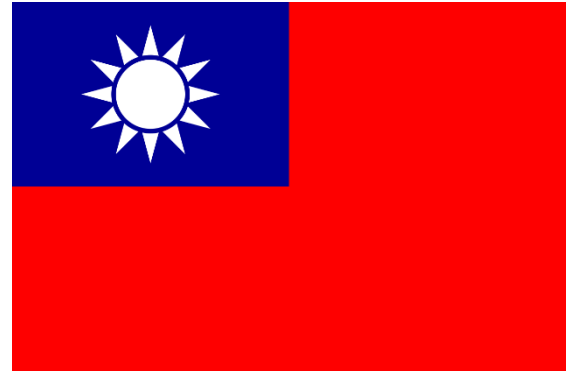


# History of Taiwan III – The Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan

*Notes taken from Dr. Andrew D. Morris's Taiwan's History: An Introduction.*



Flag of the Republic of China

- Due to the island's unique status as a former Japanese colony, Chinese leaders decided to govern the new Taiwan Province in quite a different way than the rest of the ROC.
- For having lived in relative peace under the modernizing Japanese colonial regime for fifty years, Taiwanese people were dismissed as brainwashed "slaves" who did not deserve the relatively modern conditions that they enjoyed (especially in comparison to conditions in China after eight years of war against Japan).
- Perhaps not understanding the excitement most islanders felt about being annexed by the ROC, the conquering regime immediately began working in Taiwan toward two main goals that had little to do with the hopes of the recently liberated Taiwanese.
  - First was the project of replacing any Japanese or unorthodox customs with Chinese, in order to make the island safe for ROC rule.
  - The new regime's second goal was to use Taiwan's relative wealth to win their new civil war on the mainland against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).
- The implementation of these measures served quickly to erase the goodwill that the new government had won just for being Chinese. As Taiwan was officially and forcibly [reintegrated into China], unemployment lines became distinctly Taiwanese.

- A program of de-Taiwanization, designed to "eradicate the slave mentality" among Taiwanese, meant the banning of Japanese newspaper pages, rendering voiceless an entire generation of intellectuals educated under the Japanese and propagating an official cult of the benevolent and sagely dictator Chiang Kai-shek, honoured as "Savior of the People" and "Grand Family Head" (Hsiau 2000, 53-54; Chang 1993, 141).
- The ROC's takeover of Taiwan also involved the establishment of control over all aspects of the economy for the public (but far too often, the private) good.
- Since Taiwan now belonged to the ROC, what belonged to Taiwan would belong to the ROC as well; organized [Mainland China] units descended on Chinese Taiwan, stripping the island of everything from railway wiring and signal equipment to luggage on random rail baggage cars, industrial machinery, plumbing equipment, and entire factories—all to be sent back to Shanghai, Xiamen, or other coastal mainland cities (Kerr 1965, 132-135; Peng 1972, 49).
  - This was in addition to the great amounts of raw materials sugar, coal, salt, and cement—appropriated and shipped to the mainland.
- Tensions were only exacerbated by the condescension with which so many Taiwanese viewed these arrivals from a very poor China.
- Taiwanese protests against the ROC began to take the shape of direct (and unanimously unfavorable) comparisons with the Japanese colonial regime. Voicing such concerns loudly was not wise, however, and was treated as the work of "disloyal subversives" who could only be planning Communist rebellion against the ROC. The government gave lip service to their promises of democracy; in 1946 public elections were held for village and town councils, who then elected county and city . . . but they were given only "consultative" or advisory powers and thus could do little to relieve the frustration that was growing so rapidly (Phillips 1999, 286).
- Open rebellion broke out in 1947. Two entire divisions of ROC troops were transferred to Taiwan from the mainland, and a reign of state terror – called "The White Terror" – against its opponents began.

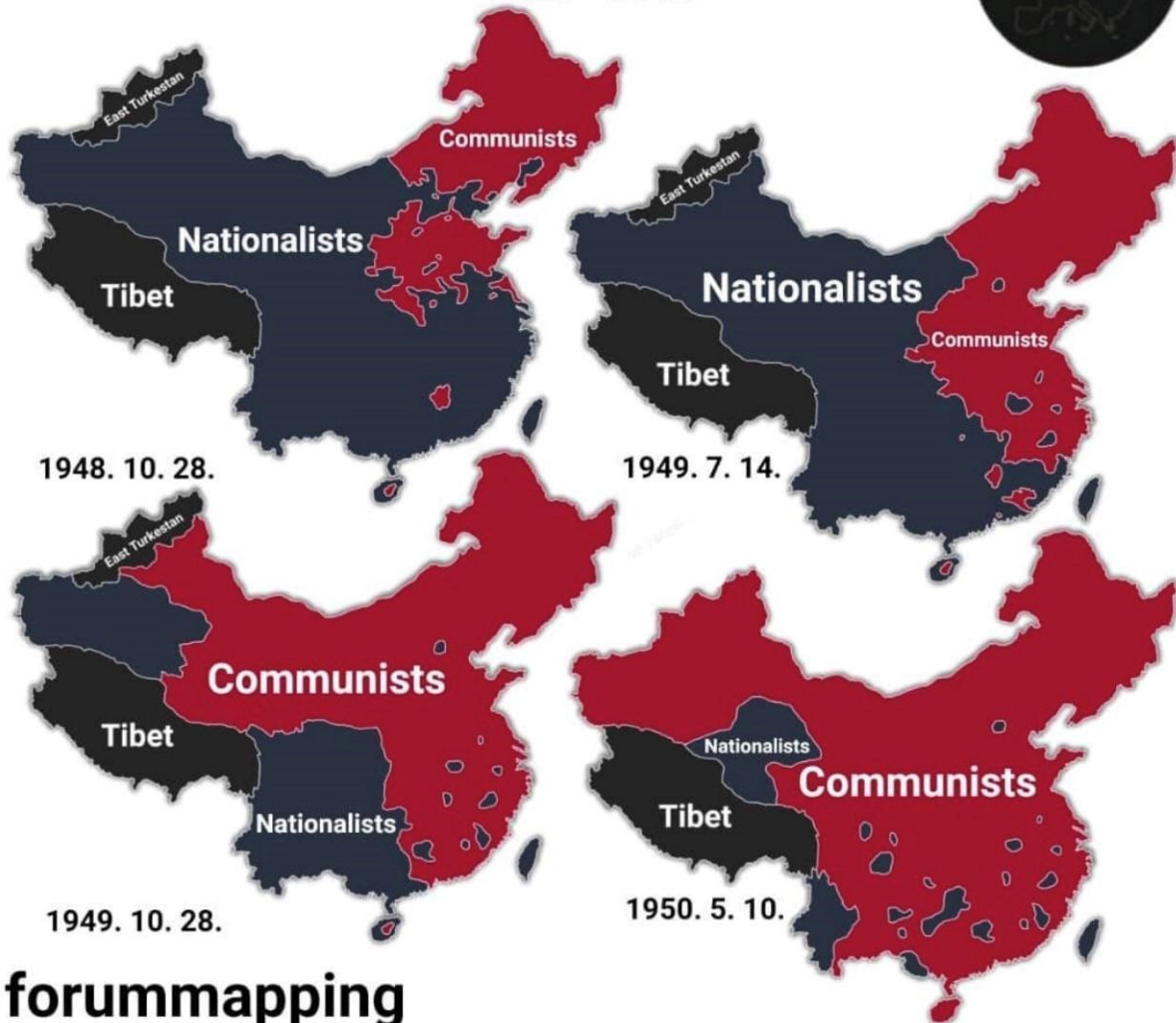
- Chinese troops landing on Taiwan began random killings of Taiwanese as soon as they came ashore, many shooting guns loaded with soft-nosed dum-dum bullets designed to wound even more painfully (Kerr 1965, 260).
- For . . . several months, thousands of Taiwanese elites who were seen as posing a threat to the regime—professors, doctors, lawyers, professionals, college and even high school students—were systematically arrested and executed in cold blood (Vecchione 1998).
- As George Kerr, a U.S. State Department official stationed in Taiwan at the time, described: "*By March 17 the pattern of terror and revenge had emerged very clearly. First to be destroyed were all established critics of the Government. Then in their turn came . . . all youths who had taken part in the interim policing of Taipei, middle school students, middle school teachers, lawyers, economic leaders and members of influential families, and at last, anyone who in the preceding eighteen months had given offense to a mainland Chinese, causing him to 'lose face'*" (Kerr 1965, 299-300).
- Some estimates put the number of Taiwanese purged in 1947 at 20,000. By the mid-1950s, the government had some fourteen thousand political prisoners (both Taiwanese and mainlander) in custody and had executed probably one or two thousand more (Taylor 2000, 211-212).



*The Horrifying Inspection by Taiwanese printmaker Li Jun. It describes the hostile environment in Taiwan shortly after the February 28 incident, which marked the start of the White Terror period.*

# Chinese Civil War

1927-1949



- In 1949, the Republic of China government was chased out of mainland China by a victorious Chinese Communist Party after more than three years of civil war. In what can only be called a cruel irony, this newest Chinese province of Taiwan, the province in which the ROC government had the least legitimacy, became home to the entire regime.
- At the time of the 1947 uprising, Chiang Kai-shek, author of that year's brutal measures, could hardly have imagined that in just two years, this most despised and "poisoned" province of Taiwan would be all that he and his party would ever control again.