

Taiwan Election Shaken

Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian claimed an extremely narrow electoral victory on March 20, following a very strange shooting incident on March 19. Many questions remain as to what really happened when Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) President Chen and Vice President Annette Lu Hsiu-lien were both lightly wounded by gunshots at a campaign motorcade.

The difference between Chen and opposition candidate Lien Chan of the Kuomintang Party was less than 30,000 votes, out of about 13 million total—about 0.2%—while over 330,000 votes were invalid. Lien Chan has called for a recount, filed with the court for an annulment of the election, and has called for an investigation of the suspicious shooting, which most analysts believe turned a solid loss for the incumbent Chen into a shaky victory. “This slim gap has been achieved under clouds of suspicion. It’s not a fair election,” he said. Taiwan’s High Court ordered all ballot boxes sealed, pending a ruling on a recount.

However, voter turnout for President Chen’s highly provocative anti-Mainland referendum, which was held simultaneously with the election, was well below the required 50%, meaning that it was defeated. The referendum was considered so destabilizing that even U.S. President George Bush had called on Chen to drop it.

China has released a statement saying that the “Taiwan authorities willfully held the so-called ‘peace referendum’ in a provocative attempt to undermine cross-Straits relations and split the motherland. The referendum turned out to be invalid. . . . Any attempt to separate Taiwan from China is doomed to failure.”

With the stock market falling by 10% in the days following the election, President Chen Shui-bian agreed to a recount, proposing first passing a law mandating a recount if any vote difference is less than 1%. However, the opposition demanded that Chen use his presidential powers to mandate an immediate recount, and called for mass demonstrations on March 27.

The Court, which sealed the ballot boxes, ruled against the petition for annulment, but only on procedural grounds, ruling that the opposition must wait until Chen was sworn in on March 26, to refile the petition.

Could Plotters Cancel Philippine Elections?

The *Philippines Daily Tribune* of March 25 described a “Strategy of Tension” unfolding in Manila. The *Tribune* notes that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed her “political patron,” and master coup-instigator, former President Fidel Ramos, as chief advisor to her newly created “Anti-Terror Task Force.” The *Tribune* further notes that the make-up of the Task Force is remarkably similar to a “junta” proposed by Ramos cohort, retired Gen. Fortunato Abat, to replace the presidency. Abat, who worked closely with Ramos in overthrowing President Joseph Estrada in 2001, is openly organizing a “No-El” (for “No-Elections”) campaign, to cancel the May 10 elections and impose the junta. Although Ramos has distanced himself from the campaign of his old cohort, no one has moved to arrest Abat for his blatantly treasonous call.

The *Tribune* writes: “Palace sources said that with Ramos in the picture, it can be deduced that this [the Anti-Terror Task Force] could very well be a political-military move, with the former President [Ramos] playing a major role. But sources in the military intimated that this could well be the start of the No-El (No-Elections) plot, which is tied in with the ‘Oplan Bawas,’ a Palace-military plot to sow terror, violence and chaos as an excuse to set the stage for a junta government in which Mrs. Arroyo, former presidents Corazon Aquino and Ramos, along with Mrs. Arroyo’s loyal military generals, will serve in the council that will supervise the government.”

Arroyo justified the creation of the Task Force by the Madrid bombings, arguing that the Philippines, like Spain, has fully embraced and contributed to the U.S. war on Iraq. She also claimed that an unidentified group of “terrorist-politicians” within the Philippines is planning to stage violent activities to disrupt the May 10 elections—just the kind of supposed danger that could “justify” their cancellation and an emergency regime.