Offers much to an understanding of the situations of transitional democracies around the world

This book explores a relatively uncharted area of democratic transitions: the empirical study of intensely politicized transitional societies. In particular, it addresses the problems of prolonged democratic transitions that occur when a one-party state has been incompletely dismantled.

Taiwan’s gradual process of democratization has been celebrated as one of the most successful cases of political transformation. However, the process was not completed after political liberalization, the advent of multi-party politics and peaceful handover of power. Since 2000, when the first non-Kuomintang president was elected, Taiwan has been marked by protracted political struggles together with an intense politicization of society. In Taiwan, many of the political practices associated with representative democracy could even undermine the future sustainability of democratic politics because of the ways in which they are pursued. Election campaigning, referenda, street demonstrations, vote mobilization, opinion polls and political debate have all been distorted in the hands of intensely partisan politicians.

The book maintains that institutional flaws are not enough to explain the shortcomings of Taiwan’s democratic politics or those in other transitional democracies. The political structures and practices established before the transition from one-party authoritarianism still greatly affect Taiwanese politics. Thus, when an old dominant party like the Kuomintang continues to thrive after the end of one-party rule, the process of political transition contains within itself the seeds of structural politicization.

The book will be of interest to scholars and students of Taiwanese, Mainland Chinese and East Asian politics, as well as to those concerned with political developments in other transitional societies.

Dr Mikael Mattlin lectures in world politics at the University of Helsinki. A fluent Mandarin speaker, he has specialized in Chinese politics since 1995.
POLITICIZED SOCIETY
Governance in Asia

Series Editor: Professor Tak-Wing Ngo, IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance (t.ngo@fhk.eur.nl)

Most Asian countries have experienced radical social transformation in the past decades. Some have undergone democratization yet are still plagued by problems of political instability, official malfeasance and weak administration. Others have embraced market liberalization but are threatened by rampant rent seeking and business capture. Without exception, they all face the challenge of effective governance. This new book series explores how Asian societies and markets are governed in the rapidly changing world. The new series will explore the problem of governance from an Asian perspective. It encourages studies sensitive to the autochthony and hybridity of Asian history and development, which locate the issue of governance within specific meanings of rule and order, structures of political authority and mobilization of institutional resources distinctive to the Asian context. The series aims to publish timely and well-researched books that will have the cumulative effect of developing theories of governance pertinent to Asian realities.

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Politicized Society
The Long Shadow of Taiwan’s One-party Legacy

MIKAEL MATTLIN
To Kai
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Preface and acknowledgements

The book you are holding in your hand marks the end of a long journey. The journey began over a decade ago when I flew to Taiwan for the first time to do field research for my Master’s thesis during three months. The intellectual journey became much longer and personal than I originally anticipated. This book is the main scholarly fruit of that journey. It is the revised monograph of my doctoral dissertation *Political transition and structural politicisation: The long shadow of Taiwan’s one-party legacy* that I successfully defended in a public examination at the University of Helsinki in September 2008.

The research for this book started out from an observation. While doing field research for my Master’s thesis, I was struck by how differently people related to politics, compared with my native Finland. While the trend in Finland, as in much of the rest of Europe, seems to generally have moved towards decreasing interest in political participation since the 1970s, whether measured by voting activity, party membership, media focus, or attitudes towards political participation, politics in Taiwan seemed to be overly active and highly charged, both during election campaigns, in media, as well as in private conversations. Early on, I labelled this phenomenon politicization, while leaving the definition of the term to be resolved later.

The obvious reason for the highly charged nature of Taiwanese politics seemed to be the so-called reunification or independence issue, i.e., whether the island should reunify with the People’s Republic of China or go it alone. Yet, the pattern of politicization seemed to occur also at lower levels of politics, where this issue was not salient. Another obvious explanation would be the ‘ethnic’ issue in Taiwan, between so-called mainlanders – those who came to Taiwan from Mainland China with the remnants of the Republic of China government – and native Taiwanese, who had immigrated to the island in earlier centuries. However, again one could observe politicization also where the ethnic issue is not a major factor, for example, in local elections where candidates are all native Taiwanese. While national identity and ethnicity undoubtedly are elements in the
explanation for politicization, they do not explain the phenomenon exhaustively. A better explanation is needed.

My initial ill-defined assumption was that there was something in the structures of society or the way politics was organized, which recurrently produces strong politicization following political liberalization in 1987–1991 and especially after the first change of ruling party in 2000. In terms of time period, this book focuses on the eight years of DPP rule following this power transition – the first handover of the highest formal political power from one political team to another following a long period of one-party rule. This time-period is crucial for the development of Taiwan’s democracy, but it is interesting also for what it tells about other politically divided transitional political systems that are afflicted by strong politicization of society. Taiwan’s political development may also be the best empirical looking glass we have into the political future of the People’s Republic of China.

Despite a lot of research on Taiwanese politics both by local and American researchers, some of the phenomena typical of Taiwanese political culture are still rather poorly understood, in particular outside of Taiwan. While there are many good studies of particular aspects of Taiwanese politics, there is a comparative dearth of good holistic and integrative studies on Taiwanese politics. I believe this book will interest scholars and students of Taiwanese, Mainland Chinese and East Asian politics, as well as people concerned with political developments in other transitional societies. It has been written in a way that makes the text accessible also to a more general audience. As such, I hope non-specialists interested in Taiwan will also pick up the book.

During my research I tried to put existing theories and explanations aside and work out an own perspective on how things ‘hang together’ in Taiwanese politics, by taking to the field rather than the libraries. Only after having spent considerable time in the field, I ventured upon integrating the perspective that I had gained with existing research, seeing how it fits in. If this study had been on politics in a European country, the holistic and integrative approach that I have adopted would make less sense, because we already have a better grasp of the categories, concepts, frameworks and explanations that are relevant in the context. Just as politics in most established European democracies nowadays operates within a well-institutionalized framework of ‘normal politics’, where upheavals and major challenges to the framework itself are rare, so political scientists already have a relatively clear picture of the relevant factors to consider in studying politics. In the context of Taiwan we, as outside observers, are still in the process of working out the relevant concepts, frameworks and explanations.
Preface and Acknowledgements

Several sections in the book draw on material that I have earlier published as articles in scientific journals. Especially the third and fourth sections of ‘Four cases of politicization’ and the second and fourth sections of ‘Informal political structures and politicization’ build on previously published articles. The idea of nested pyramid structures and the vertical nature of political support were dealt with extensively in an article published in The China Quarterly (2004). The concept of zaoshi and the psychological aspects of political mass action and referenda were broached in an article in Issues & Studies (2004). The idea of asymmetric integration between Taiwan and Mainland China was introduced in Cooperation and Conflict (2005), while I wrote on party opportunism among politicians in an article published in East Asia (2006). The book also draws on articles published in China Perspectives (2004), Issues & Studies (2003 and 2004), as well as Kosmopolis (2000).

The publication of this book has been supported by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange. The research has also been generously supported by several institutions and funding agencies. For providing the project’s main research funding, I would like to express my gratefulness to the Finnish national Graduate School for Asian Studies, the Kone Foundation, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, the Sasakawa Foundation and the University of Helsinki Rector’s fund. Smaller stipends and travel grants to support the research have been provided by Tomas Hellén’s minnesfond, Oskar Öflund’s stiftelse, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Joel Toivolan säätö, and the University of Helsinki Chancellor’s travel grant fund.

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Politicized Society

advisors, I would like to reserve the greatest thanks to Juri Mykkänen, who has travelled the whole intellectual journey together with me from the first tentative efforts at formulating my research topic to this published monograph.

During my field research, numerous people helped me in many ways. I cannot thank everyone, but I would like to thank at least a few of you. Thank you, Andrew Marble, Robert Kang and family, Forest Kung and family, Shen Ching-fa and family, as well as Lin Jih-wen, Wu Yu-shan, Wang Chao-chi and Lu Chien-yi. Other colleagues and friends who have affected this work in positive ways include (in alphabetical order): Pami Aalto, Kari Ahlberg, Tiina Airaksinen, Annikki Arponen, Raisa Asikainen, Krista Berglund, Peter Buhanist, Hassan Gubara Said, Juuso Kaarevirta, Hanna Kaisti, Lauri Karvonen, Tuuli Koivu, Iikka Korhonen, Riikka Kuusisto, Kauko Laitinen, Outi Luova, Mikko Mattila, Aaron Mehrotra, Eevamaria Mielenon, Pekka Mykkänen, Josetta Nousjoki, Lauri Paltemaa, Päivi Poukka, Jouko Rautava, Shelley Rigger, Marita Siika, Sami Sillanpää, Jan Sundberg, Pekka Sutela, Teivo Teivainen, Juha Tähkämaa, Henri Vogt and Juha Vuori.

Of my colleagues and friends, I would like to thank in particular Jyrki Kallio and Matti Nojonen, who have provided both academic advice and general support, in addition to being all-weather friends. I would also like to thank my family in general and my mother and father in particular for continuous support in every possible way. Finally, I would like to reserve special thanks to Shen Huei-yi, whose support and advice has been invaluable for this work.

NOTES

1 Political team is a more encompassing term than political party and more useful here. In the most generic sense, leaders and teams composed on various bases can be found in politics everywhere. Bailey, Frederick G. (1985 [1969]) Stratagems and Spoils. A Social Anthropology of Politics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 35–57.

2 Heffernan, Richard (2002) “The possible as the art of politics”: Understanding consensus politics,’ Political Studies, 50: 743. Of course, there are occasional events that do to some extent challenge the framework, such as the murder in the Netherlands of Pim Fortuyn, which at least temporarily triggered a major political repercussion.
Note on Chinese characters and transliteration

This work contains many Chinese characters and character transliterations. In the main text a transliteration of the Chinese characters has been entered whenever there is no good English equivalent, or the Chinese term is an idiosyncratic key concept in the book. In the index at the end of the book, terms have been entered as Chinese transliterations if they have appeared so also in the main text. In addition, the Chinese characters are provided in the index for many key terms and for all Chinese names. The characters are written in traditional Chinese, as those are the characters in use in Taiwan. The transliteration system used is the internationally most common pinyin system. However, in cases where there is another established way of transliterating the name for an internationally famous person (e.g. Chiang Kai-shek or Lee Teng-hui), a well-known scholar (e.g. Chu Yun-han), or other proper noun (e.g. Kuomintang), the more established way of transliteration is used. In uncertain cases, I have used my best judgment. Finally, for some prominent Taiwanese politicians, the book uses their English names rather than transliterations of their Chinese names, as the former are better known internationally (e.g. Frank Hsieh or Anette Lu).
The pan-greens organized a massive islandwide rally on the sensitive date of 28 February in the run-up to the 2004 presidential election and referendum. The photo is from Tainan in the south of the island.

Campaigning politicians often walk around in a street procession shaking hands and pleading for votes, accompanied by vehicles, loudspeakers and firecrackers.
After the 2004 presidential election, the pan-blues staged a week-long demonstration outside of the presidential palace in Taipei.

*Opposite above:* During election time, campaign commercials fill up much of the visual public space.

*Opposite below:* Even grassroots politicians such as borough wardens maintain constituency service centres that convert to campaign offices before an election. This one is in Hualien.
Politicians often ask better known politicians to lend them support by appearing on their commercials. Here a KMT legislator in Taichung county has solicited the assistance of the president, who is also the party chairman.
Political transitions and politicization

Two decades ago, the world witnessed the rapid collapse of communist political systems in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Around the same time authoritarian regimes in many other parts of the world were also under tremendous pressure. Power-holders in Eastern Europe, Taiwan, Chile, South Korea, South Africa and the Philippines almost simultaneously suffered from an inability to respond to new social challenges effectively, and from lack of legitimacy. Domestic and international demands for democratic change saw numerous authoritarian regimes commence a transition to democracy. Most of these societies experienced an initial outburst of mass political activity; the transformations were accompanied by largely peaceful mass demonstrations. However, popular enthusiasm for politics also quickly waned.¹

Although all such outbursts of mass political activity did not lead to political change, notably not in the People’s Republic of China and Myanmar, the general tone of the late 1980s and 1990s was that liberal democracy had triumphed. Subsequent events, not least the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia and the discrediting of Western efforts to forcefully bring political change to Iraq and Afghanistan, soon punctured the democratic triumphalism heard in some quarters. Despite this, it seemed that much of Eastern Europe had made a reasonable transition to democracy and integration into the European Union, while other less settled states like the Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan saw further attempts to transform politics through mass demonstrations.

Today, however, ardent democrats are on the defence. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has so far managed to evade a political transition by adapting its socio-economic system to embrace new economic models, building a new source of legitimacy in nationalism and offering limited improvements in political accountability.² In stark contrast, democratically elected governments
often struggle to survive. The old menace of fragile democratic systems – their overthrow by military coups – is still a danger in some corners of the world, Thailand and Fiji being two recent examples. An increasingly common phenomenon is the undermining of democratic systems from within the system itself by the very processes that are supposed to support the system. How are we to grasp democratic politics where election campaigning, political demonstrations, vote mobilization and political rhetoric seem to jeopardize the future sustainability of democratic politics by the way they are pursued?

What this book argues for, using the case study of Taiwanese politics, is a different understanding of democratic processes in those recently democratized societies where politics appears to have become stuck at a high level of mobilization. At the core of this study is a phenomenon that can be called structural politicization. The phenomenon refers to a situation where the threshold for political conflict is low, there is a strong polarization of political views and an intolerance of different political opinions, political conflicts tend to have a zero-sum logic ending in a standoff and stalemate, and political issues spread outside the formal political institutions to intrude on numerous areas of life.

Such a description of politics is not unique to Taiwan. A similar situation can be found in many transitional societies that are plagued by persistently divisive politics and a generally high salience of politics in society. For example, politics in Thailand, the Ukraine, South Korea, Estonia and the Philippines have exhibited similar traits following political liberalization. Scenes of mass protest and even violent clashes (as recently in Thailand between Yellow Shirts and Red Shirts), remind us that politics in these countries, rather than displaying the political apathy and popular disconnection from politics so common in many ‘mature’ Western democracies, reveal a mass politicization that often reaches extreme heights. But do we understand why these societies become so politicized? Why does their political culture in general seem to be characterized by a seemingly low threshold for political conflict? And why is the general public often drawn into the conflict?

In seeking to answer these questions and to understand the phenomenon of structural politicization, I shall draw on the Taiwanese experience but the wider implications of the study will be immediately apparent to many readers. The parallels in Taiwan’s political situation with those in Thailand, Ukraine, the Philippines, or even Venezuela, are not just coincidental. What may also be discerned in this study is the possible future shape of politics across the Taiwan Strait, in the People’s Republic of China. This book strives to explain
what generates the tendency towards the recurrent politicization of Taiwanese society, thereby increasing our understanding of this phenomenon in transitional societies more generally.

STRUCTURAL POLITICIZATION

Before proceeding with building the argument, it is necessary to probe briefly into the meaning and origin of the elusive term politicization, which is more commonly used by editorialists and politicians themselves than by political scientists. The root word ‘politicize’ means to render political or to give a political character to, make something or someone political, or more involved in or aware of political matters. It can also mean to act the politician or to discourse on or engage in politics. With regard to people, ‘politicized’ then refers to being interested and involved in politics, being politically motivated or adept in the ways of the politician, while ‘politicizing’ refers to talking politics or the action or process of rendering something political.

In the English language, the term has almost from the start had something of the character of an accusation or a defence against accusations. The accusatory tone in the term’s usage is particularly apparent when politicians talk of their opponents or editorialists decry the irresponsible actions of politicians. Politicization is less objectionable if politics is seen as just one potential aspect of all things, whereby it simply marks a new area of society or issue as political, opening it up for legitimate politicking and in the process redefining the boundaries of the polity.

In a general sense, when talking about the politicization of something one is simply saying that an area of society such as religion, the military or the administration, or a section of the population such as women or peasants has entered the political game, or that a political element or consideration has entered into the picture which previously was not there (descriptive statement) and perhaps should not be there (normative statement). Politicization becomes normatively deplorable if one strives to maintain a strict separation between formal political institutions and other spheres of society. Scholars have argued, for example, that professional soldiers should not dabble in politics but rather retain political neutrality, that judicial appointments should be made on professional, not political grounds, or that multilateral institutions with non-political mandates should not engage in ‘political’ anti-corruption work.

Maintaining the separation of the formal political sphere from other spheres of society may be an end in itself or may be a way to prevent unwanted consequences.
In the latter case, politicization is seen as detrimental to some other value or goal, typically professionalism, meritocracy, social peace or efficiency. Of course, such arguments can also be used as rhetorical devices by power-holders to justify their rule. Denouncing the politicizing actions of others is often akin to a do-not-rock-the-boat argument, revealing a preference for political conservatism.

A simple way of determining when politicization occurs is to observe when a particular issue enters the institutions of the formal political sphere, e.g., the parliament or the cabinet. In a minimal sense, it has then become politicized, that is, the object of legitimate political debate, arm-twisting, horse-trading and decision-making. But this is standard practice in politics. Implicit in the use of the concept is usually an assumption that the degree of politicization is measurable, at least on an ordinal scale, as in the expressions thoroughly politicized, intensely politicized, and growing politicization.7

By arguing that Taiwanese society is intensely politicized, one is at least implicitly comparing it to some standard of ‘normal politics’. In this work, the implicit standard, or point of comparison, derives from a European parliamentary democracy. Revealing this is not only meant to clarify the author’s implicit assumptions. It is also an aspect that I believe sets this book apart from many other treatments of Taiwanese politics. As most research on Taiwanese politics has been produced either by American-trained Taiwanese or American scholars, the implicit, if not explicit, point of comparison in many cases is American politics. However, in many ways, the American political system is unique. There is no obvious reason why Taiwanese politics should be compared to American rather than to European politics.

While the politicization of a contentious issue occurs in any political system from time to time, Taiwanese society often gives the impression of being excessively or at least intensely politicized, with specific issues recurrently becoming the subject of intense political wrangling.8 In contrast, politics has in many established European democracies arguably become rather depoliticized, with highly institutionalized and technicalized policy-making.9 Zizek has used the term ‘post-politics’ to describe such a state of affairs.10

To get at the essence of a persistently high degree of politicization in society, an analysis of the long-term structural relations between the activities occurring in the formal political sphere and other areas of the public sphere is called for. In other words, an understanding of the politicization potential of a particular society is needed. Due to a confluence of structural reasons, some societies may have more politicization potential than others. Yet the politicization potential
Political Transitions and Politicization

of a given society also varies over time: Finland of 1970 had a much higher politicization potential than Finland of 2000.

When politicization becomes a dominant feature in public life and has identifiable structural causes, it can be labelled structural politicization. This is a surprisingly unexplored field of study and the concept is therefore underdeveloped.\textsuperscript{11} For the purposes of this book, I define structural politicization as a tendency towards concurrent polarization and political divisiveness over a number of issues and in a variety of institutions in a society. Put in other terms, when a polarizing political conflict spreads to many corners of society, we can talk about structural politicization. In a condition of structural politicization conflict is preferred to compromise and the excess of a disposition is celebrated in the place of moderation.\textsuperscript{12}

In Europe, a decline in popular participation in politics and a lack of citizen enthusiasm has often been perceived as a problem. However, just as political apathy can become a problem for representative democracy, an overly mobilized population can also have adverse effects on representative institutions and social trust. One of the classic post-war books on politics, Almond and Verba’s 1963 \textit{The Civic Culture}, argued that politics was not a central concern for most people in society most of the time. Indeed, the authors went further by saying that representative democracy to some extent depended on the public not becoming too involved in politics; the general public should participate in the running of common affairs in principle, but not in practice.\textsuperscript{13}

In theory, political activity should in representative democracies be conducted primarily within formal political institutions. The clear separation of social roles and functions is a distinctly Western ideal. Anthropologists early on noted that outside of the West, social roles were often less specialized and differentiated, and the clear separation of social functions was not necessarily a cherished value.\textsuperscript{14} This point needs emphasizing. The whole edifice of democratic politics has been erected on the basis of Western socio-cultural models that tend to strive for a clear separation of social roles. What then happens to democratic politics when it enters a context where social roles and sectors of society are not as clearly distinguished? It would not be a bad bet to expect political processes to more readily permeate many corners of society. When mixed social roles fuse with an overarching political conflict, the politicization of society can be expected. Political competition moves beyond the formal political institutions and becomes a significant theme in the workings of primarily non-political institutions. Conversely, many ordinarily non-political organizations become protagonists in the political game.
Of course, in one sense all social institutions can be said to have at least a tangential relationship with the political. Pierre Clastres has noted, ‘If political power is not a necessity inherent in human nature, i.e., in man as a natural being … it is a necessity inherent in social life. The political can be conceived apart from violence; the social cannot be conceived without the political.’ In practically every institution there is some competition for power, positions and benefits, or what might be called office politics. But this is not the same as when formally non-political institutions routinely become deeply involved in political struggles within formal political institutions. In Taiwan, the political conflict has colonized many areas of society, turning everything from media through academia and education to the streets into political battlegrounds, in the process constricting the space for non-partisans. When political competition becomes all-consuming it is parasitic on other forms of social interaction.

Politicization sums up a host of perceived problems and shortcomings that many political scientists and editorialists have pointed out in Taiwan’s post-authoritarian politics. The Chinese word for politicization, zhengzhihua, and another concept fan zhengzhi, which translates as ‘all politics’ or ‘everything is politics’, have been frequently heard terms in Taiwan in recent years. Other authors have talked about excessive polarization, overcharged politics, populist authoritarianism, distorted democracy and illiberal democracy. Simply put, there is a widely shared feeling among both political scientists and other professional observers that there is something wrong with Taiwanese politics.

There are several dimensions to the phenomenon of politicization, not all of which are necessarily present at the same time. Firstly, politicization involves the boundaries of the political, or those aspects of society that are considered to be part of the political game. Secondly, it involves the state’s reach, or the extent to which the state penetrates society. A third dimension is partisan bifurcation, or the extent to which political differences harden into unbridgeable, dichotomous political cleavages. Finally, the extent of confrontational politics, or the prevalence of open conflict that makes use of mass mobilization, is also a key feature of politicization. While not following a strict thematic order, these different dimensions will be highlighted throughout the book.

A complex social phenomenon such as politicization cannot be explained by a single cause. There are inevitably several forces acting and interacting in society to produce the observable outcomes. Value lies in analyzing the interactions between these forces. An understanding of the structural causes of politicization helps us better to comprehend those transitional societies where politics seems to be permanently turbulent.
Some of the general prerequisites for the politicization of society are relatively well known. A one-party state is thoroughly politicized as the political system permeates most areas of society. This is less interesting than a situation where intense politicization of society occurs in circumstances of open political competition. In other words, there needs to be some possibility of competition and popular participation in politics to talk meaningfully of the politicization of society. Taiwan’s political liberalization is an important backdrop to politicization, but it is not the root cause of the problem. As early as the 1970s Arthur Lerman wrote about Taiwan’s local electoral politics giving ‘the appearance of great divisiveness’. While political liberalization did not cause politicization, it made a latent social phenomenon manifest, dovetailing with the observation of experts on African politics that open political competition has often led to a sharpening rather than an amelioration of conflicts.

In political science, there are two general ways of understanding politicization: as the political interest and involvement of people in politics (politicization of society), or as the extent of political influence on some sector of society or the whole state (state politicization). These two discussions have evolved separately, but in order to grasp the structural causes of society’s politicization both are needed, as I will argue that the one-party state legacy is a major factor behind the intense involvement of people in politics. It is widely assumed that citizens are more interested in politics the more relevance societal and political arrangements have for their lives, through government extraction of resources from society (e.g. taxes) and distribution of benefits to it (e.g. welfare services, government employment). On the other hand, state politicization is also intimately linked to rent seeking, corruption and using the state as a means for private ends.

Politicization, as Lipset and Rokkan famously claimed in 1967, usually occurs around prominent social cleavages, although not automatically, and tends to be more intense the more cleavages within a society coincide and reinforce each other rather than cross-cut. The political parties that first form are usually reflections of underlying social cleavages. In many countries, the introduction of open political competition has led to the politicization of ethnicity as the primary social cleavage. In the newly democratized political systems in Eastern Europe, party systems also largely institutionalized around existing social cleavages. However, the initial rounds of elections, party and alliance formations and entries into and exits from political competition were pivotal in determining which underlying social cleavages became institutionalized in practice as political cleavages reflected by political parties. Social cleavages can greatly condition electoral competition after a party system stabilizes. Yet, before this occurs, early
open political competition may in turn greatly affect which social cleavages become politicized and in what ways.

Parties often tend to persist even as the social importance of the original social cleavage fades. Parties may thus become legacy parties as in Western and Northern Europe, capitalising on their established institutional position and erecting barriers to entry for new parties.\(^{28}\) Party structures in many Western countries are now relatively stable. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. For example, in Italy the erstwhile dominant parties, the Christian Democrats and the Socialists, rapidly disappeared from the scene in the 1990s and were replaced by new parties. Nonetheless, on the whole new political parties rarely enter the scene in established democratic systems, and when they do, they tend to struggle to stay in the game and increase their support.

In Taiwan, as in many other transitional political systems, such as South Korea, Poland and Ukraine, the party scene is less stable and institutionalized. In India, even five decades of open political competition have failed to produce a stable party structure at the state level; party volatility is high and political cleavages often do not reflect underlying social cleavages in the way Lipset and Rokkan have described in the case of Western Europe.\(^{29}\) Weak party structures that fail to articulate collective interests or do not adequately reflect underlying cleavages, with parties acting more like ephemeral electoral coalitions, have been seen as symptomatic of fragile democratic systems.\(^{30}\) Lest we fall too easily into a culturalist argument, it should immediately be noted that this was also the case not so long ago in some European countries, and was perceived by observers as being related to the impression of intense politicization.\(^{31}\)

The question of the role of partisanship and more specifically the political party as a source of politicization cannot be circumvented, as partisanship and politicization have been linked together as far back as Thucydides.\(^{32}\) Of course, in a sense, the very raison d’être of political parties is to politicize – to accentuate political differences and rally supporters around real or manipulated political divisions – although the extent to which they actually do so varies greatly from country to country and time to time.\(^{33}\) One should therefore not be surprised to find that party activities are intimately related to politicization, but are they the ultimate cause or are there more structural reasons behind the politicization of a society?

Active state intervention in society and the economy is seen by many mainstream political scientists as inducing politicization, and as detrimental to developing a well-functioning democracy. In Lipset’s words, ‘the more the sources of power, status and wealth are concentrated in the state, the harder
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it is to institutionalize democracy. Under such conditions the political struggle tends to approach a zero-sum game in which the defeated lose all.\textsuperscript{34} However, such conventional indicators as the size of the state or the general economic relevance of the state to its citizens would appear to point towards a low level of politicization in Taiwan. Neither has more equal political competition reduced the politicization of state structures, as some research suggests it does.\textsuperscript{35}

TRANSITION INTERREGNUM

The scholarly debate on democratization is relevant for this book, in particular as regards the so-called transition paradigm and the criticism of it.\textsuperscript{36} The transition idea was popular in the 1990s. In simplified form, the transition supposition went something like this: societies may for one or another reason begin a political transformation, where a transition from one kind of political system (e.g., authoritarian) to another (democracy) is set in motion, followed in due course by a period of consolidation of the new system, whereby democracy finally becomes ‘the only game in town’.\textsuperscript{37} Incidentally, many of the writings on democratic consolidation in the late 1990s used Taiwan as a case, and a two-volume project on consolidating third wave democracies even had two Taiwanese scholars as co-editors.\textsuperscript{38}

Later, however, the academic debate moved on to a critique of the whole transition paradigm.\textsuperscript{39} Supposedly democratic institutions and practices from direct elections and civil society to various political rights have been actively promoted by Western governments and international organizations alike, in recent years converging on the notion of ‘good governance’ that even Mainland Chinese scholars now often debate. This has indeed led to the broad adoption of formally democratic institutions in a vast array of non-Western countries over the past three decades, but does this mean that we have many more democracies in the world?

The counterclaim to the transition proposition is that, rather than seeing a wholesale transition from one political system to another over a reasonable period of time, a dispassionate analysis of the third wave democracies, in particular those outside of the West, would show that this disparate grouping of societies contains many superficially democratic societies that often function in quite different ways from Western political systems in practice. Lately, mainstream political scientists studying democratization have also come to recognize that the new democracies are a very mixed bag, and that democracy, while geographically more widespread than before, is also much thinner and more vulnerable.\textsuperscript{40} Ngo
Tak-wing has claimed that the democratic transformation in Taiwan has even led to bad governance.\textsuperscript{41} Systemic transitions, i.e. a transition from one political system to an entirely different one, are rare, notwithstanding the rhetoric of political revolution, habitually invoked when new rulers are carried to power on a wave of popular discontent. ‘Change’ is easy to exclaim but hard to effect. Actual systemic transitions are exceptional events among other things because the political organization of a society is closely associated with its socio-economic organization and radical disjunctures in the fundamental organization of any society are exceedingly rare. Pre-existing social structures condition politics even though its formal trappings are changed.

Zygmunt Bauman considers both the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the downfall of Eastern European communism as examples of genuine systemic transitions involving a wholesale reorganization of society rather than just a change of power-holders and political style. The same could be said of the long and arduous task of building modern political systems in Africa, in societies often lacking both a nation and a state, and having previously been organized mainly into tribes or chiefdoms, sometimes into rudimentary states.\textsuperscript{42} In most cases of political transition there will be a substantial amount of inertia in old structures and practices left in the system long after political scientists, not to mention politicians, have claimed that a transition has been successfully completed.

The political transitions that have preoccupied political scientists over recent decades have mainly involved the transition first from various forms of authoritarianism to liberal democracy, and then, after the collapse of communism, the transitions of Eastern European states towards liberal democracy. Even in such transitions from one modern state form to another, ‘stateness’ and ‘nationness’, or the lack of them, have often proved to be key stumbling blocks in consolidating the new political system.\textsuperscript{43} Transition scholars have talked of several parallel transitions taking place in those societies that have to various degrees thrown off their previous political systems. Apart from the transitions to democracy and a market economy, there is sometimes also the need to rebuild or reorganize state structures. In some cases even nationhood has to be built.\textsuperscript{44}

Taiwan’s political transition certainly faced a challenge in constructing separate senses of state and nation. The Kuomintang (KMT) regime, upon its retreat to the island in the 1940s, had forcefully promoted a program to resuscitate traditional Chinese culture in order to emphasize the unbroken link with China, selectively creating an image of Chinese community and effectively nationalizing culture.\textsuperscript{45} However, unlike new countries without adequate state
structures (some post-Soviet countries), or suffering from paralysed or unusable state bureaucracies (many African countries) or an inefficient state bureaucracy (some Latin American countries), Taiwan’s problem did not lie in the state structures per se.46

In terms of actual state structures, Taiwan possessed a reasonably efficient state bureaucracy that had even been lauded for enabling Taiwan’s post-war economic miracle through prudent economic policies. After the problem of the state’s administrative boundaries was solved by relinquishing the claim to represent all of China in 1991, and by reducing the functions of the redundant provincial administration starting in the late 1990s, one could also claim that there was an emergent internal agreement on the limits of the state’s jurisdiction over which the state apparatus could exercise effective administrative control. Linz and Stepan (1996) have deemed this as important for democratic consolidation. Until that time, Taiwan had maintained a cumbersome administrative system based partly on a fiction. There were separate but overlapping national and provincial administrations. In terms of de facto jurisdiction, the only difference was a few small islands close to the Chinese mainland but under the control of the Republic of China (R.O.C.).

In the world of international diplomacy, the Republic of China – a state once even occupying a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council – has slowly faded into obscurity because of Mainland pressure and the gradual loss of international support. This, coupled with internal developments in Taiwanese society, in turn exacerbated a sense of identity crisis on the island, which has yet to be conclusively resolved. The identity crisis (the ‘nation’ part of the problem) is undoubtedly a factor in Taiwan’s politicization, although not as vital as people generally assume.

One aspect of transitions that has not always been given sufficient attention by scholars is the power transition embedded within political transitions. A handover of political power from one elite group to another group or groups, or significant shifts in the relative power distribution between groups, usually follow a political transition. While Huntington and many others have debated the crucial role of political elites in the immediate process of political liberalization, longer-term power transitions within the political system have been given less attention. The reason that longer-term power shifts have often been ignored is probably that in many cases a political transition has been accompanied by the immediate downfall of the erstwhile rulers, as occurred in most Eastern European cases.47

A political transition usually involves power changing hands, or at least calls for this. A power transition, which can be abrupt or gradual, violent or
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peaceful, is then usually embedded within the political transition. The role and actions of old political elites during the transition are particularly crucial when the transition is accompanied by a weak ‘stateness’ and ‘nationness’, which may make regime exit problematic. For example, the Honecker regime in the German Democratic Republic was much more reluctant to exit from communism than other Central European communist leaders, apparently due to well-grounded fears regarding the collapse of the state, and the interests linked with it.48

Political transitions rarely occur with the old political elite intact and firmly in power for any extended period of time. However, for a long time Taiwan appeared to be in just such a paradoxical situation. As late as 1999, one of the most distinguished Taiwanese political scientists, Chu Yun-han, argued precisely this possibility: had the ruling party, the KMT, managed to transform itself and adapt to the new political system, embracing political competition while continuing to dominate the political landscape? A year earlier, Bruce Dickson had persuasively argued that the KMT was likely to be able to adapt to the changed circumstances while the CCP on the mainland was highly unlikely to be able to pull off the same feat.49 At the time, a genuine power transition had yet to occur. While the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) had won a majority of local city mayor and county magistrate seats for the first time in late 1997, the KMT had never lost its majority in national politics. Ironically, a major power transition began the year after Chu’s writing appeared, a transition that threw into doubt the earlier assumption that the old ruling party had managed to change in step with changing circumstances.

Bauman cautions us that systemic revolutions are sure ‘to play havoc with the extant distribution of relative privileges and deprivations’.50 It is hard to imagine a political transition that does not involve some measure of redistribution of power, positions and associated benefits, especially if the transition is a truly systemic one, involving the uprooting of a whole set of old practices and structures. The natural inclination of any well-established political elite is to hang on to power for as long as possible. Lipset has remarked that ‘For a person or governing body to be willing to give up control because of an election outcome is astonishing behavior, not normal, not on the surface a “rational choice,” particularly in new, less stable, less legitimate polities.’51

An important distinction between Taiwan and most Eastern European cases is then that Taiwan’s one-party system has been dismantled incrementally over a long period of time. The ruling KMT securely held on to power for more than a decade after political liberalization began in 1987, and continued to block several political reforms after losing power. Election engineering allowed the KMT to
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wield a secure majority and gave the party assurances of its ability to stay in power beyond political liberalization, thus greatly facilitating the regime’s willingness to undertake and oversee liberalization.52 In the late 1980s, the KMT regime faced stateness and nationness problems similar to the Honecker regime in the GDR. By contrast, the KMT had, through a long history of elections, well-established mechanisms in place for ensuring its continued political dominance after liberalization. This mitigated the danger of conflicts over state and nation overwhelming the party-state.

In Eastern Europe, the moral justification for and thus also the political legitimacy of the old communist regimes collapsed with extraordinary speed, in many cases making it a foregone conclusion that a power transition was imminent. Eastern European countries were then in most cases spared a protracted power transition process by the rapid removal of the old elites from office, save for a few exceptions like Ukraine, where this occurred more recently. In an extreme example, the first post-communist cabinets in Estonia were staffed with very young ministers, with the prime minister himself only 32 years of age. In most Eastern European cases, the ruling party lost its power in the first free and fair elections. This did not prevent reconstituted old political elites from resisting change or recapturing power in a more restricted form through elections a few years later. These developments nicely conform to the double-turnover test that Huntington had earlier formulated and claimed was a prerequisite for successful democratic consolidation, that is, a switch through elections of power away from the former rulers and then back to them in a subsequent election.53

In Taiwan, the post-liberalization political leadership on the island was still staffed with party apparatchiks, many of who had been around in the 1970s, such as Lee Teng-hui, Li Huan, Soong Chu-yu, Hao Bocun and Ma Ying-jeou. Mexico and South Korea are in this respect similar to Taiwan. In South Korea, political liberalization started in 1987. However, it took ten years for an opposition candidate to be elected president for the first time. In Mexico, the PRI, in power for decades, did not lose national power until 2000, even though small political reforms had been implemented since a political reform law was enacted in 1977. Notably, limited elections for local office had preceded political liberalization by several decades in all three cases, which may partly explain the slow change of ruling party following the launch of political reforms.54

Those who talked about the consolidation of Taiwan’s democracy only a few years after martial law was revoked jumped the gun, so to speak. In retrospect, it appears that the KMT reluctantly relinquished power in the belief that the underlying political strengths were still in its favour and that it would be returned
to power within four years, which initially was not an unreasonable assumption. When this did not happen, against most predictions, the KMT redoubled its efforts to bring down the government by almost any non-violent means and return to power. Today, it seems more daring to claim that Taiwan’s democracy has consolidated, even though Taiwan saw its second peaceful turnover of power in 2008 (a KMT victory) – thereby fulfilling Huntington’s double-turnover test.

The standard formal definition of a completed transition to democracy offered by Linz and Stepan in their already classic book of 1996 on democratic transition and consolidation reads:

A democratic transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*.55

It seems that while the other conditions have more or less been met, the government’s *de facto* authority to generate new policies was seriously and repeatedly challenged by the KMT and its political allies in parliament during the DPP’s time in government. The former ruling party at times acted as if it was still the legitimate government. For example, in the spring of 2005, the leaders of the KMT and its two party allies in parliament all accepted invitations to visit Mainland China, signing communiqués with the Chinese leadership, thereby bypassing the constitutionally produced Taiwanese government. Policy-making was also seriously hampered throughout DPP rule, as the new ruling party never commanded a majority in parliament.

In the case of Taiwan, can we justifiably talk of a systemic transition (a reorganization of the entire society) in Bauman’s parlance, or are we dealing with a narrower political (a change in political style) and power transition (a turnover of political elites)? Taiwan has been described as a best-case democratization in which most of the conventional prerequisites for successful democratization such as a highly-educated middle-class population, high and relatively equal living standards, small size, long experience with local elections, a market economy and economic integration with the world economy were in place at the onset of political reform.56 In other words, it would seem that a fully developed socio-economic system simply shook off a dysfunctional and archaic political
system, thereby emancipating itself from its political constraints. On the other hand, local elections notwithstanding, Taiwan had no real prior experience with democracy. Until the mid-1980s it was a harsh police state under one-party rule and seemingly perpetual martial law. Taiwan’s unclear international status and still-ambiguous national identity could also be seen as impediments to democratization, as a state has usually been taken to be a prerequisite for democratization. Taiwan’s transition then appears to contain elements of a larger systemic transition.

In systemic transitions, in particular of political systems where the state previously claimed omnipotence, such as the communist state in Eastern Europe, the legacy of omnipotence may return to haunt the new rulers. The trouble with a claim to omnipotence is that the state is always in danger of being overloaded with demands. The emperor is always in danger of being exposed for his missing clothes. The new rulers taking power after the disintegration of such a system may inherit the people’s aversion to the old state, while simultaneously having to face overblown expectations of the new one. The erstwhile state with totalizing aspirations will act as a ‘dissent-condensing factor’, hampering the new rulers’ ability to transform the political system while acting under its new democratic constraints.

Karl W. Deutsch once remarked that integration between states is a broad zone of transition over a long period of time, and that states can spend decades wavering between integration and non-integration. Could it be, we may ask, that transitions from one political system to another one similarly occur across a very broad zone, often requiring decades to fully consolidate, if indeed they ever do so?

Today, rather than talking of a transition to another political system, transition interregnum offers a better description of the situation where the old system has been jettisoned but a well-functioning new system has yet to be erected. Transition interregnum captures the drawn-out in-between condition where a break with the past has been made, but the fruits of the future have yet to ripen. It is, however, primarily a figure of speech because, unless the entire society has descended into a state of anarchy, naturally there is still some kind of a political system in place.

The interregnum political system is necessarily a mix of old and new. Scholars interested in political opinions noted a marked shift in people’s perceptions of politics, power, authority and political participation in Taiwan already between the late 1970s and the mid-1990s. On the other hand, the roots of many current political practices in Taiwan, e.g., practices related to vote mobilization during
elections, can be traced to the authoritarian period. It may be easier to jettison the idea of authoritarianism than it is to rid the political system of old practices associated with the authoritarian system. The interregnum political system will then exhibit a fair amount of inertia for an extended period of time. The big question is whether this is a transitory phase or a permanent state?

Can democracy-supporting political processes develop out of historical trajectories that are entirely different from Western societies?

In his seminal book on the third wave of democratization, Huntington noted that every wave has been followed by a counter-wave, when some of the newly democratized countries have lapsed back into authoritarianism. The first one led to the rise of fascism, the second to bureaucratic authoritarianism, especially in Latin America. The third counter-wave would seem to be more inconspicuous than the previous ones. The danger of an outright relapse into authoritarianism or breakdown of the democratic system does not seem great this time around. This is also true for Taiwan, although there are a few voices warning of this danger. In interviews conducted among political observers and members of the political elite at the time of the 2000 presidential election, practically every respondent dismissed the possibility of a relapse to authoritarianism categorically, even those who otherwise were critical of Taiwan’s democratization.

A bigger danger to Taiwan is that of gradual erosion – getting stuck somewhere between authoritarianism and democracy. Huntington has later remarked that the biggest danger for the third wave democracies is not the overthrow of the democratic government, but rather the gradual weakening of democracy by the leaders. Larry Diamond early identified overweening personal or family ambition and the poor performance of politicians as two major causes of democratic breakdown in Asia.

The ‘crisis of authoritarianism’ that brought about the third wave democratization starting in Southern Europe in 1975 and culminating in the late 1980s, is by no means guaranteed to produce stable democratic systems. It seems that in many cases severe rifts within society are aggravated by political liberalization and tend to produce populism, polarization, politicization and political instability. Such trends can be observed in East Asia, Latin America and Africa. In some cases, one could even talk about political instability or disorder becoming institutionalized, often accompanied by a crisis of faith in democracy. Our grasp of what causes this systemic instability and of the nature of the new post-authoritarian states is still inadequate.

This book does not purport to cover Taiwan’s democratization process as a whole. There are already several thorough and well-written accounts of almost
every stage and aspect of Taiwan’s democratization process, as well as some good books on Taiwan’s modern political history. This is also not a study of elections *per se*. Nonetheless, one can hardly avoid dealing with elections when talking about Taiwanese politics. Taiwan has been called an election-driven democracy. Elections are an over-arching theme and central structuring feature of the political scene, and even of society in general. Elections are dealt with in as far as they are central to understanding the political structures in society, their interaction with other social structures, and how these come together to produce the outcomes that I have labelled politicization.68

CHINESE PARTIES AND THE POWER-SHARING PROBLEM

Taiwan’s somewhat untypical lack of power alternation that lasted well over a decade after political liberalization and the introduction of full and free elections naturally prompted researchers to ponder what the reasons for this were. Suggestions ranged from the KMT’s extraordinarily broad social foundation and its middle position on national identity to the party-state’s successful economic policies. However, the party’s staying power had as much to do with its clearly dominant position within the political system and the gradual introduction of open political competition as with its policy successes or ideological position.69

Since the KMT survived the initial political liberalization, dominated the political landscape after it, had co-opted most local political elites and oversaw a vast patronage system that in some respects expanded following liberalization, few people within the system had an incentive to challenge the political order. The opposition party therefore seemed to be permanently locked into a minority position with a cap on its popular support around 30 per cent. Yet, the first and somewhat unexpected loss for the KMT in presidential elections altered the structural circumstances and caused a mass exodus of politicians and support.

One of the theoretical contributions of the argument advanced in this book is bringing an analysis of Chinese social structures back to the study of Taiwanese democracy. While many of the early writers on local Taiwanese politics were keenly aware of its ‘Chinese’ social roots, much later writing has implicitly, if not explicitly, assumed that Taiwanese politics should be compared to advanced (Western) democracies rather than to Mainland China. This, in itself, is of course partly a political statement, telling us perhaps less about the actual state of affairs and more about the political preferences of those making the assumption. An undercurrent running through this book is that researchers studying the
perceived imperfections of Taiwanese politics ignore these social-structural and political-cultural roots at their own peril.

‘Chinese’ political parties founded during authoritarian rule have often had revolutionary aspirations and secret society-like origins. This was certainly true of the CCP, but the same also applies largely to the KMT. For example, Dickson observed that ‘the KMT did not originate as a parliamentary faction or an electoral machine. It began as a conspiratorial party attempting to overthrow the incumbent government in Beijing.’ The DPP had a similar origin, as it was established illegally in 1986 by a small group of ideological supporters and aimed at changing Taiwan’s authoritarian political system and moving towards Taiwanese independence. The first political parties were formed mainly in order to overthrow the existing system, not to seek representation for an un(der)represented part of the populace. This fact cannot be neglected, as the sharing of political power has been a perennial problem both in Mainland China and in Taiwan.

The lack of a tradition of shared power in high politics and a lingering intolerance of power-sharing is still perhaps the most fundamental ‘cultural’ impediment to normalizing party relations in Taiwan. This is the classic Chinese problem with having two emperors. The idea is that there can only be one legitimate ruler at any one time; one possessor of the Mandate of Heaven. The struggle for power in China has traditionally been a life-and-death struggle with only one winner – dynasties have been overthrown or divided and losing factions within parties have been obliterated. Whoever won the struggle usually determined not only the new terms of the game but also rewrote history.

Some political scientists have seen an East Asian or Chinese cultural preference for seeking consensus, harmony and unity and avoiding open political conflict. A quarter of a century ago Lucian Pye argued that a strong paternalistic element in Asian political cultures, including a pervasive fear of disunity and an aversion to openly challenging authority, are inimical to Asian societies developing thriving democracy. The appeal to unity is still popular among Asian political leaders. Mainland Chinese leaders have, for example, launched ‘harmony’ as a new meta-concept that has become ubiquitous in current Chinese political discourse. Pye’s argument was thrown into question almost immediately after his book was published, as several East Asian countries embarked on a process of democratization. If there was a cultural preference for harmony, it did not prevent democratization. However, in many cases the political transition has not really been completed, or at least the transitioning political systems retain many features of their past that may come into conflict with the new formal political institutions they have adopted.
Taiwan’s political transition seems to have become stuck at a halfway house. The changes launched within the political system more than two decades ago are big enough to call for changes in socio-economic relations as well. However, as yet the formal political institutions appear to have changed more than the social structures in which they were enmeshed, thus highlighting the importance of analysing the workings of Taiwan’s informal political structures. For example, the strong legacy of a patronage state72 has not been jettisoned, and local political machines (local factions) continue to be major political players.73 People may strongly support democracy in the abstract, but simultaneously be very intolerant of differing political opinions.

It has become customary among political scientists to view adherence to the ‘rules of the game’ as key to democratic consolidation. This postulation has usually been translated into the minimalistic requirement that a majority of people in a given society believe that democracy, even with all its flaws, is better than realistic alternative political systems. However, in order to function well, democracy also requires a loyal opposition. The reverse of a loyal opposition is one that is fundamentally opposed to existing political arrangements. In between loyal and disloyal opposition lies a large grey area of semi-loyal opposition that takes an ambivalent attitude towards the political system. A small question mark still hangs over whether Taiwanese parties, in particular the KMT, are able to act as a loyal opposition, given that the KMT viciously challenged the legitimacy of the twice-elected DPP president throughout two four-year terms. Political legitimacy has been said to exist if ‘the rulers who hold power constitutionally demand obedience, and another group questions that demand in the name of alternative political arrangements, citizens will voluntarily opt for compliance with the demands of those in authority’.74 In Taiwan, such a description is applicable only with reservations, as many Taiwanese instinctively reject government actions if they do not support the ruling party.

Paradoxically, despite the chaotic and overly politicized political scene in some post-authoritarian societies, what they lack is perhaps precisely politics. The development of ‘real’ politics – meaning both the acceptance of genuine political competition, mutual respect among political adversaries and, most crucially, the acceptance of power alternation – should serve as the ultimate test of transitional systems.75 Linz and Stepan regarded the importance of accepting common rules and norms as a litmus test for the consolidation of democracy. In a famous statement they argued that ‘Constitutionally, democracy becomes the only game in town when all the actors in the polity become habituated to the fact that political conflict will be resolved according to the established norms.
and that violations of these norms are likely to be both ineffective and costly.\textsuperscript{76} In a broader sense, the acceptance of common rules is the foundation for all organized politics and in the last instance perhaps even the only thing separating politics from a street fight.\textsuperscript{77}

The most detrimental effect of structural politicization is that it undermines trust in three ways: popular trust towards political institutions, social trust between different groups in society and ultimately also trust in democratic politics itself, as the current democracy fatigue and authoritarian nostalgia sweeping over East Asia show.\textsuperscript{78} While there has been little political violence in Taiwan, the intense political conflict has created circumstances where there is low institutional trust and little trust between the two political sides, making coalition governments across the political cleavage a difficult, if not impossible, proposition. Why has the intense politicization of Taiwanese society persisted and even strengthened rather than being merely a temporary phase?

NOTES


4 See the examples given in \textit{Oxford English Dictionary}, available at \texttt{www.oed.com}, and \textit{Cambridge Dictionaries Online}, available at \texttt{dictionary.cambridge.org/}.

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11 The concept of structural politicization has only been used in a few studies dealing mainly with civil service politicization. One empirical study argued that both new governments and old civil servants lacked incentives to depoliticize post-communist civil services in Eastern Europe. Meyer-Sahling, Jan-Hinrik (2004) ‘Civil service reform in post-communist Europe: The bumpy road to de-politicization,’ West-European Politics, 27 (1): 97–98.


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16 Bailey referred to villagers in India using the phrase ‘there is too much party in our village’ to describe a situation where politics has become parasitic on social interaction. Bailey, Stratagems and Spoils, 115.


20 I am thankful to Ngo Tak-wing for suggesting this way of structuring the concept’s dimensions.

21 Lerman, Arthur J. (1977) ‘National elite and local politician in Taiwan,’ American Political Science Review 71 (4): 1406–1422, see page 1418. I am indebted to Professor Kuan Hsin-chi at the Chinese University of Hong Kong for informing me that Taiwanese society was highly politicized and polarized already before liberalization, which he had observed when studying on the island.


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24 Political scientists conventionally gauge state politicization by such criteria as the increase and absolute number of state employees, or the state’s role in party financing. Van Deth and Elff, ‘Politicalization, economic development and political interest in Europe,’ 487-497 and Van Deth, Jan and Martin Elff (2001) ‘Politicalization and political interest in Europe: A multi-level approach’, Working Paper No. 36, Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung (MZES), 7–8; Grzymała-Busse 2003.


27 Zielinski, ‘Translating social cleavages into party systems,’ has produced a systematic and convincing argument about the importance of the early period of open political competition in determining the politicization of social cleavages.


Intense (or radical) politicization, according to Thucydides, is accompanied by pervasive conflict, polarization, perversion of laws in the service of factional ends, debasement of language, and excesses. Orwin, ‘Stasis and plague.’


Carothers, ‘The end of the transition paradigm,’ 5–21.


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43 Linz, Juan and Alfred Stepan (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 16–37. Incidentally, Linz and Stepan note in a footnote in their introduction that ‘stateness’ is one of the most important problems in Taiwan’s and South Korea’s democratizations.


47 Walder, ‘Elite opportunity in transitional economies.’


50 Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity,* 160.

51 Lipset, ‘The social requisites of democracy revisited,’ 2.


57 Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, 156.


63 Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 290–294. See also the classic work Linz and Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*.

64 Author’s field observations. Other observers report similar experiences, see Chiou Chwei-liang, ‘The political situation is unstable and dangerous.’ *Taipei Times* 3 September 2003, p. 8; Hsu Yung-ming, ‘Taiwan’s democracy is now at a crossroads.’ *Taipei Times* 1 July 2003, p. 8.

65 Diamond, ‘Introduction’.


67 Some have claimed that this has happened in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*.

68 For studies on Taiwan’s democratization, transition and elections, see e.g. Cheng Tun-jen and Stephan Haggard (1992) ‘Regime transformation in Taiwan’ in Tun-jen Cheng and Stephan Haggard (eds) *Political Change in Taiwan*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1–29; Chu Yun-han (1994) ‘Social protests and political democratization in Taiwan,’ in Murray Rubinstein (ed.) *The Other
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70 Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 57.


72 While the exact practices vary greatly, many authoritarian political systems have adopted one or another form of state patronage, so also in Eastern Europe. Bauman, Intimations of Postmodernity, 163.

73 Jonathan Fox has described the difficult, long and uneven process of transition from clientelism to citizenship in the case of Mexico, a country whose politics has often been compared to Taiwan’s. Fox, Jonathan (1994) ‘The difficult transition from clientelism to citizenship: Lessons from Mexico,’ World Politics, 46 (2): 151–184.

74 Linz and Stepan, The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes, 16–17.


76 Linz and Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, 5.

77 Bailey, Stratagems and Spoils, 1–3.
Taiwan’s structural politicization cannot be grasped without first understanding the political history and structures of the political system built by the Kuomintang (KMT). The political battles waged in Taiwan over the past years have occurred against the background of this political system, and have been both conditioned and constrained by it. Furthermore, the KMT political system provides not only the context, but has also created the main protagonists, although in different ways. Even the most important issues that political fights have revolved around are still legacy issues of the old system. In short, the one-party state built by the KMT on Taiwan is the necessary starting point for any analysis of Taiwan’s structural politicization.

Party and state were thoroughly intertwined in Taiwan during the authoritarian era, in particular when it came to the central government. The party-state’s reach into local society, although wide, was more tenuous. It was maintained as a delicate bargain between strong local factions that were co-opted by the party mainly through the party’s sanctioning of extensive local patronage arrangements. The party built diverse channels for dispensing political patronage to different groups of people, the party elite, civil servants, local factions, old soldiers etc. Although political liberalization was launched in the late 1980s, the old ruling party continued to dominate the political system, and thereby served as an effective break on efforts to genuinely reform the system. Some features were even strengthened in the 1990s, with local faction influence and vote-buying reaching new highs.
The KMT’s Turbulent Mainland Origin

Taiwan was under Japanese colonial rule from 1895 to 1945. The general policy practised by the Japanese administrators towards Taiwan evolved from a harsh paternalistic approach through a policy of assimilation (dōka in Japanese) to outright Japanization (kōminsha) of the local residents, as part of the policy of ‘homeland extensionism’ adopted in 1921 in order to extend the geographical area of Japan proper. The education system as well as economic and legal structures were gradually Japanized. The last stage foresaw transforming the local population into imperial residents loyal to the Japanese emperor, and Taiwan into an integral part of Japan proper.

Chu Yun-han and Lin Jih-wen have argued that the colonial administration fully politicized native society during the Sino-Japanese war with increased penetration into local communities. The pervasive presence of the colonial government and its local arm, the police, was underlined by the mandatory participation of the local population in grassroots administration through the baojia system. On the whole, Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan was nevertheless more benign than in Korea or Mainland China, and relations between the colonizers and the colonized were consequently also better. This did not prevent local demands for more political participation from emerging, however. In the early 1920s, a debate raged among Taiwanese students studying in Japan over the new Japanese policy towards Taiwan and their status within the Japanese empire. While there were voices supporting the assimilation policies, others argued for seeking more political participation. However, even those advocating the latter position were divided as to whether to seek full-blown local autonomy or more limited changes. Eventually, support for the establishment of a Taiwanese assembly separate from the imperial legislature in Japan crystallized into a petition movement. The movement lived on until the mid-1930s when it was wiped out.

While some educated people in Taiwan were searching for a more autonomous space under Japanese rule, parts of the Mainland social elite had already for some years been involved in projects seeking to establish a modern political system in China proper, on the ruins of the Qing Empire. In the early period after the dissolution of the last dynasty, the KMT emerged as the leading, although still weak, reformist political grouping. The precursor to the KMT party was the Tongmenghui, itself a combination of the Xingzhonghui of Dr Sun Yat-sen, later revered as the national father of modern China, and several other revolutionary groupings. The Tongmenghui had, ironically, been founded in Japan on 20 August 1905. This group made up the nucleus of the new KMT party formed in August
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1912 soon after the establishment of the Republic of China. The KMT won the majority of seats in the first National Assembly elections in 1913. However, China quickly descended into a period of warlordism. Sun Yat-sen was sidelined, and the party with him. Only in the 1920s, after gaining control of Guangzhou in the Chinese south and organising military forces through the Whampoa Military Academy, whose first principal Chiang Kai-shek had become, did the KMT regain its foothold.

The Whampoa Academy, writes Jonathan Fenby, ‘was to be highly politicized: orders by the chief of the school had to be countersigned by the head of the Political Department who reported to Sun. Officers were ideological messengers, proselytising among the soldiers.’ The curriculum broadly followed that of the Soviet Red army. Whampoa’s training proved its worth against the enemy of the time, as it produced a far more disciplined military force than anything the warlords had at their disposal. After a long military campaign against the warlords in 1926–1928, called the Northern expedition, the nationalist government returned to actual power over China, establishing its capital in Nanjing.

The state structure was to proceed through a three-stage evolution from military dictatorship through political tutelage into constitutional government resembling democracy following Sun Yat-sen’s political ideology, envisioned in his famous 1924 work Reconstruction of the State. In the last stage, the party would reduce itself from a dominant role to being one party among others. Political tutelage became a guiding principle. The state was to be controlled by an intelligentsia and society directed through a centrally led transformation while maintaining social order. In practice, political tutelage came to mean that all political power was centralized in the hands of the Kuomintang and that the party was placed above the government and vested with the power to select government personnel. While the party made use of Sun’s political ideology, the ideology was flexible and broad enough to allow the party to use various elements of the ideology pragmatically and ignore others as it saw fit.

However, the KMT was plagued by internal factionalism almost from the outset. While still ruling on the mainland, well-established factional groupings operated within the central party organization, several of which were directly linked to the Whampoa Military Academy. Chen Mingtong describes five such strong factions in the early days of the party: The C.C. Clique or Central Club Faction, the Kong-Song Group, the Military Intelligence Faction, the Political Study Group and the Corps Faction.

The power base of the C.C. Clique was in the party’s internal security organ, the Central Organizational Department’s Investigative Division. The
Investigative Division is usually simply referred to as the *zhongtong*. It has been estimated that in 1931, the C.C. Clique commanded the loyalty of no less than 15 per cent of the members of the party’s Central Executive Committee. The Military Intelligence Faction originated among the students of the Whampoa Military Academy. Graduates of the school had set up a rudimentary spy system called *Lixingshe*, loyal to their former principal Chiang Kai-shek. *Lixingshe* later formed the backbone of the important KMT Military Affairs Committee’s Security Intelligence Bureau – a spy organization established in 1938 and commonly referred to as the *juntong*.

The Kong-Song Group was named after two elite personages: H.H. Kong and T.V. Song (Song Ziwen). Kong married one of Song’s sisters, Song Ailing, while Sun Yat-sen married Song Qingling and Chiang Kai-shek married Song Meiling. The Political Study Group, established in Beijing in 1916 by former KMT delegates of the National Assembly, later became an important source of support for Chiang Kai-shek within the executive branch of the government. One of the leaders of the faction was Chen Yi, who in 1945 was sent over as the first KMT government provincial governor of Taiwan.

Finally, the Corps Faction originated among the Whampoa alumni and later centred on the Youth Corps. Its leader, Chen Cheng, had previously been a competitor to Chiang Kai-shek. In order to firm up his own power within Whampoa, Chiang had arranged that Chen would lead the Whampoa Alumni Assembly, in the process making him loyal to Chiang. Later Chiang merged the Youth Corps with the party, strengthening the hand of the Youth Corps and Chen Cheng within the party. The Youth Corps Faction dominated both party and government in the 1950s and 1960s in Taiwan.

Despite their sometimes intense rivalries, all these central-level party factions were more or less loyal to Chiang Kai-shek, forming diverse bases of support for his leadership in the most important areas of the state: central party organs, the central government, the military and the security system. Control of the central party apparatus allowed Chiang to hand an overwhelming majority of seats in the party assembly to his own loyalists. The roots of the divide-and-rule policies later adopted by the KMT central leadership towards local factions in Taiwan seem to go back to Chiang Kai-shek’s ways of establishing and maintaining his own leadership role within the party, by building several separate networks loyal to him but in rivalry with each other. Chiang had close ties with the *juntong* and the Corps Faction from his days at Whampoa, many of whose students were fiercely loyal to him. He also had close family ties with the Kong-Song faction. A CIA estimate from August 1948 reports that the C.C. Clique and the Whampoa
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military clique would give ‘staunch support’ to Chiang ‘in his refusal to consider a political accommodation with the Communists’ as long as there was any hope of continuing the armed struggle.\textsuperscript{11}

Taiwan itself was not without political factions before the arrival of the KMT. After the defeat of Japan in the war, the KMT government, then in Chongqing in western China, had to make preparations to assume control over Taiwan. Because of the fifty-year-long political separation between the island and the mainland, there was an urgent need to find intermediaries to facilitate the task. The KMT government thus made use of several members of the Taiwanese social elite, who had been born in Taiwan but later worked on the mainland. These people were sent over to assume important positions in Taiwan. They naturally developed their own networks of supporters within the institutions they had influence over, such as the Provincial Assembly, Taipei City Council, Taipei County Government and several local banks. Collectively, they were referred to as the Half-Mountain Faction or simply \textit{ban shan}, alluding to their character as half local, half mainlander.\textsuperscript{12} Of the early entirely local political factions, two stand out: the Taichung Faction and the A-hai\textsuperscript{13} Faction.

Chen Yi’s role within the KMT’s internal factional struggles has some relevance for the later analysis in this book of the KMT party centre’s interaction with local factions. During his time as the provincial governor of Fujian province, Chen actively developed his own factional support networks, both in order to further his own position within the Political Study Group Faction and the influence of this faction within the KMT party leadership. Chen came into conflict with the C.C. Clique as he began developing a factional organization within the police system of Fujian province. In Chiang Kai-shek’s factional order of things, the police belonged to the domain of the \textit{zhongtong}, and therefore the C.C. Clique. Chen violated this arrangement by restricting the influence of the \textit{zhongtong} within the police force, while allowing the \textit{juntong} to set up its own networks within it. However, these tactics backfired as the \textit{juntong} quickly grew too strong, inducing Chen to have one of its local leaders shot, thus souring relations between himself and the faction. As for Chen’s relations with the Taiwanese factions, he divided the field by using the Half-Mountain Faction and excluding the Taichung Faction, while attacking the A-hai Faction. Chen did not trust the latter two as they had both collaborated with the Japanese colonial government. The first KMT-appointed governor of the island thus appears to have mimicked the divide-and-rule tactics of Chiang Kai-shek, playing factions off against each other while trying to stay in control himself.\textsuperscript{14}
The above examples of factionalism in the KMT’s early days underline that from the very start of party-formation in modern China, factions and factionalism have been integral parts of Chinese politics. While factions are common in politics in many other political systems as well, the central importance that factions have assumed in Chinese politics, as noted by numerous scholars, merits our attention. It would appear that the relationship between leader and followers and the role of political leaders in itself make both Chinese politics in general and Taiwanese politics in particular prone to factionalism, a fact that in turn greatly conditions political competition. The KMT’s tendencies towards centrifugal forces and internal factionalism followed with the party-state from the mainland to Taiwan.

Nationalist China, as one of the Allied powers, gained control over Taiwan at the end of the Second World War, based on an agreement reached between the Allied powers at the 1943 Cairo conference for the retrocession of Taiwan. However, by the time it gained control of Taiwan, the KMT regime was already in trouble on the mainland. Not long after the end of the war against the Japanese, the KMT and the CCP resumed their interrupted civil war. The Communists had now gained strength greatly. Beginning in the northeast of the country, they pushed towards the south and grew stronger the further they pushed, as demoralized Nationalist soldiers defected en masse. Eventually, the remnants of the Nationalist armies had been pushed to the south-eastern corner of the country, from which the last troops and regime loyalists evacuated to Taiwan in 1949.

Chiang Kai-shek had dispatched the first troops and governor to take control of Taiwan four years earlier. The departure of the Japanese and the arrival of the new Nationalist governor and soldiers from the mainland were at first greeted relatively enthusiastically by the local population, although high hopes were quickly squashed and disappointment set in. The war-weary soldiers who landed in Taiwan were low both in morale and discipline. To make matters worse, the KMT leadership distrusted the Taiwanese as they had collaborated with the Japanese and served in the Imperial army, and the post-war economy was in a shambles with hyperinflation and shortages.15

The administrative system introduced by the Japanese had created new opportunities to rise in social standing; for example, by pursuing a Japanese education and becoming a doctor. A later generation of colonized Taiwanese accustomed to Japanese rule increasingly chose to work within the confines of the system and attain local elite status on its terms. The Japanese colonial administration purposely tried to cultivate pro-Japan local elites. Famous
examples of such elite individuals are former president Lee Teng-hui, presidential candidate Peng Ming-min and business tycoon and long-term chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation, Koo Chen-fu. When the KMT arrived, a new local elite that had thrived under Japanese colonial administration was already entrenched. Many native Taiwanese served in the bureaucracy under the governor-general, while others were members of district, city and town councils. At the beginning of KMT rule, more than half of the 36,000 native Taiwanese working in the bureaucracy lost their jobs.\(^{16}\)

The KMT itself never enjoyed broad popular support during its time on the mainland. The party ruled during a time of social turmoil and confusion following the end of millennia of dynastic rule. Its time in power was marred by almost continuous turmoil and war. The regime did not make things much easier for itself, as disillusioned observers both within and outside of China widely came to see it as corrupt, harsh and, above all, inept.\(^{17}\) Neither was the party a very strong organization. When the war-weary soldiers of this demoralized regime descended on Taiwan, the stage was set for a tragedy.

On 27 February 1947, there was a confrontation between the investigators of the Monopoly Bureau – a government agency monopolizing the sale of tobacco and alcohol – and a woman who was illegally selling matches and cigarettes on a Taipei street. The incident escalated and an officer unintentionally shot a native Taiwanese bystander. The same night and the next day mobs of native Taiwanese in Taipei as well as other cities went on a rampage, attacking the newly arrived mainlanders and destroying their property. The violence continued for two weeks as the local population vented the anger, hostility and frustration that had mounted against the mainlanders since they landed on the island. The hatred of the KMT was directed at mainlanders in general. For some time, the authorities lost control of many cities to the rebels. Eventually, a settlement committee was set up to negotiate with the governor-general, Chen Yi.

The rebels, among other things, demanded immediate local elections, abolition of irresponsible police units and the Taiwan Garrison Command charged with maintaining local (political) order, appointment of more native Taiwanese to higher positions and a break-up of the economic monopolies the KMT government had imposed. It appears that Chen Yi first was prepared to go along with several of the demands. However, the rebels became emboldened when they encountered Chen Yi’s initially conciliatory approach. Their demands grew more radical. Negotiations broke down and a couple of days later troop reinforcements from the mainland landed at Keelung harbour in northern Taiwan. Several months of government-directed terror ensued. These events later
came to be called the White terror, a term that also was used to refer more widely to suppression of political dissent during the martial law era. The perception among many native Taiwanese is that the KMT government systematically wiped out the local political and intellectual elite during this time. The KMT government, for its part, maintained throughout the authoritarian period that it was quelling a rebellion, and that many of the victims were innocent mainlanders. The events later became known as the 2-28 Incident. Ironically, although the native Taiwanese resented the Japanese during the period of colonization, in retrospect, many native Taiwanese began to have a more favourable image of the Japanese as they compared the Japanese colonization with early KMT rule. The 2-28 Incident is the political event that has left the deepest marks on Taiwanese politics. It continues to exert an influence even today. For example, it was one of the leading themes of a massive political rally on 28 February 2004 organized by the DPP and the TSU political parties.

As an émigré government, the KMT was in a relatively weak position initially. It took over the administrative structure left by the Japanese colonial administration, but it was not strong enough to impose itself on local society completely. After the 2-28 Incident, there was also an urgent need to co-opt at least parts of the local elite. The party-state instituted a land reform in 1949–1953. Prior to the land reform, the land ownership structure had been quite stable, and relatively concentrated in the hands of a small minority of large landholders. In 1939, 41 per cent of all land was owned by the 2 per cent of landowners with holdings of more than 10 hectares each. The KMT regime compensated the island’s gentry, who lost their land in the land reform, by granting them special economic benefits and privileges in manufacturing. This created an economic base for some of the emerging local factions. Dickson has argued that the land reform was both an economic and a political success. Politically, the land reform was successful in terms of removing local gentry from the land, their source of wealth and power, and in creating a political vacuum then filled by local factions.

The Japanese colonial administration had appropriated unclaimed properties, re-assigned land ownership and monopolized key industries, as a result of which it became by far the largest property-owner, owning fully two-thirds of all land by the end of colonial rule in 1945. The KMT party-state now confiscated the property of government institutions under the Japanese administration, as well as some 500 Japanese factories and private houses and a host of Japanese-era companies engaged in primary or secondary production. The confiscated nationalized assets have been estimated to have accounted for as much as 17 per...
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cent of Taiwan’s GDP. They provided the foundation for the KMT to become the world’s richest political party, as it is often claimed to be. The issue continues to fuel political conflicts, as it has not yet been resolved, at least to the satisfaction of the DPP.

The KMT regime was long preoccupied with the task of ‘recovering the mainland’ and then with building Taiwan into an anti-Communist bastion. It was therefore heavily geared towards the military. Spending on the military made up 35–40 per cent of the entire state budget in the 1960s and 1970s, while as late as in 1999 defence expenditure still made up more than 20 per cent of the national budget. The regime viewed its stay on Taiwan as only temporary. In Chiang Kai-shek’s scheme of things the role of the economy was to be subservient to the state, useful for raising funds but not much more. The state’s military and political goals took precedence. Similarly, all aspects of public life in the first two decades of KMT rule in Taiwan, including social issues, were placed under the control of the party-state. For most of the authoritarian period, the high politics of national security issues took precedence. The regime’s internal goals were then centred on keeping the political situation stable and the local population politically quiescent. Not until the 1970s and with power passing from Chiang Kai-shek to his son Chiang Ching-kuo did the KMT regime finally recognize that its stay on the island would be longer than expected and thus started focusing more efforts on building the island. Only then were economic interests and considerations taken seriously.

STRUCTURE OF THE KMT POLITICAL SYSTEM AND PARTY

The Republic of China on Taiwan has until now operated under a constitution inspired by the ideas of Sun Yat-sen. This constitution was adopted on the Chinese mainland on 25 December 1946, and took effect in Nationalist-held areas on 25 December 1947, although it in practice applied only to Taiwan after the Nationalists lost the civil war. The constitution has been amended several times since the start of political liberalization in 1987.

The government structure stipulated by the constitution uniquely has five branches of government called Yuan. In addition to the ordinary legislative (in Taiwan termed Legislative Yuan), executive (Executive Yuan) and judicial (Judicial Yuan) branches, Taiwan also maintains separate government branches for the functions of supervising civil servants and civil service examinations, the Control Yuan and the Examination Yuan. The Control Yuan is responsible for correcting government officials and monitoring the government through...
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impeachment, censure and audit. The Examination Yuan is responsible for the examination, employment and management of all civil service personnel, although in the early years of the KMT on Taiwan it did not function as it was supposed to, given the needs of the regime to control access to high office and provide employment for the mainlander soldiers.  

In addition to the five Yuan, the original constitution stipulated a National Assembly vested with the authority to amend the constitution or alter the national territory, and to deliberate on the impeachment of the president or vice-president. Full elections for National Assembly delegates were held only twice in Taiwan, in 1991 and 1996. After the 2000 constitutional amendment, National Assembly elections were to be held only for the special purpose of electing an Assembly to amend the constitution. Such an election was held in 2005. The 2005 constitutional amendment in turn resolved to abolish the NA altogether with its powers transferred to the Legislative Yuan.

During the martial law period in Taiwan (1949–1987), the executive branch naturally dominated the other branches of government. Executive branch domination was achieved partly by the introduction of the so-called temporary provisions (Temporary provisions effective during the period of Communist rebellion) on 18 April 1948, shortly after the original constitution went into effect, in order to counter the perceived Communist threat. The importance of the legislative branch has grown considerably since political liberalization, while the control and examination branches have been further marginalized. Despite dissatisfaction with Chiang Kai-shek’s leadership and despite great discord, the National Assembly, convening on 20 May 1948 in Nanjing on the Chinese mainland, elected Chiang Kai-shek as president by 2430 votes to 269, and gave him extraordinary powers during the campaign against the Communists. The temporary provisions superseded some constitutional provisions and were designed to give the president stronger powers during the emergency period, allowing him to take emergency measures to counteract imminent threats to national security. Both the National Security Council (NSC) and the National Security Bureau (NSB) were established under the temporary provisions. These provisions also stipulated regulations governing elections for additional seats to the parliamentary bodies and overrode the constitutional restriction to two presidential terms (Art. 47, 1947 constitution). The temporary provisions were not abolished until 1 May 1991, following a National Assembly decision on 22 April 1991.

Like the CCP, the KMT has often been described either as a Leninist or as a quasi-Leninist party, although the party itself never used these terms to
describe itself. Even the DPP maintains features of a Leninist party structure, primarily in the formal party organizational structure.\textsuperscript{31} This characterization is historically justified, as Sun Yat-sen sought and received help from the Soviet Union in political techniques and in reorganizing the KMT into a Leninist system. Comintern advisers, primarily a Russian named Mikhail Borodin (Grunzeberg), helped in setting up the party organization in the 1920s, structuring government organs on the Soviet model along Leninist lines and establishing what Jonathan Fenby has termed ‘hard-core cells’ in Guangzhou, Shanghai and local structures elsewhere. Both Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo received training in the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{32}

However, scholars have also argued that the KMT party-state never was a full-fledged Leninist regime, as it did not deny the validity of dissent and open contestation in principle, and it viewed constitutional democracy, private ownership and a market economy as eventual goals.\textsuperscript{33} After the Nationalist defeat and withdrawal to Taiwan in 1949, the party defended its authoritarian arrangements on the grounds of necessity, with reference to the perceived imminent threat posed by the Communist regime. It could also fall back on the political theory advanced by Sun Yat-sen.\textsuperscript{34}

Following reorganization at the beginning of its rule in Taiwan (1950–1952), the KMT reasserted organizational principles and tactics familiar from other Leninist parties, complete with a Politburo-like Central Standing Committee, and a strongman who had dominated the party for most of its existence. In effect, this reorganization turned the Republic of China on Taiwan into a Leninist-style party-state system, where party and state were thoroughly intertwined to the point where the two were fused in organizational and personnel terms, and the party provided the only coordinating mechanism between various arms of the state. Chiang Kai-shek apparently emulated the superior organization of the CCP in reorganizing the KMT. In fact, the internal organization of the two parties has been quite similar. The KMT emulated the CCP’s functional organization, with workplaces and neighbourhoods in urban areas and villages in rural areas forming the focus of the party’s organization. The KMT introduced a cadre system and a cadre school, as well as political commissars in the military, and established the Anti-Communist Youth Corps, akin to the Komsomol in the Soviet system. A network of party cells was created throughout the government, military and society (including economic, social and educational organs) to which each party member had to belong. The KMT also strove to eliminate factionalism in the security-intelligence apparatus.\textsuperscript{35}
The party organization in the early 1950s was especially strong in the executive branch of the government. All major policy decisions and personnel appointments had to be approved by the party. The party made decisions and transmitted them as instructions that were to be implemented by the government. Tentative proposals by government entities might also be submitted to party committees for approval prior to their official adoption. However, in distinction to the nomenklatura systems of other Leninist parties, the scope for overtly political appointments to government positions was narrower in the KMT system, covering mainly ministers and political vice ministers. The exceptions were appointments for positions within party-owned enterprises and party-owned media outlets, the latter of which controlled a sizeable chunk of TV broadcasts until the 1990s through its control of three public television networks. The party also dominated the radio channels.

After reorganization, the KMT remained largely unchanged until a further reorganization of central party organs in 1972 and the start of a localization policy shortly afterwards. The reforms of the 1970s involved reassigning task responsibilities, creating new offices and, above all, effecting significant personnel changes in party organs at both central and local levels. The party then made no major organizational reforms until 1993 when the Central Policy Committee (CPC) was vastly expanded and elevated to parity with the secretariat of the Central Committee, its main function being to coordinate between the cabinet and the parliamentary caucus and negotiate with the opposition in the legislature. Afterwards, the CPC head reported directly to the party chairman and the Central Standing Committee rather than to the secretary-general. At the same time, four new departments were created under the CPC, responsible for policy research and coordination of the Legislative Yuan, coordination of the National Assembly and coordination with the opposition.

The security and intelligence organs were a key component of the party-state built by the KMT on Taiwan. Two organs in particular merit our attention: the National Security Bureau and the Taiwan Garrison Command (TGC). The NSB – also known as ‘Taiwan’s KGB’ – was headquartered in a top secret compound in a Taipei suburb that came to be known as the ‘Mystical 110’, from where it conducted both external and internal espionage and occasionally harassed political dissidents. The TGC was responsible for disciplinary measures during internal political turmoil and ran the prison for political prisoners on Green Island established in 1970, where many dissident leaders, including former vice-president Anette Lu, served long sentences. Other former political prisoners include former DPP chairmen Shih Ming-teh, Lin Yixiong and Zhang Junhong, Kaohsiung mayor
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Chen Ju, Yao Jiawen, who acted as senior adviser to the president during Chen’s presidency, and the recently deceased human rights activist and writer Bo Yang. The TGC was de-commissioned in 1992, the year after the temporary provisions were abrogated. The NSB was supposed to redirect its efforts towards external espionage. However, from media reports it is still somewhat unclear whether the spy agencies, including the Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of Justice, have stopped their surveillance of domestic political parties.41

For most of its history, the KMT has had an enduring strongman leader, first Sun Yat-sen, then Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, and finally Lee Teng-hui. Only the most recent party leaders, Lien Chan (2000–2005), Wu Boxiong (2007–2009), and Ma Ying-jeou (2005–2007 and 2009–), have lacked such stature. Chiang Ching-kuo was concurrently chairman of the party’s National Congress, the Central Committee and the Central Standing Committee.42 Despite having been an authoritarian leader, he still seems to be the most revered president in Taiwan, with some older KMT members sounding almost euphoric when they talk of him. One interviewed party member mentioned what an great honour it had been for him to have had the opportunity to see Chiang Ching-kuo in person as a young military conscript.43

Lee Teng-hui appeared initially to be a rather weaker president than Chiang Ching-kuo. However, he considerably strengthened his power both within the party and government over the years and for a time also reigned supreme in popular politics, although he failed to win over the loyalty of the whole party, which contributed to repeated party splits beginning with the departure of the New KMT Alliance to form the New Party (NP) in 1993. Chu Yun-han and Lin-Jih-wen have said of the party re-organization in 1950–1952 that it ‘created a structure of personified power centralization anchored on the paramount leader, secured a stable, homogeneous and non-competitive process of elite recruitment, and laid the organizational foundation for the KMT to establish its hegemonic presence in society’.44

In the KMT’s idealized view of itself, it represented all social strata. The party not surprisingly therefore set up a corporatist system in Taiwan, dividing society into functionally specialized groups, each of which had only one union or association officially recognized by the government. These organizations and associations were closely controlled by the party and had little or no autonomy. The party apparatus was made up of intersecting functional units organized along regional and corporatist/sectional lines. The party-state provided the only horizontal link across social sectors. Prior to political liberalization party cells operated within the organizations of all major sectors of society: trade unions,
professional associations, youth and religious groups, women’s associations, mass media and schools. Even farmers’ associations had become central instruments for policy implementation. The party established party organizations within all universities and colleges, the university president usually acting as chair. However, in distinction to Mainland China, the administrative leadership of the university was above the party cadres in the KMT system. Nevertheless, the party dominated the selection of leaders for all state-sanctioned corporatist organizations. In addition, the party used a vast array of state-owned enterprises to favour its loyalists, chiefly among the mainlanders.45

It appears that the KMT’s establishing corporatist structures in its interactions with Taiwanese society were at least in part a pre-emptive measure designed to prevent the emergence of independent associations and challenges to its rule. One of the primary functions of party-sanctioned organizations and associations was to control their members. There was a persistent under-organization of secondary associations, which were not functional under the KMT’s strict rule, leading to a lack of functional intermediaries to translate popular discontent into effective policy responses.46 All non-sanctioned formal organizations were repressed, incapacitated or incorporated into the state. However, there existed a thriving informal sector based on personal ties and social networks. As Robert Weller has stated – referring to the influential article *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam that argued the decline of American associational activity – the alternative to bowling in formal teams is not bowling alone, rather it is bowling in informal groups.47

During the authoritarian era there was little space available for organized social forces that wished to avoid the control of the authoritarian order. However, the party-state’s elaborate effort to thwart the rise of associations autonomous of the state began to break down rapidly in the 1980s. In the mid-1980s, about the time of political liberalization, Taiwan experienced an unprecedented surge in protests and street demonstrations that reached a climax in 1988. The recorded number of public demonstrations surged from 175 in 1983 to 1,172 in 1988. The number of protests primarily of a political nature grew the most rapidly, from four incidents in 1984 to 106 in 1987. Chu Yun-han has argued that most of the protests of a political nature designed to bring about a change in regime were organized by the newly-established DPP, while those that dealt with existing political arrangements or how political power was exercised in the local sphere were usually organized by non-DPP local politicians with factional ties. The size of protest actions also grew. Prior to 1986 no social protest had attracted more than 5,000 people. In 1988 large-scale demonstrations were arranged no less than twelve times.48
Beginning in 1980, Taiwanese society also experienced a surge in single-issue interest groups, social movements and associations. Among the more notable social movements that emerged between 1980 and 1988 were a consumer movement, several environmental protest movements, a farmer’s movement, a women’s movement, aboriginal and *hakka* rights movements, student and labour movements, a movement focused on mainlander veterans’ rights and a ‘home-visiting’ movement for mainlanders wishing to visit their old home in Mainland China. Many of these provided the breeding ground for numerous emerging civic organizations independent of the party-state. The number of civic organizations has grown steadily ever since political liberalization. One effect of the outpouring of social discontent was that it compelled the KMT government to revitalize the existing KMT corporatist arrangements.49

On arrival in Taiwan, the KMT had few members. In 1949, there were only 34,382 party members, accounting for no more than 0.8 per cent of the population over the age of fifteen. Party membership took a great leap forward in the next two years, increasing to 232,000 by 1951. After that, membership kept growing steadily and faster than the population growth, so that as a proportion of the population it reached its peak just after political liberalization when the ratio of party members to the total population over fifteen years stood at 17.1 per cent and the party had more than 2.5 million members. In the early 1950s, about half of all party members were military and security personnel, a ratio which declined markedly over the years. Although the KMT leadership was anxious to broaden its social base by recruiting more native Taiwanese and more farmers and workers, the recruitment drive was not particularly successful initially. By contrast, its recruitment among military personnel was a roaring success, with fully 35 per cent of all military personnel being party members in 1954. In accordance with their clear numerical majority in the general population, native Taiwanese came to make up more than half the party members at lower hierarchical levels. However, central-level, military and security organs were almost entirely occupied by mainlanders for decades, and many former soldiers also occupied positions within educational and cultural institutions, for example as public school teachers. The party membership as a whole remained mainlander-dominated until the mid-1970s.50

In the early 1970s, party recruitment efforts began to focus almost exclusively on educated youth, reflecting a shift in policy. More than half of all new party members in this period were students (soldiers being the other main vocational group targeted), with a third of all college students being recruited into the party.51 The party’s penetration into the life of students took several forms: directly
through campus party sub-branches, Youth Corps activities, military officers installed on campus and compulsory military courses, and indirectly through campus penetration by the security apparatus and the political affiliations of teachers and administrators. The overwhelming presence of the party implied that it would snap up almost all of what there was in terms of young political talent on the island. Consequently, it should not surprise anyone that some of the early leaders of the opposition had a background in the KMT. For example, Xu Xinliang, who used to be a KMT-backed member of the Provincial Assembly, later became an early leader of the DPP. The opportunity structure available to young politically talented individuals simply did not contain many options for career advancement until the late 1970s.

Many scholars have argued that the KMT had an extraordinarily broad social base on Taiwan, and that it acted as a catch-all party, trying to draw all social sectors into the fold. However, it was only after turning its attention to Taiwan’s development that the KMT gradually developed a mass-party character, actively recruiting members of diverse social strata. By the 1990s, the KMT indeed had achieved a relatively broad and balanced mix of supporters among various social sectors. However, while it ruled on the mainland, the KMT had a much narrower social base, both in terms of numbers and composition. It had even managed to alienate business interests, its seemingly natural ally, along with many other social groups.

When mainlanders first arrived in Taiwan in the late 1940s, they were housed in so-called juancun, or military-dependent’s villages, establishing a kind of loose housing segregation. In 1982, there were still 880 juancun, mostly in northern Taiwan, with more than 100,000 residents. Although the degree of segregation diminished over time with people moving out of these ‘villages’ through intermarriage or new employment, a degree of residential separation still remains, which shows up for example in voting patterns, with heavily mainlander areas tending to vote for mainlander candidates. Most mainlanders today live in the urban centres in northern Taiwan, and to a lesser extent in the cities of central and southern Taiwan. Unsurprisingly, the mainlander minority in the cities and especially in the juancun formed a stable basis for the KMT’s vote mobilization, which began to erode only in the 1990s. These voters formed so-called iron votes (tie piao). The party secretariat would for example use this firm vote block to swing the balance between local factions, thus enabling it in effect often to decide the results of local elections according to its preferences.

During the first decades of KMT rule, there was a relatively clear ethnic division of political power. The mainlanders dominated the central administration.
and the institutions of national political power of the Republic of China, as mainlanders and Half-Mountain Taiwanese had been favoured over other native Taiwanese in filling the government posts vacated by the Japanese when they left. Local politicians were primarily native Taiwanese. An overwhelming majority of central government personnel were party members in the 1950s, a ratio that remained high even as it declined rapidly at lower levels of government. Native Taiwanese consistently occupied an overwhelming majority of local elected offices, with mainlanders never holding more than 10 per cent of Provincial Assembly seats, or 20 per cent of County and City Council seats, and rarely more than one mayoral position at the county/city level.60

A localization policy was launched by former president Chiang Ching-kuo in the 1970s. However, it was carried on in a more radical way first under Lee Teng-hui and then Chen Shui-bian. At first localization was a means of rebalancing the lopsided balance of power that disproportionately favoured the mainlander minority in the political/administrative sphere,61 as well as to cultivate political talent from the other ethnic groups, thus indigenizing the KMT. Former president Lee Teng-hui himself is the most famous beneficiary of this policy.

The loftier goal of these personnel changes was to increase the number of competent native Taiwanese in government. A more pragmatic reason was that Chiang Ching-kuo, who had taken over the leadership from his father, lacked a power base within the party, although he had strong support within the government and security apparatus. Chiang junior used the personnel changes to transfer power within the party to his own supporters. He and another key architect of localization in personnel appointments, Li Huan, would personally handpick all people for party positions, beginning in the 1970s, to further both the localization goal and Chiang’s personal goals.62 An interesting question is how much the repercussions of this policy change can still be observed on the present political elite. When I interviewed one of the earliest opposition leaders in Taipei in 2002, he spent no small amount of time explaining what he called the ‘X party’, a carefully groomed political elite, which according to him still ruled Taiwan at the time of the interview. The interviewee went so far as to say that the other centres of power in Taiwanese politics, the KMT, the DPP, and what he referred to as the ‘mob party’, or mob-related politicians, were all just branches of the X party.63 In his view, there was then a relatively unified political elite in Taiwan, intact at least until the 1990s, whose origins were similar and which stemmed largely from the recruitment efforts of Chiang and Li in the 1970s and 1980s.
Nevertheless, it took a long while for the localization policy to have a substantive effect on the composition of higher party organs. As late as the mid-1980s, native Taiwanese only made up a small portion of the directors of party offices and less than 30 per cent of provincial-level party cadres. The impact on local party offices was more pronounced, with the native Taiwanese proportion of party cadres increasing from 34.5 per cent in 1975 to 53.9 per cent in 1985 nationally, and from 56.6 per cent to 73.3 per cent at the district level. Native Taiwanese made up two-thirds of new party members. The ethnic composition of the highest party organs changed more rapidly when Lee Teng-hui succeeded Chiang Ching-kuo after his death. At the 13th KMT National Congress held the same year as Chiang’s death in 1988, Lee picked several native Taiwanese for the party’s Central Standing Committee, handing native Taiwanese the thinnest of majorities on the Standing Committee for the first time. Two significant milestones in the localization of power were when Lee Teng-hui succeeded Chiang Ching-kuo as the first native Taiwanese (hakka) president in 1988 and when Lien Chan became the first semi-native premier in 1992. Lien was born in Xi’an on the Chinese mainland to native Taiwanese (minnan) parents. In other words, he is ban shan.

**ORGANIZATION AND EXPANSION OF ELECTIONS**

In 1935, the Japanese colonial government instituted limited local elections in Taiwan as part of an institutional reform, in order to co-opt opposition leaders and some members of the local elites into the political structure and to strengthen the mobilizing capacity of the colonial administration. A new law stipulated that the Provincial and City Councils could make decisions, which, however, executives could overrule. Elections with limited suffrage were introduced, whereby half the members of City, Street, and Village Councils were elected. These representatives in turn elected half the Provincial Council members.

Elections for public office were held in Taiwan almost from the start of KMT rule. Direct elections had already been organized in 1946 when village heads were elected by village meetings and town and township councillors by town and township meetings. Indirect elections were also held for city and county councillors, 30 Provincial Assembly members and town and township heads. The first direct elections by universal suffrage were held, starting in the latter part of 1950. These elections covered the positions of city and county councillors, town and township councillors, town and township heads, village heads and city and
Historical Origin and Structure of the KMT System

county mayors. Voter turnout was relatively high, ranging from 63.0 per cent in village head elections to 80.7 per cent in city and county councillor elections.\textsuperscript{67}

There are several reasons for the KMT’s reliance on local elections. Initially, the most important rationale was probably the same as the Japanese colonial administration’s. Elections were a way both to placate and to co-opt sections of the local elite, which was especially important after the internal turmoil in 1947. The persecution of local elites in the aftermath of the 2-28 Incident meant that the incumbent withdrawal rate in the 1950–1951 city and county councillor elections was exceptionally high, handing the KMT an opportunity to re-shuffle local elites. Local elections also gave the KMT the opportunity to maintain an appearance of democracy without threatening the party’s control of central power. Appearing to be more democratic than the CCP regime was important in retaining the support of the Americans. Over time, the regime also began to base its domestic legitimacy increasingly on the mandate offered by local election success.\textsuperscript{68}

In the first decades, the election picture remained relatively unchanged, with executive elections up to the county-level and representative positions up to the provincial level (Provincial Assembly) elected by universal suffrage. The provincial governor and the mayors of the two municipalities directly under central control, Taipei and Kaohsiung, were appointed, while the representative bodies elected on the mainland in 1947 – the National Assembly, Legislative Yuan and Control Yuan – were essentially frozen with old legislators elected on the mainland in the 1940s still dozing in their parliamentary seats in Taipei in the late 1980s. Only when old representatives died were supplementary elections held to fill their positions. Supplementary elections also contributed to increasing the number of native Taiwanese on these bodies. Supplementary elections were organized in 1969, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1987 and 1989.

Local elections had the important immediate side effect of providing a venue for locally strong social networks to cement their power position as local political factions through holding key local offices. Politically influential local factions originally developed from territorially based social networks that cooperated in irrigation committees, farmers’ associations and associated credit cooperatives, and participated in the local elections that already had begun in the Japanese colonial period. When the KMT government in 1950 initiated county magistrate elections, local factions were in an advantageous position to form competing political teams.\textsuperscript{69} Over time, local factions adopted party-like functions in local politics. The first county magistrate elections seem to have been important for the formation of enduring local factions. Those elections defined for example
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Taichung county’s Sea and Mountain Factions, and the Zhang and Lin Factions in Pingtung county. In several cases, one hard-fought election alone sufficed to determine the broad contours of competing local political blocs and associated loyalties for decades to come.

Taiwanese local factions differ from political factions elsewhere in various ways. Factions commonly occur in elite politics, especially in political systems where political parties are few. Although there are also such factions among the political elite in Taiwan, they are less prominent than factions in Taiwanese local politics. Joseph Bosco has described Taiwanese local factions as otherwise similar to factions elsewhere except that they are ‘more group-like, permanent, and sharply defined’. Local factions in Taiwan have permanent names, a strong sense of identity and a stable leadership. The KMT found local factions useful for maintaining control of local politics, as almost all local faction politicians were running as KMT candidates. The party had banned the formation of new political parties in the extra-constitutional emergency provisions introduced in 1948. However, two minor parties, the Youth Party and the Chinese Democratic Socialist Party, did exist but retained a role similar to the eight ‘democratic parties’ in Mainland China today: being only supplementary parties to the dominant party, with no independent political influence of their own, although the Chinese Democratic Socialist Party participated actively in local elections. They were certainly not able to form any kind of opposition to the ruling KMT.

The KMT used local factions to deliver votes in elections, especially in the rural areas where its own party organization was weaker. The need to rely on existing local elites can be seen as a sign of the weakness of the ruling elites at the grassroots, or of state weakness. The KMT state was initially not able to provide effective local administration, and therefore had to make use of existing local leadership resources. Ironically, the KMT state had faced the same problem on the mainland when it finally established a semi-viable central government in Nanjing in 1927. It first tried to substitute its own cadres for existing local elites, but when this proved ineffective the party had to rely on existing local leaders. The later bifurcation of national and local power in Taiwan thus had an earlier KMT model.

In exchange for their political loyalty, local factions often got monopoly control over important local resources, such as farmers’ associations and associated local credit cooperatives, or various other local monopolistic privileges in selected economic sectors, such as exclusive local transportation licences. The party directed a local spoils system providing region-based economic rents in the non-tradable goods sector. Chu Yun-han has identified four different types of
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economic privilege granted by the KMT to local factions: protecting the monopoly rights of certain enterprises earning excessive profits or distributing favours; preferential access to loans granted to politicians; procurement and construction contracts granted to faction-affiliated enterprises; and personal profits gained by carrying out official duties. With the strong growth of the economy and rapid industrialization and urbanization, economic rents multiplied, and local factions became deeply involved in the buoyant construction business. When local factions increased their control of the legislature in the 1990s, unsurprisingly faction-backed legislators competed fiercely for seats in the committees dealing with finance, economic affairs, communication and transport.

The close alignment of political and business interests also attracted criminal and semi-criminal elements to Taiwanese local politics, a feature still apparent today. The KMT’s trade in monopolistic economic favours in exchange for political support goes back a long way. In 1927, Chiang Kai-shek, who at the time was still in a relatively weak position, solicited the support of the leading criminal group in Shanghai, the Green Gang, apparently in exchange for similar monopoly rights. On Taiwan, the party allegedly used criminal gangs on occasion to do its dirty work in exchange for a level of impunity for criminals. Later on, local factions recruited gangster elements and members of secret societies in order to prop up their electoral strength after the effectiveness of vote buying began diminishing in the 1980s. Gang members also began running for office spontaneously, as they realized the benefits that holding office could provide.

The KMT model of ruling relied heavily on co-opting local elites by offering political favours and perks to loyalists. However, it was a Faustian bargain. The party had an ambivalent attitude towards local factions, always fearing that an overly strong local faction would come to challenge the party’s rule. Given that local factions had taken on many functions normally attributable to political parties, this was a realistic fear. The KMT therefore practised an elaborate form of divide and rule, preventing local factions from forming horizontal alliances between geographical areas, for example. In higher elections, such as those for the president and the Taipei and Kaohsiung mayors, local factions are less able to wield critical influence, as they are territorially based and stronger in the countryside. For example, factional heavyweight Zhang Boya got only 1.7 per cent of votes in the 2002 mayoral election in Kaohsiung city, which is not her home area.

While in many places two or three factions arose spontaneously through elections, in some cases only one strong faction emerged. In such cases the
party opted in effect to create a rival. The predominant form of local political competition became that of bipolar machine politics – two strong local factions competing for local offices. During elections, the KMT would try to maintain the factional balance, for example, by supporting a weaker faction. A measure of predictability and a reduced need for power struggles was introduced in some locations by practising consociationalism; top positions were divided between the local factions, so that all involved gained, resembling somewhat the Gojyûgonen taisei system in Japan with its highly institutionalized reshuffling of political positions between political factions.\(^79\)

In Taiwan, local factions often command more loyalty in local politics than parties, especially in rural areas, as they are in a better position to dispense both regular resources and political favours through controlling key local offices, both within the formal political structure and in the semi-official farmers’ associations, irrigation committees and associated financial institutions. In local politics, the party’s role is often mediated by local factions, whose main function is election mobilization frequently greased by vote buying.\(^80\)

In areas where local factions are strong, they can often swing election results more effectively than parties. A telling example is the landslide victory of Lin Daihua, a young, politically inexperienced DPP candidate in Kaohsiung county, who got a legislator’s seat in 2001 with the fifth-highest vote on the whole island. Her father was the mayor of the biggest township in the county and a heavyweight in a pro-DPP local faction. In an interview with the Lin family, her brother told me that without their father’s help Lin Daihua would not have stood a chance in that election. Another example is the independent local faction in Chiayi, the Hsu Band, which prior to the 2005 mayoral election told its supporters not to back the DPP candidate, a former independent.\(^81\) As a consequence, the DPP candidate lost, contrary to expectations. In county magistrate and city mayor elections, local political machines accounted for on average 76 per cent of KMT-held offices from 1954 to 1993,\(^82\) while fully 61 per cent of KMT candidates nominated for Provincial Assembly elections had factional ties between 1954 and 1985.\(^83\)

Nevertheless, the KMT was not entirely happy with the arrangement, as factional influence grew stronger over time. Consequently, the party periodically tried to dismantle the local factions; for example by nominating party candidates without factional affiliation. One particularly noteworthy failed attempt was made by Chiang Ching-kuo in the 1970s to deliberately replace local faction-backed candidates with native Taiwanese party cadres.\(^84\) The strategy was successful in some cases, particularly in Taipei city, Tainan city, Ilan county
Historical Origin and Structure of the KMT System

and Nantou county, where the factional proportion of votes fell markedly over the years. The strategy failed in most other locations. The tension between nominating outsiders chosen by the party centre and easier to control but often lacking popular support, or local people with popular support but embroiled in local political conflicts, was built into the system.

There was also some measure of cultural conflict between the political elite and the local politicians. Arthur Lerman has described how the political elite found the manners and practices of elected local politicians offensive. The political elite first tried to do away with elections, but eventually ended up expanding their scope instead. Over time, the KMT grew to rely more on local factions than the factions relied on the party centre. During the 1990s, local faction-supported politicians strengthened their hold on the Legislative Yuan. The tail started wagging the dog.

Incidentally, Bruce Dickson has argued that Chiang Ching-kuo chose Lee Teng-hui as vice-president in 1985 because he lacked factional ties within the political elite, that is, an independent power base within the party that he conceivably could draw upon to challenge Chiang’s leadership. Ironically, during Lee’s time as president, he and the ‘mainstream KMT’ loyal to him became deeply involved in factions both at the local level and in elite politics, perhaps as an inevitable consequence of the structures and realities of Taiwan’s political system. By this time, the elections by themselves had become a key route to higher political office. Supplementary elections for the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan began in the 1960s. Following political liberalization, full elections for the National Assembly were held in December 1991, followed by the first completely open and competitive Legislative Yuan elections in December 1992. The process culminated in the first openly contested presidential election by universal suffrage in 1996. At its zenith in the late 1990s, Taiwan had elections for more than a dozen different offices (Table 2.1, overleaf).

The lowest level of villages and boroughs is effectively an extension of the township administration, with borough wardens (lizhang) and village heads (cunzhang) acting as brokers between the local population and the administration. In addition to the elections within the formal administrative structure, there are also elections for semi-official representatives of more than 300 farmers and fishermen’s associations that control local credit cooperatives. There is then hardly a year without elections on the island, with some years seeing elections for numerous positions. For example, in the six-month period between December 2001 and June 2002, elections were held for the Legislative Yuan, county magistrates and city mayors, county and city councillors, township
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executives, township representatives, borough wardens and village heads. Not without reason has it been said that Taiwan’s democratization is ‘election-driven’.91 A few elections have however been scrapped or suspended. Specifically, elections for the post of provincial governor, the Provincial Assembly and the National Assembly were all cancelled in 1999–2001. However, a task-oriented National Assembly was convened in 2005 to deliberate on a constitutional amendment.

Table 2.1. Republic of China administrative levels and elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republic of China 中央 zhongyang</th>
<th>Republic of China 中央 zhongyang</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>elections: president and vice-president, Legislative Yuan, National Assembly*</td>
<td>Municipalities directly under the central government市 shì mayor, city councillors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan province 省 shēng provincial governor*, Provincial Assembly*</td>
<td>County-level city 市 shì mayor, city councillors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County 县 xiàn county magistrate, County Assembly</td>
<td>County-level city 市 shì mayor, city councillors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township (rural) 鄉 xiāng executive, representatives</td>
<td>Township (urban) 鎮 zhèn executive, representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village 村 cūn village head</td>
<td>Borough 里 lǐ borough warden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table is adapted from one in Bosco, ‘Faction versus ideology’, 29. Scrapped elections followed by an asterisk (*).

Expansion of elected offices has had several effects. For one, it seems to have made the KMT party organization even more reliant on local factions for vote mobilization. It has also allowed local factions to extend their influence from the county level via the Provincial Assembly all the way to the Legislative Yuan in the 1990s. The power shift from lifelong legislators to elected legislators also increased open factional strife in the legislature, where local faction-backed KMT legislators increasingly refused to take orders from KMT party headquarters. Early on, some scholars foresaw the possibility that Taiwan’s local factions would link up with national-level politicians to become nation-wide factions similar to those within the LDP party in Japan (habatsu). Expansion of elections also allowed more opportunities for independent candidates to contest office. For a long time these candidates had been scattered and uncoordinated, although their proportion of the vote and seats was substantial.92
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These independent election candidates joined forces and coordinated their efforts for the first time in the 1977 county magistrate, city mayor and Provincial Assembly elections. During these elections, opposition supporters alleged voting fraud in Taoyuan county – the KMT was accused of manufacturing votes (zuo piao) in order to help their more unpopular candidate beat the popular non-party competitor – and attacked polling stations in what came to be known as the Chungli incident. That same year, the independent candidates came to be referred to by the media as the dangwai movement. The term means to being outside the party. The next year the dangwai formed the Dangwai Campaign Corps to help coordinate the campaigns of all non-KMT candidates. A few years later, the dangwai movement’s election cooperation was further formalized in the Dangwai Campaign Assistance Association. The dangwai movement became the basis on which the first opposition party was formed. The party was preceded by leading figures in the movement establishing the Formosa Magazine after the 1977 election. Almost all leading figures in the movement were on the editorial board of the magazine. The Formosa Magazine, the Campaign Corps and the Campaign Assistance Association were followed by the establishment, two years prior to the inauguration of the DPP, of a quasi-party organization called the Association of Public Policy Studies, which proceeded to set up island-wide branches. The DPP party was finally formed in 1986, on the eve of supplemental elections for the Legislative Yuan.

POLITICAL CHANGES AFTER POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION

The neat bifurcation of power vertically (central versus local power) and horizontally (between factions in local elections) which had facilitated the KMT’s rule on Taiwan under a very limited electoral democracy since the 1950s, began to break down in the 1970s. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, an increasing number of independent candidates would contest elections beyond party control. These gradually evolved into a challenge to the regime. The vertical power separation, with central power being all but monopolized by the mainlander minority, also grew increasingly difficult to maintain. Social mobility had increased both the demands of the local population for representation and the availability of educated native Taiwanese, prompting Chiang Ching-kuo to initiate the localization policy in order to cultivate political talent from the other ethnic groups.

Finally, the legitimacy of the regime was shaken by the loss of its seat in the United Nations in 1971 and the switch in American political recognition
to the People’s Republic in 1979. This coincided with a gradual diminution of the fear of an imminent attack from Mainland China, which gave intellectuals and the opposition ammunition to attack the KMT government’s insistence on maintaining the authoritarian arrangements that had been rationalized precisely with this threat scenario.94

After a crackdown on the emerging opposition movement in the aftermath of the so-called Kaohsiung incident (Meilidao shijian) in 1979, there was a period of tighter political control. However, when the opposition announced the illegal formation of the first opposition party, the regime, contrary to expectations, did not crack down on the opposition. This marked a difference from earlier practice. The regime had reacted harshly to the attempt by Lei Chen and others to form an opposition party called the China Democratic Party (Zhongguo minzhu dang) in 1960, and to other attempts at challenging the regime.95

The freeing of the political atmosphere on the island can be gauged by Taiwan’s scores on the annually compiled Freedom House surveys, which use a standardized methodology to compare the development of political rights and civil liberties across all countries and regions of the world as well as across time. Taiwan’s scores since 1980 are displayed in Figure 2.1. The political liberalization is clearly visible in the scores, both of which improved in the late 1980s. The improving trend continued after a few temporary setbacks in the early 1990s. By 1996, Freedom House judged Taiwan to be a politically free society.

Figure 2.1. Taiwan’s scores on political rights and civil liberties in the Freedom House survey
Notes: The survey uses a 1–7 scale, where 1 denotes the ‘freest’ and 7 the least free circumstances. A score of 2 on one dimension and 3 on another dimension gives the overall status of a free society.
Historical Origin and Structure of the KMT System

Following the death of Chiang Ching-kuo, Lee Teng-hui became president by constitutional fiat. At the same time, serious rifts within the ruling KMT party emerged. A power struggle ensued between the KMT old guard which came to be called the ‘non-mainstream KMT’ (fei zhuliu pai) under the leadership of then-premier Hao Bocun, and the party mainstream led by Lee Teng-hui, often in alliance with the DPP, culminating in their joint efforts to oust Hao in 1993.96

The first major confrontation between these two political camps occurred in 1990, ostensibly over rival tickets for president and vice-president to be elected by the National Assembly, which at the time functioned as an electoral college for choosing a president. However, beneath this issue was the broader dispute over the general direction of policy following political liberalization. The mainlander minority within the KMT was concerned about the increasing Taiwanization inclinations of president Lee Teng-hui. While the issues varied, the struggle continued. This conflict has often been portrayed by scholars as the national identity controversy or a dispute over whether to reunify with Mainland China or pursue independence (tong-du wenti). However, the conflict was more complex than that, involving a wholesale clash between the two political camps on almost every significant issue after the start of political liberalization: constitutional design, mainland relations, election rules, etc.97

With the localization, or Taiwanization, of society and the opposition's demands becoming conventional, feelings of inequality among the minnan, although not necessarily among all native Taiwanese, gradually lessened.98 The tables turned with the mainlanders now becoming anxious about their position. At the same time as the DPP toned down its overt ethnic posture in the 1990s, mainlander interest organizations stepped up their own ethnic mobilization. Initially, the driving force was the so-called Huang Fuxing caucus within the KMT, drawing its support mainly among soldier’s dependants and retired military personnel, the vast majority of whom were mainlanders. With the mainlander elite instilling a sense of crisis among its constituency, the Huang Fuxing caucus gradually turned into a protector of mainlander interests.99 After the mainstream prevailed in the internal power struggle within the KMT, a party faction called the New KMT Alliance, made up mostly of second-generation mainlanders and forming the backbone of the non-mainstream, split from the KMT, forming the China New Party in August 1993 (‘China’ was soon dropped from the name). The New Party (NP) became the new mobilizer of mainlander fears, with a substantial share of the KMT’s mainlander iron votes switching to the NP.100

While the general mood was very much in favour of reform, it is one thing to talk reform and another to implement it. A heavyweight KMT politician
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remarked in an interview that government reform has been on the agenda in Taiwan ever since Chiang Ching-kuo came to power, but not much had come of it. The interviewed politician had already participated in the Chiang reform efforts. At the time of the interview he was again a member of a government restructuring committee.\textsuperscript{101} This initiative had been preceded by another attempt at government reform launched in 1998 during the Vincent Siew government, these in turn preceded by reforms launched by the Lien Chan government in 1993.

After political liberalization, many of the problems inherent in the Republic of China constitution, which was designed for all of China but which applied now only to Taiwan, came to light. At the start of political liberalization, the temporary provisions that overruled several parts of the constitution became hard to maintain, as they were tightly linked with the authoritarian political system. They were thus abrogated in 1991. However, even when reinstating the original constitution in full, several problems persisted. For one, as the constitution was designed for all of China, it required a national and a provincial administration, which had been implemented in Taiwan, even though their respective jurisdictions differed only marginally. The only difference between the area of jurisdiction of the national administration in Taipei and the provincial administration in Nantou county was the few islands located between Taiwan and the mainland still under the jurisdiction of the Republic of China. Secondly, there was the problem of the frozen legislators.\textsuperscript{102} Although the constitution prescribed regular elections for the national representative institutions, only supplementary elections had been held for the Legislative Yuan, the National Assembly and the Control Yuan since the elections held on the mainland in 1947. By the late 1980s, the original representatives were naturally all old and ineffective. The pressure to extend regular elections to national-level representatives and higher executive positions (provincial governor, Taipei and Kaohsiung mayors, and president) had also grown.\textsuperscript{103}

Another tricky question brought to light by the abrogation of the temporary provisions was the relations between the various branches of government and the status and future of the two branches peculiar to Taiwan – the Control Yuan and the Examination Yuan – as well as the National Assembly. The original constitution of 1947 envisaged a political system that resembled parliamentarism somewhat, but it was ambiguous about whether it was the president or the legislature that controlled the cabinet.\textsuperscript{104} In practice, the president and the executive branch dominated over the other government branches during the authoritarian period, backed by martial law and the temporary provisions, which
had significantly enhanced presidential powers. As for the Control Yuan and the Examination Yuan, there were questions as to whether Taiwan needed such cumbersome government arrangements when most other democratic political systems managed well with only three branches. Finally, was there a need to maintain the National Assembly if the Legislative Yuan’s role was enhanced to make it operate as a regular parliament?

In order to remedy these perceived flaws, Taiwan went through a series of six constitutional amendments between 1991 and 2000 under the auspices of Lee Teng-hui. Many of the changes were essentially pushed by the mainstream KMT, which followed Lee. Few DPP proposals advanced in the first rounds of revision, as the power imbalance was too great. One could hardly escape the impression that constitutional amendments were imposed by the KMT, rather than being a negotiated outcome between roughly balanced political forces. Both the DPP and the NP at times boycotted the constitutional reform process altogether. However, at times Lee Teng-hui sought the cooperation of moderate sections of the opposition DPP as an expedient political tactic, marginalizing both the non-mainstream KMT (later the NP) and the radical wing within the DPP. In preparation for the 1997 constitutional amendment, a broad deal was struck in closed-door meetings between the KMT and the DPP party leadership as a compromise package. The deal quickly succumbed to internal opposition within both parties.105

Despite the frequent constitutional amendments, the basic five-branch government structure of the Republic of China was kept intact. The main changes introduced by the amendments to the constitution as they affect the structures and organization of government in Taiwan, are listed in Appendix II. In summary, many among the major changes introduced by this series of constitutional amendments was first to expand and then to contract the scope of popular elections. Full elections were introduced for the Legislative Yuan (1991), National Assembly (1991), provincial governorship (1992), the mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung city (1992), and the presidency (1994). However, later constitutional amendments scrapped elections for provincial governor, Provincial Assembly (1997) and the National Assembly (2000). Elections by universal suffrage for the Legislative Yuan and the president are highly significant, and both have altered Taiwan’s political landscape. Just as significant as the expanding scope of elections was the increased powers of the presidency, and the enhanced role of the Legislative Yuan. Table 2.2 (overleaf) lists the main powers of the president and the Legislative Yuan after the 2000 constitutional amendment.
Table 2.2. The main powers of the president and Legislative Yuan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President</th>
<th>Legislative Yuan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Represents the republic in foreign relations</td>
<td>The highest legislative organ of the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme commander of the armed forces; exercises the powers of declaring war and making peace</td>
<td>Can initiate petitions to impeach the president or the vice-president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May declare martial law with the consent of the Legislative Yuan</td>
<td>Has the power to initiate a recall of the president or vice-president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, by resolution of the cabinet, issue emergency decrees and take all necessary measures to avert imminent danger affecting the security of the state or of the people or to cope with any serious financial or economic crisis</td>
<td>Has to ratify presidential emergency decrees, otherwise they are void</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May establish a National Security Council and a subsidiary National Security Bureau to determine major national security policies</td>
<td>Can take the initiative to amend the constitution or alter the national territory (exclusive right)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promulgates laws with the countersignature of the premier</td>
<td>The cabinet is responsible to the Legislative Yuan, and the Legislative Yuan has the right to interpellate the cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can appoint or remove from office the premier or personnel appointed with the confirmation of the Legislative Yuan in accordance with the constitution, without the countersignature of the premier</td>
<td>Can bring a vote of no confidence against the premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can dissolve the Legislative Yuan without the countersignature of the premier, but only after the Legislative Yuan has passed a vote of no confidence against the premier</td>
<td>Has to ratify all nominations of Judicial, Control and Examination Yuan members appointed by the president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powers to nominate and, with the consent of the Legislative Yuan, appoint the presidents and members of the Examination and Control Yuans and the 15 grand justices of the Judicial Yuan</td>
<td>No member of the Legislative Yuan may be arrested or detained without the permission of the Legislative Yuan when that body is in session, except in the case of <em>in flagrante delicto</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powers to nominate the provincial governors and government</td>
<td>Legislators enjoy parliamentary immunity for speech or votes made in parliament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Taiwan Documents Project 2000.

Notes:

1. This right was provided for in the additional articles during the constitutional amendments and more specifically in a new law (the *Organic law for the creation of a National Security Council and National Security Bureau*), as a legal basis for these two already existing institutions had to be found following the end of martial law. Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 175–177.

2. A motion for a no-confidence vote requires the signatures of one third of the total number of legislators. An open-ballot vote needs the approval of more than 50 per cent of Legislative Yuan members in order to pass.

3. *In flagrante delicto* means ‘in the very act of committing a [criminal] offence’.

The constitutional amendments formally strengthened the powers of the presidency that had been relatively weak in the 1947 constitution. In practice,
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however, the biggest winner may have been the Legislative Yuan, whose powers increased both in formal terms and especially in practice, as new-elected KMT legislators took their roles much more seriously – in effect starting to act as legislators were supposed to act according to the constitution – and as opposition legislators brought real debate and much more aggressive tactics to the parliament floor. Taiwan’s parliament became known as the ‘fighting parliament’ for the many fistfights that erupted between legislators in the heat of the debate. This tradition of semi-violent legislative behaviour continues in Taiwanese politics. In the 2001 legislative election campaign, one veteran DPP legislator used the slogan ‘hitting black-gold’ (da hei jin) – referring to corrupt and mob-influenced politicians – accompanied by a picture of him hitting a KMT legislator in parliament, apparently as proof of his reformist credentials.

A stipulation in the 1997 constitutional amendment that the president appoints the premier (president of the Executive Yuan) without the consent of the parliament constitutes an important increase in presidential powers and a latent source of friction when the opposite political camp controls parliament. In the amendment, the president also got the power to nominate and, with the consent of the Legislative Yuan, appoint the presidents and members of the Examination and Control Yuans and the 15 grand justices of the Judicial Yuan. The Legislative Yuan, for its part, took over many of the powers that had formerly belonged to the National Assembly. In addition, the power of impeachment of the president and vice-president was transferred from the Control Yuan to the Legislative Yuan in the 1997 amendment.

Many scholars have argued that, after this series of constitutional amendments, Taiwan had a semi-presidential system that somewhat resembled the French system or the Finnish system prior to the Finnish constitutional reform of 2000. According to one participant in the constitutional amendment process, the original idea was indeed to create a French-style semi-presidential cohabitation system. However, the result was something that looked somewhat like French cohabitation, but in which the president was not as strong as in France. One significant difference was that the president could not dissolve the legislature unless the Legislative Yuan had first passed a vote of no confidence against the premier. On the other hand, according to Taiwan’s constitution the premier is appointed by the president and not chosen by the Legislative Yuan.

After the amendment, the constitution of the Republic of China then endorsed neither a clearly presidential nor a clearly parliamentary system. It was commonly considered to be an unsatisfactory compromise in need of further revision as consensus on constitutional issues between the political camps was
hard to establish in the 1990s. This is not surprising given that throughout the revisions both sides often took positions that were designed to favour their own party, based on their reading of the state and direction of relative political strengths at the time.

The DPP initially opposed giving the president more powers. It also persistently wanted to either abolish the institutions where it was not strong or scrap elections for those positions where it was weakest, especially the Provincial and National Assemblies, as well as township governors, borough wardens and village heads. The KMT, on the other hand, seeing the weakening in its hold on the Legislative Yuan in the 1990s and apparently fearing obstruction of (its) government policies by the opposition, favoured a very high threshold for the Legislative Yuan to initiate a vote of no confidence.\(^{110}\) It also favoured allowing the cabinet the power to veto a decision by the Legislative Yuan and advocated dropping the need for the president to seek confirmation from the Legislative Yuan on premier appointments. In order to achieve its aim of abolishing the confirmation vote for the premier, the KMT made concessions, including agreeing to postpone the requirement of a 50 per cent support threshold in presidential elections. This concession eventually enabled the biggest upheaval in Taiwanese politics in recent years, as the DPP candidate won the presidential election three years later with only 39.3 per cent of the vote, due to the KMT’s candidate nomination split.

The KMT also consented to introducing a vote of no confidence mechanism. The executive veto was amended in the Legislative Yuan’s favour so that the legislature in turn could override the executive motion for reconsideration of a law by an absolute majority instead of a two-thirds majority. Ironically, with the change of government in 2000, KMT legislators themselves became the biggest source of obstruction for the government, while they were also highly indignant at Chen Shui-bian’s unilateral changes of premier. The irony was that the KMT’s insistence on scrapping the premier confirmation vote now favoured the DPP, while its concessions on the executive motion favoured itself. On the other hand, the DPP’s concession to a much more restrictive requirement for the Legislative Yuan to unseat the cabinet turned out to favour itself, while its earlier advocacy of a two-phase presidential election designed to produce a majority vote would most likely have returned to haunt it in 2000 if it had passed. The DPP’s staunch opposition to enhancing presidential powers in the 1990s did come back and haunt the first DPP president, who was frequently frustrated by the gap between the ambitious goals on his agenda and the meagre means he had with which to pursue them, while the KMT can thank its luck that it did not manage to push
through the significant increases in presidential powers it first sought in the 1997 constitutional revision.

Positions on constitutional revisions thus were motivated as much by partisan considerations as by the desire to build a workable political system. With the constitutional amendments that gave the president the right to appoint the premier at will but severely restricted his or her powers to dissolve the Legislative Yuan (in effect requiring the Legislative Yuan’s consent, as it could only be dissolved after a no-confidence vote) and handed the Legislative Yuan the powers to initiate an impeachment or a recall of the president while raising the stakes for calling a vote of no confidence, the stage was set for a showdown between these two institutions once they were in the hands of separate political camps. Just such a situation came to pass in May 2000; only a few weeks after the constitutional amendments had been promulgated. Taiwan’s experience with split control of government turned out to be very different from the French experience.

Since the mid-1980s, the KMT party-state has undergone major changes, changing in the process in a more evolutionary way than any other Leninist system. Nonetheless, it is highly unlikely that the long legacy of party and state intertwining would not have left its marks on Taiwan’s politics. In this context, it is instructive to read the comment by one scholar writing at the threshold of political liberalization in 1988: ‘The persistence of Leninist structures and institutions suggests that these legacies may stay in the KMT system for quite a long period.’

After political liberalization, the opposition pushed hard for the political neutrality of the military and security agencies, the judiciary and the civil service, more equal media access, and tough restrictions on the KMT’s party-owned enterprises. The early DPP party platform contained articles demanding a clear separation between party and state (Art. 28) and the KMT’s ceasing to control or supervise the military, police and intelligence agencies (Art. 29). The military’s strong historical links to the party-state meant that the opposition never viewed the military as a neutral instrument of the state. In response to public and opposition criticism, the KMT abolished the political commissar system in the military. However, it did not get rid of party cells within the military, rather simply moved them underground and away from the barracks.

In comparison with its history on the mainland, the military of the Republic of China became progressively less politicized after moving to Taiwan. But despite the fact that military leaders immediately pledged loyalty to the new president upon Chiang Ching-kuo’s death in 1988 and no generals were on the KMT’s Central Standing Committee as of 1993, the military still dissuaded its
own from joining the DPP, and there were incidents within the armed services of punishments meted out to military officers supporting the opposition, and public accusations that the military were politicizing the armed forces. The military and the security apparatus continue to belong to the presidential prerogative, without direct supervision from the legislature, but after 2000 the president represented the DPP.\textsuperscript{115}

One of the opposition’s early political targets was pushing for a level playing field in political competition between the KMT and the other parties. The Judicial Yuan was previously criticized for not being independent enough of the influence of the ruling party, although a law passed in 1980 (the \textit{Separation of trial from prosecution reform act}) had enhanced the judiciary’s independence. Nonetheless, the reform of the judiciary proceeded faster than that of the military, as young judges pushed for upholding impartiality and getting rid of political influence on legal rulings. However, the KMT did not yield to pressures for upholding a politically neutral civil service. Until recently, several years after the launch of political liberalization, the party still maintained special party branches in all administrative agencies and in various semi-governmental organizations. It was even more adamant on the issue of retaining control of its vast business interests, including those in the broadcast media. The KMT vigorously opposed efforts to introduce a political party law which would require it to disclose its financial holdings, and most likely also require it to divest itself of them.\textsuperscript{116}

Faced with pressures from the opposition and public opinion, the KMT eventually and grudgingly gave up some of its advantages, for example, in media control and party control over the military. Despite these changes, the KMT in Taiwan still had some formidable advantages over other political parties at the start of open political competition, many of which remained relatively intact through the late 1990s. These inherited assets gave the ruling party an edge over all other political parties, including the DPP, as many scholars have noted.\textsuperscript{117}

Among the tangible assets that the party could put to work to secure its continued rule were huge financial assets contained in a conglomeration of business interests that generated substantial dividends for the party.\textsuperscript{118} The proceeds from the KMT’s business empire were used to finance a massive party organization comprising 4,000 full-time paid staff at its peak.\textsuperscript{119} In contrast, the DPP, even since it came to power, has maintained a relatively small paid party apparatus. First-hand figures obtained by the author from the DPP central party headquarters indicate that in June 2005 there were 157 people employed at the DPP central party headquarters, while there were 169 people working in local party headquarters. Altogether there were 326 paid DPP employees at the time,
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a figure that, according to the vice-director of the DPP secretary-general’s office, had not changed very much in recent years.

The KMT’s business interests included significant ownership of several media organizations. The government had frozen the number of newspaper licenses at 31 in 1951, and new registrations were not allowed until 1988. Of these papers, the party and the central government owned about a third, while the rest were closely supervised. The two main media groups, the *Lianhebao* and the China Times Group were closely linked to the party-state, and were recipients of many political and economic benefits, their publishers having seats on the KMT party’s Central Standing Committee. The party-state’s control of the broadcast media was even tighter. Until the mid-1990s, all three networks were linked to various regime institutions. Taiwan Television (TTV) was under the provincial government, China Television (CTV) was run by the party, while Chinese Television Services (CTS) was under the Ministries of Defence and Education.

In 1992, the KMT government yielded to opposition pressure on allowing free media allotment among political parties to air their campaign messages during election campaigns. Nevertheless, the KMT still controlled the airwaves with its three television networks. Most radio stations were also owned or affiliated with the party, government or armed forces. In response, DPP politicians sponsored the establishment of underground radio channels and illegal cable television stations in their districts, which developed into important new tools of election mobilization. The KMT government was forced to make concessions on opening up the cable television market. In 1995, the government also granted another television network licence to a pro-DPP operator Formosa Television (FTV) and licences to many new radio stations, many of which had formerly operated underground. However, it was not until mid-1997 that FTV started operating.

Other key advantages were the KMT’s strong local factional support, its so-called responsibility zone system (*zeren qu*), and its hold on most borough wardens and village heads, all of which were used to mobilize voters in elections. This area-based direct voter mobilization has traditionally been most effective for the KMT in the *juancun*. Even today, although *juancun* areas have now become regular residential communities, these mainlander strongholds are often off limits to the DPP, implying that the DPP does not even try to attract votes in these areas, which still heavily concentrate their votes on a few, often mainlander, candidates. A local KMT official confirmed in 2004 that the responsibility zone system was still in place. According to this official, every paid KMT worker, of which there were five in his own district, has an area with which this person maintains close contact. Ideally there should be (at least) one KMT-leaning
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family in every neighbourhood (lin). If there are, on average, two party members in every larger family/surname group, and 50 lin in the borough, then that would make 100 people to help in vote mobilization. However, the party cadre added that the system does not function as it should any more.

In addition to this hierarchically organized and party-run vote mobilization machinery, more conventional support groups (houyuanhui) are also active before elections, but, at least in the case of the KMT’s support groups, these are often latent in between elections, when members maintain contact through various social events such as children’s sporting events and charity functions. Support groups can be based on the geographical area (e.g., district or borough) or on profession (e.g., doctors, lawyers) and can support an individual candidate or a party. There are now also many support groups that support DPP candidates, many of which sprang up after Chen Shui-bian won the presidential election. I happened to be present at a DPP legislative candidate’s campaign office when a middle-aged businesswoman walked in and handed over a list of names of supporters that she had been able to secure among her acquaintances. Support groups therefore do not give the KMT a clear organizational advantage over the DPP anymore. According to party insiders’ assessments, in 2004 the KMT had some 250–300 such support groups in Tainan city, while there were more than 500 support groups for Chen Shui-bian. Tainan is a DPP stronghold. The DPP, at least, actively collects houyuanhui-name lists. Both the KMT and DPP apparently require a minimum of 30 people to set up a separate houyuanhui.122

During the authoritarian era, the KMT established an iron grip on associations through various corporatist arrangements, as earlier noted. Prior to political liberalization, these arrangements were designed partly to prevent an autonomous civil society from organizing,123 in which they succeeded for a long time. The ability of the party-state to prevent the organization of non-KMT, non-state-linked associations broke down after the mid-1980s. Nevertheless, the KMT can still often count on the support of several important organizations. The KMT has established close long-term relations with many civic associations and organizations, which has allowed it to use them for election mobilization purposes, while others were closely linked to the KMT party-state to begin with. Among the politically more important associations and organizations in Taiwan are women’s associations (funü shetuan), youth associations (qingnian shetuan), industrial and trade organizations (gongshanghui), farmers’ associations (nonghui) and fisherman’s associations (yuhui), irrigation committees (shuilibui), village associations (tongxianghui), trade unions, churches, the Lions and Rotary. In
2002, one KMT party cadre estimated that there were around 50–60 politically relevant associations in Tainan city.\textsuperscript{124}

These associations and organizations have a bearing on election mobilization and are often the base from which election support groups spring. The leaders of local branches of various organizations can exercise influence on their members, persuading them to vote in a certain way. One informant used the words \textit{la long} to signify this activity. In the context of campaign work in associations, the words indicate a tactic whereby one is trying to attract support from the association in question by cultivating relations with influential people within it, who then, it is hoped, persuade their colleagues to vote in the preferred way. Farmers’ associations in the countryside have been particularly effective at this, as they are well organized and command patronage resources. The general managers of farmers’ associations are often the heads of local political factions, which can give them effective command of large blocks of local votes.\textsuperscript{125}

The KMT also mobilizes party members within these associations directly, for example by calling them up and asking them to help mobilize people within their organization to vote the way the party headquarters wishes. Except for trade unions and churches, in particular the Presbyterian church, most of the politically useful organizations used to belong to the KMT’s domain. However, the political influence of these organizations varies greatly. Some are only tangentially related to politics, such as Lions and Rotary and the Taiwan Professors’ Association, while other organizations such as the Presbyterian church and farmers’ associations are integral to the political game and crucial to political mobilization. One informant suggested that a crucial distinguishing feature between those organizations that are pivotal and those that are of secondary importance is the extent to which they control economic resources.

Finally, the KMT used to have a much stronger position than the DPP within the administration and the military. This is, of course, natural given that the central administration and the higher echelons of the military apparatus were initially staffed almost exclusively with people who had come to Taiwan with the KMT. Mainlander families employed by the government are often fiercely loyal to the Republic of China and thereby often the KMT as well. In addition to emotional reasons for supporting the regime, public servants also received several material benefits such as pensions (not otherwise widely available), income tax exemptions for military personnel and school teachers, education benefits for their children and low-interest loans, to which I shall return in the next chapter.\textsuperscript{126}

The continuing structural strength of the KMT is a key factor behind Taiwan’s politicization. The battle over this legacy, both its symbolic forms and the vast
material interests linked to it, is a necessary element in explaining the repeated clashes between the main political camps, and the sharpening of conflict around this cleavage. It was not until after 2000 that KMT loyalists faced a real threat of losing their privileges. Simultaneously, only then did the DPP have its first real chance at dismantling the old system.

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Many early scholars on Taiwanese politics have mentioned, usually in passing, the apolitical, depoliticized or even anti-political nature of one or another part of Taiwanese society during the authoritarian era, providing a sharp contrast with the highly politicized appearance that Taiwan often gives observers today. Conceivably, these early observations were nevertheless made against an environment that was, or had earlier been, intensely politicized. Depoliticization or apoliticality may have been noted because it stood out in the context of a generally politicized society. The roots of the politicization found in contemporary Taiwan are evident in the recent history of the island.

From previous research on politicization we know that the role of the state apparatus is a key factor in inducing a greater politicization of society. Just as with Eastern European communism, politicization was in-built in the way the political regime operated in Taiwan. For example, far from depoliticizing culture, the KMT state often used culture in an attempt to indigenize nationalist ideology and further the party-state’s political aims. Chu Yun-han and Lin Jih-wen have argued that the state tightened state-society relations both during the KMT regime and the Japanese colonial administration preceding it. The population was actively mobilized to participate in maintaining local social order through the baojia system; in interest organizations controlled by the regime; in local elections dominated by the ruling party; or in various officially sanctioned political campaigns.

However, such state-induced politicization, or the penetration of the party-state into all corners of society and the mobilization of people to serve its political aims, is distinct from politicization as a more spontaneous burst of political activity and a participation in political actions. Spontaneous political activity that could pose a challenge to the regime was abhorred and both the Japanese colonial administration and the KMT state attempted to depoliticize society, in as far as that meant making people less interested in politics. For example, labour was specifically targeted by the KMT state for political surveillance and demobilization, while the regime sought to balance local factions and prevent any one faction from becoming too strong. With the loosening of the political
regime in the 1980s, pent-up social demands led to a tremendous burst of protest activity. Some of the social movements that formed quickly moved from an apoliticized phase to becoming active participants in the general politicization of society. Following liberalization Taiwan saw political overflow, as the political struggle did not remain confined to formal political institutions.130

The main political cleavage in Taiwanese society formed well before political liberalization, between those who opposed the one-party system and those who were co-opted by it. In the formative years right after political liberalization, the opposition bundled its calls for democracy, Taiwanization and dismantling the party-state system. The KMT itself then embraced democratization, which left Taiwanization and the one-party legacy as the two main issues around which politicization could occur.

NOTES


2 Chu Yun-han and Lin Jih-wen have described the ‘Public service association of imperial subjects’ set up by the Japanese colonial administration in 1940, in which local elites had to take part, and which monitored even minute details of people’s everyday life. Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 102–103, 110–111, 129. Lai et al., A Tragic Beginning, 27–28, 172.


4 Fenby, Jonathan (2003) Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the China he lost. London: Simon & Schuster, 66. Ironically, the military academy trained not only later Nationalist military leaders, but also several famed Communist generals, most famously Lin Biao and Peng Dehuai, while the long-time premier of the People’s Republic, Zhou Enlai, was a political instructor at the academy and Ho Chih Minh supervised a Vietnamese contingent. Ibid, 32-41.


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7 Chen Mingtong (1995) 派系政治與台灣政治的變遷 [Factional politics and Taiwan’s political transformation]. Taipei: Mingdan chubanshe, 38–41.

8 Fenby, Generalissimo, 231.

9 The party organization, controlled by the C.C. Clique, and the Youth Corps, for example, created separate organizations in each province and city in China, thus becoming political rivals. Dickson, The Adaptability of Leninist Parties, 50–53.


13 Adding ‘A-’ in front of words is a Taiwanese habit usually signifying an affectionate relationship with the subject; e.g., one former president is also called A-bian (Chen Shui-bian), while another is called A-hui (Lee Teng-hui) and a pop diva A-mei (Zhang Hui-mei). In names, ‘A-’ is usually followed by the last character of the given name.


16 Lai et al. have estimated that as much as four per cent of Taiwanese families had at least one family member employed by the Japanese bureaucracy. Lai et al., A Tragic Beginning, 17–23, 170–171.

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20 Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 106.

21 Chen Mingtong has provided a list of the most important such companies. Chen, 派系政治與台灣政治的變遷, 61–62. See also Lai et al., A Tragic Beginning, 170.

22 Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 112, 117.


29 Fenby, Generalissimo, 479.


32 Fenby, Generalissimo, 61–72; Chou, ‘Social movements and the party-state in Taiwan,’ 30–38. Following an attack on Chiang’s leadership from local party branches in Jiangsu province (capital city Nanjing) in the late 1920s, county party branches were reconstituted across the province. Mitani, 秘密結社與中國革命, 256–257.

33 Chou Yang Sun has argued that the KMT party has been Leninist in terms of organization, institution and structure, but not in terms of ideology and mobilization mechanisms. Chou, ‘Social movements and the party-state in Taiwan,’ 80; see also Hao, ‘The transformation of the KMT’s ideology,’ 11.


35 The term Leninist-style party-state system was coined by Sartori, Parties and Party Systems, 46. Other features associated with the concept are democratic centralism, party authority over government bureaucracy and military, ideology as a guide to policy and hierarchical authority, and an appointment system which functioned similarly to a nomenklatura system, according to Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 46, 49–56, 68–69. In 1995, Chen Chun-ming remarked that the ‘party cells that used to exist in every civic organization have gradually disappeared’. Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 212. See also Dickson, Bruce (1993) ‘The lessons of defeat: The reorganization of the Kuomintang on Taiwan, 1950–52,’ The China Quarterly 133: 56–84; Bosco, Joseph (1992) ‘Taiwan factions: guanxi, patronage, and the state in local politics,’ Ethnology 31 (2): 173; Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 113–115.

36 Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 78–82.

37 Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 196.


39 Tien and Chu, ‘Building democracy in Taiwan,’ 119–120.


42 The various titles of the party leader have varied over time; however, the titles of party president and director-general are reserved for Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek respectively. Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 196. In the People’s Republic, the title of party chairman was similarly frozen in 1982 to prevent another strongman like Mao Zedong from arising.
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43 Author’s interview in Tainan, July 2002.
44 Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 114.


46 Chou, ‘Social movements and the party-state in Taiwan,’ 169; Chu, ‘Social protests and political democratization in Taiwan,’ 101; Bosco, ‘Taiwan factions,’ 175; Chu, ‘A born-again dominant party?’ 108.

47 Weller, Alternate Civilities, 57–58, 110.

48 Chu, ‘Crafting democracy in Taiwan,’ 101–105, and Chu, ‘Social protests and political democratization in Taiwan,’ 100–102.

49 In 1992 there were 8,190 officially registered social organizations, 6,628 vocational organizations and 96 political organizations. By 2003, the numbers had grown to 22,482 social organizations (an increase of 175 per cent), 9,238 (39 per cent) vocational organizations, and 138 (44 per cent) political organizations. R.O.C. Ministry of Interior Affairs Civil organizations in Taiwan-Fuchien area, and Mattlin, Mikael (2000) ‘Demokratisoituminen ja poliittisen kulttuurin muutos,’ [Democratization and change in political culture] Kosmopolis, 2: 40. See also Hsiao, ‘Emerging social movements and the rise of a demanding civil society in Taiwan,’ 167–177; Chu, ‘Crafting democracy in Taiwan,’ 118–120.

50 Kuo, ‘The reach of the party-state,’ 35; Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 70–74, 82; Jiang, 國家發展與文官政策, 139–149.

51 Interestingly, similar tendencies and figures have been reported of Communist party membership among students in Mainland China today.

52 Chou, ‘Social movements and the party-state in Taiwan,’ 128–130.

53 Based on early survey studies in the late 1960s, Sheldon Appleton noted that the best students in Taiwan tend to go abroad. Those who stay on the island tend to become disillusioned by politics and withdraw from participating in it, focusing on personal and family matters instead. Appleton, Sheldon (1970) ‘The political socialization of college students in Taiwan,’ Asian Survey 10 (10): 910–923, esp. 919–923.


stressed that it is a party for all people residing in Taiwan, to counter a frequent claim that it has a narrower social base (mainly representing native Taiwanese). Lu 1992: 132.


60 Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 112; Lerman, ‘National elite and local politician in Taiwan’; Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 81; Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 70–71.


63 Author’s interview in Taipei, August 2002.

64 Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 276, 278.

65 Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 199.


Dickson has written that ‘the co-optation of local leaders … became a defining characteristic of the KMT’s rule on Taiwan.’ Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 68. Historical research has shown that US support for Taiwan after the People’s Republic was established was by no means a foregone conclusion. Among many other considerations, the US government, disillusioned with KMT rule on the mainland, had serious misgivings about the Nationalist regime. Fenby, *Generalissimo,* 480–481; Su Ge (1987) “A horrible dilemma” – The making of
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70 Some local factions were deliberately created by the KMT. Liao Zhongjun (2000) *台灣地方派系及其主要領導人物* [Taiwan local factions and their main leaders]. Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 180; Bosco, ‘Faction versus ideology,’ 34–35.

71 Bosco, ‘Taiwan factions,’ 157. One of the most comprehensive accounts of the whole factional picture is given in Chen, *派系政治與台灣政治的變遷*. Until 1977, the party would discipline party members who ran in elections without formal party approval. Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 50, 76, 85.


73 Chu, ‘Social protests and political democratization in Taiwan,’ 101.


75 Tien and Chu, ‘Building democracy in Taiwan.’ 120.

76 Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 146.


78 Wu Nai-teh (1999) ‘家庭社會化和意識形態: 台灣選民政黨認同的時代差異’ [Family socialization and ideology: Generational discrepancies in Taiwan voters’ party identification], *台灣社會學研究* [Taiwan sociological research], 3: 137–167; also Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 207.


Reworked from data provided by Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 116.

Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 73.

Winckler recounts that in the 1977 elections the party central leadership of the time, Chiang Ching-kuo and Li Huan, decided to support all incumbent KMT local executives regardless of how unpopular, with the result that several of them lost their positions. Winckler, Edwin A. (1981) ‘Roles linking state and society’ in Emily Martin Ahern and Hill Gates (eds) The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society. Taipei: SMC Publishing, 60; see also Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 119.


Lerman, writing in the mid-1970s, claimed that ‘Taiwan is one of those few developing countries in which the political culture of the national elite and the mass political culture still confront each other.’ Lerman, ‘National elite and local politician in Taiwan,’ 1406; also Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 207.


In addition, there are also elections for party assemblies by party members, and hotly contested elections for positions such as speaker/vice-speaker in assemblies at various levels by the assembly delegates.


For example, in the 1972 supplementary elections for the Legislative Yuan, non-KMT candidates got 26 per cent of the votes and 21 per cent of the seats. Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 77, see also 182–185, 205;
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Bosco, ‘Taiwan factions,’ 178; For an explanation of habatsu, see Bouissou, ‘Party factions and the politics of coalition.’

Formosa Magazine had been preceded by several other magazines, which usually formed around one or another opposition personage. The Taiwan Political Review (Taiwan zhenglun), founded by Huang Xinjie and Zhang Junhong in 1975, was a particularly important one. Lu, ‘Political opposition in Taiwan,’ 124–126; Cheng and Haggard, ‘Regime transformation in Taiwan,’ 12–15; Liu, ‘The development of the opposition,’ 69; Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 120.


Chu, ‘A born-again dominant party?’ 70–71, 79–83; Tien and Chu, ‘Building democracy in Taiwan,’ 103–104; Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 170–172. Ling and Shih have written that it was widely perceived that the DPP had pro-Lee sympathies at the time. Ling and Shih, ‘Confucianism with a liberal face,’ 69.


The minority ethnic groups do not always share the same interests. While the main concern for the mainlanders is the appropriate allocation of political power, the hakka are mostly concerned about the protection of their distinctive culture and language. For the aborigines, the mere future existence of their distinctive group(s) is a challenge. Shi Zhengfeng (1998) ‘台灣族群結構及政治權利之分配’ [Taiwan’s ethnic structures and the allocation of political power]. Paper presented at the conference 族群台灣: 台灣族群社會變遷 [Ethnic Taiwan: Changes in the ethnic society of Taiwan], Taipei, 23–25 October 1998, 26, 29.

The Huang Fuxing formed an effective vote mobilization system among retired military personnel and their families. A similar system, named Wang Shikai, functioned among conscripts. Both systems were named after fictitious persons. Hsu, Brian, ‘Military throws away old election role,’ Taipei Times 25 November 2002, p. 3. See also Shi, ‘台灣族群結構及政治權利之分配,’ 18–20.

Wang Fu-chang has made the claim that the NP’s ‘scare tactics’ was the vehicle that in fact gave birth to a shared mainlander ethnic feeling. Wang 1998: 15-18. Chu, ‘A born-again dominant party?’ 72, estimates that 54 per cent of the NP’s support came from mainlanders. See also Hughes, Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism, 56–66, 73–86, and Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 86.
Incidentally, the fear of ordinary mainlanders for their position is incomprehensible to many *minnan*.


102 Copper, *Taiwan*, 62–63.

103 Gregory Noble has written that the first three rounds of constitutional revision (1991–1994) largely focused on expanding the scope of elections, while in the 1997 amendment attention had shifted to how to craft an effective and stable set of democratic institutions. Noble, ‘Opportunity lost,’ 90–92.


106 Noble, ‘Opportunity lost,’ 98. Some of the extra powers previously held by the president through the temporary provisions were now transplanted into the constitutional amendments, e.g., presidential emergency powers and sanctioning the creation of the National Security Council under the Presidential Office. Chu, ‘The challenges of democratic consolidation,’ 151.

107 Chen, ‘Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 161–163, has argued that, for example, the parliamentary committees during the authoritarian era acted mostly as rubber-stamps to legislation, or alternatively delayed bills, rather than as organs to revise and amend bills.

108 Author’s observations of the legislative campaign of a DPP legislator in Tainan, November 2001.


110 Many observers prior to the December 1998 legislative election perceived the DPP as likely get a majority of the seats in the Legislative Yuan. Dickson, ‘China’s democratization and the Taiwan experience,’ 357; Noble, ‘Opportunity lost,’ 99–101.


112 See Dickson, ‘China’s democratization and the Taiwan experience,’ for an explanation of why the KMT on Taiwan was more likely to be able to change in an evolutionary way than the Communist Party on the mainland is.

113 Chou, ‘Social movements and the party-state in Taiwan,’ 82.

114 Tien and Chu, ‘Building democracy in Taiwan,’ 110–112; Lu, ‘Political opposition in Taiwan,’ 135; Moody, *Political Change in Taiwan*, 104.
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116 Copper, Taiwan, 64; Tien and Chu, ‘Building democracy in Taiwan,’ 110–112; Lu, ‘Political opposition in Taiwan,’ 143.


119 Chu, ‘The challenges of democratic consolidation,’ 151–152.


121 Liu, ‘The electoral effect of social control on voters.’

122 The author’s field observations in Tainan, November 2001. It is difficult to give an exact figure of support groups as such groups tend to come and go.

123 Chou, ‘Social movements and the party-state in Taiwan,’ 169; Chu, ‘Social protests and political democratization in Taiwan,’ 101.

124 The author’s interviews in Tainan, July 2002.

125 Rigger, Politics in Taiwan, 77–79.


128 Chun, ‘From nationalism to nationalizing,’ 66.

129 Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan.’
Chapter 3

Power transition and the inherited power structure

By the late 1990s, some political scientists had already taken a pessimistic view of the workings of politics in Taiwan, dismayed at rampant vote buying, the polarization of society, populism, and latent authoritarian tendencies. However, it was only after Chen Shui-bian’s somewhat chaotic first year in office that this feeling became widespread, both among political scientists and more broadly in society. After several political crises during Chen Shui-bian’s administration, editorial commentators frequently deplored Taiwan’s intense politicization. One editorial in a pro-DPP paper wrote that ‘we’ve already become something rarely seen in the world – a “politicized society”’.¹ Many placed the blame on institutional flaws, in particular Taiwan’s semi-presidential constitutional system and the SNTV voting system, where all candidates compete directly against each other.²

Political liberalization had done away with the formal hallmarks of an authoritarian political system in Taiwan and increased political competition. Nonetheless, it did not fundamentally alter the workings of the political system built up by the KMT. The localization policy adopted from the 1970s was changing the system from within, however, but only slowly. At the turn of the century, Taiwan was ripe for further political change, although many observers were not predicting a DPP victory until the 2004 presidential election.³

THE MAJOR BATTLEFIELDS

Chen Shui-bian won the presidential election on 18 March 2000 with only 39.3 per cent of the popular vote, marking the first time the top political position had
changed hands from one political party to another through direct elections, not only in the history of Taiwan and the Republic of China, but in the history of any predominantly Chinese society. Given Taiwan’s semi-presidential constitution, the victory meant that the DPP vaulted to ruling party even though it was still in a clear minority in parliament. At the same time, the KMT became an opposition party for the first time.

The election victory was a surprise to Beijing, as to many within the DPP itself. When asked how the new administration was going to handle the Beijing relationship, a campaign team member mentioned in an interview that the team had spent the whole night thinking about that, as they had not really prepared for it in advance. Perhaps because it was so unexpected, the power transition that occurred in 2000 instantly threw the whole system and relations within it into uncertainty and flux, and brought about realignments at all levels.

As a legacy of the one-party system, party loyalty in Taiwan is more than usually dependent on incumbency or the prospect of gaining power. When a political party is likely to lose an impending election, party loyalty is particularly fragile and mass defections can easily occur. The relationship between the party and its politicians is based more on coexistence in a mutually beneficial relationship than on a shared ideological conviction. The distinguishing feature of political support is that it is mainly based on direct and vertical personal relations rather than on more abstract relations between a person and an organization. Party support that is not strengthened by such personal ties or fixed by the imminent prospect of reaping the benefits of party support through access to assets tends to be transient. Because of these features, there is a great amount of opportunistic political behaviour.

Given that the old systems of patronage both at the central and local levels had been beneficial to many people in a number of different ways, after the DPP victory in 2000 a lot of people repositioned themselves in order not to lose their benefits, or they sought out another source of patronage. New parties sprung up and rapidly attracted large followings, while the KMT saw an exodus of politicians and support. Some (including certain prominent political scientists) opportunistically sought membership in the new governing party, while the DPP itself was forced to enter into an unholy alliance with strong local factions, in order to build an effective ruling coalition in a situation where genuine coalition government between political parties proved impossible to achieve. Many people with vested interests, however, retreated in order to protect their interests at all costs.
Chen Shui-bian’s surprise victory in the presidential election had a big impact on the strengths of parties and factions at all levels of Taiwan’s political structure, but this did not occur in uniform ways. Naturally, the KMT was initially the big loser. As for the winners, the picture was less clear. In domestic politics, the general public and the new opposition, which controlled the legislature, gave the DPP-led cabinet a short honeymoon. However, in such a situation, it was unsurprising that conflict between the new government and the opposition quickly broke out and escalated. A few months into Chen’s first term, the administration began encountering criticism for its handling of several issues. The first major challenge came with a dispute over the halting of the construction of Taiwan’s fourth nuclear power plant, construction of which had been started by the KMT government. Government-opposition relations spiralled downwards to the point where the opposition threatened the president with impeachment. Similar controversies and smaller political crises erupted with great frequency throughout the DPP’s time in power.

In the first major election after Chen’s first presidential election victory – the joint legislative and city mayor and county magistrate elections held in December 2001 – changes were momentous, especially in the Legislative Yuan. However, victory for the new president’s party was not assured beforehand. In fact, using conventional logic, the opposite could have been expected. The first one and a half years of DPP rule can justly be described as somewhat chaotic, as it was encumbered by a deteriorating economy, government mismanagement, record unemployment and strained cross-Strait relations. Given this rather dismal picture, added to the general impression that the DPP administration gave of incompetent and ineffective administration, one could have expected a DPP loss in the elections. However, the party won the legislative election, surpassing the KMT’s vote for the first time, while the KMT lost 55 of its previous 123 legislative seats.

Because of the participation of the People First Party and the Taiwan Solidarity Union parties in these elections for the first time, it is not easy to compare longitudinal party election results. Most PFP voters were previous KMT or NP supporters, while the TSU mostly comprised Lee Teng-hui loyalists from the KMT. There is a widely accepted view that the KMT, PFP and NP form what is referred to as the ‘pan-blue’ (fan lan) political camp, while the DPP and the TSU belong to a competing ‘pan-green’ (fan lü) camp. The trend in the legislative political balance between these two competing political alliances can be gauged by combining the party seats in legislative elections accordingly (see Figure 3.1 overleaf). In the 2001 legislative election the green camp made a big
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advance to an unprecedented level of seats, as the founding of the TSU increased the size of the green ‘cake’, given that many TSU politicians and supporters were Lee Teng-hui supporters from the KMT.

![Figure 3.1. Political balance in the Legislative Yuan after elections](chart)

\[Source\]: Calculated from R.O.C. Legislative Yuan data and election reports.


The vote for independent candidates in the legislature was squeezed, with only 6 per cent of legislators in the fifth legislature being independent. This low figure can be compared to independent candidates’ votes in other elections. In 2002, independents and non-party nominated candidates commanded 63 per cent of borough warden/village head positions, 58 per cent of township representatives, 35 per cent of City and County Council seats and 29 per cent of township executives.\(^6\) At least two explanations can be conceived of for the drop in votes for independent candidates. It may be that it was easier for voters to find a suitable party given that there were two more parties than before. Alternatively, formerly independent candidates switching to party nomination while retaining their earlier supporters would naturally increase the share of ‘party votes’.

Taiwan’s SNTV electoral system, in use in non-executive elections until 2007 when the election system changed to single member districts (SMD), made the situation of rapidly swinging party support among the electorate particularly problematic. Under the SNTV system, all candidates compete directly against each other and parties can theoretically estimate their underlying support and
calculate how many candidates they are likely to get elected. If the estimate is correct, and the party nominates only as many candidates as are likely to get elected and successfully applies vote allocation strategies, it can minimize the number of non-elected candidates. By optimising vote allocation, as few votes as possible are wasted because of one party candidate in the electoral district attracting too many votes, or by candidates falling just short of the required vote threshold.

However, when the underlying party support swings rapidly, this optimization exercise becomes inordinately difficult. A KMT party heavyweight later readily admitted to me in an interview that the KMT committed a big mistake in 2001 by over-nominating candidates. The party seriously miscounted its underlying support and lost many seats through over-nomination and the difficulty in gauging the impact of the PFP participating for the first time. In the 2004 Legislative Yuan election, the KMT seemed to have learned its lesson. Instead it was the DPP and the pan-greens that misjudged their underlying support, resulting in several narrow misses by their candidates.

The loss of the highest executive position and the entry of the two new parties on to the electoral scene affected the KMT’s support and thereby the number of candidates it was able to successfully field in elections. In the 2002 City and County Council elections, the KMT fielded almost a fifth fewer candidates island-wide than in the previous election, but even with this reduction the likelihood of a KMT candidate getting elected fell, as the KMT’s vote share dropped from 48.8 per cent to 36.0 per cent. The impact of the two new political parties account for part of this decrease as some former KMT candidates switched to these parties, but not all of it. Three years later the KMT clawed back some of its lost support gaining 40.2 per cent of the votes partly as a result of better concentration of the vote.

The KMT’s performance can be compared with that of the DPP, the other well-established party in Taiwanese politics. The two new parties did not tax the DPP’s support, which has increased slowly but steadily in each local council election, from 15.8 per cent to 24.4 per cent. More importantly, however, the likelihood of a DPP candidate getting elected rose significantly, from 38.7 per cent in 1998 to 69.3 per cent in 2005, even exceeding the likelihood of a KMT candidate getting elected (66.6 per cent). From a pragmatic point of view, DPP party candidacy became an appealing alternative to KMT candidacy in council elections. In 1998, KMT candidates were still far more likely than other candidates to win their seats. As long as the KMT maintains a clear edge over smaller-party and independent candidates in council elections, this could be expected to put a brake on KMT politicians defecting.
In grassroots elections, the power transition had much less of an impact. In the 2002 joint elections for borough wardens, village heads and township representatives, the KMT still attracted the bulk of votes, comfortably winning 53.8 per cent of seats in the borough warden and village head elections and 50.1 per cent of township seats, while the DPP got only 3.3 per cent and 5.2 per cent of the seats respectively. However, non-KMT parties have never had any real strength in grassroots elections. This is not surprising given that borough wardens were traditionally vote captains for the KMT and party-linked local factions, and that it is generally speaking harder for new political parties to succeed in local elections than at the national level, as local success usually requires building a comprehensive grassroots organization, which in turn requires considerable resources both in terms of personnel and money. DPP party cadres readily admit their difficulties in grassroots elections. Nevertheless, the almost total absence of DPP candidates in grassroots elections, even after the party took control of the presidency, is striking. For example, in the Tainan area, a known DPP stronghold, the party nominated only 32 candidates in 764 boroughs in 2002 of whom nine were elected. The numbers were almost unchanged from the previous two elections.

Rather than contest grassroots elections, the DPP has attempted to abolish borough, village and township elections altogether. After the party took control of the executive branch, it first pushed for the abolition of township governments and the elected positions in townships, boroughs and villages. The KMT had also initially pledged to reduce the self-governing status of town and city governments and even to do away with elections for city and town mayors and related councils altogether, in an accord reached between the leaders of the KMT and the DPP prior to the 1996 National Development Conference. Yet the KMT quickly reneged on this promise as it realized that the townships especially were one of the party’s electoral strongholds, and the issue was dropped from the agenda. The DPP has since also shifted its position on local elections. The party dropped its goal of abolishing elections for borough wardens and village heads, as that plan ran into much local resistance. However, it is still trying to abolish township elections and turn the township executive into a appointed position, like the city district head.

During the authoritarian period, state and party were organizationally intertwined. Earlier I noted that the party-state preferred to create and deal with one officially sanctioned organization for each major segment of society. The party controlled the selection of the leadership of all state-sanctioned corporatist organizations. The state also made the KMT the sole mediator.
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between various sections of society and the state. With political liberalization, non-state organizations quickly proliferated. The KMT, however, maintained close links with several key organizations throughout the 1990s. Following the opposition’s first win in a presidential election, the KMT’s strong grip on key civic organizations grew less certain. In 2002, an interviewed local KMT party cadre indicated that many of the formerly KMT-supporting organizations had switched to supporting the DPP, adding that the way the associations lean depends on the ruling party. Interviewed DPP activists, on their part, indicated before the 2004 presidential election that many local associations and organizations had moved to neutral ground and some were ready to ‘switch sides’ should the DPP again win the elections. DPP supporters also imitated some KMT associations. As an example, a women’s organization called Shui dang dang was established right after the DPP’s first presidential victory in 2000 to match the KMT’s ubiquitous women’s associations and to assume similar support group functions during elections.

The levelling of the field between the KMT and the DPP with respect to politically important civic associations can be gauged by the growth in DPP-supporting Rotary Clubs since the power transition. The International Rotary rules prohibit explicit political or religious involvement by the organization’s branches. However, this prohibition has long been discreetly circumvented in Taiwan, where few major civic organizations are entirely devoid of political connections. The local Lions Club International, the Junior Chamber International (JCI) and Rotary are all at least tangentially linked to Taiwanese politics. This is not surprising given these organizations’ relatively large membership and the influential social positions of many of their members; useful assets in Taiwanese elections, which are heavily reliant on direct person-to-person mobilization. Lions and JCI traditionally leant towards the KMT, while Rotary was more favourably inclined towards the DPP, as the organization’s origin in Taiwan is linked to native Taiwanese businessmen during the Japanese period. Rotary was established in Taiwan in 1931, while Lions and JCI have had Taiwan chapters since about the end of the Second World War and the Japanese withdrawal from the island. Robert Weller has argued that Rotary, JCI and Lions were among the few organizations that escaped corporatist control during the authoritarian period, partly because of their international connections.

A president of a local Rotary Club explained in an interview that although the Rotary chapter in Taiwan formally respects the organization’s rules prohibiting taking an explicit political stance or overtly supporting a political party, local members are very active in their communities during election time. Members
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go around their communities and discreetly ask for votes and support for their favoured candidate. Although Rotary is not directly mentioned, in practice it is widely known that the person in question is a member. According to the interviewee, the DPP’s small formal organization is dwarfed by its very large and active informal organization, represented for example by DPP-leaning Rotary districts.

Given that taking an overt political stand is prohibited, there are naturally no statistics on the trends in the political inclinations of Rotary Clubs. However, according to the interviewed Rotary Club president and other scattered evidence, the DPP-inclined nature of Rotary became more apparent after the power transition. Chen Shui-bian, who became a member of a Rotary Club in Taipei after his election as president, was a frequent speaker at Rotary events. According to the informant, the DPP’s success in presidential elections led to a proliferation of DPP-leaning Clubs. For example, both his own Club and Chen Shui-bian’s Club were established after 2000. Rotary districts and Clubs have distinct political leanings. Chen Shui-bian also publicly courted associations that were previously staunch KMT supporters.

One of the main political battlegrounds in Taiwan during the DPP’s time in power was the Legislative Yuan, the importance of which had grown immensely since the beginning of political liberalization. From having been very ineffective in passing laws, the legislature has taken on a much more active role, and the power of the legislative caucuses over party legislators has also been enhanced. Significantly, throughout the entire period of DPP government the ruling party did not have a legislative majority, even taking the TSU, its political ally, into account.

The legislature became a key venue for the battle between the two political camps, given that there are many areas of Taiwan’s political system that the DPP could not change without legal changes even if it wanted to. Party discipline in Taiwan’s legislature is relatively strong and has been increasing over time, being especially high among DPP legislators. Taiwan’s party caucuses can often effectively direct party legislators’ votes on issues important to the party. In 2002, during the height of party opportunism and uncertainty about the KMT’s political future, the KMT enacted tough sanctions on party legislators who had defied the party line on key issues, expelling or suspending the party membership of several legislators, while admonishing others. Although the first DPP-led cabinet contained many KMT politicians, these politicians did not join the cabinet with the KMT’s explicit consent. The opposition’s obstruction of the new government intensified once the first cabinet quickly came to an end and the premier resigned.
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During the time it dominated the legislature, the KMT had, for obvious reasons, neglected to pass many laws that restricted its own continued dominance of the political scene. Consequently, Taiwan lacked a political party law, laws regulating lobbying and political contributions, and legal provisions prohibiting conflicts of interest among public officials. Given the huge sums of money that move in Taiwanese elections and the close relations between government officials and businessmen often biologically related to them, there was an obvious need to pass such laws. More controversial were laws directly targeting the KMT’s political dominance, its business empire and its role in the media, such as the Bill regarding the disposition of assets improperly obtained by political parties proposed by the DPP. The DPP-led government pushed for the passage of all these laws, but it encountered varying degrees of resistance from the opposition. The political donation law was passed on the eve of the 2004 presidential election after contentious parts of it were dropped. The pan-blue opposition apparently calculated that it could not let the DPP government make this an election issue. However, many of the laws were not passed, to the frustration of the DPP government. As the new government’s efforts to tackle political corruption (and thereby the old political system) through legislation ran into trouble, it turned instead to showcase campaigns against vote buying and the influence of organized crime in politics.16

While some of the KMT’s advantages over other political parties were dependent on its status as ‘permanent’ ruling party, the party had several significant advantages that were at least semi-independent of this. The KMT continues to have an advantage over other parties in its established ties with many civic organizations, useful in election mobilization. However, in terms of the civil society assets that the two main parties are able to exploit, the competition evened out after the DPP’s presidential election victory. In that sense, the DPP partially achieved one of its early political goals of levelling the political playing field.

The conditional nature of political support applies in particular to the various sources of patronage-based support that the KMT had, whether in the local factions, among borough wardens, in associations or among civil servants. The party had turned exchanging material favours for political support into an elaborate system of political mobilization. For example, KMT election candidates benefited from being able to take bank loans to finance their election campaigns. These loans were allegedly frequently left unpaid. Bank managers apparently dared not object to this arrangement for fear of losing their licences (many of Taiwan’s financial institutions are state- or party-owned). Similarly,
local factions often had unrestricted access to the funds deposited by farmers in the credit cooperatives of farmers’ associations.\textsuperscript{17} It is not unheard of for the head of a farmers’ association (\textit{nonghui zongganshi}) to simply run away with the money deposited in the credit cooperative. When the DPP came to power, the new administration imposed stricter controls on credit cooperatives’ money flows.

However, the KMT’s huge financial empire and the profits generated by it provided a buffer, shielding the party from the immediate financial effects of the loss of its ruling party status.\textsuperscript{18} Holding on to these assets became a partisan priority of the party, while undermining them was crucial to the DPP. Not long after the DPP came to power, the KMT ran into trouble extracting dividends from its businesses in order to pay the salaries and pension obligations of its employees. Party cadres cited a bad economic climate as the reason for this financing trouble. However, the party’s financial trouble continued throughout the period of DPP rule with the administration seeking various ways to force the KMT to disentangle the party organization from the business empire. The KMT first downsized its organization from 3,000 to 1,400 paid staff, despite an improved macro-economy. In March 2005, the party announced that further cuts over the following two years would reduce the number to 600–700.\textsuperscript{19} Anecdotal evidence gathered during fieldwork suggested that many cadres at the time were looking for ways out of the party. The DPP’s coming to power then seriously threatened the KMT’s ability to continue providing patronage to loyalists.

**SCHOLARS IN POWER: CHANGING POLITICAL ELITE FORTUNES**

Above it was noted that a key development within the political power structure in Taiwan beginning in the early 1970s was a trend towards the localization of power, implying a gradual increase in the number of native Taiwanese who entered the upper echelons of the party-state’s power structure. Lin Jih-wen has even remarked, ‘The fundamental dynamics of Taiwan’s political history in the past decade has been regime transition through indigenization.’\textsuperscript{20} The clear bifurcation into separate national and local elites, which Lerman described in an early article,\textsuperscript{21} gradually became blurred. Nevertheless, the KMT power structure and the channels for elite recruitment remained by and large intact until the party lost power in national elections.

Generally speaking, the current political elite in Taiwan is composed of four kinds of people: party ‘apparatchiks’, technocrats, elected politicians and intellectuals pursuing political careers. In practice, the lines between these
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cannot be clearly drawn, as many people have ‘crossed over’; for example, from party apparatchik to elected politician. Nevertheless, in general terms, party apparatchiks are those people who have been carefully groomed within political parties (mainly the KMT, now also the DPP) for political leadership positions and whose political careers have been closely tied to the party bureaucracy. The KMT has traditionally valued bureaucratic-technocratic rule and it built an impressive machine for selecting and training such talent for the uses of the party-state. While in power the party has made extensive use of technocrats in political positions, selected for their expertise especially in various areas of economic management. Technocrats are still often called upon to serve as government ministers, based on the special knowledge they have of particular fields.

The influence of elected politicians was long confined to the sub-national level, including the Provincial Assembly and County and City Councils. In the 1990s, elections became the main route to power for national politicians as well, a development after political liberalization spearheaded by the DPP. Practically all of the top-level DPP leaders in recent years have made their political careers mainly through elections, including Chen Shui-bian, former vice-president Anette Lu and previous premiers Frank Hsieh, Su Zhenchang and You Xikun. KMT politicians have also had to adapt to electoral politics. Many KMT politicians who started out as party apparatchiks later changed over to become elected politicians. Some managed this transition more successfully, like Lee Teng-hui, Soong Chu-yu and Ma Ying-jeou, than others, such as Lien Chan.

Perhaps the most interesting component of Taiwan’s political elite is, however, the key role played by academics in government. Academics also provide the best gauge of what the change of governing party meant for the composition of the political elite. The fortunes of party apparatchiks and elected politicians obviously depend on election fortunes, while pure technocrats are uninteresting since they are invited to serve in government mainly for their expertise and are often not key figures. However, the change of governing party had a direct impact on personal career fortunes for the intellectual elite with political ambitions. Political science scholars provide a particularly interesting reflection of the effects of the power transition on the political elite given that many of Taiwan’s political scientists are active in politics, and often appear to be more interested in pursuing a career in government than a career in research. Political scientists are therefore used as an illustrative example of changes within the political elite, but a general context for the political role of academics in Taiwanese politics is first provided.
Academic personnel have played an important role in government in various functions since the Lee Teng-hui period. According to a respected Taiwanese magazine, Lee put great emphasis on the policy contributions of intellectual advisers, and built the ‘Lee system’ of policy-oriented think tanks, primarily the Institute for National Policy Research (INPR), the Taiwan Institute for Economic Research (TIER) and the Taiwan Research Institute (TRI). TIER was founded in 1976 with financial backing from Koo Chen-fu, owner of a business conglomerate and long-term chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation, a semi-official organization handling contacts between Taipei and Beijing. TIER emphasizes the interests of the business community. The INPR was established in 1989 and the TRI in 1994. The latter in particular played a key advisory role in Mainland policy during Lee Teng-hui’s time in office. However, the original political think tank is the Institute of International Relations (IIR) founded in 1953 as a peripheral branch of the National Security Bureau and converted into an academic think tank with close ties to the KMT in 1961.22 Many of the IIR’s directors have gone on to hold important government posts.

After the power transition, the continuation of this tradition of an active role played by academics in policy-making was spearheaded by Taiwan’s only Nobel Prize winner and president of Academia Sinica (Taiwan’s science academy), Li Yuanzhe, who a few days before the 2000 presidential election vote publicly voiced his support for Chen Shui-bian. During Lee Teng-hui’s long term as president, Li Yuanzhe had held posts as a national policy adviser to the president, technology adviser to the Executive Yuan, convener of the educational reform commission, and member of the National Unification Council.23 The three candidates had all been vying for this respected scientist’s support, while the media was rife with speculation about Li Yuanzhe possibly being asked to head the Executive Yuan, i.e., become premier, in the first DPP government. Li was persuaded by the new president first to head a committee that was to select the first DPP-led cabinet in the crucial transitional period and then to chair a special high-level task force on Taiwan’s cross-Strait policy.

With Chen Shui-bian’s presidential election victory, the KMT domination of the think tank scene was broken. Lee Teng-hui, having founded a new party (the TSU), also established an independence-promoting think tank called the Taiwan Advocates in late 2001. The same year, the DPP-linked Taiwan Thinktank was also established. Then in March 2003, the Ketagalan Institute was established with president Chen Shui-bian as its nominal founder, a DPP-linked foundation (the Formosa Foundation) as its financial backer, Chen Shui-bian’s mentor Li Hongxi,24 his former professor in law school, as its president and You Yinglong as its convener.
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as its vice-president. The Ketagalan Institute is not purely a think tank, since it also has a broad mandate in training political talent and providing education with a political agenda.

Ironically, the KMT also founded a new think tank after it lost the election. The National Policy Foundation (NPF) became a sanctuary for KMT political heavyweights out of office, and as such can be regarded as the closest equivalent in Taiwan to a shadow government. The chairman of the NPF’s board was nobody less than the former party chairman and presidential candidate Lien Chan. The NPF was reorganized from a foundation into a think tank in July 2000 a few months after the KMT lost the presidency. Why the KMT should need another think tank may seem puzzling. However, one has to remember that most think tanks affiliated with the KMT were closely linked to former president and party chairman Lee Teng-hui, who had been forced to resign from the party chairmanship. Lee kept an office at the TRI premises,\(^{25}\) and was soon to form another party with different aims.

While pan-green think tanks sprang up following the change of governing party, some older institutes ran into financial trouble, partly as a consequence of the poor economy and increased competition for funds. Given that many of these institutions are heavily dependent on government-sponsored research projects,\(^{26}\) the financial squeeze on think tanks linked to the old ruling party may indicate that they were no longer in a privileged position in applying for research funds. I have, over the course of my research on Taiwanese politics, been able to follow the changing fortunes of the Institute of International Relations, Taiwan’s oldest think tank. On my first visit to the IIR in 1998, it was still going strong with a large, well-paid research staff. After the change of ruling party the IIR descended into a slow downward spiral of cutbacks and increased infighting as its future grew increasingly uncertain. The privileged position enjoyed by the institute’s research staff was set to end and the personnel rumoured to be dispersed to regular faculty teaching positions, which created a lot of anxiety. However, eventually the institute managed to survive eight years of DPP rule and several IIR scholars went on to hold influential positions in government when the KMT returned to power in 2008.

To sum up, the political think tank scene in Taiwan has grown considerably since the power transition with no less than four significant new organizations being established after 2000. For KMT politicians, think tanks have had a function similar to what think tanks have for out-of-office politicians in the United States. However, their function can also be seen from another perspective. Above, it was mentioned that several of the existing institutions had close relations
with Lee Teng-hui during his long term in office. Later, the Taiwan Advocates and the TRI were closely linked to Lee, while the Taiwan Thinktank and the Ketagalan Institute were close to Chen Shui-bian, and the NPF was almost synonymous with Lien Chan. The IIR is still affiliated with the KMT, while the party affiliations of the INPR and the TIER are less clear, as they and their directors – Liu Taiying (TIER and TRI) and Tien Hung-mao (INPR) – were close to Lee Teng-hui but not necessarily the KMT. Liu Taiying was considered to be Lee’s right hand man and the manager of the KMT’s financial empire, until sentenced to a long prison sentence in 2006 for white-collar crimes. Tien was a trusted policy adviser to Lee.

Chen’s presidential election win also gave a major boost to several scholars’ political careers but caused major setbacks for others. Appendix IV presents a non-exhaustive list of people with a scholarly background in political science or related fields (e.g. law, sociology, and economics), who have held important posts either in the DPP or the KMT administration, positions in the party machines, or elected positions. It appears that party membership has promoted the political careers of many social scientists by providing them access to important government offices. The scholars utilized by the KMT government are among the long-term KMT party elite, while those used only by the DPP government are almost exclusively DPP members, albeit that some joined the party after they were appointed.

There are also some relatively non-partisan scholars (e.g. Lin Chongpin, Wu Rongyi) who have had political roles in both KMT and DPP governments due to their expertise, as well as a handful of people close to Lee Teng-hui who later joined or cooperated with the DPP (Cai Yingwen, Hsiao Hsin-huang, Tien Hung-mao). Hsiao has had close relations to the DPP since 2000. He was involved with Chen Shui-bian’s re-election campaign in 2004. Cai Yingwen joined the DPP in September 2004, possibly in order to be able to gain a legislator-at-large seat on the party’s list in the legislative election in December 2004. Following the disastrous defeats in the 2008 legislative and presidential elections, Cai was elected DPP chair. Tien Hung-mao served in the early DPP government immediately after the power transition.

Given that it is normal in Taiwanese politics to invite scientists to become government ministers, and that Taiwan’s cabinet is possibly the most educated cabinet in the world, at least in terms of people holding doctoral degrees, the list excludes researchers who were invited to become government ministers because of their high level of technical expertise (usually scholars with a natural science or technology background), but then returned to pursuing an academic...
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career. An example is Lin Chongyi, a biology professor at Tunghai University, who served as head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the first DPP cabinet. People with a doctorate and a part-time professorship/lectureship, but who have not primarily been researchers prior to taking political office, have also been excluded. For example, current president and KMT party chairman Ma Ying-jeou and former party chairman, premier and two-time presidential candidate Lien Chan have both earned doctoral degrees and worked as university professors for some time. However, their primary focus has still been a political career and they are therefore excluded.29

Many prominent Taiwanese political scientists, in particular the generation that came back from the United States with PhDs in the 1990s, including Guo Zhengliang, Joseph Wu, Lin Jialong and You Yinglong, have since pursued a career in politics or government. These scholars have worked both as key persons in the party machine and important government posts, and many eventually sought elected posts as party-nominated candidates since the DPP government took over. However, generally speaking, scholars and ‘scholarly types’ have not fared very well when campaigning for popularly elected posts. Prominent examples are You Yinglong’s failed bid for Hualien county magistrate and a legislative seat, Li Yingyuan’s failed try at the Taipei mayorship, Lin Jialong’s unsuccessful run for Taichung city mayor and Li Junyi’s failure at the DPP primaries for Chiayi city mayor. However, Taiwan’s electoral system offers opportunities to gain seats as legislator-at-large in the legislature even for people who are more adept at policy-making or policy planning than at street campaigning. For example, Su Chi and Huang Defu, both gained a legislator-at-large seat from the KMT’s party list in 2004, while the director of the economics department at Taipei University, Wang Tufa, and Cai Yingwen got at-large seats on the DPP list.

Many scholars had already been working for the DPP behind the scenes prior to its coming to power, while others switched sides after 2000. In a conspicuous coup, 51 new members, comprising top government officials and members of the social or intellectual elite joined the DPP simultaneously and publicly in July 2002, among them several prominent political scientists.30 Based on anecdotal evidence, it seems that many Taiwanese political scientists are not primarily interested in an academic career; rather they regard research as a springboard or a fallback position, when they are out of government. Thus, for example, several KMT politicians with PhDs took up or returned to positions at Tamkang University, IIR/NCCU or at the newly founded NPF after 2000. Others tried to switch from a research career to a position of power in the DPP government but
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after being disappointed at not receiving the positions and influence they craved, reverted to research.  

The active participation of Taiwanese scholars and in particular social scientists in government, or the desire to participate in governing, was from the start a conspicuous feature to one coming from a country where academic and political careers are rather clearly demarcated. Even some scholars who are not tightly linked to the big political parties are often actively involved in politics, for example, Academia Sinica sociologist Qiu Haiyuan and NCCU political scientist Wang Yeh-lih in the so-called Purple Alliance. Another prominent political scientist, Emile Sheng, also acted as spokesperson for the 2006 political campaign led by Shih Ming-teh to depose president Chen. Sheng later got a position in the KMT government as Cultural Affairs Minister.

There was a well-established historical tradition in imperial China of scholarship as a route to government office (so-called scholar-officials). There are also more mundane explanations for this phenomenon, such as the fact that most of the scholars who have sought office have received their degrees in the United States where the practice of rotating between academe, government and business is well established. However, this phenomenon has as much to do with the demand side of the equation. Given the DPP government’s serious lack of experienced political talent the party was forced to look for surrogate talent where it could find it. As intellectuals had been one of the key social groups supporting the opposition movement and the DPP in the early days, it was quite natural to draw on this group. Seen from the other side, this created an opportunity for quick career advancement for many young social science scholars, who, rather than languishing in junior or mid-level academic positions with slow advancement prospects, could opt for influential positions in government or the DPP party machinery and consequent quick career advancement. At the same time, however, the power transition also marked a slow sunset on the long political careers of several KMT heavyweights.

However, in 2008 the tables turned with the KMT’s return to power. In the new KMT government, a number of political scientists close to the KMT received powerful posts or advisory roles, especially in the Presidential Office and the NSC, for example Ho Szu-yin, Philip Yang, Gao Lang and Chen Desheng, in addition to Su Chi, who had chosen a political career earlier. At the same time, the issue of whether DPP-appointed ambassadors should resign caused controversy. Despite a lack of clear rules on this, a number of DPP-appointed ambassadors tendered their resignations, including several former scholars, such as Joseph Wu and Gao Yingmao. Several ambassadors, including former
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political science Professor Parris Chang, also resigned or were removed following an investigation by the new government revealing that they had residency status in foreign countries, which according to law is banned for government officials. Additionally, newspaper reports indicated that the work contract of some scholars, who had taken up official positions in the DPP government, were revoked by the KMT-leaning NCCU, in what appeared like a partisan revenge.32

It is questionable whether one can be a neutral observer of politics as a scholar if one at the same time is actively involved in partisan politics. Partisan scholars have contributed to maintaining and intensifying politicization in the United States by writing on issues that are sure to create partisan sympathy (and antipathy). In Taiwan, many political scientists have been actively involved in designing election campaigns, referenda and opinion polls, and in writing articles that serve clearly partisan aims. They can therefore not deny their partial culpability for the island’s intense politicization. By tying their own material well-being to the fortunes of a political party, partisan scholars have a big incentive to see that party succeed, which creates a motivation to put science into the service of politics.

CHANGE OF GOVERNING PARTY AND THE BUREAUCRACY

The growth of the government sector and selection of government personnel is a prominent theme in the literature on state politicization. For example, in studies on Eastern Europe and Russia, the very definition of state politicization has been almost synonymous with growth in the state bureaucracy and selecting personnel on political criteria.33 Charges of political favouritism and patronage are commonplace in highly divided societies. So also in Taiwan.

On coming to power, the DPP suffered a serious lack of expertise and in particular governing experience at the national level. While early DPP party stalwarts such as Xu Xinliang and Anette Lu had a background in the KMT, they had usually switched parties so early that their experience of governing was, at best, out of date. In local politics, the situation was different. Chen Shui-bian had impressed many during his term as mayor of Taipei in 1994–1998 with an efficient administration, and the party had captured a majority of county magistrate and city mayoral seats in the 1997 elections.

But for national politics there was very little governing experience within the party. At the beginning of its first term in power, the DPP made use of several former KMT officials. Most notably, Tang Fei, a former KMT Minister of Defence, headed the first cabinet. However, he resigned over the nuclear
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power plant controversy having spent just four and a half months in office, and was followed in the post by several DPP heavyweights: Zhang Junxiong, a key political backer of Chen Shui-bian; You Xikun, Chen’s 2000 election campaign director and former DPP secretary-general; Frank Hsieh, the popular mayor of Kaohsiung city; and former Taipei county magistrate Su Zhenchang. Nowhere was the DPP government’s inexperience more glaring than in cross-Strait policy-making. The new administration was forced to sift through academe and old KMT hands in its search for suitable talent that it could use. Even so, it was criticized for using many inexperienced young people.34

The composition of the DPP-led cabinets and other key positions within the government’s policy-making circles reveals that the trend in terms of the top positions within the DPP government was towards slowly increasing the use of long-term party loyalists in key positions over the course of successive short-lived cabinets. The first cabinet (Tang) contained as many as 15 people who were KMT members, while only a third of the ministers were DPP members. The second (Zhang) cabinet had five KMT members, and the third cabinet (You I) initially had four. However, their party memberships were all suspended by the KMT in late April 2002. The turncoats infuriated many party members.35 The sole remaining ‘pan-blue’ minister in You Xikun’s first cabinet, Hau Lung-bin (NP), resigned in October 2003 because of a scandal. The situation continued unchanged in You’s second cabinet. The fifth (Hsieh) cabinet had only one KMT member, the head of the coast guard administration, while the sixth (Su) cabinet was entirely without pan-blue party members (see Appendix III for a timeline). The Defence Minister in the Hsieh and the Su cabinets used to be a KMT member. However, he apparently did not renew his membership in a 2001 membership re-registration drive. Nominally, DPP cabinets then became progressively more partisan towards the end.

For an example of how the policy-making apparatus was gradually ‘greening’ politically, consider the change in the cross-Strait and security policy-making apparatus. Key positions within the Presidential Office, the National Security Council, the cabinet and Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) are central to Taipei’s cross-Strait policy-making. The marching order in Taiwan’s cross-Strait policy-making was described by an interviewed high-ranking government official as the president, the NSC, the Executive Yuan and the MAC.36 As noted, the former Defence Minister in the KMT government held the premiership at the start of the first DPP-led government. The previous government’s deputy Defence Minister Wu Shiwen was promoted to Minister of Defence. The secretary-general of the NSC was also asked to stay on, but he refused.37 Instead, Zhuang Minyao,
the former commander of Taiwan’s navy and former KMT government deputy Defence Minister, got the job as the first DPP cabinet’s NSC secretary-general. Other key cross-Strait policy-making insiders who continued to play a role in the new administration included Zhang Rongfeng, deputy secretary-general of the NSC until the summer of 2003; Cai Yingwen, the MAC chairperson in the first DPP cabinets, who had been a key policy adviser to Lee Teng-hui and apparently also one of the persons behind Lee’s 1999 ‘special state-to-state relations’ statements; Lin Chongpin, who continued as vice-chairman of MAC; and Tien Hung-mao, one of Lee Teng-hui’s policy advisers, who became the first Foreign Minister in the Chen government.

Chen Shui-bian inherited Lee Teng-hui’s military and security apparatuses almost intact. Not until some fifteen months after taking office did Chen carry out a major reshuffle of leading positions within the security apparatus, replacing several Lee Teng-hui loyalists with his own people. In the reshuffle, Chen simultaneously changed the secretary-general of the NSC and the heads of the Military Intelligence Bureau and the Investigation Bureau at the Ministry of Justice, promoting the deputy head of the National Security Bureau to the first post, the head of the National Security Bureau to the second, and the Investigation Bureau deputy as its head. A few months later, Chen performed a similar reshuffle among the top military brass, simultaneously changing the chief and deputy chiefs of general staff, the three commanders-in-chief of the army, navy and air force respectively, and the director of the National Defence University among others.38

In the DPP administration, many cabinet members were people with whom Chen Shui-bian had worked closely in the Taipei City Government during his time as mayor. For example, at least six ministers in the Hsieh cabinet – Lin Quan, Guo Yaoqi, Lin Lingsan, Xu Zhixiong, Zhang Fumei and Chen Ju – had worked in the Taipei City Government under Chen, while Zhuo Rongtai was a Taipei city councillor. The previous cabinets contained several more of Chen’s former colleagues. Otherwise, the DPP-led cabinets were also filled with professionals and specialists (judges, military personnel, economists) and scholars from various fields, like the KMT cabinets before them.

It appears that the DPP first took up secondary leadership positions in the key government agencies during the immediate transfer of power and then took over leadership of these agencies as party loyalists had learned the required governing skills. Interestingly, although the context is very different, such a practice is somewhat reminiscent of the methods used by Leninist parties when taking control of the state apparatus, for example in Eastern Europe after the Second
World War, or by the KMT in the 1920s, albeit without the violent means: first a period of apparent coalition government, then taking complete control of the state apparatus when powerful enough. An interview in 2002 with a prominent DPP legislator suggested that the thinking within the DPP ran along those lines, when he candidly explained that the party’s strategy is to take control of key positions in the various institutions and then let the process ‘trickle down’. The interviewed legislator even gave estimates of how big a share of key positions in the Foreign Ministry and in the state-owned enterprises had been changed by that time. Another interviewee also suggested that there was such a drive in the diplomatic corps. From its inception, the DPP contained some Leninist aspects, including its character as an exclusive elite party, greater party discipline than the KMT, organizational features such as a Central Standing Committee and, perhaps most importantly, a semi-revolutionary party charter.

The DPP government froze civil servants’ salaries for four years. Later on, it pushed through changes to the special benefits enjoyed by government pensioners. The latter move in particular caused a lot of ill will. Instead, the Chen government introduced an old-age pension of NT$3000 per month for those not already eligible for other pensions, and raised the monthly stipend for senior fishermen and farmers by NT$1000. Collectively, these measures were expected to comparatively benefit DPP voters, many of whom lacked proper pensions, while having adverse effects on many KMT supporters, who received preferential government pensions.

Despite this, civil servants by and large gradually transferred their loyalty to the new government without any major upheavals. This was not, however, a foregone conclusion. Civil servants, particularly at the national level and among the military and public school teachers were among the most loyal KMT supporters. Initially, following the power transition, there were reports of civil servants failing to take orders from their politically appointed superiors. Taiwan’s political appointee system is formally relatively narrow, covering mainly ministers and their deputies. However, during the one-party era, the KMT had staffed the higher echelons of the state apparatus with what often in practice amounted to political appointments, many of whom were still in office when the DPP took over. Not to mention that most high-ranking officials and military officers were party members to begin with.

The loyalty of military officers, in particular, was a cause for concern for the new government. Many of the senior officers were mainlanders loyal to the Republic of China, but not necessarily to Taiwan. These fears were not allayed by some conspicuous cases of high-ranking military officers moving to Mainland
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China or engaging in espionage for the People’s Republic. Not until the spring of 2005 did the Ministry of National Defence publicly and unequivocally state that the military would defend Taiwan in the case of an attack regardless of the cause of the attack. Looking at the issue from the other side, civil servants were concerned that their privileged positions would erode or that their jobs might face cuts, not without reason. Civil servants had enjoyed perks rare in Taiwan, such as retirement pensions, schooling benefits for their children and low-interest loans, in addition to higher job security. One year into Chen’s first term the DPP government signalled some dissatisfaction with obstructionist civil servants and expressed its desire to weed out recalcitrant and incompetent bureaucrats. In his election campaign, Chen Shui-bian had promised to cut the size of the administration by a third.

The R.O.C. Yearbooks show a major drop in government personnel from 602,407 to 395,523 between 2000 and 2001. However, the main reason for this is a change in classification, rather than a drop in actual numbers. As in many other countries, firing a civil servant in Taiwan is not easy, and a sudden drop in government personnel through firing is therefore unlikely. More specifically, public school teachers used to belong to the broadest civil servant category. However, they were excluded in some statistics in 1995 and in others in 2001. By excluding public school teachers, some quantitative trends in government personnel following the power transition can be gauged (Table 3.1, overleaf).

The table shows that while the size of the general administration has been stable, the size of the staff in state-owned enterprises almost halved, and all other categories also saw drops. Employment in state-owned enterprises was on a steady downward trend. However, this downsizing started in the mid-1990s and is partly due to the privatization of government enterprises. At its peak in 1993, there were almost 178,000 employees in state-owned enterprises. Administrative personnel in public schools peaked in 2000, dropped significantly in 2001, and then stabilized.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some civil servants were encouraged to retire early, while others quit voluntarily, unable to serve under a DPP government. Nevertheless, the change of governing party does not seem to have had a significant quantitative impact on the size of the civil service in the narrower sense. The DPP government’s talk of cutting the size of the administration appears to have been mostly a numbers game: changing categorizations and reorganising units by cutting the number of ministries without actually reducing their size and by tighter control of the number of formal civil servant slots. An official at the Ministry of Civil Service responsible for compiling the numbers who was interviewed believed that any reduction was due mainly to combining
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offices and sharing services, thus reducing duplication of functions. Government reorganization cut the number of government ministries and ministerial-level commissions from 36 to 22, in addition to which there are six directorates-general. According to well-placed informants, however, this restructuring also involved a reorganization of units, not actual personnel reductions.47

If the size of the general administration has not diminished greatly during DPP rule, it has not grown either, which is different from societies such as the Czech Republic where state politicization has been seen as being a consequence of one party dominating the political scene and using its position to provide perk jobs to loyalists.48 In comparison, during the KMT administration, the number of personnel in the administration still grew between 1991 and 1997. The relatively modest quantitative impact of ruling party change on the career civil service does not mean that there was no impact at all. Given that the higher echelons of the administration were thoroughly permeated by the KMT and that promotions had traditionally been based at least partly on good personal and political connections, the sudden introduction of a different political leadership can naturally be expected to have cut old loyalties and channels for advancement at many government institutions. Anecdotal evidence that I have heard from different corners of Taiwan’s society over the years suggests that this was one of the most noteworthy changes within the administration, and a source of frustration for many old KMT loyalists.

Table 3.1. Public sector size during the DPP’s first years in government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>year</th>
<th>general administration</th>
<th>police administration</th>
<th>medical staff</th>
<th>public school administrative personnel</th>
<th>state-owned enterprises</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>409,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>408,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>136,680</td>
<td>80,531</td>
<td>27,794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>395,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>139,473</td>
<td>79,485</td>
<td>27,224</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>389,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>139,143</td>
<td>79,632</td>
<td>26,146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>376,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>138,902</td>
<td>78,516</td>
<td>25,360</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>368,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>137,979</td>
<td>77,804</td>
<td>23,250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>337,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change from base year (%)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>(3.4)</td>
<td>(16.3)</td>
<td>(23.5)</td>
<td>(45.3)</td>
<td>(17.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: R.O.C. Ministry of Civil Services, Central personnel administration.
Note: For the year 2005 public schools’ administrative personnel have been indirectly calculated from the other numbers as data was unavailable. Numbers for the first three categories are missing for 1999 and 2000.
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The minor impact the power transition had on the career civil service also does not entirely reflect the very politicized process of nominations and the composition of several government bodies. Among the most politicized have been the Control Yuan, the National Communications Commission (NCC) and the Central Election Commission (CEC). The three cases are briefly reviewed in the next chapter. However, by and large, Taiwan’s civil service has not figured very prominently in the island’s politicization. The fact that Taiwanese civil servants have to pass a gruelling examination to enter the civil service is a safety valve that may have prevented the worst excesses of politically motivated appointments within the bureaucracy. Instead, Taiwanese pork-barrel politics and favouritism is concentrated in elections, local factions and party positions.

TO PARTY OR NOT TO PARTY?

The shift in executive power from the KMT to the DPP affected the prospects and behaviour of voters, political elite and bureaucrats alike. Naturally, there was also a marked change in the behaviour of elected politicians. A recurring theme in interviews for this book was the pragmatic and opportunistic nature of politicians. It can be hypothesized that this pragmatism and opportunism is a consequence of the one-party legacy and in particular the kind of regime patronage system developed by the KMT party, which depended partly on the availability of resources that could be exchanged for political support and therefore, by extension, government power.49

Because of Taiwan’s long past as a one-party state, KMT party membership did not necessarily signify a strong ideological attachment and party identification. A high turnover of party candidates can therefore be expected, unless there are mechanisms that counteract such tendencies, such as sanctions for party-hopping. That is, we may assume that election candidates in Taiwan are relatively opportunistic about their party membership and party nominations, displaying party symbols in election campaigns when useful and not when they are of little value,50 and seeking party nomination when it is deemed beneficial for one’s electoral chances and not when it is deemed irrelevant or of little value. However, a more interesting question is whether the DPP’s win in the 2000 presidential election produced a more permanent shift of politicians away from the KMT and towards the DPP, or other parties.51

In this section, data on switching between party nomination and independent candidacy and between parties in elections among politicians at various levels of Taiwanese politics is analysed in order to determine the extent to which party
mobility among politicians increased after the change of ruling party. The data set covers three consecutive elections, straddling the power transition, for all of Taiwan except the grassroots elections for borough wardens and village heads where it covers only Tainan city and county.

Conventionally, any elected position below the national level, i.e., not dealing with national political matters, is referred to as local politics or local government in the broadest sense. However, given the many sub-national elected positions in Taiwan, a three-way division into the high, the intermediate and the grassroots levels may be more useful for election analysis, where the high-level signifies the top elected executive positions, the grassroots-level the lowest level and the intermediate-level everything in between. Another way of looking at the same three-level framework is organizing the data by the key bases for support in elections. Three such generic features are more important in Taiwan than other features: social networks, dispensing services and favours and ideological identification. While none of these is entirely excluded from any election, there are clear variances in their relative importance at different election levels that imply differences in campaigning and party election outcomes.

Social networks are most important in grassroots elections; services and favours are emphasized in intermediate elections; while in the highest elections ideology reigns supreme. At each level one feature dominates and structures the way election campaigns are organized. From the campaigning perspective, the distinguishing feature between intermediate and grassroots positions is that the latter have a significantly smaller constituency and therefore a lower threshold of votes needed to be elected. For example, in borough warden elections, the electoral constituency is only one borough, and in villages one village. For township representatives usually two or three boroughs form the constituency. This, in turn, has a direct effect on election campaigning and the political party’s role in campaigning. The party has a very low degree of involvement in grassroots election campaigning.

Borough wardens, village heads and township representatives are the lowest elected positions in Taiwan and elections for them are held simultaneously. These positions have very little power and formally only meagre financial benefits. Officially, a city or county councillor position does not have a salary either, only compensation for each day the council is in session and the councillor attends, as well as ‘study compensation’ (yanjiufei) and an ‘assistant compensation’ (zhulifei) to cover expenses. In 2002, a city councillor mentioned that he received NT$2,650 for each day in session (a minimum of 70 days a year) as well as an annual study compensation of NT$80,000 and an annual assistant compensation
Power Transition and the Inherited Power Structure

of NT$60,000. However, the city and county councillor positions can be used much more effectively than lower positions to line the pockets of their holders by unofficial means, and are therefore also much more coveted than grassroots positions.

In terms of their official functions, grassroots political positions are unimportant, as the tasks that a borough warden performs, for example, are not clearly legally defined, are trivial and not even generally known by the residents who are supposedly being served. In a somewhat cynical remark, an office head at a City Election Commission stressed that she had no idea who her own residential borough warden was or what he or she was supposed to do, adding that the whole borough warden position was in her view useless. The ill-defined tasks of the borough warden seem to have become redundant. Residents’ committees (jumin weiyanhui) in Mainland China, on the contrary, have a heavy burden in running the administration’s increasingly numerous errands. However, the traditional role of borough wardens and village heads as grassroots vote brokers (zhuangjiao), important in particular for the KMT, means that they can be regarded as one of the inherited assets that have benefited the KMT over other political parties. It is beyond this study to assess what relevance vote brokers in general still retain in Taiwan, but a common view among election workers is that they still retain some influence.

Intermediate-level elected positions are coveted in Taiwan and of much greater importance than grassroots positions, especially the powerful seats of city mayors, county magistrates and legislators. These have traditionally been very lucrative as tools for corrupt politicians to exchange political favours for economic benefit. Not surprisingly, these positions have also been the stronghold of local factions, which first focused their election efforts on the county magistrate and county councillor positions, and later on the mayorships and the Provincial Assembly. Since the beginning of the 1990s, local factions have also had a grip of the Legislative Yuan, as all seats were opened up to open competition.

Seen from the election campaigning perspective, campaigning for a seat in the legislature has more similarity to campaigning for the City Council than for the high-level executive positions of the big city mayors and the president. The big city mayors are distinct from the other city mayors and county magistrates for several reasons. Campaigns for these positions are quite ideological, relying heavily on mass events and the media, as distinct from the greater emphasis on direct mobilization in intermediate level elections. The constituencies are very large, several times the size of those of other city mayors and county magistrates. They are also crucial seats in the overall power balance between the two main
political parties and parties are therefore very involved in campaigning. The two biggest cities, Taipei and Kaohsiung, are administratively separate from other cities and counties, being placed directly under the national level as self-governing municipalities (the number will increase to five at the end of 2010 when Kaohsiung city and county, Taichung city and county and Tainan city and county are merged to form new municipalities, and Taipei county is upgraded to municipality status). They receive a disproportionate share of redistributed tax revenue compared to other local governments. Elections for these mayorships are also held separately from other mayoral elections.

KMT-nominated candidates are far more numerous in grassroots elections than DPP candidates. Although the KMT has a greater presence, it does not appear to be very actively involved in campaign efforts if you ask KMT borough wardens or campaign organizers. However, there seems to be some discrepancy here between the view of party cadres, candidates and campaign organizers. A KMT party cadre reported that the party will provide campaign help to both party-nominated and other KMT-leaning candidates in the form of party personnel (renli) helping with the campaign effort, of help with election material (xuanchuan), and of small financial assistance (buzhu). In theory, the KMT only nominates one strong party candidate in each borough or village. In practice, there are often several party-nominated candidates or none at all. In any case, even non-nominated party members may run as independents in the elections, choosing whether they want to display the party symbols or not during campaigning. The choice seems to be influenced by whether showing party symbols is deemed to be positive or more likely to alienate some voters. Both local DPP and KMT party cadres maintain that displaying the DPP party symbols in local elections may lose the candidate votes. The practice of KMT party members not displaying the KMT party symbols also seems very common. In one borough warden election campaign that I followed closely, there were three independent and one DPP candidate (the weakest candidate). According to informants, all three independent candidates were actually KMT party members.56

In general, election results at the grassroots level tend to be very stable as they depend on stable social networks of family and friends to a large extent. While it is possible to gain votes without pre-existing relations by buying votes with relatively large sums of money, an extensive social network offers a more effective way to build local support, especially in rural areas. An analysis of data from the Tainan city borough warden elections in 1994 and 1998 shows that the likelihood of an incumbent warden getting re-elected was as high as 75.2 per
cent. Anecdotal evidence also confirms this. In one borough in Tainan county that I followed closely, campaign workers mentioned that the results between the two main social networks had been almost identical in 1994 and in 2002. In 1998, the incumbent warden had persuaded the competing network not to field a candidate in order to save the resources of both sides. The numbers were later checked in the local election statistics. It turned out that the winning candidate indeed received almost the same number of votes as eight years before – 1,249 and 1,232, respectively. The competing network’s candidates vote base was similarly little changed.57

In lower elections, party nomination procedures are less regularized and more subject to the influence of personal relationships. The DPP has no set nomination procedures for grassroots elections; rather, the city or county party assembly may stipulate the procedures (subject to approval by the party headquarters). Borough and village candidate nominations are handled by the township or city district party branch.58 KMT nomination procedures at the grassroots are apparently decided on the basis of informal consultations between the local KMT party branch and prospective candidates.

Two-way traffic between KMT nomination and independent candidacy is consistently high in the data for Tainan city and county borough warden and village head elections, with 10.4–35.9 per cent of KMT candidates switching to independent in a subsequent election and 14.0–21.3 per cent of formerly independent candidates displaying their KMT affiliation. Also interesting to note is that not one KMT candidate actually switched between two party nominations in the entire data set, while very few formerly independent candidates ran for other political parties. This, of course, partly reflects the fact that very few candidates from other parties take part in these grassroots elections to begin with. In the 1998 elections, five former DPP candidates ran as independents, while only two former independents ran for the party. In the 2002 elections, only two former DPP candidates ran as independents, while eight ran for the party.59

In higher elections, such as for the Legislative Yuan, movement from the KMT to other parties, and vice versa, was more frequent since the power transition. In contrast, in grassroots elections Taiwan is, for all practical purposes, still a one-party-dominated system. The continued dominance of the KMT in grassroots politics implies that newly established political parties tend to be born top-heavy. The legislative strength of the DPP (and previously the PFP, TSU and the NP) is not reflected in comparable grassroots strength. Apart from the DPP, the other three parties never had a strong presence even in council elections.
In grassroots politics, party nomination switching is really not an issue, as there for all practical purposes is only one party. However, it appears that politicians still display political sensitivity by actively seeking or dropping their KMT affiliation, depending on the circumstances. But here it is not the governing party that is key to understanding this sensitivity. Grassroots politics is so far removed from national politics that the party affiliation of key officeholders at lower levels is more important than the president’s party affiliation. City mayors, county magistrates and township executives in particular are important in this respect as borough wardens and village heads are almost entirely dependent on discretionary financial resources granted upon their request by the city or township government. Several interviewees mentioned that good relations with the city or township government are essential to get these funds. Many informants also noted the great powers of the city mayor in Taiwan. When the mayor changes, many city department heads (zu zhang) and also some vice-heads are changed. District heads (qu zhang) in cities are appointed, while the equivalent position in the counties, the township executive, is an elected position. The city mayor’s party affiliation may then be more important as an explanatory factor for whether borough wardens display their party affiliation in the cities, while the township executive’s party affiliation may be more important in the counties.

In Tainan city, the KMT lost the mayorship to the DPP in 1997. In Tainan county, the county magistracy has been held continuously by the DPP since 1994, but the KMT has held the majority of township executives. After the 2002 township election, fully 19 executives were KMT, while ten were independent and only two DPP. Unsurprisingly, the townships with the most KMT candidates in the 2002 borough warden and village head elections all had a KMT township executive, save for one exception. Furthermore, all the townships that saw big moves by formerly independent candidates to KMT-nominated candidates in 2002 were or had just come under KMT control. For example, in Jiangjun and Xigang, new KMT township executives (the former executives were independent) may have contributed to ten independent candidates displaying their KMT affiliation, while in Guanniao, where the township executive position had just gone from the DPP to the KMT, six independent village heads displayed their KMT credentials. Opposite moves occurred in some villages where the executive position had gone from a KMT to an independent politician.60

Against this background, the following logic (Figure 3.2.) behind the switches *en masse* between running for the KMT and independent candidacy at the grassroots level can then be envisaged: (1) the party headquarters pressures the local party branch to secure a good showing in grassroots elections, through nominating as...
many good candidates as possible; (2) the local party branch then solicits help from its key politicians in the various townships, promising them party nomination and resources in exchange for help in securing the party’s grassroots support and mobilizing votes in higher elections; (3) finally, the township executive – often a key political supporter for borough wardens – in turn promises election help and funds to borough wardens if they run for the party and help to mobilize votes for the executive in their borough or village in return.

Given the dependence of grassroots politicians on discretionary funding from the township or city government, it is logical that in a city with a DPP mayor an open show of support for the KMT is risky, and vice versa. Not surprisingly, KMT local party cadres maintain that DPP mayors exert pressure on KMT-leaning borough wardens, while DPP city councillors offer benefits to those borough wardens who give their support to the DPP. On the other hand, there are clearly incentives for borough wardens and village heads in KMT-controlled townships to appear to be KMT supporters, at least superficially. To what extent the KMT’s borough wardens actually help the party get votes, that is, act as its vote brokers, as opposed to just promising such help is, however, not a straightforward question. In the 2004 presidential election, the KMT apparently had great trouble in getting ‘its’ borough wardens to help the Lien-Soong campaign effort.
For example, a local party cadre in Tainan reported that the party struggled to get even ten borough wardens in their district to help the campaign effort, although the boroughs concerned had several more KMT borough wardens. The DPP’s controlling executive positions both nationally and in the city had made borough wardens more cautious in declaring their support for a political party. Instead of helping only the KMT, they often helped both the KMT and the DPP to mobilize votes. Naturally, a shift towards political neutrality would hurt the KMT the most. Another way to get around this quandary is for borough wardens to switch boroughs when they are mobilizing votes. Instead of helping the party in their own borough they appear in a far-away borough where nobody knows them, thereby nominally fulfilling their obligation to assist the party. Of course, given that the whole point of grassroots vote brokers is that borough wardens are locally known and trusted people, such mobilization ‘for show’ would be expected to be rather inefficient.

It can be hypothesized that party candidacy in general should have a net positive effect as it may provide access to new electoral mobilization resources. It is a common view among people active in Taiwanese politics that a political party, especially a big one, may even ‘donate’ a share of party loyalists’ votes to one of its favoured candidates and thus influence election outcomes. In the interviews, both a KMT city councillor and a KMT party cadre gave the same estimate of the proportion of a city councillor’s votes, 10–20 per cent, that can be directly attributed to KMT endorsement of a candidate. Given that informants usually stress that the political party is insignificant or unimportant in grassroots elections, the impact of party nomination would be expected to be smaller in borough warden and village head elections. In some areas party candidacy is of no importance in grassroots elections as almost all candidates run as independents. I checked the accuracy of this commonly held view by using councillor and borough warden election data from the 1998 and 2002 elections and calculating the positive vote effect of party nomination as well as the negative effect of a loss of party nomination. In general, the effect of party nomination on a candidate’s vote appears to be surprisingly consistent with the estimate offered by my interviewees, with a party nomination effect of 15-25 per cent of votes in councillor elections and around 10 per cent in grassroots elections. However, the negative effect of a loss of nomination appears to be greater than the positive effect of gaining party nomination. Among 69 incumbents in the city and county councillor data who forfeited their party nomination, more than one-third lost their seats in the next election, while among 40 non-incumbents who gained party nomination, only nine succeeded in getting elected. This discrepancy is understandable given
that some candidates are almost entirely dependent on party-mobilized votes, in which case loss of party nomination may mean an immediate loss of more than half of the candidate’s votes, and often subsequently a lost seat. Other politicians build a strong, often faction-backed, independent power base. Political parties often try to woo such strong candidates to the party’s fold. However, the effect of party nomination in such cases is usually negligible for the candidate, and may even be negative. For example, 11 incumbent former independent politicians who ran for a party in 2002 actually lost their seat. Interestingly, it would then appear that party nomination could also be a risk for popular independents. There would then seem to be thresholds in both directions, with party nominees trying to hold on to their nomination, while successful independent candidates ought not to be particularly enthusiastic about party nomination purely for the sake of enhancing their chances in elections.

On the whole, city and county councillors tend to benefit from party nomination, given Taiwan’s electoral system and the way votes are mobilized, in particular the increasing role of the party in vote mobilization in elections with bigger constituencies. This is most clearly seen among big city (Taipei and Kaohsiung) council candidates. In the 2002 election, eleven incumbent former party candidates ran as independents in the two biggest cities. Every one of them lost votes, with an average turnout-adjusted vote loss of 43.5 per cent. Of the eleven candidates, only three managed to retain their seats after losing their party nomination.

Non-KMT party candidates are a much bigger force in City and County Council elections than in grassroots elections, although independent candidates are numerous in these elections as well. Movement between independent candidacy and party nomination is common, now also including other parties. However, in higher elections it is difficult to derive definitive conclusions regarding party opportunism from switches between party and independent candidacy, given that nomination policy is an important intervening factor. In key elections, such as legislative, mayoral and magistrate elections, the DPP has adopted a nomination system whereby 70 per cent of the weight in the decision hinges on opinion polls and 30 per cent on a vote by registered party members in a party primary where a consensus candidate cannot be arrived at. Even with this system, it is not uncommon for candidates to try to manipulate the result, for example by paying the party membership fees for many of their acquaintances and then arranging transportation to the voting location on the day of the primary vote. An apparent switch from DPP to independent candidacy may then simply indicate defeat in the party’s internal nomination. The KMT
has experimented with various primary systems but has still eventually tended towards a top-down selection of party candidates. The party headquarters has the final say on nominations. This in turn induces candidates trying to secure a nomination to cultivate personal relations with party leaders.  

However, in the selection of city and county councillor and township executive candidates, even the DPP does not have a unified party primary system. The DPP party statutes only stipulate that the city or county party headquarters handles the procedures for candidate nominations for county-level councils, as well as the nominations themselves. Given that nominations are not the result of opinion polls and party primaries in these elections, it is more meaningful to gauge switches between the party-nominated and independent categories. Direct party-to-party nomination switches are also more interesting as there is more of a real party choice than in grassroots elections. However, if nomination policy is the only reason behind switches between party and independent, then it appears that party nomination processes are flawed. Formerly party-nominated incumbents often run as independent candidates even when the party does not nominate another candidate. The party also often nominates clearly inferior candidates instead of previously party-nominated incumbents.

Table 3.2. presents detailed data on nomination switches in City and County Council elections in 2002 and 2005. The data covers all of Taiwan. The table is organized so that changes in all the major parties are scrutinized, including the two new parties, the PFP and the TSU, participating for the first time in 2002. The columns detail each party's gains and losses of candidates from other parties and independents respectively. It appears that the trend – as expected – was clearly away from the KMT in the 2002 elections. The party suffered a net loss of 76 candidates, not gaining a single candidate from other parties. Taking its much smaller size into account, the NP fared even worse, losing a net 19 candidates and not gaining a single one. The big winner was the new PFP party, which attracted lots of candidates from the KMT and the NP as well as independent local faction politicians, and to a lesser extent the TSU. The PFP leader Soong Chu-yu had actively courted local politicians especially at the township and provincial levels during his time as provincial governor in the 1990s. The DPP also saw net gains, although not as big as one might perhaps expect, given the hypothesized political opportunism and the party’s new position as the ruling party. However, compared with the other two major parties that existed in 1998 (KMT and NP), the DPP fared relatively well. The main immediate effect of the power transition on elected politicians at the intermediate level was a major reorganization within the pan-blue camp. Among the party-to-party switches,
Power Transition and the Inherited Power Structure

35 were within the pan-blue camp, eight between the blue and green camps, two within the green camp and three between minor parties and big parties. In 2005, the KMT gained, as its prospects looked considerably brighter than in 2002. The DPP and TSU also continued to gain, while the PFP was the biggest loser with a net loss of 12 candidates.

Table 3.2. Party gains (losses) of candidates in council elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Net gain (loss) other parties 2002</th>
<th>Net gain (loss) independents 2002</th>
<th>Net gain (loss) other parties 2005</th>
<th>Net gain (loss) independents 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>(30)</td>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFP</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSU</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other parties</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The data has been extracted and calculated from that provided by the Central Election Commission.

Note: The calculations were performed by adding the number of candidates switching from independent or another party to the target party and subtracting the candidates moving in the opposite direction.

In Table 3.3 (overleaf) similar data is provided for legislative elections. The table summarizes the net gains and losses of candidates participating in consecutive elections for all the major parties and between three pairs of legislative elections, one before the power transition, one straddling it and one after it. The last line of the table gives the average party-changing propensity among all party-nominated candidates for each election. As can be seen from the table, the KMT and the NP consistently lost candidates in the last three legislative elections. The KMT saw a surge in party defections in 2001 with the founding of the two new parties. The PFP and the TSU were naturally on the receiving end in their first election, but both lost candidates in the following election. The 2004 elections saw another newcomer, the Non-Partisan Solidarity Union (NPSU), which first formed as an alliance of legislators. The NPSU is led by Chiayi local faction heavyweight Zhang Boya, who had previously cooperated with the DPP and was appointed Minister of Interior in the first DPP government. Like the PFP and the TSU in the previous election, it also attracted candidates from other parties and independents.
Table 3.3. Party gains (losses) of candidates and party-changing propensity in legislative elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPP</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFP</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSU</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPSU</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other parties</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Party changing propensity 10.4% 15.5% 7.4%

Source: Calculated from data provided by the Central Election Commission.
Notes: The calculations have been done as with Table 3.2. The propensity to change party has been calculated as the ratio of those candidates who were nominated by one party in the previous election and by another in the next one to all party-nominated candidates in the previous election.

Other parties saw a great increase in candidates in 1998. The DPP especially lost many candidates to the Taiwan Independence Party (TIP) or the newly founded New Country Alliance (NCA). However, the DPP fared by far the best among the old parties following the power transition, neither losing nor gaining candidates on a net basis. This does not mean that there has not been a supply of new candidates to the DPP. However, the party has to some extent been able to pick and choose, only taking over those candidates that have a very good chance of winning, while simultaneously dropping weaker candidates. The DPP has also been more cautious in welcoming party opportunists than other parties.

The tendency to change party nomination directly from one party to another is high in legislative elections. The ratio was above 10 per cent of all candidates participating both in 1998 and 2001, with almost one in six of all the party-nominated candidates in 1998 who also participated in 2001 being nominated by another party in the later election. However, the party-hopping in 1998 and 2001 was qualitatively different. In 1998, all cases of party-hopping were of candidates changing between a minor and a major party’s nomination, while in 2001 most cases involved switches between two major parties. In 2004, party-hopping seemed to subside, at least temporarily.

The power transition in 2000 was followed by a surge in political opportunism among Taiwanese politicians. Due to the one-party legacy, a patronage state legacy and the nature of political support networks, there is a great amount of opportunism with regard to party affiliation in Taiwan, and bandwagoning is rampant.69 Opportunism here refers to a tendency to take advantage of
opportunities as they arise. In relation to political parties, this implies a low threshold for changing party affiliation based on fluctuations in party political fortunes and the benefits they are able to offer. A term has even been coined in Taiwanese political parlance – the ‘watermelon effect’ (xigua xiaoying) – to refer to such political bandwagoning where people turn towards whichever side appears stronger. Party opportunism is especially serious at the intermediate level of the political structure where local factions and pragmatic interest considerations are most prominent.

Given this general political opportunism and top-heavy concentration of political resources, a change of president to another political party for the first time could be expected to have an impact throughout the political system. The president is the most important political position in Taiwan. Because of Taiwan’s semi-presidential constitution, the presidency has greater powers than in a parliamentary system of government, but still far fewer than in a presidential system. Power between central and local government was traditionally skewed heavily in favour of the central government and the two provincial-level municipalities, Taipei and Kaohsiung. The central government also appointed senior local government personnel, except for a few elected positions. Prior to a law on local self-government promulgated in 1994, power was even more centralized with strict legal stipulations dictating local administrative organization, for example, with little or no room for flexibility. Significant parts of locally collected taxes are still routed through the central government and redistributed to lower-level governments in a top-heavy manner.

As this section has shown, there was, as expected, a surge in party opportunism following the first change of ruling party. However, opportunism among Taiwanese politicians still occurs mainly within the two large ideological blocks, which forms the main political cleavage in society. Therefore such opportunism does not interfere with the partisan bifurcation in Taiwanese politics. Newly formed parties have drawn their support mainly from either side of this cleavage, the NP and the PFP from the blue side and the TSU (and earlier TIP) from the green side. The most ‘crossovers’ occurred initially when the TSU was formed, as supporters of Lee Teng-hui and his intra-KMT localization supporters were a major part of the TSU’s early politicians. The pattern of political opportunism thus reaffirms the main political cleavage within Taiwanese society, around which politicization occurs.
POLITICIZED SOCIETY

POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM AND PARTY STABILITY

Above I hypothesized that the long legacy of one-party rule and party-state sanctioned patronage would mean major shifts in party membership following the change of ruling party, as opportunistic politicians and others were attracted to the new power centre. I was sensitized to this ubiquitous political opportunism through early field experiences. Immediately after the 2000 election, an acquaintance studying political science at the National Taiwan University deplored his difficulty in choosing a supervisor for his master's thesis at that particular time. Most professors in the department were pro-KMT, but the DPP had won the elections and he was afraid that choosing wrongly would influence his future career. The person in question ended up choosing a KMT-inclined supervisor. Another young scholar explained that it is generally known in Taiwan that certain academic departments, or even entire universities, lean in a particular political direction. The phenomenon is particularly rife at private universities and causes headaches for young political scientists, who need to show political sensitivity in their work. The university board may, for example, be inclined towards a particular party. Since the board approves new professorial appointments, politically undesirable professors can therefore be blocked and more desirable choices favoured. In another anecdote about the influence of politics in Taiwanese academia, a former student of the East Asian Institute at National Chengchi University told me that several fellow students later worked for the DPP government or wrote laudatory commentaries in newspapers about DPP government actions. Students of the East Asian Institute were famous for being among the most conservative of all students, most of them being mainlanders and descendants of military or security personnel. In the late 1990s, most were staunch NP supporters.

KMT party membership had already plateaued in the late 1980s at around two and a half million members. Prior to the 2000 presidential election the party still had 2.3 million members. DPP party membership was only a fraction of the KMT’s, registering only 200,000 members more than a decade after its foundation. However, DPP party membership recorded a conspicuous jump in the year the party captured the presidency, almost doubling in 2000 (Figure 3.3.). During the rest of Chen Shui-bian's first term in office, the party’s membership continued to climb rapidly. However, questions rose over the accuracy of the DPP figures during the election for DPP chairman in 2006, when it was discovered that only 234,000 of the more than half a million registered party members were eligible to vote, having paid their annual membership fee of NT$300 to the local party headquarters, a sum that had tripled in only a few years. The party
Power Transition and the Inherited Power Structure

membership, as reported by the DPP itself, peaked in 2006, after which it has declined three years in a row.\textsuperscript{75}

Accurate KMT party membership figures are harder to come by than DPP membership figures, which are publicly available on the internet. After the 2000 presidential election and the emergence of the PFP and TSU on the party scene, the KMT party headquarters itself grew concerned about the robustness of the party’s membership. The KMT therefore organized a re-registration campaign six months after the election, discovering that the party had lost almost two-thirds of its members. Only around one million people bothering to re-register\textsuperscript{76} although the party was offering incentives such as accident insurance coverage to those who renewed their party membership. There were even some doubts about the loyalty of those who did re-register. A local KMT party cadre estimated that as much as 30--40 per cent re-registered because someone they knew asked them to do so, rather than out of ideological conviction or party loyalty. This is because many politically active KMT members have a pragmatic interest in their relatives and acquaintances also being party members. For example, only party members can vote in party primaries. Incidentally, the deputy director of the DPP secretary-general’s office also gave the same explanation as a possible reason for the jump in DPP party membership in 2003.\textsuperscript{77}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.3.png}
\caption{Development of DPP party membership}
\textit{Source:} DPP party website.
\end{figure}
**Politicized Society**

As mentioned the DPP uses a system of candidate nomination in higher elections whereby 70 per cent of the decision is based on several opinion polls, and 30 per cent on party primaries. Although primaries account for less than half of the weight in the nomination decision, they are hotly contested. The DPP party charter stipulates that only those who have been DPP members for a full year have the right to vote in primaries. Those seeking party nomination in party primaries therefore often mobilize their family members and friends to register as members, sometimes even arranging bus transportation to the polling station (polling stations in party primaries are far fewer than in actual elections).

While the KMT, in principle, also has a membership fee, it seems that many people never pay it. The issue became a crucial one in the spring of 2005 when the KMT was gearing up to choose a new party chairman. It was discovered that a great many party members had not paid and thus were not eligible to vote for the chairman. This was seen as having a direct effect on the result, as most of those paying their membership fees were mainlanders and likely to vote for Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jeou (also a mainlander), while most of those who had not paid their fees were native Taiwanese likely to vote for the contender Wang Jinping (a native Taiwanese). Because of the fierce competition over the party chairmanship, the KMT’s actual party membership was a sensitive issue at the time I first tried to obtain the exact figures in 2005. Incidentally, two Lianhebao journalists covering the Taipei mayor’s office and the DPP party headquarters, respectively, even doubted that the KMT itself anymore has accurate figures on its party membership. Nevertheless, in February 2006 I obtained KMT membership figures for the years 1999–2005 from the party central headquarters through direct contact with a heavyweight KMT politician that showed party membership increasing slowly since 2000, following a huge drop. KMT party members hovered just over 1 million in 2002–2005.

The most significant shifts in the political landscape after the power transition occurred due to two new political parties entering the contest and attracting politicians from the KMT and the NP. These parties, in turn, are intimately related to the actions of two top politicians, namely Lee Teng-hui and Soong Chu-yu. The DPP has similarly lost several leading figures, including former party chairmen Shih Ming-teh and Xu Xinliang, as well as firebrand Sisy Chen. However, none of them have attempted to form an own party following their departure from the DPP. The PFP formed around Soong, who lost the presidential election in 2000, while the TSU formed around former president Lee a little later. In Taiwan, lesser politicians tend to switch party following their patron (a more powerful politician). When Soong left the KMT after his falling
out with Lee, and Lee a little later stepped down from the chairmanship of the KMT, a drove of KMT politicians followed Soong to the PFP and a smaller group of Lee Teng-hui loyalists left the KMT for the TSU. The candidates’ good personal relationship with Soong Chu-yu was frequently brought up during interviews with PFP politicians and their staff. It was also clear that this was a major source of disappointment, as the party would, for example, nominate two candidates with good ties to Soong in an election district, with the result that both lost as they played each other out owing to insufficient underlying support. Other candidates were incensed that the party failed to nominate them despite their excellent ties with Soong. They would then run as independents and sometimes publicly attack Soong’s perceived betrayal.

Soong had cultivated ties with many lower-level politicians and faction leaders during his term as provincial governor (1994–1998). His close ties with the so-called old guard (mostly mainlanders) within the KMT also meant that many of those who had previously left the KMT for the NP were inclined to view the PFP as the NP’s ideological successor. The PFP then immediately made a relatively strong showing both in the legislature, where it attracted many mainland legislatorsto its fold, and in the City and County Councils and among township executives, where it attracted local faction-backed politicians whom Soong had courted before. The TSU, although it is regarded as the other pan-green party beside the DPP, actually attracted more people from the KMT than from the DPP. Many of those who switched to the TSU after 2000 belonged to the Lee-loyal native Taiwanese within the party. Few of them were identified with the TSU’s independence-leaning ideological values.81

The KMT’s frequent splits have been a dominant feature of the party scene ever since the majority of the KMT old guard broke away from the party in 1993 to form the New Party, following a leadership split among the party elite. There have been many attempts at forming new political parties since the DPP’s foundation in 1986, but all those parties – NP, TIP, NCA, PFP, TSU – have failed to institutionalize and faded rapidly following an initial surge in support, regardless of whether they have had a strong leadership figure or not. The New Party’s best election showing came in the first round of elections it participated in when it captured 12.8 per cent of the vote in legislative elections and more than 30 per cent of votes in the Taipei mayoral election. Since that time the party steadily lost support and the party’s politicians either returned to the KMT, or joined the PFP. In the 2004 legislative election, seven remaining NP politicians campaigned under the KMT banner, with only one politician still campaigning under the NP flag to symbolize the party’s continued existence. The party’s
remaining politicians later announced that the remnants of the party would formally re-integrate with the KMT.

Table 3.4. provides a summary of the general propensity both for status changing and party changing in several elections after the transition of power (two consecutive elections). Based on the table, one can conclude that the tendency of candidates to change their affiliation in elections is high throughout the political structure. Direct party-to-party switches are relatively rare, although they appear to increase at higher election levels. This is consistent with the top-heavy nature of new political parties in Taiwan, as already noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elections</th>
<th>Total count</th>
<th>party / independent %</th>
<th>party / party %</th>
<th>total propensity %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislator</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County and city councillor</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township executive</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough warden and village head</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources*: Central Election Commission and Tainan City and County borough warden/village head election reports (1998 and 2002).

*Note*: The 'total count' is the number of candidates participating in both elections. 'Total propensity' is the number of candidates whose status was different (any combinations) in the two elections as a ratio of all candidates participating in both elections. The data for city and county councillors covers all of Taiwan; the data for city/county borough wardens/village heads only covers Tainan city and county.

Many formerly independent candidates chose to run for another party in 2002, which may indicate that many local politicians without a strong party attachment calculated that the moment was ripe to join another party after the KMT had lost the presidential election. Regarding the direct party switches, it has to be noted that some party arrangements act as a brake on such switches. Apart from sanctions for leaving the KMT or running an independent campaign, the DPP also has a rule, which may have limited KMT-to-DPP switches; namely, the party statutes require that anyone registering as a party candidate in elections must have been a member continuously for at least two years prior to registering a candidacy. Although Taiwan’s parties are known to have been flexible on such rules, this may have been a factor slowing down party switches. At the time of the 2001–2002 elections analysed above, less than the required time had lapsed since the DPP’s presidential election victory.

Political parties do not generally appreciate opportunistic politicians who are quick to exploit changes in the political wind. Parties are therefore likely to think twice before nominating such politicians, unless they independently command
sizeable blocks of votes that can benefit the party. In particular, the DPP has been relatively strict in accepting party-hopping candidates, while the KMT has been much keener to welcome back its ‘lost sheep’ from the NP and the PFP. Bruce Jacobs provided an illuminating example from the Mazu township executive election in 2002. The election was a two-way race between independent candidate Huang and a KMT-nominated candidate Chen. Huang had applied for DPP membership and even used the DPP symbols in his campaign; however, the DPP delayed approving his membership until after the election as Huang had a reputation for vote buying. Chen, on the other hand, was still nominally KMT-nominated, but ran his campaign almost without assistance from the KMT and did not include any references to the party in his campaign material. In fact, the local DPP branch was quietly helping KMT-nominee Chen, perhaps seeking to woo him in the future.84

The tables above do not cover the whole range of politician opportunism. For one, I only counted direct switches from one party’s nomination to another in consecutive elections. This leaves out politicians who switched party with one election in between or who switched parties but have held other than elected positions in the new party, of which there are several cases. For example, Lin Yufang was a NP legislator 1995–1998 and a PFP legislator 2001–2004; Chen Zhibin was a KMT legislator 1995–1998 and a PFP legislator 2001–2004; Huang Zhuwen was a KMT legislator 1995–1998 and then became the chairman of the newly-formed TSU; Chen Hongji, a former KMT legislator, deputy director of the party’s organizational department and leader of a KMT legislative faction, also defected to the TSU in 2002; finally, Zhou Xiwei was a PFP legislator 2001–2004 but got elected as a KMT candidate in the Taipei county magistrate election in 2005.85

An often seen pattern is a party member withdrawing from the party immediately after it decides not to nominate her or him, and then running as an independent candidate. For example, the Nantou county magistrate – a twenty-year party member and member of the DPP’s Central Standing Committee – announced that he would withdraw from the DPP immediately after learning that he had lost its primary for nomination. Alternatively, members are expelled by the party for deciding to run an independent campaign against a party candidate, as happened to long-standing KMT member Wu Guodong, who ran as an independent in the by-election for Hualien county magistrate after losing the party nomination.86

But politicians often also desert parties when they judge that its future does not look bright, as was seen in the rapid implosion of the NP, a party which
many political observers only a few years before had considered as a force to be reckoned with. Prior to the 2004 presidential election, when the prospects for the DPP did not look good and opinion polls suggested that the DPP candidate was going to lose the election, the head of the party’s Banqiao branch announced his resignation from the party and his support for KMT candidate Lien Chan’s campaign. He was purportedly taking 250 DPP members with him.87 Chen Shui-bian’s senior adviser for international affairs, Lai Xingyuan, resigned from the administration and gained a non-district seat representing the TSU in the 2004 legislative election. Lai later took up the position as MAC chair after the KMT returned to power.

The PFP and the TSU followed a trajectory of party implosion similar to the NP’s. After the shock capture of 20.3 per cent of the legislative vote in its first election in December 2001, the PFP rapidly lost support in every election. By 2005, it already seemed to be going the way of the NP, its support crumbling almost as fast as it had emerged. In the 2005 local elections, two key PFP figures defected to the KMT before the elections. Ironically, many had switched from the KMT to the NP and then from the NP to the PFP. Some were now closing the circle by returning to the KMT they had left more than a decade before. The event that sealed the PFP’s fate may have been talk of a secret agreement on a quasi-alliance between the party’s leader Soong Chu-yu and the DPP in early 2005. Following this piece of news, several PFP politicians re-evaluated their position and sought to rejoin the KMT. Some had already joined prior to the next legislative election. The coup de grâce came when the PFP and KMT leaderships began negotiations on a party merger, while the PFP legislative caucus whip likened his party to ‘used toilet paper’. In September 2005, the leader of the PFP’s party caucus announced that she would return to the KMT.88 Within a year, 12 of the PFP’s 34 legislators and some city councillors had defected to the KMT. In January 2007, the KMT and PFP were again talking about formalizing a political alliance, making a virtue out of necessity for the PFP. This cooperation led to concrete measures in the next legislative election when the two parties jointly nominated several candidates. The deteriorating prospects of the PFP following its de facto leader Soong Chu-yu’s repeated election failures, coupled with an impending change in the election system with bigger election districts and legislative seats cut by half in the January 2008 legislative elections and the KMT’s introduction of a four-month party membership rule for politicians who seek party nomination in elections, led to a new string of PFP party defections that left the party with a marginal existence similar to the NP.
The TSU initially seemed to have a better chance at remaining a third force in Taiwanese party politics, as its support appeared to have stabilized around eight per cent and it had more of an ideological base. However, prior to the 2008 parliamentary election that would apply the new voting system and a five per cent threshold for parties, TSU politicians began to defect from the party in droves. The party’s unravelling commenced in October 2007, when it resolved to dismiss two of its legislators, who were allegedly maintaining too close relations with the DPP and had been uncooperative with the TSU. The situation worsened when another two TSU legislators criticized the party and talked about joining the DPP. The TSU expelled two of the legislators and revoked the party nominations in the upcoming election of the other two. As a consequence altogether five out of the TSU’s 12 incumbent legislators quit the party. Thus, within a few years three parties that not long before had commanded sizeable blocks of the electorate had imploded spectacularly. The 2008 election saw party switches in several directions as many legislators faced the imminent prospect of losing their seats or losing party nomination. Among the switching legislators were three TSU legislators, a KMT legislator and another KMT party member plus an independent city councillor, who all secured a DPP nomination. Meanwhile, ten PFP members joined the KMT and got KMT nominations as part of the election pact between the two parties, while KMT legislator Joanna Lei chose to run as a legislator-at-large candidate for the NP, after failing to secure KMT nomination. Lei’s move was clearly political suicide, as there was no prospect of her getting elected by running for the NP.

The political opportunism I observed in Taiwan takes at least four distinct forms. Firstly, there are the cases where a political leader cannot be accommodated within a party, usually as a consequence of a bitter competition for party leadership. In this case the leader may withdraw from the party to start a new one, as Soong Chu-yu did in 1999 and Lee Teng-hui somewhat later. The most dramatic case was Soong Chu-yu’s leaving the KMT, which resulted in many KMT politicians instantly following Soong to the newly-founded PFP party. Secondly, local factions may change loyalty in their entirety from one political party to another. Such shifts are usually based on political expediency and the expectation of political benefits. Earlier it was mentioned that several factions switched to supporting the DPP, while some of them later again distanced themselves from the DPP. Some local factions also switched to the PFP upon its founding, with the expectation that Soong would become the next president. Thirdly, individual politicians sometimes switch party, especially in the parliament, usually as a consequence of the availability of nominations, or party efforts at snatching...
appealing candidates from other parties. When such politicians have a loyal following, they sometimes take their whole support network with them. Some politicians also withdraw from the party to run independent campaigns when they do not get party nomination. Finally, grassroots politicians tend to have a very instrumental relationship to the party. While they seldom actually switch party, they often flow in and out of party affiliation in elections, depending on whether they perceive party affiliation as having benefits.

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The change of governing party ushered in a high level of opportunism within the political elite, in party structures, in the military and even in grassroots politics. Comparatively, the government bureaucracy was the most stable element, protected by civil servant privileges that were relatively intact, even as there were pay freezes and old loyalty and patronage ties at the top of the structure were cut. The changes were most prominent in party structures that became the focus of intense manoeuvrings and horse-trading, as parties struggled to attract and maintain key politicians, many of whom were ready to change party to better their personal position.

These myriad signs of political opportunism are important for politicization due to the titanic struggle over control of the political system, and, by implication, political patronage, that ensued. The key prize looming in the background was control of the parliament. After the first parliamentary election following the change of governing party, the political balance between the main political blocks was a close call. A slight shift in the balance, through elections, party defections or party realignments, would have handed the DPP control of the parliament for the first time, enabling it to pursue a number of reforms and allowing it to dismantle the KMT’s patronage structures, as well as to pursue more aggressive changes to national symbols.

Intuitively, it would seem that politicization and opportunism do not spring from the same kinds of political structures, since the former seemingly implies a powerful conviction of the rightness of one’s political cause, while the latter seems to indicate a lack of such conviction. Despite this, politicization and opportunism need not necessarily contradict each other. Political opportunism among Taiwanese politicians was pervasive within the broad ideological green and blue coalitions and between party and independent candidacy in elections, while movements between two parties across the major political cleavage have been far fewer, underlining the sharp partisan bifurcation. Politicization in Taiwan overwhelmingly occurs around the dominant political cleavage, but
opportunism is far more common on each side of the divide. The opportunistic attitude towards party affiliation exhibited by many Taiwanese politicians is then restrained by their broad political outlook, being either for or against the old ruling party. This turned out to be one of the biggest stumbling blocks for the DPP to build a majority coalition. The high level of opportunism continued throughout the period, although after 2004 the pendulum again swung in the other direction. The KMT was able to manoeuvre so that it retained control of the parliament throughout the eight-year DPP rule, eventually also snatching back the presidency in 2008.

NOTES


3 In the spring of 2000, I bought a newly published book by a research unit of the KMT-formed Executive Yuan. A sentence from the book captures the Zeitgeist on the island well: ‘Change is necessary, of this the government and many ordinary people are firmly convinced.’ The book hit the shelves exactly one month before the presidential election in which the KMT lost power for the first time. Wei Qilin et al. (2000) 政府再造運動 [The government restructuring movement]. Taichung: Morningstar Publishing, 221.

4 Author’s interview in Taipei, March 2000.

5 Even the DPP-leaning Taipei Times felt compelled to ask in an editorial what achievements the Chen administration had to show for its first period in power? ‘Editorial: The only choice to make,’ Taipei Times 7 July 2003, p. 8.

6 Calculated from data provided by the R.O.C. Central Election Commission election database.

7 Wang, ‘The political consequences of the electoral system,’ 90–95.

8 Author’s interview in Taipei, May 2005.
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12 Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 115; Hsiao, ‘Emerging social movements and the rise of a demanding civil society in Taiwan.’

13 Author’s interviews in Tainan, February-April 2004.

14 Weller, *Alternate Civilities*, 76–77. According to news reports, there are 37,000 Lions Club members, close to 17,700 Rotary members and 7,200 JCI members in Taiwan. Huang, Sandy, ‘It’s all in the name for “Taiwan”,’ *Taipei Times* 15 July 2002, p. 3; ‘Chen says everyone should stand up for Taiwan’s profile,’ *Taipei Times* 18 July 2003, p. 3; ‘Chen honors Rotary centennial,’ *Taipei Times* 15 April 2005, p. 2.

15 E.g., ‘Chen says everyone should stand up for Taiwan’s profile,’ *Taipei Times* 18 July 2003, p. 3; Shih Hsiu-chuan, ‘Chen urges Lions to drop the “China”,’ *Taipei Times* 26 January 2006, p. 3.


17 In addition to dozens of commercial banks, there are more than 300 credit cooperatives in Taiwan.

18 See Fields 2002 for a thorough discussion.

19 Hong, Caroline, ‘KMT to dismiss around 1,100 employees,’ *Taipei Times* 3 March 2005, p. 2.

20 Lin, ‘Transition through transaction,’ 151.

21 Lerman, ‘National elite and local politician in Taiwan.’


24 Li Hongxi is a famous legal scholar active in the early opposition movement. He was also the convener of the task group on the new constitution enacted in 2008. Li Hongxi’s son is likewise a legal scholar now also active in politics.

Power Transition and the Inherited Power Structure


28 The Frank Hsieh cabinet in office, for example, had no less than 24 ministers with doctoral degrees (55 per cent of all). Almost all of these have also been university professors for part of their careers.

29 Other scholars not on the list but who have also held important political or government posts include Peng Mingmin (DPP) and Lai Yizhong (DPP).


31 Author’s observation of a political scientist’s career since 1998.


33 Grzymała-Busse, ‘Political competition and the politicization of the state in East Central Europe,’ 1125–1126.


35 Huang Chen-ling, ‘KMT members fume over turncoats joining Cabinet,’ Taipei Times 2 May 2000, p. 3.

36 Author’s interview in Taipei, August 2002.

37 Lin Chieh-yu, ‘NSC chief to remain at his post,’ Taipei Times 8 April 2000, p. 3; Jou Ying-cheng, Irene Lin and Catherine Sung, ‘Three more named to Chen’s Cabinet,’ Taipei Times 13 April 2000, p. 1.


39 See Fenby, Generalissimo, 75–98, 145–162 and 175–192, for an account of how the KMT first cooperated with the communists and then rid themselves of them violently in the course of establishing their rule over China.

40 Author’s interviews in Taipei, August 2002.


42 Dickson, ‘The adaptability of Leninist parties,’ 282, for changes in the shares of civil servants, party cadres and teachers among KMT members.
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43 At least 30 ministries/commissions have politically appointed deputies. ‘Yu reveals partial list of cabinet’s new appointees,’ *Taipei Times* 1 February 2002, p. 3; ‘Editorial: Building an effective government,’ *Taipei Times* 22 March 2001, p. 8; and ‘Editorial: Big is not always beautiful,’ *Taipei Times* 16 July 2002, p. 8.


45 Low, Stephanie, ‘Civil service faces major shake-up,’ *Taipei Times* 23 March 2001, p. 3.


47 Author’s interviews in Taipei, June 2005.

48 Grzymała-Busse, ‘Political competition and the politicization of the state in East Central Europe’; see also Mattlin, ‘Political transition and structural politicisation,’ 76.


50 Bosco, ‘Faction versus ideology,’ 32.

51 As Shelley Rigger noted in 2001, there is great uncertainty surrounding the stability of the local networks’ loyalty to the KMT. Rigger, ‘The Democratic Progressive Party in 2000,’ 949.


53 Author’s interview in Tainan, June 2002.

54 Author’s interviews in Tainan, June-July 2002. See also Chang Yun-ping, ‘Questions hang over wardens’ role in society,’ *Taipei Times* 5 January 2003, p. 2.

55 Many early studies of Taiwanese local politics focused on the Provincial Assembly.

56 Author’s interviews in Tainan, June 2002 and March-April 2004. See also Bosco, ‘Faction versus ideology,’ 32.


58 *DPP party statutes regarding elections* [黨職人員選舉辦法]. Available at: <http://www.dpp.org.tw> (accessed 18 February 2008).

59 Mattlin, ‘Political transition and structural politicisation,’ 80.

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61 Author’s interviews in Tainan, February-March 2004.
62 Author’s interviews in Tainan, March-April 2004.
63 For the accurate data, see Mattlin, ‘Party opportunism among local politicians after Taiwan’s power transition,’ 75.
64 Prior to the establishment of the first opposition party in 1986, independent candidates and candidates for the two officially sanctioned parties besides the KMT, the Youth Party and the Chinese Democratic Socialist Party, usually held 15–24 per cent of seats for example in the Provincial Assembly and in County Councils. Zhao Yongmao (1997) 中央與地方權限劃分的理論與實際. 兼論台灣地方政府的變革方向 [Theory and practice in the division of powers between central and local government. Including the direction of reforms of Taiwan’s local government]. Taipei: Hanlu tushu publishing, 203.
66 See DPP party statutes regarding elections (in Chinese), par. 2 and 4.
68 Chang earlier held several high-ranking posts, e.g., as Interior Minister in KMT governments.
69 Mattlin, ‘Party opportunism among local politicians after Taiwan’s power transition’; Mattlin, ‘Nested pyramid structures.’ Tan et al. have argued that the share of ‘independent’ voters, i.e. voters without a strong party attachment, is significant in Taiwan. Tan, Alexander C. et al. (2000) ‘What if we don’t party? Political partisanship in Taiwan and Korea in the 1990s,’ Journal of Asian and African Studies 35 (1): 67–84.
71 Tsai Ting-I, ‘Ministry of the Interior agrees township governments should be abolished for good,’ Taipei Times 11 May 2002, p. 3.
73 The National Chengchi University, or ‘political university’, was the KMT party’s university.
76 Huang, Joyce, ‘KMT membership drive wraps up after five months,’ Taipei Times 30 January 2001, p. 3.
77 Author’s interviews in Tainan and Taipei.


79 Author’s interviews in Taipei.

80 Information obtained on 7 February, 2006 from the KMT party headquarters via a KMT legislator’s aide.

81 In an interview, a legendary election campaign organizer claimed that most of the TSU people were Lee loyalists among local factions. Author’s interview, August 2005.

82 In higher elections, the KMT has often expelled party members who decided to run as independents against party-nominated candidates, most notably Soong Chu-yu, see e.g. Huang, Sandy, ‘KMT to expel renegade candidate in by-election.’ *Taipei Times* 16 July 2003, p. 1.

83 DPP party statutes regarding elections (in Chinese), par. 1.

84 Jacobs, Bruce, ‘Election analysis is off the mark,’ *Taipei Times* 28 January 2002, p. 3.

85 Some politicians have migrated between several parties. For example, Zhu Gaozheng went from the KMT through the DPP and the small Socialist Party back to the DPP. Qianlin Huijin went from the DPP through the Taiwan Independence Party to the TSU and Xu Xinliang from the KMT through the DPP chairmanship to being an independent politician.


88 Ko Shu-ling, ‘Soong chastises some PFP members,’ *Taipei Times* 15 December 2005, p. 3; Mo Yan-chih, ‘Ma denies knowledge of PFP member’s defection,’ *Taipei Times* 7 September 2005, p. 3.


90 An early study concluded that politicization seemed to be related to low party attachment and the frequent occurrence of so-called flash parties, a phenomenon in turn associated with political turbulence. Perceived higher politicization in post-war France than in the United States turned out to have more to do with a political culture permeated by the boisterous grandstanding of politicians and frequent political realignments in party politics than with a greater engagement of ordinary citizens in politics. Converse and Dupeux, ‘Politicization of the electorate in France and the United States,’ 15, 22–23.
Chapter 4

Four cases of politicization

While this book argues that Taiwan’s politicization is largely structural in nature, this politicization has also been exacerbated by several political events. This chapter looks into Taiwan’s politicization through four descriptive cases that highlight areas where politicization has been particularly pronounced. The first section deals with the political crisis surrounding the politically motivated stoppage of construction at the fourth nuclear power plant in 2000, an event that greatly soured relations between the DPP and the KMT. The second section discusses the intense politicization of the legislature throughout Chen’s presidency. The third section explores the cross-Strait situation and in particular the contentious symbolic issues surrounding the China/Taiwan complex, over which political disputes regularly erupt. Finally, the fourth section looks into the practice adopted by Taiwanese political parties (in particular the DPP) of arranging highly partisan referenda in conjunction with elections, a practice that has led to election campaigning being launched long before the actual election as a highly politicized struggle over referendum procedures.

FIRST BLOOD: THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT DISPUTE

The symbolic colour of the DPP was always green. There are also some aspects of the party’s agenda, especially in its early days, that resemble green parties in Europe, although the DPP always had a broader agenda than just a narrow focus on environmental issues. In the context of a general protest against the old regime and its policies, the DPP also adopted environmental and social issues into its agenda. However, they were always below the more important goals of democratization and identification with Taiwan, as well as the pursuit of formal or de facto independence for the island.
Environmental protests, usually against local industrial pollution, had constituted an important component of the early surge in protests just prior to and after the onset of political liberalization. In the mid-1980s, environmental protests were the second most common type of public protest, after protests related to economic issues. Chu Yun-han counted 383 environmental protests between 1983 and 1987. Only the last year in this period saw more political protests than environmental ones. The DPP, in its early capacity as a channel for the crystallization of discontent against l’ancien régime, naturally embraced this sentiment. The DPP party charter also encompassed environmental issues, the most symbolic being the nuclear power plant issue. The party charter clearly stated that the party was against the building of new nuclear power plants on the island and for closing existing plants. There was always a section of the party that considered this issue a crucial one, although there were also those for whom it was, at most, of secondary importance.

The nuclear power plant issue is an emotional one in Taiwan, not only due to environmental concerns but also because in the eyes of many native Taiwanese especially it symbolizes the old one-party state way of making big policy decisions: heavy-handedly, catering to business interests and oblivious of local residents’ concerns. For example, Taiwan’s previous nuclear power plants have been built just a stone’s throw from beaches of important natural and touristic value, Nanwan in southern Taiwan and Green Bay in northern Taiwan. The new plant is similarly being built near Yenliao Bay, which is one of the main fishing areas in northern Taiwan.

The nuclear power plant issue was the first major political crisis that confronted the DPP administration. The issue dominated the political agenda from the time the new administration took office and for the whole first year of government. It caused a prolonged political standoff in Taiwan’s domestic politics and resulted in major policy reversals. It also led to the resignation of the first DPP premier, as well as indirectly to a drive by the opposition to recall the president. Since this pattern was to be repeated over numerous other issues throughout Chen’s time as president, these events deserve our closer attention. Even before the first Chen government was inaugurated, the nuclear power plant issue was seen as likely to come to an early head, given that the new vice-president-elect, Anette Lu, had reassured DPP supporters on the eve of the election that the party stood firm in its long-term opposition to nuclear power and was poised to make good on those promises after the election victory. Lu was seconded by a key DPP figure, Chen Shui-bian’s former campaign manager Qiu Yiren, who less than a week after the election stated, ‘I can say very clearly that Chen will not build the new nuclear
planted. The president-elect himself had signed a petition around the same time to abolish nuclear power and the DPP chairman at the time, Lin Yixiong, had traditionally walked in the first row in an annual protest march against nuclear power.\(^5\)

This anti-nuclear stance implied the probability that Taiwan’s fourth nuclear power plant project would run into strong headwinds after the new government assumed office. Taipower, the state-owned energy company, had conceived of the plant in 1978 and construction had been launched by the previous KMT administration. At the time the DPP administration took over it had already been long under construction. According to newspaper reports, the project had already cost 1–2 billion US dollars and over one third of the construction had been completed. The issue was not made much easier by the fact that Chen Shui-bian had drafted a former KMT Defence Minister and mainlander, Tang Fei, as a compromise first premier, both in order to placate the most ardent supporters of the old regime and as a preventive measure to assure Beijing that the island was ready for the possibility of armed conflict. Because Chen’s election victory was somewhat of a surprise and the DPP was therefore ill prepared to govern, it initially had to make use of several KMT people when forming the first cabinet. However, the government was formed without proper party-to-party consultations. The KMT members of the new cabinet joined in an individual, non-partisan capacity.\(^6\) With a premier whose party had launched the power plant construction and naturally remained committed to seeing the project through, there was an in-built contradiction. Which position was the new premier to adhere to, his own party’s or the new governing party’s?

The DPP, for its part, was pressed on the issue of how partisan the new government would be. Many within the party rejoiced at finally getting the power they craved and thus the ability to push their agenda more effectively. However, the new government was also under intense public scrutiny from the beginning, not least by the newly minted opposition and non-sympathetic media. Would the DPP be able to make good on its promises of being different from its predecessor by not putting party interests ahead of national interests and truly representing the public will, which promises DPP officials were quick to stress in an effort to make a rhetorical distinction from the KMT. The first government was formed under the slogan ‘a government for all the people’ (quanmin zhengfu), denoting a government transcending party lines, as opposed to ‘a government led by the party’ (yi dang ling zheng). In order to stress this, the president-elect formally withdrew from direct involvement in party affairs after taking office.

However, in July 2002, Chen Shui-bian reneged on his promise not to be directly
involved in party affairs when he took over the party chairmanship in an effort to strengthen party-government coordination, which had been lacking in the first two years.

All these contradictions were epitomized in the nuclear power plant issue, where the party’s ideal of a non-nuclear Taiwan appeared to come into direct conflict with many more mundane public interest considerations, such as the future availability of energy, considerable indemnities for breach of contract, and a public which, according to opinion polls, was divided. The issue even endangered good relations with the United States, as a major part of the project was contracted to General Electric.

Both the new premier-designate and the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) were evidently concerned that the DPP was going to make good on its populist election pledges and stop construction of this expensive project. Officials from MOEA weighed in on the issue on several occasions even before it was officially on the agenda, warning that the new administration would have to pay a heavy political and economic price if it tried to stop the project. Premier-designate Tang Fei reportedly sought out Chen Shui-bian’s key advisers to consult on the issue shortly after his nomination as the new premier had been confirmed. On the other hand, the local government of Taipei county, where the new power plant was to be located (in Kungliao township) and which had opposed the project, felt encouraged by the advent of the new government. The county governor at the time was the DPP stalwart Su Zhenchang, who was later both premier, party chairman and general secretary of the Presidential Office. Even some KMT politicians from Taipei county were against the nuclear power plant construction.

After the 1997 constitutional revisions, the Legislative Yuan no longer had the right to amend policies implemented by the Executive Yuan once they had already been passed and the budgets had been approved in the Legislative Yuan. On the other hand, the government could not unilaterally overturn a decision by the Legislative Yuan (construction of the power plant) for which the budget had been approved, i.e., the new government could not stop construction at will by executive decree. If it had wanted to stop construction, it would have had to obtain approval from a majority of the Legislative Yuan’s legislators – a tall order given the KMT’s firm control of the legislature.

With 123 out of 225 seats of the Legislative Yuan, control of the parliament was a major ace for the KMT. In addition, on the nuclear plant issue, the KMT could count on the support of the newly formed PFP party. While it was not legally able to overrule the Executive Yuan, it could if need be use its parliamentary
muscle to easily pass a vote of no confidence in the premier, which required only 50 per cent of the total votes in parliament and a motion signed by more than one-third of legislators. On the other hand, with the constitutional amendments in effect at the time, that would most likely result in the president dissolving the parliament and calling for new elections, which the KMT were likely to lose, having just lost its position as the ruling party for the first time. Alternatively, the opposition could try to recall the president. The recall requirements stipulated by the constitution are stringent. Firstly, a recall requires that a motion by a quarter of the members of the Legislative Yuan be passed by a two-thirds majority of all the members of parliament and also by more than half of the valid ballots in a vote in which more than half of the whole electorate has participated. At the time, the DPP only had 65 seats in the Legislative Yuan. Theoretically, the DPP alone would then have been unable to stop a recall in parliament launched by a united opposition. The recall option was made more appealing by the fact that the opposition had lost the presidential election because they did not unify around one candidate. If they could recall the president, a new presidential election would have to be called, which a KMT-PFP alliance was very likely to win, given that their two candidates combined had received close to 60 per cent of the vote in the presidential election less than six months before.

Environmentalist pressure groups in Taiwan rejoiced at the prospect of DPP rule given the party’s earlier commitment to their anti-nuclear position. However, they were also with justification somewhat apprehensive of whether the DPP in power would have a different stance on the issue from the DPP in opposition. An annual anti-nuclear demonstration organized by a group called Taiwan’s Environmental Protection Alliance was scheduled only a week before Chen’s presidential inauguration on 20 May 2000. DPP legislators also began pressuring both Taipower, the company responsible for the construction of the plant, and the government, to stop construction. In early May, a non-binding motion was initiated in the Legislative Yuan and co-signed by 43 legislators from the DPP, but also from the KMT and the NP, calling for a halt to construction. Several of the sympathetic KMT and NP legislators had their constituencies close to the construction site. Another proposal with support from some DPP legislators and a few KMT legislators urged the Legislative Yuan to pass a long-stalled referendum law, so that the nuclear power plant issue could be resolved by a popular vote.

Given that there were no legal ways for the parliament to stop construction of the plant at such a late stage, anti-nuclear legislators, egged on by environmental activists, tried another tactic instead. Citing the outdated nature of a previous
environmental impact assessment on the plant, which had been conducted in 1991, and unilateral and unauthorized changes to the plan made by Taipower, the legislators’ argument was that a new and thorough assessment should be made and become a basis for deciding whether to continue with the project or not. The new head of MOEA, Lin Xinyi, almost immediately upon taking office ordered the setting up of the fourth nuclear power plant re-evaluation committee to comprehensively assess the project. Although he first seemed to adopt a moderate position on the issue following Chen’s election victory, Lin Yixiong, the DPP chairman known for his strong anti-nuclear sentiments, quickly reverted to a more hard-line stance. Lin stated that government ministers, including the new premier, who did not accept the new ruling party’s stance, enshrined in the party charter, that the nuclear power plant construction ought to be discontinued, should duly resign or be relieved of their duties. Lin put the same argument to members of the DPP-led cabinet should they advocate reunification with Mainland China, against the DPP party charter.11

Lin Yixiong also pressed the president to clarify the new government’s stance on the nuclear power plant issue. If the president-elect did not support the position adopted in the DPP party charter, the president-elect should explain the reasons for this to the people and the party charter would then possibly have to be amended. Lin pushed the government to organize a referendum on the issue. He was seconded by the new vice-premier, You Xikun, who also appeared to endorse Lin’s rigid position on party discipline that any cabinet member who was unable to agree with the president and the premier on policy issues should resign. Furthermore, both Lin and You seemed to indicate that the marching order was that of a presidential system: the job of cabinet members was to implement the agenda on which the president had campaigned in the elections; the premier’s powers ultimately derived from the president, and the premier should therefore be the president’s executive officer (zhixingzhang).12

The first political crisis of the new administration thus highlighted the problems inherent in the constitutional arrangements that were an unsatisfactory compromise between a presidential and a parliamentary system. The new premier Tang Fei was put into an uncomfortable position even before he took office. The DPP chairman was demanding that the government follow the DPP party charter, and that any cabinet member who did not implement policies consistent with the charter’s ideals should resign. The KMT immediately responded by saying that as the KMT was committed to constructing the fourth nuclear power plant, Tang Fei, as a party member, was obliged to follow suit or face disciplinary action from the party. The same would go for any other KMT member who joined
the DPP-dominated cabinet. The prospects for genuine coalition government in Taiwan were soured right from the start by this mutual unwillingness to set aside differences and work for a political compromise. Forcing cabinet members to uphold partisan positions erected ideological barriers to cooperation.

However, with the imminent prospect of actually having to put political ideals into practice, different voices quickly emerged within the DPP itself, with some favouring a referendum on the nuclear power plant issue, as the DPP had previously advocated, some opposing it on the grounds that given the current popular opinion, a referendum was bound to lose, and others arguing for a reconsideration of the whole inflexible anti-nuclear power stance itself. Both the president-elect and the new secretary general of the Presidential Office adopted moderate positions on the issue, trying to win time by saying that stopping construction on the plant was a complex issue that needed to first undergo a careful study of the economic consequences by MOEA prior to a decision. DPP party heavyweights, including even Lin Yixiong, were also conspicuously absent from the annual anti-nuclear march organized just before the presidential inauguration.

Only a few days after the presidential inauguration, Lin Yixiong announced that he would not seek a new term as party chairman. Instead, Lin announced that he would devote his time to the movement opposing the fourth nuclear power plant. This decision may be seen as symptomatic of what was to become a recurring pattern of DPP rule. While now in power, the ruling party continued also to ‘fight in the streets’ with political tactics more common to populist opposition parties. An intra-party debate on whether to work within the system (through parliament), or outside the system (through demonstrations and mass movements) had plagued the party from the start and had never been conclusively resolved. Initially, following the power transition, those favouring a continuation of the street tactics were perhaps not in the majority in the party leadership. However, the more opposition obstruction the DPP president and cabinets encountered, the more the party reverted to its old opposition tactics, to the point where the party at times completely embraced such tactics as political tools in pushing through its policy initiatives. Instead of undergoing the more common transformation from being an ‘idealistic’ opposition party to a ‘realistic’ governing party, the DPP tried to both have its cake and eat it.

In early June 2000, the DPP produced a document outlining the party’s official stance on the continued construction of the fourth nuclear power plant, arguing for the benefits of abandoning the plant. The document was given added weight by the fact that five of its co-authors were on the review committee set
up by MOEA to assess the project. The issue temporarily calmed down during
the summer, when the review committee met frequently. When it submitted
its report to MOEA, the divided committee recommended that construction
be terminated, despite an estimated immediate cost effect of several billion
euros. In a speech two days later, the president said that he would respect the
recommendation of the committee. By contrast, premier Tang Fei had earlier
stated that if the review committee recommended that construction be halted,
the cabinet would have its own experts review the project, reserving the right to
overturn the committee’s decision. According to the constitution, the project
could legally only be terminated after a motion initiated by the Executive Yuan
had been approved by the Legislative Yuan. Tang Fei, in an apparently desperate
attempt to evade responsibility for a decision his own party was strongly against,
urged the ruling party to propose it in the Legislative Yuan if they wanted to
halt the project, which of course was likely to fail given the DPP’s relatively
weak position in parliament at the time. Two days later, premier Tang Fei came
out unequivocally in favour of continuing construction of the nuclear power
plant, emphasising his stance by saying that he would resign if construction was
stopped.17

Despite warnings from several key government ministers about the
consequences, MOEA on 30 September decided not to support continuing
construction of the plant. MOEA’s decision was welcomed by the DPP and the
NP parliamentary caucuses, but criticized by both the KMT and the PFP. The
head of the DPP party caucus urged Tang Fei to resign, as he had indicated
he would do if plant construction were halted, if he did not agree with the
president’s stance on the issue. Tang Fei duly offered his resignation to the
president, who accepted it. Tang resigned on 3 October having served as the
shortest-term premier in Taiwanese history up until that time. Two weeks later,
the KMT decided to expel from the party the Economic Affairs Minister Lin
Xinyi, who, despite voicing concerns about stopping the nuclear project, had
eventually endorsed it. The party also decided to suspend the party membership
of Eugene Jao, the KMT legislator from Taipei county, who had opposed the
nuclear plant most vocally. The decision meant that Jao would be ineligible for
KMT nomination in the upcoming legislative election, while Lin could reapply
for membership after two years at the earliest.18

Lobbying efforts for accepting that stopping construction was the better
choice intensified. The DPP, the cabinet and local residents living near the sites
of nuclear plants were all looking for ways to persuade the public to back their
cause. Indeed, intense lobbying would be required in order to make the public
understand the new government’s stance, as even the DPP’s own opinion polls showed that a clear majority was against stopping construction of the power plant.19 On 27 October 2000, the government formally announced that its construction would be suspended. The opposition was furious at the timing of the announcement. The government’s decision had been announced, apparently without prior briefing of the opposition, less than an hour after a high-profile meeting between the president and the KMT leader Lien Chan had failed to find a basic agreement between the ruling party and the main opposition party.20

Opposition lawmakers had first threatened to stall the passing of the 2001 annual budget in retaliation if construction was stopped. Only a day after the decision had been passed, they upped the ante by threatening to launch a motion to recall the president and vice-president, or alternatively vote for a reshuffle of the cabinet. A recall petition was initiated by the legislator Ding Shouzhong (KMT), a former political science professor. In response to this, the Academia Sinica president, Li Yuanzhe, again took a very public political stance in support of the beleaguered president. In the previous chapter, it was noted that Li came out in support of Chen Shui-bian just a few days before the presidential election in 2000. Several angry demonstrations and scattered incidents of minor violence ensued. The biggest demonstrations on 12 November drew tens of thousands of participants to the Taipei and Kaohsiung streets in support of the effort to scrap the nuclear plant project.21

The recall option prompted the DPP in November 2000 to ask the Council of Grand Justices (CGJ, Taiwan’s supreme court), vested with the power to interpret the constitution, to rule on the constitutionality of the cabinet’s decision to halt construction, effectively putting the new premier Zhang Junxiong (DPP) in the line of fire in lieu of the president. Given that there were widely different political interpretations of whether the new government’s actions in the nuclear power plant controversy were consistent with the letter and spirit of the constitution, the CGJ, decided to review the issue. After two months of deliberation, the CGJ gave its interpretation. However, instead of producing a clear-cut ruling on the constitutionality of the cabinet’s decision, the CGJ criticized both the cabinet’s and the parliament’s handling of the issue, urging the cabinet to deliver a report on its decision to the legislature and criticising opposition legislators for boycotting an attempt by premier Zhang to report to the legislature. Effectively, the CGJ only addressed procedural errors rather than the larger issue of the decision’s constitutionality. This judicial inconclusiveness returned the issue to the political arena with both sides claiming that the CGJ had shown their position to be right. Tentative party-to-party negotiations to settle the issue quickly broke
down over the issue of whether the construction stoppage should be put to a vote in the legislature. Opposition legislators pressed on with their decision to vote on the matter. In a 135-to-70 vote the opposition-dominated legislature passed a resolution calling for the immediate resumption of construction.22

In the face of this vote and criticism from both the CGJ and the Control Yuan on procedural flaws, the cabinet backed off and decided to resume construction on the plant. However, in announcing the decision, the premier simultaneously resolved to make the passage of a referendum law the government’s top priority, in order to enable resolution of political disputes in the future by directly asking the public’s opinion. In the high summer of 2001, Lin Yixiong renewed his call for a referendum on the nuclear plant issue, adding that anyone who was opposed to a referendum was unsuitable for public office. The government pondered whether to hold a consultative referendum in conjunction with the December 2001 legislative and mayoral elections but eventually decided against it, citing poor macroeconomic circumstances.23

The nuclear power plant issue, although only the first in a long line of large and small crises, showed the kind of difficulty the DPP administration would continuously run into in policy-making. An old adage claims that good revolutionaries don’t necessarily make good governors. The DPP in many ways has been a force pushing for a small revolution, the overthrow of the one-party system and all its vestiges. Over the years, the party developed into a highly effective election machine by making maximum use of street campaigning, mass rallies and demonstrations. The style was often populist, as politicians had discovered long before political liberalization that populism appealed to Taiwanese voters.24 On the particular issue of the nuclear power plant, Chen Shui-bian had, for example, sworn to the Mazu goddess that he would halt construction of the plant, when visiting the Jenho temple (Ren he gong) in Kungliao, the site of the plant construction in the summer of 1999.25

The predictable danger with populism is that it is often much easier to talk revolution from the podium than to actually implement it when in office, as populist politicians from Jörg Haider to Junichiro Koizumi have discovered. The same trouble befell the DPP government. In the case of the fourth nuclear power plant, the party chairman Lin Yixiong acted the role of the party’s conscience, in the process making life difficult for the more pragmatic people in the cabinet. Lin could not easily be ignored by anyone within the DPP. Beside his formal position within the party, he has a strong informal moral leadership position. To many of those who supported the opposition movement in Taiwan, he is a hero because of his uncompromising attitude in politics and his personal suffering at
the hands of the previous regime. Lin’s mother and twin daughters were killed in 1980, probably by security personnel, on the politically sensitive date of 28 February.26

Given Lin’s stature among the party’s core supporters, Chen Shui-bian unsurprisingly often tried to use Lin at critical moments as his support was seen as crucial.27 For example, prior to the extremely hard-fought presidential election in 2004, the DPP tried to get Lin openly to show his support for Chen. Lin eventually came out in support of Chen’s re-election, but only just prior to the election. For the task-oriented National Assembly elected in 2005 for the first time only through party lists, and with the sole purpose of debating and ratifying the proposed new constitutional amendments, Chen apparently again tried to enlist the support of Lin, by asking him to be the first name on the DPP’s party list. However, this time Lin declined the honour.28

The political crisis over the fourth nuclear plant manifested a number of themes that were to recur throughout Chen’s time in power. Firstly, the DPP had continuous difficulty in adjusting to the role of ruling party with all the responsibilities that that entails, including relinquishing the continued use of the ‘street’ as a political tool, while the long-time ruling party, the KMT, had equal trouble in adjusting to its role in the opposition. In the nuclear plant dispute, the DPP flirted with the idea of resorting to a referendum as a convenient political tool, an idea that later came to dominate both the 2004 and the 2008 presidential elections. But first and foremost the dispute showed the extent to which politicians in Taiwan are ready to push politicization in order achieve their political aims. The nuclear plant issue was integral to driving a deep wedge between the new and the old ruling party, but also to pushing the KMT and the PFP to cooperate despite their differences. In a sense it set the tone for the entire period of DPP rule, during which conflict was to dominate over cooperation, and the threshold for issues to become intensely politicized was pushed lower. Confrontational politics became the norm for interaction between parties and individual politicians alike.

LEGISLATIVE BATTLES

The DPP came to power determined to dismantle the political system built by the KMT, a system that had extended the reach of the party-state deep into the fabric of society. On the list of favourite targets of the DPP were the KMT’s considerable remaining party assets, its continuing heavy ownership presence in the media, the party’s cosy relations with the military (which could be used for
electoral mobilization), and local politics ridden with factions and vote buying. The DPP set out to sever from the KMT all these politically useful assets that had facilitated the KMT’s continued political dominance far beyond political liberalization. However, the DPP-led government was severely hampered in its efforts by its lack of a majority in the legislature. Nevertheless, after the DPP took over the presidency, the legislature evolved into one of the main political battlegrounds, given that many political reforms required the passage of new laws or the amendment of old ones. The parliament has been one of the main backdrops for Taiwan’s intense politicization as, literally, blood, sweat and tears have been expended in a clash of wills over its control and the command of the political system more generally.

As was seen in Figure 3.1., the pan-blue legislative majority progressively narrowed between the 1996 and the 2004 legislative elections, allowing the DPP to occasionally build majority coalitions by allying with the TSU and co-opting independents and some pan-blue legislators. Following several incidents of KMT legislators being co-opted by the DPP government into casting votes in favour of government bills in 2002, the KMT moved to enforce party discipline. The party expelled or suspended the membership of legislators, councillors and other party members who had voted against the party caucuses’ wishes on key bills, supported non-KMT candidates in an election, or run maverick election campaigns after losing party nomination. Apart from expelling and suspending members, other measures are also used by the political parties to ensure compliance, which partly explains the remarkably high rate of party discipline shown for example in roll call votes, where legislators’ voting positions are noted for the record. An official at the Legislative Yuan indicated that parties also ensure legislator compliance with the party line through their control of resources.29

The vice director of the DPP’s secretary general’s office explained to me how party discipline is enforced in his party. There is an internal party discussion before voting on how the party should vote. Some votes are regarded as more important than others. The former are referred to as *jiaji dongyuan* and the latter as *yiji dongyuan*. With the jiaji votes, legislators are required to vote in a unified manner. If they do not, the party will fine them. A wrong vote usually costs NT$10,000, but there is a cap on the total sum, with a maximum of NT$100,000 per day. With very important votes, the party will expel its legislators for the wrong vote. The DPP vice director interviewed gave two examples. In the 2005 National Assembly vote on the constitution it was made clear that any DPP representative voting against the party’s position would be expelled from the party (other parties adopted similar rules). Another example
mentioned was a parliamentary vote for the vice speaker of the parliament, which the DPP candidate eventually lost by one vote because a fellow party member did not vote for him. The member was later expelled from the party.30

However, high internal party discipline is not enough if one is locked in a permanent minority position, as the DPP has been. After the year-end 2004 elections, it looked as if the pan-blue alliance for the first time would lose their absolute majority in parliament. Several incumbent KMT and PFP legislators withdrew from their seats mid-term, part of them because of taking part in the mayoral elections in late 2005 and winning office. Taiwan’s laws require that legislators’ seats be vacated when another office is taken. However, several DPP legislators also withdrew from their seats mid-term, for various reasons. The pan-blues then dominated the legislative setting throughout the entire period of successive DPP cabinets, with major consequences for the governing party’s ability to push through new legislation.

Despite the DPP government’s lack of a parliamentary majority, its drive to reform the political system did subtly undercut the old KMT system in some ways. Getting effective control of government agencies was one of the first priorities of the new government, and there it succeeded reasonably well. The government also pushed through a new law that forbids political parties or the government owning, funding or assuming key positions in media outlets. Another of the early emphases was to go after election-related corruption and vote buying. This did not demand new legislation as much as tougher enforcement of existing rules. Given that vote buying and the local factions deeply involved in it were initially mostly linked to the KMT, there was an obvious degree of self-interest for the new ruling party. Vote buying was targeted among other means by cutting off easy bank credit for candidates in elections, which was previously often not repaid by politicians, and by an energetic campaign against vote buying by the Justice Ministry under Chen Dingnan’s term as minister, which rewarded vote buying informers handsomely. While it is almost impossible to prove, newspaper reports and anecdotal accounts heard during fieldwork suggest that these efforts met with some initial success.31 Many people involved in election campaign work in 2001 noted that vote buying, while still occurring, had to be done in more circumspect and discreet ways, and that less money was involved, although a brief recession at the time may have been a contributing factor.

In 2001–2002, the Justice Ministry also tried to institute much tighter controls on the money flows of credit cooperatives linked to farmers and fishermen’s associations. Given that local credit cooperatives had often been the source of money used for buying votes in local elections, this would have reduced the
money available. The ministry forced the closure of dozens of poorly performing credit cooperatives. However, more sweeping reforms that had already been announced were suspended after strong resistance by farmers and the KMT using the issue as a stick with which to lash out at the government.

One offshoot of the general battle for control of the political system concerns the allocation of resources. Political incumbency in Taiwan has a great effect on the resources available to be channelled (legitimately or otherwise) to supporters. At the grassroots level, borough wardens supporting the ruling party customarily take a cut of the money channelled down to them to implement local projects. Local politicians often have intimate relationships with construction companies that enable them to reap personal benefits in exchange for speeding up the administrative process of building projects, a practice that is referred to as bao gongcheng. If the mayor is from their own party, councillors’ initiatives are pushed through the administration more quickly. According to one DPP city councillor, the local budget is one of the few issues on which the party votes as a block. Many politicians act as ‘consultants’ for companies, which involves promoting specific projects in exchange for ‘consulting fees’. Legislators are also known to often pocket a major part of the general expenses provided to them, for example, for employing assistants.

Finally, several top politicians and their family members have been punished for corruption, embezzlement or misusing their expense accounts. Former President Chen Shui-bian and his wife received life sentences in September 2009 for embezzlement and graft, while the current President Ma Ying-jeou in April 2008 was cleared of charges of misusing mayoral special allowance funds. The DPP party chairman You Xikun was indicted, while in October 2007 former party chairman Zhang Junhong was convicted to 11 years imprisonment for embezzlement of funds from an investment company set up to fund FTV, the first pro-DPP television channel. The president’s son-in-law and the son-in-law’s father were handed long prison sentences in December 2006 for insider trading. One KMT party cadre referred to Taiwanese politicians with the expression ‘yi ge xiaotou, yi ge qiangdao, yi ge wangyang dadao’, suggesting that they only differ with regard to the size of their ‘crookedness’; from small fry to medium-sized fish to big predators. The alleged fundamental corruption of the other political side is one of the most easily politicized issues, with mutual recriminations and defamation lawsuits almost monthly spectacles. This is a prominent theme also in many mass protests, such as the one organized by Shih Ming-teh in late 2006.

Even entire cities or counties have in the past benefited if the government is led by the same party as the city mayor or county magistrate. The multitude
of ways that political incumbency proffers material benefits and the KMT’s continuing strong hold on local governments, especially at the township level, had created a tremendous weight of vested interests that were threatened by the DPP’s taking over the government. An early DPP government plan to cut the budget allocation ratio for Taipei and Kaohsiung while increasing the share for other counties and cities, over which the DPP at the time had a strong hold, prompted the then Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jeou to draft amendments to the financial allocation law, which were pushed by KMT legislators just before the party’s absolute legislative majority ended and a new legislative session convened in 2002. The ‘Ma amendments’ would have increased central government redistribution of tax revenue to local governments and guaranteed a fixed percentage allocation for Taipei – a pan-blue stronghold. The amendments were overturned. The DPP-led government instead proposed its own amendments, which would have made tax redistribution to townships and villages (KMT strongholds) subject to county governments, where the DPP is stronger, but these also failed to pass. The township level – financially dependent on redistributed tax revenue – benefited when the KMT was still in power. Not surprisingly, local KMT township executives in DPP-controlled counties began complaining about politically motivated discrimination. Part of central government funding to townships is channelled through county governments.36

Initially, the DPP-led cabinet only commanded 65 out of 225 seats in the legislature. In the December 2001 legislative election, the disparity between the pan-greens and the pan-blues was greatly reduced. This second election shock to the KMT had immediate legislative repercussions. Not respecting any lame duck conventions, legislators passed an unprecedented number of legislative acts – 199 in 15 weeks – in the last session of the fourth legislature (IV-6 in Figure 4.1, overleaf), just before the political strength of the two alliances was to even out in the Legislative Yuan. Outgoing legislators were apparently in a hurry to pass many favoured pieces of legislation. Not to be outdone, the new legislature started by passing almost as many bills in its first session (V-1). The more evenly balanced legislature also saw a boost in repealed legislation. While there were only seven such acts in the third legislature (1996–1999), as many as 66 acts were repealed during the fifth (2001–2004), most of them during the first year.37

The sixth legislature was marred from the outset by bad relations between the governing party and opposition following the viciously fought and narrowly decided 2004 presidential election. Legislative work was continuously disrupted by various obstructionist measures launched by the opposition, as well as by counter-measures by DPP lawmakers. As a consequence, many key laws failed to
pass. In the four-month legislative session that ended in January 2007, only 39 legal acts were passed, despite the session having been extended by three weeks.38

The DPP-led government’s enthusiasm to get rid of the vestiges of the old political system was matched in intensity by the pan-blue fervour in defending it. This naturally applied to KMT legislators, but the KMT also found willing collaborators on many pieces of legislation in the PFP and the remnants of the NP. For any reforms that required passing new laws, the pan-blues had a major advantage given their continuous control of the legislature. Consequently, the DPP government’s efforts to get at the KMT’s party assets were frustrated time and again. The governing party tried to push through several bills that either directly or indirectly attacked these assets, many of which had been appropriated by the old regime by semi-legal and allegedly also illegal means during the authoritarian era and transferred to the party. Both a statute directly targeting KMT assets,39 and a more general political party law, were blocked by the pan-blue alliance in the legislature. However, the pan-blues finally allowed a political donation law to pass on the eve of the presidential election in 2004, after some contentious parts of it were dropped. It would not seem far-fetched to assume that election considerations were involved. The KMT’s strategy in dealing with the issue appeared to be to block or stall new legislation that would give the government

Figure 4.1. Legislative bills passed in each legislative session, 3rd to 6th legislatures (1996–2008)

Source: R.O.C. Legislative Yuan, Office of procedures.
Notes: Chen Shui-bian was inaugurated as president in the middle of IV-3. The power balance in the legislature between the pan-blue and pan-green camps shifted, starting from V-1.
stronger legal means to deal with the matter, while gradually divesting itself of its assets as generous pension packages, sales to preferred buyers, etc.

It should be emphasized that in terms of practical policy-making, the differences between the main parties are not that great. In fact, a formerly very influential KMT politician told me that there are few major policy differences between the main Taiwanese parties. According to a Legislative Yuan official who was interviewed by me many legal acts pass quite smoothly through the parliament. However, those issues that directly affect party interests or strong vested interests within a party, such as the party assets or the referendum law, become very contentious. In his view, the political line of division does not run between a pair of parties, rather it was almost consistently between the pan-blue and the pan-green camps during Chen’s presidency.40

If relations between the government and the pan-blue opposition had not been very good before, they soured even more after the bitterly fought presidential election in 2004, which the opposition accused the DPP of ‘stealing’ by allegedly staging a shooting of the president and vice-president on the eve of the election. This election marked an important milestone. After it, all pretence to cooperation across the political cleavage was dropped. During the second Chen term, the pan-blues engaged in an all-out political war to block most major government initiatives and to bring down Chen, one way or another. The period between the run-up to the 2004 election and the 2006 effort to recall the president can be regarded as the high point of Taiwan’s politicization. The partisan bifurcation hardened to an unbridgeable division. Confrontational politics and mass participation in political action reached new highs. The expansion of the political in Taiwanese society had reached its zenith.

The bad relations severely impacted on lawmaking, with the opposition retaliating against the government’s alleged trickery by refusing to endorse a number of legal bills and repeatedly resorting to various obstructive tactics, which resulted in severe political gridlock.41 The legislature became hyper-politicized and ordinary policy-making all but ground to a halt. Any attempt by the opposing side to introduce any bill of significance was instantly blocked. Unrelated bills were shamelessly coupled together and the passage of one side’s favourite bill was often made a prerequisite for the passage of the other side’s bill. As many of the proposed bills furthermore were unambiguously partisan in nature, even to the point of being direct attacks on the other side’s political strengths, a politicized legislature got mired ever deeper in a stalemate, with more grandstanding than legislating. Not only were bills not passed, they were often not even allowed to be debated by the plenary session. And as if that was not
enough, at times legislators resorted to physically blocking entry to the plenum. In some cases, such as with the party assets bill or an arms procurement bill, the pan-blues used their legislative majority in the procedural committee to prevent the drafts from even reaching the preliminary stages of the legislative process.\textsuperscript{42}

The bitterly fought national budget for 2005 was a harbinger of things to come.\textsuperscript{43} The pan-blue camp began a prolonged campaign of what could be described as political blackmail, using the national budget as a political weapon. Specifically targeting government institutions with which they were most displeased, the opposition used their legislative power to cut the expenditure of the Mainland Affairs Council, the Government Information Office, the National Security Council and various special committees and programs of the Presidential Office. A cut of NT$2 million in the Ministry of Civil Services' overseas inspection fees and NT$1 million in Examination Yuan president Yao Jiawen's special expenses was also proposed, in apparent retaliation for the Examination Yuan's approval of a plan to reform the 18 per cent preferential interest rate applied to the pension accounts of civil servants, teachers and military personnel.\textsuperscript{44} In addition to the budget cuts, opposition legislators froze three-quarters of the GIO budget, two-thirds of the NSC budget and more than half of the MAC budget, demanding that the government agree to various conditions before they would unfreeze the funds. According to media reports, more than 14 per cent of the national budget for 2006 was frozen through these measures.

Some of the biggest political battles have been waged over three politically appointed organs, the Control Yuan, the Central Election Commission and the National Communications Commission. The Control Yuan is a peculiarity of the R.O.C. five-branch system of government. Its political importance derives from its power to monitor the conduct of the government and discipline civil servants. According to the constitution, the president nominates and appoints Control Yuan members, but these need to be ratified by the legislature. President Chen presented a list of nominees at the beginning of 2005. However, the list was instantly rejected in its entirety by the pan-blue caucuses, who disapproved in particular of the nominations for chair and vice chair. The opposition also rejected the president's nominee to the position of Taiwan's highest prosecutor, thus preventing the president from nominating the Control Yuan members. The Control Yuan all but ceased to function after 31 January 2005.

President Chen finally indicated in late 2006 that he was willing to consider nominating a new slate of Control Yuan members. He then asked the parties to submit suggestions for nominees, but the pan-blue parties neglected to respond. No solution to the conflict could be found as the opposition simply refused to
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review the president’s nominees. Tens of thousands of petitions to the Control Yuan piled up as a consequence of the dispute. The DPP asked for an opinion on the matter by the Council of Grand Justices (Taiwan’s supreme court), which ruled in August 2007 that the legislature’s refusal to review the matter was unconstitutional. The pan-blues instantly rejected the ruling.

The next viciously fought nomination was the composition of the NCC – a newly established organ that supervises the telecommunications and broadcast industries, taking over some of the responsibilities hitherto held by the Government Information Office. The dispute occurred against a backdrop of the GIO having rejected the applications to renew operating licenses for seven TV stations, including a major news channel, putting several other channels on probation, and then demanding that the TVBS channel, popular among pan-blue supporters, change its ownership structure. These moves drew widespread criticism from the opposition parties. After a year of political wrangling, the opposition-dominated legislature passed the Organic law of the national communications commission, which, among other things, stipulates nomination procedures for NCC members. These procedures were set to benefit the pan-blue opposition, as the NCC composition would largely reflect parliamentary strengths. In a counter-proposal by the Executive Yuan that failed to pass, NCC members would have been nominated by the Executive Yuan and appointed by the president.

Believing that the NCC law violated the constitution, the cabinet asked the CGJ to review its constitutionality. On 21 July 2006, the grand justices ruled that the law, and thus the nominations, were unconstitutional. Following this ruling, the responsible minister urged NCC members to resign. In retaliation, the KMT’s legislative caucus condemned the minister, Xu Zhixiong, declared him persona non grata in the legislature and considered retaliating by abolishing the entire GIO.

More recently, the Central Election Commission also became the subject of intense political wrangling. The CEC occupies a key role in the Taiwanese power struggle, given how much this struggle revolves around elections. In addition, the CEC also makes rulings on referenda, which have gained in importance since 2003. The CEC is not universally trusted as an impartial arbiter, given its political composition. At the time, it was firmly controlled by the pan-green parties. A KMT bill introduced in mid-2006 that would effectively have given the pan-blues control of the CEC was fiercely resisted by the DPP, its legislators blockading the plenum, and preventing lawmakers from entering the plenary floor. In retaliation for DPP obstruction of the motion, the KMT in turn
blockaded a review of the 2007 national budget proposed by the DPP cabinet, which did not pass until 15 June 2007, after KMT party chairman Ma Ying-jeou personally intervened and urged its passage. According to law, the budget bill should have been passed a month before the start of the budget year at the latest.

According to the rules in effect at the time, the premier had the power to nominate and the president to appoint the members of the CEC. No more than 40 per cent of members could be affiliated to any single political party, and they must include at least one non-party member. The KMT believed the arrangement favoured the DPP and that the CEC was staffed with people sympathetic to the DPP. Consequently, the KMT proposed applying a nomination model similar to the NCC, its composition being made to reflect parliamentary strengths more accurately, which of course would favour the KMT. The DPP opposed this formula, as it would take away powers that the premier currently has, and probably result in a composition in which the pan-blues would have a slight majority. Either way, the CEC suffered from political divisiveness and politicization. The CEC had become so politically divided that it became almost impossible for it to reach decisions. The KMT coupled the national budget with the controversial new law on the CEC, refusing to pass the budget before the CEC bill was passed.47 When the DPP did not budge on the matter, the opposition pushed a motion that would cut the CEC budget by 40 per cent. Despite repeated attempts to resolve the matter through the party caucus consultation procedure and in extra legislative sessions, the CEC bill was again postponed in late 2007.

One of the most drawn out political battles was waged over an arms procurement bill, first considered by the DPP government in August 2002 following American approval of a major arms package in April 2001. The bill was brought to the legislature for review in June 2004 as a special budget, but was blocked in the legislature’s opposition-dominated procedural committee more than sixty times before the KMT changed its stance on the issue in the last days of 2006 and the PFP conveniently ‘forgot’ to oppose it, allowing a modified bill to begin the legislative process. Continuous opposition obstruction of the review of the law had previously prompted DPP-inclined activists to resort to people power, mobilizing tens of thousands of people for a demonstration on 25 September 2005 in support of the passage of the arms bill, while pan-blue supporters counter-mobilized their own protest march on the same day in opposition to the bill. The bill finally passed in a reduced form on 15 June 2007, only weeks after the director of the American Institute in Taiwan (de facto equivalent to an ambassador) publicly called for its passage for the second time in just over six months.
Ironically, one of the biggest legal projects of the new government, the seventh amendment of the constitution, eventually passed rather smoothly in 2005. There were three reasons for this. First of all, the proposals had been considerably watered down to the point where the draft revisions did not involve changes to the most controversial issues of Taiwan’s name and international status. The main changes concerned the legislature, which was to be cut in half and changed to a single district, dual vote voting system. At the same time, a threshold of 5 per cent would be applied to the party list vote. Other notable changes were tightening the requirements on constitutional changes and changing the procedures on impeachment of the president (for further detail, readers are referred to Appendix II).

Secondly, both of the big parties apparently calculated that the constitutional changes, especially the changes to the election system, would favour them. Just as previous rounds of successfully passed major political reforms had required that the KMT co-opt the DPP, the DPP knew that it needed to co-opt the KMT on constitutional reform in order to pass the constitutional amendment. The battle lines on the constitutional revisions then shifted from an initial blue/green divide, into a big party/small party divide, making this one of the few major political issues in recent years that has not revolved around the overarching blue/green political divide. The small parties backtracked on their earlier support for constitutional reform as they realized that the proposed changes would in all likelihood favour the big parties and even endanger the very existence of the smaller ones.

The final reason for the smooth passage of the constitutional revisions was procedural. The parties had stated their unified positions on the revisions, which were clearly and publicly announced (supports or does not support) in advance. Given that the two major parties were in favour, passage was a foregone conclusion. The role of the National Assembly was restricted to deliberating on constitutional amendments and ratifying the changes. However, as there was no permanent National Assembly any longer, a temporary task-oriented National Assembly was elected on 14 May 2005 to perform the required tasks and then to disband. This National Assembly election also marked the first time that only party lists were used in an election in Taiwan. Parties nominated candidates in order of preference. Turnout in this fait accompli election was a record low at only 23.4 per cent. The fact that voter interest was so minuscule in the otherwise heated political atmosphere is interesting, especially as it occurred in conjunction with an agreement between the two big parties and therefore the absence of very visible and vocal efforts by the major parties to politicize the issue. This
suggests that party activity in exaggerating political divisions and intensifying the emotional feelings aroused by contentious political issues is crucial to the phenomenon of excessive politicization.

For the January 2008 parliamentary election, the new voting system sanctioned by the seventh constitutional amendment was applied at the same time as the size of the legislature was cut from 225 to 113 seats. Instead of the previous SNTV election system, 73 seats were now filled through single majority districts with big electoral districts, while 34 seats were filled from party lists and six were reserved for aboriginal candidates. The change of election system had dramatic effects. It was expected that the new election system would favour the big parties. However, with a small political tilt back towards the KMT after 2004, aided by previous political opportunists from the PFP and NP having returned to the mother party’s fold, the new electoral system ended up overwhelmingly favouring the KMT, which won a landslide victory in terms of seats in the 2008 election. With a favourable underlying political balance in most election districts, the KMT took almost 72 per cent of the seats with a support rate of 51 per cent. The DPP got the opposite result. With a support rate around 37 per cent, the party got only 24 per cent of the seats. The smaller parties fared even worse. Both the TSU and the NP were left without seats, while the PFP got only one seat from a smaller district. Except for the two major parties, all other parties failed to get at-large seats from the party lists that had a five per cent threshold.

Throughout Chen’s presidency, KMT legislators together with their pan-blue allies used their electoral strength to vote out or block those pieces of legislation directly related to the former ruling party’s position. The pan-blue political camp also waged a defensive war on many other bills the DPP government proposed that would indirectly affect the balance of power or vested interests linked to the KMT. With a continuous majority coalition in parliament, the opposition’s blocking efforts were for the most part successful, especially in those areas that concerned the party’s core interests, such as the party assets. The president and the DPP grew increasingly frustrated over the years at their inability to get anything done through parliament. Later in Chen’s first term and during his second term, the party increasingly resorted to street tactics and mass political mobilization to try to push through key items on its agenda that were not advancing through regular representative institutions. Thus the arms issue, KMT party assets and Taiwan’s international status all ended up on the list of referendum items, and in each case the referendum was arranged in conjunction with an election.

Taiwan’s hyper-politicization is evident in the legislature. However, in maintaining politicization in the broader society, the relationship between the
legislature and the media is crucial. Taiwan’s very conflict-prone legislature and take-no-hostages legislators are constantly at the centre of disproportionate and scandalizing media attention. The legislature is permanently monitored by a small army of journalists, who tend to focus on the theatrical aspects of politics – physical scuffles, vicious verbal attacks, throwing things, dramatic blockades of the plenary and so on – that many legislators are all too happy to put on. Two journalists interviewed in April 2004, who cover the legislature and the political scene, estimated that there were altogether close to 300 journalists reporting on Taiwan’s legislature. As for their own employers (two big daily newspapers), in each newspaper as many as seven or eight journalists covered the legislature. Incidentally, one of the journalists remarked that he believed the relationship between the media and legislators in Taiwan was not healthy.49

One of the features of the relations between Taiwan’s parliament and media that promote polarization and extreme positions is that even regular debates in parliamentary committees are often broadcast live. Needless to say, in a divided and charged political atmosphere not much meaningful political negotiation between the parliamentary caucuses takes place in the committees, where the only people present are often those who speak, and the media. In the view of one journalist familiar with committee work, the actual negotiations and decisions take place through the party caucus consultation procedure, introduced a few years ago. The objective of this procedure is to enable the smoothing over of political differences through both regular and extraordinary small-group consultations between party caucus representatives, presided over by the speaker of parliament.50 However, during Chen’s second term in office, the partisan bifurcation and mutual distrust grew so deep that even the negotiation procedure proved ineffective in solving many of the disputes.

One of the most detrimental effects of these hyper-politicized legislative battles has been increasing disrespect for the constitution. While both sides have been guilty of this, the culpability of the pan-blue opposition seems particularly egregious; on several occasions, the pan-blues have simply flatly refused to respect the constitution, e.g., in terms of procedural order in nominations, or the opinions of various government bodies which they happen to disagree with. The disrespect is injurious also for public trust in political institutions. As Fredrick Bailey argued a long time ago, all politics is dependent on having accepted the ‘rules of the game’; without them there is nothing to distinguish politics from a street fight.51
For most people observing Taiwanese politics from a distance, it revolves mainly around cross-Strait relations, that is, the relations between Taipei and Beijing. Undeniably, Taiwanese politics can hardly be discussed without also dealing with this aspect.

There is a well-established near-consensus in Taiwan on maintaining the island’s political status quo for the time being, that is, no formal independence, but with a de facto independence-like existence. In opinion polls, commonly around 75–80 per cent of Taiwanese consistently favour this option. This quasi-consensus does not, however, mean that cross-Strait relations is a non-issue in Taiwanese politics, quite the contrary. Despite the clear short-term consensus, there is substantial divergence in people’s long-term preferences for Taiwan’s political future. The issue fundamentally is a moral one, over which compromise is not possible. Moral issues in general tend to arouse strong passions when they become politicized. Not surprisingly, political parties make ample rhetorical use of the cross-Strait situation, especially during election campaigning in national elections. For example, in the 2004 presidential election, the DPP played up the threat from Chinese missiles. In Tainan, a mini-truck carrying a mock missile with the P.R.C. flag on it could be seen cruising the streets. The KMT, on its part, had used similar scare tactics before the 2000 presidential election, indirectly warning voters that a DPP victory would bring misery or even war.

The security issue surrounding Taiwan’s precarious international existence plays into Taiwan’s politicization in many ways. It produces fodder for election campaigns. The de facto security guarantees provided by the United States through the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) may have initially emboldened the DPP to push harder on political changes. In the 2001 election campaign, following President Bush’s strong expression of support for Taiwan and his approval of a large arms package, local DPP cadres indicated that they believed the U.S. would stand beside Taiwan in any dispute. On the other hand, the threat of Mainland military action that is taken seriously on the island tends to rein in Taiwanese politicians just before they reach the brink, thereby keeping political conflicts from spiralling out of control. Similarly, Taiwan’s extensive economic integration with the Mainland over the past decade also makes the question of Taiwan’s political future more urgent, while it simultaneously greatly reduces chances for Taiwan’s outright independence.

The tremendous change in the orientation of Taiwanese exports since the beginning of the decade is apparent when comparing the development of Taiwanese export volumes to the U.S. and China. The Taiwanese export economy
used to be geared to servicing mainly the American and, to a lesser extent, the Japanese markets. This was the case until the early 1990s. Since then, exports to Mainland China have exploded in volume. Given the lack of direct trade links with the mainland until 2008, the trade between Taiwan and the mainland was routed through transhipment centres or Hong Kong, with very little of the goods actually destined for end-users in Hong Kong. For all practical purposes, Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong figures can therefore be bundled together as one market. Figure 4.2 shows the dramatic change in the trade picture. In less than two decades, the Chinese market completely replaced the American market as the main destination for Taiwanese exports.

Figure 4.2. Taiwanese exports to the USA vs Mainland China (including Hong Kong)

Source: R.O.C. Ministry of Economic Affairs
Note: The figures include re-exports. The percentages are as a share of total exports.

The main driver for booming Taiwanese exports to Mainland China has been the exodus of Taiwanese manufacturers to the mainland that started in the early 1990s and shifted into high gear towards the end of the decade. Although exact figures for Taiwanese investment are impossible to find, it is often estimated that Taiwanese companies have invested at least US$150 billion on the mainland. Tens of thousands of Taiwanese companies operate on the mainland, and several of the biggest exporting companies based on the mainland are Taiwanese-funded. For example, in 2005 as many as seven out of the fifteen biggest China-based exporters were Taiwanese, including four of the five biggest.53

Much of the trade generated between Taiwan and the mainland is thus a consequence of adding a new leg to a production chain that serves final
consumers in the U.S. and Europe. In greatly simplified terms, East Asian trade started out with Japan manufacturing goods for end-customers in the West. In the 1970s and 1980s, South Korea and Taiwan were added to the production chain, with key parts still being sourced in Japan but final assembly taking place in Taiwan or South Korea. Since the 1990s, the latter have in turn been moving their assembly plants to Mainland China. Huge flows of intermediate products and components feed their factories on the mainland, while final products are re-exported to end-customers.

The simultaneous high level of integration of the Taiwanese economy with the Mainland Chinese economy and almost complete lack of political relations during the DPP’s time in power formed an interesting and exceedingly rare case of asymmetric integration. Taiwan has integrated its own economy to that of its chief political rival and adversary to an unprecedented extent, a situation that creates strong cross-pressures. On the one hand, short of risking the complete destruction of its own economy, Taipei cannot endanger the precarious political situation by declaring outright independence. On the other hand, public opinion in Taiwan is currently not ready to accept a political solution on the terms offered by Beijing. Consequently, Taiwan was stuck in international limbo with economic and political trends pulling in different directions during the Chen administration. Asymmetric integration is thus an additional structural feature boosting the politicization of society.

The idea of asymmetric integration bears some similarity to Huntington’s idea of torn countries, by which he referred to countries such as Turkey, Russia and Mexico, which are wedged between two different civilizations: perhaps seeking to join the West, but tracing their cultural and historical roots to a non-Western tradition. Taiwan is ‘torn’ between the economic imperatives of its de facto integration with Mainland China and its political desire to maintain and reinforce its separate way of life, backed up by American security pledges. In Taiwan’s awkward international position, any political move that seeks to either increase or decrease the political distance between Taiwan and the People’s Republic, whether symbolically or practically, has encountered an instantaneous political backlash. Politicization is a predictable outcome, but the real danger of military conflict imposes constraints that prevent the domestic political conflict from getting out of hand. Taiwanese politics creates a lot of heat, but little fire.

The KMT position on cross-Strait relations underwent considerable modification during the 1990s. The decade started with a substantial number of old guard mainlanders in leading positions within the party and an essentially unchanged Mainland policy since Chiang Kai-shek’s time. In 1991, in conjunction
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with the first constitutional amendment, the KMT government renounced its aim of retaking the mainland by force, thereby dropping its claim to rule over all of China. Nevertheless, the party still adhered to the idea of one China, although disagreeing with Beijing over the interpretation of the concept, as evident in the supposed consensus revolving around ‘one China, with different interpretations’ that some consider was achieved in Hong Kong in 1992 as a preparation for the talks between Beijing and Taipei in Singapore in 1993. This consensus has, however, since been disputed in Taiwan by the DPP government. The term itself was coined by a key KMT policymaker, Su Chi.56 When I discussed the 1992 consensus with Su Chi in May 2005, he mentioned that the consensus in itself is not so important, as it is mainly a tool that can be used in many ways. The key is the one China principle.57

In the early 1990s, the old guard within the KMT grew increasingly uncomfortable with Lee Teng-hui’s more obvious localization policies. They finally left the KMT in 1993 to form the New Party. Cross-Strait relations began deteriorating after Lee Teng-hui’s U.S. visit and the missile rehearsals in 1995–1996, to hit a low point in July 1999 when Lee talked about ‘special state-to-state relations’ in a Deutsche Welle interview. The 1999 statement followed previous similar but less provocative formulations. For example, in 1997 the Taiwanese government hardened its stance by saying that one should talk about one divided China, while in 1998 Lee Teng-hui stated that Mainland China and Taiwan are ‘two sovereign states of which neither rules the other’.58 The KMT’s position on Taiwan’s status appears to have moved along with Lee Teng-hui’s personal position during the 1990s towards more clearly emphasising Taiwan as a separate entity.

The DPP, for its part, has moderated its formal stance on cross-Strait relations since the party charter of 1991, which had enshrined a clause on striving for independence. In 2001, the DPP Party Congress decided to elevate a resolution (Taiwan qiantu jueyiwen) passed in 1999 to the foremost guiding document for the party’s Mainland policy. The key point in the document is that the DPP already regards Taiwan as an independent, sovereign nation and therefore sees no need to formally declare independence. This could be construed as a moderation of the DPP’s earlier position. The document also insisted that any change to this status quo would require the consent of the people through a referendum. The new interpretation had already been made public a year before in a seven point statement by the DPP Central Standing Committee, apparently as a response to Clinton’s visit to China and his so-called Three Noes Statement.59
By the turn of the century, KMT and DPP positions on cross-Strait policy were converging. A scholar who later became a key cross-Strait policy-maker in the DPP government mentioned to me that there was, in his view, very little difference in the cross-Strait policy stances of the 2000 presidential election candidates. In August 2002, Chen Shui-bian used the characterization ‘one country on each side’ to describe cross-Strait relations. Chen’s new concept and an earlier DPP document entitled the *Cross-century China policy white paper* both echo Lee’s state-to-state relations. While the DPP has moved from striving for formal independence to emphasizing that Taiwan is already independent, the KMT similarly subtly moved closer to the centre on this contentious issue. From having striven for eventual reunification, it has gradually muddled the eventual goal. Prior to the 2008 presidential election, the KMT’s presidential candidate formulated his cross-Strait policy around three noes, no unification, no independence and no use of force. The two main political parties, which had almost diametrically opposed cross-Strait goals in the early 1990s, came to have substantially converged positions, revolving around maintaining the ambiguous status quo.

Beijing, for its part, spelled out its position on the Taiwan issue perhaps most clearly in a white paper that was published just prior to the 2000 election. Beijing explains how it perceives the dispute over Taiwan; in effect, why it regards Taiwan as belonging to itself. The document further elaborates on the importance of the one China principle, giving some indication of what Beijing’s bottom-line in the conflict might be. The one China principle continues to be the cornerstone of Beijing’s stance on the Taiwan issue. However, Beijing seems to have realized in recent years that it needs to show some flexibility on this. Consequently, it has tried to subtly broaden its definition of the concept, for example through a new formulation first mentioned by the former Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen that ‘There is only one China in the world. Both the mainland and Taiwan belong to the same one China, and China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity are inseparable.’ There is still much reluctance in Beijing towards any kind of formulation that does not take one China as its starting point. However, one astute observer recently argued that the current Chinese leader Hu Jintao has shifted the Mainland’s Taiwan policy-making from emphasizing solving the problem to managing it, in the process floating the idea of establishing a peace agreement. Mainland Chinese scholars have also recently recognized that in order to achieve such an agreement, a more flexible one China principle is needed, and that Hu Jintao is working in that direction.
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During Chen Shui-bian’s time in office, Beijing was reluctant to openly deal directly with the DPP government, even in technical matters such as those related to cross-Strait flights. However, since 2005 Beijing has taken an increasingly relaxed attitude towards Taiwan. Beijing has exuded a new confidence that time is on its side, given the rapid integration of the Taiwanese and mainland economies since the late 1990s. While there are some substantive policy differences between the political parties in terms of cross-Strait policy, especially on the part of the smaller parties and particularly with regard to their stances on the pace of Taiwanese economic investment in Mainland China and the opening up of direct transportation links, it is the symbolic aspects of this relationship that give rise to the most politicized disputes. Despite all the political fervour in domestic politics and antagonism in cross-Strait relations, when major economic interests are involved pragmatism has tended to prevail and relatively low-key practical solutions to specific problems have usually been found, for example regarding charter flights, Mainland Chinese tourist arrivals in Taiwan or the relocation of less advanced, but still sensitive, microchip factories from Taiwan to the mainland.

The domestic politicking surrounding cross-Strait relations has thus revolved more around how close relations to the Mainland should be and especially around the fate of various Chinese symbols in Taiwan in the face of a Taiwanese local identity that has been strengthening at least since the early 1990s. Mainland Chinese commentators early on expressed concern that the DPP administration was seeking to rid the island of everything Chinese in a general program of desinification. The ruling party’s ally, the TSU, launched such a de-sinification campaign in 2002. Nevertheless, it seemed initially that the worst fears of these commentators would not materialize, as Chen Shui-bian pledged not to dispense with some of the most conspicuous symbols of Chineseness, did not implement too many reforms aimed at changing the symbolic adherence of the island, and generally gave only a lukewarm response to the TSU-led political project. Smaller political feuds erupted over reforming school books (changes to the content were made in 1997 and then again in 2003 and 2007), Taiwan’s development of its own transliteration system for Chinese into Roman letters, the so-called Tongyong pinyin in 2001, removing big posters in front of the presidential palace that exhorted Taiwan to ‘recapture the mainland’, and adding ‘Taiwan’ to the cover of Republic of China passports and ID cards in 2003. However, by and large the DPP administration appeared to move cautiously in these areas.
That timidity began to crumble in early 2006 when Chen, apparently frustrated both by a perceived lack of response from Beijing to his initiatives and endless parliamentary opposition to many of his political programs, launched an attack on the National Unification Guidelines and the National Unification Council. Lee Teng-hui had established the NUG and NUC in 1991 in order to emphasize Taiwan’s continuing commitment to eventual reunification with Mainland China, even as the Taiwanese government *de facto* renounced its claim to rule all of China. In practice, they were without much importance, but were of great symbolic significance, especially since Chen had specifically pledged not to abolish them in his 2000 presidential inauguration speech.\(^{65}\)

However, the attack on these lingering unification symbols was insignificant compared to the full frontal attack that the DPP administration launched a little later on the Chinese legacy in Taiwan. In an apparently deliberate attempt at irritating Beijing and the pan-blue opposition, the administration instigated a name-changing campaign of sorts. The magazine *Sinorama* changed its name to *Taiwan Panorama*. The *Free China Review* had already changed its name, first to *Taipei Review* in 2000 and then to *Taiwan Review* in 2003, while the official Republic of China Yearbook changed its name to the *Taiwan Yearbook* in 2004. A government move to drop ‘China’ from the names of a range of state-owned enterprises was also initiated.

Around the same time, the name of Taiwan’s main international airport, the Chiang Kai-shek International Airport, was changed to Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport and the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei was turned into the Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall. The latter move was accompanied by removing statues of the former dictator and generalissimo at military barracks across the island. Even the main holiday’s English name was changed from Chinese New Year to Lunar New Year. In 2007, Taiwan also renewed its bid for World Health Organization (WHO) membership, but applied for membership under the name Taiwan rather than the Republic of China for the first time. Activists also proposed changes to the national anthem. The DPP government even proposed a United Nations membership application using the name Taiwan instead of the Republic of China. The UN membership issue and a DPP-proposed referendum on it was spurred on by a massive DPP-organized support rally in Kaohsiung on 15 September 2007, which drew up to several hundred thousand people. The KMT organized a counter-rally in Taichung on the same day in support of its own UN referendum using the Republic of China name. The party organized a thousand buses to bring mobilized supporters to the rally.\(^{66}\)
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Not surprisingly, the administration’s de-sinicizing efforts aroused controversy and political disputes both within Taiwan and outside. Among these moves, some of the fiercest resistance was sparked by the plan to change the names of all state-owned enterprises that had ‘China’ in their names, a proposal initially made by the president in 2004. This included the national flag carrier, China Airlines, the China Post postal service, the state-owned oil company, Chinese Petroleum Corp, and a major steelmaker and shipbuilder, China Steel and China Shipbuilding. Protests by angry workers at the affected companies erupted, while the opposition tried to block the name changes in parliament. Nevertheless, China Post (Chungwha Post) was forced to change its name to Taiwan Post, Chinese Petroleum Corp to CPC Corp and China Shipbuilding to Taiwan International Shipbuilding.

The political drive to change names can be seen as having had both strategic and tactical goals. It is hard to claim that the administration’s name-changing frenzy did not amount to a concerted campaign to rid the island of remaining symbols of Chineseness in order to cement its status as a political entity de facto separate from the People’s Republic as a strategic long-term goal. The DPP government deliberately manipulated these symbolic issues in the run-up to key elections in the short term, while trying to make a symbolic break with China in the long term. Ironically, this campaign in itself adhered to a very Chinese tradition. In ancient Chinese state philosophy, names that no longer correspond to reality have been seen as a main cause of distortions in society, and the ‘rectification of names’ is an old preferred remedy for the ills afflicting society.67

In October 2007 the DPP National Party Congress passed a new resolution on cross-Strait relations, referred to as the ‘normal country resolution’. In conjunction with the release of an initial draft in early August, prepared under the direction of then-party chairman You Xikun, it was made amply clear that the drafters wished to emphasize the need to change the name of the Republic of China to Taiwan at an early date, and that this was a prerequisite both for rewriting the constitution and rejoining the UN.68 The resolution text even directly refers to the idea of the rectification of names as a rationale. This signified an important deviation from the party’s previous resolution, which, while stressing that Taiwan is already an independent country (and that there is therefore no need to declare independence), also stated that the name of the country is the Republic of China.

However, You Xikun drew widespread criticism from within the party for failing to consult with the party’s presidential candidate, who had earlier urged the party to accept the old R.O.C. constitution until a new constitution had
been enacted. The DPP Central Executive Committee drafted a more moderate resolution proposal. You Xikun resigned from the party chairmanship in response to this. Eventually, the Party Congress accepted the more moderate version promoted by the Central Executive Committee and supported by the party’s presidential candidate, Frank Hsieh. The original draft resolution had provocatively referred to ‘correcting the nation’s official title to Taiwan’.69 The accepted resolution was more circumspect, containing the following formulation.

In order for Taiwan to become a normal nation, we need to actively promote and implement name-rectification, promulgate a new constitution, and accede to the United Nations. In addition, we must realize transitional justice and restore a Taiwan-centric identity, with the ultimate goal of transforming Taiwan into a normal nation.70

The resolution talks about achieving transitional justice, which refers specifically to righting the wrongs of the previous KMT government, including repatriating national assets that the KMT allegedly appropriated during its long reign. Despite the vague formulations, the text makes clear that the DPP aims to maintain and strengthen an identity separate from Mainland China, with name rectification as a key means to achieve this. Although independence was not talked about, the obvious aim was to build a separate nation. A reversal of the DPP’s rectification campaign was quickly launched when Ma Ying-jeou became president in May 2008, with Taiwan Post reverting to China Post only a few months after the inauguration. Furthermore, there were calls for DPP leaders to be held accountable for their name-changing actions.71

Devout political supporters on either side of the political divide have an extraordinary talent for seeing the sinister motives in the other side’s pursuits, while ignoring similar actions of their own side. With both political camps believing that the other side is deeply corrupt and that allowing it to prevail in the political struggle would lead to doom, either because of associating too closely with the mainland or of risking war through gambling with sensitive symbolic issues, the threshold for politicization is low. As the evenly divided political stalemate dragged on, the situation became self-perpetuating and politicization itself a structural feature.

The condition of asymmetric integration that Taiwan has found itself in has been a major contributing factor to political tensions. Nationness, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, is a crucial challenge for some new democracies. Scholars of democratization have even argued that there can be no stable
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democracy without a broad social consensus over the boundaries of the state and nation. Does such a consensus exist in Taiwan? Relying on survey data, two scholars have argued that there is actually already a *de facto* consensus in Taiwan on the boundaries of their ‘country’, with national identity for most people revolving around a Taiwan separate from Mainland China. Most people may agree on the current boundaries of state and nation and wish to see the status quo continue for the time being.

However, the longer-term issue of Taiwan’s political future is unresolved and on that issue there is no consensus. As political elites generally are careful not to step over the line that would cause street violence or armed intervention, the cleavage mainly manifests itself around symbols related to state and nation. While the battles waged in Taiwanese politics over nation and state are largely of a symbolic nature, the political cleavage over the issue is very real and any related issue is easy to politicize. As seen in this section, the DPP showed no shyness in playing on these symbolic issues. It may even be said that, like a biker who needs to keep pedalling in order not to tip over, the DPP depended on continuously politicizing symbolic issues, to keep its base supporters galvanized. Confrontational politics over symbols were *de rigueur* during the DPP’s time in power. Given that the new KMT government has indicated that it intends to reverse many of the DPP’s hard-won symbolic reforms, such politics appears set to continue.

**COMBINING REFERENDA AND ELECTIONS AS A POLITICAL STRATEGY**

General politicization among the population intersects with political populism. When politicians deliberately play on strongly held popular beliefs in order to enhance their support, they resort to populism. Nation, ethnic group and language tend to be prime candidates for such beliefs. However, whether populist politicians manage to raise the level of politicization (or even political tension) within the larger society or are made to look ridiculous due to a lack of popular resonance greatly depends on the overall social and political circumstances. Nationalistic politicians playing on ethnic sentiments just prior to the break-up of Yugoslavia found a ready resonance among ordinary people because of prior historic experiences, with tragic consequences. Extreme right politicians in Europe after 2000 managed to politicize segments of the electorate with the anti-immigration theme in circumstances of high unemployment and failed social integration policies, while Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez has similarly managed to politicize many poor Venezuelans with his radically populist policies.
In Taiwan, the DPP government incessantly flirted with populism through various ideologically charged political drives. With a never-ending gridlock in parliament and the DPP’s background as an accomplished vehicle for street mobilization and an election machine, it was perhaps not surprising that the party would eventually attempt to harness the popular will in order to bypass the representative institutions that were not working in its favour. The administration’s use of populism as a deliberate political ploy was taken to a new level in 2004, when the administration decided to launch a ‘defensive referendum’ in conjunction with the presidential election that year. The sequence of events leading up to and following this joint referendum and election ushered in a period of heightened politicization, partly as a consequence of the administration-directed political mobilization to support the referendum (and thereby the incumbent president’s re-election) and the opposition’s counter-mobilization against the referendum and in support of their contending candidate. These actions raised confrontational politics involving ordinary people to a new height, in the process expanding the scope of political competition further into the fabric of Taiwanese society.

Since 2004, the use of referenda in Taiwan has rapidly developed into a distinguishing feature of Taiwan’s political culture. However, the Taiwanese use of referenda is rather different from more established political systems where referenda play an important role, foremost Switzerland. All the national-level referenda organized in Taiwan to date, as well as numerous proposed referenda, have been highly partisan in nature. Political parties, in particular the DPP, have launched the referenda. The referenda organized so far have been boycotted by the pan-blues. The KMT even made the peculiar move of boycotting a referendum that it itself had launched and expended lots of resources to organize. Furthermore, all these referenda have been organized in conjunction with an election and been a major part of the election campaigns from the start. Finally, the questions asked in the referenda have been of secondary nature. In short, referenda in Taiwan have been used in a highly instrumental way, as political tool and election strategy.

The idea of introducing referenda in Taiwan had long been promoted by only a few radical voices within the DPP party, foremost Lin Yixiong and Cai Tongrong. Even as recently as 2002, the party’s legislative caucus was opposed to introducing a referendum law, arguing that there were other more urgent matters on the agenda, and the cabinet had eventually decided against organizing a referendum on the nuclear plant in 2001. Facing a gridlocked cross-Strait situation, the idea of organizing a referendum as a defensive measure was floated by the Chen Shui-bian administration in August 2002. A top DPP legislator
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interviewed about the rationale behind the defensive referendum after it was first announced by Chen Shui-bian placed the referendum in the context of Taiwan’s deteriorating international position due to pressure from Beijing and explained it as a necessary toughening of the position toward Beijing. A high-ranking DPP government official in turn portrayed the referendum both as a challenge to the Taiwanese people to confront their problem with the Mainland and as a measure to get international attention in order to deter Beijing.75

The drive for a referendum law began to gather political weight in April 2003 when Chen Shui-bian threw his weight behind it in his capacity as DPP chairman. The referendum became an election issue soon after that, as there was talk of combining it with the presidential election. The pan-blue political camp initially strongly opposed the referendum law and tried to block it. As the law-drafting process seemed stalled, Chen backtracked on his earlier push for the enactment of a referendum law, arguing instead that no such law was needed in order to hold referenda. The cabinet considered introducing an executive order instead that would bypass the need for a law by referring to the constitution, which had a general provision for referenda. However, before that the pan-blues changed tack and began supporting their own draft version of the law.76 Citing the need to pass a referendum law to provide a legal basis for a referendum on the nuclear power plant and the danger of a constitutional crisis without one, the pan-blues now supported a watered-down version of the law that would leave constitutional issues, in particular issues related to sovereignty, beyond its scope.

Judging from articles in government newspapers, Beijing was not pleased at the pan-blue volte-face and their sudden endorsement of a weaker version of the law. The pan-blues apparently found it hard to oppose outright an issue with wide popular appeal, especially with an election approaching, the DPP initially also had reservations about including sovereignty issues as possible referendum subjects. Nevertheless, the party pushed for the inclusion of a provision for a defensive referendum that could be launched by the president when the nation was under external threat. In response, the KMT-PFP alliance produced a law draft that included a provision prohibiting government agencies from calling referenda, and another prohibition on arranging referenda in conjunction with presidential elections.77

For some of the staunchest referendum proponents, there was no need to have a specific law in order to organize a referendum. In the midst of the disputes over the law that had not yet passed, a township called Pinglin in northeastern Taiwan went ahead and organized a local advisory referendum on opening an exclusive road to the public and making it an interchange. The legal basis for this
referendum was in dispute, although there were precedents in county magistrates and mayors calling local referenda on specific local issues. Other local governments played copy-cat, announcing their own plans for local referenda, while KMT chairman Lien Chan floated the idea of a local referendum in Kaohsiung on opening direct air and shipping links with the mainland.

Meanwhile, the major political parties started coming up with the most imaginative ideas for national referenda. The cabinet had initially pondered holding a referendum on WHO entry, then the nuclear power plant. On 27 June 2003, Chen Shui-bian had stated that referenda would be held in conjunction with the 2004 presidential election, possibly on the nuclear plant issue, on whether Taiwan should apply for membership of the WHO or on whether the number of seats in the legislature ought to be halved. The TSU wanted a referendum on the nation’s name. The KMT, for its part, sought a referendum on the administrative integration of Taipei city, Taipei county and Keelung city. Finally, the KMT chairman even suggested referenda on ethnic harmony and reconciliation.78

The Pinglin vote, beside leading to the resignation of the sole remaining pan-blue affiliated minister in the government (then EPA head Hao Longbin), also heightened the urgency of passing a referendum law before politicians went ahead with their various plans for further referenda. The fight over the referendum law heated up, with then Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jeou allegedly even comparing the cabinet’s plans to hold non-binding advisory referenda to the Cultural Revolution.79 Meanwhile, referendum activists from the DPP and the TSU staged a massive march in Kaohsiung on 25 October 2003, attended by the president, in support of passing a law that would enable nationwide referenda.

The version of the law that eventually was passed in late November 2003 was much closer to the pan-blue-sponsored draft of the law,80 which is not surprising given the pan-blue parliamentary strength. Pan-green supporters, as well as many in the DPP, were not satisfied with the law, calling it a piece of ‘birdcage legislation’ given the many restrictions it imposed on referenda. The cabinet was denied the power to hold advisory referenda. The law also prohibits the referendum process from being applied in issues of sovereignty, territory and constitutional issues. The DPP had been pushing for a relatively low threshold for initiating referenda, but the opposition managed to block this. The bar for initiating national referenda was raised high, with the signatures of 0.5 per cent of the number of people who voted in the last presidential election, or approximately 83,000 signatures, required for proposing a referendum in order
for it to be screened by a supervisory committee, and ten times that number of people having to endorse the referendum petition for it to pass.\textsuperscript{81}

The law that eventually passed did not endorse many of the most controversial clauses in the original proposal offered by the cabinet, which naturally was unsatisfied with the law and even contemplated trying to overturn some of its provisions. However, the pan-greens had scored two major victories that would be useful in terms of political tactics. The first was that referenda could be held in conjunction with national elections. The law also endorsed the cabinet's proposal on the so-called defensive referendum. A clause (Article 17) was included in the law that gave the president the right to initiate a defensive referendum on national security issues in order to safeguard the nation's sovereignty in case the country came under foreign threat.\textsuperscript{82} President Chen did not waste any time in invoking Article 17 of the law and initiating such a referendum. Just two days after passage of the law, Chen announced that he was determined to hold a referendum in conjunction with the 2004 presidential election, referring to his right and duty as a president to do so. However, he neglected to mention the topic of the referendum. The pan-blue camp was infuriated by this move, arguing that there was not enough of a threat to justify the calling of such a referendum. Not even the DPP-sympathetic \textit{Taipei Times} was impressed. Calling a defensive referendum in conjunction with an election without an imminent threat was foolhardy, according to the newspaper’s editors.\textsuperscript{83}

Following the president's announcement of the referendum, there followed an intra-party search for suitable referendum questions. Suggestions revolved around the one country, two systems model or China’s military build-up. The referendum content narrowed down to the threat posed by the missiles China had targeted at Taiwan. Eventually, it was decided that voters in Taiwan would be asked two referendum questions. The first one asked whether the voter agreed that the Taiwanese government should strengthen its self-defence capability by acquiring more advanced anti-missile weaponry if Beijing did not openly renounce the use of force against Taiwan and remove its missiles. The second question enquired whether the Taiwanese government should engage in negotiations with Beijing to establish a ‘peace and stability framework’ in order to seek a cross-Strait consensus and for the welfare of people on both sides. To many political observers, the questions did not seem appropriate for a referendum, as most people would hardly disagree with these statements. In a last-ditch effort to thwart the defensive referendum, the KMT together with the PFP used their legislative muscle to table an amendment to the law’s Article 17, just two weeks before the referendum. However, they failed to stop the referendum.
The 2004 referendum cannot be well understood from an issue-centred point of view that only considers the referendum questions themselves. In many ways, the questions asked were of secondary importance, if not insignificant, as is already clear from the fact that the referendum was announced before it was apparent what the referendum would be about. Furthermore, Chen Shui-bian himself and other government officials indicated before the actual referendum that the result of the vote would not have much practical policy effect. The result of the referendum also clearly shows that the two questions were rather irrelevant. On the first referendum question, fully 91.8 per cent of respondents answered yes. On the second question, almost the same number, 92.1 per cent, did the same. The numbers for those opposing were also almost identical. However, voter turnout was low, 45.2 per cent and 45.1 per cent respectively, as the pan-blue opposition told its supporters to boycott the referendum, which meant that mostly only pan-green supporters picked up the referendum ballot. This was then a clear case of partisan bifurcation, where taking part in the referendum was a very strong indicator of pan-green sentiments, and abstaining an equally strong indicator of pan-blue sympathies.

Attempting to understand the first Taiwanese referendum as a regular referendum, designed to gauge the views of the populace on a matter of particular policy importance, fails to grasp its function. Even a DPP insider conceded just prior to the referendum that the real function of the referendum was not to ask the voters’ opinion on the actual questions, but rather to express a popular will. Another observer mentioned that it is common knowledge that the referendum was really about the presidential election. By not seeing the content of the referendum questions as important, but rather considering the activity itself and people’s participation in it as key, then holding the referendum begins to make more sense. In an interview in 2000 with one of the key DPP referendum-promoters, I inquired about the relationship between democratization and Taiwanization. He replied by asking me whether they were not the same thing. In light of the later referendum it indeed seems that the two are inextricably intertwined in the thinking of DPP politicians. From this perspective, using one’s democratic right of expression becomes tantamount to an expression of Taiwanese identity. Taiwan’s 2004 referendum is then better understood as an activity that carried a political statement.

In fact, the whole referendum is more appropriately considered as an executive-initiated partisan plebiscite than a regular referendum. The difference between a referendum and a plebiscite, although colloquially often used interchangeably, is important as a matter of principle. A referendum implies putting a political
question to a direct vote of the electorate in order to gauge public opinion on an important political issue. A plebiscite, on the other hand, refers to a request for approval in general of the policies of the government, or an often radical governmental decree. A recent example of the latter is the Venezuelan president’s failed attempt to prolong his time in power indefinitely and amass greater executive powers by resorting to a plebiscite. In the case of Taiwan, the referendum also had the more specific election-strategic function of supporting the incumbent in the presidential election. Given this motive and the pan-blue efforts to boycott the referendum, strong public participation in Taiwan’s first referendum turned, not surprisingly, into a more important goal for the DPP than the successful passage of the two referendum questions. In order to be valid, a minimum voter turnout of 50 per cent was required and 50 per cent of those voting had to agree with the statement. The same threshold was needed for victory in the presidential election.

The political usefulness of the 2004 referendum is clear when considered in light of the circumstances of the presidential election. For most of the run-up to the election the incumbent, Chen Shui-bian, was trailing far behind in the opinion polls, though the difference steadily narrowed as the election approached. Even strong DPP supporters were resigned to defeat, just days prior to the election. Eventually, the DPP ticket won by a sliver-thin margin: 50.1 per cent to 49.9 per cent. Although the referendum in itself failed, the drive to pass the referendum law and arrange the first referendum almost completely set the agenda for the presidential election. The pan-blue side’s attempt to shift the focus of the election to economic issues was eclipsed by the referendum.

By seeing the referendum as an activity that makes a political statement, the greater the number of people voting in favour of the referendum questions, the stronger the endorsement would have been for the incumbent president and the more difficult would it have been for the opposition to criticize him. As noted above, an overarching theme of Chen Shui-bian’s time in power was his difficulty in getting things done. On the domestic front, a host of government initiatives stalled in parliament as the pan-blues, who held a narrow majority of seats, refused to endorse them. Chen’s problems in getting a grip on the government apparatus were acute in 2002 when he assumed the party chairmanship, against his earlier pledge not to, and instituted regular coordinating meetings between the Presidential Office, DPP legislators, and the party headquarters. Similarly, the Chen government was almost completely ignored by Beijing on the external front. Beijing consistently maintained that Chen Shui-bian was only the representative of a small extremist minority in Taiwan, with the vast majority not accepting his
stance. If the DPP government had gained strong popular support for its more controversial initiatives, Beijing would perhaps have been put in the position of having to initiate contact with Chen’s administration. Holding a plebiscite-like referendum thus made sense in terms of the island’s external relations as well. The referendum strategy attempted to break the political gridlock on both the domestic and external fronts and give the ruling party a much-needed boost.\textsuperscript{89}

However, the referendum’s failure to pass the vote threshold did not give Chen a strong mandate for dealing with Beijing, nor did it provide immunity from criticism. If anything, it exacerbated criticism and intensified politicization even further. The opposition claimed that Chen’s narrow victory was achieved by a mysterious assassination attempt on the president that occurred one day before the election. For a long time, the opposition refused to accept the election results. The losing presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Lien Chan and Soong Chu-yu, staged a last stand in a marathon protest demonstration in front of the Presidential Office in Taipei. For both senior politicians, the presidential election was their last chance of holding high political office. The 2004 joint referendum and presidential election was the straw that finally broke the party-political camel’s back. Mutual trust between the competing political sides fell to a new nadir. Now the gloves were off in domestic politics and legislative work ground to a standstill.

Had the 2004 joint referendum and election been a one-off event, it may not have been so interesting for understanding politicization in Taiwan. However, the fact that the ruling party attempted the same strategy again, in both the 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections, and that the opposition called a competing referendum in both cases, even when the previous combination of the referendum with an election had been widely condemned by both foreign governments and political scientists, suggests that Taiwanese politicians, and in particular the DPP, at least believed that it was a useful political strategy. This strategy therefore tells us something about Taiwan’s political culture. That this strategy was tried again despite the fact that the first referendum’s two questions both failed to cross the 50 per cent vote threshold is further testimony to the political function of a referendum as an election strategy, not a means of gauging public opinion. As such, it is also a vehicle for politicization.

For the 2008 parliamentary election, the DPP launched a new referendum drive, this time using the regular referendum procedure. If the first referendum had been used to further partisan election aims, then this time around even the content of the referendum questions was exceedingly partisan. The referenda were openly described by local media as election tools or tools of political
Four Cases of Politicization manipulation. The DPP’s referendum concerned the return of assets allegedly stolen by the KMT during its time in power. The DPP election campaign focused largely on this issue. The KMT was again thrown on the defensive by the DPP’s referendum-based election strategy. However, this time the KMT decided not to be outdone. The party launched a competing drive to hold a referendum in order to counter the DPP referendum. The topic? Leadership corruption. While corruption charges used to be one of the DPP’s strongest weapons against the old regime during its time in opposition, the pan-blues more than made up for this by waging an almost non-stop political campaign against the alleged corruption of DPP leaders that finally bore fruit. Among those accused were the president and almost his entire larger family, as well as a number of other key politicians. Both sides were thus targeting the other side’s alleged abuses of power as a ruling party.

Apart from the clearly partisan content of Taiwanese referenda, the questions posed can be criticized for being long, equivocal and leading voters on, as well as posing if/then-type questions. The referendum questions were formulated as long statements and were either directly or indirectly targeted at another political party (the CCP, the DPP or the KMT). Consider the question of the DPP-promoted referendum in January, 2008.

Do you agree that the following principles should be applied to legislate a ‘Regulation for the disposal of properties inappropriately acquired by political parties’, in order to return such properties of the Kuomintang to the people? The property of the Kuomintang and its associate organizations, except for party membership fees, political donations and public subsidies, should be presumed to have been inappropriately acquired and (therefore) returned to the people. (The party) should compensate already liquidated (property) at market value. [Freely translated by the author.]

This referendum question is clearly directed at the alleged past offences of the erstwhile ruling party during the authoritarian period. The presumed guilt of the KMT on the part of those who formulated the referendum question is clear from an attached explanatory background to the referendum that was included in the referendum announcement by the CEC. However, the referendum promoted by the KMT, although somewhat more generally formulated, was not much better in terms of a well-formulated referendum question.

Do you agree that legislation should be enacted in order to investigate the responsibility of national leaders and their subordinates if they wilfully
or due to grave misconduct have caused serious damage to the nation? Do you further agree that commissions of inquiry should be set up by the Legislative Yuan to investigate such matters and that all government departments should fully co-operate (with such an inquiry) without resistance, in order to safeguard the interest of all the people and so that the personnel criminally at fault can be punished and their illegal income recovered?93 [Freely translated by the author.]

Such formulations would appeal mainly to the drafting party’s staunch supporters, and were almost certain to put off the other side’s supporters. Given the relatively demanding double threshold for passing referenda – half of eligible voters voting and half of them agreeing with the referendum statement – both referenda were almost designed to fail. Nevertheless, both sides apparently believed that the strategy of combining the referendum with an election had helped the DPP in 2004, for the DPP was again pushing for a joint referendum and election, while the KMT was staunchly opposed to this. A high-ranking DPP party cadre had allegedly even lectured the party’s 2008 presidential candidate, Frank Hsieh, who had expressed doubts about the referendum on Taiwan’s UN entry, on the necessity of holding the referendum in conjunction with the presidential election, as the party’s winning the election depended on it.94

Just as the 2004 referendum had first degenerated into a fight over the law and then the procedures for organising the referendum, the January and March 2008 referenda also saw a prolonged fight over procedures. Even as both sides organized massive signature drives to get their respective referenda approved, a separate battle was waged over the procedures for the referenda. This time the conflict focused on whether the referenda would be held in conjunction with the election and more specifically on how the ballots would be distributed, either simultaneously, which would presumably raise the number of referendum votes, or separately, which presumably would lower the number.

The CEC mulled over a plan to distribute the ballots together, thus siding with the ruling party’s preference. However, the pan-blues, who had severely criticized the CEC for being slanted towards the DPP government given that its members were mostly nominated by the cabinet, were not happy with the plan, indicating that they would possibly not honour it. Mobilizing the pan-blues’ local strength, eighteen cities and counties governed by KMT or PFP mayors and magistrates signed a joint statement declaring that they would distribute the ballots separately in their respective areas. This method had been used in the 2004 referendum. On 16 November 2007, the CEC announced that a one-step
procedure would be used for the parliamentary election and referenda. Almost immediately, pan-blue cities and counties announced that they would not follow the CEC ruling, but instead adopt a two-step procedure. The KMT presidential candidate gave them flank support.

The cabinet threatened to punish local government officials who failed to honour the CEC ruling, and even suggested possible criminal violations. Predictably, a row followed over whether the CEC had authority over local electoral commissions. In the midst of this dispute that had already thoroughly politicized the CEC, both referenda, and election procedures, Chen Shui-bian gave a speech that left people with the impression that he was contemplating even martial law as a way to resolve the standoff between central and local governments. Soon afterwards, Chen emphasized that he was not suggesting that he would actually declare martial law, only reminding people that it was within the president’s authority and that some people had suggested he use it to settle the controversy. The president’s comments did not lessen tensions. The KMT tried another tactic, pushing forward a legal bill on the reorganization of the CEC. The DPP immediately responded that they would do what it took to block it. The pan-blues then pushed through a resolution stating that the CEC could not refuse to allocate funds to local election commissions that wished to adopt the two-step procedure. The cabinet indicated that it would not abide by this resolution. The central government’s determination was reinforced by regulations passed by the CEC, according to which the premier would be able to remove local election commission members from office at its request. Finally, to break the deadlock that was turning the referenda into an extended farce, the CEC proposed a face-saving compromise whereby ballots would be picked up separately, but that the arrangement would follow a one-step voting logic. This compromise the KMT accepted and the referenda could proceed.95

If the DPP seriously had believed that the referendum strategy would work as well in the parliamentary election as it had done in the presidential election four years before, they were wrong. Just before polling day, the KMT decided to change their strategy. Instead of promoting their own referendum, they now asked supporters to boycott both referenda. Following the months of long and intensely politicized haggling over minute details, this was some anti-climax. Subsequently, neither referendum aroused voter passions and both failed to have a discernible effect on the election result, with the voting rate at a low 26.3 per cent for the DPP referendum (91.5 per cent in favour) and an almost identical 26.1 per cent for the KMT referendum (58.2 per cent in favour).96 Whereas the 2004 referendum may have given the DPP the final boost that it needed to
win the very tight presidential election, this time the strategy failed miserably. The party lost the election heavily, as the pan-blues managed to agree on joint candidates, which allowed their candidates to easily carry most election districts, given the new single member district election system that favours concentrating votes to one candidate per district.

Apart from the KMT boycott, the much smaller interest in and effect of the referenda stems partly from the different nature of the elections. Presidential elections are far more ideological in Taiwan and voters are less susceptible to suasion. In legislative elections, partisan ideological themes do not resonate as well. People also tend to vote for people they know, directly or indirectly. Finally, the ‘machine’ aspect, i.e., vote mobilization through networks and vote buying, is much more prominent, although this may have been reduced by the change of election system.

The January 2008 referenda were in many ways a dress rehearsal for the more important referendum on UN entry, to be conducted in conjunction with the presidential election two months later. However, with the failure of the January referenda, the DPP strategy for the presidential election was in danger of failing as well. The stakes were immense, as failure in yet another major election would be a devastating blow to party morale. A loss in the presidential election would also return the KMT to a position of strength that it had not enjoyed for almost two decades. With most of the counties and cities having already returned to KMT control (the townships never left it), and the legislative majority stronger than at any time since political liberalization, a KMT president would hand the party almost complete control of the political system, only a few years after it looked as if the KMT was a spent force. The stakes could not have been higher for the DPP. Yet, the DPP’s momentum was lost and the old ruling party sailed comfortably back into power eight years after having lost it.

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Almost from the start of Chen’s time in power, severe difficulties in achieving political compromises and coalition governments emerged. Both sides chose to put partisan goals ahead of a workable political compromise in the first real political showdown. The political crises testified to the dysfunctionality both of various politically appointed committees, such as the CEC, the NCC or the Referendum Review Committee, as well as judicial organs such as the CGJ, in arbitrating contentious political issues. The former tended to make what look like partisan decisions based on their political composition, while the latter suffered from an inability to produce decisive judicial rulings that gain wide acceptance.
Taiwan’s structural politicization extended to encompass all of these bodies and organizations during the intense struggle for control of the political system, and the boundaries of the political expanded deep into society. A fundamental distrust spread towards the impartiality of practically all organizations and institutions that had a role in politics. In the end, no body or person was any longer able to act as a perceived neutral arbiter in political disputes. Even if some institutions and people may have initially possessed such trust, they tended to lose it rapidly in the rough-and-tumble of Taiwanese politics. Chen Shui-bian failed to live up to his promise of being a president for all the people. Li Yuanzhe lost his non-partisan stature and general respect when he repeatedly showed partisan support for the president, while widespread admiration for the former president Lee Teng-hui quickly evaporated as he took an aggressively partisan stance after stepping down as president. Practically all the key committees were entirely or in part composed on political grounds and tended to vote according to partisan interests, or at least be suspected of it. Finally, the Council of Grand Justices was not up to the task of performing an independent judicial review resulting in an unequivocal verdict. Instead, it tended to turn into a pawn in the game played by the political parties.

While this politicization was ultimately structural in nature, political parties were instrumental in maintaining it at a heightened level. The KMT’s partisan blocking of a large number of government-sponsored bills brought to the parliament emboldened the DPP government to push even harder for legal changes. The DPP and Chen grew increasingly frustrated at pan-blue legislative obstructionism. Mutual trust between the two sides and their supporters eroded. As the parliamentary road seemed permanently blocked, the DPP turned to referenda instead. Employing referenda in this way promoted the politicization of not only the referenda themselves and related procedures, but also of the elections with which they were bundled. Of course, elections are about politics and politicizing issues in elections is only to be expected. However, the politicization of the elections and their outcome was accomplished by using the referenda as political tools in election campaigns. The pan-blue side regarded the referenda promoted by the DPP as partisan election gambits, just as many pan-blue supporters believed that Chen Shui-bian or the DPP had staged the shooting incident just prior to voting day before the 2004 joint presidential election and referendum. Consequently, the losing pan-blue candidates in that election refused to accept the result of the election. The pan-blues were hardly innocent with regard to partisanship, as was evident in the dispute prior to the January 2008 referendum, and in the local KMT-led counties’ refusal to abide
by the CEC ruling. If the pan-blues distorted the purpose of the legislature, then the pan-greens made a mockery of the referendum.

The detrimental effects that structural politicization had on Taiwanese society have all been present in this chapter. Social trust between groups suffered as a consequence of repeated intense political battles that often assumed a zero-sum character, especially when they touched upon issues of identity, power or party assets. Public trust towards a number of institutions from the legislature to the judicial system wore down, culminating in the utter disrespect that both political sides at times showed for the constitution. Ultimately, the public also lost faith in the political system. Slowly but surely, politicians were hollowing out Taiwan’s democracy from within. Small wonder then that many ordinary Taiwanese began distancing themselves from politics altogether, disappointed in the form democracy had taken in Taiwan.

NOTES

1 Chu, ‘Social protests and political democratization in Taiwan,’ 100.
2 DPP party charter [民進党党纲]. Available at: <http://www.dpp.org.tw> (accessed 8 August 2005), chapter V, article 64.
3 See Lassen, Jonathan, ‘Power play,’ Taipei Times 10 September 2000, p. 17, for a thorough account of the background to the issue.
4 There was a smaller crisis related to a river bed incident at Pachang river, which resulted in four lost lives, partly because of the slow response of the government. The premier offered to resign at that time, but the president refused his resignation. However, the incident led to the impeachment of the Vice-minister of the Interior.
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9 R.O.C. constitution, 2000 amendments, Art. 2 and 3.

10 Chen Yingci, ‘阿扁總統，聽聽台灣環境的聲音’ 聯合報 (United Daily News) 23 April 2000, p. 8; Chiu Yu-tzu, ‘Activists condemn DPP’s resolve on nuclear issue,’ Taipei Times 30 April 2000, p. 3; Chu, Monique, ‘Lin says DPP’s party line must guide cabinet,’ Taipei Times 4 May 2000, p. 3.

In 1994, Lin Yixiong had participated in a hunger strike appealing for a plebiscite on the nuclear power plant. He then founded an association devoted to promoting a referendum on the issue. The first notable action of the association was to walk around the island promoting the issue. Chiu Yu-tzu, ‘Nuclear plant in question,’ Taipei Times 9 April 2000, p. 2; ‘黑白輪唱’ 聯合報 (United Daily News) 5 May 2000, p. 2; Chiu Yu-tzu, ‘MOEA promises nuclear review,’ Taipei Times 23 May 2000, p. 2; Chiu Yu-tzu, ‘EPA wants new assessment of power plant,’ Taipei Times 24 May 2000, p. 3.

11 Chu, Monique, ‘Lin says DPP’s party line must guide cabinet.’ Taipei Times 4 May 2000, p. 3; Lin Meiling, ‘遊錫堃：民進黨不是“以黨領政”的政黨 指陳水扁退出黨務活動，並非不顧黨的政策、黨綱’ 聯合報 (United Daily News) 4 May 2000, p. 3.

12 聯合報 (United Daily News) 5 May 2000, p. 4.


However, by changing the question to whether one was for or against stopping of construction if no blackouts were to happen or alternative power supply measures were in place to solve power shortage problems, a majority swung in favour of the government’s position. Chu, Monique, ‘Nuclear decision fails to win over public, poll finds,’ *Taipei Times* 30 October 2000, p. 1.

Lin Chieh-yu, ‘Chen-Lien meeting, the calm before the storm,’ *Taipei Times* 28 October 2000, p. 1.


‘Lin calls for power-plant referendum,’ *Taipei Times* 8 July 2001, p. 2; Huang, Joyce, ‘Cabinet kills plant referendum,’ *Taipei Times* 11 August 2001, p. 3.


Lin Yixiong stood on stage right beside Chen Shui-bian to celebrate the first DPP presidential election victory in 2000. Author’s observations, Taipei, 18 March 2000.

This piece of information was given to the author by two *Lianhebao* journalists.

Author’s interview in Taipei, May 2005.

Author’s interview in Taipei, June 2005.

‘Anti-vote-buying drive gets credit for “clean” election,’ *Taipei Times* 5 December 2001, p. 3.


Author’s interview in Tainan, July 2002.

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38 Shih Hsiu-chuan, ‘Analysis: Legislative session a string of broken promises,’ *Taipei Times* 24 January 2007, p. 3.

39 Statute regarding the disposition of assets improperly obtained by political parties.

40 Author’s interviews in Taipei, November 2001 and May 2005.

41 Shelley Rigger has argued that the seeds of political gridlock had already been sown during the KMT administration. Rigger, ‘The unfinished business of Taiwan’s democratization,’ 290.

42 Author’s interview in Taipei, May 2005.

43 The 2005 budget was used as an example of a particularly difficult negotiation process in an interview with the vice-director of the Legislative Yuan’s Office of Procedures, responsible for overseeing mediation between party caucuses in parliament. Author’s interview in Taipei, May 2005.


45 Chang, Rich, ‘Grand Justices say legislature’s refusal is unconstitutional,’ *Taipei Times* 16 August 2007, p. 3.

46 Political parties nominate 15 candidates in proportion to the number of seats they have in the legislature, and the premier additionally three candidates. A separate review committee then elects 13 NCC members from the pool of candidates. The review committee will be composed of experts recommended by the parties in a ratio that reflects their seats in the legislature. Ko Shu-ling, ‘Communications body can’t escape politics: experts,’ *Taipei Times* 31 October 2005, p. 3.

47 ‘Legislature ends sixth session with little done,’ *Taipei Times* 23 December 2007, p. 3.

48 The revision to the constitution was then formally initiated by the Legislative Yuan. On 23 August 2004, the Legislative Yuan passed the constitutional amendment bill.

49 Author’s interviews in Taipei, April 2004.


In January 2004, it was estimated that there were 68,100 Taiwanese-invested companies operating on the mainland. ‘Business briefs,’ *Taipei Times* 3 January 2004, p. 11; P.R.C. Ministry of Commerce 2006, *Biggest exporting companies*.


Author’s discussion in Taipei, May 2005.


Yan Anlin and Lu Xiaoyan (2001) ‘民进党执政与海峡两岸关系’ [DPP rule and cross-Strait relations], 台湾研究 [Taiwan research], 3: 38.


Chen Shui-bian inauguration speech, 20 May 2000, Taipei.
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67 See Kallio and Mattlin, ‘Making language accord with the truth of things,’ for a modern application of this concept.


69 Cao Changqing, ‘Resolution must include “Taiwan”,’ Taipei Times 27 September 2007, p. 8.


71 Shan, Shelley, ‘“Taiwan Post” sent into history,’ Taipei Times 5 August 2008, p. 3.


74 This section draws on Mattlin, Mikael (2004) ‘Referendum as a form of zaoshi: The instrumental domestic political functions of Taiwan’s referendum ploy,’ Issues & Studies 40 (2): 155–185. Even Frank Hsieh has later indirectly admitted that coupling referenda with elections was an election tactic. ‘TSU to DPP: Separate the two votes,’ The China Post 22 January 2008.


78 ‘Referendum law could backfire, legislator says,’ Taipei Times 30 June 2003, p. 2; Chang Yun-ping, ‘Chen details issues to be put to vote,’ Taipei Times 8 December 2003, p. 1.


For the precise wording in Chinese see R.O.C. Ministry of Interior Affairs, *Referendum law 2004*.

The *Taipei Times* reported, citing sources within the DPP, that the early announcement of the referendum was in order to placate hard-core referendum advocates within the party who were disappointed at the referendum law’s content. Chang Yun-ping, ‘Hardcore DPP members pressured Chen,’ *Taipei Times* 4 December 2003, p. 3.

‘Taiwan’s Chen says ballot won’t affect missile deal,’ *Reuters* 19 February 2004.

Author’s interviews in Taipei, March 2004 and March 2000. For more on this, see Mattlin, ‘Referendum as a form of *zaoshi*.’


Author’s personal observations, Taipei, March 2004.

Several interviews with key DPP legislators and heads of party departments in Taipei, August 2002. For a more thorough argument of this election strategy, see Mattlin, ‘Referendum as a form of *zaoshi*.’

Unsurprisingly, Beijing and Washington, as well as other foreign governments, were alarmed at the 2004 referendum, fearing that it was introducing a precedent for a future referendum that could later be used to sanction some form of *de jure* independence. Swaine, Michael (2004) ‘Trouble in Taiwan,’ *Foreign Affairs* 83 (2): 39–49.


Ibid.


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Chapter 5

Informal political structures and politicization*

Most research on Taiwanese politics by political scientists focuses on formal rather than informal political structures. Topics such as the relations between the major political institutions, parliamentarism versus semi-presidentialism, the effects of the election system, or constitutional reform are de rigueur. While such formal structures certainly condition political behaviour greatly, the explanation for Taiwan’s politicization advanced in this book puts more stress on informal structures and the realities that people operating in Taiwanese politics confront as a consequence of these. Such informal political structures can be said to exist when certain social practices and patterns of behaviour have become so habitual that people have come to accept them as natural, unquestioned political realities, i.e., they structure and direct political action although they are not official, formal structures. In order to grasp the phenomenon of politicization in Taiwan, an understanding of the social structures that are politically relevant is needed, as they have an integral effect on the techniques of political mobilization that are effective, and thus on politicization as well. In particular, we should be interested in how political support in Taiwan is built up and maintained.

BUILDING POLITICAL SUPPORT

The most local elections differ from higher elections in the general closeness of social relations. While this is a feature of electoral politics everywhere, the strength of social and family networks and their widespread utilization in election campaigning, especially in the Taiwanese countryside, makes the

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point worth emphasizing. There is a long tradition in Taiwan of relying on local social networks. For example, during the Qing dynasty, people relied on traditional social networks and self-help to defend themselves in the absence of a strong state. The Japanese colonial government made use of local self-defence groups and the traditional Chinese *baojia* system of collective responsibility for maintaining social control, which had existed in various forms for centuries. The *baojia* system relied on the large lineages that were common in southern China. Membership of lineages could number in the thousands, with entire villages using the same surname. Today, pleas for campaign help in close social relationships are almost impossible to say no to, and campaigning local politicians also frequently mobilize such relations. Neither is ‘collective voting’ uncommon in the Taiwanese countryside, i.e., the household head effectively decides whom the family will vote for.

Politics both in Taiwan and in Mainland China appears to be inherently prone to factionalism. Factionalism and local factions were major issues in studies on Taiwanese politics during the 1990s. These studies often emphasized the corporate aspects of local factions, their longevity and strong internal identity. Although it is true that people in Taiwan often refer to all factions below the central level as local factions, there is a difference in degree of formalization between factions at the intermediate level of the political structure and grassroots social networks. The former are semi-institutionalized, with a name, leadership and long history, while the latter are informal networks of family and friends. Connections between formalized local factions and grassroots social networks tend to be based on informal personal relations between people at each level.

While I stress the differences between formal factions and informal networks for analytical purposes, both share roots that can be traced back to social networks, in particular the strong familism that prevails in the Taiwanese countryside. Politically influential networks are usually centred on locally influential families called *wangzu*. Such influential families can be seen as comprising a core family, relatives and loyal friends and followers. Famous examples include the Hsu Band in Chiayi, and the Yu family in Kaohsiung county. The Hsu Band was established by Xu Shixian, a strong mayor of Chiayi city. Together with her two daughters, Zhang Boya and Zhang Wenying, they have dominated Chiayi city politics for decades. Some of the most important business-originated family dynasties in Taiwan have become influential on the national political scene, where their interests often straddle politics and business. The Koo family is a prominent example. While this family is mainly engaged in diverse business interests, a key figure in the family, Koo Chen-fu, also held important political
posts such as chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation and as a member of
the KMT Central Committee.

At the local and intermediate levels politics in Taiwan is a kind of family
business. In stark contradiction to the importance of family and friends in local
elections, at this level the party is almost non-existent. Even party candidacy is
often elusive in local politics. In grassroots elections many candidates are KMT
party members, but as was previously noted, only a few of them openly flaunt
the party banner. Many prefer to campaign as independents. Local party cadres
maintain that displaying party symbols in local elections may even be offensive
to some voters. In local politics, a personal relationship with a candidate
invariably overrides party loyalty. Consequently, parties ignore the most local
level in elections largely due to difficulty in effectively influencing the outcome.
However, the KMT especially still often perceives local politicians linked to
it as forming the nucleus of its local base. From interviews I learned that the
party apparently counts three kinds of candidate in estimating its underlying
support: party nominees, other candidates who are party members, and ‘party
friends’, that is, candidates with relations with the party but not currently party
members.\textsuperscript{6} ‘Party friends’ were especially numerous after many KMT members
joined the newly formed PFP, but were still counted as KMT-leaning.

At the intermediate level of Taiwan’s political structure, the ability to deliver
favours and services is often used by voters to assess the politician’s competence
and ability. Political patronage takes several forms. Key political supporters
such as wealthy businessmen making campaign donations, so-called \textit{jinzhу},
often receive return favours in the form of tangible benefits for their businesses.\textsuperscript{7}
Ordinary supporters receive lesser benefits. These are usually dispensed through
the ubiquitous service centres (\textit{fuwuchу}). Taiwanese politicians traditionally
maintain one or more service centres as a combined physical interface with
supporters and their local office in the constituency. Requests directed to the
service centre usually involve seeking help to deal with minor administrative
problems. Some of the most common services offered are free legal counselling
in minor legal problems, free medical or financial/tax consultation, help with
job-seeking, and help with military service relocation. Among the more unusual
requests, two legislative assistants working in a legislator’s office in Taipei reported
receiving requests for help in finding a spouse. Politicians are also often asked to
participate in family events in order to ‘give face’ (\textit{gei mianzi}) to the host. The
services provided by service centres depend on the candidate’s former profession,
personal contacts and interests. For example, a lawyer running for legislative
office enlisted 25 of his lawyer friends to offer free legal consultation to voters.\textsuperscript{8}
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It is noteworthy that there are government- or market-provided alternatives available for most of the services that politicians provide. However, many people, especially older people in the countryside, often still prefer to seek help through a trusted local politician. Educated urbanites are more accustomed to seeking help through regular government-provided channels. Consequently, politicians targeting a mainly middle-class urban population increasingly do without service centres, although one may find them even in downtown Taipei.

In principle, services (fuwu) are given to anyone asking for help, and in interviews politicians and their staff stress that they do not discriminate between supporters and non-supporters when delivering services. In practice, there are, however, several ways of ensuring that it is primarily supporters who benefit from such services. Campaign donor lists and lists of people who have pledged their support, are actively compiled. For this reason, poor people sometimes give very small token donations. In small communities, this is not even necessary, as everyone basically knows whom everyone else supports. Those asking for help tend to be supporters. When they plead for help, they always make it known to the politician that they know someone, e.g., a vote broker, who is important to the politician, which provides an incentive to help. Benefits are particularistic and discriminating, something which pervades Taiwanese politics.

Taiwanese elections are very expensive. It is commonly estimated that a successful campaign for a seat in parliament will cost around NT$100 million (ca 2.5 million euros), while even becoming a councillor will easily set a politician back by several million. The higher the election level, the more money is involved, through vote buying, donations, party assistance and money paid by candidates to the party for securing a place on non-district party lists. Donations collected from supporters are recorded and the sums and names are often publicly displayed on the campaign office wall. In observing one southern legislative candidate’s campaign office in 2001, I noted down the publicly displayed campaign donations to the candidate made by individuals and enterprises. The data is shown in Table 5.1 (overleaf).

The total amount of displayed money donations amounted to around NT$5 million five days before the election. In addition, I counted around fifty non-money donations, for example, big flower arrangements, food and water packages, cigarettes etc. Some sources indicated that the biggest donations would not be recorded on the public record, as they would likely involve companies trying to secure political favours. According to the election law in effect at the time, individuals could not donate more than NT$20,000 and business groups more
than NT$300,000. The latter’s donations could also not exceed 10 per cent of their business profits.\textsuperscript{11}

**Table 5.1. Displayed financial campaign donations received by one legislative candidate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum (in NT$)</th>
<th>Number of donations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100,000–200,000</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000–99,999</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000–49,999</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000–19,999</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;10,000</td>
<td>~150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Recorded by the author during field research in southern Taiwan five days before voting day.*

When the financial stake increases, political support tends to become more calculative. While this is less prominent in local elections, it is not entirely absent. For example, the borough warden enjoys some financial benefits and significant power to appoint in the community setting, which is frequently used to repay help received during the election campaign. Neighbourhood heads (*linzhang*) are customarily appointed by the borough warden and become her or his vote brokers, which brings with it a significant incumbent’s benefit in future elections. For example, in the 2002 Tainan city councillor elections, an incumbent DPP borough warden got 63 per cent of all votes in his own borough. In 49 other boroughs his average was only 3 per cent.\textsuperscript{12}

How does the Taiwanese political reality look from the perspective of a young politician seeking a first elected position? The fictive account presented below, based on interviews and field observations, is a combination of typical elements from several similar career trajectories that I have observed and heard about during my interviews. Thus it does not depict any particular young politician’s career but attempts to synthesize a fairly typical career trajectory in Taiwanese politics during the DPP’s time in power.

Ms Wang Shufen is thinking of entering the elections but she is constrained by her lack of funds. She knows that elections in Taiwan are exorbitantly expensive. A legislative seat is out of her reach because she lacks the financial means. While she also knows that many candidates still buy votes, sometimes using money borrowed from the bank, she has decided to stay out of that, instead building her campaign on networks of social relations and her own activity.
Informal Political Structures and Politicization

Wang Shufen’s father, Mr Wang Zhiqiang, used to be a long-standing county councillor, which gives her a head start. While her father left politics a few years ago, many people still remember him. Luckily, he still has many friends in the area. It may be smartest to build up support in the same community her father was elected by and go for a county councillor’s seat first, Wang Shufen reasons. Her father promises to visit all his old friends and key supporters in the area and put in a good word for her. Mr Wang also helps his daughter ask for donations among family and friends in order to finance the campaign.

Then there is the tricky question of party affiliation. Ms Wang’s father, like most local politicians, used to be a KMT member. After having developed a sufficient independent support base during his time as county councillor, he decided to run as an independent candidate. The campaign assistance offered by the party was in any case not that essential for an old-timer like him. To Wang Zhiqiang’s surprise, his votes were not much affected by turning independent. But the daughter’s case is different and complicated by the fact that the DPP now holds the presidency. A few years before, Wang Shufen would have faced a relatively easy choice. The KMT was dominant, so it was a choice between either joining it or running as independent. Now the situation is different. But the DPP is still weak at the local level and the party’s power in national politics unconsolidated. It should be possible to join the party later if that should become essential, Wang Zhiqiang reasons. The father advises his daughter to campaign as an independent.

Apart from working existing social relations, Wang Zhiqiang knows that it is important to be seen and to give people time. People down in the south of Taiwan do not much appreciate receiving ‘impersonal’ greeting cards. They do welcome you to come in and sit with them for a while. Ms Wang and her father calculate that there are some 50,000 households in her election district. They decide to concentrate on the boroughs where their house, her father’s old service centre and her uncle’s medical clinic are located – around 9,000 households in all. They know that around 3,500–4,500 votes are needed to obtain a seat. If she concentrates her efforts on this area and gets around a third of all the votes cast in it plus some scattered votes in other areas that should just be enough.

Over the course of a few weeks, Wang Shufen goes around the chosen area several times, knocking on doors and talking to people. Most importantly, she listens to their problems, when they are brought to her attention. Meanwhile, her father has enlisted thirty vote captains among his old key supporters and some other socially prominent friends and relatives to help out with the vote mobilization. They in turn work their
relations. Unbeknown to the daughter, her father has given some of the vote captains a share of his savings to distribute discreetly to people they know, in order to increase the likelihood that they actually vote for her. While vote buying has lost some of its effectiveness in Taiwan, Wang the father knows that older people especially will still feel obliged to vote for a candidate after having received a larger sum of money. He also knows that few first-timers get elected in county councillor elections without vote buying. Wang Zhiqiang wants his daughter to get a seat perhaps even more than she does herself. Election victory would mean continuity for the Wang family’s political influence in the area – and social face (mianzi), of course. Besides, it does not hurt to have a daughter close to the local power centre, just in case.

On election day, Wang Shufen gains just enough votes to grab the last seat in her election district. She believes it is due to her activity in visiting people. Her father knows that his daughter's success is at least as much due to mobilizing his own network in support of her efforts, sometimes smoothed by targeted handouts of money. Nonetheless, now that she has gained a seat, she has a base from which to work. While the councillor's position does not carry big official financial benefits, it can be turned to advantage by helping out companies in need of a 'listening ear', for consulting fees, of course. The ordinary expense and meeting compensation that comes with the councillor position is barely enough to cover the expenses that go into setting up and maintaining a service centre, which no southern Taiwanese politician can do without. But Wang Zhiqiang knows that having one is just a minimum requirement, and that operating one successfully is what makes a difference and gives a young politician a chance to aim for higher office.

Two years into her first term, Wang Shufen has a very active service centre that employs two permanent staff and occasional volunteers. They have specialized in giving free medical advice. In this they have a natural advantage, as Wang Shufen's uncle operates a local clinic. The service has become increasingly popular, especially among the poor and unemployed. Ms Wang's popularity has not gone unnoticed by the local DPP party branch, which is actively looking to attract promising young independent politicians in order to build up the party's weak local structure. One day a local DPP legislator from the county approaches Ms Wang with an offer to join the party. The legislator, Mr Chen Xubo, sweetens the deal by offering Ms Wang generous help in the next councillor election campaign; both party assistance and personal help. He also says that they could consider setting up a joint campaign office, functioning as a joint service centre outside campaign time.
Chen Xubo has been urged by the local DPP branch to approach Wang Shufen with this offer, both as a favour to the party and as a smart personal tactical move. Joining forces with a young and energetic politician would be beneficial for Mr Chen, who has based his career more on the strength of his ideological appeal, but whose prowess in delivering services to supporters has been found wanting in internal party surveys. In Taiwanese politics, a politician acting as vote broker to another politician will mobilize her or his own loyal supporters to vote for the other politician (*la piao*). A major part of the campaign involves establishing and strengthening existing relations with key supporters. When a senior politician supports a junior politician, he or she will be seen on numerous posters and leaflets shaking hands with the other politician and will appear on stage during rallies campaigning for the other politician. At times, two politicians at different levels even share a campaign headquarters. Such dyadic relations also tie election levels together; a borough warden may support a city councillor, who in turn supports a mayor or a legislator, who then supports one of a few top politicians.13

After carefully considering the pros and cons of the offer, Wang Zhiqiang urges his daughter to take it up. He believes that the current political winds in the south are favourable to the DPP and that it will be advantageous to join the party sooner – when the door is still open – rather than later. He knows that the DPP is much more selective about accepting politicians from the outside than the KMT is. In the next election, Wang Shufen campaigns under the DPP banner. She now has a broader base of supporters. No longer dependent only on her own and her father’s social networks, which have expanded because of the popular services her service centre offers, she now gets a boost from the DPP, which tells a carefully calculated number of party loyalists to vote for Wang Shufen. But she is also aided by legislator Chen, who tells his loyal supporters to vote for her, since they are not direct competitors in elections. Wang Shufen retains her seat with a comfortable margin at the cost of owing favours to the party and Chen Xubo. She is now on the road to becoming a legislator.

There are several features of the Taiwanese political reality that have become facts of life that no single politician or political party is able to change and that anyone operating in Taiwanese politics has to face. Among these are the inordinate expense of running for office, the relatively small influence of parties in local politics, voters’ expectations that politicians offer particularistic services, and in particular the great influence of social networks and direct mobilization in election campaigning.
It is almost an understatement to say that Taiwanese politics is personalistic and particularistic. Although there are committed party loyalists, people tend to choose person over party. Cultivating a strong personal base of loyalists can be very effective in securing elected seats and, conversely, not doing so is often fatal to election prospects. This is especially true in party primaries where only party members are allowed to cast a vote, while party supporters’ opinions are gauged in opinion polls for the primaries. It is then relatively easy, even in legislative election primaries, to win by mobilizing a strong local base of personal loyalists. The DPP party primaries for legislative seats in the 2007 legislative elections are a case in point. Many successful candidates had a conspicuous concentration of votes in their own home area, where loyalties are cultivated through networks of friendship, active community presence, service centre services and mutual favours, including vote buying in some cases. Although the election district in legislative primaries covers all of Taiwan, most successful candidates got between one-third and two-thirds of their votes in their home area. If voters voted primarily based on public image or some other value, one would expect votes to be more evenly spread across Taiwan’s almost two-dozen counties and cities than is actually the case. However, a small caveat is added here regarding the interpretation of the results, as there is no point of comparison, for example, to primaries in other countries.

Given the importance of building a strong local base, it is uncommon in Taiwan for people to launch successful careers in politics directly in higher elections. In some contemporary Western polities, people who have first made a name for themselves outside politics can quickly launch a successful bid for a parliamentary seat. For example, the Finnish parliament has seen a long string of successful campaigns by former athletes, beauty queens, authors and other celebrities without any prior political experience. In Taiwan, it is very rare for people to get elected directly to parliament based simply on their previous celebrity status. A lot more work goes into constructing a political base, which usually has to be built up painstakingly from the bottom and by heavy reliance on the direct mobilization of supporters. Apart from massive vote buying, almost the only factor that can instantly turn around election fortunes in higher elections is gaining party nomination and thereby access to party supporters and other party mobilizational resources.
Informal Political Structures and Politicization

NESTED PYRAMID STRUCTURES

A blind spot in much writing on Taiwanese politics is the implicit or explicit assumption that a political party in Taiwan operates in much the same way as parties in established democracies in Western countries. There is reason to accept the idea that social structures condition informal political structures, but there is no reason to believe \textit{a priori} that Taiwanese political parties are structured like Nordic political parties, for example, beyond basic similarities such as both having a leadership, party members, and political resources that they mobilize to win elections. One key difference stems from the fact that Taiwan’s political parties have all recently evolved out of an authoritarian one-party system, whereas most Nordic political parties have a long history in a multi-party setting.

A related error is to assume that the national level political party and the local factions are quite separate. This view may have been justified at a time when the old central-level political elite within the KMT was intact, while the election-produced local political leaders had an altogether different social origin.\textsuperscript{15} However, the picture has long been more complicated, not least since local political leaders advanced through elections to take control of much of the legislature, or allied themselves with strong KMT politicians, as Vincent Siew and the Hsu Band did in the 1990s (Siew rose to become premier). While there are still differences between various levels of politics, these differences are now more nuanced.

In dealing with these problems in making sense of Taiwan’s political scene, it is useful to return to the roots of the informal political structure. Sun Yat-sen, the father of the modern Chinese state, allegedly complained that Chinese people are like a sheet of loose sand, after his seemingly unfruitful efforts at uniting the Chinese people. Later, the same idea received a sociological expression by the most famous Chinese sociologist, Fei Xiaotong, who explained that the Chinese have a ‘differential mode of association’ (\textit{chaxu geju}) where social networks emanate from each person, as opposed to Westerners’ ‘organizational mode of association’ (\textit{tuanti geju}) where social relationships are mediated by organizations. According to Fei, this is reflected in different kinds of morality: a general and universalising morality in Western society versus a contextual and particularistic morality in Chinese society.\textsuperscript{16}

Generations of China and Taiwan scholars have dutifully remarked on the particularistic nature of Chinese social relations, on the pre-eminence of the family, and on tendencies towards clientelism and factionalism in Chinese politics, but few have attempted to provide a more systematic analysis of what this ‘Chinese’ social structure implies in terms of the prospects for democratic
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politics, and concomitantly party structures and political stability in a multi-
party open competition environment.\(^{17}\) My contention is that the basic informal
building block of Taiwanese political organization is a dyadic relationship of
mutual support between two people at different hierarchical levels. This fact is
not fundamentally altered by the context being a political party, a local faction or
grassroots politics. This is also a key that clears up some of the misunderstandings
concerning the structure of the Taiwanese political party.

The knowledgeable reader will have noticed a similarity to the idea of patron-
client politics. Arguing that politics in many societies outside of established
Western democracies is permeated by such relationships is of course by no means
a new one. However, how much such basic social ways of relating and organizing
also affects political party structures in formally democratic settings may have
been insufficiently recognized. Patron-client type relations have usually been
described in political systems of less complexity, coupled with an environment
that does not follow laws as much as customs, such as codes of honour.\(^{18}\) The
existence of such relationships is traditionally accompanied by great differences
in power and wealth, which give a patron the means to dispense significant
wealth and protection, and clients the motivation to offer their support and
loyalty in exchange.

Politically relevant dyadic relations in Taiwan are somewhat different from
the traditional patron-client relations described by scholars. Generally speaking,
Taiwanese people are today affluent enough to be independent of any particular
benefactor. While services and favours gained through political connections may
provide a sense of added security, especially in the context of an inadequate social
security system, and can also be used and abused to gain an edge in business,
they are seldom vital to the well-being of the client. Furthermore, the emotional
bond in some dyads is more important than the material benefits, while in others
loyalty is based on more abstract ideological notions and the ability of a politician
to embody these. As a legacy of the past many Taiwanese are still oriented towards
building their sense of security through direct and often semi-affective relations
with local power-holders. The key thing to note is that political support and
loyalty among Taiwanese politicians are primarily based on relations between
two people rather than between a person and an organization.\(^{19}\) This observation
may not strike an American or an Eastern European observer as unusual, but in
many Western and Northern European parliamentary systems the relationship
to the party often takes precedence over any personal loyalty ties.

Among politicians, such dyads of mutual support are often merely short-term
election alliances, such as in the fictive case above. Party heavyweights sometimes
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Even campaign for candidates whom they dislike because of their mutual interest in party victory. The political alliances that are most useful in elections are those between politicians from the same party and the local or party faction in the same geographical area but at different hierarchical levels. Such dyads are in a position to offer mutual help without competing with each other. In distinction to vertical dyadic relations, party-sanctioned cooperation and vote-equalization (pei piao) between party candidates on the same election level is usually a temporary and unstable election alliance, which under the SNTV election system only worked with a conservative nomination strategy, with voters voting largely according to party wishes, and candidates refraining from competing against each other. Most of the time, the key criterion for successful cooperation between politicians, mutual benefit, is not met and same-party candidates fight each other for nomination and office.20

On the vertical axis, support networks work much better and it is therefore very common for politicians to cooperate by ‘donating’ their support networks to another politician, in particular if they effectively command sizeable vote blocs and the two politicians are not direct competitors. The favour will be returned when the donating politician in turn needs assistance.21 Mutually supporting politicians may also share campaign offices and service centres, they will appear in election commercials shaking hands, and they will take part in each other’s rallies on stage. Gaining the support of a powerful political leader can then be crucial to the election fortunes of lesser politicians. On the other hand, when a top political falls from grace, as happened with Chen Shui-bian towards the end of his second term, such support can also turn into a political liability.

It may seem incredible to the European reader that someone could simply promise the vote of someone else. However, the practice is common among Taiwanese politicians and it appears at least moderately effective. The effectiveness stems from the fact that people, especially older ones, tend to be loyal supporters of a particular politician and therefore susceptible to the moral suasion of this person. Keeping records of supporters enhances this effectiveness, a practice that is not unique to Taiwan. According to one KMT city councillor, all Taiwanese politicians collect lists of supporters (people who have pledged their support), a practice that I have also observed.22 While there is no absolute certainty that people will vote according to their pledges, politicians have some degree of confidence in these lists and regard them as their iron votes, and sometimes try to raise this likelihood by vote buying.

A recent article attempted to quantify the effectiveness of KMT vote buying, using data from a 1993 election. The study concluded that almost
half of the pledged votes were eventually not cast in the promised way. While this represents considerable leakage, on the other hand it also shows that vote buying is moderately effective, if it catches around half the votes. Vote buying is normally conducted through an elaborate organization that ultimately relies on close social relations. In one intensely studied township without local factions, Wang and Kurzman counted a massive 669 people in the KMT’s vote broker organization.\textsuperscript{23} The relationship is key, the money a token.

Theoretically, the informal political support networks in Taiwan can be characterized as a kind of \textit{nested pyramid structure}; individual politicians and their personal networks combine forces to form larger agglomerates of dyadic support networks (factions). These networks then form yet larger agglomerates of factions (parties). The structural situation is depicted in Figure 5.1.

![Figure 5.1. The political party as a nested pyramid structure](image)

\textbf{Note}: The big circle denotes a top politician; the squares are lower-level politicians or opinion leaders and the small circles ordinary supporters. The white objects represent politicians personal support networks, black formalized local factions and the grey objects party networks. The figure is adapted from Mattlin, Mikael (2004) ‘Nested pyramid structures. Political parties in Taiwanese elections,’ \textit{The China Quarterly} 180: 1047.

The middle tier of these layered networks, in particular, is prone to opportunistic switches from supporting one top leader to another, as such support networks are built and maintained largely on expectations of political patronage. Consequently, many local factions switched to cooperating with the DPP after the party won control over the presidency. Apparently in exchange for her support for the DPP in the presidential election, Zhang Boya of the Hsu Band was given the post of Interior Minister and later the provincial governorship after the position had reverted to being appointed instead of elected. Similarly, the Yu faction also received several political posts after the Chen victory. Yu Zhengxian later also occupied the post of Interior Minister.

Political parties based primarily on such vertical and particularistic ties rather than on ideological commitment to a common cause or shared values are inherently
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unstable and prone to internal factionalism. Indeed, it is almost superfluous to say that they are prone to factionalism, as they tend to be a collection of diverse and potentially competing party factions to begin with. For example, the DPP has had well-established named party factions, each with its own leadership and even regular factional meetings, since the beginning of the party’s existence. Recognising the problems caused by the party’s well-developed internal factionalism, the party decided to formally abolish party factions in 2006. However, the extent to which this has happened in practice is somewhat unclear.

Such a party structure makes the question of party leadership pressing. In order to hold this structure together and the inevitable centrifugal forces in check, strong and universally recognized leadership is called for. Political parties in Taiwan will tend towards disintegration unless they have been brought into a unified pyramid structure in which party networks and factional support networks all support the same top politician. If there are two competing party heavyweights, party support networks split easily as personal loyalties trump party loyalties and factions (both local and party) have to take sides, possibly leading to a party split (Figure 5.2), as happened to the KMT following the 2000 presidential election.

Figure 5.2. Two competing leaders causing a party split

Note: The figure is reused from Mattlin, ‘Nested pyramid structures,’ 1048.

In elite politics, personal charisma is linked to ideological identification, so that support for one of the top leaders indirectly signifies support for an ideological position. Political leaders frequently come to embody a particular ideological position, most clearly in the case of Lee Teng-hui. Parties are often built around such personages. The PFP formed around Soong Chu-yu, who lost the presidential election in 2000, while the TSU formed around former president Lee Teng-hui. Election issues similarly tend to follow a clear ideological line of division and are seldom crucial for election outcomes by themselves.
The ability to embody an ideological position can rapidly catapult a party and a political leader to seemingly formidable power. For example, the NP rapidly emerged as a splinter group from the KMT to take almost 13 per cent of the vote in the 1995 legislative election on the back of voters disaffected with a localizing KMT, just two years after the party’s foundation. A mere six years later, the NP was reduced to one legislative seat representing Kinmen on the mainland coast. Simultaneously, the PFP got 20.3 per cent of all votes in its first appearance in elections, while the TSU got 8.5 per cent. However, political parties and politicians are only the representatives of the basic ideological forces – pan-blue and pan-green – and can easily fall from grace if they are perceived to betray their basic values or fail in their bid for power. For example, when KMT legislator Lin Nansheng cast the decisive vote for a DPP candidate to head the Examination Yuan, his voters were furious and wanted him expelled from the party. Building a power position on ideology is precarious in Taiwanese politics.

New political parties in Taiwan have tended to emerge mainly from divisions within the political elite of an existing political party. This was a major factor behind the formation of the NP, PFP and TSU. So far, party splits have mainly afflicted the KMT. However, the model above claims to have validity for all Taiwanese political parties. The danger of a party split increases when a major political figure within the party comes into conflict with the party leadership and decides to leave the party. This occurred between Lee Teng-hui and Hao Bocun in the early 1990s, between Lee and Soong in the late 1990s, and later between Lien Chan and Lee.

Only a handful of people qualify as potential party-builders or ideological leaders for a new party. They need to be sidelined potential leaders in the original party, have a strong independent following, and represent a divergent ideological position. When these conditions apply, new political parties can emerge very quickly, as seen in the rapid emergence of the PFP. Recently, similar leadership conflicts with the potential to result in new parties have been the increasing distance between ideological figurehead and former party chairman Lin Yixiong and the DPP, and the conflict between Chen Shui-bian and Frank Hsieh. Such top political leaders are referred to as tian wang, which translates as ‘heavenly king’. Some of them have even dressed like various comic book stars on stage; for example, the president has been seen dressed up in Superman-attire.

Party opportunism coexists with personal political loyalty. Political leaders in Taiwan are often charismatic heroes to their followers. Both voters and lower-level politicians often switch party following their leader or patron. Politically active people tend to be more motivated by their own career prospects rather
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than by just reaping the passive benefits of support, and are therefore profoundly opportunistic, especially when a party’s fortunes on the political scene appear to be headed up or down. However, in high-level politics charisma alone is not enough if a party does not back it up. Shih Ming-teh, one of the charismatic leaders of the opposition movement, got only 1.1 per cent of votes in the 2002 Kaohsiung mayoral election when he ran as an independent candidate, despite Kaohsiung being one of the bases of the opposition movement.

For contending parties, the prospect of winning power by staying united assures internal stability best. The agglomeration of separate networks that forms the DPP has held together primarily because the party has managed to contain recurrent internal struggles to achieve the common goal of getting into power. However, horizontal cooperation is precarious in Taiwanese politics, where political support tends to be vertical and personalized, while benefits tend to be particularistic and exclusive. Horizontal cooperation is likely to last only as long as mutual benefit is assured.

The New Party quickly attracted 70,000 party members after its foundation. Wang Fu-chang has argued that the mainlanders who switched from supporting the KMT to the New Party were mainly those who were not dependent on the KMT for living arrangements or care. However, the NP tried to maintain a relatively horizontal structure, and its strong support quickly vanished. Former premier Hao Bocun would have been the natural ideological leader for the NP, given the NP politicians’ earlier support for him and Hao’s competition with Lee Teng-hui for the leadership of the KMT. Lee, however, shrewdly co-opted Hao by offering him a post as one of the KMT’s four vice-chairmen right after the NP’s breakout. Hao eventually cancelled his KMT party membership (just short of being expelled) three years later when he ran as an independent in the presidential election. Nonetheless, Lee apparently managed to deprive the NP of a natural leader by this move.

Leadership contests have a major effect on the stability of the party structure. At the highest level of politics, a notable change since political liberalization has been the increase in serious contenders for leadership, from having had only one undisputed leader from the 1940s all through to the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988. Following the DPP’s rise to power, there were four major leaders in Taiwan politics. There were also four major political parties, all related to one of these figures: Chen Shui-bian and the DPP, Ma Ying-jeou and the KMT, Lee Teng-hui and the TSU, and Soong Chu-yu and the PFP. More recently, the PFP and the TSU were knocked out of the competition. This was seemingly due to the change in the election system that introduced a party vote threshold of five
per cent in legislative elections. However, the election system is not a sufficient explanation. After all, both parties had a much higher support rate not long before. It is the political demise of Soong Chu-yu and the expected fading of Lee Teng-hui, already 87 years old in 2010, in conjunction with the change of the election system that caused two new waves of opportunism. In conclusion, after the power transition the number of top political leaders and relations between them has been essential to the structuring of the party scene.

For a ruling party, internal stability is dependent on incumbency and the prospect of staying in power. When there is a danger of losing power, prey starts circling the nest. Chen’s victory in 2000 introduced a measure of hierarchy among DPP party factions that lasted for a few years, but the party’s political fortunes seemed to turn down with the Legislative Yuan election in late 2004 and the bad streak continued in local elections the year after. While the party did not lose much in the way of votes (and actually gained votes in some elections), it lost against highly set expectations. The KMT, for its part, clawed back some of its lost support, partly due to NP and PFP politicians returning to campaign for the KMT. The pan-blues seemed to be moving towards unity again on the cycle of disintegration and integration.

Now it was the DPP’s turn to face the danger of party disintegration instead. After the 2005 elections, a DPP power struggle came into the open, with three party factions and four leaders contending for control of the party apparatus through the party chairmanship position. In 2006, party heavyweight and former premier Frank Hsieh publicly mulled over the possibility of the emergence of a new party, after his relations with Chen Shui-bian soured and Chen abruptly dismissed him from the premiership. However, this time the party weathered the storm. Once Hsieh won the party’s internal primary for the presidential candidacy in 2008 and was nominated as the party candidate, the party united behind him.

One of the distinctive features of Taiwanese democracy is the very active role that political parties and politicians adopt in mobilizing people for various political actions. Perhaps the most peculiar aspect of these political mass actions is that the governing party itself has been one of their most active organizers in recent years. One could perhaps say that Taiwanese politics has not quite shaken off the shadow of the authoritarian days in this respect. During the martial law era, the KMT was also active in mobilizing the populace to support the governing party in elections, or the government’s policies and political campaigns, while the DPP was most adept at organising street protests against the KMT government in the party’s early days.
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Mobilization for political action in Taiwan normally takes the form either of party efforts to mobilize attendance at mass rallies and demonstrations or vote-mobilization during elections. As noted above, there are, generally speaking, three motivational bases that are invoked when politicians mobilize supporters: ideological conviction, social networks and material interests. While the number of fluid non-party attached swing voters in Taiwan is significant, both the DPP and the KMT have an ideologically motivated core of supporters. The same holds true to various degrees of all other Taiwanese parties as well. The ideological core among a party’s supporters is naturally the easiest to mobilize, as long as the party manages to stay true to its political ideals. However, political parties, in Taiwan as elsewhere, tend to be pragmatic when it comes to the means they use to mobilize support, especially during elections. Thus, rather than relying purely on the ideological fervour of committed supporters, many other means are used as well, ranging from vote buying to enlisting pop stars to campaign for candidates.

One of the well-known defects of Taiwanese elections is vote buying, which grew to a veritable plague in the 1990s as the local factions most implicated in them extended their reach into the legislature and thus needed to mobilize ever greater numbers of voters effectively. Given the extraordinary expense of Taiwanese elections, vote buying can be very costly. However, as several of my informants pointed out, it is unlikely that people would engage in vote buying if it was totally ineffective, or if winning a seat would not allow the politician to recoup the ‘investment’. However, vote buying is only the most conspicuous form of using money to mobilize support in Taiwanese politics. Another example is politicians who pay the party membership dues of relatives and friends in order to allow them to vote (for the politician) in party primaries. In the early days of the DPP, even party leaders sometimes resorted to paying the membership fees of their supporters in order to ensure themselves a power base. Handing out small sums of money to those who attend often raises attendance at political rallies. At least this is what both sides claim that the other side is doing. While the allegations are hard to substantiate, the frequent comments to the effect that this occurs would suggest that it is plausible. The key point here is not that Taiwanese voters sometimes are swayed by money into voting in a particular way or attending a political rally; rather, that Taiwanese politicians and parties go to such lengths to ensure votes and attendance.

Another distinctive feature of Taiwanese political mobilization is the extensive utilization of social relations based on pre-existing social ties. In its most innocent form, politicians naturally expect their family and friends to vote for them.
However, in Taiwan such mobilization of social ties does not always restrict itself to gentle verbal persuasion. Given the strong obligations inherent in the Chinese notion of guanxi (social relationships), especially guanxi based on emotional ties, Taiwanese politicians often make it hard for their social relations not only not to vote for them, but also to avoid helping out in the campaign effort, by appealing to the obligations of the relationship and manipulating social pressures.

At the very least, friends and other social relations are expected to make a financial contribution to the campaign. The ‘face’ aspect strengthens this expectation. In Taiwan it is often almost impossible in practice not to give so-called red envelopes – specially designed donation envelopes filled with a carefully considered sum of money, based on the closeness of the relationship – when the social situation calls for it. The practice of giving red envelopes in lieu of gifts is ubiquitous in Taiwan and among ethnically Chinese people everywhere. Apart from elections, you see it for example at weddings, engagements, in temples and during Chinese New Year. For readers unfamiliar with the practice, it should be noted that the sums given can be quite substantial. Even among ordinary friends, it is common to give a sum equivalent to 100 euros. Relatives may give even several thousand euros at a wedding. A record is held of the sums of money and the donor’s name. In Taiwanese elections, this record is often publicly on display, e.g., by hanging it on the campaign office wall. Thus anyone coming to the office may see who has contributed and how much, and conversely, also note conspicuous absences. Furthermore, financial assistance offered during the campaign is not altruistic; rather it is a favour that needs to be reciprocated. Money exchanged between politicians and loyal supporters during the campaign is a token intended to maintain or strengthen the relationship.

Mobilization through social relationships not only includes family and friends. In Taiwanese politics, it is often enough for people to have met and talked with a politician a few times for the person to feel that they have at least a rudimentary guanxi. Soong Chu-yu, for example, became famous for visiting all 309 townships personally during his time as provincial governor, and cultivating close relationships with faction leaders. Mobilization through social relationships is also a standard method used by political parties. For example, the local KMT headquarters actively contacts party sympathizers by phone and sms-messages, as I observed during my fieldwork. These loyalists are then usually tasked with persuading friends and relatives in the district to vote for party-favoured candidates. Regular contact is also maintained with key persons within organizations and associations (party vote brokers), facilitating their help in vote mobilization during elections.
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Generally speaking, the higher the election, the greater the party’s role in mobilization. Massive political rallies were held in Taiwan in the spring of 2004 in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the joint presidential election and Taiwan’s first referendum. These rallies provided good examples of how party-organized political mobilization operates. One striking feature was the high level of organization behind the rallies, and the vertical/hierarchical nature of the mobilization. For example, in the so-called 2-28 hand-in-hand rally jointly organized by the DPP and the TSU parties, which featured a chain of people holding hands stretching the 486 km length of the island, each party politician had responsibility for a section of the human chain, based on the number of the politician’s supporters. So, for example, a DPP legislator would have to mobilize far more people to attend the rally than a city councillor from the same party. Another example is the big weeklong demonstration organized by the KMT together with the PFP and the NP in Taipei immediately after the election. A local KMT cadre from the south complained of how tiresome it was to organize the demonstrations. He had sat in the party-organized bus several times a day taking groups of demonstrators back and forth between Tainan and Taipei.

The frequent occurrence of such massive political rallies and demonstrations is undoubtedly one of the reasons why observers frequently get the impression that Taiwanese politics is intensely politicized. In my experience, people who have only been to Taiwan for a few days may spontaneously use the word ‘politicized’ to describe what they see. The crucial role of political parties in this aspect of politicization cannot be denied. Without parties, many of the biggest, most extravagant rallies and demonstrations would simply not take place. However, it is not only a question of impression, for mass rallies around divisive and symbolic issues are among the most powerful means by which the high level of politicization of the population is maintained. In this, parties and politicians are greatly aided by informal political structures that facilitate quick mobilization through existing vertical networks. Yet, maintaining high participation levels over a long period of time is challenging, and dependent on a constant flow of issues that are important to people.

The DPP was initially rather competent in raising and framing such issues, for example the first referendum in relation to the Chinese missile threat in 2004. The KMT’s most successful mobilization attempts were those that targeted alleged misdeeds by the DPP government, the ‘stolen’ presidential election in 2004, corruption of DPP political leaders, or rallies to support the KMT candidate in presidential elections. However, towards the end of Chen Shui-bian’s period in power, the enthusiasm of DPP supporters to participate
in such rallies waned amid widespread disillusionment. This was evident in the relatively lacklustre mobilization of support for the 2008 DPP-initiated referenda. The KMT’s return to power in turn removed the main motivation for KMT supporters to rally. However, given the strong political-cultural tradition on the island, mass rallies will easily return.

POLITICIZED SOCIETY

It is almost inconceivable to have persistent and intense politicization without some kind of social or political cleavage, as it is hard to sustain politicization without an underlying divide within society. Unsurprisingly, most studies on politicization also deal with social cleavages. Social cleavages have traditionally been seen as providing the impetus to form new political parties. In Europe, the most prominent social cleavages were traditionally related either to the oppositions between working class and capital, or the urban and rural population. In many younger democratic systems, the traditional left/right division has been less relevant and often ethnic divisions more prominent.

In Taiwan, a number of studies have talked about an ethnic-like social and political cleavage between mainlander and native Taiwanese, especially in the 1990s. During the Qing dynasty, ethnic conflicts had been common on the island, with practically every population group at some point coming into conflict with other groups, as the number of Chinese settlers grew. Han Chinese immigrants were in conflict with the aborigines. Hoklo Chinese (minnan) fought the hakka Chinese. Hoklo from Quanzhou feuded with hoklo from Zhangzhou, while there was no love lost between lineages, either. However, while the unclear future status of the old ruling mainlander elite is intimately related to Taiwan’s intense politicization, it is too simplistic to turn the issue into one of only ethnic social cleavage. For one, mainlanders account for no more than about 10 per cent of the population, while the political divide has split the island in two evenly matched halves in recent years. Furthermore, it was almost as common to hear a native Taiwanese (pan-blue supporting) voter deride the DPP-led government, as it was to hear a mainlander do so.

Rather than being a social cleavage based on ethnicity, the underlying cleavage in Taiwanese society is of a more complex political nature. At the heart of it is the question of nationness, the symbols that go with it, and a clash between two clearly demarcated competing political elites that are committed to opposing interpretations of the nation. While this seems to reduce the question into one of independence from or reunification with Mainland China, the issue is not
that simple, either. According to most opinion polls, only a minority of people favour *de jure* independence, but even fewer people would like to see quick reunification. Most people take a pragmatic stance and favour maintaining the status quo, either for the time being or indefinitely.\(^3\)

The real ideological divide in Taiwan is between those who are committed to retaining the symbolic Chinese connection, and those who are intent on dismantling this legacy. This divide in turn is partly related to historic family trajectories, usually predisposing families with close links to the party-state to wanting to retain the legacy of the R.O.C. and the symbolic connection to China. Those lacking such links and sympathetic to the opposition movement are more ready to dismantle them. While I lack detailed data to prove it, anecdotal evidence suggests that those native Taiwanese who were more involved with the KMT party-state and benefited from it, for example as civil servants, teachers or party members, are more likely to want to preserve the island’s Chinese trappings, continue to support the KMT and semi-automatically opposed DPP government actions.

The dominant cleavage in Taiwanese society today is essentially a political one, and much less a social one based on ethnicity, religion, class or some other common dividing factor. By this I mean that the fault line of the cleavage is not defined by social group categories as much as by divergent ideological positions. However, contrary to the Eastern European destruction of old loyalties and the emergence there of new dominant cleavages after political liberalization and the start of open political competition, in Taiwan a dominant political cleavage had already formed prior to political liberalization and has continued relatively intact ever since.\(^4\)

Needless to say, the nationness issue is a highly emotional one for some voters, and not surprisingly political parties often purposefully make use of it in election campaigning, commonly by attacking or defending Taiwan’s Chineseness. Taiwanese voters are, generally speaking, far more prone to vote ideologically in higher elections than in local elections, as the positions at stake are able to influence larger issues. Campaigning in major elections therefore makes heavy use of symbolic issues, cues and associations revolving around the blue/green political divide. Parties and politicians try to associate themselves either with pan-blue or pan-green symbols and issues, depending on their constituency’s preferences.\(^4\) While political opportunism is rampant, people seldom cross this ideological line of division. Voters also tend to move within these ideologically delimited areas, although they may readily switch parties within the political block.
In essence, the cleavage around which partisan bifurcation occurs is about an attack on the Kuomintang-dominated *ancien régime* and a defence against this attack by those loyal to the old regime. The years and months immediately preceding political liberalization saw a swiftly developing groundswell of popular discontent against the regime and all its shortcomings. The anti-feeling united a motley collection of interests that otherwise had little in common. While the general politicization of society soon peaked in 1988 and slowly waned after a few hectic years of demonstration and after the regime in many ways responded to the demands, the years 1986–1989 proved to be the politically formative years for many.\(^42\) At the end of this period, Taiwan had begun its move towards political liberalization and full democratization. The island now also had an opposition party.

While rallying against the regime’s perceived shortcomings had a broad social base, the support base of the new opposition party was narrower, and for a long time more or less unchanged in size, judging by election results. In the 1989 legislative election, the party captured 28.2 per cent of the vote. Nine years later, the party’s vote was essentially unchanged at 29.6 per cent, although the KMT’s vote had fallen, partly due to the splintering away of the New Party. Even then, the DPP was a collection of diverse interests and factions united more by what they were against than by what they had in common.\(^43\)

Ideologically, the DPP was originally built on the twin pillars of a call for greater democratization and a striving towards independence for Taiwan. Most of the party’s political drives consequently aimed at furthering either one of these goals. While Taiwan indeed underwent a remarkably smooth step-by-step transition to formal democracy, the DPP was not able to achieve this by itself. In fact, there was little that the party could accomplish alone, being a minority party in opposition without the control of the presidency. However, the DPP found an avid ally in the president, Lee Teng-hui, who had come to share similar ideals, and in the so-called mainstream faction within the KMT that supported Lee.

Throughout the 1990s, the DPP in opposition and the KMT mainstream collaborated on a number of political reform issues, most significantly on the constitutional amendments in 1997, thus marginalizing both the non-mainstream within the KMT and the New Party.\(^44\) The New Party drew its strength mostly from mainlanders in the Greater Taipei region, many of whom were fiercely loyal to the ‘old KMT’ and the Republic of China, but equally loathing of Lee. As a side note, when I first began conducting interviews in Taiwan, this anti-Lee feeling was quite palpable among some in the political elite in Taipei. On the
other hand, there were also many ardent Lee loyalists within the party, a few of whom were later co-opted by the DPP. In the 1994 Taipei mayoral election, and again in the 1996 presidential election, the NP claimed that the DPP and KMT had banded together to prevent the NP-supported candidate from winning – in 1994 by the tactic of dropping the KMT candidate Huang Dachou in order to save DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian, and in 1996 by dropping the DPP candidate Peng Ming-min, in order to save KMT candidate Lee Teng-hui. Similar allegations were made by some Soong Chu-yu supporters after the 2000 presidential election, accusing the KMT and the DPP of colluding to prevent a Soong victory.45

The fact that Lee Teng-hui remained at the helm of the KMT from 1987 until 2000 while subtly undermining the basis of the party’s hold on power and later engaging in vitriolic attacks on the party may appear confusing to the outside observer. However, to many of those old party loyalists who first left the party in 1993 to form the New Party (originally called the New KMT), and then in 2000 to form the People First Party, it was quite clear that the main enemy at the time was Lee Teng-hui, and not the DPP.

The day after the party lost the presidential election for the first time, I was caught between the KMT party headquarters, an angry mob and riot police for hours. The protesters appeared to consist of KMT and New Party members who were furious at what they alleged to be Lee Teng-hui’s betrayal.46 A common view was that Lee had purposefully caused a rift with popular Soong Chu-yu by making it clear that he would not be the party’s choice as presidential candidate. Following this, Soong withdrew from the party, running as an independent candidate against the KMT and DPP candidates and two marginal candidates. This split the KMT party vote and ended up handing the victory to the DPP and Chen, who defeated Soong by a small margin. The KMT-nominated candidate, Lien Chan, performed miserably, only garnering roughly the same number of votes as there were party members.

Whereas the underlying political cleavage was well established by the late 1980s, it was only after the power transition that the elite conflict shifted to one between the new ruling party elite and the old power elite as a whole. The ‘Lee factor’ that had dominated Taiwanese politics throughout the 1990s slowly lost significance. Many hardcore Lee loyalists had initially followed him into the newly founded TSU, while others either shifted to support the new government or switched patrons within the KMT, often to support Lien Chan. As noted earlier, apart from the immediate power transition, the DPP party has not been very welcoming in accepting defectors from the KMT. Anecdotal evidence

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suggests that more people from the former political elite were initially inclined to switch to supporting the new regime than actually did.

Soong and then-KMT chairman Lien Chan cooperated on a joint presidential ticket in the 2004 election. The bid failed narrowly, and the independent political influence of Soong evaporated soon afterwards. Chen Shui-bian probably sped up the process by publicly contemplating an offer of political cooperation with Soong and the PFP in early 2005. Soong eventually rejected the offer, but only after a long silence, which left the impression that he was seriously considering accepting a political position offered by the DPP government. To many, this finally revealed the profound political opportunism of Soong, and antagonized the PFP’s base, who were ideologically opposed to any cooperation with the DPP and Chen. At the same time, it also underlined that even Soong no longer believed in the future of his own party. Not surprisingly, many key PFP politicians began returning to the KMT soon after. Soong still made a final bid for political office in the 2006 election for Taipei mayor, but managed to garner only a fraction of the support he had commanded just a few years before.

Since 2000, the elite power struggle intensified and converged with the underlying political cleavage in society. At the same time, the lines of division also hardened. After the first year of DPP rule, few politicians switched from the pan-blue camp to supporting the new ruling party, although many switched party within the two political blocks. Whatever their internal differences (and they were many), the pan-blues were for eight years locked into a situation of having lost access to the resources, benefits and power that comes with being in the governing party elite, but with a significant amount of obstructionist gunpowder to be expended, primarily in the legislature, and, for many, continuing patronage from a still-rich KMT.

In the introductory chapter, I noted that the state’s role as a distributor of benefits has often been linked to arguments about the politicization of the state. Grzymała-Busse argues that a politicized state’s structures have been captured by political competitors, such as political parties. The administration and regulations may then be shaped by the ad hoc needs of political agents rather than by policy objectives aimed at providing public goods. However, conventional indicators used to gauge the level of politicization, such as the size of the state or the general economic relevance of the state for its citizens, appear to point towards a low level of state politicization in Taiwan. The state is not particularly big, whether measured by tax income collected, redistribution of income, or the number of state employees. The size of Taiwan’s public administration relative to the total workforce stood at 2.2 per cent in 2003, compared with Hungary’s 7.9 per cent,
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the Czech Republic’s 3.6 per cent or Slovakia’s 4.2 per cent. However, within the political elite, the number of people tied to and more or less dependent on the KMT party-state was significant. Using a broader measure, central and local civil servants made up around 2.7 per cent of the population until 2000. In addition to ordinary civil servants, there are also ‘black officials’, meaning people employed in government offices on political grounds without proper qualifications. Before Chen Shui-bian came to power there were some 3,000 full-time salaried KMT cadres and in addition thousands of elected politicians benefiting from party nomination.

Until recently, the state in Taiwan did not collect much by way of taxes, nor did it provide many universally available public services for tax money. In 2003, total government expenditure represented only 12.8 per cent of GDP, while social welfare expenditure accounted for only 3.1 per cent of GDP in 2001. But these figures do not tell the whole story. The KMT-dominated state assumed very different roles for different segments of the population. Whereas the general population did not have much interaction with the state in its capacity as a distributor of social benefits – there was for example no general pension system – some of the mainlander minority were heavily reliant on the state for their well-being. Initially, the state needed to provide for the ca 2 million mainlander soldiers who followed it to the island. It therefore built residential areas for them and their families, the so-called juancun.

Many mainlander soldiers initially found it hard to get a job on an island where they lacked the requisite connections. They were therefore heavily over-represented in sectors linked to the state: public schools and universities, state-owned enterprises, the police force, the civil service and, naturally, the military and security services. This may not have been so controversial if it were not for the fact that public sector jobs carried special benefits far beyond better job security. Government employee benefits included retirement pensions (not widely available), free education for their children, income tax exemptions for school teachers and military personnel, and a preferential 18 per cent savings interest rate that could actually result in higher incomes after retirement than during active working life. While these benefits were not directly discriminatory in an ethnic sense, given the ethnic composition of the public and private sector workforces, the mainlanders naturally were disproportionate beneficiaries of the system.

In addition to the state-provided benefits came party-provided benefits and a massive system of indirect benefits accruing from elected office. A significant carrot was a generous party pension offered to long-time party cadres, for which
profits generated by party-owned enterprises were used. KMT party assets have commonly been estimated to be worth several billion euros. The pension usually came as a one-off package offered upon retirement to cadres who had served at least 18 years in the party organization. According to an informant, the pension package could in 2002 amount to as much as NT$7 million (around 200,000 euros at the time) for a long-serving manager at a local party branch. Women’s associations set up by the KMT after it came to the island would also provide social security benefits to party members and their families. Such associations had up to three million members. Because of the population imbalance, native Taiwanese also came to enjoy such benefits, as the local level both in party and government became populated mainly by native Taiwanese over time.

Perhaps the hardest part to grasp of this spoils system is the election system. Formally, only higher elected positions such as those of legislators or mayors are generously salaried. In 2008, legislators received a NT$180,000 monthly salary and, in addition, NT$120,000 for general expenses and NT$420,000 in subsidies for assistants, part of which some legislators apparently in practice pocket for themselves. Lower positions such as those of a city councillor or a borough warden only offer meagre direct financial benefits, although other privileges, such as local influence over appointments or social prestige are also valued. The fact that election campaigns have become exceedingly expensive would seem to lower the incentive for people to run for elected office in Taiwan. However, as mentioned, people would not run for office if they did not expect to be able to recover this substantial investment while in office. The KMT created a very elaborate patronage state that was able to incorporate elections smoothly. Despite the power transition, the system was not entirely broken.

In practice, for almost every elected politician in Taiwan there will be a group of family and friends who also benefit to some extent. For example, a borough warden customarily gets to appoint neighbourhood heads, which can number in the dozens, and members of community development committees. The warden receives a salary and pension and the social network gets funds for activities and various perks. Salaries for higher elected positions are often dwarfed by consulting fees that in practice are a sanitized and institutionalized form of political bribery that politicians collect, especially from companies seeking various policy benefits. A seat in the legislature also gives immunity from arrest and detention during legislative sessions and full immunity for all speeches made in the legislature. It is not unheard of for legislators to meddle with criminal investigations.

Taiwan’s legislature is infamous for its gangster influence. One of the strange consequences of the political and election systems is that a legislator targeted by
several criminal investigations could act as convener of the legislature’s Judiciary Committee. A fairly common scene is of police waiting outside the doors of legislators with criminal entanglements on the day when the lawmaker’s term ends. If the legislator is not re-elected, he is arrested and put on trial because his immunity ends. If his election bid succeeds, the police have to pack their bags and wait for the next election. Needless to say, the stakes in the elections for such politicians are inordinately high.

A vicious circle was created following the introduction of full elections. Election campaigns required considerable outlays to succeed, especially if vote buying was involved. Politicians financed these outlays by taking big bank loans, which were often not repaid, or by going to local companies and demanding contributions to their campaigns. Enterprise managers in Taiwan are often apprehensive of powerful local politicians, who can either facilitate or block their plans by administrative means. As official remuneration for office-holders rarely is enough to recuperate the investment in the election campaign, politicians themselves became deeply involved with business interests. In fact, eventually it was not easy to separate economic and political functions, as local factions came to hold both significant business interests, especially in construction and transport, and political office. These interests were sometimes also linked to criminal interests.

Financial resource control in Taiwan is centralized, with locally collected taxes being routed through the central government and redistributed to local governments. Of the redistributed money Taipei and Kaohsiung cities have taken close to half, while all other cities, counties, townships and villages share the rest. The high degree of budgetary centralization and the KMT’s long-time monopoly on national power meant that the KMT could use budgetary means to distribute benefits to party loyalists while still in power. For example, the party-state used subsidies for public construction to favour KMT-controlled areas and filled KMT party coffers through various contracts and subsidies. In the countryside, farmers’ associations and associated credit cooperatives became the stronghold of factions, given that these associations had a big influence on the livelihoods of farmers, and because farmers deposited their money in the credit departments of farmers’ associations. This gave their bosses large financial means, oversight of these funds being lax. The local credit institutions also provided considerable means for distributing local political patronage in the form of employment or other favours. In many ways, local factions, rather than political parties, could then be the political presence in the local setting. During Taiwan’s rapid development, many formerly rural areas were engulfed
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by cities and became their suburbs. Urbanized local factions extended their business interests into the rapidly developing construction business, as well as public transportation.54

Although local factions often controlled the local political scene, they were intimately related to political parties. Initially this involved only the KMT, which developed sophisticated means to control them.55 Almost all local faction politicians were also nominally KMT members. The local faction-party nexus worked on a bargain between the two whereby the party acquiesced in the local factions’ *de facto* control of local politics, in particular in the countryside, in return for their support for the ruling party. Over time, the patronage practices of local factions became an integral ingredient in the range of means by which the party secured its political dominance, even as first limited political competition and then full competition were allowed. At the same time, the party itself was almost engulfed by the influence of local factions.

One of the troubles many scholars of Taiwanese politics seem to have in making sense of the whole picture appears to be the difficulties in reconciling the ‘machine politics’ perspective and its self-interested, spoils-maximizing and calculating political entrepreneurs with the conspicuously ideological and emotional behaviour of participants in many elections and active efforts by political parties to manipulate such sentiments.56 As a consequence, two strands of study have developed largely separately, one focusing on local factions, clientelism, patronage, vote buying and the SNTV election system, the other on issues of national identity, ethnicity, independence/reunification and polarization. The two perspectives are often separated unnecessarily. The difference in perspectives arises from looking at different parts of the whole. Like the blindfolded people in the story trying to describe an elephant by touching it, people touching on various parts of Taiwanese politics can justifiably end up with very different perspectives on it.

 Taiwanese politics exhibits both a high degree of party opportunism, especially among politicians, and ideological fervour. These do not contradict each other. While it is true that party loyalty is in short supply in Taiwan, opportunism towards political parties does not mean ideological laissez-faire. The blue/green ideological divide is wide, and the general blue or green orientation among people appears very solid and unchangeable. This stability is easily taken to imply stability in party structure, but it is not the party structure that is stable; rather it is the underlying ideological division. There is basic support for each side, which more or less cuts the island politically in half, roughly on a north-south axis.57
The blue/green divide is not synonymous with the ethnic division. The gist of the divide is a decades-long movement to localize the use of power and allocation of resources in Taiwan by those who were on the losing side during the old regime (many pan-green supporters), and reaction to this by those who stand to lose the most from localization, such as those linked to the KMT party-state through public or party employment (many mainlanders) and those who benefited from KMT patronage through local factions (mainly native Taiwanese). The latter group is more easily co-opted by the pan-greens.

The independence/reunification issue forms a second dimension of the pan-blue/pan-green divide but is better described as a question of how close relations should be between Taiwan and Mainland China. Here positions range from those who wish for a total divorce (the TSU) to those who desire very close relations (the NP). The ideological fault line runs between those wanting closer ties and those seeking to maintain the distance. This controversy manifests itself whenever political issues touch upon the ideological divide, such as in the political proposals to allow direct flights to Mainland China, change the passport or alter the writing system used on street signs.

The political cleavage in Taiwan is not only about national identity or the ethnic issue, as is widely assumed by commentators on Taiwanese politics. However, this is not to claim that national identity and ethnicity are entirely without influence. During the DPP’s time in power in particular, the symbolic aspects of national identity were heavily used as political tools to rally supporters and frame the debate. To summarize the gist of these symbolic battles, it revolved around the legacy of Chineseness in Taiwan. The most ardent participants in anti-DPP government protest in recent years include a disproportionate number of mainlanders, old soldiers as well as civil servants, while the pro-government protesters tend to be mostly minnan and from the south of the island.

The DPP administration’s growing use of the controversial symbolic issues towards the end of its time in power indicates that it increasingly turned towards courting its base supporters, just as the cabinet itself became more partisan over the years. Knowing full well that appealing to Taiwanese symbolism and degrading or even vilifying Chinese symbols is still offensive to many in the electorate, the party apparently calculated that it nevertheless had more to gain than lose from such a strategy in the beleaguered domestic situation. In external relations, the administration similarly chose to endure predictable outbursts from Beijing and reproaches from Washington, and increasingly Brussels as well, about needlessly stoking cross-Strait tensions.
The symbolic battles have the most significance for ideological base supporters (jiben jiaoyi pai). While the more moderate middle tier of the electorate may be relatively indifferent to such symbolic issues most of the time (presidential elections have been exceptions), there are substantial groups on both sides of the ideological fault line that are committed enough to personally take part in recurring lengthy demonstrations and sit-ins in order to protest against some action targeting these symbols, or alternatively in support of such action. As mentioned, such mass actions are important in maintaining a high level of politicization in society.

**ZAOSHI, PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE AND THE THEATRICAL SIDE OF POLITICIZATION**

By now, it should be clear to the reader that notions of strength, power and struggle, and the display of these, are important in Taiwan’s political culture and intimately related to its politicization.60 Taiwan’s legislature became known as the fighting parliament in the 1980s for the frequent scuffles that broke out on the floor of the legislature, and it still happens that teacups and fists fly during a legislative debate, followed by predictable media frenzy and lawsuits. Consider this newspaper depiction of a scene in the legislature in May 2007:

Expecting hand-to-hand combat, both blocs were well prepared. Forty opposition lawmakers had barricaded the platform of the speaker, who is from the opposition Kuomintang (KMT), with their own bodies to repel an invasion of their DPP colleagues long before the legislature was scheduled to open. DPP lawmaker Wang Hsing-nan, however, led a surprise attack to prevent the speaker Wang Jin-pyng, president of the Legislative Yuan, from entering its floor to start the day’s plenary session, where a draft organic law of the [central election] commission and the 2007 national budget bill were on the agenda. Wang Jin-pyng, under heavy escort of his fellow Kuomintang lawmakers, tried to sneak into the floor from the back door at 9:37 a.m. Under command of Wang Hsing-nan, scores of DPP legislators attacked the small Kuomintang contingent. Kuomintang fighters broke their human barricade and rushed to its rescue. The rescue didn’t come in time. After he had failed to make good his sneak entry, the parliament speaker declared: “That [attack] did democracy a great damage.” At 10:19 a.m., however, the opposition party KMT succeeded in reoccupying the speaker’s platform. Wang Jin-pyng, installed at 10:30 a.m., proclaimed the plenary session open. The whistle was blown for
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kicking off the game. Never was a free-for-all so fierce, vicious and bloody as the one that followed. Many were injured, one of them so seriously as to be taken immediately to the next door Taiwan University Hospital. No one knew who hit Kuomintang legislator Chiang Yi-hsiung, whose forehead bled profusely. He was hospitalized immediately. Wang Jin-pyng was unharmed, however. He was protected by Yen Ching-piao, leader of the Nonpartisan Solidarity Alliance known for his mob connections. In fact, DPP lawmakers didn’t dare to attack Yen, who served as the speaker’s guardian angel.61

Despite these violent images, Taiwanese politicians have to be lauded for keeping political violence in check, in spite of the powerful emotions aroused. One incident, in particular, impressed me. Following the extremely narrow loss in the 2004 presidential election, political tensions again ran high. Opposition supporters set up a protest camp outside the presidential palace on Ketagalan boulevard and demonstrated non-stop for more than a week until the police eventually removed the last diehards. With emotions running high, a few minor scuffles broke out. Opposition politicians were agitating the crowd for days on end behind barbed wire and riot police. Whenever tempers appeared to rise too high, the politicians on stage would tell their supporters to sit down on the ground to prevent accidents, and almost immediately the supporters would do as they were told. The agitating politicians would repeatedly remind the demonstrators that they are ‘peaceful and rational’ people.62

Serious political violence is not as common in Taiwan as in other Asian democracies, such as the Philippines, Thailand or India. In recent years, the most serious incidents have been an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the president and vice-president before the presidential election in 2004 and a handful of murders in local politics. An investigation concluded that the former was due to a desperate act related to gambling on the election outcome, while the latter incidents have mostly been gang-related. It is not the violence in Taiwanese politics that stands out by international comparison, but the high proportion of theatrical struggles and show fights in relation to actual physical injuries. Intriguingly, feuds between local communities in late 18th and 19th century Taiwan were highly organized, to the point of displaying ritual formality, feuds often being organized and financed by local temples.63 This suggests that there are deeper political-cultural roots to the ubiquitous Taiwanese displays of political conflict.

The emphasis on struggle in Taiwanese politics has spilled over into the political language as well, with election activities frequently being described
in militaristic terms. For example, the expression *ta mei daguo zhang*, which literally translated means ‘she has not fought battles’, is sometimes used of a person who has no practical experience in conducting election campaigns. The two main political camps are referred to as the *lanjun*, the blue camp (or army), and *lüjun*, the green camp (army). Meanwhile, a campaign song is referred to as a *zhange*, or a ‘battle song’. The war analogy may seem somewhat far-fetched, but many participants certainly take election battles very seriously in Taiwan. In the run-up to the 2004 presidential election and referendum there was a virtual ‘arms race’ of political mass rallies. In the two biggest such events, the DPP and the TSU together organized a huge human chain to ‘protect Taiwan’ (*shouhu Taiwan*), in practice to support the Chen Shui-bian campaign. The mass action was modelled on the Baltic countries’ human chain in 1989. An estimated 2 million people took part in the chain that ran 486 kilometres from the island’s northernmost point to its southernmost cape. Pulling off this hand-in-hand rally, which occurred on the sensitive day, 28 February, was a great coordination feat and a very potent election weapon, given the large number of people mobilized. The event made a pan-blue rally of a few tens of thousands in Kaohsiung on the same day look measly in comparison.

Following the massive pan-green organized rally some local KMT campaign organizers in the south of the island were visibly nervous, with higher-level party cadres running around doing face-to-face checks on the firmness of their grassroots support. On the other hand, the DPP people appeared elated, reporting that the pan-blues had started fighting amongst themselves. The 28 February event had been a hands-down battle victory for the green side. However, the pan-blue camp managed to pull its ranks together and countered two weeks later with an equally massive mobilization in the 13 March rally, also bringing an estimated two million people to the streets. Despite another huge DPP counter-rally in the southern city of Kaohsiung the same day, the rally on 13 March again shifted the election balance according to several local political observers.

After the DPP’s crushing defeat in the 2008 legislative election, presidential candidate Frank Hsieh used strong militaristic language, telling his campaign team that everybody must prepare themselves for ‘a fight to win or die’ and to ‘cut off all avenues of retreat’ in the presidential election. Taiwanese political rhetoric is prone to such hyperbole. At various points during Chen Shui-bian’s time as president, the opposition had even likened him to a new Hitler, Osama and Saddam. Such instances of political theatricality and political language use should lead us to suspect that they have some meaning for the participants and audience and serve some political and perhaps psychological function. Scholars
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writing on Chinese (including Taiwanese) political and social psychology have previously noted a pronounced potential for sudden violent behavioural outbursts, both in everyday human relations and in politics, a phenomenon Lucian Pye linked to the Chinese propensity to treat the failures of formal institutions as being due to a flawed and undeserving personified authority.67

In the previous chapter, I referred to the phenomenon of combining referenda and elections as a political strategy that centres on mass mobilization. The way Taiwan’s first referenda were used by the executive branch draws on tried and successful campaigning methods: mobilizing political mass rallies to create the impression of strength, demands by politicians for displays of loyalty from their supporters, and the instrumental use of almost any means deemed beneficial to election success. I summarize these mass campaigning techniques in the concept of zaoshi.

The term zaoshi combines two characters, zao, usually meaning ‘to make’ or ‘to create’ and shi, carrying connotations of power, strength, influence and momentum. While zaoshi as a concept does not appear to have been widely used in China historically speaking, the character shi, like dao is both a word rich in connotations and a central concept in Chinese military-strategic literature. In classical Chinese strategic thinking, shi denotes that force, momentum or correct timing by which a battle or war is won. More abstractly, zaoshi refers to creating circumstances that are favourable to a desired political outcome, in other words, positioning oneself strategically before the battle in such a way that enables victory. While not using this term, Lucian Pye has described a common belief among Chinese political actors in the importance of correct timing and circumstances, and in a free-floating decisive power (of history) that has a profound influence on events; a force that can be benefited from, but that is also ultimately beyond the control of anyone.68

The notion of zaoshi is not primarily a theoretical concept. It is a lay concept in frequent use in Taiwanese politics, and it is used here as a sensitizing concept.69 As a theoretical concept, zaoshi has not been used by other scholars studying Taiwanese politics. The concept is, however, a profoundly important element of Taiwan’s political culture. The concept had been sporadically used in the context of the KMT’s mission to recover the mainland, often in the form of a mobilizing call to arms. The current use of the concept seems to coincide conspicuously with the birth of the first opposition party, the DPP, in 1986, with the island’s political liberalization that began in 1987 and with the commencement of large-scale non-local elections. The first uses of the concept itself in conjunction with elections appear to have been during the campaign for mayor in Hsinchu city in
late 1985, where in particular the political speeches of an independent candidate attracted crowds. Use of the term then exploded in 1989, coinciding with the election held that year. By the time of the 1991 legislative elections, the term *zaoshi wanhui* had been coined to refer to the mass campaign rallies usually organized out in the open air and featuring mobilizing political speeches that have since come to typify non-local elections in Taiwan. One DPP legislator said that the role of mass political rallies strengthened especially after the 1994 Taipei mayoral elections, and their size started growing. The origin of such mobilizing mass rallies lay in the populistic campaign tactics introduced by former DPP chair Xu Xinliang in the 1970s. Today, participants in Taiwanese elections usually describe *zaoshi* in campaign activities as meaning something like showing force, or bringing out the forces.

However, the activities that this concept refers to did not develop automatically as a consequence of elections. Taiwan had, after all, seen regular elections since 1950. Rather, *zaoshi* specifically refers to the tactics of mass mobilization that came to be actively used by the opposition in the heated political atmosphere of the first years of political liberalization. The ruling KMT used an array of meticulously organized ways of vote mobilization, such as responsibility zones, local factions and vote buying, as well as the frozen legislators, to secure its power. The opposition movement, which lacked the KMT’s abundant resources, resorted instead to populist methods and hit the street. Supporters were mobilized via street parades, elaborate hand-shaking that the locals refer to as ‘sweeping the street’ (*sao jie*), and mass political rallies – actions akin to what James C. Scott famously described as ‘weapons of the weak’. The election tactic proved so successful that all parties, including even the KMT, began to imitate these activities to the point where they developed into one of the more distinguishing features of Taiwan’s political culture.

Early on, there was a major debate within the DPP on whether the party should abandon its street protests and work mainly through established channels like the parliament. The New Tide Faction within the party was more favourably inclined towards continuing to use street tactics, while other party factions increasingly leaned towards working within the formal system. Eventually, the party chose a combination of both. The DPP’s mass mobilization tactics proved so appealing that all Taiwanese political parties now imitate them.

The opposition movement’s frequent use of mass political rallies had deeper reasons than just the party’s prowess at organising such events. One must bear here in mind that during the authoritarian era, the KMT had permeated most sectors of society, including what might be called civil society, and up to 12 per
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cent of the entire population were KMT party members. Five years after its foundation, the DPP still counted only 20,000 party members. The usefulness of such rallies thus lay in the fact that it was initially very daring to show support for the opposition, and such behaviour could result in arrest and harassment as in the best-remembered case, the Kaohsiung Incident in December 1979.

Most DPP supporters are native Taiwanese, who had learned after the 2-28 Incident in 1947 and the White terror that followed it to stay away from politics. For a long time, native Taiwanese were more politically apathetic than mainlanders, whose level of political mobilization was kept up by their closer links to the party-state. Uniting in a group, which was often more visible than its actual numbers would lead one to believe, can be seen as a way for the opposition to draw on mutual strength and portray its strength outwardly. It also developed into a way of doing politics that emphasized active struggle against the old system, although in non-violent ways.

The notion of a heroic political struggle was originally born out of a sense of profound political unfairness and as a fight against the authoritarian system controlled by a small elite that did not always represent the majority. While there are obvious similarities in people challenging the old system on the streets in Taiwan to events in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there are also differences. In Taiwan, the phenomenon did not die out as society democratized and the old political system crumbled. Mass protests remain an important element in Taiwan’s political culture to this day. The DPP has not given up fighting the streets, although it was the governing party for the better part of a decade. Meanwhile, the old rulers and their loyal supporters also took up the gauntlet and waged an equally heroic fight – in their eyes – to protect society against what they perceived as the DPP government’s attempts to profoundly change the old, whether in terms of national symbols, cultural icons or material privileges. Ironically, both political sides are now united in a feeling of unfairness. A mutual feeling of historical unfairness and vulnerability is typical of polarizing group conflicts.

Taiwanese politics has been exceedingly divisive, polarized and politicized in recent years. In such circumstances, there is little room for compromise. One side’s victory is the other side’s loss. In many political disputes, the logic is zero-sum. With policy-making having become gridlocked on many issues, the actual outcome of disputes may even be a lose-lose situation. Staying politically neutral in such an environment is difficult, but there is an inherent paradox in Taiwanese politics. Amid the high level of political engagement, support for political parties is actually generally relatively weak and there is a great propensity for people to
switch their support from one party or person to another. The strong emotions on full display in politics appear to belie a widespread political opportunism.

The weakness of party loyalty and rampant opportunism has its roots in Taiwan’s authoritarian past. During its long period of rule, the KMT integrated party and state but the party had a more tenuous relationship with society. As party membership could provide benefits, many joined the party more because of those benefits than ideological conviction. Being in the party or outside its patronage was then almost tantamount to being within or outside the system. This legacy implies that political parties in Taiwan can never be too sure of retaining voter support. Taiwanese voters are fickle and politicians themselves often exceedingly opportunistic.

As there can never be too much certainty about political support, various loyalty-proving rituals figure prominently during election campaigns. Both candidates and parties will use several tactics to make key political supporters lock in their support to make it difficult to change loyalty halfway through the campaign. Such strategies include asking the person to appear together with the candidate at public events, typically on stage during an election campaign rally; arranging photo-ops with the candidate, with the photos later prominently on display; making decorative placards to hang on the campaign office wall, where the supporter expresses support for the candidate, and so on. Well-known people and key political supporters will commonly be lined up on stage, visible to all. The main function of such an exercise is to create the impression that many notable people in the community support the candidate or party in question.

The KMT traditionally relied on grassroots vote brokers to mobilize its supporters, but such mobilization is utterly dependent on the possession of political and economic resources. The DPP government tried to break the KMT’s hold on resources used to supply clientelistic networks through new legislation, institution-building and investigations, but was not very successful. Borough wardens are almost entirely dependent on allocations of funds from higher administrative levels; funds with which they traditionally have lined their own pockets. They are therefore necessarily sensitive to the direction of the political winds and after the power transition sometimes needed to juggle between the two main political parties. The loyalty of key vote brokers is a particularly crucial feature for political parties but at the same time the least trustworthy feature. Small wonder then that demanding visible displays of support and loyalty become a central part of the election campaign. During elections, one may, even as a foreigner, easily be dragged into showing support for one or the other political side, as campaigning candidates grab every opportunity to be
seen with notable people. This is good for one’s social face (mianzi), especially outside Taipei. Getting people to come out and show support during a campaign is important, as it means that supporters are tying themselves, both symbolically as well as often in practice, to one’s political career. For that reason prospective key supporters such as prominent local businessmen sometimes actively resist such efforts, as the wrong choice may negatively influence their own professional pursuits.

Looking at Taiwanese politics through anthropological spectacles, the function of the massive political rallies that have become a hallmark of Taiwanese politics is a particularly interesting phenomenon. The massive political rallies frequently mobilized by political parties in Taiwan are the epitomization of Taiwan’s high level of politicization. Political rallies are, of course, among the oldest features of competitive politics, and big rallies at times occur in almost any political system; for example in France street demonstrations are a well-established tradition. What is distinctive about Taiwanese political rallies is the frequency with which they occur, the great numbers of people that they often attract, their highly organized nature, and the governing party’s active role in organizing them. These traits suggest that mass rallies are perceived by politicians and parties as playing an important role in Taiwanese politics. It is Taiwanese political parties’ ability to recurrently mobilize huge political rallies, even outside election time, that points both to the high level of politicization of Taiwanese society and the enduring appeal of such populist tactics among segments of the population.

The zaoshi concept allows us to see mass rallies both as an expression of the heroic struggle for justice in politics and as a form of psychological warfare against political opponents. While it is rare for Taiwanese political rallies and demonstrations to turn violent, participants often act exceedingly dramatically and emotionally. Scenes of participants crying hysterically, prostrating themselves on the ground, shouting until they lose their voices, or scuffling with opponents in a way that looks worse than it often is are commonplace.

It should be added that hardly any of these actions escape the ever-present cameras of Taiwan’s numerous television channels. There are several TV channels that report so-called social news. Given the numerous channels and the relatively few newsworthy events in a small society like Taiwan, a great number of car accidents, suicides and minor demonstrations end up on the TV news. The media plays a major role in Taiwan’s politics today. Much of the reporting is scandal-driven, often making political news seem like a cross between the yellow press, reality TV and soap opera. A telling example is that the scandal-reporting
Hong Kong newspaper Apple Daily became the most widely read newspaper on the island only a few years after its debut.

Nevertheless, it is hard to distinguish the chicken from the egg. The media needs politicians, who constantly come up with outrageous acts or statements to feed the scandal-producing media machinery. But politicians equally need the media to give them exposure, which in Taiwan often means putting on a display for the cameras. The Taiwanese use the term zuo xiu, borrowed from English, to denote putting on a show. It is hard to escape the impression that many of the most dramatic political outbursts would not occur if the cameras were not rolling. One of the peculiarities of the relationship between politics and the media in Taiwan is that even committee debates in parliament are televised live. Against the background of divisive politics and the need to show off to one’s own supporters, one can expect trouble in actually getting things done in parliament. Few politicians want camera crews present when they betray their principles in the give and take of political compromise building.

It is then small wonder that mass political rallies often attempt to make as big a ‘splash’ as possible. Apart from using an extensive arsenal of methods to mobilize attendance, the visual and auditory effect is enhanced by participants wearing similar colours, ubiquitous flags and banners, drums, horns, dramatic music, fireworks, and so on. Mass rallies are often characterized by ear-splittingly loud noise; the louder, the better. Such rallies, as the concept zaoshi suggests, attempt to convey or construct an impression of strength and power. In the context of elections, they are designed to enhance the election success of the organising party. For one’s own supporters, mass rallies are a way of strengthening supporter resolve and encouraging passive voters to turn out and vote. Towards pragmatic intermediate voters, who have often played a decisive role in Taiwan’s elections, the aim is to sway them to support the side that appears to be winning.

Seen as a kind of psychological warfare, massive and boisterous political mobilization aims to frighten the opposing side into capitulating without a fight, in the best tradition of the Chinese military strategist Sun Zi. When I discussed the zaoshi concept with an astute observer and insider of Taiwanese politics, he immediately linked it to psychological warfare, using the example of a few horses in the desert making a wall of sand in order to frighten the opponents into thinking that there are more of them than there in fact are.

Such psychological political tactics are meaningful particularly against the background of an almost equally divided political scene and the tendency of some uncommitted voters to side with the winning side. The importance of these swing voters is of course enhanced by the very tightness of the political
competition. Unsurprisingly, political mobilization almost always occurs around the dominant political cleavage that has popularly been referred to as the green/blue divide. In recent years, very few political mass events have occurred that have not been by one of these sides mobilizing against the other. One potentially anomalous case comes to mind: the Shih Ming-teh-led mobilization against the alleged corruption of the ruling DPP party in 2006. However, even this does not quite qualify. Although Shih is a former DPP party chairman and legislator, he later distanced himself from the party and has become a vociferous critic of it. On the pan-green side, many saw Shih Ming-teh’s protest action, aimed at bringing down the president, as Shih’s final betrayal. Many pan-blues, on the other hand, supported it.

Politicization around the pan-blue/pan-green divide also trickles down during ordinary election campaigning for lower political posts, through the practice of party heavyweights campaigning for the lower level politicians that they support. The practice of lending vertical support is very common among Taiwanese politicians. While politics at the intermediate level of the political structure tends to be less ideologically tinged than the highest level of politics, the practice of lending vertical support, and in particular the practice of top politicians hitting the campaign trail to support their political clients, tends to inject the green/blue politicization into campaigning for lower posts. Some lower level politicians therefore abstain from receiving this kind of help, although it is commonly believed to be an effective tactic.  

The concept of zaoshi is most applicable to understanding the crucial function of mass rallies during Taiwanese elections. However, the use of the concept is not limited to elections. The function of many other political activities in Taiwan may also be grasped through this concept. It is illuminating to use it, for example, in trying to understand the function of several grandiose and ambitious national political conferences convened by presidents Lee and Chen, as well as Taiwan’s first referendum. High-level ad hoc committees and conferences have a prominent place in Taiwanese politics. Former president Lee Teng-hui organized two large political conferences in the 1990s, the National Affairs Conference in 1990 and the National Development Conference in 1996, supposedly in order to achieve national consensus on key political issues. Neither conference resulted in much agreement, but holding such events has been an effective way of rallying support behind the leader and undercutting opposition. Chen Shui-bian used the same tactic in 2001 when he convened a conference to discuss economic development and cross-Strait economic integration at the Economic Development Advisory Conference that ended in a long list of supposed consensus statements.
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Ling and Shih have drawn attention to the clash between liberal political institutions and Confucian ethical conceptions in Taiwanese politics and argued that *ad hoc* committees appealing to unity can be understood as an attempt to gain moral leadership. In their view, it is difficult for Taiwanese politicians remaining within the confines of liberal institutions to gain real moral authority, as this requires a sense of moral certitude in government on the part of both the leader and the led. For this reason, politicians often go outside regular institutions through *ad hoc* committees, for example. From this perspective, the function of the conferences was perhaps not so much to hammer out actual agreement on nitty-gritty political issues, but more an attempt to rally support behind the leader, stabilize the political field for a while and undercut opposition, although the aim is not always achieved. According to one participant, the NDC conference, for example, hardly even discussed what it was supposed to discuss, i.e. constitutional reforms.

The most intriguing example of applying the *zaoshi* tool is undoubtedly the practice of trying to harness the popular will through referenda to support election campaigns. To all appearances, the 2004 referendum was no ordinary referendum. Holding the referendum had been decided upon prior to deciding what questions were to be asked; it was announced prior to the referendum that the outcome would have no practical policy effect; almost everyone who voted, voted yes, given that the opposition boycotted the referendum; and finally, the number of voters taking the referendum ballot were almost the same as those voting for Chen in the presidential election. Indeed, it is hard to make sense of the referendum if one assumes that its function really was to inquire into the opinion of the populace on a major political issue. The referendum makes much more sense when interpreted as a *zaoshi*-like political tool that was designed to rally support for Chen’s presidential election bid by mobilizing ideological voters in a situation where he was trailing behind the KMT’s contending presidential ticket.

The *zaoshi* concept embodies a less serious aspect of Taiwan’s politicization: its theatrical dimension. While there are several features of Taiwan’s intense politicization that can be deplored from a normative standpoint (and it is relatively easy to point out the detrimental effects that such politicization has, for example, on efficient policy-making, societal relations or people’s trust in politicians), the theatrical aspect of politicization counterbalances these by offering a somewhat less grim interpretation of politicization.

It is, of course, no new claim that public politics is a kind of theatre. In Taiwan, politics offers drama that fills much of the media. For example, many
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street-side restaurants have a TV set that shows continuous coverage of the day’s local political events. Many people follow their favourite politician as they would follow their favourite football team in another country. The constant stream of scandals and dramatic events that Taiwanese politics offers enhances popular interest. During my first field trips it often seemed that some extraordinarily important event in Taiwan’s political evolution was unfolding. Later I realized that there was an election, political scandal or a minor crisis in cross-Strait relations during practically every visit to the island. Other observers have also had the impression of being in the eye of a storm each time they visit Taiwan.90

The analogy with devout football fans is worth pondering. Especially during the mass political events described above, the similarity is striking, with ‘fans’ donning their team’s colours and regalia, waving their team’s flags, singing their team’s song and generally living the ups and downs of the team’s fortunes. DPP events, in particular, appear to be generally carefully stage-managed with the objective of arousing the emotions of ideological supporters. DPP orators often unabashedly play on the native Taiwanese sense of historical unfairness, on their love for Taiwan and, more guardedly, on the ethnic division between native Taiwanese and mainlanders.91

When Chen Shui-bian appeared on stage in front of a crowd of supporters, the crowd arousal techniques were well developed. Chen (and other skilled DPP orators) used his voice masterfully, often letting it slowly grow from a low and measured tone towards a more forceful and fast pitch, until he shouted the last words accompanied by drums and a crescendo of music and sometimes even fireworks, followed by a raucous response of cheers and horn-honking from the crowd. The climax was often followed by a moment’s silence from the podium. When the noise died away, the speech continued, beginning again in a more tempered voice. Chen was skilful at using pauses and changes in the tone and volume of his voice, as well as calculated shifts between the Taiwanese dialect and Mandarin Chinese as a political tool.92 His posture on stage was often pompous; standing upright with both hands straight on the rostrum in front of him. In speeches, Chen often referred to himself in third person, as A-bian.

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To recap this chapter, a key point to recognize is that the mass events that I have described as zaoshi are not a spontaneous outpouring of political discontent. In Taiwan, political mass events are usually highly organized and carefully stage-managed by the main political parties. The ability of political parties to repeatedly organize such events depends on the informal political structure I have described
above. There are ideological loyalists within each party who form a pool of core protesters on which parties draw time and again as a reliable source of mass power that can be used as a convenient political tool. However, in bigger mass political events the organization of participants is channelled through the dense networks of personal loyalties between local politicians and their supporters, whereas local party branches assume a coordinating and enabling role. Thus there is a structural dimension to zaoshi, and by implication to politicization.

The phenomenon of zaoshi and its relationship to politicization has to be understood against the background of Taiwan’s recent political history. Zaoshi has a particular function in Taiwanese politics. It is in such mass political actions that the heroic political struggle is embodied. To participants, it appears to provide psychological satisfaction: being part of something larger that is perceived as correct and just. The phenomenon of zaoshi developed in tandem with the establishment of the first opposition party and political liberalization, and it has also become a fundamental part of democratic politics in Taiwan. Political parties spend much effort in planning, organizing and implementing recurring mass political actions, and are concerned if turnout is not as high as hoped.

However, Taiwan’s high level of politicization is at the same time both comforting and disturbing to Taiwanese themselves. Taking part in a mass event displaying an emotional political reaction seems to provide comfort to participants. On the other hand, noticing that other people can have diametrically opposed political views and hearing constant vicious verbal attacks on one’s own core political values and ‘heroes’ can also be a very uncomfortable experience. This is especially true for people who were brought up in an authoritarian education system that emphasized the dangers of disunity, and raised political leaders high on a pedestal, beyond open criticism. While the causes of Taiwan’s politicization are not cultural in nature, in the political mass rallies there are some distinct parallels to the Cultural Revolution on the mainland.

A quarter of a century ago, Lucian Pye argued that in Asian politics the relationship between power and legitimacy operates in a reverse way to Western politics. While legitimacy has tended to be defined at will by political elites, power, i.e. the ability to command obedience, ‘flows upward’ and is critically dependent on the willing compliance of subordinates. Conversely, Pye claimed, it is conventional in the West to think of power as something that leaders possess, while legitimacy is something that the public grants to their leaders. Paradoxically, political opportunism and seemingly strong political support in Taiwan can be regarded as two sides of the same coin. Occupying a superior
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political position does not ensure automatic compliance by followers and seemingly strong political support can vanish as quickly as it arose, if moral leadership is lost.

Unsurprisingly, Taiwanese politicians expend a lot of effort to prove their moral ‘worthiness’ in the eyes of their supporters. In contemporary Taiwanese high politics, political morality rests on two pillars. The first is an unquestioning, and, for want of a better term, semi-religious belief in whatever basis for political legitimacy currently is *de rigueur* – for example, passionately supporting one referendum today, and vehemently opposing all referenda tomorrow. The second one is an instrumental ability to satisfy the particularistic needs of loyal supporters. For participants in the political struggle, it provides both emotional and material nurture. It has to be emphasized that morality here does not mean an incorruptible nature. A known criminal who is very generous to his friends and supporters can be voted into parliament time and again. On the other hand, someone who is very law-abiding, but does not share the good fortune of winning office with others, is considered selfish and may soon be out of a job.

The fact that political support is not maintained automatically, for example by habitual voting, is a significant factor behind politicization. Support has to be continuously stimulated by resorting to mass mobilization. Political parties that do not engage in *zaoshi* and politicians who do not continuously electrify their support networks will soon be deemed as being out of the race. Taiwanese politicians, although much to blame for fomenting excessive politicization, are in a sense also captives to a political culture and social structure that necessitate such action.

As a consequence of this demand on politicians to continuously demonstrate moral authority, a recurrent dilemma in Taiwanese politics is how to reconcile open politicking with the demands of effective decision-making in a political environment that rewards those who take extreme positions and appeal to emotion. Neither regular parliamentary committee work, where ‘debates’ often take the form of publicly aired personal attacks, nor *ad hoc* bodies convened with great fanfare, which either succumb to bickering or amount to little more than a bigwig congregation that ends in grand sounding but ultimately vacuous ‘consensus’ statements, are particularly effective in moving things forward.

In this political environment, even something as ordinary in a democracy as a meeting between the president and opposition party leaders takes on extraordinary importance, is difficult to arrange, and is therefore carefully orchestrated. For example, it took almost eight months before a meeting between newly elected KMT party chairman Ma Ying-jeou and Chen Shui-bian was
arranged in April 2006, an event so rare that the whole meeting was televised live. Even more extraordinarily, after a meeting in late 2000, Soong Chu-yu, the leader of the PFP, and Chen did not meet again (at least openly) for more than four years in the uncompromising political atmosphere. When the meeting was finally arranged, it was only after weeks of frenzied media speculation, long preparatory negotiations and political jostling.

Prior to political liberalization, the Taiwanese government was famous for its technocratic and developmental orientation. After the start of open political competition, and particularly in recent years, Taiwanese politics has swung to the other extreme, of intensive populistic politicking. As Benjamín Arditi has eloquently argued, populism and democracy are intimately related but, depending on circumstances, populism can either be entirely compatible with liberal-democratic representative government, a nuisance, but with the potential to renew it, or an outright danger to institutionalized forms of representative government.95 It may be asked whether Taiwan’s particular brand of populist politics is detrimental to its representative government.

NOTES
1 This definition is modified from Pye, *Asian Power and Politics*, 284.
2 In the version used by the Japanese colonial administration, a *jia* was composed of ten households, and a *bao* of ten *jia*. In this manner, the biggest unit comprised one hundred households. Household heads were responsible for their households’ doings and collectively for social order in their area. The head of the *jia* supervised the whole *jia*, while a *baozheng* oversaw the entire *bao*. Yanaihara, ‘日本帝國主義下之台灣’, 194; Shih Tien-fu (2001) ‘日治時代台灣地域社會的空間結構及其發展機制 – 以民雄地方為例’ [The spatial structure and the developmental mechanism of Taiwan’s territorial society during the Japanese era: The case of Ming-hsiung], 台灣史研究 (Taiwan historical research) 8 (1): 16–17, 24; Crissman, ‘The structure of local and regional systems,’ 101; Lai et al., *A Tragic Beginning*, 16; Lamley, Harry J. (1981) ‘Subethnic rivalry in the Ch’ing period,’ in Emily Martin Ahern and Hill Gates (eds) The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society. Taipei: SMC Publishing, 296–318. See also Roy, Denny (2003) *Taiwan: A Political History*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 20–21; and Weller, *Alternate Civilities*, 32.
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5 See e.g., Sima Xiaoqing (2000) 台灣五大家族 [The old monies: Taiwan’s power families]. Taipei: Yushan she.

6 Author’s interviews in Tainan, June–July 2002.


9 See Lin, ‘The voter-candidate connection in Taiwan,’ 183–185, on the meaning of ‘service’.

10 A former legislative assistant confirmed that services are not provided on an altruistic basis. Author’s interview in Taipei, February 2004, and field observations of service centres and campaigning activity in Tainan November 2001–July 2002.

11 Schafferer, The Power of the Ballot Box, 120–121.


13 Several instances of this were observed during field research. However, none of the politicians on the same level shared an office. The author’s field observations. See also Rigger, ‘Grassroots electoral organization and political reform in the R.O.C. on Taiwan and Mexico,’ 304; and Rigger, ‘Machine politics in the new Taiwan,’ 153–226.

14 Mattlin, ‘Political transition and structural politicisation,’ 137.

15 See e.g., Lerman, ‘National elite and local politician in Taiwan”; Chen, ‘派系政治與台灣政治的變遷’, 168–169. Chu Yun-han and Lin Jih-wen have claimed that ‘a[t the grassroots level, existing patron-client networks were incorporated into the party structure’. Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan,’ 114–115.


21 This view is relatively widely accepted. See e.g., Ling and Shih, ‘Confucianism with a liberal face,’ 75. Similar actions have been known to occur also in American politics. For example, the Ohio governor is regarded as securing Hilary Clinton’s primary victory in that state in 2008 by putting his support network to work. I am thankful to Joseph Bosco for providing me with this comparison. Alexander Lu wrote years ago that ‘traditional loyalty to a particular political personality is relevant to the maintenance of support for the opposition, just as it is relevant to the maintenance of KMT strength’. Lu, ‘Political opposition in Taiwan,’ 134.

22 Author’s observations in Tainan, November 2001.


24 According to some sources, Lee tried to undercut Soong Chu-yu by calling the National Development Conference in 1996, and later by scrapping the Provincial
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26 The DPP was from the start splintered by intense internal factionalism. Lu, ‘Political opposition in Taiwan,’ 139–142.


28 Compare this with the Chinese idea that ‘what has long been united must be separated and what has long been separated must be reunited’ (he jiu bi fen, fen jiu bi he). See e.g., Ge Jianxiong (1992) 統一與分裂中國歷史的啟示 [Unification and splits: Illuminating remarks on Chinese history]. Taipei: Jinxiu chuban.


30 The DPP frequently mobilized supporters to street protests and rallies. Other early mobilization tactics were the use of small-circulation videotapes and the spoken word. Lu, ‘Political opposition in Taiwan,’ 129.

31 Wu, ‘家庭社會化和意識形態,’ 68. Bailey has noted that ‘moral’ relationships in politics are stronger than relationships based on the exchange of material benefits. However, the basis for this moral relationship – the ideological cause – needs to be actively nurtured, because if it is lost, then support will eventually vanish. Bailey, Stratagems and Spoils,’ 42–44.

32 Author’s interviews in Tainan, November 2001 and July 2002.

33 See e.g., Bosco, ‘Faction versus ideology,’ 39–41; Rigger, ‘Machine politics in the new Taiwan,’ 153–226; Liu, ‘The development of the opposition,’ 73, 75; also Tien and Chu, ‘Building democracy in Taiwan,’ 121.


35 Rigger, ‘The Democratic Progressive Party in 2000,’ 956. At the peak of his career, Soong was hugely popular. For example, his personal votes in the 1994 provincial governor election exceeded the combined votes of all the KMT’s provincial assemblymen. Tien and Chu, ‘Building democracy in Taiwan,’ 116–117.

36 There are many historical precedents to vertical mobilization in Chinese society. For example, David Strand has written that ‘vertical mobilization, as a general principle, operated throughout Beijing society from Republican political elites down to neighbourhood charities and militia or labor gangs.’ Strand, David (1994)
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‘Mediation, representation and repression: Local elites in 1920s Beijing’ in Joseph W. Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin (eds) Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance, 222.

37 Author’s interviews in Tainan, February–March 2004.

38 Keliher, Macabe (2003) Out of China or Yu Yonghe’s Tales of Formosa. Taipei: SMC publishing, 93–100; Lamley, ‘Subethnic rivalry in the Ch’ing period.’


42 See O’Donnell and Schmitter, ‘Introduction to the Latin American cases,’ 40, on the general and rapid politicization of society that often occurs at the onset of political liberalization.

43 Before 2000, it was common to distinguish between four well-established elite factions with separate leaderships: the Justice Alliance, the New Tide Faction, the Formosa Faction and the Welfare State Alliance.

44 Lin, ‘Transition through transaction,’ 144–155.

45 This election strategy is often successful under Taiwan’s single-member constituency electoral system where voters are ideologically loyal. Two ideologically similar trailing candidates can band together and beat the leading candidate. Conversely, if they are not able to agree on a common ticket, they frequently end up beating each other out. Author’s observations in Taipei in the autumn of 1998 and spring of 2000.

46 Author’s observations in Taipei, 19 March 2000.

47 R.O.C. Examination Yuan and Governmental Information Office. See also Table 3.2. Grzymała-Busse, ‘Political competition and the politicization of the state in East Central Europe,’ 1125, 1141. Note that the Eastern European figures are for 1998.


49 Wu Nai-teh (1997) ‘檳榔和拖鞋，西裝即皮鞋：台灣階級流動的族群差異及原因’ [Beetlenuts and slippers, suits and leather shoes: Ethnic differences and causes for Taiwan’s class mobility], 台灣社會學研究 [Taiwan sociological research] 1: 137–166.

50 Fields, ‘KMT, Inc.’

51 Author’s interview in Tainan, July 2002.
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53 Hwang Jau-yuan, ‘It is time to clean out Taiwan’s legislature,’ *Taipei Times* 17 April 2001, p. 8.


55 Chen, 派系政治與台灣政治的變遷.

56 This point was recognized by Bosco, ‘Faction versus ideology.’

57 Scholars have noted the weakness of political parties in so-called Third Wave democracies and the difficulties they encounter in rooting themselves in society. Lau and Kuan, ‘Hong Kong’s stunted political party system,’ 1010–1028; see also Hsieh, ‘Whither the Kuomintang?’ 931–940.

58 Some scholars have argued that native Taiwanese supported the KMT regime due to its policy successes. Lai et al., *A Tragic Beginning*, 192; Rigger, ‘The Democratic Progressive Party in 2000’; See also Kau, ‘The power structure in Taiwan’s political economy,’ 287–305, and Chang, ‘Toward an understanding of the sheng-chi wen-ti in Taiwan,’ 112–141.


62 Author’s field observations in Taipei, April 2004. Only one event observed by the author turned mildly violent. That event was the protest outside the KMT headquarters the day after the party lost the presidential elections for the first time. Author’s field observations, Taipei, 19 March, 2000.

63 Lamley, ‘Subethnic rivalry in the Ch’ing period,’ 305–306.

64 This and the following sections draw on Mattlin, ‘Referendum as a form of zaoshi,’ “Great Wall of peace” opposes China,’ *The China Post* 29 February 2004 (internet edition).


Py, Asian Power and Politics, 298; Sun, ‘Contemporary Chinese culture,’ 22. In more general terms, Marc Howard Ross has noted that violent conflict is far more likely in societies where socialization is harsh, lacks warmth and affection and where male gender identity conflict is high. Ross, Marc Howard (1997) ‘The relevance of culture for the study of political psychology and ethnic conflict,’ Political Psychology 18 (2): 316.


See Mattlin, ‘Referendum as a form of zaosb,’ 160–161. Christian Schafferer has also written extensively about the role of Xu Xinliang in introducing a new way of campaigning. Schafferer, The Power of the Ballot Box.


In the Chinese language, there is a difference between street demonstrations (kangyi), mass political rallies (zaosb wanhui) and (political) street parades (youxing). Youxing and zaosb are ordinary campaign activities, while kangyi is usually used to denote gatherings in opposition to something.


Lucian Pye has written that the personalization of nationalism in (Mainland) China has contributed to a sense of the theatrical in which the self is cast in a heroic mould; while defending the nation’s honour, one is simultaneously defending the honour of oneself and one’s family. Pye, Asian Power and Politics, 194–195.
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75 Ross, ‘The relevance of culture for the study of political psychology and ethnic conflict,’ 321.

76 Mattlin, ‘Nested pyramid structures’; See also Tan et al., ‘What if we don’t party?’ 67–84; and Tang Tsou (1995) ‘Chinese politics at the top: Factionalism or informal politics? Balance-of-power politics or a game to win all?’ China Journal 34: 95–156.

77 Kuo, ‘Taiwan’s distorted democracy in comparative perspective,’ 90–98. Chu and Lin have argued that the party-state thoroughly permeated all corners of society. Chu and Lin, ‘Political development in 20th-century Taiwan.’ Researchers have argued that the LDP in Japan similarly forms a political system in its own right. Bouissou, ‘Party factions and the politics of coalition,’ 581–602.

78 Author’s field observations in Tainan, November 2001 and June 2002.

79 Göbel, ‘Beheading the hydra.’ See also Rigger, ‘Grassroots electoral organization and political reform in the R.O.C. on Taiwan and Mexico,’ 302–308; Rigger, ‘Machine politics in the new Taiwan,’ 153–226.

80 The author personally witnessed a minuscule demonstration where the number of TV crew was roughly equal to the number of demonstrators. Author’s field observation, Taipei, August 2002.


82 Taiwanese intermediate voters tend to be politically active. Tan et al., ‘What if we don’t party?’ 67–84.

83 Author’s interview in Taipei, January 2006.


85 Ling and Shih, ‘Confucianism with a liberal face,’ 68–74, 79–81.

86 See e.g., Chu, ‘The challenges of democratic consolidation.’

87 Author’s interview in Taipei, November 2001.

88 See Mattlin, ‘Referendum as a form of zaoshi.’


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91 Author’s field observations of political rallies in Taipei and Tainan, November 1998–March 2004. See also Wei, ‘Code-switching in campaigning discourse for an analysis of Chen’s speeches.’

92 Ibid, 161.


Explaining Taiwan’s structural politicization

This book has taken the reader on a journey through the events and structural shifts that occurred as a consequence of Taiwan’s first real power transition, one that was not completed simply by the old ruling party turning over the formal reins of government to the new ruling party. Taiwan’s gradual process of democratization has been celebrated as one of the most successful cases of political transformation. But the very incremental nature of ceding power, contrasting with the more drastic nature of change in Eastern Europe, has heightened politicization on the island. The DPP’s ‘accidental’ 2000 presidential election victory ushered in a political showdown waged in subsequent elections, in the legislature as well as in the streets through political mass mobilization, as the new government tried to dismantle the bases of the KMT’s power and the old political elite fought back.

In the context of predominantly ethnically Chinese societies, Taiwan’s democratization process has been a unique experience. The process has, as one would expect, attracted the attention of people outside the island, given the potential implications for democratization prospects in the Greater China area. Taiwan’s political transformation has also been noteworthy because of the rather unusual nature of the process. Instead of making an abrupt break with its authoritarian past, democracy developed in an evolutionary manner from within a one-party state, with that ‘one party’ still largely intact and powerful. There was no radical disjuncture with the past, nor did blood flow on the streets. The process was hailed as a model for others to emulate. However, even as Taiwan managed to effect an initially smooth political transition, the unfinished nature of this transition has served to make it much more protracted, with adverse consequences, such as political gridlock. Above all, the intense politicization of
society has brought about a decrease in social trust, a general lack of trust in political institutions and a loss of faith in representative democracy.\(^1\)

Political transitions are seldom painless. In the case of the democratization of political systems that lack prior experience with democracy, transitions tend to be both long and turbulent. It should not be surprising that Taiwan’s great political transition is proving to be more protracted and less certain than initially thought, perhaps partly because it was at first so smooth and bloodless. The great challenge to the long-term viability of Taiwan’s democratic experiment is to break out from the plight of structural politicization that is eating at the foundations of its representative democracy.

The book has systematically developed a surprisingly unresearched area, namely the empirical study of intensely politicized societies (structural politicization). I have illuminated the structural origin of Taiwan’s intense politicization, focusing on informal political structures rather than on formal political institutions. There is no shortage of scholars who have argued that the semi-presidential constitutional arrangements adopted in Taiwan promote political gridlock, or that the electoral system is deeply flawed and gives rise to factionalism. I do not directly challenge these assertions. Institutional features such as semi-presidentialism, the SNTV election system and a partisan media, for example, certainly contribute to society’s politicization. Nonetheless, focusing exclusively on institutional flaws is clearly inadequate.

My argument has been that the fundamental reasons for the intense politicization of Taiwanese society lie deeper, that the latent politicization became far more visible during the DPP’s eight years as governing party, and that institutional arrangements mainly exacerbate the problem. I maintain that Taiwan’s intense politicization stems from five structural features: an incremental political transition (transition interregnum); a constitution that enables a power split between two political teams (semi-presidentialism); Taiwan’s geopolitical ‘tornness’ (asymmetric integration); strong vested interests and related political cleavage (the patronage state); and a social structure that facilitates political mobilization (nested pyramid structures).

Separately, these factors do not necessarily result in intense politicization. Semi-presidentialism can work decently with a consensus-seeking political culture. A torn society will not descend to vicious fighting as long as the political cleavage does not harden into a confrontational partisan bifurcation. Neither does simply having social structures conducive to political mobilization necessarily result in a very politicized society. And if a one-party system crumbles quickly, old vested interests may not have the opportunity to entrench themselves in
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the new transitional system. However, in conjunction with each other they can produce an explosive mix. It is the interplay of all these factors – the one-party era political cleavage, flawed political system, geopolitical uncertainty, vested interests and easily mobilized social networks – that we need to look at to grasp Taiwan's structural politicization. Ultimately, all of these relate back to one underlying root cause: the legacy of the one-party state.

AFTER THE PARTY

An old adage states that power is not given, it is taken. The Taiwanese political transition process makes it painfully clear how hard it is to give up power when one is not forced to do so. Or, as Henry Kissinger purportedly said, power is the ultimate aphrodisiac. The intense politicization of Taiwanese society is intimately tied in with the incremental process of political transition and the KMT's enduring strength in Taiwanese politics. Two decades after the start of political liberalization, it is still possible to hear comments from KMT politicians that hark back to another era. For example, one local party cadre explained to me at length why the KMT had a natural obligation to rule, while the DPP belonged to the opposition. In his view, the KMT was the rightful ruler, the DPP the usurper.²

While the outer markers of authoritarianism have disappeared from Taiwan, such comments suggest that many people still retain a lingering authoritarian mindset, especially the older generations that matured politically in an authoritarian environment. However, it has to be immediately stressed that this is not only something that afflicts KMT politicians. Similar trains of thought can also be discerned in people from other parties, including the DPP. Whether they know it or not, many people operate according to a logic that either aims to overthrow the old system or to protect its dominance, thinking that stems from an authoritarian context.

The KMT built an elaborate system of rule, with the party-state’s reach into society being extensive. The apparent democratization of the political system disguises a considerable amount of inertia in underlying political and social structures, deriving from the old one-party system. Many of the structures underpinning this system, such as permeating mobilization networks and massive party assets, are still largely intact and have yet to be dismantled. This fact sits awkwardly with the constitutional reality of a semi-presidential system that allows for a situation where a reformist president and cabinet are locked
in permanent battle with an obstructionist legislature protecting vital material interests.

Consequently, any political issue that is likely to shift the power balance between the two political camps either directly or by affecting the resources at the disposal of either side develops into a political conflict and often gridlock. As Taiwan is neither clearly a presidential nor a parliamentary system, in a split situation such as the one after 2000 both sides frequently block or overturn each other’s proposals and initiatives. However, institutional arrangements are not the root of Taiwan’s intense politicization. In the absence of a clear and venomous political cleavage the same arrangements might not be problematic at all. A few years ago France managed a cohabitation situation quite well. It is the clear and intense partisan bifurcation deriving from the enduring one-party legacy that makes the institutional arrangements problematic.

The question of the KMT’s future is inextricably tied to the fate of the Republic of China; rather as the Honecker regime’s fate was tied to that of the GDR. Despite the long localization trend in the KMT since the 1970s, the party has never entirely localized. Indeed, it may even be said that the trend in recent years has been in the opposite direction, with mainlanders regaining control of the party leadership. The party’s ‘right to rule’ to a large extent stems from the R.O.C., which is a major reason why it has been adamant about retaining the symbolic trappings of the R.O.C. state. For example, the KMT prefers to apply to United Nations bodies under the R.O.C. name, even though it obviously is an unworkable proposition given the international circumstances. Similarly, the party has resisted efforts to rewrite the constitution, as opposed to amending it. Senior party politicians and cadres have repeatedly stressed that the KMT will not abandon the Republic of China, the state founded by the party. The R.O.C. state is the political framework that provides the raison d’être for the KMT.

The stakes in the political game are further raised by the geopolitical situation of Taiwan. Existing in international limbo, without widely recognized statehood, the frictions caused by the asymmetric integration with the mainland, and in particular the pull of ever-deepening economic integration, gives a sense of urgency to those who wish to make a clearer political break with Mainland China before it is too late. However, the close economic integration between Taiwan and the mainland also makes formalizing the political break through a declaration of independence the work of a madman. Instead, the political conflict over Taiwan’s status has gravitated toward a highly politicized perennial quarrel over symbolic nationness and, consequently, about the legacy of the R.O.C. state. Since symbolic nationness is also an issue that has much relevance for
ordinary people, mass political mobilization tends to revolve around the symbols of Taiwaneseness and Chineseness.

Whatever the nature of the political system that the KMT built on Taiwan, one thing is certain: it did not establish a universal welfare state similar to those in northern Europe. The party-state provided discretionary benefits to parts of the population. The system was highly beneficial to some, while others received little if anything from it. People linked to the KMT party-state through party membership, government employment, local factions, party-affiliated associations, or elected and appointed positions, as well as their family members, made up a substantial proportion of the population. However, people not involved in the institutions of the party-state received little from it, therefore had little stake in it, and often developed a deep antagonism towards it. Belated efforts to build a semblance of a welfare system after political liberalization do not alter this fact.3

The state’s legacy of granting privileges, favours and benefits was not discontinued by political liberalization. In Taiwan, building a universal welfare state implies the loss of privileges for many. As a direct consequence, the party-state-sanctioned patronage systems created powerful vested interests in various segments of the population, and powerful resentment at such privileges in other segments. We are reminded of Seymour Martin Lipset’s words: ‘The greater the importance of the central state as a source of prestige and advantage, the less likely it is that those in power – or the forces of opposition – will accept rules of the game that institutionalize party conflict and could result in the turnover of those in office.’4

The patronage state legacy is still strong in Taiwan. This can be contrasted with Mexico, a state that shares several of the traits of Taiwan, being both a torn country and one with a strong one-party and patronage state legacy that has been dismantled since the long-time ruling party lost power in 2000. A recent book has argued that one-party dominance in Mexico crumbled as the ruling party lost its ability to use the state for political patronage.5 In Taiwan, the KMT has been more successful in holding on to its patronage assets. With the old powers-that-be still clinging on to their vestiges of power by all possible means and the challenging political team using all means at its disposal to dismantle the old system, politicization is a predictable outcome. All is allowed in love, war ... and Taiwanese politics. The struggle proceeds with major elections serving a function similar to the rounds of a heavyweight boxing match. During the breaks, both sides try to stare down the other side in an interlude of psychological warfare. When a new round begins, both of the sluggers aim for the final knockout.
Dismantling the one-party system has occurred slowly and gradually, giving old political elites ample opportunity to block reforms. Those set to lose from the old system’s disappearance have waged a long and bitter defensive struggle. Completely dismantling the old system would involve both a substantial redistribution of power and benefits and a redefinition of the state itself (Republic of China), from a China-focus to a Taiwan-focus, with major symbolic and practical consequences. The strong emotions aroused by this state redefinition and the real possibility of change through the ballot box increases popular interest in politics at the national level. Political parties play on these emotions.

One of the fundamental features of politically relevant social structures in Taiwan is the importance of vertical personal relationships. This factor is also consequential for politicization. Taiwan has adopted democratic political institutions without yet effecting a reorganization of the entire society, to refer back to Zygmunt Bauman’s thoughts. When elections were introduced early on, political loyalties were built on pre-existing local social networks, rather than, for example, ideology, party identification or media image. This tradition became firmly established in the way elections are fought in Taiwan. Even today, the mobilization of particularistic ties, e.g. through local factions and vote buying, in election campaigning is crucial, while both Taiwanese politicians and voters are opportunistic about their party loyalties. The method of contesting elections was already partly established prior to political liberalization and retains many features from a one-party authoritarian context.

The patron-client legacy and strong particularistic ties turn these social networks into an effective means of political mobilization, and political elites frequently draw on such networks and partisan civic organizations. This facilitates an intense politicization of society and gives an impression of strong political participation. However, the passionate participation of part of the population coexists with increasing political disappointment and apathy among those not participating. Low party loyalty and significant incumbency benefits raise the stakes for politicians, as political support is fickle and potential losses substantial. If the political situation is relatively evenly divided, party instability ensues, as political opportunists within the two major political blocks readily switch to whichever side appears to offer better prospects.

The situation approximates the zero-sum logic that Tang Tsou has extensively discussed with regard to Chinese politics – the logic of winner-takes-all. There is no more graphic illustration of this logic than the fate that often awaits political leaders involved in power struggles after they lose power. Many of the losing political leaders in Mainland China until Mao’s death paid for their loss with
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their life. In current East Asian politics, from Thailand to the Philippines, from Malaysia to Taiwan, political leaders face the danger of criminal prosecution, often on various corruption charges, and a long time in jail after they step down or are forced from office. Just over a year after Chen Shui-bian stepped down from the presidency, he and his wife were handed life sentences for embezzlement and bribe taking, while their son and daughter-in-law also received prison sentences. Several other people close to the former president were also convicted. Losing is simply not an option for those active in the political game. This imperative gives Taiwanese politics much of its intensity and fervour.

BACK TO CHINA

The underlying logic of Taiwanese political party competition still carries the legacy of a struggle for complete victory. Given the widespread opportunism, which applies as much to politicians as it does to voters, the stakes for political parties in Taiwan are inordinately high and the peril of party implosion or division is always present. For the two established parties the main danger of this highly opportunistic context is a party split, while for less established parties the danger is implosion and complete collapse. Political uncertainty spurs intense political activity both by parties and by individual politicians to build and firm up support, especially given the high economic stakes involved. It also necessitates the use of various tactics for locking in political support, especially among those whose support is not so assured. The uncertainty related to political support heightens the politicization.

With the political stakes so high, it has so far proved impossible to set up a genuine coalition government between political parties. The style of politics in Taiwan has not yet ‘normalized’ in the sense of becoming dull, business-as-usual representative democracy. In the battle for decisive victory, the political parties’ tools of choice have been electoral mobilization through reliance on well-oiled social networks – the nested pyramid structures that make up parties – and mass mobilization for political action. Initially, the KMT relied mainly on the first and the DPP on the latter, but now both parties make use of both tools.

The style of Taiwanese politics is confrontational rather than consensus seeking. This feature is intriguing, given that so many observers have talked of a Chinese or East Asian cultural preference for seeking consensus rather than confrontation. If there is such a cultural preference, it quickly succumbed to the thrills of political confrontation once such an opportunity was offered by the structural constellations of Taiwan’s transition process. While culture clearly
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does not prevent democratization, it may still complicate it. However, the reasons for Taiwan’s intense politicization are structural, not cultural, in nature. The very political processes that are supposed to underpin democratic politics – electoral campaigning, political rallies, vote mobilization, parliamentary debate and media coverage of politics – may actually undermine Taiwan’s democracy by the way they are pursued. The underlying reason for this counterintuitive observation is that these processes mix badly with the structures of a society that has yet to rid itself of its one-party-system past.

Political mass actions served a purpose in the early struggle against the old regime, and raised direct political participation to a high level. They later became a key obstacle to normalizing Taiwanese representative democracy.9 The very logic of zaoshi is a struggle for victory in zero-sum circumstances, which is not conducive to normalizing policy-making or responsible opposition politics. According to Stepan and Linz, democratic consolidation requires not only a shared normative commitment, but also a behavioural commitment by all sectors of society to the democratic system.10 If both the opposition and the government expend far more effort in mobilizing mass rallies and referenda against each other rather than working for political compromise, the underlying political cleavage will be recurrently activated and intense politicization will remain a semi-permanent state of affairs.

Zaoshi is the quintessence of the intense politicization of Taiwanese society. It is a symptom of the ailment of Taiwan’s body politic. Ironically, the DPP, while attacking the vestiges of Chineseness in Taiwan, simultaneously perpetuated a long legacy of Chinese political culture through its frequent use of the zaoshi tool. However, massive rallies are only the most visible sign of the boundaries of politics expanding beyond formal political institutions. On a micro-level, Taiwan’s structural politicization took politics far beyond the role envisaged by Almond and Verba’s The Civic Culture for the citizen in a representative democracy, who, ideally, should be participating in the running of the state in theory but not in practice. At the height of Taiwan’s politicization, one could genuinely claim that everything was politics, with large parts of the population regularly taking part in political mass actions and the political battle also invading workplaces and even family affairs. Breaking free from the detrimental mould of political competition is necessary if this overly politicized society is to achieve a condition where politics contents itself with being an activity confined mainly to formal political institutions. This would make democratic politics more dull, but also more durable.
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Most of the factors that I have described as promoting Taiwanese politicization are also present in the People’s Republic in one form or another, as it shares much in terms of the structures of the one-party system, social structures and political culture with Taiwan. Of course, we should not fall into over-simplifying naivety and assume that there is no substantial difference between politics in Taiwan and Mainland China. Yet, it is equally naive to expect that Taiwan can just forget about the roots of its one-party political system; roots that stem from the turbulent establishment of a modern political system on the mainland. This affects not only the nature of the constitutional system, but also more fundamentally the nature of political parties and political competition.

Put the other way, Taiwan’s experience with democratization also has something to teach us about the prospects for Mainland China, should it eventually decide to take the same road. The CCP has built a formidable power position on the mainland using much the same tools as the KMT in Taiwan. The party will absolutely not want to relinquish control of the political system. However, it may one day come to the conclusion that some measure of political liberalization is unavoidable due to societal pressures, but that such liberalization has to occur in a very incremental and party-controlled manner. If that scenario ever came to pass, several of the circumstances would be in place for structural politicization to develop.

NOTES

1 Shelley Rigger has also used the term ‘unfinished’ to refer to Taiwan’s political transition. Rigger, ‘The unfinished business of Taiwan’s democratization.’

2 Author’s interview in Tainan, June 2002.

3 The development of social welfare legislation in Taiwan has been chronicled in a paper written by Chan and Lin, ‘Taiwan.’

4 Lipset, ‘The social requisites of democracy revisited,’ 4.


6 Tang, ‘Chinese politics at the top.’


8 The very early dangwai candidates made extensive use of social networks, based on kinship, friendship and community faction, in order to build political support. Chao and Myers, ‘How elections promoted democracy in Taiwan under martial law,’ 402.
9 Few people in society actually took part in the social protests in the mid-late 1980s. Chu, ‘Crafting democracy in Taiwan,’ 121.

Afterword

The KMT returned to power and its former position as a dominant party in early 2008. With a political royal flush in controlling the presidency and dominating the legislature, county magistrates and city mayors, County and City Councils, township magistrates as well as grassroots positions, the game seemed to be over. The public had had enough of eight years of incessant political conflict and voted for a return to the often-criticized but familiar one-party dominance. Taiwan’s democracy had reached a milestone. If we are to believe Samuel Huntington, Taiwan’s democracy is now consolidated, having gone through two peaceful power transitions. Did the Chen era mark a historical high tide of politicization?

After the KMT’s resounding victory in the 2008 legislative election, the party’s top politicians extolled the virtues of one-party dominance in various ways. The former premier and then vice-presidential candidate, Vincent Siew, gave a speech in which he referred to Singapore as a good example of a society that has been able to combine one-party dominance with an efficient economic system that produces prosperity. The party’s presidential candidate, Ma Ying-jeou, promised to lay the foundations of an era of one hundred years of peace and prosperity if he was elected president. Meanwhile, the KMT party chairman Wu Boxiong talked about the importance of the KMT being ‘in full control’ and shouldering all administrative responsibility. The legislative speaker, Wang Jinping, also took a clearly partisan stance by urging voters to back the KMT in order to stabilize the political situation.1 Plus ça change…

The KMT government wasted no time in capitalizing on its electoral dominance, quickly moving to push through a political opening with Beijing. On the surface, cross-Strait relations showed a remarkable improvement. In the space of a few months, relations went from facing another threat of imminent worsening, had the UN referendum and DPP presidential candidate succeeded, to amicable encounters between high officials on both sides. To avoid running into a political minefield, leaders in Beijing and Taipei chose to pursue only economic issues in the initial phase of talks. The direct three links were finally
open in 2008; six decades after the proverbial door had shut. A number of agreements were reached on everything from financial cooperation to agricultural issues. The Ma government sounded an upbeat note as talks on an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) were smoothly concluded and even kept the idea of an eventual peace agreement warm.

The pan-greens were in complete disarray. The TSU had all but evaporated and the DPP had lost a tremendous number of seats throughout the political structure. Just like the KMT eight years before, the DPP seemed to be in danger of disintegrating. After an exhausting few years of political mobilization, there was little appetite for more political mass action in the aftermath of the lost elections. The pan-greens managed to scramble together around 100,000 people on the 100th day of Ma’s presidential inauguration to protest against government policies. By Taiwanese standards that was a poor showing.

Then the world was hit by the first global recession and Taiwan was hit by typhoon Morakot. Suddenly, the political ground under the KMT’s feet began shifting, with the popularity of the president and the party slipping. Following a string of vote buying scandals and forced resignations, the party had poor showings in several by-elections in 2009. It managed to stay on top in the first larger election following the party’s return to power, the three-in-one local elections in December 2009. Yet, the underlying support numbers were again disconcerting, as they showed DPP gains almost across the board. Ma’s claim of being a president for all the people was looking as hollow as Chen’s claim before him. At the time of writing, one-party dominance is again looking less than certain.

During the DPP’s time in power, the vestiges of Taiwan’s one-party legacy were not vanquished. The KMT’s structural dominance was too strong for that to occur. Consequently, the structural features that brought about the politicization of Taiwanese society are still largely intact. These structures may evolve slowly to become less conducive to politicization, but there are no guarantees that this will happen without the political will to actively change them. Whether or not these structures continue to be activated in the old way ultimately depends on two things. Will the main political protagonists again become evenly matched and engaged in a battle for the control of the system? Will the Taiwanese population put up with this?
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NOTE

Appendices

I. Notes on methodological choices

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, is said to have remarked that ‘[i]t is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.’ While it is impossible to begin doing research as a tabula rasa, reading too much before entering the field, especially on one’s own topic, and spending much time contemplating the case before actually studying it, will likely make it that much harder to come up with any new perspective on the topic. I have endeavoured to follow this general guideline of data-before-theory during the research process.

This study aims at being a contribution to an attempt at reconstituting the debate on Taiwanese politics, making it a study more of the way things actually are than the way things ‘ought to be’. This aspiration was born out of a personal sense of dissatisfaction with the conventional discourse and explanations found in English-language writing on Taiwanese politics, including most of the English-language research written by Taiwanese researchers, which borrows heavily from mainstream American political science. Some of the research done on Taiwanese politics in recent years may even obscure more than illuminate the actual workings of Taiwan’s body politic, and is not always helpful in understanding many of the phenomena typical of Taiwanese political culture. This goes especially for research in which the concepts, concerns and research frameworks have been adopted more or less wholesale from general Western political science discourse. The approach chosen needs to take seriously the structures of the society in which the political culture is embedded, not implicitly or explicitly to assume that they are similar to those in Western societies, while at the same time not to succumb to easy but stereotypical generalizations about differences.

As this research project started out with an interest in the politicization of Taiwan’s society and the workings of informal political structures, and was
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initially guided by a general research problem rather than a well-defined and specific research question, inspiration for the methodological approach was drawn from political anthropology and grounded theory.

Political anthropology is a branch of social anthropology, which in turn is a branch of general anthropology. While its roots can be traced to Montesquieu and de Tocqueville, the modern field of political anthropology has been dated to 1940 and the publication of a volume titled African Political Systems, edited by Meyer Fortes and Edward E. Evans-Pritchard. The discipline briefly flourished in the late 1960s and early 1970s with prominent publications by Fredrick G. Bailey and Abner Cohen, but then quickly petered out following the major academic reorientations of the 1970s. Since then, this sub-field of anthropology has continued to live a marginal existence with occasional publications but little major debate that would stimulate a wider interest. Given its methodological orientation and focus on the actually existing social-organizational bases of politics, political anthropology still has much to offer political science, nowadays so often torn between the competing obsessions of scientistic formalism, meaning(s) and criticalism.

The methodological toolbox of the political anthropologist is much the same as that of other anthropologists – ethnographic methods such as participant observation and the recurrent interviewing of key informants – but the objects of study are closer to the political scientist’s concerns. Although political anthropology, just like anthropology in general, has moved from studying entire small-scale (‘primitive’) societies towards more defined studies of various institutions in the anthropologists’ home societies, topics such as the forms and uses of power and force, legitimacy and ways to establish authority, and social ways of handling disputes and conflict are still central to the discipline. The interest of the political anthropologist tends to lie in questions such as where the locus of ‘the political’ is in a society, and in the nature of political power and the state.

Political anthropology concerns itself not so much with the actual content of politics but with how politics, especially in the sense of an ordered and mostly peaceful contest over power and resolving conflicts, is possible in a given society, institution or system. In a sense, political anthropology is a non-behaviouralist way of studying political behaviour, structures and processes. However, precisely this focus by early political anthropologists on constructing tedious morphologies of politics and all its constituent parts rather than focusing on its content has been blamed for the rapid waning of scholarly interest in political anthropology. Jonathan Spencer provocatively claims that ‘Political anthropology … was the
subdiscipline that died of boredom’. By this he refers to its rapid reduction to a micro-study of instrumental behaviour, factions, networks and much apparently meaningless politicking, devoid of any content, ideology or cultural meaning. Nonetheless, Spencer sees enduring value in political anthropology, as long as it is more sensitive to culture and less confident in its claims than the early scholars were.\footnote{7}

In my research, ethnographic methods associated with anthropology have been applied, and the interest in the social organization of politics and informal political structures in Taiwan is close to the concerns of an earlier generation of political anthropologists. However, hopefully this work is not as myopic about culture and the historical background of various social institutions as Spencer claimed early political anthropology was. The work contains a chapter on the political history of Taiwan, focusing on the state and the one-party system. It also contains sections dealing with the interpretation of some of the observable phenomena in Taiwanese political culture. Finally, the work definitely does not disregard the importance of ideology. In fact, the argument put forward claims that high-level politics in Taiwan is highly ideological in nature, although the fact of its ideological nature is emphasized more than the substance of the ideologies.

The second source of methodological inspiration for this study is grounded theory, especially in the sense one of the originators of this approach, Barney Glaser, understands it. Despite its name, grounded theory is primarily a methodological approach. Grounded theory favours building up an explanation and a candidate for a theory from one’s own research observations. In other words, grounded theory is primarily concerned with theory-generation, not theory-testing. According to Glaser, a grounded theory is a theory that is inductively derived through the systematic generation of theory from data that itself is systematically obtained from social research.\footnote{8}

Grounded theory tries to get away from the all too common practice of fitting reality to theory. Instead of beginning with an existing theory, a well-defined hypothesis, or even clearly defined research questions, one begins with an area of study and lets the data guide theory-building through an iterative process. Data collection, analysis and theory-building are thoroughly integrated and proceed side by side. What is relevant to that area will eventually emerge, grounded theorists claim.\footnote{9} In this way, it is hoped, one avoids getting blinded by preconceptions, derived \textit{inter alia} from existing literature, that prevent one from discovering what is new and interesting in the data itself.

Glaser argues that the central objective of grounded theory is to ‘generate a theory which accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and
problematic for those involved’. The emerging theory is developed around a central concept. The core concept is usually a basic social process, either a social psychological process such as becoming or identifying, or a social structural process such as bureaucratization or centralization. In this research project, the core concept is politicization. Grounded theory is conceptual in nature, since it develops theories that essentially consist of links between concepts that are grounded in the data. The end product is, ideally, an integrated conceptual explanation of the causal linkages between several concepts as they relate to one central concept. The research findings constitute a theoretical formulation of the area under investigation.

Grounded theory fits well with the idea put forward in the 1950s by Herbert Blumer of using sensitizing concepts in the social sciences. Blumer deplored the poor state of social theory, especially its tenuous connection with the empirical world, both in guiding the enquiry and in adjusting itself to fit ‘the facts’. Blumer’s solution to the problem was to recognize the key role concepts play in social theory. They are a means of establishing a connection between data and theory. Adequate concepts offer empirical relevance, guidance and analytical order. Contrary to ideals derived from the natural sciences of creating definitive concepts, Blumer claimed that concepts in the social sciences are necessarily only sensitizing instruments. The key difference, he claims, is that whereas definitive concepts provide descriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts only suggest a direction in which to look.

The attraction of grounded theory to this research project is that it appears to be an approach well suited to a study that started with an ill-defined research problem, but centred on a key concept that had emerged from early field research experiences. Although grounded theory has not been followed wholly orthodoxy (in particular the more systematized versions of it) the research process has been imbued with the general grounded theory philosophy of putting observation before theorizing, developing one’s own concepts based on field observations, adhering to an inductive logic, and striving for holistic representation and saturation of the data. The grounded theory of politicization in Taiwan produced in this book is presented mainly in the concluding chapter, including the self-developed concepts structural politicization, transition interregnum, nested pyramid structures, zaoshi and asymmetric integration.

While the research subject was the phenomenon of intense politicization observed during my first stays in Taiwan, I never purposefully brought up politicization in the interviews, except with a few local researchers with whom the research project itself was discussed. The concept was usually not addressed.
even indirectly, unless informants themselves brought it up. Instead, questions would be asked about almost any other aspect of politics. The informants were mostly only led to the table, so to speak, letting them describe various aspects of Taiwanese politics in their own terms.

The main primary data sources used in this research are four: unstructured and semi-structured interviews; election and statistical data collected from various sources, reflecting changes in Taiwanese politics in recent years; direct observation of various lengths of time; and media reporting in newspapers since 2000. I had already done some research interviews in Taiwan in 1998 for my Master’s thesis. Between 2000 and 2006, interviews related to Taiwanese politics were conducted every year except 2003. A variety of people have provided information in various ways and on a wide range of topics related to Taiwanese politics: through semi- and unstructured interviews, briefly during ongoing activity and informally over lunch or dinner, privately and in groups, both without and with recorder. The interview process has mostly followed a snowballing logic, using earlier contacts as gateways to other interviewees.

Rather than try to get as many standardized interviews as possible from one particular group of people, my aim has been to highlight Taiwanese politics from many different perspectives. The appropriate analogy for this research strategy is detective work rather than the experiment. The research endeavour resembles solving a puzzle with an expanding palette of bits of information and leads, rather than running a set of carefully constructed and performed tests. While many leads eventually end up in dead ends, a single first-rate lead may open the door both to a wealth of information and to other informants. Interviewees broadly fall into the following categories: politicians and political activists, government and party cadres, people in supporting and staff functions, academic observers, journalists, ordinary supporters/local residents and businessmen. Altogether, the pool of informants comprises 143 people.

As frequently happens in research projects based extensively on field research, some informants prove to be more valuable than others and become unplanned key informants. In this project, there were indeed a few interviewees who could be called key informants. Twenty-three people were interviewed repeatedly over the years. One of the best sources was a local KMT party cadre who happened to be present when I walked unannounced into a local party branch. The party cadre had a personal scholarly interest in the subject and therefore was very willing to help with the project. The KMT is not famous for being a transparent organization, which is why the help of this local party cadre proved particularly important. Other valuable sources of information were three journalists
representing different media, who turned out to be long-term sources of good background information, helped by the fact that I had already befriended two of them prior to their becoming journalists. Other good sources included a former DPP legislative aide with a scholarly interest in the subject and local residents in a borough in Tainan county, as well as a handful of high-ranking officials in the government.

Interview data collection was information-guided. I tried to get as complete a picture as possible of how Taiwanese politics works as a way to a better understanding the phenomenon of politicization rather than, for example, focusing on linguistic or content analyses of the interview texts. The book extensively relies on these interviews as sources for background knowledge and interpretations of various phenomena in Taiwanese politics and these sources are noted in the endnotes.

Social scientists doing field research discovered early that, while maintaining a neutral position as an interviewer was a laudable ideal, what most people in fact view as ‘neutrality’ is agreement with their own views.14 Interviewees are more prone to talk to a sympathetic listener than a non-sympathetic one, something I discovered also in my own interviews. As an ethnographic research strategy, strict neutrality in the ideal scientific sense, that is, of the researcher as being unbiased, value-free and uninvolved, may not be the most useful strategy. In field research for this book, the challenge of maintaining research neutrality was accentuated by field research being conducted on politics in a politically divided society. Incidentally, many other political anthropologists have also reported on doing field research in such highly politicized environments. Many of the practical problems in undertaking such field research in Taiwan today revolve around questions of establishing and maintaining trust between the researcher and the interviewee.15

The main data for the research was gathered over the course of more than five years. I visited Taiwan on a dozen occasions in every year from 1998, except for 1999, ranging from a yearlong stay in 2001–2002 to visits just two weeks in duration. Several of the intensive interview periods were timed to coincide with elections at different levels, from grassroots elections to two presidential elections. During the stays, I was primarily based in Taipei city and affiliated with various academic institutions there, first the Institute of International Relations (National Chengchi University), then National Taiwan University, and most recently the Institute of Political Science of Academia Sinica. Several field research trips were also made to the south of the island. My field research focused especially on the Tainan area. However, many interviews were conducted in Taipei and some

Appendices
in the Kaohsiung area. Additionally, I discussed Taiwanese politics in Hong Kong with Hong Kong, Mainland Chinese and non-Chinese scholars with early experiences of Taiwanese politics or a research interest in Taiwan, and even had a few discussions with interesting participants in Taiwanese politics visiting Europe.

Half a dozen short but intense field trips were made to Tainan. Four of these trips were timed to coincide with election campaigns. During these trips, data was gathered by various means. Among other things, I did much ‘legwork’ in the Tainan area, locating campaign offices and politicians’ service centres and interviewing people in them, monitoring several legislative candidates in their various campaigning efforts, observing politicians’ campaign offices and service centres for hours on end, observing political rallies and demonstrations of various sizes, following a local borough warden closely during an election campaign for ten days, and ‘hanging around’ a local KMT party branch for days during a presidential election campaign observing the activities.

During these field stints, detailed longitudinal election data was also gathered, particularly on elections in the Tainan area, from the Tainan City Election Commission and the Central Election Commission in Taipei. Other statistical data was gathered from various sources in Taipei, including the Legislative Yuan, the Government Information Office, the Mainland Affairs Council, the KMT and DPP parties and several libraries. I received valuable help from a few local journalists in locating some data. The newspaper reporting utilized is partly openly available on the internet (the Taipei Times database), but for the other main newspaper source, hundreds of pages of relevant material was downloaded through the Academia Sinica network (the Lianhebao database).
II. R.O.C. constitutional amendments

Changes to the constitution took the form of seven amendments to the original text of the constitution in order to clarify it, rather than to rewrite the original text. Subsequent amendments mainly replaced prior amendments. In the first amendment (1991) ten additional articles were added to the constitution, while in the second amendment (1992) another eight additional articles were added. The ten articles in the third amendment (1994) replaced these 18 articles, while those in turn were replaced by a new set of 11 additional articles in the fourth amendment (1997). The Council of Grand Justices declared the fifth amendment (1999) void. The 1997 amendments thus remained in effect until they were replaced by the 11 additional articles of the sixth amendment (2000). The seventh round of constitutional amendments was passed in a task-oriented National Assembly for which delegates were elected for the first time solely through party lists in 2005. Below are some of the key changes.

First amendment in 1991
- a provision for regular elections of the Legislative Yuan and the National Assembly
- authorization for the president of the republic to issue emergency decrees to avert imminent danger to the security of the nation or of the people

Second amendment in 1992
- the president and the vice-president of the republic are to be elected by the people for at most two terms of four years each
- local self-government is granted a legal basis and the provincial governor and municipal mayors are to be elected by popular vote
- rather than being elected by the provincial and municipal councils, members of the Control Yuan – a watchdog body – are to be nominated and appointed by the president of the republic (with the consent of the National Assembly)
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– the president, vice-president and members of the Examination Yuan, and the president and vice-president of the Judicial Yuan and its grand justices are also to be nominated and appointed by the president of the republic (with the consent of the National Assembly)

– the grand justices of the Judicial Yuan are to form a constitutional tribunal to adjudicate on the dissolution of political parties for constitutional violations

Third amendment in 1994

– the president and vice-president of the republic are to be elected by direct popular vote, but the recall of the president and the vice-president shall be proposed by the National Assembly and passed by more than half of all voters

– presidential orders to appoint or remove from office personnel appointed with the confirmation of the National Assembly or Legislative Yuan in accordance with the constitution do not require the counter-signature of the premier

Fourth amendment in 1997

– the president of the Executive Yuan shall be appointed by the president of the republic, requiring no consent of the Legislative Yuan

– the president of the republic may, within ten days following the passage by the Legislative Yuan of a no-confidence vote against the president of the Executive Yuan, declare the dissolution of the Legislative Yuan after consulting with its president

– the power to impeach the president or the vice-president of the republic shall be transferred from the Control Yuan to the Legislative Yuan, and such action shall be initiated for high treason or rebellion only

– the Executive Yuan may request the Legislative Yuan to reconsider the passage of a bill that it deems difficult to execute; but, should more than one-half, rather than two-thirds, of the total number of Legislative Yuan members uphold the original passage of the bill, the president of the Executive Yuan shall immediately accept the said bill

– the Legislative Yuan shall have 225 members starting with the fourth Legislative Yuan (1999–2002)

– as of 2003, the Judicial Yuan shall have 15 grand justices, including a president and a vice-president. Each grand justice of the Judicial Yuan shall serve a term of eight years, independent of the order of appointment to office, and shall not serve a consecutive term
Appendices

– the budget of the Judicial Yuan shall be independent, no longer requiring the approval of the Executive Yuan

– Taiwan provincial elections shall be suspended; Taiwan province shall have a provincial government and a provincial consultative council; the members of the provincial government, one of whom shall be the provincial governor, shall be nominated by the president of the Executive Yuan and appointed by the president of the republic

Fifth amendment in 1999
The fifth round of constitutional amendments approved on 15 September 1999, was declared void by a constitutional interpretation (no. 499) made on 24 March 2000. Instead the revised additional articles of the fourth constitutional amendments in 1997 would remain in effect.

Sixth amendment in 2000
– the 300 delegates of the National Assembly are not to be elected by popular vote, but by proportional representation

– transfer of certain powers from the National Assembly to the Legislative Yuan, specifically the requirement of consent by the National Assembly of Judicial Yuan, Examination Yuan and Control Yuan nominations

– restricting the powers to initiate constitutional amendments, previously enjoyed by both the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan, to only the Legislative Yuan

Seventh amendment in 2005
– cutting the legislature by half – from 225 to 113 seats – beginning with the 7th legislature in 2008 and changing the length of the term from three to four years

– changing the election system from the SNTV system to a single district, two vote system, implying bigger election districts and separate candidate and party votes

– introducing a five per cent threshold for political parties in the legislative elections for the party lists (non-district)

– tightening the requirements for the passage of future constitutional changes and changes to the national territory, including requiring the endorsement (valid votes in favour), in a popular referendum, by more than half of all eligible voters
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- abolishing the National Assembly
- changes to the impeachment procedures for the president and vice-president; impeachment now requires a proposal by more than half of the legislators and endorsement by 2/3; after passing the resolution the legislature can ask the Council of Grand Justices to review the resolution in the constitutional court, and if the court agrees with the resolution, the official to be impeached will be relieved of his or her title and power immediately
III. R.O.C. presidents, premiers and vice-premiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>term</th>
<th>president</th>
<th>premier</th>
<th>vice-premier</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.6.84–1.6.89</td>
<td>Chiang Ching-kuo (KMT)</td>
<td>Yu Guohua (KMT)</td>
<td>Lin Yanggang (KMT)</td>
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<td>Shi Qiyang (KMT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.6.89–1.6.90</td>
<td>Lee Teng-hui (KMT)</td>
<td>Li Huan KMT)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hao Bocun (KMT)</td>
<td>Shi Qiyang (KMT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.2.93–24.2.96</td>
<td>Lee Teng-hui (KMT)</td>
<td>Lien Chan (KMT)</td>
<td>Xu Lide (KMT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.2.96–1.9.97</td>
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<td>Lien Chan (KMT)</td>
<td>Xu Lide (KMT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.97–22.1.99</td>
<td>Lee Teng-hui (KMT)</td>
<td>Vincent Siew (KMT)</td>
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<td>22.1.99–20.5.00</td>
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<td>Vincent Siew (KMT)</td>
<td>Liu Zhaoxuan (KMT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.5.00–6.10.00</td>
<td>Chen Shui-bian (DPP)</td>
<td>Tang Fei (KMT)</td>
<td>You Xikun (DPP)</td>
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<td>Zhang Junxiong (DPP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.10.00–1.2.02</td>
<td>Chen Shui-bian (DPP)</td>
<td>Zhang Junxiong (DPP)</td>
<td>Lai Yingzhao (non-partisan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.02–20.5.04</td>
<td>Chen Shui-bian (DPP)</td>
<td>You Xikun (DPP)</td>
<td>Lin Xinyi (non-partisan)</td>
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<td>20.5.04–1.2.05</td>
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<td>You Xikun (DPP)</td>
<td>Ye Julan (DPP)</td>
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<td>Zhang Junxiong (DPP)</td>
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<td>9.9.09--</td>
<td>Ma Ying-jeou (KMT)</td>
<td>Wu Dunyi (KMT)</td>
<td>Zhu Lilun (KMT)</td>
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</table>

Source: R.O.C. Executive Yuan.
IV. Selected former academics who later pursued a political career

**KMT government**

*Cai Zhengwen*: presidential adviser (G); Head, Commission for drafting the 1997 constitutional amendments; member, Examination Yuan (G); Minister of State (G); member, Central Election Commission (G)

*Ding Shouzhong*: legislator (E); Chair, KMT Central Standing Committee (P)

*Gao Lang*: Deputy secretary-general, Presidential Office (G)

*Guan Zhong*: President and Vice-president, Examination Yuan (G); Minister of Civil Services (G); Director, Youth Commission (G); Director-general, KMT Organizational Affairs Department (P); Director, INPR (O); legislator (E)

*Ho Szu-yin*: Deputy secretary-general, National Security Council (G); KMT party strategist (P); Head of the KMT Overseas Department (P); Director, IIR (O)

*Huang Defu*: Director, National Youth Commission (G); legislator (E)

*Jiang Yihua*: Interior Minister (G); Chair, Research, Development and Evaluation Commission (G)

*Lin Biyao*: Vice Secretary-general, National Security Council (G); Director, IIR (O)

*Shaw Yu-ming*: Director, Government Information Office (G); KMT Deputy secretary-general (P); Director, IIR (O); publisher, *Central Daily News* (O)

*Sheng Zhiren (Emile Sheng)*: Minister of Cultural Affairs (G)

*Su Chi*: Chair, Mainland Affairs Council (G); Deputy secretary-general to the President (G); Director, Government Information Office (G); legislator (E); Vice-director, IIR (O); Secretary-general, National Security Council (G)

*Zhu Lilun (Eric Chu)*: Vice-premier (G); legislator and Convener of Budgetary and Finance Committees (G); county magistrate (G)
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DPP government

Chen Bozhi: Chair, Council of Economic Planning and Development (G); President, Taiwan Thinktank (P)

Chen Mingtong: Chair and vice-chair, Mainland Affairs Council (G)

Gao Yingmao (Michael Kau): Vice Foreign Minister (G); adviser to the National Security Council (G), R.O.C. Representative to France (G), R.O.C. Representative to the European Union and Belgium (G)

Guo Zhengliang: legislator (E); Head of DPP Policy Planning Department (P)

Hu Shengzheng: Chair, Council for Economic Planning and Development (G), Minister without portfolio (G); member, Central Bank Board of Directors (G)

Li Junyi: Head, Office for Constitutional Re-engineering (G); Deputy mayor, Chiayi city (G); Vice Minister for Civil Service (G); legislator (E)

Lin Jialong: Director, Government Information Office (G); cabinet spokesperson (G); DPP Secretary-general (P); senior adviser, National Security Council (G); member, DPP Central Executive Committee (P)

Lin Quan: Minister of Finance (G); Director-general, Directorate-general of Budgeting and Accounting (G); presidential adviser (G)

Wu Zhaoxie (Joseph Wu): Deputy secretary-general to the president (G); Chair, Mainland Affairs Council (G); R.O.C. Representative to the United States (G)

You Yinglong: Vice-chair, Mainland Affairs Council (G); Vice-chair, Research, Development and Evaluation Commission (G); DPP departmental secretary-general (P); candidate, mayoral and legislative elections (E)

Zhang Xucheng (Parris Chang): member, National Security Council (G); legislator and Chair of Foreign Relations and National Defence Committees (E); R.O.C. Representative to Bahrain (G)

Note: People who have either switched directly from pursuing an academic career to a political career, or those who have intermittently pursued both, are included. The letter in brackets denotes whether the position is in government (G), the party machine (P), an elected position (E) or some other politically important position (O), such as think tank directorship. In particular, people who have held important positions across the various sectors, or particularly important individual positions, have been selected. The scholars are divided into two groups according to whether they have held important positions during the DPP or KMT governments.
NOTES TO APPENDICES


2 I am indebted to my former supervisor, Ilkka Heiskanen, for bringing this point home.

3 Heiskanen, Ilkka (2000) ‘Sivilisaatioiden sodat, kulttuurikamppailut ja antiglobalismi. Osa II Kulttuuriset kamppailut ja MES:in mahtti,’ [Civilization wars, cultural battles and antiglobalism. Part II Civilizational battles and the might of MES] Kosmopolis, 30 (4): 7–37; Huntington, ‘The West’; Pye, Asian Power and Politics. The rational choice framework that is mainstream in current American political science is popular also in Taiwan, where most young political scientists have received their research education in American universities.

4 Other prominent names in the tradition are Pierre Clastres, Fredrick Barth and Edmund Leach. Scholars primarily working within other subfields of anthropology, such as Bronislaw Malinowski and Marshall Sahlins, have also ventured into the political. As a side note, many of the most prominent political anthropologists have done their main field research in Southern Asia, following in Leach’s footsteps, e.g. his students Barth and Bailey. Encyclopedia Britannica Available at: <www.britannica.com>; HighWire Press TopicMap, Stanford University Press. Available at: <http://highwire.stanford.edu> (accessed 13 November 2005); Spencer, Jonathan (1997) ‘Post-colonialism and the political imagination,’ The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 3 (1): 4–8.


7 Bailey’s classic Stratagems and Spoils is the archetype for this type of scholarship. Another prominent work is Barth’s Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. Both books appeared in 1969. Spencer, ‘Post-colonialism and the political imagination,’ 5–6, 15.

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12 Glaser’s erstwhile colleague, Anselm Strauss, later wrote a book together with Juliet Corbin, where they provided a much more systematic and ‘scientific’ interpretation of grounded theory than Glaser’s and Strauss’ early writings. See Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*. However, Glaser severely criticized this attempt as distorting the very meaning of ‘grounded theory’, claiming that Strauss’ version of grounded theory would more correctly be called ‘full conceptual description’. Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*.


17 A new *Law of provincial and county autonomy* (sheng xian zizhifa) was promulgated on July 29, 1994. Prior to that law, local autonomy was only stipulated in an Executive Yuan directive. Liu, 重構台灣縣市組成, 128. The constitutional amendment also lifted some restrictions on local self-rule contained in the original constitution text from 1947. Zhao, ‘中央與地方權限劃分的理論與實際, 112–113.

18 Previously these powers were vested in a party review committee of the Executive Yuan. Chen, 'Party politics and democratic transition in Taiwan,’ 155.

19 The original constitution text gave two possibilities for initiating a constitutional amendment, either ‘upon the proposal of one fifth of the total number of delegates to the National Assembly and by a resolution of three fourths of the delegates
present at a meeting with a quorum of two thirds of all delegates to the National Assembly' or 'may be drawn up by the Legislative Yuan and submitted by it to the National Assembly for concurrence through referendum upon the proposal of one fourth of the Members of the Legislative Yuan and by a resolution of three fourths of the members present at a meeting with a quorum of three fourths of all members of the Yuan.' (R.O.C. Constitution, Art. 174, Items 1 and 2). After the sixth constitutional amendment in 2000, item 1 ceased to apply. Taiwan Documents Project 1997. ‘Additional articles to the Constitution of the Republic of China (Fourth revision, 1997)’. Available at: <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/constitution02.htm> (accessed 18 February 2008); Taiwan Documents Project 2000. ‘Additional articles to the Constitution of the Republic of China (Sixth revision, 2000)’. Available at: <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/constitution04.htm> (accessed 18 February 2008).

20 Lai has close relations to Soong Chu-yu (PFP), whom he advised during the 2000 presidential election campaign.

21 Lin was expelled from the KMT for joining the DPP government and supporting the decision to scrap the nuclear power plant.
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R.O.C. Executive Yuan.

R.O.C. Government Information Office.

R.O.C. Legislative Yuan, Office of procedures.


R.O.C. Ministry of Civil Services, Central Personnel Administration.


R.O.C. Ministry of Interior Affairs. Civil organizations in Taiwan-Fuchien area.


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