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Topical Issue: The Making and Operation of Everyday Authoritarianism in Taiwan during the Cold War
Guest Editor: Isabelle Cheng

Isabelle Cheng and Táňa Dluhošová (2018)
No Distant Memory: Rethinking the State, Its Citizens, and Authoritarianism in Everyday Life, in: *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 47, 2, 3–13.

URN: http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-4-11711

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

The online version of this introduction and the other articles can be found at:
<www.CurrentChineseAffairs.org>

Published by
GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies, in co-operation with the Lau China Institute at King's College London, and Hamburg University Press.

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No Distant Memory: Rethinking the State, Its Citizens, and Authoritarianism in Everyday Life

Isabelle CHENG and Táňa DLUHOŠOVÁ

On 10 October 1952, the 41st anniversary of the founding of Republic of China (ROC), Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) – the national leader exiled to Taiwan three years earlier from mainland China – addressed the nation. He appealed intimately to the nationalist sentiments of the people in Taiwan, then internationally known as Formosa. Calling for their compatriotic empathy towards the people in China, he urged that the

> civil population and armed forces in *Free China* must not for one moment forget the *urgent* expectancy of our fellow citizens in mainland China for *early* liberation. (Chiang 1952: 53, italics added for emphasis)

Appealing to liberty-loving American listeners, this "early liberation" was interpreted by Madam Chiang Song Mei-ling (Song Meiling) that her countryfolk in Taiwan should not give up the fight for the liberty of the Chinese nation, when she spoke on the radio in New York in January 1950 before departing for Taiwan (Song 1950). After the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the authoritarian regime of Free China in Taiwan, as well as the governments of the so-called Free Asian nations on the foremost front (Yen 1969: 77) of the Cold War, were shielded by similar kinds of discourse punctuated by notions of democracy and liberty – even despite sociopolitical life in these states being neither democratic nor liberal.

As the cliché goes, in the wake of these speeches repeatedly denouncing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as traitors and the Soviet Union as imperialist the rest is history. Chiang Kai-shek, his wife Song Mei-ling, his son Chiang Ching-kuo (Jiang Jingguo), as well as the island's top diplomats – who countless times addressed the public both domestically and internationally along similar lines of nationalism, patriotism, and anti-communism (e.g. Liu 1950; Hsu 1951; Tsiang 1951, 1955, 1958; Tong 1956; Chiang 1957, 1969; Song 1958a, 1958b; Chow 1965a, 1965b) – have all paled into insignificance, except for the Chiang family being in the limelight from the unremitting endeavours of realising transitional justice in contemporary society. Without launching the counterattack that Chiang and his government had long prepared the people for (Chiang 1965), the anti-communist bastion of Taiwan embarked on the journey of democratisation in conjunction with the rise of Taiwanese identity. Such political transformation, the implications of which also manifested in other realms of sociopolitical life, has been well researched, largely by the scholarship coming together under the rubric of "the third wave of democratisation" (Huntington 1991). Therefore, in addition to timely contributing to the debate on transitional justice, what are the further justifications for this topical issue that re-engages with the formation of the authoritarian state of Taiwan at the peak of the Cold War?

Justifications obviously neither lie in the lineal view of human progression, nor in another cliché that those who do not learn from history will be condemned to repeat it. If a strongman's speeches can be seen in the light of communication rather than of indoctrination or disinformation, then Chiang's speeches provide such justifications. Encouraging the people in Taiwan to stand on their own feet, in the same national address mentioned above, Chiang as head of state applauded the "high morale of the armed forces" and the "ardent zeal" of the youth who had received military training (Chiang 1952: 54). He moved on to declare the realisation of democracy critical after the enforcement of local self-government and popular elections of local councillors. His content extended to the economic front too, and announced the "highest record of all time" regarding the production of foodstuffs, salt, and coal. He dwelled on the success of the implementation of the "Land-to-the-Tillers" programme, in contrast to the "Sovietisation" of peasants' lives in China (Chiang 1952: 53–54).

As the war against the CCP seemed to have lost momentum after 1965 (see Isabelle Cheng in this issue), the Executive Yuan premier's annual reports to the Legislative Yuan – like those delivered by Yen Chia-kan (Yan Jiagan) in 1969 and Chiang Ching-kuo in 1973 – were even more substantiated by the government's public policies (Yen 1969; Chiang 1973). After duly elaborating their views on the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution in China and analysing world affairs within the frame of the fatalistic downfall of communism, the two premiers unfolded the government's plans to enhance defence modernisation, nuclear research, anti-corruption initiatives, organisational reform, educational entitlement, economic planning, infrastructure investment, agricultural production and revitalisation, manufacturing growth, and trade expansion (Yen 1969; Chiang 1973). Clearly, authoritarianism – as overseen and executed by its institutional head – was not only built on might but also the people's mind; it could not function without feeding the people and powering their economy, particularly when their material well-being was taken by the regime as *the* token for victory within a self-propelled ideological conflict.

Generating a *holistic* understanding that can map out the reach of authoritarianism into all aspects of daily life is the very point of departure for this topical issue, as it strives to rethink the making and operation of authoritarianism in Taiwan. The diverse lines of scholarly investigation within this topical issue weave together a picture of the enmeshment of politics with economy, culture, and everyday life. In this all-compassing way of life that could also be found elsewhere, such as in South Korea, the authoritarian government sanitised what citizens read, demanded their lives as a patriotic sacrifice, aired the leader's worldviews like the transmitting of Big Brother's speeches in Brave New World, distributed the resources prioritised by the government, and subsidised military personnel's living by accommodating them in purpose-built houses. When this system was pushed to its extreme, as in a self-closed warzone like Jinmen, the military–civilian relationship was not only a matter of militarisation but also of interdependence for subsistence.

Dissecting authoritarianism as such, this topical issue is able to draw out the dynamism between burgeoning state authority and the people who live *with* its enactment. This dynamism deepens our understanding of authoritarianism as a type of political system *as well as* lived everyday reality. It also complements research on authoritarianism as a political system that focuses on the monopolisation of power by civilian or military individuals, ethnic or regional groups, or political parties for purposes of ideological legitimation, information dissemination, political representation, institutional arrangement, the penal system, and of resource distribution. In spite of being conceived of as an oppressive regime often associated with militarism (Vagts 1967), authoritarianism as a research subject was in fact initially taken up within the academic discipline of Psychology in the United States, and has been approached by scholarships with diverse interests ever since.

In response to the anti-Semitism rife in Europe during the Second World War, authoritarianism is proposed as a scale of personality traits rooted in childhood experiences (Adorno et al. 1950) that develop into conventionalism, submission, and aggression in adult life (Altemeyer 1981). Such personality traits are, in essence, those that are either to be influenced by or intend to take control of power, authority, and hierarchy. While the relationship between "the influenced" and "the influencer" is related to charisma (Lindholm 1990), these interactions are not absent from the arena of electoral politics when populist or autocratic leaders come to power (Harms et al. 2018).

Given that resource distribution is at the core of the survivability of authoritarian regimes, related scholarship has also since interacted with the field of Political Economy. This is particularly so vis-à-vis the "developmental state" model, whereby the state is "brought back in" for the analysis of the making of economic policies. The authoritarian state's interventionist policies as charted by nationalist technocrats are considered positive contributions to the rapid industrialisation initially built on export-oriented, labour-intensive industries. However, the priority given to economic growth and sociopolitical stability are also taken into account for the state's suppression of appropriate wages, negligence of workers' rights, and exploitation of women as cheap and disposable labour (Gold 1983; Amsden 1989; Öniş 1991; Leftwich 1995; Pempel 1999; Ho 2014; Lee 2004).

Seen from the strategic vantage point that surveillance leads to totalitarianism (Giddens 1985), it is observed that there is a "global turn to authoritarianism" where a swath of states across the world have strengthened their surveillance capacities to count, categorise, and monitor people within their territories – and, in the Foucauldian sense of "panopticism," to train, mould, and discipline citizen-subjects (Wood 2017: 358–359). Thus, authoritarianism also stands for a governmentality that skews towards intolerance for *otherness* as embodied by foreigners, minority groups, or non-mainstream ideas and prioritises uniformity of – or conformity to – a belief system pre-set or vetted by the state authority.

Within this labyrinth of interrelated authoritarianism scholarship, this topical issue expands the scope thereof from the usual domain of politics to the realm of *everyday reality*. This topical issue advocates that, essential as it is, our understanding of authoritarianism as a political system should go beyond its instrumentalisation of citizens in the name of the “national interest” and the suppression of their political and socio-economic rights by political, military, and judiciary means. The research agenda should *also* elucidate how authoritarianism, as lived experience, permeates citizens’ daily lives and triangulate this permeation by probing how those individuals respond to its oppression, indoctrination, surveillance, and disciplining.

This interactive and holistic view coincides with a recent trend towards the diversification of the study of the Cold War. “Set free” from its previous domination by International Relations and military-diplomatic history, the Cold War is now also explored by Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies – not regarding its origins, but rather its operation, impact, and legacy. Parallel to the evolution of the postcolonial world order, the Cold War is now more conceived of as a global phenomenon. Thereby the previously overlooked experiences of people in Latin America, the Middle East, and South Asia have come to light, while migration, religion, tourism, gender, sexuality, literature, and pop culture have become sites for the study of the Cold War (Masuda forthcoming). In sum, the pursuit of a “human-faced” Cold War strengthens – rather than discards – the established epistemology with its traditional framing around the bipolarity of belief, political representation, economic productivity, and military capacity.

Echoing such endeavours to project the human face of the Cold War, this topical issue uses the decades-long experiences of Taiwan’s inhabitants as a vantage point to scope out the breadth and depth of authoritarianism – as executed by government policies, and as conceived of by male and female citizens alike in their daily activities. Such advocacy of divulging “everyday authoritarianism” is partly achieved by the methods and source materials employed by the seven articles featured in this interdisciplinary topical issue; collectively, they contribute to piecing together an intimate portrayal of Taiwan’s humanity under authoritarianism.

Picking up the trail of regulations regarding press control in the bulletins issued by the Taiwan Provincial Government, Táňa Dluhošová utilises these unique archival materials to present how censorship and censors worked in 1945–1949, prior to the Nationalist (Kuomintang, KMT) government taking refuge in Taiwan. Employing the concept of “necropolitics,” Cheng analyses how citizens were encouraged by the regime to sacrifice their lives for winning the war against the CCP. These insights arise by using a wide breath of sources including government archives, declassified minutes of meetings chaired by Chiang, and personal diaries and memoirs of key actors as well as victims. Corresponding to Cheng's focus on authoritarian leadership, Lut Lams and Wei-lun Lu adopt Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Metaphor Analysis for examining Chiang's speeches that instated his charismatic status at the helm of the authoritarian regime. For their respective studies on food consumption, Pin-Tsang Tseng and Chang-hui Chi work with official documentations and historical materials as well as personal documents that reveal the impact of authoritarianism at the individual level. To explore citizens' responses to the authoritarian regime's permeation, the interviews conducted by Elisa Tamburo, Chi, and Hsiao-Chiao Chiu in their respective articles all foreground a personal understanding of the effects of oppressive policies in their daily lives at home and in their social relationships with neighbours, clan members, and authority outside of home.

This close scrutiny of everyday authoritarianism is also facilitated by the topical issue's temporal interest in probing the making and operation of authoritarianism. Underlining how information circulation in Taiwan in 1945–1949 was affected by the prolonged civil war in mainland China, Dluhošová looks at the control of press and censorship in these early post-war years and demonstrates the party–state symbiosis before a full-fledged authoritarian regime grew roots in Taiwan. Cheng, Lams and Lu, and Tseng concentrate, meanwhile, on the first 15 years after the KMT's retreat to Taiwan, when the prospect of war against the CCP seemed imminent. Centralising personal memories that bridge the past and the present, Tamburo brings to the fore the legacies of authoritarianism that outlive its duration as an institution. Such longitudinal insights are also brought to light by Chi's and Chiu's research on Jinmen. Set against the backdrop of the Military Administration (戰地政務, *zhangdi zhengwu*) under the Jinmen Defense Command from 1956 to 1992, their articles illustrate the long-lasting impact of authoritarianism – spanning across generations – among men and women on the island.

Finally, the illumination of everyday authoritarianism is delivered by this interdisciplinary topical issue as it situates censorship, war, discourse, food, housing, taste, and livelihood on the continuum between an oppressive state and its resilient male and female citizens.

Taking the top-down perspective of the state, Cheng explores the motivations that drove Chiang Kai-shek to consolidate the KMT's authoritarian rule. Dluhošová and Lams and Lu illuminate how values selected by the KMT were promoted by the publishing industry and conceptualised by Chiang personally; they build inroads into better understanding mechanisms of information manipulation and indoctrination. A top-down approach that investigates how laws and regulations restricted the rights of the population is enlivened by Dluhošová's study of the publishing industry and of literature, as well as by Tseng's and Chi's examination of food both production and rationing. Tseng and Chi further show that the regime's tempering with basic necessities such as food or drink facilitated changes not only to people's diet but also to their cultural preferences – ones that eventually gave life to a new drinking tradition.

The everyday authoritarianism perspective advocated by this topical issue would not have been accomplishable without the bottom-up triangulation of those who lived through the authoritarian regime years and who felt its impact the most acutely. Authoritarianism as lived experience is exemplified by the daily reality of residents in Taiwan's erstwhile military villages, as observed by Tamburo. Defying the conventional portrayal of mainlanders (外省人, *waishengren*) as the beneficiaries of authoritarianism owing to the regime's indoctrination of them vis-à-vis Chinese nationalism, Tamburo reminds us of the inadequacy of dichotomising mainlanders and Taiwanese (本省人, *benshengren*) when seeking to grasp the dynamics within local society. Mainlanders, particularly those in the military, were themselves subjects of the regime's persecution and penetration, partly made manifest by the *spatial* design of their residential compounds and the physical construction of their homes. Their families' daily activities and social interactions inside and outside the (not so) private home were marred by self-disciplining and overshadowed by the mutual watching over each other among residents.

Everyday authoritarianism was self-evident in the warzone of Jinmen, where political, socio-economic, and cultural life were subject to overwhelming regimentation in the name of developing the island into a utopia (Szonyi 2008). Intimidating as it was, militarisation as such also provided fertile soil for the local economy to thrive on and facilitated the meeting of the military's daily needs, including entertainment. The civilian population, as observed by Chi, adopted the military's drinking preferences after the Jinmen Defence Command introduced sorghum as the crop for liquor distilling. Chi observes that military–civilian relationships, stiff and confrontational when it came to resource distribution, could turn relaxed and amicable in consequence of a drinking ritual at the banquet table. The distinctive taste of sorghum liquor, a by-product of authoritarianism, unexpectedly blended into the islanders' identity.

Bringing a much-needed gender perspective, Chiu underlines how Jinmen women of different age cohorts negotiated the patriarchy-cum-authoritarianism as the island's traditional livelihoods of farming and fishing came to be heavily regulated by the military. Riding on the back of rapid economic development in Jinmen and Taiwan, they not only secured personal economic independence but also earned social respect within their family and their clan. Chi's and Chiu's research is not an appendage to authoritarian Taiwan, but rather a testimony to its twists, dynamism, and complexity. Their respective contributions to the better understanding of everyday authoritarianism are also timely given the growing scholarly interest in Jinmen, which has culminated in the establishment of the field of Jinmen Studies (金門學, *jinmenxue*) (Wang 2011).

Authoritarianism founded and prominent during the Cold War either in the so-called free world, such as Taiwan, or in the countries lying behind the Iron Curtain is not but a distant memory. Its impact and legacy is entangled with pressing political interests of our day, in the wake of needing to realise transitional justice – as commonly pursued in post-authoritarian societies. Authoritarianism as a political system in these societies may have crumbled in an institutional sense; yet, the extent of the impact of its omnipresence among citizens' political, socio-economic, cultural, and personal lives has only just surfaced.

As shown in Taiwan and elsewhere, the declassification of archives, the removal of larger-than-life political symbols, the changing of place names, and the appearance of state-sponsored dark tourism have become intertwined with the investigation or prosecution of injustice, the restoration of personal integrity and property, the conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritages, and the emergence of previously neglected historicity – and, with it, a subsequent alternative historiography. Post-authoritarianism as a form of epistemology is as challenging and complicated as postcolonialism regarding their ultimate concerns with issues of identity, dignity, value, power, and knowledge. This topical issue is, then, our timely contribution to this emerging post-authoritarian epistemology.

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