及台北自由中國之言論各方進行分化挑撥，指友聯所倡海外中華為搞第三個中國運動，受美方指使陰謀反蔣反台，因而不斷發動新的和談宣傳攻勢，提出兩點荒謬主張，呼籲國共雙方共同聲明反對兩個中國政策，同時國民黨聲明不反攻大陸，共產黨聲明對台灣放棄用武。日來匪方在港之文匯報晶報新晚報等均不斷有此類造謠文字，殊堪特別注意。<sup>24</sup>

The report also presented an analysis on Taiwan's Chinese Youth Party and China Democratic Socialist Party. It highlighted anti-KMT criticism in Hong Kong by members of the Friendship Society and other Hongkongers who were involved with the society and sympathetic to the Chinese Youth Party. The analysis then gave a stark warning that such criticism may become linked with the schismatic activities of *Free China Journal*'s Lei Zhen and Taiwan's Chinese Youth Party and China Democratic Socialist Party.<sup>25</sup>

Despite this report, the KMT remained suspicious of Hong Kong. Later that year, the regime's sense of crisis heightened after Lei Zhen decided to form a new opposition party with support from Taiwan and from overseas, including from *United Voice Weekly*.<sup>26</sup>

Subsequently, Zhang Fakui and others who were supporting Hong Kong's liberals backed out of signing a political declaration by *United Voice Weekly* condemning the KMT as unlawful. Perhaps their decision signaled that the KMT's sustained crackdown was bearing fruit. Even Zuo Shunsheng and others refrained from making any overt declarations of support for Lei Zhen's new party. Perhaps as part of a political horse trade, the Chinese Youth Party asked the KMT for more money to fund its anti-CCP and anti-Soviet propaganda, and the KMT agreed to comply.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, at the start of the 1960s, the KMT was using funding as a means of leverage over the Chinese Youth Party and *United Voice Weekly*. Even so, *United Voice Weekly* continued to bash the KMT. Consequently, the KMT cut its

funding and banned imports of the publication to Taiwan. Such measures against *United Voice Weekly* ultimately paid off for the regime. Evidence for this comes from the following document in KMT's internal archives. It must also be mentioned, however, that the KMT's curtailment of *United Voice Weekly* was, in a sense, an act of friendly fire inflicted upon what could have been its ally in Hong Kong in a common fight against the CCP.

二：聯合評論週刊係中國民主反共聯盟對外宣傳刊物。該盟之成立原為繼中國自由民主戰鬥同盟之後，海外分歧分子第二次大結合，而以本黨有關之張發奎黃宇人，青年黨之左舜生李璜，民社黨之羅永揚劉裕（實際上張君勱亦參加該項組織），民主社會黨之孫寶剛，友聯出版社之胡越、史誠之，及自由出版社（已結束）之謝澄平、丁遠標（已故）等人為核心出版週刊，公開主張“政治反攻大陸，民主改造台灣”，經常對政府及本黨進行抨擊。該刊費主要係由張發奎及“友聯社”支持，其他各黨派僅作象徵性捐助，發行範圍包括東南亞歐美及世界各地。

三：本組遵循中央決策，年來曾透過各方關係，對該集團進行疏導分化。首先運用亞洲基金會揭穿匪嫌份子參透友聯事實，迫使停止經濟支助，退出聯盟。次則利用張發奎左舜生等訪問歐美各國之機會促使轉變態度，造成該盟內部分裂。最近一年復爭取孫寶剛脫離。兼以刊物銷路不佳，張發奎停止資助，掙扎數月，至張君勱返港亦無更好辦法，最後唯有停刊。

四：該刊停辦，基本上對我有利。以香港為中心之反黨反政府集團日趨分解，由《自由陣線》、“友聯社”以至《聯合評論》先後沒落或停辦可以證明。但目前情勢變化，敵我鬥爭更為複雜。《聯評》雖已結束，而共匪之統戰工作必將乘機加強，若干反黨反政府份子之活動，仍極堪注意。<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

The KMT should theoretically have found some common ground with the liberals of Hong Kong and Taiwan in the fight against the CCP's rule. However, it inadvertently pushed these liberals into opposing the KMT as well as the CCP. Moreover, its cultural strategy had the effect of weakening liberalism-as-a-phenomenon in Hong Kong and Taiwan, ultimately undermining the political clout of anti-CCP liberalism in Taiwan.

From Hong Kong's perspective, the trajectory of liberalism was as follows. Liberalism poured into the colony but never gained traction among Hongkongers. The same was true of the variant of liberalism advocated by the New Confucians. As limited as Hong Kong liberalism may have been, it nonetheless became a target of the Taipei regime's cultural strategy. The effect of Taipei's interventions was to wreck what could have been a liberal front uniting Taiwan and Hong Kong against the CCP. Thus, anti-CCP liberalism, both in the sense of universal liberalism and liberalism-as-a-phenomenon, began to sink into Hong Kong as it did in Taiwan. The catalyst for this transformation was the Taipei regime's persecution of Lei Zhen.

However, there is another historical development that deserves a mention. Lei Zhen's liberalism was reignited in Hong Kong in the late 1970s. After Lei's release from prison, his memoirs were published in the Hong Kong publication *The Seventies* (70 niandai 七十年代). Subsequently, *The Seventies* started featuring articles penned by Hu Ping 胡平 and other intellectuals who advocated liberalism in mainland China, providing an opportunity for reviving liberalism in the colony. Accordingly, at the start of the 1980s, Beijing viewed the publication as a source of concern. Considering that Taiwan was liberalizing and democratizing around this time, it seems apt to say that the triangular relationship over liberalism between Beijing, Hong Kong, and Taipei was coming into play once again.

## Notes

- (1) From Zhongyang Xuanchuanbu 中央宣傳部 to Huanan Fenju 華南分局, 'Dui Gang dagong, Wenhui bianji fangzhen zhishi' 對港大公、文匯編輯方針指示, "Zhonggong Zhongyang Huanan Fenju dang'an" 中共中央華南分局檔案, 204/1/245/037, 18 September 1950, stored at Guangdongsheng Dang'anguan 廣東省檔案館.
- (2) "Ziyou Zhongguo de zongzhi" 『自由中国』的宗旨, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 自由中国, Inaugural Issue, 20 November 1949.
- (3) Shelun 社論, "Wu xian Zongtong yu weixian: Bochi Zhongyang Ribao 1 yue 9 ri shelun" 勿陷總統於違憲：駁斥中央日報一月九日社論, *Ziyou Zhongguo*, 18–2, 16 January 1958; Shelun, "Quxiao yidang zhuanzheng!" 取消一黨專政！, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 20–2, 16 January 1959.
- (4) Lei Zhen 雷震, "Women weishenme jipo xuyao yige qiangyouli de fanduidang" 我們為什麼迫切需要一個強有力的反對黨, *Ziyou Zhongguo*, 22–10, 16 May 1960.
- (5) Shelun, "Zhengdang de chengren wenti" 政黨的承認問題, *Zhongyang Ribao [Taipei]* 中央日報〔台北版〕, 29 July 1960.
- (6) Shelun, "Jinggao Riben minzhu ziyou renshi shu" 敬告日本民主自由人士書, *Ziyou Zhenxian* 自由陣線, 6–8, 10 August 1951; Peiran 沛然, "Jianshe ziyou Yazhou shengzhong de sanda wenti" 建設自由亞洲聲中的三大問題, *Ziyou Zhenxian*, 23–11, 1 August, 1955.
- (7) Shelun, "Jiang 'minzhu' yu Mao 'xianfa'" 蔣「民主」与毛「憲法」, *Ziyou Zhenxian*, 18–2, 2 April 1954; Xie Chengping 謝澄平, "Ziyou renmin dageming kaishile! (Daishelun)" 自由人民大革命開始了！（代社論）, *Ziyou Zhenxian*, 33–5, 6, 10 October 1957; Xie Chengping, "'Minzhu gaizao Taiwan' dakewen" 『民主改造台湾』答客問, *Ziyou Zhenxian*, 35–11, 5 May 1958.
- (8) Shelun, "Women yiguan fandui 'zhongli Taiwan'" 我們一貫反對『中立台湾』, *Ziyou Zhenxian*, 23–5, 20 June 1955.
- (9) Shelun, "Ba Xianggang jianshecheng ziyou zhengyi de shehui" 把香港建設成自由正義的社會, *Ziyou Zhenxian*, 28–7, 27 August 1956.
- (10) Xiao Yi 蕭怡, "Lun ziyou zhuyi de benzhi yu fangxiang" 論自由主義的本質与方向, *Ziyou Zhenxian*, 40–10, 22 June 1959.
- (11) "Fakanci" 發刊詞, *Lianhe Pinglun* 聯合評論, 15 August 1958.
- (12) Zuo Shunsheng 左舜生, "Zhonggong zai xiangxie shenme?" 中共在想些什麼？, *Lianhe Pinglun*, 31 July 1959; idem, "Mao Zedong zuihou de kubei" 毛沢東最後的苦杯, *Lianhe Pinglun*, 2 July 1963.
- (13) Zuo Shunsheng, "Qiangjiu Zhonghua Minguo shijian yijing bu duole" 搶救中華民國時間已經不多了, *Lianhe Pinglun*, 19 June 1959.
- (14) Shelun, "Zuo Shunsheng de 'gaige guimo'" 左舜生的『改革規模』, *Zhongyang Ribao [Taipei]*, 29 June 1959.
- (15) Shelun, "Zheyang neng jiejué wenti ma: Duiyu Zuo Shunsheng xiansheng zhuzhang yu Zhongyang Ribao shelun de pingyi" 這樣能解決問題嗎：對於左舜生先生主張与中央日報社論的平議, *Ziyou Zhongguo*, 21–2, 16 July 1959.
- (16) Benshe tongren 本社同人, "Bochi suowei "liangge Zhongguo" de miulun" 駁斥所謂『兩個中国』的謬論, *Lianhe Pinglun*, 13 November 1959.
- (17) "Lianhe Pinglun, Zuguo Zhoukan, Xinshehui, Ziyou Xueren 'wei tao-Gang nanbao huyu'" 聯合評論、祖国周刊、新社会、自由學人「為逃港難胞呼籲」, *Lianhe Pinglun*, 25 May 1962.

- (18) Sun Baogang 孫寶剛, “Minzu zhuyi yu zhimindi wenti” 民族主義与殖民地問題, *Lianhe Pinglun*, 19 January 1962.
- (19) “Chuangkanci” 創刊詞, *Minzhu Pinglun* 民主評論, 1–1, 16 June 1949.
- (20) Shelun, “Ziyou ritan zhen ziyou” 自由日談真自由, *Ziyou Zhongguo*, 10–3, 1 February 1954.
- (21) Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, “Benkan jieshu de hua” 本刊結束的話, *Minzhu Pinglun*, 17–9, September 1966.
- (22) Initially, *Free China Journal* was itself US-funded. Funds were procured by Lei Zhen and Wang Jiwu 王紀五, son of Wang Shijie [Huang 2019].
- (23) Tai 台 (40) gaimizi 改秘字, no. 0456, presented by Zhang Qiyun 張其昀 and Tang Zong 唐縱 (6 October 1951, Zongcai piqian 總裁批簽, 40/0360), *Jiang Jieshi zongcai piqian daxi dang'an* 蔣介石總裁批簽大溪檔案, stored at Dangshiguan 黨史館; Tai (47) yangmizi 央秘字, no. 087, presented by Zhang Lisheng 張厲生, “Di 8 jie Zhongchanghui di 3 ci huiyi mijilu” 第8屆中常會第三次會議密紀錄, 3 March (15 March 1958, Zongcai piqian, 47/0038), *ibid.*
- (24) Tai (49) yangmizi, no. 041, presented by Tang Zong, Tao Xisheng 陶希聖, and Chen Jianzhong 陳建中 (17 February 1960, Zongcai piqian, 49/0033), *ibid.*
- (25) *Ibid.*
- (26) Tai (49) yangmizi, no. 152, presented by Tang Zong and Chen Jianzhong (6 July 1960, Zongcai piqian, 49/0122), *ibid.*
- (27) Tai (49) yangmizi, no. 180, presented by Tang Zong and Chen Jianzhong (12 August 1960, Zongcai piqian, 49/0144), *ibid.*; Tai (49) yangmizi, no. 235, presented by Tao Xisheng, Tang Zong, and Chen Jianzhong (8 October 1960, Zongcai piqian, 49/0181), *ibid.*
- (28) Tai (53) yangmizi, no. 166, presented by Gu Fengxiang 谷鳳翔 and Chen Jianzhong (7 November 1964, Zongcai piqian, 53/0081), *ibid.*

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