

How Democratic Is Taiwan? Five Key Challenges for Democratic Development and Consolidation¹

By Larry Diamond (April 1, 2001)

(Paper for the Symposium on "The Transition from One-Party Rule: Taiwan's New Government and Cross-Straits Relations," Columbia University, April 6-7, 2001)

By any measure, Taiwan is a democracy today. It has regular, free, and fair elections to determine who will exercise government power. These elections are meaningful, in that victory at the polls confers real power on the winning party. Increasingly, electoral competition is vigorous and uncertain, as witnessed by the historic Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) victory in the 2000 presidential election. The Kuomintang's monopoly on the political system has been shattered and will never be restored. Even if the KMT emerges as the largest party after the forthcoming December 2001 Legislative Yuan (LY) election, it will not retain an absolute majority of the LY. Neither will the KMT reclaim a majority of the 23 city and county magistrate seats that will be up for reelection this December. In fact, facing now a three-way competition with the People First Party (PFP) as well as the DPP, the KMT will view itself as fortunate if it can increase its current paltry seven executive seats by one or two. Even if the KMT should recapture the presidency in 2004, it will never dominate the political system the way it did through most of the democratizing period of the 1990s (not to mention the period of one-party authoritarian rule up to 1988).

By global standards, Taiwan also has a relatively liberal democracy. The press is quite free and competitive, although tilted toward conservative (pro-unification, or anti-

independence) points on the political spectrum. Indeed, Freedom House judges that “Taiwan enjoys one of the freest media environments in Asia, despite some continuing legal restrictions and political pressures.”² Three of the four major television networks are still controlled by the old political establishment (the KMT, the military, and the government). But there is growing pluralism in the electronic media, generated in part by the explosion of cable television stations. There is extensive freedom of organization and assembly, and Taiwan has an active civil society (though not as vigorous as South Korea’s).

Overall, Freedom House rates Taiwan a 1 on political rights and a 2 on civil liberties (with both scales ranging from 1, most free, to 7, least free). This average score of 1.5 on the combined scale of freedom classifies Taiwan as a liberal democracy. If we separate out the 30 “core democracies” of the world (the 24 West European states, plus the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Israel), there are only 45 other liberal democracies in the world, and the majority of these have populations of less than one million.. The significance of Taiwan’s liberal democratic status comes into sharper relief when we look at regional breakdowns. Of the 25 states in Asia (Northeast, Southeast, and South), *Taiwan is one of only three liberal democracies* (the other two are Korea and Japan). Of the 19 states in Central and South America (including Mexico), only 8 are liberal democracies (as measured by an average score of 2 or better on the combined scales of Freedom). Of the 30 countries that might could be considered most strategically important outside the “core democracies” (those with populations over 50 million or GNPs over \$50 billion), Taiwan is one of only seven that are liberal democracies.

In all these respects, Taiwan can take pride in its democratic achievements. For a political system that faces a huge and growing threat to its security from the gigantic emerging superpower on the mainland, Taiwan is amazingly open, competitive, and free. Few observers would have predicted even two years ago that, within thirteen years of its founding, and without having revoked its formal commitment to hold a referendum on Taiwan independence, the Democratic Progressive Party would capture the presidency of the Republic of China. Neither was it obvious that the DPP's victorious candidate, Chen Shui-bian, would strike an impressively conciliatory posture by eschewing any projection of Taiwan independence. In fact, President Chen has contained a potentially polarizing political struggle in Taiwan by shelving any talk of Taiwan independence, and by adhering to all the symbols and constitutional language of the Republic of China, a country that in principle includes the mainland and is committed to political unification. Partly because of this moderation and restraint, evident throughout the presidential election campaign, President Chen quickly won the formal loyalty of the armed forces, and any speculation that the military leadership might not obey a DPP president was quickly laid to rest after the election and inauguration.

All of this is on the positive side. But it is only part of the story. Along with these positive developments are several negative factors that diminish the quality and obstruct the consolidation of democracy in Taiwan. Democracy is consolidated when all significant political actors are committed to the legitimacy of democracy and play by the rules of the democratic game. This means that electoral democracy is not only recognized for the moment as "the only game in town," but that political actors are normatively committed to and behaviorally abide by rules and restraints concerning

political means. Lawfulness and constitutionalism in political and electoral behavior are key indicators of a deeper elite convergence that signals consolidation. Similarly, at the mass level, the general public must also embrace democracy as the best form of government and manifest a durable and unconditional commitment to their own constitutional form of government.

I argue that there are five key problems that diminish the quality of democracy in Taiwan and stand in the way of its consolidation. The first of these is widespread corruption in politics and government, or “black and gold politics.” Second, related to this, is the institutional weakness of the rule of law, especially the judiciary. Third, party politics remain substantially polarized along the lines of ethnicity (Mainlander vs. Taiwanese) and attitudes toward the mainland (independence vs. unification). Fourth, the constitutional system suffers from serious deficiencies and a lack of consensus in two of its most vital dimensions: the executive structure and the electoral system. Finally, democracy and democratic values remain to be consolidated at the level of mass public opinion. I will now briefly review each of these challenges.

I. Combating Black and Gold Politics

Chen Shui-bian won election to the presidency not because of his historic identification with the cause of Taiwan independence, but rather because he neutralized this issue and made the election something of a referendum on “black and gold politics.”³ “Black and gold” refers to the power of organized crime and its penetration into party politics and electoral representative bodies. This is reflected in the shady character of many local KMT factional leaders, who are believed to have ties to organized crime; the

incestuous links between wealthy corporate interests and the longstanding party-state; the gigantic volumes of cash that slosh around the political system, buying votes and influence; and the inability of the judicial system to rein in these perversions of democracy.

All three parties suffer to some extent from political corruption and vote buying among their elected officials and candidates, and from ties to local power brokers of dubious character. But the KMT is by far the most burdened with these connections. Many of its bosses and vote brokers have “black” reputations as a result of criminal records and links to organized crime. During the 2000 election campaign, Lien Chan leaned heavily on this black network. In what came to be widely viewed as the greatest blunder of his campaign, Lien appeared on stage at a Pingtung rally several weeks before the election with two of the most notorious “black gold” personalities, Lo Fu-chu and Wu Tse-yuan. This embrace of the two most powerful gangsters in politics (both members of parliament) helped prompt Academia Sinica President Lee Yuan-tseh to endorse Chen Shui-bian, which was crucial to his winning the presidency.

The disgrace of criminal penetration into politics was dramatized just in the past week. On March 28, 2001, the same Lo Fu-chu violently assaulted a female (PFP) legislator, Diane Lee, on the floor of the LY, after she had intimated that he had attempted to interfere in the selection process for board members of an educational institution that is mired in a corruption scandal. The violent attack came less than four weeks after Lo was sentenced to 59 days of detention by a Taipei district court for assaulting a DPP legislator in June 1998. The latest attack, said its victim, “is not only a harm to myself,

but also humiliating to the legislature and Taiwan's democracy."⁴ That is, if anything, an understatement. The mass media have focused on the dramatic visual images of a thug legislator slapping, punching, and pulling the hair of a female colleague (an event captured on video camera, unbeknownst to Lo, who first denied that it had happened until the video was played on Taiwan's television stations). The deeper, problem, however, is that a person of proven violent bent who is widely believed to be a leading organized crime figure has sat for years, untouched by the law, as a member of Taiwan's parliament, and *as co-chairman of its judiciary committee!* Although formally an independent, Lo has cooperated closely with the KMT, and his son (Lo Ming-tsai) is now a KMT legislator and co-chairman of the Finance Committee.

Even KMT legislators have called for Lo to be punished with suspension or expulsion from Parliament, and Lo himself has volunteered to withdraw from Parliament for three months. But the issue is not simply controlling violence on the floor of the LY. It is cracking down on organized crime and rooting out criminals and thugs from party politics. Lee Teng-hui did much to democratize and liberalize Taiwan's politics. It was under his leadership that Taiwan became a liberal democracy. But it was also under his leadership that the KMT increasingly tolerated and embraced local organized crime figures in order to preserve its electoral dominance. One KMT Justice Minister after another failed to mobilize the forces of law against this problem, and at least two are rumored to have resigned in frustration over the party's refusal to let them go after vote-buying and organized crime, no matter the political consequences. That the KMT still does still not grasp the real problem is indicated by the response of its now highest elected official, Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng, who "was first to give a

thumbs-up to Lo's self-discipline decision, saying the move indicates that Lo is repentant of his violent action."⁵

Taiwan is long past superficial, symbolic acts of "repentance." Legislative action is needed to lift parliamentary immunity and allow criminal prosecution of any MP who is alleged to have connections to organized crime. The LY would also do well to adopt a law that has just been proposed by KMT parliamentary whip Hung Yu-chin to expel serious violators of parliamentary rules from the LY and ban them from running in the next legislative election. Even more importantly, Taiwan's democracy must mobilize more vigorously against "black and gold" politics. Late last year the Executive Yuan sent to the LY "anti-black gold amendments" to the "Public Officials Election and Recall Law." These provisions would have made it easier to crack down on vote-buying and criminal penetration of the election process. Not surprisingly, they are vigorously opposed by lawmakers with criminal records and suspected criminal ties. This is one of many EY bills that have been frozen in the LY by the KMT leadership.⁶ The KMT also recently blocked a PFP-proposed amendment to the same Election Law that was intended to fight vote-buying in party primaries (a problem that does not yet afflict the PFP since it does not select its candidates through primary elections).

Criminal penetration of electoral politics is most pervasive at the lowest levels. The immunity from prosecution of members of city and county councils must also be lifted. Election laws must be amended to ban people with criminal records from participating in elections for any public office, as well as offices within the associations of fishermen and farmers (which are heavily penetrated by organized crime, and whose financial

institutions are riddled with corruption and bad debt). The KMT has balked at this reform, as it has opposed a DPP proposed reform to do away entirely with elections for mayors of the townships and county municipalities. Both reforms would go far to clean up politics at the micro level but would strike serious blows in the process to the KMT's grassroots political machines. Although the latter reform, to do away with elections for township and county municipal officials, was endorsed by the 1996 National Development Conference, the LY speaker Wang has denounced the reform as politically motivated and is opposing it. The failure to enact these reforms is a concrete manifestation that many party actors are putting their immediate political interests above the urgent need to strengthen and reform Taiwan's democracy.

II. Reforming the Judiciary and Strengthening the Rule of Law

Strengthening the rule of law also requires reform of the judicial system. Under the current system, Taiwan's judges are career civil servants who begin their judicial careers with no actual legal experience and who are extremely difficult to remove, no matter how bad their performance. Careerism and lack of accountability incline the judiciary toward arbitrary, poorly informed, and sometimes corrupt decisions. An American attorney with long experience in Taiwan compares these judges to imperial mandarins.

Like the mandarins, the judges have a lifetime job. They got their jobs not based on experience, but on their ability to parrot answers on the state-sponsored tests. As a group they have little or no "life experience." . . . Like the Mandarins, they

have no public accountability, they consider themselves above all public scrutiny and review.⁷

A judicial reform committee has been seeking for some years now to restructure the judicial system to promote greater professionalism and protection for human rights and the rule of law. One needed element of reform would be to recruit judges from the ranks of experienced lawyers and pay them accordingly. An independent review committee of high-level judges should be empowered to assess complaints against judges and remove those who are found to be incompetent, abusive, or corrupt. Judges and prosecutors need more resources and staff, and in particular better insulation from politics. There must be a firewall of insulation that enables career prosecutors to go after politicians and their supporters at every level who are suspected of criminal activity, without being restrained by more politically minded officials in the Cabinet. Prosecutors could benefit also from the kind of anti-racketeering laws that helped law enforcement in the United States crack and cripple some of the most powerful organized crime families.

The institutional power to check corruption and abuse of power must also be strengthened. This power, in principle, now lies within the Control Yuan, which combines many of the functions of an anti-corruption commission and an Ombudsman's Office. The Control Yuan is a vital institution in the struggle for accountable, transparent, and responsible government. However, its capacity is limited in several respects. First, it does not have sufficient investigative staff, especially staff with adequate expertise. In the past two years, the number of investigators has more than doubled, from around 40 to more than 100. But it could be enlarged still further. Second, its ability and

resources to monitor the declarations of assets of public officials must be strengthened as only a small percentage of these declarations are audited in any given year. No high-profile public official in Taiwan has been impeached and punished for false declaration of assets. Yet it strains credibility to think that every public official has declared all his assets. Third, the Control Yuan should have the capacity to investigate and impeach civil servants. This would require a constitutional amendment. Fourth, and most important, the Control Yuan can impeach a public official, but then punishment (including removal from office) depends on a committee of the Judicial Yuan to discipline public functionaries. This disciplining function (independent of any criminal charges that are filed through the normal judicial process) should be transferred to the Control Yuan. Too many impeached officials never get seriously punished, giving the Control Yuan the image of a toothless tiger. The tiger needs teeth. Finally, the tiger needs more independence. All members are now appointed by the President. This is better than the old system of indirect election, but it would be better to disperse the appointments to a variety of institutions, such as the Legislative Yuan, the Judicial Yuan, and respected organizations like the Bar Association.

III. Political Polarization

A few years ago, it appeared that a new dimension of political cleavage—relating to economic and social issues—was surfacing that cross-cut the traditional divide between KMT and DPP over ethnicity and cross-strait relations. Such cross-cutting is very important for the political health of democracy in Taiwan, but progress toward this more complicated structure of political cleavages has stalled in recent years. There are a few

reasons for this. First, the New Party, which moved to the right of the KMT on cross-strait relations but to the left of it on economic and social (and political reform issues), has faded and now faces the danger of electoral extinction. Second, the KMT, lacking any strong ideological commitment, has moved in populist fashion to close the space between it and the DPP on many economic and social issues (such as shortening the work week). Third, now that Lee Teng-hui has retired from the political scene, the KMT's appeal to native Taiwanese, particularly those who favor a strong projection of Taiwan's separate national identity, has sharply contracted. Virtually, all of the most prominent political leaders of the KMT are mainlanders, save for Lien Chan, who was born to a mixed family but is regarded by many Taiwanese as more mainlander than Taiwanese. And fourth, although the DPP has moderated significantly its position on cross-strait relations, particularly as it has been articulated during the campaign and now the presidency of Chen Shui-bian, it continues to attract almost all voters who favor Taiwan independence, and to repel almost all voters who favor unification. Cross-strait relations remain the overriding valence issue in Taiwan politics.

In short, the polarization of Taiwan's electoral politics along the principal fault line of ethnicity cum nationalism (independence vs. unification) remains a serious danger. In the short to medium run, this danger will probably only be neutralized if the issue of cross-strait relations is itself neutralized through a dramatic initiative by the Chen Shui-bian administration. President Chen has the ability to negotiate a breakthrough with mainland China, by returning Taiwan to the principle of "one China" but with the separate interpretations that allowed the semi-official dialogue with Beijing to proceed in 1993. President Chen could not take this difficult step unless Beijing clarified that the

recent statements of Vice-Premier Qian Qichen represent the policy of the PRC and not merely the view of one leader or faction. These three crucial statements—that “one China” does not have to mean the PRC, that both the mainland and Taiwan are part of “one China,” and that when the two sides meet they can do so with equal status—could provide the basis for a breakthrough. But to achieve it, Chen will have to signal that he is ready to recognize the principle of “one China.”

A window of opportunity is open now to achieve this political breakthrough and resume negotiations. The PRC has made it clear that it is willing to deal with any leader who will return the ROC to the one-China principle. It has indicated privately in some settings that it would even be willing to risk helping President Chen politically (i.e. before the upcoming LY election) if he were willing to take this essential step. There are indications that President Chen recognizes that he will need at some point, in exchange for appropriate rhetorical and symbolic concessions from Beijing, to return the ROC to an explicit recognition of the one-China principle. But he appears to have decided that the time is not ripe to do so this year. Such a sharp turn would embitter the fundamentalist supporters of the DPP for the second time in one year (after resuming construction of the suspended Fourth Nuclear Power Plant). And it would probably compel some number of DPP LY candidates to disavow the president’s decision in order to hold on to their electoral bases.

I believe that Chen Shui-bian will seek an accommodation with Beijing well before his first term in office ends. I hope that Beijing will be ready to answer the firm knock on the door when it comes. Should Chen be able to revive the political dialogue with Beijing

under some kind of explicit acknowledgement of “one China,” it would reposition the DPP away from its historic pro-independence position and significantly close the distance between the DPP and the other parties on this issue. Many other developments could follow this initial breakthrough: the opening of the “three direct links,” a series of military confidence-building measures, a freeze on the diplomatic wars, a summit meeting between Jiang and Chen, and PRC agreement to allow Chen to participate in APEC meetings and to offer some space for Taiwan’s participation in certain international bodies like the World Health Organization. Such a far-reaching accommodation between Beijing and Taipei now seems far-fetched. But a generation ago, so did the prospect of the cold warrior Richard Nixon normalizing U.S. relations with Mao’s China.

If Taipei and Beijing were able to revive the Koo-Wang talks and to take a number of practical steps toward normalizing relations across the Taiwan Strait, while agreeing to defer indefinitely discussion of the intractable issue of the political status of Taiwan, a new generation of Taiwan politics would open. Taiwan independence would be effectively ruled out, and the DPP would at some point repeal the pro-independence provisions in its platform. Yet unification would still remain a distant prospect that would have to await fundamental political change on the mainland. Political debate and cleavage could then gravitate to other issues relating to the economy, social policy, and the environment. If the DPP were clever, it would seek to win over the New Party by laying aside the cross-strait issue and focusing on the economy, social equity, the environment, crime, and corruption. On these issues, the DPP and the New Party share a broad philosophical orientation that in European terms could be described as

moderately left of center (although Chen is eagerly and ostentatiously searching for the Clinton-Blair “third way”). It is not purely by coincidence that Chen has just enticed the New Party’s brightest and most prominent political star, LY member Hau Lung-pin (the son of the former KMT General, Premier, and Chiang Ching-kuo loyalist Hau Pei-tsun) to be the new head of Taiwan’s environmental protection agency. If the cross-strait issue is largely neutralized, it would be possible to imagine Taiwan’s party politics realigning along the ideological lines of other advanced industrial democracies, with one moderately progressive party and one moderately conservative, business-oriented party, each trying to hug the center.

IV. Institutional Structures (Executive and Electoral Systems)

Taiwan is stuck with two elements of institutional design that serve democracy very poorly. The first is the semi-presidential system. The system worked perfectly well when one party controlled both the presidency and the parliament. Through his position as chairman of the party, President Lee Teng-hui was able to exercise formidable control over both the Executive Yuan and the Legislative Yuan. That is no longer the case. Taiwan’s constitutional system does not function well under divided government. Because the president can name the premier and has the constitutional power to dissolve parliament if the latter votes no confidence in the premier, the president has the upper hand in forming a government. Thus, he is sorely tempted to manipulate the system as if it were a purely or predominantly presidential one. However, constitutionally Taiwan’s system is very far from presidential, because in dealing with parliament on legislation and budgeting, the president and his executive cabinet hold no

cards. In a purely presidential system like the U.S., the presidential veto is a powerful bargaining tool to craft or block legislation. Neither the president nor the premier has this tool in Taiwan.

The result is a strong proclivity toward ungovernability when party control over the presidency and the parliament is divided in Taiwan. As we have seen in the past year, each branch regards itself as the legitimate expression of the popular will. Each can claim a certain constitutional authority and electoral mandate. Neither is willing to yield to the other. So the president appoints a cabinet that can survive but cannot pass legislation. The parliament, controlled by the opposition, has not dared to topple the premier (and risk new elections), but has been happy to block most of the essential legislation (including crucial economic and political reform bills) submitted to it by the Executive Yuan.

This deadlock must be broken if democracy in Taiwan is to prove itself able to govern effectively under less than ideal political conditions, and is thereby to accumulate the legitimacy necessary to become consolidated. The early signs are not encouraging. The KMT expects that, in alliance with the PFP and the New Party, it will hold the upper hand and will name the next premier. The DPP expects that it will somehow be able to lure over enough independents and KMT (and even New Party) supporters to do the same. Much will depend on which party comes closest to realizing its maximum goal in LY seats. But unless one of the two leading parties, the KMT or the DPP, wins a fairly decisive victory (in the sense of a plurality that is within striking distance of a parliamentary majority), serious, debilitating institutional conflict could well persist.

The best solution would be to dump semi-presidentialism in favor of either purely parliamentary or purely presidential government. Either system would be better than the current one, because the rules and lines of authority would be clearer. However, with the most recent constitutional changes, it is now so difficult to amend the constitution (and political actors differ so profoundly on which of the two “pure” systems would be preferable), that constitutional reform in this area is extremely unlikely. Taiwan is therefore stuck with a system tailored to Lee Teng-hui’s rule and now outmoded and unwieldy. Democratic consolidation will require that all major parties learn that the semi-presidential system requires some willingness to accommodate on the part of all major parties if it is to function effectively. In this sense, the same is true of any type of constitutional system (and perhaps equally of presidential systems under divided rule). But this is a hard lesson to learn in a political system where no party has yet had to share power at the top of the system. Under any circumstance, the DPP will have to forge some kind of coalition, since it is mathematically impossible for it to win a majority of seats, and no one expects it to win more than about 90 seats (23 short of a majority). The DPP will have to be prepared to surrender more power than it has been willing to do so far if it wants to be able to govern more effectively in the second half of Chen Shui-bian’s term than it has in the first.

Electoral reform is more feasible, and more vital. One of the chief factors that makes election campaigns for the Legislative Yuan so expensive, and that preserves the power of local factions that are often linked to organized crime, is the electoral system of multi-member districts with the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV). In districts of large magnitude, the system also gives space for candidates to forge militant appeals and

engage in excessively theatrical gestures (such as fighting on the floor of parliament, and humiliating the premier in questioning) in order to capture the support of well-defined but narrow constituencies. Now that Japan has abandoned this system, Taiwan is the only country in the world that uses it. I know of no political scientist or independent political analyst in Taiwan who favors keeping this system. Taiwan's political party system would be much healthier if SNTV were terminated and elections were based at least partly on proportional representation. Most observers doubt this is possible any time soon—precisely because of the strength of local factions. But the principal political parties are not that far apart in the alternatives they might favor, and it is possible to imagine a national consensus forming around a new system that would combine in some way single-member districts (SMD) and party-list proportional representation.

There are several feasible alternatives: pure SMD, pure PR, a mixed system (in which 50 or 60 percent of the seats are chosen by SMD and the other portion by PR), or the German system (purely proportional in overall representation, but with half the seats elected from single-member districts). Any one of these would be better than the current system. The problem is that any change in electoral districts would require a constitutional amendment, which raises again the formidable challenge of mustering an exceptionally broad cross-party coalition. There is one devilishly simple alternative, however, that would not require a constitutional amendment. The electoral system can be changed by a simple act of parliament, so long as the electoral districts (and their magnitude) remain. LY member Shen Fu-hsiung proposed last year a reform by which the current districts would be retained but the method of election would be changed

from SNTV to proportional representation (from an open party list within each district). Voters would choose one party list in each district, and then select or rank the party's candidates within that list. The current balance between district seats (176) and seats drawn from the system-wide party lists (49) would be retained. Such a system would not be perfect. But it would be highly proportional; it would make independent candidacies less viable; it would remove concerns about over-nomination of candidates, making the system more competitive; it would somewhat depress intra-party competition; and it would focus attention somewhat more on parties and less on individuals. (A better system would probably be closed lists, ranked by the party through the nomination process, but LY members would probably resist this as too drastic a change).

The challenge of governability is a crucial one. Under authoritarian and then one-party-dominant democratic rule, Taiwan has enjoyed several decades of sustained rapid economic development. The country has come to have high expectations of economic performance, yet it faces new and unprecedented challenges to sustaining that performance. Economic development on the mainland will increasingly suck away capital and lower-level manufacturing jobs. Integration into the WTO will subject Taiwan's agriculture, manufacturing, and services to more competition. The economy will have to accelerate its adaptation to higher levels of processing and capital intensity if it is to retain its competitive edge. The social demands of an aging population will have to be met with empathy but fiscal prudence. All of this will require continuously artful management and vigorous reform from the central government. There will be less margin for error than in the past, in terms of incompetence or corruption. Unless government in Taiwan becomes more transparent and efficient while retaining a high

degree of technical competence in macroeconomic management, the economic “miracle” will be endangered, and so could be the stability of democracy.

V. Public Support for Democracy

At the level of mass public opinion and values, democracy in Taiwan remains to be consolidated. In consolidated democracies, there is overwhelming and robust support for democracy both in principle and in practice. At least seventy percent of the public consistently supports democracy as the best form of government (across different measures, and over time), and no more than ten percent (fifteen at most) is willing to entertain an authoritarian form of government. While some new democracies (Spain, Portugal, Greece, Uruguay, possibly now a few of the Central European states) have attained such consolidation of public support for democracy within a decade of the transition, this does not appear to be happening in Taiwan. In 1998, only 54% of the public agreed that “democracy is always preferable” (12% said authoritarianism can be preferable; 17% said it didn’t matter; and 17% couldn’t or wouldn’t answer the question).⁸ Only 57% rated democracy as “suitable” for Taiwan (compared to 63% in Korea). Somewhat less than half the public expressed confidence in each of several key democratic institutions: the courts, the legislature, the press (while a little more than half trusted the military and the president). Only a quarter of the public views the political system as responsive to its concerns. And substantial portions of the public (up to half) remain wary of too much political pluralism.

In some respects, it is not surprising that there is not more support for democracy and belief in democratic values. Taiwan has only in the past decade emerged from half a

century of rigidly controlling and highly effective authoritarian rule. Value orientations will change in part with generational replacement over time. But this factor alone cannot be expected to carry the entire burden of legitimating and normatively embedding democracy in the mass culture. If Taiwan's public is to develop a broad, deep, and unquestioning commitment to democracy as the best form of government, democratic institutions and politicians must show that they are worthy of this commitment. That means they must function in the coming decade with greater accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and accommodation than they have exhibited so far. Democracy will not be consolidated at the level of mass public opinion unless political parties and leaders make significant progress in meeting the above challenges of democratic governance and politics.

¹ This paper is based on research that was supported in part by a grant from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation. I am grateful to that Foundation for its support, but the views expressed here are entirely my own and the CCK Foundation assumes no responsibility for them.

² Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1999-2000* (New York: Freedom House, 2000): p. 469.

³ For an extended analysis of the presidential election campaign, the issues, and why Chen won, see my essay, "Anatomy of an Electoral Earthquake: How the KMT Lost and the DPP Won the 2000 Presidential Election," paper presented to the East-West Center Conference, "Taiwan Presidential Elections: Outcome and Implications" Honolulu, August 21-22, 2000, forthcoming in a volume edited by Muthiah Alagappa.

⁴ *Taipei Times*, March 29, 2001, p. 1.

⁵ *The China Post*, March 30, 2001, p. 20.

⁶ "Thinkers, not Thugs, Wanted," editorial, *Taipei Times*, March 29, 2001, p. 8.

⁷ Brian Kennedy, "Justice and Cognitive Dissonance," *Taipei Times*, March 30, 2001, p. 12.

⁸ A fuller analysis of the comparative survey data can be found in Yun-han Chu, Larry Diamond, and Doh Chull Shin, "How People View Democracy: Halting Progress in Korea and Taiwan," *Journal of Democracy* 12 (January 2001): 122-136; and Chu, Diamond, Shin, "Growth and Equivocation in Support for Democracy in Korea and Taiwan," *Studies in Public Policy* no. 345, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 2001.