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Discussion Paper

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**Study on the Tendency of Politicization of
Taiwan's Social Movements**

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After the Democratic Progressive Party went out of power in 2008, Taiwan's social movements gradually rose up, beginning from the "Wild Strawberries Movement", and kept intervening in political struggles through the Anti-media Monopoly Movement, the Anti-Nuclear Movement, the Hung Chung-chiu case, the "Sunflower Student Movement", the "Anti-curriculum Change Movement", etc. Through attacking the Kuomintang administration's reputation and efficiency, publicizing "opposition against China and unification", hindering development of cross-Straits relations and supporting the Democratic Progressive Party's assumption of power, Taiwan's social movements have become tools for political struggles and show an obvious tendency of politicization.

I. From the "Wild Strawberries Movement" to the "Anti-Curriculum Change Movement": Development of Taiwan's Social Movements

Taiwan's social movements have a long history. In the 1980s, as "martial law" was lifted politically, a series of social struggle movements emerged, including peasants' movements, women's movements, indigenous people's movements, environmental protection movements, old soldiers' return-to-homeland movements, anti-nuclear movements, student movements and various collective self-relief movements. These social movements combined with political movements led by people outside the Kuomintang and the Democratic Progressive Party, and pushed forward Taiwan's political and social transformation towards democracy and diversity. After the 1990s, the Democratic Progressive Party gradually replaced street struggles outside the system with elections in the system, and was increasingly distanced from social movement groups; the Democratic Progressive Party came into power in 2000, and social movement groups emphasized independence more.

However, after the Democratic Progressive Party went out of power in 2008, Taiwan's social movements showed a rising tendency, and social movements and student movements combined and penetrated each other, so various political forces, especially the pan-green camp, intervened successively. In November 2008, the second Chen-Chiang summit was held in Taipei. Lee Ming-tsung, an assistant professor at the National Taiwan University Department of Sociology, issued the "1106 Action Announcement", and instigated hundreds of students to sit in front of Taiwan's administrative bodies and clash with the police. This was the beginning of the so-called "Wild Strawberries Movement". Lin Fei-fan, Dennis Wei, Chen Wei-ting, etc. who later led the "Sunflower Student Movement"

all participated in this movement. At that time, because the Democratic Progressive Party had just gone out of power, students participating in the movement did not trust the Democratic Progressive Party, and maintained a distance from the Democratic Progressive Party. Lin Chia-lung attempted to speak on the stage, but was forced to step down from the stage.

From then on, Taiwan's social movement groups continued to accumulate energy, strengthen organizational ability and foster organizations' backbones through intervening in the incidents of the Losheng Sanatorium, the Sanying tribe, Kuokuang Petrochemical, Orchid Island nuclear waste, same-sex marriage right, Young Fast Optoelectronics, attempted rail suicide of closed factories' workers, the Shaoxing Community, Minamar Resort, Wenlin Yuan, the Dapu case, etc.

After 2008, Want Want Holdings returned to invest in Taiwan, acquired media in the China Times Group including "China Times", "CTI Television" and "China Television" successively, and formed Want Want China Times Group. On July 25, 2012, Associate Research Fellow at Institutum Iurisprudentiae, "Academia Sinica" Huang Kuo-chang and others held a press conference, and issued an announcement to oppose Want Want China Times Group's acquisition of CNS. Nongovernmental social groups formed the "901 Anti-media Monopoly Alliance", and jointly pushed forward the Anti-media Monopoly Movement. The Anti-Media Monster Youth Alliance also participated, formed the mode of alliance between student movements and social movements, and was supported by the Democratic Progressive Party.

On March 9, 2013, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident in Japan, nongovernmental environmental protection groups including the "Green Citizens' Action Alliance" held the "309 Great Demonstration Against Nuclear Plants across Taiwan" at the same time all over Taiwan, and requested the Taiwan authority to stop the operation of the "Fourth Nuclear Power Plant" and realize denuclearization of Taiwan. Police statistics show nearly 70,000 people joined the demonstration, while the organizer said more than 200,000 people in Taiwan participated. On August 3, 2013, one month after Taiwan's soldier Hung Chung-chiu was abused to death, Taiwan's nongovernmental social movement group "Citizen 1985 Action Alliance" initiated a large-scale white-shirt protest movement. 250,000 people gathered on the streets of Taipei, and shouted the slogan of "Investigate the Truth and Punish the Murderer".

On March 18, 2014, to oppose adoption of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement, a number of students and supporters of social movement groups rushed into the "Legislative Yuan", and later some students broke into and occupied the chamber of the "Legislative Yuan". The 24-day "Sunflower Student Movement" thus began. Incidents such as "323 occupation of the Executive Yuan" and "330 gathering on the Ketagalan Boulevard" also took place during this

period. Appeals of student movements changed fast from “opposition against the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement” to “opposition against Ma Ying-jeou and China” and “opposition against the constitutional system”, and their advocacy was finally upgraded from “legislation before deliberation” to “Taiwan independence” and “change of the name and constitution”.

In 2015, with the emergence of a dispute over revision of the senior high school curriculum by Taiwan’s education authority, Taiwan’s student movements further developed towards younger people. Under the support and planning of political parties and social groups advocating “Taiwan independence” including the Democratic Progressive Party, the “Taiwan Solidarity Union”, the Northern Taiwan Society, the Humanistic Education Foundation and the “Black Island Nation Youth Front”, some of Taiwan’s senior high school students participated in the “Anti-curriculum Change Movement”. They requested Taiwan’s education authority to revoke the change plan, unveiled the slogan of “Oppose Brainwashing and Black-box Curriculum!”, and instigated the generation of senior high school students younger than those in the “Sunflower Student Movement” to take to the street. Taiwan’s senior high school curriculum seemed to have become a new battleground in the fight between unification and independence.

In view of Taiwan’s social movements in recent years, there are mainly the following types:

1. Traditional social movements with public policies as topics, such as “anti-nuclear” movements and “same-sex marriage right” movements. In March and April 2014, soon after students in the “Sunflower Student Movement” retreated, anti-nuclear groups created an anti-nuclear surge across Taiwan again. Lin Yi-hsiung announced an indefinite hunger strike to oppose nuclear plants, and at last made the Ma Ying-jeou administration announce suspension of construction of the “Fourth Nuclear Power Plant”.

2. Social movements for rights maintenance with individual cases as topics, similar to early self-relief movements. For example, the incidents of the Losheng Sanatorium, the Sanying tribe, Kuokuang Petrochemical, Orchid Island nuclear waste, the Shaoxing Community, Minamar Resort, Wenlin Yuan, the Dapu case, the Hung Chung-chiu case, etc. all involved direct interests of local residents, etc., attracted social attention in the struggle, and received social movement groups’ assistance and support.

3. Social movements with “opposition against Ma Ying-jeou” as the clear goal, mostly pushed forward by political parties to carry out political struggles in the name of social movements. For example, on May 17, 2009 and May 19, 2012, the “517 Anti-Ma Ying-jeou Demonstration for Protection of Taiwan” and “519 Anti-Ma Ying-jeou Demonstration for Clarification” initiated and led by the Democratic Progressive Party were held in Taipei and Kaohsiung in Taiwan.

4. Social movements with opposition against cross-Straits relations as the clear goal, the earliest one being the “Wild Strawberries Movement” against the second Chen-Chiang summit in November 2008. Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC Zhang Zhijun’s visit to Taiwan between June 25 and 28, 2014 was also opposed by a few social movement groups. Deliberate protests and conflicts such as the “Wulai chain incident” and the “Kaohsiung Sizihwan paint pouring incident” also emerged during this period.

5. Social movements combining „opposition against Ma Ying-jeou” and “opposition against China”, such as the „Sunflower Student Movement” with “opposition against the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement” as the appeal and the “Anti-curriculum Movement” having the clear political tint of “opposition against Ma Ying-jeou, China and unification”.

II. Characteristics of Taiwan’s Social Movements in the Current Stage

Compared with the past, Taiwan’s social movements in the current stage show some new characteristics.

The first one is the tendency of “pro-Taiwan independence” movement appeals. The shadow of “opposition against Ma Ying-jeou and China” behind the so-called spontaneous mass movements can hardly be concealed. A series of social movements are superficially organized and mobilized by nongovernmental social groups, but these social movement groups have a clear pro-Taiwan independence color and often mix the noise of “opposition against Ma Ying-jeou and China” in certain appeals involving people’s wellbeing to accumulate the dissatisfaction of Taiwan’s society with the administration through “opposition against Ma Ying-jeou” on the one hand and use the opportunity to build the ideology of “opposition against China” on the other. The “Wild Strawberries Movement”, the Anti-media Monopoly Movement, the “Sunflower Movement” and the “Anti-curriculum Change Movement” all showed the clear ideology of “opposition against China”, and fostered a number of leading students and scholars advocating “Taiwan independence”.

The second one is the tendency of younger movement participants. Though participants in social movements after 2008 came from different age groups and engaged in different professions, including teachers, people in cultural circles, ordinary office workers and students (few came from business circles), most participants in social movements in recent years such as the “Sunflower Student Movement” and the “Anti-curriculum Movement” were young people in their 20s and 30s. Particularly, in-school students were likely to be greatly influenced by school teachers, and could become targets to be mobilized and used by intellectuals easily. Even senior high school students under 20 were mobilized.

The third one is the organizational tendency of movement groups. Taiwan's numerous social movement groups belong to different factions, but through movements, different social groups and different people continue to communicate and integrate, and their connections make social movement groups show the organizational tendency. Though most of such organizations are loose, they all have the goal of "opposition against Ma Ying-jeou and China", have a clear sense of ideological identity, establish ties with each other, support each other and help each other in movements, and make social movements' momentum stronger and stronger.

The fourth one is the tendency of concealment of organizations for "Taiwan independence". The Democratic Progressive Party, the "Taiwan Solidarity Union" and extremist political groups for independence try their best to hide their dominant roles in social movements, but many signs in social movements and student movements still show the truth that organizations for "Taiwan independence" are guiding, supporting and controlling the direction of social movements behind the stage. First, they train backbones of social movements and student movements through training classes; second, they directly give material and financial support; third, they give support and protection at the places of parades, demonstrations and sit-ins; fourth, they give support in public opinion to prevent the Taiwan authority from adopting legitimate measures for maintaining order.

The fifth one is the characteristic of soft social movements. To mobilize more people to participate in social movements, Taiwan's social movements often showed a civilized style, held the banner of nonviolence and peace, emphasized non-confrontation with the police and non-confrontation with ethnic groups, consciously excluded political parties and ideologies, and beautified and glorified student movements by means of garbage classification, division of work in cooperation and publicity songs to expand social movements' social basis and mobilization ability in recent years. However, the essence of Taiwan's social movements, i.e. "opposition against Ma Ying-jeou and China", is not changed but is decorated more deceptively.

The sixth one is the networking characteristic of social movements. In recent years, network media with low-cost and high-efficiency performance played an increasingly important role in social movements. Social media such as Facebook, twitter and ptt establish many online social groups, these interaction platforms link a group of people paying attention to the same social topic, and network mobilization has also become the commonest mode of social movement mobilization in the current stage. The "1106 Action Announcement" in the "Wild Strawberries Movement" was first released on a ptt electronic bulletin board. The Anti-Media Monster Youth Alliance consisting of students' social groups also publicized mobilization through the Facebook social book "I'm a student against

Want Want China Times”. The “Citizen 1985 Action Alliance” was also first formed by 39 Facebook users on the Internet, and its members included doctors, teachers, lawyers, plane designers, café bosses and clothes shop salesmen with an average age of 30. Besides, the incidents of Wenlin Yuan, the hundred-day strike of Hualon Textile’s trade union, NTW students’ support for the Shaoxing Community, the “Sunflower Movement” and the “Anti-curriculum Change Movement” were all mobilized through the Internet.

III. Trend of Politicization of Taiwan’s Social Movements

In recent years, the development of Taiwan’s social movements showed an increasingly clear tendency of politicization. In terms of ideologies, the “pro-Taiwan independence” tendency is clear; in terms of appeals and goals, they more and more directly conflict with cross-Straits relations and hinder development of cross-Straits relations; in terms of movement participants, they often mingle with and echo social groups, political groups and political parties; in terms of means of struggling, they combine social movements and election politics and combine violent struggles and mild lines; in terms of organizational development, they have the tendency of turning groups into political parties and turning individuals into politicians, but it is not easy to do so.

First, social movements’ “pro-Taiwan independence” tendency is unchanged. Today, activists and social movement groups in Taiwan’s social movements do not conceal their political standpoint of “Taiwan independence”. In many social movements they led or participated in, “opposition against Ma Ying-jeou and China” was visible. Slogans and banners for “Taiwan independence” are often seen at the places of social movements, and radical groups for “Taiwan independence” such as the “Alliance of Referendum for Taiwan” and the “Taiwan Society” and extremist individuals advocating “Taiwan independence” such as Shi Ming publicize their radical appeal for “Taiwan independence” among them while helping and supporting social movements.

Second, social movements will continue to advocate “democracy”. In Taiwan’s social movements, political parties, students and social movement groups deem themselves as representatives of “absolute justice” and firmly believe that “their opinions and appeals” are opinions and appeals of all people in Taiwan, so when some major economic and social issues “do not conform to their views”, they mobilize more people to participate in the struggle with slogans such as “state violence”, “incompetent government”, “black box”, violation of democracy and “civil disobedience”.

Third, social movements mingle with election politics. In Taiwan’s social movements, social movement groups and the Democratic Progressive Party are inseparable and echo each other to different degrees. The occurrence of the

“Sunflower Student Movement” and the “Anti-curriculum Movement” on the one hand restricted the Democratic Progressive Party’s transformation and made it return to the old road of “opposing against anything related to China”, and on the other hand supported and coordinated the rhythm of the Democratic Progressive Party’s victory in elections. The “Sunflower Student Movement” became an important factor in the Democratic Progressive Party’s victory in the “nine-in-one” elections, and the “Anti-curriculum Movement” will also impact Taiwan’s 2016 general election.

Fourth, social movements will combine mild and violent modes of protestation. There was not only the mild and rational white shirt army in the “Hung Chung-chiu incident”, but also destructive acts in the “opposition against the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement”, “opposition against nuclear power plants” and the “Anti-curriculum Movement”. Students’ occupation of the “Legislative Yuan” and occupation of the “Executive Yuan” obviously set a certain example for protesting groups in the later “Anti-curriculum Movement”, etc. Even extremist means such as hunger strikes and threats with life were used to make the Kuomintang administration follow their will and force the Kuomintang to concede on relevant issues. Future protestors are quite likely to imitate them.

Fifth, network technologies will be commonly used in social movements. In the “Sunflower Movement”, the young generation’s skillful use of network technologies showed its great power. The effect of quick mobilization, obtainment of material resources, independent control of the right to speak, and timely allocation of people in various localities for site support was realized through new media. Young people in the Internet age are familiar with various social group media, share and forward messages through interactive media such as Facebook, YouTube and Line, realize rapid viral spread, and carry out quick online mobilization through such means of spread relying on existing interpersonal relationships.

Sixth, there are many difficulties in transforming social movements into the third force. Many people always think reputation in social movements is a shortcut to the political field, but social movements and political movements are completely different fields and activists in social movements still must undergo daunting tests in the political fields. In December 2014, student movement leader Chen Wei-ting attempted to participate in the by-election of “legislators” in Miaoli County but was forced to withdraw from the election because of exposure of a sexual harassment scandal. In early 2015, the “Taiwan Citizen Union”, a social movement group in the “Sunflower Student Movement”, split into two political parties: the “New Power Party”, which absorbed student movement supervisor Huang Kuo-chang, and the “Social Democratic Party” with social movement activist Fan Yun as the convener. They will both participate in the election of “legislators” in early 2016. The “New Power Party” is a political party with clear

color of “Taiwan independence” advocating “termination of the one China framework and establishment of a normal state through joint efforts”. The “Social Democratic Party” advocates “politics for pursuit of better life”. Its concepts are relatively pragmatic. Many small parties participated in Taiwan’s previous representative elections, but under Taiwan’s special political environment of numerous small parties, it is not easy for small parties to obtain seats in the election of “legislators”.

IV. Concluding Remarks

In recent years, Taiwan’s social movements show a clear tendency of politicization whether in terms of the ideological manifestation of “opposition against Ma Ying-jeou, China and unification” or in terms of formal intervention in party politics, election politics and cross-Straits relations. Of course, it is easy to transform social movements into political movements, but it is difficult to transform figures in social movements into political figures. What deserves attention is that social movements’ intervention in cross-Straits relations has materially affected the course of peaceful development of cross-Straits relations. In particular, political powers for “Taiwan independence” use social problems and actual difficulties facing the people of Taiwan to direct social movements towards the political nature of “opposition against China and unification” with social topics as breakthrough points, and carry out a new round of political mobilization and political infiltration towards young people. This is a new challenge facing peaceful development of cross-Straits relations.