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The Impacts of Changing Ruling Parties in the Twenty-First Century

Ming-Yeh T. RAWNSLEY

Changes of ruling parties are widely viewed as a critical marker of a country's level of democratisation. Huntington (1991: 266–267) even suggested a democracy can only be considered consolidated after passing a “two-turnover test”: two changes of ruling parties through elections. Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwan has continued to experience comprehensive social transformation and political reforms, including the first direct presidential election in 1996; the defeat of the Chinese Nationalist Party (中國國民黨, Zhongguo Guomindang, Kuomintang, KMT) in the 2000 presidential election by the Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨, Minzhu Jinbudang, DPP) after five decades of one-party rule; and the subsequent setback for the DPP in 2008 when the electorate voted the KMT back into power. This indicates that Taiwan should now be considered a consolidated democracy even though, comparatively speaking, it may still be young and evolving (Rawnsley and Gong 2011).

As the possibility of such an election-driven change of ruling parties is one of the most important features distinguishing democracies from authoritarian states, attention in Taiwan usually centres on the shifting of power from one party to another, as well as on the island's electoral system, party politics, election campaigns, national identity and political behaviour (e.g. Fell 2006, 2011; Rawnsley 2003; Rigger 1999, 2001, 2006; Sullivan 2013a, 2013b). There are an impressive number of studies which compare and contrast the social, cultural, political and economic conditions in Taiwan before and after democratisation (e.g. Ash, Garver, and Prime 2011; Blundell 2012; Cabestan and deLisle 2014; Corcuff 2002; Schubert and Damm 2011). However, it is noteworthy that although political parties frequently warn of the dire consequences should their rivals win an election, changes of ruling parties tend to demonstrate as much policy continuity as change. On the one hand, the historical, structural and cultural forces that shape the continuity of social networks and decision-making processes in Taiwan despite the rotation of ruling parties may constitute the basis from which the vitality of Taiwan originates and

help explain both why its economic development has been described as miraculous and how the island has achieved smooth and peaceful transitions between regimes (Tsang 2012: 1–18). On the other hand, the same set of internal and external conditions may also create a deep sense of frustration among the Taiwanese for the island's seeming lack of institutional transformation and the perceived slow pace of democratic progression (Fell, Klöter, and Chang 2006: 16–17).

Contributors to a co-edited volume by Dafydd Fell, Henning Klöter and Bi-yu Chang in 2006 discussed the most significant issues that faced Taiwan when the DPP took charge of the government after over half a century of rule by the KMT. As the editors noted at the time, while the unexpected victory of the DPP made the presidential election of 2000 a watershed in Taiwan's modern history, no publications

have as yet looked at the volatility of the changes that have taken place since the 1990s, nor have any compared the two regimes and analysed the latest developments in the island's social and political life (Fell, Klöter, and Chang 2006: 15).

The volume brought to our attention how the Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁, Chen Shuibian) administration attempted to introduce far-reaching reforms in different policy areas and in what ways the DPP government was severely constrained. It also highlighted how the legacy of the authoritarian era permeated different public and private realms and layers of socio-political structures in contemporary Taiwan. Nevertheless, a great deal has changed since the first turnover of ruling parties in 2000. Several key issues deliberated in the book by Fell, Klöter and Chang deserve further attention as they can enhance our insight into the similarities and differences that have characterised the policies of the DPP and the KMT since Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九, Ma Yingjiu) became president in 2008.

This topical issue¹ addresses the central question of whether and how the shift of power between political parties in democracies mat-

1 The inspiration for this topical issue came from two major international conferences in 2012: the annual conference of the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS) in Sønderborg, Denmark, and the first World Congress of Taiwan Studies, organised by Academia Sinica in Taipei. My thanks to Prof. Gunter Schubert of Tübingen University and Dr. Dafydd Fell of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London for encouraging me to submit a proposal to the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* (JCCA). I also ex-

ters. That question is examined from a range of political, economic, social and international policy perspectives in order to foreground the continuity and changes in Taiwan in the context of two turnovers of ruling parties following elections in the twenty-first century.

Fell and Chen begin their article by comparing the KMT's presidential electoral performance in 2012 with earlier national-level election campaign strategies. This study builds upon an analysis of the 2012 elections by Schubert (2012) and places Taiwan's post-2000 national elections in a longitudinal spectrum in order to examine what the KMT and the DPP might have learnt from previous successes and failures. The authors discover that while the change of ruling parties may not result in a change of policies, electoral policy change in 2008 certainly had a tremendous impact on the fortunes of political parties: The 2008 election was the first time Taiwan's new electoral system was used – a result of constitutional reforms passed in 2005. The new system tightened the space allotted to smaller, third parties and rendered them no longer competitive, whether at the district level or at the party-list level. Consequently, the KMT managed to gain almost three-quarters of the seats with just over 50 per cent of the overall vote. In other words, the new voting policies produced a highly disproportional parliament.

In 2012, by contrast, figures suggested that the DPP and the smaller parties learnt lessons from 2008 regarding how to adapt to the new electoral system. Thus the KMT's seat bonus fell to just over 10 per cent, while the DPP achieved rough parity in its vote (34.6) and seat (35.4) shares. Moreover, a major feature of the 2012 elections was the re-emergence of the third parties, including Soong Chuyu (James Soong, 宋楚瑜, Song Chuyu) and his People First Party (親民黨, Qinmindang, PFP) as well as Lee Teng-hui's (李登輝, Li Denghui) Taiwan Solidarity Union (台灣團結聯盟, Taiwan Tuanjie Lianmeng, TSU). The KMT managed to hold onto power by winning reduced majorities in both the presidential and legislative elections in January 2012 as the KMT's election campaigns appeared to hold

tend my gratitude to the editorial team of the JCCA, led by Dr. Karsten Giese, and the anonymous reviewers for their critical feedback on each essay. The vigorous editorial process ensures that the collection of research articles and analyses in this issue is a valuable intellectual contribution to our understanding of how democracy functions, the role the political party plays and the complex dynamics and interaction between the state and society in Taiwan today.

great appeal for their voters. The campaigns emphasised Taiwan's economic development, achievements in its China policy (including cross-strait relations and peaceful engagement with the PRC), and its plans to remedy corruption issues, improve ethnic harmony and make reforms (though it was unclear in the campaigns what kind of reforms were envisaged). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the KMT's message on identity in 2012 was markedly different from its 2008 version, as it reintroduced its appeal to dual ROC Chinese and Taiwanese identity, in contrast to the more heavily Taiwan-themed campaign of 2008.

As Fell and Chen suggest, China has always been, and will continue to be, a (if not "the") major policy concern for Taiwan's ruling parties. Following that line of thought, Chun-yi Lee's research article extends the discussion to include the PRC. She compares and contrasts the continuity and the changes that have taken place around labour policies in both Taiwan and the PRC since 2000. She argues that the comparison is important for the interactions between state and society and may promote mutual understanding and more meaningful engagement across the Taiwan Strait. One of the key questions she asks is whether the development of labour policies in Taiwan can provide China with viable lessons.

Lee points out that under the DPP administration between 2000 and 2008, labourers gained legal recognition in various aspects, the most important of these being the recognition of a nationwide independent trade union body, the Taiwan Confederation of Trade Unions (全國產業總工會, Quanguo Chanye Zonggonghui, TCTU). She assesses whether and how the labour policies in Taiwan have changed since 2008 under the KMT, traditionally considered a pro-business party. Meanwhile, Lee discusses how in the PRC, without independent trade unions or choice of different political parties, the Chinese government promulgated a New Labour Contract Law, which went into effect on 1 January 2008. Although many scholars believe that the new Chinese labour policies favour employees over employers, labour unrest and disputes have been soaring in the PRC since 2008. More importantly, the Chinese government's severe suppression of labour organisations indicates that the Chinese authorities are determined to maintain tight control over social organisations, especially in relation to labour issues. After reviewing the changing paths of labour policies in Taiwan and China, Lee reflects on the more fundamental

challenges in the development of Taiwan's labour policies and ponders how these issues may manifest and affect China.

Following Lee's discussion on labour policies across the Taiwan Strait, Cheng and Fell examine how Taiwan's policy of multiculturalism has been affected since 2008, when labour and marriage migration began to dramatically alter Taiwan's demography. The authors present a multidimensional examination of the political parties' election campaigns, citizenship legislation and immigrants' lived experiences, so as to gauge how the political system between 2000 and 2012 responded to the growing multicultural makeup of the national community. Cheng and Fell ask: Do elections really make a difference in terms of policy outcomes for Taiwan's claim that it is "multicultural"? How are the changes in ruling parties affecting Taiwan's immigrant community, if at all?

As Cheng and Fell have stated, although contract migrant workers make up almost half of Taiwan's migrant population, their study focuses only on migrant spouses, because contract workers do not have the right to apply for citizenship and thus do not form a constituency that vies for politicians' attention. In conclusion, the authors reveal that multiculturalism has become a primary discourse for Taiwan's nation-building, and it has been extended to embrace immigrant women. In their election campaigns, both major parties were rhetorically adhering to the normative multiculturalism discourse and also gradually moved to put forward public policy proposals to reach their respective goals. However, the normative discourse was paradoxically undermined by the ruling parties' conceptualisation of immigrant women as instruments for transmitting national culture and ensuring Taiwan's international competitiveness. Both the KMT and the DPP prioritise assimilation over a multicultural spirit of respect for immigrants' cultural rights. In terms of Chinese migrant spouses, while the duration of residency for Chinese immigrants' citizenship eligibility was reduced under the Ma administration, the KMT stuck to the status quo in that the required duration of residency for spouses from the PRC remained longer than the one required of foreign spouses; thus the KMT maintained the legal framework of political differentiation.

Rawnsley and Feng's essay continues the theme of civil society but tackles the issues of media policies. As the student-led anti-media-monopoly movement (反媒體壟斷運動, *fan meiti longduan yundong*) in

Taiwan had been generating momentum since mid-2012, the National Communications Commission (國家通訊傳播委員會, Guojia Tongxun Chuanbo Weiyuanhui, NCC) drafted the Prevention of Broadcasting and Television Monopoly and the Maintenance of Diversity Act (known as the Anti-Media-Monopoly Act) in early 2013; the Executive Yuan subsequently, in April 2013, approved the act, which is now waiting to be debated in the Legislative Yuan. The authors believe that in the context of Taiwan, the social is often connected with the political. Thus they contextualise the anti-media-monopoly movement, together with a series of civic movements since the KMT regained power in 2008, as a driving force for the “second wave” of democratisation for further political reform and democratic consolidation. Rawnsley and Feng draw from the thesis developed by Fell, Klöter and Chang (2006) that the authoritarian legacy remains evident in post-democratisation Taiwan and argue that the island’s “first wave” of democratisation in the twentieth century has failed to lead to the resolution of many issues. For example, is Taiwan a presidential or cabinet-based system? Where are the checks and balances on presidential power? How can the capacity and quality of the legislature be enhanced? What is the remedy for the aggressive commercialisation of the media, which has hindered, rather than improved, the performance of the media industry in general?

Rawnsley and Feng contend that the demand for the liberalisation of the media began in the 1980s as part of the process of democratisation. However, during the political transition, the media industry sacrificed the democratic ideal for profit and commercial growth, which has consequently transformed Taiwan’s media and journalism landscapes. While public-service broadcasting enjoyed modest expansion under Chen Shui-bian, DPP and KMT policymakers have generally embraced the principles of the free market when devising media policies in Taiwan. Yet, free media does not necessarily mean independent or responsible media that can fulfil the democratic expectations of citizens. In fact, the tyranny of the market is driving media practitioners towards sharing formats that attract middle-ground audiences and pushing the industry towards concentration of ownership in the hands of a few, powerful private individuals and consortia that are accountable to shareholders rather than to the public. Through their analysis of different versions of the Anti-Media-Monopoly Act, Rawnsley and Feng discover that a consensus has

emerged for Taiwan's media industry to move toward oligopoly rather than monopoly. Nevertheless, during the long process of waiting for approval by the legislature, observers worry that the essence of the Anti-Media-Monopoly Act may be lost in the end. As the activists do not fully trust the NCC and are unwilling to endorse its version of the Anti-Media-Monopoly Act, politicians of different affiliations have an excuse to play one camp against the other to suit their individual political preferences. This further demonstrates that the polarisation of party politics poses serious obstacles to the debate over the quality of Taiwan's media policies.

How the interplay between different stakeholders in a polarised political environment affects policies is similarly addressed in Simona Grano's research paper through the lens of the green movement. As the author comments, in Taiwan's electoral system voters' opinions are the key political driver, and thus policies often become election-oriented and lack long-term considerations. The DPP and the KMT use the environment as a tool to attack each other and to compete for votes. While the DPP has insisted that the KMT is irresponsible in its pro-development stance, the KMT has managed to galvanise support among pro-business elites and has criticised the DPP for being anti-industry. In reality, neither party has been able to make significant structural changes towards a better environment. This myopia and aggressive political competition appear to be the greatest challenges facing the environmental NGO community, as environmental concerns are merely secondary for the ruling elites during their policy-making process. The two case studies selected by Grano are: (1) the construction of Taiwan's controversial eighth naphtha-cracker project (八輕, *ba qing*) – namely, the Guoguang Petrochemical Project (國光石化, *guo guang shihua*, GPP) in Zhanghua County – and (2) the island's fourth nuclear power plant (NPP-4), in Gongliao District in New Taipei City. Through participant observation and interviews conducted in Taiwan in 2011 and 2012 with environmental professionals, social activists, local residents, members of Taiwan's Green Party and representatives from NGOs, Grano's study highlights the changes and continuities in Taiwan's environmental policies under different political parties.

Grano demonstrates that the conflicting concerns between economic growth, employment and the environment often mirror the imbalanced, triangular power relationship between the state, civil

society and business conglomerates. The approaches taken by local and central governments are becoming increasingly differentiated from one another. As Grano states, local governments usually pay more attention to economic growth since it is of immediate concern to local communities. Moreover, while central authorities are more committed to principles of public accountability in order to be re-elected, local officials are more tied to traditional practices relying on favouritism and personal ties. Under such circumstances, local and central interests in regards to environmental policies have widened in the twenty-first century, and in recent years the conflicts of interest between national regulations and local stakeholders have become increasingly influenced by emerging powers and actors such as social organisations, journalists and agencies, at both the local and national level.

Finally, Gary Rawnsley situates his discussion at the nexus of Taiwan's politics, diplomacy and international communications, framing his analysis with debates about how subsequent governments in Taipei have sought to exercise "soft power" (Nye 2005). His paper suggests that Taiwan's international engagement is not as successful as it otherwise might be because of the ways international and domestic political environments both shape and constrain its public diplomacy strategies. Rawnsley is critical of what he calls the "architecture" of Taiwan's public diplomacy, both in Taipei and in the government's overseas missions, and he particularly laments the dissolution of the Government Information Office (新聞局, Xingwenju, GIO) in favour of a new Ministry of Culture. This, he suggests, reflects that governments in Taipei have decided to project abroad those themes which resonate with party narratives over and above considerations of what may be more effective among international audiences: The closure of the GIO and the creation of a Ministry of Culture signals the Ma Ying-jeou administration's belief that "preserving traditional Chinese culture" is a far less provocative theme – at home and abroad – than democracy and democratisation (which were at the forefront of Chen Shui-bian's public diplomacy). Rawnsley concludes that by privileging culture, the KMT government has missed an opportunity to communicate themes that correspond more closely to Taiwan's "soft power" and that would resonate more loudly among audiences in other democracies.

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