

How did the Japanese affect the island of Taiwan? What ethnic groups live there and how do they generally feel about each other? What is the Kuomintang? How did Chiang Kai shek change the history of Taiwan? How did Taiwan change after the Chinese civil war? We will learn the answers to these questions and more in today's episode, part one of the last 100 ish years in Taiwan.

Welcome to wiser world, a podcast for busy people who need a refresher on all things world. Here we explore different regions of the globe, giving you the facts and context you need to think historically about current events. I truly believe that the more we learn about the world, The more we embrace our shared humanity.

I'm your host Allie Roper. Thanks for being here.

Hey, welcome back. I am happy to be continuing the mini series of the last 100 years history. In a few countries, I think we really need more background information on to process current events. And last time we covered China and today we're going to cover Taiwan. Next up we have North Korea and Iran. So, so much good stuff.

And I'm very excited to talk about Taiwan today. I also want to start something called the corrections corner. On occasion, I make mistakes on pronunciations. I'm sure I botched some of the pronunciations, even though I try to look them up and make sure I'm doing things correctly. So I am grateful in the case of China, I'm grateful that the Chinese are generally quite forgiving of English speakers trying to learn their language because I'm sure I messed a lot of things up.

But the biggest one I messed up was the name of the Chinese currency. It's spelled Y U N C. An, and turns out that it's actually pronounced in Mandarin, something closer to Yuan or like the word, the letter U N, Yuan. So I'm probably never going to nail the inflection on that, but now, you know, that was mispronounced in my China episodes.

And lastly, I will be We're referencing quite a lot of Chinese history here. So if you haven't listened to parts one through three of the last 100 years in China episodes, go ahead and do that. It will give you so much more context to what is going on as we talk about Taiwan, especially go listen to part one, because I will be referencing quite a bit from the Chinese civil war in this episode, and I don't plan on repeating a whole lot.

All right, let's do this. The last 100 ish years in Taiwan. Let's go scratch the surface. Yes. Okay. To start off, do you know where Taiwan is? If you don't yet, go look at a map, make sure you know where in the world we're talking about. Taiwan is an island just off the east coast of China, roughly a hundred miles away.

And the water between the two countries is called the Formosa Strait or the Taiwan Strait. You actually can take a ferry from China to Taiwan. That's how close they are. And Taiwan also controls some other islands that are only a few miles from mainland China. So Taiwan's

government has power over quite a few islands nearby as well, but it's very important to know that China and Taiwan are very geographically close to each other.

Now Taiwan's official name is the ROC or the Republic of China, not to be confused with mainland China, which is called the PRC or the People's Republic of China. So sometimes throughout this episode, I'll mention the ROC. When you hear ROC, Republic of China, think Taiwan. When you hear PRC, People's Republic of China think mainland China, and we'll talk a lot about why these two are very different from each other throughout these whole, both episodes.

Now, Taiwan is not a large island. It is slightly bigger than the state of Maryland here in the United States where I live, or around half the size of Scotland. 23.5 million people live in Taiwan, which is about four times the population of New York City. It is a rugged island. It has some farmable land, but mostly mountains.

The tallest are almost 10,000 feet. So really big mountains, lots of national parks. It's known for being a very beautiful island and just the capital of Taiwan, which is called Taipei. It has 2.6 million people living there since most of the island is forested and can't really be lived in. About 90 percent of the population lives only on a strip of land on the east coast of Taiwan.

So that's that particular area of Taiwan is very densely populated and the rest is less populated. Taiwan has had a tumultuous and often chaotic past and its future doesn't look necessarily neat and tidy either. So I'm really excited to go into this. Just like in the other episodes, we're going to start in the late 1800s just to give a very brief history of Taiwan.

Before that time, I really want to cover the ethnic groups in Taiwan right off the bat because some of the conflicts between these groups still continue today. So, prior to the late 1800s, Taiwan was inhabited by a Malayo Polynesian people for thousands of years. Another name for them would be Austronesian people or Taiwanese indigenous peoples.

And over the centuries, these early islanders developed very distinct languages and cultures. And to this day, Taiwan recognizes 12 groups of these Austronesian people, but due to intermarrying now, many of these Taiwanese, many of the Taiwanese people today have Austronesian or aboriginal blood. And this aboriginal or indigenous people, they make up about two to three percent of the population of Taiwan today.

So in the 1500s, these people are living on the island, these aboriginal indigenous people and Portuguese sailors sail past Taiwan and they call it the Ilha Formosa or beautiful island. And this is why some people actually call Taiwan Formosa. Chinese merchants, so again, it's very close to China, Chinese merchants and fishermen passed through Taiwan occasionally way back then.

We know that some of the indigenous people did trade with the Han Chinese people. And we also know that for hundreds of years, Chinese people from China's Fujian province, which is

just across the Taiwan Strait, so kind of like a state in China, a lot of those people migrated to Taiwan. So they're ethnically Chinese, but they've been on the island of Taiwan for hundreds and hundreds of years and today those people make up roughly 70 percent of the population.

They're the majority of the population in Taiwan. And these people are often called the Hokkien or Hoklo people. Another minority group from Taiwan, from China also migrated to Taiwan in these years, their last huge migration was in the mid 1800s and they are called the Hakkas, H A K K A. So again, they are also ethnically Chinese, just like the Hokkien people, but they were persecuted in China, driven out, and they have a very distinctive culture and they settled closer to the mountains.

The last major ethnic group in Taiwan are often called the Mainlanders. And these are the Chinese people who came to Taiwan after they were defeated by the communists in the Chinese civil war. So post 1949, if you remember from part one of the China episodes, when the communist defeated the nationalists, many nationalists fled to Taiwan and I'll talk extensively about them later.

And these people all came post 1949. So I just want to be clear on this. There are 90 percent or more of Taiwan's population is technically ethnically Chinese, but what differs between them is the time that they came to Taiwan. There are the pre 1949 people and there are the post 1949 people. And there's a difference between these groups.

It's important to know also that Taiwanese is a different language from Mandarin. Around 70 percent of the people on Taiwan also speak Mandarin and Hokkien. 10 percent of them speak Hakka. So the languages are different. Some even speak Japanese. We'll talk about that. We'll also talk about multiple languages that the Formosan or indigenous people speak.

So again, it's more of a diverse place than I ever expected when I initially went into this research. Now, since the 1620s, Taiwan has had a very long history of colonial rule, or in other words, other countries coming in and controlling the land. And only in really the last 40 ish years has it really made itself distinctly Taiwanese on the world stage.

If we're going back a little bit in the 1620s, we saw the Dutch East Indian Company create a base there. And then we saw the Fujian people come in. And 40 years after the Dutch base was created, the Manchurians took over the Ming dynasty in China and started what is known as the Qing dynasty, Q I N G.

And you might recognize this name from the Chinese episodes since the Qing dynasty was the last ruling dynastic family in China, and they ruled for almost 300 years. And the Qing dynasty takes over part of the island of Taiwan. And for about 200 years, it stays this way. So Taiwan stays in. A state of almost constant rebellion with political groups of the Fujian Hokkien people and the Aborigines rising up against the Qing.

And some of these uprisings were very violent. The Aborigines were known for collecting heads. They're called headhunters. They display these heads in their villages. If you want to go down a historical rabbit hole, that is a fascinating one. It's also said that the Chinese people, the Qing, would come cut up bodies, eat them, uh, slave.

Slain aboriginal bodies. So the history is very bloody and wild and we can't go into all of those details. But it's just important to know that Taiwan did have other places ruling it for the majority of its history. And Taiwan's economy did improve under the Qing dynasty Chinese dynasty, but during the 1800s, the major colonial powers start eyeing Taiwan.

So the Western powers, yes, but also Japan. And these colonial powers were much more straightforward, forthright than the past Dutch or Portuguese had been. So if you remember from the China episodes, you remember the opium wars between Britain. Well, Taiwan was one of the ports that the Chinese were required to open after they lost the opium wars.

So Christian missionary work and some British trade were being done in Taiwan in the 1800s. In 1895, Taiwan had a brief five month period where it was technically independent, but then China was at war with Japan. And when the Sino Japanese war ended in 1894, the Chinese lost it. And Taiwan was essentially given to the Japanese as part of their spoils.

Taiwan became a colony of Japan until 1945. So for 50 years, it was ruled by Japan. How was the Japanese rule over Taiwan? Well, Japan wanted Taiwan because of the agricultural and resource potential of the island. And it's also kind of a choke and control point for maritime traffic in the yellow sea, the East China sea, the South China sea.

So it's really important in that region. And Japan began fairly quickly to work on the culture and the customs and the economy of the Taiwanese to make what some historians would call good and loyal Japanese out of the Islanders. So according to many of the sources I read, the Japanese were very authoritative leaders.

There was compulsory education so that every child on the Island could read and write in Japanese. They worked very hard to break down traditional family hierarchies to essentially wipe out Taiwanese culture. They wanted to make the Taiwanese feel like the Japanese were always watching. And many of the Taiwanese made life pretty difficult for the Japanese policemen.

And there were many rebellions that have been documented. There was even a youth core where young Taiwanese men were required to learn to be police scouts and inform on any unusual happening. So a sort of indoctrinate, indoctrination of young Taiwanese people. This is ringing bells of China. They wanted the Taiwanese to be useful, loyal, but not too educated.

So they were taught basic things in the Japanese school, but until the 1920s, Taiwanese and Japanese kids were segregated on the island in school. They were wearing Japanese style

clothing. They even had Shinto shrines in their homes. So the Japanese definitely controlled a lot of the Taiwanese lives.

Many Taiwanese kind of took the path of least resistance and they actually benefited from going along with the Japanese. They actively collaborated with the Japanese. They became quite rich. Those who did were often targeted by groups who wanted independence for Taiwan. However, Most of the Taiwanese preferred Japanese rule to the prior Chinese Qing dynasty and felt like generally life had improved under the Japanese.

So in the meantime, the Taiwanese aborigines in the mountain districts, they put up a huge fight in being under Japanese control. And with their headhunting habits. And intense defense of their territories, they were kind of a big problem for anyone who was trying to rule Taiwan. And during this time, Japanese sent troops into the forests and there were serious atrocities, entire villages were completely destroyed.

But some aborigines persisted. They're still around today. As I mentioned, they are around in small numbers because of a lot of this violence. Japan, meanwhile, was at war with China during the 1940s. And so, Naturally, Japan was nervous about all these ethnic Chinese people on the island of Taiwan. Were they truly loyal and dependable to Japan after all of this indoctrination and to feed the war effort, industry and agriculture were pushed even further.

And many Taiwanese Islanders served in the Japanese army and Navy. So, looking back on this, overall, the kids who grew up during this time period, during the Japanese, um, occupation, some are still alive today and they're quite elderly now, and many of them often feel closer to Japanese culture than Chinese culture.

And there are varied views on how the Taiwanese feel about the Japanese, but overall, from my research, it does seem to be generally true that the Japanese were harsh in the way that they ran their colony in Taiwan, but they were harsher to the Koreans and also the people in northern Taiwan. Manchuria in China.

So the fact that many of the older generation today view in Taiwan, view the Japanese period as beneficial to the island is worth noticing because to most Eastern Asian countries, the Japanese are not viewed very favorably since they were pretty brutal rulers. But in Taiwan, generally Japanese culture is viewed more favorably.

Now also during this time of Japanese rule, there was a lot of civil strife going on in mainland China. And we know that from part one of the Chinese episodes that in 1911, the final dynasty, the Qing, they were overthrown. China was thrown into many years of rule by the nationalist party, the ROC, as well as a warlord era, and the communists and the nationalists had very different perspectives of what China should look like, but they did join forces during World War II to fight the Japanese.

Let's do a quick review on the Chinese nationalists. These are people who generally subscribe to the ideas of Sun Sen, who was very generally pro democracy or anti communist in a very small nutshell. Another name for the Nationalist Party is the Kuomintang, or to shorten it, the KMT. We know that the KMT, or the Nationalists, during this time ruling mainland China, they were not able to reach the potential of democracy that they theoretically said that they stood for.

So the KMT party, the Nationalist Party, was riddled with corruption on mainland China. And there were a lot of what we now would call war crimes against the communists. It struggled to put into action a lot of the things that it said it stood for. And again, I talk about this in the China episodes, but a man named Chiang Kai shek rose to power in the KMT, the Kuomintang, and he is critical in understanding modern China.

He was the head of the KMT from 1928 to 1949 in China. And then afterward. When the KMT moved to Taiwan in exile, he was also the leader. And his life story is pretty fascinating. He was born to a moderately wealthy merchant and farmer family on the coast. And he went to military school and actually served in the Japanese army.

He was a revolutionary. He married a woman who was educated in the United States. Her name was Song Mai Ling. And so he had more of a pro Western stance than many Chinese did at the time. And while he didn't always get along with Western powers, because again, the party had some corruption and he definitely had some dictator tendencies.

He definitely had a more pro Western perspective than say Mao Zedong, the leader of the communists and his wife was again, highly Americanized Chinese. And during the early 1940s, during World War II, the United States was very interested in helping the KMT because they were ruling China, and they were helping to fight the Japanese.

And China fought with the Allies during World War II. It gets kind of complex here because you'll remember in World War II, the Soviet Union, and the U. S. were on the same side during World War II, but the Chinese communists were getting support from Stalin in the Soviet Union, and the U. S. was financially helping the shek.

So when World War II ended and the communists and the KMT, the nationalists, start fighting each other again in the Civil War, they joined together for World War II, they start fighting each other again afterward. The U. S. has sympathies with Chiang Kai shek, and Soviet Union has sympathies with Mao Zedong.

And again, very complex, right? And the U. S. It had a very ambivalent or complex relationship with Chiang Kai shek because they were aware of the corruption and the imperfection of the KMT rule, but also didn't want to support Mao Zedong. Now let's go back a few years toward the end of World War II in 1943, something pretty monumental happened.

President Roosevelt invited Chiang and his wife to Cairo, Egypt, for a summit where he met with Winston Churchill. And this is mostly because he wanted to flatter Chiang Kai shek so that the

Chinese would fight more against the Japanese. And Chiang didn't speak English, so his wife and others had to translate a lot during the meeting.

And at the summit, Chiang would not meet with Joseph Stalin. He believed that the Soviets were supplying the communists with weapons. Which they were. So even though decisions were made in Cairo about the future of China, the U. S. and Britain actually had to meet with Stalin a few days later to check everything with him before they could announce it because Chiang Kai shek wouldn't even meet with Joseph Stalin.

So this Cairo Declaration, what was it? It was basically a press release, and I'm going to focus on the most important part. I'm going to read it to you. It is that the three powers, so U. S., Britain, Soviet Union, its purpose is that Japan shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific, which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of the first world war in 1914, and that all of the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, Taiwan, other islands like the Penghu Islands shall be restored to the Republic of China.

Basically, what this is saying is, when we beat Japan, the Japanese territories that once belonged to China will go back to the ROC, the KMT. the ruling power of China at the time, which was ruled by Chiang Kai shek. On August 15th, 1945, Emperor Hirohito of Japan announced the surrender of Japan after the dropping of the atomic bombs, and that sent into the carrying out of the Cairo Declaration.

Now, in Taiwan, on the island of Taiwan, emotions ranged from relief at the end of the war, to, you know, to anxiety of what's going to happen to our island. And they waited and waited and nothing happened. There's a lot of political red tape going on after a war. It took some time, but eventually China did to get Taiwan back from the Japanese.

So finally, about six weeks after Japan surrendered. A Chinese general arrived and he told them, and I'm quote, the, the island has been degraded by Japanese occupation and the Islanders were a degraded people outside the bounds of pure Chinese civilization. And after this American transport ships brought 12, 000 Kuomintang troops to the island and General Chen Yi.

was appointed governor of Taiwan by Chiang Kai shek, and he actually arrived with his Japanese geisha wife. So again, lots of complicated things going on here. There was this big parade for the general. He proclaimed that Taiwan had been reincorporated into China under the sovereign administration of the Kuomintang, even though the Americans thought this was going a little too far, they were like, wait, in the Cairo declaration, we said that Taiwan would be restored to the Kuomintang or the Republic of China.

But we still have to sign a formal peace treaty. And anyway, it was kind of a complicated time at the same time as all of this is happening. China is also drifting back to civil war against the communists. And America has nerves about that as well, or the United States has some nerves about that as well.

And many of the Taiwanese at the time kind of made fun of the Kuomintang troops who came in after the Japanese left some comments like The dogs have gone, but the pigs have arrived. We're common. So again, the Taiwanese are going from one occupier to another. They're going from the Japanese to the Chinese and this general Chen Yi, he was a Chinese KMT member again, appointed governor.

He was not well liked. His military administration did not include any Taiwanese people that were native to the island. Only mainlanders were represented and the KMT lived by plunder. You'll remember that. China during this time was not doing very well. It had lost a ton of soldiers in World War II. It had been in a civil war since the late 1920s, and these boys were in a rough spot.

Chen and his higher officers seized everything, especially anything that had been Japanese. It is said that 90 percent of the island's economy began to be run by the mainlanders. A lot of Taiwanese property was seized and many of the mainlanders had no idea how to run a business or support industry.

And so naturally the economy collapsed, the bubonic plague and cholera came up again, malaria, and all of the medicines that the Japanese had left behind had been sold to mainland China. So the Taiwanese again have gone from the Qing dynasty to the Japanese, and now the KMT. Which is in the middle of a civil war with the communists on the mainland.

Hopefully you've got, you've gone with me this far. In 1946, so a year after the end of World War II, Chen Yi announces that young male islanders would be conscripted to serve in China. Fighting the communists, the public in Taiwan is so outraged by this, that the call was abandoned, but any journalists or critics who attacked his call were harassed by him as well.

And Chiang Kai shek back on the mainland, he is being supported in this civil war with weapons and military instruction from the United States. By early 1947, Taiwan was, Very unstable and public resentment was so high. Governor Chen was not fair. Again, we have mainlanders taking over everything. And so the Taiwanese people that had been there prior to 1949 hit the streets.

Streets of angry crowds protesting the way that they're being governed. And something called martial law was declared on February 28th, 1947. Martial law, if you don't know what that is, It is often used during emergency situations or over times of war. And it's basically the idea that the military takes over the civilian government.

And this is a big, important day in Taiwanese history, February 28th, 1947. Like I said, on this day, mass protests erupt all over Taiwan, over the KMT government, military patrols. Drove through Taipei firing at anyone from their cars, large groups of people gathered outside of the governor's office to protest.

They were shot down without warning and some Taiwanese people tried to take control of local governments. There was mass violence that erupted all over the country and it lasted until

March 7th. So about a week. Finally, on March 7th, a committee of students and legislators presented Governor Chen with a list of Demands.

32 demands. And it was like all these reforms that they wanted. End military rule, establish Taiwan as a separate, autonomous province of China. And again, some of the ideas were free and fair elections, improving the corrupt fleet, police forces, but Chen rejected it and asked for them to soften their demands.

And then he went ahead and sent a Asking for reinforcements. And shortly after 10, 000 troops arrived and began a campaign of indiscriminate shooting, raping, bayonet, bayonetting, as they, you know, move to control the Island again, they hunted down any kind of dissonant. It has said that about a thousand middle school students in their early teens were detained and.

And close to a hundred were arbitrarily executed. Thousands more people were killed, mutilated their bodies, left in the streets. Even the KMT records that at least 28, 000 people were killed. Some say it might've been 18, 000, but no matter, it was a lot of people. And this particular event is called the 228 Massacre in Taiwan today.

It's important for many reasons, especially for the lives taken, but also because it changed. How. Other major powers, especially the U. S., who was Chiang Kai shek's most powerful and rich ally at the time, the United States starts criticizing the KMT for their treatment of the Taiwanese people. And Chiang claimed that he knew nothing about it and he blamed Governor Chen and recalled him from Taiwan.

But it did change the relationship between the United States and the KMT for some time. And after the 228 massacre, Taiwan entered a period that is now called the White Terror. It was the time when the KMT controlled Taiwan from 1947 to 1987 or 1991. It depends on the source. And we'll talk more about the White Terror.

But basically the KMT launched a massive cover up of the 228 massacre and today it has been uncovered. History has shown itself and on February 28th that's now a memorial holiday in Taiwan to remember the atrocities of February 28th, 1947. In 1948, Chiang Kai shek starts thinking about what his plan would be if the communists won the war.

And efforts begin to be made to kind of rebuild the island of Taiwan's economy, so that it could potentially serve as a haven for Chiang, his supporters, and the remaining military. By 1949, the communists, uh, We're looking like they were going to win the civil war. Meanwhile, the U. S. is just in the beginning days of the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

So everyone is watching the outcome of the Chinese civil war. The U. S. begins to try to figure out how to resolve Taiwan's status. They like the idea of the United States nations having like a trusteeship over the island. But when the communists won the civil war in October, 1949, what does Chiang Kai shek and the Kuomintang, the KMT start doing?

They start fleeing to Taiwan. And Washington at this point decides it's only a matter of time before the communists take over Taiwan. President Truman kind of announces that America's out of the Chinese civil war is going to provide no more weapons or advice to the KMT. A lot of Chiang Kai shek's powerful friends in the China lobby in the United States roundly attacked Truman.

They felt that he abandoned the KMT. Um, but Truman was concerned about the leadership of Chiang Kai shek. And this again is a huge hit to the KMT. In December of 1949, so very shortly after the communist Mao Zedong, uh, take over China, win the war, Chiang makes a formal movement of the capital of the Republic of China.

And by that time, there were about 2 million mainlanders on the island and a little less than half were surviving members of the KMT army. So the military moved over to Taiwan and just in December alone, around 1.2 million people relocated from China to Taiwan. So again, the Republic of China government.

relocated to Taiwan following the communists taking over China. And Chiang and the KMT, they insisted that this was only a temporary setback and that they would return to the mainland once the people had suffered enough from communism. The idea was, at that time, that it was important to govern Taiwan As though it was China and to begin implementing the doctrine that Sun Yat sen had founded the party with and this doctrine was the idea that before democracy, there has to be a period of kind of popular teaching when there would be a benevolent party dictatorship.

And during this trend, there had to be a transition period, essentially towards democracy. So there had to be this benevolent dictatorship. And during this transition period, the party. The KMT would concentrate on establishing economic and social and political condition, political conditions that were suitable to, and I quote, the flowering of democracy.

So here's how I try to imagine this. In the United States where I live, there was a civil war. It was between the union and the Confederacy. Obviously this war is very different, but just work with me here. This would be kind of like the union winning the war and members of the Confederacy moving in. to Puerto Rico and claiming that they will one day take back the mainland.

Again, this is a very loose analogy because the distances and histories are very different. I hope that puts some things into perspective. The people who technically lost the civil war. Move to an island, claim that they want to go back. Now, the refugee situation on Taiwan was overwhelming. 1.2 million people moving in one month to a small island.

Many of these people had nowhere to live and the Chinese mainlanders, these defeated nationalists, they were surprised by Taiwan. Many of them had never been there before. They were surprised by the Japanese style roofs on many of the houses, this hot steamy weather. Many of the newly arrived refugees were totally unaware of this, like, simmering resentment that

had been going on between the local Taiwanese, pre 1949 Taiwanese, and the nationalists that had come after Japan lost Taiwan, that small interim period.

And most of them were totally unaware of that. too deeply entrenched in their own trauma of having to leave China to even notice most of them had to start from scratch. And again, they felt very distant from the local Taiwanese people who in many ways behaved more Japanese than Chinese. They spoke Japanese.

Many of the KMT families had also been quite wealthy. So arriving in Taiwan was a huge shock. Many of them didn't understand the Taiwanese dialect and they had to use hand signals to buy their groceries. And the sheer number of the refugees totally overwhelmed the island's resources. There were 6 million people on, uh, Taiwanese people on the island at the time.

And then 1. 2 million people come out? There was a shortage of everything, especially medical professionals. The entire nationalist government at the time was kind of a hot mess. Formerly high ranking nationalist off officers began competing for seats in the government. There's like creating a new government.

Everyone wants power. And some of these KMT families that came over, didn't have a lot of money. They came on boat, they came on plane for days and days. And there was great concern about communist spies sneaking in. It was a very unstable time and many nationalists or KMT people were warned to stick with other nationalists.

When they arrived on the island, in fact, many of them didn't feel like they would be in Taiwan long enough to even buy furniture. And from the native Taiwanese perspective, I don't think this takes too much imagination to understand how many of them must have felt. Many were mistreated. They were displaced to make room for the new refugees.

And especially after the very recent 228 incident, this is a very, very challenging time for Taiwan. Cheng continues to claim to represent the true government of China. And the KMT starts working very quickly on the economy of Taiwan because it took some time to recover after what had happened with Chen.

Taiwan in 1949 still had mostly a feudal land holding system and so they completely reworked the way the land was owned in the country and in many ways it was quite successful. And many independent farmers began to be more independently thinking during, during this time. USAID was also a big part of Taiwan's economic revival.

Only six months after the U. S. washed its hands of Taiwan, the Korean War began, and suddenly Taiwan was the front line of a conflict that, again, directly affected American interests. And so two days after the North Koreans attacked the South, Truman ordered a fleet to patrol the Taiwan Strait. His goal was to prevent China from using the Korean War as a cover.

To attack Taiwan and also to keep Chiang from invading the mainland China and dragging the U S into a war with China, which he knew could escalate into a nuclear war with the Soviet union. So again, the United States is greatly affecting the history of Taiwan and the Korean war did keep Taiwan from being abandoned by the United States.

financially. Taiwan was strategically important because it was helpful also in the Vietnam War as a staging point for American military. And really Taiwan didn't have any other alternative. They really needed to maintain good relations with the U. S. and felt that in, they needed to have some kind of democratic reform as a guarantee for security.

This gave the KMT access to American resources, but again, it was a fine line between the United States and Taiwan for many years because the KMT spent a lot of time in those early days, trying to convince the United States of its agenda to take over the mainland. And the U S saw this as unrealistic.

And the KMT again saw it as a sacred responsibility to nation and history, and the U. S. just wasn't getting this at all during the 50s. There was never really a formal alliance between Taiwan and the U. S. at this point. The U. S. knew a base in Taiwan would be helpful, but again, it was very wary of being dragged into a war with China.

And so eventually, they just kind of committed to this idea that Taiwan did have a right to recover the mainland, but it was kind of inferred, and it was very clear that the U. S. did not want to encourage military action. And during this time, there was some heavy fighting in the Taiwan Strait from 1954 to 1958.

And Taiwan did lose a few of the islands to China. And Chiang kept wanting a public commitment from the United States that they would assist in remaining, in defending any other islands. But the U. S. wouldn't, wouldn't commit. And so Chiang was getting very frustrated by the situation. Meanwhile, back on the island of Taiwan, the 1950s and 60s were very interesting times.

As one historian put it, the KMT government had been designed for the whole of China. And so when its jurisdiction contracted to include only Taiwan and a few tiny islands, its institutions were an awkward fit to cope. The regime walled off the national government, sharply limited Taiwanese people's access to it.

And while provincial and local politics flourished, the national politics became, as he said, more frozen and crabbed up from the start. The KMT allowed some contested elections, but KMT candidates had major advantages. There was a police force that kept any politicians who they saw as a serious threat out.

There were some token attempts to respect democracy, but the native Taiwanese were not represented at all. So a very small minority mainlanders have control over the island of Taiwan and not showing very much respect to the native Taiwanese people. The KMT also had a kind of

secret police. They would arrest people who they saw as real or imagined communists, they would hold trials in secret where people weren't allowed to contact their families or have legal representation.

And the thing was that the communists really weren't the threat to the KMT. It was the Taiwanese who just really wanted autonomy over their own house. And so this secret police force, which was called the Garrison Command, they fought against these Taiwanese who advocated for reform, and they did this for many, many years.

And again, I talked about this earlier, but this time was called the White Terror. And some say that 90 percent, 90,000 people were arrested during this time. It's possible that 45,000 were executed. Again, these pre 1949 Taiwanese people wanted nothing to do with reuniting with the mainland. But the KMT had different dreams.

Their vision really was the unification with China. They were very focused on this. Lots of, lots of stories about this. One story I found very interesting was that Taiwan recruited pirates to keep an eye on the movement of Chinese ships. And they would have these little skirmishes across the Taiwan strait where they would destroy resources and boats from the other side.

And the KMT even had a thing for a while where warships would round up these groups of Chinese fishing boats. And then they would haul them up on the warships. They'd teach them anti communist propaganda. They'd have them watch movies, enjoy a banquet, receive gifts. Again, remember these people are under Chairman Mao at the time who are going through the Great Famine.

And then they'd give them all these gifts and then they'd return them to their boats and they would go off fishing again. So there was like a strong, almost like a spiritual, like, as one historian put it, kind of a quasi religious character to the KMT self image, like they felt the weight of China's long history and the conviction that Chinese civilization was the finest the world had ever produced.

And by being defeated by the communists, they were going to be historically seen as As one historian put it, sinners who had squandered a birthright of incalculable worth, end quote. So again, the KMT government begins to serve the people of Taiwan with a heavy diet of propaganda, posters, billboards, helping people to see a need for reunification with China, announcements on the radio, television broadcasts, military parading around.

And ironically, a lot of these features made the KMT look more like The communist dictatorship across the strait. But again, their goal was reunification with China. It is important to note, though, that the KMT did hand down orders, but it was never totalitarian. It did not monitor the people extremely closely in terms of their individual households, their social lives as a full totalitarian dictatorship would, which we'll talk about with North Korea next time.

But there's, there was logic for this martial law, this military law, and their logic was to maintain the security peace happiness and prosperity of Taiwan and they felt like they needed to rule the island of Taiwan in a military like fashion to avoid the communists getting in. And it is said that many military courts tried the cases of tens of thousands of civilians and a lot of anti communist hunting.

Things of that nature. They also did a lot of censorship during this time. They did create a constitution and there were three bodies of the, of the parliament, which were the national assembly, the legislative UN and the control UN. So they did create a parliament, but in that time they essentially froze out any native Taiwanese people and they created a ban on any opposition parties to the KMT for a very long time.

In the 1960s economically, Taiwan expanded quite a bit. They started focusing on chemicals, textiles, paper, rubber products, plastics, lots of economic changes and reforms and started moving toward becoming a more developed nation. I'm going to stop here. This was a ton of history and we have more good stuff in part two coming, but I have two takeaways that I want to quickly go over the first takeaway I have and we'll continue to talk about this often is that one of the main reasons to study history is to identify patterns and one of the patterns I want to point out here here is how interesting it is that people can very quickly turn from being the oppressed or in this case losing a war or whatever to becoming the oppressors and again we could go into a lot of psychology sociology discussions on this but I just think it's really important to notice it And to notice when we do it in our own ways, in our own lives on small scales, because we do, and it happens in each of our countries.

There is this natural inclination, inclination. I think that when people are kicked, when they're down, they want to find someone else to be above. Again, the idea is hurt people, hurt people. And we see this with almost every group ever. Humans seem to like hurt people. dominating. And so for me, it is an important reminder that with this KMT, they lose, right?

They move to an island. They're outsiders. What a difficult transition that must have been. And they, as a minority group, essentially rule over the majority group of native pre 1949 Taiwanese. And regardless of political opinions, I think it's very interesting to consider in ourselves. If we feel that we deserve to dominate other people, or that other people's voices don't deserve any say, because we ourselves have been victims, I think we're walking on very dangerous territory.

And I think that's a historical pattern that is worth analyzing and worth some critical thought. Another takeaway for me is just how important it is for people to be heard. By their governments that there is representation. We see this again with the cam T they somehow through martial law, we're able to systemically not listen to the majority of the public.

This happens in history. It happened in South Africa under apartheid. We'll talk about that in the future, but it's where this idea that a small minority is able to dominate a majority. And how do they do this? They do this through fear and police tactics and getting people to snitch on each

other. And so in my belief, my opinion is that freedom of diversity of thought is incredibly important, especially if we disagree with each other.

The only time I think it's not okay is when human lives are at stake, when people are dehumanizing another group in a violent way. Obviously, That is not okay. But if one group truly shuts down another group from being able to speak peacefully and be represented, it becomes a regime. And I think that that's why it's important to have push and pull critical thought because people thrive in that environment.

And those are my two opinions, my two takeaways from this episode. I'm excited for you to listen to part two. It's ready to go. Go ahead and listen to that. And thank you so much for being here. I hope we can go out and make the world a little wiser.