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# Contemporary Taiwan Studies in Europe: More Institutionalized, More Vital

Gunter SCHUBERT

The field of Taiwan Studies has gained considerable momentum in recent years, as prominently reflected by the annual conferences of the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS) founded in 2004 and, most recently, the holding of the first World Congress of Taiwan Studies, held at Academia Sinica from 26 to 28 April 2012. Particularly in Europe, the study of Taiwan has become more institutionalized, most notably by the founding of the Centre of Taiwan Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London – which grew out of a special Taiwan Studies programme introduced in 1999 and offers the first and only M.A. degree programme on Taiwan Studies outside of Taiwan – and the establishment of the European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT) at the University of Tübingen in 2008, which is dedicated to the promotion of social science research on Taiwan at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels. The editors of the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* have decided to support these efforts and positive developments by cooperating with the ERCCT to publish an issue of the journal focusing on Taiwanese topics in regular intervals. This makes the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* unique, as it is the only Western-language academic journal offering Taiwan scholars such an opportunity. The Taiwan issues either have a thematic focus or present a number of independent research articles on different subtopics. The present issue follows the second model and contains six articles on different aspects of contemporary Taiwanese politics.

Cal Clark and Alexander C. Tan discuss a puzzle that has been observed by many Taiwan scholars in the past: Although the Taiwanese party system is characterized by polarization – given the highly diverging ideologies and policies of the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) – this polarization is not reflected within the electorate. While both parties clash on issues of national identity and Taiwan's relationship with China, the majority of Taiwanese voters are moderate and oriented toward the status quo. The authors' explanation for this phenomenon is thought-provoking: Taiwan's two dominating political parties have become cartel organizations that mobilize support by consciously polarizing their positions in relation to one another. Ap-

parently, they do not have to fear punishment by the median voter because of a lack of serious party alternatives. It seems that Taiwan's party system has been "frozen" by stable cultural and social cleavages, "sticky" institutions, and strong-enough party attachments by critical voter constituencies who are not ready to switch their allegiances. Consequently, "Downsian" logic seems invalid in the Taiwan case, raising interesting questions concerning the democratic quality of its party system.

Jonathan Sullivan and Eliyahu V. Sapir apply an innovative analytical framework based on qualitative and quantitative content analysis to measure and explain context variation in Ma Ying-jeou's (Ma Yingjiu) presidential speeches during his first term (2008–2012). Their findings confirm what has been reported repeatedly over the last few years: Ma talked often about the economy and Chinese identity, and rarely about democracy and Taiwanese identity. Chi-squared Automatic Interaction Detection (CHAID) analysis, a sophisticated statistical method that allows for the identification of "time–audience nodes" for specified analytical categories, shows that there is some variation in the mean differences between those categories with respect to the targeted audiences, but the overall result is sustained over time: A change in political discourse from the Chen Shui-bian (Chen Shuibian) era to that of his successor, Ma, is clearly visible in the latter's emphasis on Chinese identity being linked to, if not convergent with, the issue of ROC sovereignty.

Christian Göbel deals with the thrilling question of to what extent the electoral reform implemented in 2004 – the abolition of the long-used system of single non-transferable vote in multi-member districts (SNTV-MMD) – has impacted the mobilizing capacities and sheer existence of Taiwan's notorious local factions. By drawing on thorough field work conducted in one Taiwanese county well known for its factional strife, he shows how little these clientelist networks have been affected by institutional changes that are supposed to contain factional voter mobilization in other political systems. Göbel's article provides the reader with fresh insights into the murky and quite under-researched world of Taiwan's local factions, as he convincingly demonstrates that they easily weather institutional change because of the voters' conviction that factions should have a legitimate say in deciding who gets the votes and who does not. As a matter of fact, local factions are deeply entrenched in Taiwan's political culture and socio-political fabric, and only on-going urbanization and social mobility may gradually change their pervasiveness in Taiwan's domestic politics.

Wang Hung-jen, in an article driven by the author's interest in Taiwan's recent intellectual history, focuses on the relationship between liberal and nationalist thinking among intellectuals since the beginning of the democratic era. His major argument is that democratic thought in Taiwan has never followed a "pure" liberal view but was (and still is) deeply entangled in the Taiwanese quest for national identity (either Taiwanese or Chinese). By drawing on the work of influential Taiwanese scholars and political thinkers over the last three decades, Wang differentiates between "universal liberalism", "moderate liberalism", "pragmatic liberalism", and "nationalist liberalism" as four orientations among Taiwanese liberals. Obviously, these scholars felt a greater urgency to respond to Taiwan's undecided collective identity than they did to position the Taiwanese experience in the great Western narrative of democratization as a manifestation of universal liberalism.

In his contribution, Stefan Fleischauer undertakes an intellectual experiment by asking if and to what extent the current state of cross-Strait relations can be conceptualized and understood by looking at the history of European integration, and how the future of this relationship could be shaped when we take the European experience into account. Trade alone, the author argues, will not reduce the security risk in the Taiwan Strait, which needs "some form of integration". Bringing about integration, for that matter, requires a "technocratic policy style" on the part of the responsible political elites, along with regional leadership by China combined with its willingness to offer more than it actually gets out of the integration process. Institutional "locking-in" is certainly necessary but constrained in the cross-Strait case by the unresolved sovereignty dispute between Taiwan and China. Fleischauer believes that the ongoing process of cross-Strait integration will deepen mutual trust, thus making the relationship between both sides more predictable in the future. However, the sovereignty conflict will hardly disappear, which is arguably a reflection of the resilience and longevity of the nation-state in Europe.

Finally, Gunter Schubert analyses the March 2012 legislative and presidential elections that confirmed KMT rule and secured Ma Ying-jeou's second term. Though a surprise to many observers, the DPP's defeat was predictable due to its murky stance on Taiwan's (future) China policy. While the KMT accepts China's rise as an independent variable to which Taiwan must respond by pro-active cross-Strait policies, the DPP has faced many problems adapting to this reality. At the same

time, the second Ma administration will have to strike a delicate balance between deepening the integration process and safeguarding Taiwan's sovereignty, lest it risk losing power in the next presidential race. Cross-Strait relations thus remain a complicated, multi-level game in which China must be aware that it cannot take the current power configuration in Taiwan for granted.

All in all, this collection of articles provides the reader with profound insights into current debates within the field of Taiwan Studies and highlights its vitality. Hopefully it will encourage Taiwan scholars worldwide to contribute to the Taiwan edition of the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* in the future as authors or guest editors to make this project a lasting scholarly undertaking.

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# Contents

## Introduction

- **Gunter SCHUBERT**  
**Contemporary Taiwan Studies in Europe:  
 More Institutionalized, More Vital** 3

## Research Articles

- Cal CLARK and Alexander C. TAN  
 Political Polarization in Taiwan:  
 A Growing Challenge to Catch-all Parties? 7
- Jonathan SULLIVAN and Eliyahu V. SAPIR  
 Ma Ying-jeou's Presidential Discourse 33
- Christian GÖBEL  
 The Impact of Electoral System Reform on Taiwan's Local  
 Factions 69
- WANG Hung-jen  
 Liberalist Variation in Taiwan:  
 Four Democratization Orientations 93
- Stefan FLEISCHAUER  
 Cross-Strait Relations and the Way Forward:  
 Observations from a European Integration Perspective 117

## Analysis

- Gunter SCHUBERT  
 No Winds of Change: Taiwan's 2012 National Elections and  
 the Post-election Fallout 143

- Contributors 163