

THE DYNAMICS OF TAIWAN'S PARTY POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

Taiwan’s party system stands out among its Third-Wave democratic peers for its high institutionalization: it features low electoral volatility, high partisanship, broad elite and mass commitment to the legitimacy of elections and party politics, and two catch-all parties with strong party organizations, distinctive brands, and loyal followings in the electorate. This stability is reflected today in both the leading parties and the issues they compete on: for more than two decades, the “China question” has been at the heart of Taiwanese party politics, and the Chinese Nationalist (*Kuomintang*, or KMT) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have remained the primary competitors. Below the radar, Taiwan’s party system has changed in one key, and underappreciated, way: it has become more *nationalized*, as partisan factors have risen in electoral importance relative to personal ones, both static and dynamic measures of nationalization are high or on the increase, and national partisan influences have trickled down to become increasingly decisive even in local elections. It has not, however, undergone a partisan realignment, despite significant swings in the vote away from ruling parties in recent elections. In particular, I find little evidence to support the claim that the 2016 general elections were “critical elections” that fundamentally reordered the previous patterns of party competition. Taiwan’s party system remains relatively stable and unlikely to realign away from the fundamental “China” divide anytime soon.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE DYNAMICS OF TAIWAN’S PARTY POLITICS

Taiwan stands out among the Third Wave democracies for the remarkable stability of its party system.¹ Ever since Taiwan’s first fully democratic legislative election was held in 1992, the two leading political parties have remained the same: the Chinese Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang*, or KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) finished 1-2 in 1992, and 2-1 in 2016. Despite important defections from the KMT in the early 2000s, no other party has ever managed to knock either one out of the top two positions.

Taiwan’s party system is also unusual among Third Wave cases for its uni-dimensionality. For most of its democratic history, party competition in Taiwan has been oriented around what I will call simply, “the China question.”² Whether we characterize it primarily as a divide over (sub)ethnicity, over national identity, or over competing visions for how to handle relations with the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the China question has long been the most salient issue in Taiwanese politics.

Since at least the early 2000s, when the present pattern first emerged, this single dimension of political conflict has also been the axis along which the party system is structured.³ As any observer of Taiwanese politics knows, the two leading parties have consistently held distinct positions on the China question: to the right of the median is the KMT, which has

¹ T.J. Cheng and Yung-ming Hsu, “Long in the Making: Taiwan’s Institutionalized Party System,” in Allen Hicken and Eric Kuhonta (eds.), *Party System Institutionalization in Asia: Democracies, Autocracies, and the Shadows of the Past*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 108-135; and the other chapters therein.

² Scholars as a whole have been inconsistent in how they refer to this fundamental cleavage in Taiwan politics. Rather than defend a particular interpretation, here I will simply note that there is enough overlap between the identity symbols that each party’s core partisans embrace or avoid in their campaigns and public statements, and their views on cross-strait relations, that we can refer without oversimplification to a single dimension of political conflict.

³ Among the many studies making this point over the past 15 years, see, e.g., Yun-han Chu, “Taiwan’s National Identity Politics and the Prospect of Cross-Strait Relations,” *Asian Survey* 44 no. 4 (2004): 484-512; Ching-hsin Yu, “The Evolving Party System in Taiwan, 1995-2004,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 40 no. 1-2 (2005): 105-121; John Fu-sheng Hsieh, “Ethnicity, National Identity, and Domestic Politics in Taiwan,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 40 no. 13 (2005): 13-28; Dafydd Fell, *Party Politics in Taiwan: Party Change and the Democratic Evolution of Taiwan, 1991-2004* (London: Routledge, 2006); John Fu-sheng Hsieh, “Continuity and Change in Party Politics in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea,” *East Asian Policy* 5 no. 76 (2013): 76-85; Shelley Rigger, “Political Parties and Identity Politics in Taiwan,” in Larry Diamond and Gi-wook Shin (eds.), *New Challenges for Maturing Democracies in Korea and Taiwan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 106-132; Cheng and Hsu, “Taiwan’s Institutionalized Party System”; Shing-yuan Sheng and Hsiao-chuan (Mandy) Liao, “Issues, Political Cleavages, and Party Competition in Taiwan,” in Chris Achen and T.Y. Wang (eds.), *The Taiwan Voter* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 98-138; Chi Huang, “Generation Effects?: Evolution of Independence-Unification Views in Taiwan, 1996-2016,” *Electoral Studies* 58 (2019): 103-112.

avored a closer, more cooperative relationship with the PRC, and to the left is the DPP, which has been wary of growing cross-Strait ties and has advocated for moves toward de jure or at least maintenance of de facto independence for Taiwan. The KMT has been joined by two breakaway parties, the strongly pro-unification New Party (NP) and the more centrist People First Party (PFP) of James Soong, which together have formed what in Taiwanese political parlance is known as the “Pan-Blue” camp. On the other side, shortly after the 2000 election the DPP was joined by the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), another group of KMT defectors led by former president Lee Teng-hui, which set up to the DPP’s left and took a stronger nativist, anti-China stance. Parallel to the KMT and its more pro-China offshoots, the DPP and TSU together became known as the “Pan-Green” camp.

The enduring salience of the China question can also be seen at the individual level. In the last 20 years of public opinion research on Taiwanese politics, the single most robust finding is that attitudes toward the China question increasingly determine vote choice in national elections.⁴ As the four significant parties repositioned themselves into two camps in the early 2000s, segments of the electorate followed them and re-sorted into the political camp closest to their own views.⁵ Ever since, as this body of research has repeatedly shown, the party system as a whole has remained oriented around offering voters different positions on national identity and cross-Strait relations, and every election has turned at least to some degree on shifts in the median voter’s preferences on this dimension.

Was 2016 Different?

It is with this context in mind that questions about a fundamental partisan realignment in the 2016 presidential and legislative elections are so intriguing. In the months before the elections, more than a few observers of Taiwanese politics speculated that this long-standing pattern of “blue vs. green” competition might at last be in danger of breaking up, and that Taiwan’s party system could be headed for a permanent reorientation around something besides the China question.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.* For an excellent recent summary of this body of research findings, see also Chris Achen and T.Y. Wang (eds.), *The Taiwan Voter* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

⁵ Eric Yu, “Partisanship and Public Opinion,” in Yun-han Chu, Larry Diamond, and Khari Templeman (eds.), *Taiwan’s Democracy Challenged: The Chen Shui-bian Years* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2016), 73-94.

⁶ For some examples, see Yu-shan Wu, “From Identity to Distribution: Paradigm Shift in Taiwan Politics—A First Cut,” conference paper presented at the American Association of Chinese Studies Annual Conference, Rutgers

These expectations were driven in part by developments overseas. After the global financial crisis in 2008-9 ushered in a deep and prolonged economic recession in most of the world's advanced economies, voting publics in many democracies became increasingly disillusioned with traditional governing elites of all political stripes.⁷ New anti-establishment candidates and parties popped up throughout the democratic world on both the traditional Left and Right, and in many cases quickly became a serious threat to win power.⁸

This pattern was particularly pronounced in the members of the European Union, which suffered through an economic downturn that by some measures was worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s. In Greece, for instance, which experienced the longest and deepest economic contraction of any of the members of the Euro zone, the two major parties with governing experience both bled votes to challengers through three successive elections, creating an opening for the untested, far-left Syriza party to win a plurality and form a government in 2015. In Spain, the left-wing populist party Podemos, founded on an anti-corruption and anti-inequality platform in March 2014, became the third-largest party in parliament in December 2015, and effectively prevented the formation of a stable coalition government there. In Italy, the Five Star Movement, a populist and Eurosceptic party founded by a blogger with no political experience, grew rapidly in prominence and popularity; its candidates won the mayor's elections in Rome and Turin in 2016, and it played a key role in defeating a constitutional referendum in 2016 that led to the resignation of the Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. In France, the socialist and Gaullist political camps disintegrated in the run-up to the 2017 presidential election, as each faced existential challenges from the political extremes: on the right, Marine Le Pen of the Front National, and on the left, Jean-Luc Melenchon of La France Insoumise. That election ended with the election as president of Emmanuel Macron, a former Socialist Party cabinet minister, at the

University, Oct 11-13, 2013; Jonathan Sullivan and Michael Thim, "Here Comes Taiwan's Big Political Realignment," *The National Interest*, December 3, 2014, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/here-comes-taiwan-s-big-political-realignment-11774>; Lajavakaw Sia EkHong, "Nationalist Dealignment in 2014, Realignment in 2016?," *Thinking Taiwan*, November 11, 2014, at: <http://thinking-taiwan.com/nationalist-dealignment-in-2014-realignment-in-2016/>; C. Donovan Smith, "The Coming Collapse of the KMT?," *China Policy Analysis*, May 14, 2015, at: <https://cpianalysis.org/2015/05/14/the-coming-collapse-of-the-kmt/>; Linda van der Horst, "The Rise of Taiwan's 'Third Force'," *The Diplomat*, January 6, 2016, at: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/the-rise-of-taiwans-third-force>.

⁷ Klaus Armigeon and Kai Guthmann, "Democracy in Crisis? The Declining Support for National Democracy in European Countries, 2007–2011," *European Journal of Political Research* 53 no. 3 (2014): 423-442.

⁸ See, for instance, the chapters in Hanspeter Kriesi and Takis S. Pappas, eds, *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2015).

head of *En Marche*, a completely new, centrist party which included dissidents from parties of both the traditional left and right.

Given the global trend of rising support for new and anti-establishment alternatives, the prospect of a similar development in Taiwan suddenly did not seem so far-fetched. And indeed, there were also some domestic indications that the party system might be headed for a crackup driven by an anti-establishment movement. First, KMT President Ma Ying-jeou's personal popularity and that of his administration turned negative early in his second term, and by 2013 his approval rating was consistently under 20 percent in opinion polls. At the same time, civil society activists led an increase in street protests directed against a wide range of government policies, including the allegedly improper use of eminent domain by local governments in Miaoli County, Taoyuan City, and Taipei City⁹; proposals to allow imports of US beef and pork¹⁰; and the negligent death of a conscript in military custody¹¹. The surge of social activism culminated in the student-led occupation of the Legislative Yuan for three weeks in spring 2014 to prevent the approval of a trade agreement with the PRC, for which the Ma administration had pushed hard—an event that eventually became known as the Sunflower Movement. Finally, the ruling KMT itself appeared increasingly divided and paralyzed by infighting among its legislative caucus, local officials, and the Ma administration, and buffeted by corruption scandals and rising public opposition to further cross-Strait rapprochement.

The December 2014 local elections put an exclamation point on the swing in public opinion against the ruling party.¹² The KMT was trounced: going into the election, it held 15 of 22 county executive and city mayor seats, but lost nine to either the DPP or independent candidates. The headline result was in Taipei City, traditionally a Pan-Blue stronghold, where a DPP-supported independent candidate and political novice, Ko Wen-je, handily won the election over the KMT nominee Lien Sheng-wen. Particularly noteworthy was that Ko positioned himself

⁹ For an introduction to these cases and a more general review of environmental protests during the Ma era, see Simona A. Grano, *Environmental Governance in Taiwan: A New Generation of Activists* (London: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁰ "Taiwan, America, and Meat Wars: Gored," Banyan, *The Economist*, March 8, 2012, at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/03/taiwan-america-and-meat-wars>

¹¹ "Blooded: A Conscript's Death Has Brought the Young out on the Streets," *The Economist*, August 10, 2013, at: <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21583271-conscripts-death-has-brought-young-out-streets-blooded>

¹² See Min-hua Huang, "Taiwan's Changing Political Landscape: The KMT's Defeat in the Nine-in-One Elections," Brookings Institution East Asia Commentary series, December 8, 2014, at: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/taiwans-changing-political-landscape-the-kmts-landslide-defeat-in-the-nine-in-one-elections/>

as a centrist on cross-Strait relations, playing down the traditional division between the leading parties, and instead spent much of his campaign emphasizing his outsider status and concern for local economic and governance issues. When his margin of victory was far larger than any previous DPP candidate had achieved in a Taipei mayor's race, some commentators saw it as proof that Taiwan's party system was headed for a broader realignment around economic and class issues and away from the old "blue-green" competition over cross-Strait relations.¹³

The run-up to the 2016 election raised expectations further that a fundamental change in patterns of political support might be in the offing. In the months after the local elections, several new political parties were founded that claimed to represent a new "Third Force" in Taiwanese politics, distinguishing themselves from both the two main political camps by emphasizing distinctive positions on cross-cutting social, economic, and cultural issues. The most prominent were three parties that had close links to the social movement groups most active during Ma Ying-jeou's presidency: the New Power Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Green Party of Taiwan.¹⁴ Attempting to capitalize on concerns that they thought the leading parties were ignoring, all three based their campaign appeals on a call to move beyond "blue vs. green" competition to address other economic and social issues such as labor rights, environmental protection, social welfare policy, and regulation of big business.

These three were joined by at least half a dozen other significant new contestants, including the Minkuotang, which began as a personal vehicle for the prominent legislator and KMT defector Hsu Hsin-ying but quickly became associated with a Zen Buddhist religious master; the Faith and Hope League, a party appealing to religious conservatives advocating traditional family values; the Military, Civil Servants, Firefighters, Academics [Teachers], and Policemen Party, or MCFAP, whose chief issue was the protection of pensions for retired government employees; the National Health Service Alliance, founded by a former minister of health, which advocated for full nationalization of the health insurance system and elimination of for-profit hospitals and clinics, along with a greater emphasis on traditional Chinese medicine; and the Trees Party, another pro-environmental protection party established by a breakaway

¹³ *Op. cit.* fn. 6.

¹⁴ The NPP and SDP were new. The GPT was founded in the 1990s but gained little traction in elections before the 2016 campaign. On the history of the Green Party Taiwan and the environmental movement, see Grano, *Environmental Governance in Taiwan*; and Dafydd Fell, "Small Parties in Taiwan's 2016 National Elections: A Limited Breakthrough?" *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 23 (2016): 41-58.

group from the Green Party Taiwan. In total, 18 different parties ran their own party lists—a record number for Taiwan. And at least that many nominated candidates at the district level.

But in the end, the disproportionate attention given to these “non-traditional” alternative political parties belied their weakness on election night. Of all the new parties that contested the legislative election, only one, the NPP, managed to win any seats at all; three of its nominees won their district seats, and the party secured 6.1 percent of the party list vote, enough for an additional two seats. All the others came up short of both the five percent threshold for party list seats and in the scattered district races in which they competed.

Instead, the main shift in the 2016 election was not to upstart “Third Force” or “non-traditional” parties at all but from the KMT to the DPP, which won both an easy victory in the presidential race and, for the first time in the party’s history, a large majority in the Legislative Yuan. For all the talk about a crackup of the party system, the same two leading parties soon took up their seats in the new legislature, and almost as quickly, restarted many of the same familiar partisan arguments that had driven politics for the previous decade and more. Developments over the subsequent three years suggest this swing toward the DPP may even have been temporary: the popularity of President Tsai and the new ruling party has fallen precipitously; the KMT, not another third party, has been the major beneficiary of this discontent; and national identity and cross-Strait policies are again front and center as the 2020 campaign gets underway in earnest.

Preview of the Argument

Viewed over a timespan of decades, the primary impression one gets of Taiwan’s party system is continuity rather than change. Today the China question is still at the heart of Taiwanese party politics, and the DPP and KMT remain the primary competitors in the run-up to the 2020 elections. Furthermore, as I show in section 2, Taiwan’s party system continues to be exceptionally well-institutionalized for a young democracy, with low electoral volatility, high partisanship, broad elite and mass commitment to the legitimacy of elections and party politics, and two leading political parties with strong organizations, distinctive brands, and loyal followings in the electorate. In section 3, I discuss one underrecognized way in which Taiwan’s party system has changed over the last two decades: it has become more *nationalized*, as the importance of partisanship has risen relative to personality, both static and dynamic measures of

nationalization have increased, and national factors have trickled down to become increasingly decisive even in local elections. These changes have in fact *reinforced*, rather than undercut, the institutionalization of the party system. In section 4, I tackle the question of whether the 2016 elections brought about a partisan realignment and should mark the start of a new party system, or should instead be viewed as a continuation of the 2000-2016 patterns. On balance, I find little evidence to support the claim that 2016 was a “critical election” that fundamentally reordered the previous patterns of party competition. I conclude with some thoughts about what this long-term consistency and stability of Taiwan’s party system implies for the quality of its democracy and the legitimacy of the political system in the future.

2. PARTY SYSTEM INSTITUTIONALIZATION

We can get a sense of how the stability of Taiwan’s party system compares to the rest of the democratic world by looking at some concrete measures of how institutionalized it is. *Party system institutionalization*, or PSI for short, is the degree to which the patterned interactions among significant¹⁵ political parties—the issues they advocate for, their membership and bases of support, and the shares of the vote each wins—are stable across multiple election cycles. To operationalize this definition, I follow the influential work of Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully, who specify four distinct components of PSI: (1) stability in the nature of inter-party competition over multiple election cycles; (2) the “rootedness” of political parties in society; (3) the legitimacy attributed to political parties and the electoral process; and (4) the institutionalization of political party organizations.¹⁶

Electoral Volatility

¹⁵ “Significant” is a squishy term, and one could adopt many different cutoffs to distinguish “significant” from “insignificant” parties in the party system. My own preference is to focus on “significance” in terms of policy-making in the legislature—given the outsized power that individual party caucuses have in the LY, I define as significant any party that holds enough seats to form a party caucus.

¹⁶ Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

The first component of PSI, the stability of interparty competition over time, is typically operationalized as *electoral volatility*—that is, the change in party vote shares from one election to the next. Electoral volatility is calculated by taking the sum of the net change in the percentage of votes gained or lost by each party from one election to the next, divided by two—that is: $(\sum |v_{it} - v_{it+1}|) / 2$. The resulting *electoral volatility index* varies from 0 to 100; a score of 0 means the exact same parties receive exactly the same share of votes in elections at time t and $t+1$, while a score of 100 indicates that the set of parties winning votes at election $t+1$ is completely different from the set winning votes at election t . The higher the volatility score, the lower is the institutionalization of this component of the party system.

In Table 1 below I have calculated this measure for Taiwan for each election to the Legislative Yuan from 1992 to 2016; to provide a context in which to situate these scores, Table 2 reproduces the electoral volatility scores for the rest of Asia and for party systems in other regions of the world, calculated by Allen Hicken and Eric Kuhonta.¹⁷

[Table 1 and Table 2 about here]

As the data in the tables show, Taiwan's party system has remained fairly stable over its democratic history, with an average volatility score of 15.4. This measure puts Taiwan at the low end of the region; only Singapore and Malaysia, both long-time dominant party systems, have similar or lower electoral volatility over roughly the same time period. By contrast, average volatility is significantly higher in South Korea (36.5), the democracy to which Taiwan is most often compared, and even slightly higher in Japan (16.5), which has a much longer history of democratic elections and for much of the post-war period was a predominant party system. And Taiwan is not even in the same ballpark as the leading democracies of Southeast Asia: Indonesia (27.5), the Philippines (38.3), and Thailand prior to the 2006 coup (42). Hicken and Kuhonta also calculate an average electoral volatility for regions of the world, including Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet states (44.1), Latin America (25.5), and western democracies including Australia and New Zealand (10.4). Taiwan's electoral volatility score puts it far below the averages in the former two regions and fairly close to the average in the West. In other words, the low electoral

¹⁷ Allen Hicken and Eric Kuhonta (eds.), *Party System Institutionalization in Asia: Democracies, Autocracies, and the Shadows of the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 11-12.

volatility of Taiwan’s party system makes it appear more like that of a developed democracy than a young Third Wave case.¹⁸

Partisanship

The second component, the “rootedness” of political parties in society, is usually operationalized as *partisanship* and measured via questions about party identification asked in public opinion surveys of the general population. Figure 1 reproduces the well-known data on this question collected regularly since 1994 by the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University.¹⁹

[Figure 1 about here]

As one can see from the figure, since 1997 at least half of all respondents in each year have identified with one of the significant political parties in the party system. The share of “partisans” in the electorate has varied quite a bit over this period, ranging from as high as 69.5 percent in 2011 to as low as 50.9 percent in 2018. But, with the exception of a brief period in 2001, the KMT and DPP have retained the largest shares of partisan supporters over Taiwan’s entire democratic history, outpacing all other competitors in the party system. Moreover, in recent years declines in partisans of one of the major parties have been correlated with increases in identification with the other: the surge in identification with the KMT starting in 2005 corresponded to a slump in DPP identification, and a similar drastic decline in KMT partisans beginning in 2012 was followed by an uptick in DPP partisanship. The pattern shows some signs of repeating again, as the DPP has slumped since its high point in 2016, and the latest public opinion data show a modest recovery in KMT partisanship, to the point where there are now again more self-identified KMT partisans than DPP ones in the electorate.

¹⁸ The drop in electoral volatility in the 2012 and 2016 elections may be due in part to the new, more majoritarian electoral system introduced in 2008. Nevertheless, it is not self-evident that Taiwan’s low volatility (and high PSI) of recent years is related to the change in electoral system. For one, majoritarian electoral systems can also produce extremely high volatility under some conditions, as recent elections in Canada, France, and Malaysia demonstrate. For another, both South Korea and Japan now use systems very similar to Taiwan’s to elect their national assemblies, yet have recorded significantly higher electoral volatility over the last decade.

¹⁹ National Chengchi University, Election Study Center, at: <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/main.php> [accessed June 14, 2019]

It is also revealing what these data do not show: a rise in third-party partisanship. In particular, the number of respondents who identify with the New Power Party (NPP) has remained small since 2016. The NPP burst onto the political scene during the 2016 election campaign, winning 6.1 percent of the party list vote and five seats in the legislature, and its relative success inspired a fair amount of commentary about a fundamental realignment of Taiwan's party system around issues orthogonal to the China question and a potential end to the old green-blue duopoly.²⁰ Yet the most recent polling data suggest that the NPP remains a niche party in the party system, rather than the usurper and potential future major competitor to the DPP that it is sometimes portrayed as.²¹ Partisanship in Taiwan remains strong and persistent enough to root the party system into two major camps and to raise a high bar for third-party challenges.²²

Legitimacy of Party Politics

The third component that Mainwaring and Scully define is the legitimacy of political parties and trust in the political system. This dimension has been mostly ignored in subsequent work²³, so I leave it aside here, although it is worth noting that, with rare exceptions, Taiwanese political parties themselves have accepted electoral competition as the only legitimate path to power, and in public opinion surveys, most Taiwanese consistently recognize the right of political parties to contest elections and acknowledge the fairness of the electoral process for choosing political leaders.²⁴

²⁰ *Op. cit.* fn. 6.

²¹ Ian Tsung-yen Chen and Da-chi Liao, "The Rise of the New Power Party in Taiwan's 2016 Legislative Election: Reality and Challenges," in Wei-chin Lee (ed), *Taiwan's Political Re-alignment and Diplomatic Challenges* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 71-96.

²² This is not to say that high PSI *prohibits* successful third-party or independent candidacies in Taiwan, only that they are difficult to pull off and even more difficult to sustain beyond a single election. Skeptics might point to the many independent candidates who have run serious campaigns for local office in recent years, most prominently the current Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je. Ko, however, is the exception that proves the rule: his election in 2014 relied on the implicit backing of the DPP, which did not run its own candidate and campaigned for him on the stump. When the DPP nominated a challenger in 2018, by contrast, Ko's share of the vote dropped by nearly 20 percent and he barely won reelection, despite high approval ratings for his performance as mayor.

²³ For one important exception, see Aurel Croissant and Philip Völkel, "Party System Types and Party System Institutionalization: Comparing New Democracies in East and Southeast Asia," *Party Politics* 18 no. 2 (2012): 235-265.

²⁴ Ian McAllister, "Democratic Consolidation in Taiwan in Comparative Perspective," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 1 no. 1 (2016): 44-61; Howard Sanborn, "Democratic Consolidation: Participation and Attitudes toward Democracy in Taiwan and South Korea," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties* 25 no. 1 (2015): 47-61; Huo-yan Shyu, "Trust in Institutions and the Democratic Consolidation in Taiwan," in Wei-chin Lee (ed), *Taiwan's Politics in the 21st Century: Changes and Challenges* (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific, 2010), 69-100.

Party Organization

The fourth component of party system institutionalization is party organization. On this dimension, there is wide variation across the parties in Taiwan that have held seats in the legislature during the democratic era. The KMT and DPP are both well-institutionalized: both have robust party organizations that include party branches in almost all local jurisdictions, integrated into a coherent hierarchy, with power concentrated at the top and wielded by a central executive committee and chairperson. Both retain tight party control over their nominations for elected offices, are able to raise and deploy significant financial and personnel resources to aid party activities, and have effective mechanisms for disciplining wayward members including current office-holders. And both are clearly much more than electoral vehicles for the party chairperson or highest office-holder: they have survived long periods in political opposition, rapid rises and falls in political fortunes, and multiple changes in party leadership.²⁵ This persistence of robust party organizations is particularly noteworthy because Taiwan is a presidential regime, and there is a tendency for presidents to dominate and hollow out the organization of their political parties; when presidents leave office, their political parties sometimes struggle to survive as coherent, meaningful organizations.²⁶

The other significant parties in the party system feature much less robust party organizations and have been more clearly associated with a single founding leader: James Soong in the case of the People First Party (PFP), and Lee Teng-hui in the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU). As both leaders age out of politics, neither party looks like it has a particularly bright future; the TSU was even shut out of the legislature in the most recent election and is in a fight for relevance. The more interesting and uncertain case is the NPP, which in its earliest days pledged radical transparency in its policy and strategy deliberations and attempted to foster a more open process of collective decision-making among its mostly young, politically inexperienced membership. After entering the legislature, however, it remains an open question

²⁵ On the DPP's organization, see Shelley Rigger, *From Opposition to Power: Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001).

²⁶ David Samuels and Matthew Shugart, *Presidents, Parties, and Prime Ministers: How the Separation of Powers Affects Party Organization and Behavior*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

whether it will retain its initial deliberative democratic impulses or instead become increasingly hierarchical and bureaucratic in order to survive in the political system.²⁷

Other Evidence for High Party System Institutionalization in Taiwan

In addition to Mainwaring and Scully’s canonical components of PSI, one can also observe other evidence that suggests a high degree of stability in Taiwan’s party system. One additional measure is the frequency and consequence of attempts at party-switching, which Dafydd Fell has studied in detail in recent years.²⁸ Fell finds that, while party-switching is not exactly rare, in the legislature it has occurred almost entirely within the pan-Blue camp (i.e. KMT and allied parties), typically from the KMT to the PFP or New Party and back again. Party switchers on the blue side of the spectrum have fared a bit better than those who have attempted to switch to or from the DPP, which has been exceedingly hostile to defectors. But overall, Fell finds very few cases of successful party-switching in which incumbent office-holders manage to win re-election under the banner of another party, suggesting that partisanship and party organizations effectively limit this kind of opportunistic behavior.

One can also look at the fates of new parties in legislative elections, which are an indicator of the party system’s “permeability” and thus provide yet another alternative measure of PSI. From 1992 until 2008, Taiwan’s legislators were elected using single non-transferable vote (SNTV) in multi-member districts, which provided realistic opportunities in some districts for parties winning as little as five percent of the vote to capture seats. And since 2008, parties winning at least five percent of the separate party list vote are guaranteed seats from the PR portion of the electoral system. Thus, Taiwan’s electoral system, while not guaranteeing proportionality, has also had a rather low threshold of exclusion for party entry. Yet the vast majority of new parties that have run candidates in legislative elections have had no success. The exceptions have typically been a very specific kind of party: those which took more extreme positions on the “China question” than the DPP or KMT.²⁹ In 2001, for instance, both the PFP,

²⁷ Chen and Liao, “The Rise of the New Power Party,” 90-91.

²⁸ Dafydd Fell, “Should I Stay or Should I go?: Patterns of Party-Switching in Multiparty Taiwan,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 14 (2014): 31-52; Fell, “Do Party Switchers Pay an Electoral Price?: The Case of Taiwan,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 70 (2017): 377-396; Fell, “Merger and Takeover Attempts in Taiwanese Party Politics,” *Issues and Studies* 53 no. 4 (2017): 1-28.

²⁹ Dafydd Fell, following Paul Lucardie, calls these “purifier” parties. Fell, “Success and Failure of New Parties in Taiwanese Elections,” *China: An International Journal* 3 no. 2 (2005): 216; see also the discussion in Fell, *Government and Politics in Taiwan* (London: Routledge, 2nd ed., 2018), 115-121.

whose chairman James Soong initially took up a position to the right of the KMT, and the TSU, which took up a position to the left of the DPP, managed to win a significant number of seats in the Legislative Yuan elections held that year. Indeed, one can line up on a single “China question” dimension every single party to hold at least three seats in the legislature since 1992. The parties in the current legislature are no exception. The success of the NPP is in no small part due to the party’s positioning itself as a more pro-independence ally of the DPP—a kind of “TSU for young people.”³⁰ Thus, the fate of new parties, too, suggests that Taiwan’s party system, while permeable enough to allow some replacement of small parties with others, remains deeply rooted in the original cleavage around which it became oriented shortly after democratization.³¹

3. PARTY SYSTEM NATIONALIZATION

Despite the high party system institutionalization documented in the previous section, Taiwan’s party system has not in fact remained frozen in place. But rather than the more obvious major shifts in support between the parties, or the replacement of the TSU by the NPP, my own view is that the most underappreciated trend in Taiwan’s party system over the last decade has been toward greater *nationalization* of elections.

As Scott Morgenstern has argued, the degree of nationalization is just as important a feature of a party system as the number of parties, the dimensions of political conflict, and parties’ ideological distance from one another. The geographic basis of political parties’ support “influences party politics and representation by determining a party’s orientation toward distribution of public resources, support for region-specific interests, and the degree of unity or perhaps the sense of purpose with which a party addresses these and other policies.”³² In party systems where a significant party is based only in one region, cross-regional differences can take on outsized importance in policy-making, and are likely to put regional redistribution and

³⁰ For evidence, see the interviews with NPP activists in Lev Nachman, “Misalignment between Social Movements and Political Parties in Taiwan’s 2016 Election,” *Asian Survey* 58 no. 5 (2018): 874-897; this characterization of the NPP is my own.

³¹ For instance, this is the primary finding of *The Taiwan Voter*. See Chris Achen and T.Y. Wang (eds.), *The Taiwan Voter* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 1-25.

³² Scott Morgenstern, *Are Politics Local?: The Two Dimensions of Party Nationalization around the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 7.

autonomy issues at the center of national politics, as in Spain, Italy, Canada, and increasingly, the United Kingdom.³³ Even when political parties have a presence everywhere and are reasonably well-aggregated up to the national level, significant regional differences between members of the same party can create awkward bedfellows and make it more difficult to develop and implement coherent programmatic policies—as was long the case for the Democratic Party in the United States when it was divided between a conservative Southern wing and more liberal northern and western ones.³⁴

Regional differences in Taiwanese politics have been the subject of scattered studies, but party system nationalization itself has received little attention in recent years. In particular, the degree to which elections turn on local rather than national factors, and how these effects might have changed over time, has been a neglected topic. As a result, we have overlooked a fundamental shift in the nature of Taiwanese politics over the last 25 years. At the dawn of the democratic era, much of the energy and focus of elections was directed by necessity at the local level: for county and city executives and councils, and the Taiwan Provincial Assembly, and the candidates, issues, and determinants of vote choice varied significantly across jurisdictions. Yet today, the parties running in each district and jurisdiction, the issues they campaign on, and the determinants of voting behavior from one election to the next appear similar across most regions and levels of government in Taiwan.

One can observe at least four different kinds of evidence for this shift: the rising importance of partisan (as opposed to personal) factors in election outcomes, the increasing uniformity of the party system across jurisdictions (static nationalization), and in the swings from one election to the next (dynamic), and the trickle-down effect of partisan factors to lower-level contests.

Partisan Factors in National Elections

In order to speak meaningfully of a nationalized party system, there first have to be meaningful parties, and joining a party has to confer advantages to candidates over running as independents. Taiwan's deeply partisan electoral environment is taken as a given today, but it

³³ Dawn Brancati, "Pawns Take Queen: The Destabilizing Effect of Regional Parties in Europe," *Constitutional Political Economy* 16 no. 2 (2005): 143-159;

³⁴ Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950," *Political Science Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (1993): 283-306.

was not always the case that elections turned on “blue vs. green” partisan considerations. In the 1980s and 1990s, independent candidates did well in elections in Taiwan—candidates who did not secure the KMT’s official nomination, in particular, could still run competitive, “renegade” campaigns; the backing of a local faction or one’s own name recognition could be as important as the endorsement of a political party.³⁵

Yet since the early 2000s, the importance of partisan factors in determining individual vote choice and collective election outcomes has increased at the expense of incumbency, factional ties, and other personal and idiosyncratic factors.³⁶ Today, a voter’s partisan identification is the strongest predictor of how she will vote in any given race, and split-ticket voting, once common in Taiwanese elections, is now relatively rare, especially for central government elections and across political camps.³⁷ Thus, one precondition for a nationalized party system—meaningful party organizations—has gradually fallen into place.

Static Nationalization

A second piece of evidence is the relative uniformity of the party system across districts and jurisdictions in Taiwan. Scott Morgenstern has termed this element “static” nationalization: the more nationalized the party system is, the more the parties nominating candidates are the same across the country, and the more similar the shares of the vote they win are as well.³⁸ Although Taiwan’s two major parties have long had clear regional strongholds—the KMT in parts of the north, east, and offshore islands, and the DPP in the south³⁹—they also are each the

³⁵ Joseph Bosco, “Faction versus Ideology: Mobilization Strategies in Taiwan’s Elections,” *The China Quarterly* 137 (1994): 28-62; Yun-han Chu and Tse-min Lin, “The process of Democratic Consolidation in Taiwan: Social Cleavage, Electoral Competition, and the Emerging Party System,” in Hung-mao Tien (ed.), *Taiwan’s Electoral Politics and Democratic Transition: Riding the Third Wave* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharp, 1996): 79-104.

³⁶ Ching-hsin Yu, “Parties, Partisans, and Independents in Taiwan,” in *The Taiwan Voter*, 79-81.

³⁷ Chi Huang and T.Y. Wang, “Presidential Coattails in Taiwan: An Analysis of Voter- and Candidate-Specific Data,” *Electoral Studies* Vol. 33 (2014): 175-185. Note that by “split-ticket voting” I am referring here to casting a vote for one party’s candidate in the executive election, and another party’s candidate in the legislative district race. In contrast, splitting one’s district and party list votes has been possible since 2008 and, apparently, fairly common in legislative elections. See T.Y. Wang, Chang-chih Lin, and Yi-ching Hsiao, “Split-Ticket Voting under MMM,” in Nathan F. Batto, Chi Huang, Alexander C. Tan, and Gary Cox (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems in Constitutional Context: Taiwan, Japan, and Beyond*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 194-226.

³⁸ Scott Morgenstern, John Polga Hecimovich, and Peter M. Siavelis, “Seven Imperatives for Improving the Measurement of Party Nationalization with Evidence from Chile,” *Electoral Studies* Vol 33 (2014), 186-199.

³⁹ Jinn-Guey Lay, Ko-Hua Yap, and Yu-Wen Chen, “The Transition of Taiwan’s Political Geography,” *Asian Survey* Vol 48 no. 5 (2008), 773-793.

principal opposition party almost everywhere they do not hold office. As Table 3 shows, since the switch in 2008 to single-member districts to elect members of the Legislative Yuan, both parties have run candidates in the large majority of these districts. The primary exception was in 2016, when the DPP refrained from running candidates in 11 districts, mainly in Taipei, and instead negotiated a pre-electoral coalition agreement with other parties which otherwise might have undercut it. Nevertheless, there are no third parties that have had enough regionally-concentrated support to disrupt this duopoly in the single-member races over the last three election cycles. And notably, there is not a single district in which neither a KMT nor DPP candidate ran.

Thus, Taiwan today has a well-institutionalized two-party system that typically provides voters with a binary choice, in both presidential and legislative elections at the national level, and also in local executive races.⁴⁰ This pattern has been reinforced since the new mixed-member parallel electoral system was introduced for the Legislative Yuan in 2008, creating powerful incentives in the new single-member districts to coalesce around one of two party nominees.⁴¹ Small parties have survived and persisted in the legislature, thanks mostly to the proportional representation tier of seats, but even after 2016 they held only 9 of 113 seats, or less than eight percent.

[Table 3 about here]

Dynamic Nationalization

The third piece of evidence for nationalization is that the swings in vote share from one party to another across different elections in Taiwan are *also* quite uniform (what Morgenstern calls “dynamic nationalization”). The last three presidential elections have featured remarkable geographic consistency in the two-party swing; not only did the DPP increase its overall presidential vote share⁴² from 2008 to 2012 to 2016, it also raised its share of support across *all*

⁴⁰ Cheng and Hsu, “Taiwan’s Institutionalized Party System,” 108-135.

⁴¹ Chi Huang, Ming-feng Kuo, and Hans Stockton, “The Consequences of MMM on Party Systems,” in *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 25-51.

⁴² I report the DPP’s swing rather than the KMT’s because of pan-blue splits in these elections—a renegade campaign from an unominated (former) KMT or pan-blue candidate was much more common than from a DPP or pan-green one. Thus, the DPP’s share of the vote gives a more consistent indicator of shifts between green and blue camps than does the KMT’s. For representative commentary on the DPP’s gains in elections from 2008 to 2016, see John Fu-sheng Hsieh, “Taiwan’s 2016 Elections: Critical Elections?,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies* (2016), pp. 9-23; Dafydd Fell, *Government and Politics in Taiwan* (Routledge, 2nd ed., 2018), pp. 267-282; Michael Hsiao, “2016 Taiwan Elections: Significance and Implications,” *Orbis* (Fall 2016): 504-514.

of Taiwan's localities as well. For instance, as Table 5 shows, Tsai Ing-wen won 45.63% of the vote in 2012, an increase of 4.12% over the 41.55% that DPP nominee Frank Hsieh won in 2008. Incredibly, although she did not win the election, Tsai did better than Hsieh *in every single county and city* on the island, and her increase varied by only about 2 ½ points, from a low of 2.45% in Taipei to a high of 4.94% in Pingtung. Tsai's big victory in 2016, when she won 10.49% more than in 2012, featured a bit higher variance in increase across localities, but she still won at least 5% more in every single jurisdiction than in 2012: her smallest gain was in Penghu, where she captured 5.16% more of the vote, and her largest in Taipei, where she got 12.4% more. This uniformity of swing is another indication that national factors have outweighed local ones in recent presidential elections.

[Table 4 about here]

We can also look at these shifts at a lower level of disaggregation. Figures 2 and 3 show the swing toward the DPP presidential candidate between 2008-12, and 2012-16, respectively, at the township (and town and district) rather than the city/county level. Remarkably, between 2008-2012, the DPP increased its vote share *in every single jurisdiction* in Taiwan (Pearson's $r = .9965$). It came close to repeating the feat in 2016: only in Wang-an Township in Penghu did Tsai Ing-wen's share of the vote actually decline, by 2.1% (Pearson's $r = .9893$).

[Figures 2 and 3 about here]

We can also do the same thing for the legislative districts. Figure 4 shows the change in the DPP candidate's vote share from 2008-2012 in the 58 districts that included both a DPP and KMT candidate. The correlation is lower than in the presidential vote, but still reasonably strong (Pearson's $r = 0.7017$). Figure 5 shows the same thing for the 61 districts with both a DPP and KMT candidate in both 2012 and 2016; here the correlation between the two elections is even stronger (Pearson's $r = .7844$). If personalities, incumbency, and other idiosyncratic local factors were driving most election outcomes in the districts, then we should see much higher variance across these districts. But in fact, the DPP's increase in support was still fairly uniform—another indicator that national factors trumped local ones in these races.

[Figures 4 and 5 about here]

It is tempting to pass these results off as unremarkable: after all, if one party does better nationwide, shouldn't we *expect* it to do better everywhere? But this expectation is frequently violated in other democracies, even old ones with long-established party systems. In the presidential election in the United States in 2008, for instance, Barack Obama did worse than John Kerry, the previous Democratic candidate in 2004, in over 50 counties, even as he won five percent more than Kerry overall. These “anti-Obama” counties were clustered together in a handful of states—southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, Tennessee, northern Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and southeast Louisiana—an indication that some kind of local characteristics drove the collective voting publics there to react differently than the rest of the country to Obama's candidacy.⁴³ In the United Kingdom, too, the uniformity of swing has been violated with increasing frequency in recent elections. In the 2017 general election, for instance, even as Labour increased its overall share of the vote by almost 10 percent and picked off 28 Conservative-held seats, it lost another six constituencies it had held to the Tories, and in the 2015 general election, Labour picked up 10 Tory-held seats even as its overall number declined by 24. Local factors, including the emerging divisions over the EU and Brexit, the strength of regional parties such as the SNP, and strategic voting for the Liberal Democrats, all contributed to a swing in both these elections that was far from uniform across constituencies.

Nationalization of Local Elections

The final element of nationalization is that “national” issues are increasingly important even in local races. In the past, independents and local-faction-linked KMT candidates won a majority of seats in local elections, particularly council elections, even as the DPP made inroads in legislative and county executive races. But partisanship has trickled down to lower levels as well, and national factors increasingly drive voting behavior even in local elections.⁴⁴ The

⁴³ What these characteristics might be, I leave as an exercise for the reader.

⁴⁴ Chia-hung Tsai, Chin-shou Wang, and Ding-Ming Wang, “Analysis of a Compound Campaign in the 2005 Three-in-One Election: A Case Study of Loh Tsui County,” *Taiwan Political Science Review* Vol. 11 no. 2 (2007), pp. 173-225 [in Chinese]; Chi Huang and Yi-ching Hsiao, “Government Performance and Vote Choice in Local Elections: the Case of 2009 Yunlin County and Township Magistrates Elections,” *Journal of Election Studies* Vol. 18 no. 2 (2011), pp. 59-86 [in Chinese], both cited in Austin Wang, “How Do Political Scientists View ‘Mother Hen

KMT's sweeping defeat in the 2014 elections, for instance, was remarkable not only for its breadth—the party lost nine of the 15 executive seats it previously held—but also the uniformity of its decline in vote share across these races. The deep unpopularity of President and KMT party chairman Ma Ying-jeou at this juncture clearly contributed to the broad downturn in the party's electoral fortunes. In another striking parallel, the opposite happened in 2018: wide dissatisfaction with President Tsai Ing-wen and the ruling DPP contributed to the party's rout in the most recent local elections, including defeats in high-profile races in New Taipei and Taichung and stunning losses in localities the DPP had long held such as Kaohsiung City and Yilan and Yunlin Counties.

These elements of a fully nationalized party system have emerged gradually and almost imperceptibly since the beginning of the transition to democracy in the late 1980s. But the cumulative effect has been to produce a political system in which the parties running in each district and jurisdiction, the issues they campaign on, and the determinants of voting behavior from one election to the next appear similar across most regions and levels of government in Taiwan.

4. THE 2016 ELECTIONS: REALIGNMENT OR DEVIATION?

In the previous two sections, I have argued that Taiwan's party system is notable both for its high degree of institutionalization (PSI), and for how nationalized it is. The evidence there suggests that a realignment of the party system in 2016, if it did occur, would have been a rather abrupt departure from previous patterns of party competition, and thus a critical moment in Taiwan's party system evolution. In this section, I take up the question of whether the 2016 presidential and legislative elections ushered in a fundamental partisan realignment, or whether they were instead more likely a temporary deviation from the underlying pattern of partisan competition.

Leading Chicks' in Taiwanese Elections?" [in Chinese], at *Political Marketplace*: <http://whogovernstw.org/2018/07/27/austinwang36/>, July 27, 2018.

Before tackling that question in earnest, however, we need to agree on some terminology: what exactly is a “critical election” that leads to a “party system realignment”?⁴⁵ We often use the terms casually, without definition, and most of us have an innate sense of what we mean by it: an election that results in a fundamental, lasting shift in the patterns of party competition and voting behavior, whatever they may be. That definition, however, obscures an important distinction between at least two possible kinds of realignment: what I will call the *major* and *minor* versions.

Party System Realignments: Major and Minor Versions

The first, major version is what V.O. Key had in mind when he first introduced the concept of a critical election in 1955: it is one in which “the decisive results of the voting reveal a sharp *alteration of the pre-existing cleavage* within the electorate” [italics mine].⁴⁶ The key feature here is that a *completely new dimension* of competition suddenly becomes salient enough that a significant number of erstwhile partisans permanently drop or switch their partisan attachments. The old political coalitions in one or more parties are split apart by this new cleavage, and either a new party emerges to win big chunks of the old parties’ voters, or coalitions behind the parties reform, with some segments of the electorate in effect “trading places.”

For instance, in the 1968 presidential election in the United States, the Democratic Party fractured over the issue of civil rights, and many white voters in the southern states refused to support the Democratic nominee. Thus accelerated a period of dealignment from the national Democratic Party, and eventual realignment of white southerners toward the Republican Party,

⁴⁵ Major contributors to the literature on party realignments in the U.S. context include V.O. Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” *The Journal of Politics* 17, no. 1 (1955): 3-18; E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist’s View of Democracy in America* (New York: Holt, Reinhard, Winston, 1960), 112-25; W.D. Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970); and J.L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1973). A thorough, although critical, review of this literature can be found in David Mayhew, “Electoral Realignments,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (2000): 449-74. For a more sympathetic view and defense of the concept, see Edwin G. Carmines and Michael W. Wagner, “Political Issues and Party Alignments: Assessing the Issue Evolution Perspective,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 67-81. A good example of research on realignments outside of the United States is Geoffrey Evans and Pippa Norris (eds.), *Critical Elections: British Parties and Voters in Long-Term Perspective*, (London: Sage, 1999).

⁴⁶ V.O. Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” 4.

while at the same time African American voters swung decisively into the Democratic Party coalition.⁴⁷

But there is a second way in which the term is used, what I will call the *minor version* of party realignment: rather than requiring the appearance of a new dimension of competition, the underlying preferences of the electorate can suddenly shift in a way that favors one of the leading parties over others. A significant share of voters who supported party A (or C, or D, or did not vote at all) in the previous election now support party B in the current, “realigning” one. And crucially, *this shift is both abrupt and lasting*: either through the establishment of partisan attachments from formerly unattached voters, through generational replacement, or through wholesale conversion of one party’s partisans to another’s, the expected share of the electorate that will vote for party B increases.

For instance, the 1977 Israeli election delivered for the first time a plurality of the vote (33%) to the right-wing Likud, over the incumbent left-wing Labor Party (26%). That vote marked a critical shift in the Israeli party system: Labor (and its predecessor Mapai) had long been the leading party in the electorate and had formed every government since the state of Israel was founded in 1948. The Likud victory in 1977 ushered in a new period of relative parity between the left and right blocs in the Israeli electorate and the parliament, and Labor was never again able to regain the dominant position it held prior to that election.⁴⁸

To illustrate more clearly the difference in these two patterns of party system change, consider the following stylized example. Let us assume a simple, symmetric two-party system with high party identification: both Party A and Party B can each count on the support of 40 percent of the electorate. The remaining 20 percent are swing voters who may alternate their votes between the parties depending on the identities of the candidates, the parties’ positions on the issues of the day, the state of the economy, the performance of the party in power, and whatever else affects voting behavior.

[Figure 6 about here]

⁴⁷ Harold W. Stanley, “Southern Partisan Changes: Dealignment, Realignment or Both?” *The Journal of Politics* 50, no. 1 (1988): 64-88.

⁴⁸ Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, “Two Reversals in Israeli Politics: Why 1992 Was Not 1977,” *Electoral Studies* 12, no. 4 (1993): 315-341.

In a major critical realignment, a new cross-cutting cleavage emerges that divides the coalitions of both parties. Let us take the limiting case for our example: assume this cleavage splits both parties exactly in half, with 20% of the electorate on each side in each party, and that it is so salient that partisans care more about this issue than whatever previously divided the two major parties, as Figure 6 shows. The party leaders then take opposing positions on this new issue of the day, and the electorate re-sorts into the parties that correspond to their preferences on this issue. After the critical election, the parties enjoy the same proportion of supporters in the electorate—but 40% of the electorate has switched parties!

To be sure, most party system realignments, even of the major variety, are neither this neat, dramatic, or sudden. In established democracies, partisan attachments tend to be strong, and make voters resistant to wholesale party-switching of this kind. So it is more often a completely new party that appears on the scene to Hoover up the newly unaligned voters from both camps, as, for instance, the Republican Party did over the issue of slavery in the US in the 1850s, or the British Labour Party did over class and economic divisions in the 1920s. Regardless, the key feature of the major realignment is not neat, symmetric party switching, but merely *the emergence of a new issue cleavage* that leads to a “sharp alteration” of the pre-existing patterns of voting.

Now consider the minor version of a critical realignment, again assuming a symmetric, two-party system with each party enjoying the committed partisan support of 40 percent of the electorate, and 20 percent as swing voters. A minor realignment occurs without the emergence of a new cleavage at all, but simply a defection of some partisans from one camp. In the scenario illustrated below in Figure 7, five percent of the electorate “dealigns” from Party A to become swing voters, while five percent of the previous swing voters “realign” with Party B and become committed partisans. After the critical election, the electorate has gone from a perfectly competitive, symmetrically distributed two-party system to one with a pronounced advantage for Party B, which now enjoys a 45%-35% lead among all partisan voters.

[Figure 7 about here]

Now, note what does *not* have to occur here: the emergence of a new cleavage. The same issue that separates the two major parties can remain the primary, salient one in the political system, and the two parties that win votes are the same two parties as before. What *does* have to occur, instead, is a shift in the collective preferences of the electorate, away from Party A's position, and toward Party B's. Either through generational replacement, targeted appeals by Party B (or indifference from Party A), or a true reordering of preferences on the primary dimension of conflict, Party B permanently increases its share of partisans.

Deviating and Maintaining Elections

Finally, a brief comment on two other terms that are sometimes tossed around in the critical elections and realignments literature: deviating and maintaining elections.⁴⁹ Following the stylized example above, we can think of a deviating election as one in which there is no change in the underlying partisan balance, but for some reason most of the swing voters break in one direction or the other. If the swing is large enough to look unprecedented, or at least unusual, we might even call it a “surge” election, to use Angus Campbell's term.⁵⁰ For instance, if party A's partisans are only 35 percent of the electorate, while party B's are 45 percent, as in Figure 4 above after realignment, then the only way party A can win an election is if most of the swing voters support it. That is, the electorate as a whole has to *deviate* from the partisan tendency toward Party B.

Why might swing voters deviate in this way? Many reasons: an economic downturn is the most likely possibility, but other factors such as an unpopular candidate or party leader, a corruption scandal, a foreign crisis, or general disillusionment with the incumbent are all strong enough to cause these kinds of electoral swings. We need simply observe something that causes a short-term shift in support for one party to another at the ballot box to identify a deviating election.

Last but not least, if none of these changes happens—no critical election, nor a temporary deviation from the established patterns of support—then we have a maintaining election. If, in

⁴⁹ The fullest discussion and defense of this typology of elections is given in Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*.

⁵⁰ Angus Campbell, “Surge and Decline: A Study of Electoral Change,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1960): 397-418; cf. James E. Campbell, “The Revised Theory of Surge and Decline,” *American Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 3 (1987): 965-979.

Figure 7 above after realignment, the swing voters break half for A and half for B, then Party B's advantage in the electorate is *maintained* through that election.

Was 2016 a Critical Election that Launched a Partisan Realignment?

The terms “critical election” and “partisan realignment” come up often in discussions of Taiwanese politics⁵¹, but the preceding discussion suggests it is worth stepping back and thinking a bit more carefully about what we should observe had a major (or minor) realignment occurred in the party system in 2016.

First and foremost, was there, as a result of an election, *a fundamental change in the primary cleavage* structuring party competition? This is what we need to observe to make the case for the major version of a party system realignment: new cleavage, new electoral coalitions. If no new parties have successfully broken into the system, or if the winning parties are still competing on the same dimensions of conflict, then we have no evidence of a major realignment. The best place to answer this question is to look at the legislative races rather than the presidential one, since it is in the legislative election where new parties ran candidates and attempted to take positions orthogonal to the issue of cross-Strait relations and “blue-green” party competition.

So how did these new, small parties fare in 2016? As Dafydd Fell has argued⁵², they collectively enjoyed a “limited breakthrough” relative to the rather dismal experience of most previous attempts of new parties to compete for seats. Several ran high-profile candidates in the district races as well as for the party list vote, and one, the New Power Party, ran particularly well in both tiers. The NPP surprised many prognosticators by winning three of four district races in which it ran viable candidates, and it came in fourth in the party list vote with 6.1 percent, winning an additional two seats and narrowly missing out on a third.

But the New Power Party's success is a bit misleading in this context, and we should be skeptical that it represents a “new kind” of politics for at least two reasons. First, the party

⁵¹ *Op. cit.* fn. 6. For some of the more careful considerations of this topic, see T.J. Cheng and Yung-ming Hsu, “Issue Structure, the DPP's Factionalism, and Party Realignment,” in Hung-mao Tien, ed., *Taiwan's Electoral Politics and Democratic Transition: Riding the Third Wave* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996); Yu, “The Evolving Party System in Taiwan, 1995-2004”; Dafydd Fell, “Success and Failure of New Parties in Taiwanese Elections,” *China: An International Journal*, 3 no. 2, (2005): 212-239; and Dafydd Fell, “Was 2005 A Critical Election in Taiwan? Locating the Start of a New Political Era,” *Asian Survey* 50 no. 5 (2010): 927-945.

⁵² Fell, “Small Parties in Taiwan's 2016 National Elections.”

deliberately pursued a personality-based campaign strategy. It recruited three candidates with high name recognition to run in the district races: Freddy Lim, a lead singer for the band Chthonic; Hung Tzu-yung, the younger sister of a military corporal who died after harsh punishment while in a military barracks; and Huang Kuo-chang, a National Taiwan University law professor and one of the public faces of the Sunflower Movement that occupied the legislature in 2014. These candidates helped the party garner a great deal of free media attention, giving it a significant leg up on the other new entrants into the party system.

Second, as Fell notes⁵³, the NPP coordinated very closely with the DPP itself during its campaign. The party went so far as to negotiate a pre-electoral coalition agreement with the DPP not to run candidates in most districts; in exchange, the DPP yielded three winnable districts to the NPP and agreed not to nominate its own candidates there. The DPP even sent Tsai Ing-wen to campaign with the NPP candidates, reinforcing the impression that the NPP was running not as a competitor seeking to split the DPP's base, but as a close Pan-Green ally.⁵⁴

We can get a sense of how closely the NPP's fortunes were tied to the DPP's by comparing the party's vote shares to Tsai Ing-wen's in the districts. Figure 6 shows the vote share won by each district's DPP nominee, plotted against the vote share won by non-DPP candidates endorsed by the DPP. These included the three NPP candidates but also eight other non-DPP candidates, most of whom ran as part of an anti-KMT "Capital Alliance" grouping in Taipei City. The diagonal line represents parity between the district and presidential vote shares; points above the line indicate candidates who ran ahead of Tsai, while points below indicate they ran behind.⁵⁵

[Figure 8 about here]

As the figure shows, the three NPP candidates won very nearly the same share of the vote as Tsai did in their districts—their performance looks much like other DPP district candidates.

⁵³ Fell, "Small Parties in Taiwan's 2016 National Elections," 52; see also Nachman, "Taiwan's Political Misalignment," 887-889.

⁵⁴ Iok-sin Loa, "Tsai Slams KMT's 'Mudslinging'," *Taipei Times*, December 14, 2015, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Note that this comparison does not adjust for the fact that indigenous voters are included in the presidential but not the legislative totals, since they vote in separate legislative constituencies. Because indigenous voters tend to be "bluer" than the electorate as a whole, the graph overstates the divergence in the DPP's party vote share between the presidential and legislative races. This difference is greatest in Taitung and Hualien—the two districts where indigenous voters are over 20 percent of the presidential electorate.

By contrast, the other, non-NPP candidates who were endorsed by the DPP fared much more poorly, on average, than Tsai did in their districts. Thus, we have an additional piece of evidence that the NPP was not really running an “orthogonal,” anti-elite or anti-system campaign, but rather a more conventional, “DPP-lite” one, and that association with Tsai and the DPP was an important component of their success.

Given the close coordination between the NPP and DPP, a better test of the appeal of issues off the primary dimension of competition is the performance of the other “Third Force” parties, particularly the SDP-Green Alliance, the Civil Servants party, the Faith and Hope League, and the National Health Service Alliance. So how did they do, as a whole? In the district races, they fared not as well as the NPP, as Figure 6 shows—they generally ran behind not only Tsai Ing-wen but also the NPP and DPP challengers. But what about the party list vote? Not well there, either, as Table 5 shows. The SDP-Green Alliance won only 2.53% of the party list vote, despite the distinct ideological space the party staked out during the campaign. Other parties that highlighted positions off the blue-green spectrum also fared poorly: the Faith and Hope League won 1.69%, the Minkuotang won 1.62%, and the National Health Service Alliance won 0.42%. There is simply no evidence from the party list vote to support the assertion that a latent, under-served dimension of political conflict suddenly became salient and burst into the open in this election, despite the many attempts by the new political parties to emphasize neglected political issues.

[Table 5 about here]

In fact, if we go simply by the parties holding seats in the legislature, the only change to the party system after the election was the replacement of the Taiwan Solidary Union by the NPP. And since taking office, the NPP has positioned itself to the left of the DPP on cross-Strait relations, occupying a roughly similar ideological space to the TSU. Given these facts, it is hard indeed to make the case that Taiwan’s party system has undergone a fundamental realignment in 2016, and that the NPP represents the leading edge of a new kind of politics.

Was 2016 a Realigning Election or a Deviating One?

While there is no evidence of a reorientation of the party system around a new cleavage in 2016, there was a very clear swing towards the DPP. As I noted earlier, Tsai Ing-wen did 10 ½ points better in 2016 than in 2012, and she carried into office enough DPP candidates to win over 60 percent of the seats in the Legislative Yuan—the party’s first-ever majority. The corollary to the DPP’s unprecedented success in this election was the sweeping defeat of the KMT. Its standard-bearer in the presidential race, Eric Chu, won only 31% of the vote, a decline of over 20 percent from 2012. The party’s legislative candidates fared a bit better in the district vote, winning 38.9% (down from 48.1 in 2012) but support for the KMT on the party ballot slumped much more dramatically, to only 26.9% (down from 44.6% in 2012). In the wake of these results, a number of commentators began to speculate that the KMT might never recover from such a comprehensive defeat, and that key segments of the voting public had permanently shifted into the green camp—that is, to use the term above, that Taiwan’s party system had undergone a “minor realignment.”

Yet we face a fundamental challenge in interpreting these shifts: how do we differentiate between a deviating election and a critical one? They are observationally equivalent without other sources of data: the surge in support for the DPP is consistent with either a short-term deviation from the previous pattern of presidential elections, or a long-term shift in the electorate in the direction of the DPP and away from the KMT. Much rides on this question, yet it is the hardest to answer with any degree of certainty. Nevertheless, there are some clues to look for: the level of turnout, generational and regional differences, and the coherence and organization of the parties themselves can all potentially tell us something about whether the current election is likely to mark the start of a new political era, or whether it instead represents a short-term deviation from the previous state of play.

With this in mind, there are at least three pieces of evidence that are inconsistent with the claim that this was a “critical election” that ushered in a lasting realignment, even in the “minor” sense of a simple shift in partisan attachments. First, turnout in this election hit a record low for a presidential race: at 66.3%, it was below even the 2014 local elections (67.6%), and it fell a full eight points short of the turnout of 2012 (77.4%). That means at least a million people who voted in 2012 did not in 2016. One likely reason for the drop in turnout is that the presidential election was not expected to be close, and there was very little drama by the end of the campaign, so many voters may not have felt compelled to participate. Another is that the KMT’s very late

switch of presidential candidate from Hung Hsiu-chu to Eric Chu in October 2015, less than three months before the election, undoubtedly angered some core KMT supporters, and probably further dampened enthusiasm for voting among the Pan-Blue side. The latter, at least, is unlikely to happen again. Thus, on this count, the 2016 election is best viewed as a deviation to the low side from the “normal” level of Pan-Blue support in the electorate.

Second, the KMT’s position as the long-time ruling party put it at a distinct disadvantage in this election. Although the incumbent president Ma Ying-jeou was not on the ballot, his own low popularly rating and the widespread dissatisfaction with his government were clearly factors in the KMT’s own struggle to run a competitive campaign. The subsequent challenges the Tsai Ing-wen administration has faced in confronting many of the same issues that dragged down President Ma’s popularity are further evidence that the KMT might be a more formidable opponent now that it is unencumbered by the responsibilities of governing.

Third, incumbency worked against the KMT in 2016 for another reason: a poorly-timed economic downturn meant the party was trying to win an election in the middle of a recession—one, furthermore, that was triggered at least in part by a slowdown in the mainland Chinese economy. Because the Ma administration had made closer economic integration with the PRC a central part of its agenda while in office, the KMT was especially vulnerable to criticism that it bore responsibility for this downturn.

Thus, the preponderance of evidence suggests that 2016 was a deviation, not a permanent realignment of the party system, even a minor one. Developments over the last three years are consistent with this interpretation: President Tsai’s support has slumped dramatically from her initial highs, and in a shocking reversal, the DPP was defeated as badly in the 2018 local elections as it had won in 2014. Notably, the KMT, not the NPP or other third-party alternatives, was the main beneficiary of the DPP’s unpopularity. And in the early stages of the campaign for the 2020 elections, cross-Strait relations are again front and center in the debate between the two parties, and within them. *Plus ça change...*

5. CONCLUSION: IS PARTY SYSTEM STABILITY GOOD FOR TAIWAN’S DEMOCRACY?

Viewed over a timespan of decades, the primary impression one gets of Taiwan’s party system is continuity rather than change. In the run-up to the 2020 elections, the China question

remains at the heart of Taiwan’s party politics, and the DPP and KMT are still the chief competitors—much as they have been for the last two decades. Taiwan’s party system continues to be exceptionally stable for a young democracy, and highly institutionalized: electoral volatility is low, partisanship is high, political elites and masses are both broadly committed to the electoral process as the only legitimate means to win and retain power, and the two leading political parties retain strong organizations, distinctive brands, and loyal followings in the electorate.

It is tempting to view this exceptional stability through a negative lens, and lament the repeated failure of other parties offering a new kind of “post-blue-green” politics to win seats. There is, indeed, some danger that Taiwan’s party system might become too detached from the concerns of an increasing share of the electorate, and that its political elites become unresponsive to critical issues that do not fit neatly into the pre-existing China question cleavage. Such elite drift is probably at least partly to blame for the rise in populist and Euro-sceptic parties in Europe, and of Donald Trump in the United States.

Nevertheless, Taiwan’s current party system has, so far at least, proven surprisingly responsive to shifts in mass opinion. When public opinion swung in favor of greater engagement with the PRC during the latter half of Chen Shui-bian’s term, and the DPP ignored it, it was swept out of office and replaced by a president and party that aggressively pursued cross-Strait rapprochement. When public opinion later turned against President Ma’s cross-Strait policies, and the KMT attempted to force through additional agreements anyway, it, too, was swept out of power in the next election. In addition, whichever major party is in opposition has shown an impressive ideological flexibility on most issues orthogonal to the China question, and willingness to raise new concerns or reposition itself on old ones for the hope of an electoral advantage—on labor rights, energy policy, and same sex marriage, for instance. Both parties have also managed to build broad coalitions to return to power. Prior to 2008, for example, the KMT managed to reunite its warring factions and re-assimilate much of the PFP into its ranks, and prior to 2016, the DPP brought together a diverse group of critics of the Ma administration and the KMT behind Tsai Ing-wen’s candidacy.

More broadly, democracies with high party system institutionalization appear to fare better over the long run, both in terms of democratic quality and more fundamentally, their

ability simply to survive, than those with low PSI.⁵⁶ Partisanship and “blue vs. green” competition is the object of much complaining among political observers in Taiwan, but the comparative experience does not provide much evidence that weaker party organizations, a more volatile party system, and weaker partisan attachments would improve the representativeness, responsiveness, and accountability of Taiwan’s political elite. As boring and predictable as the KMT and DPP’s partisan fights may seem to casual observers, they also have provided the foundations for a nationalized, responsive and programmatically oriented political system that, so far at least, compares very well against its peers in the region and beyond.

⁵⁶ I develop this argument at length elsewhere; see Kharis Templeman, “Blessings in Disguise: How Authoritarian Legacies and the China Factor Have Strengthened Democracy in Taiwan,” *International Journal of Taiwan Studies*, forthcoming.

Table 1. Electoral Volatility by Party Seat Share in Legislative Yuan, 1992-2016

Electoral Volatility in Taiwan, 1992-2016	
<i>Year</i>	<i>Volatility</i>
1995	13.1
1998	12.4
2001	33.5
2004	10.3
2008	22.9
2012	7.2
2016	8.4
Average	15.4

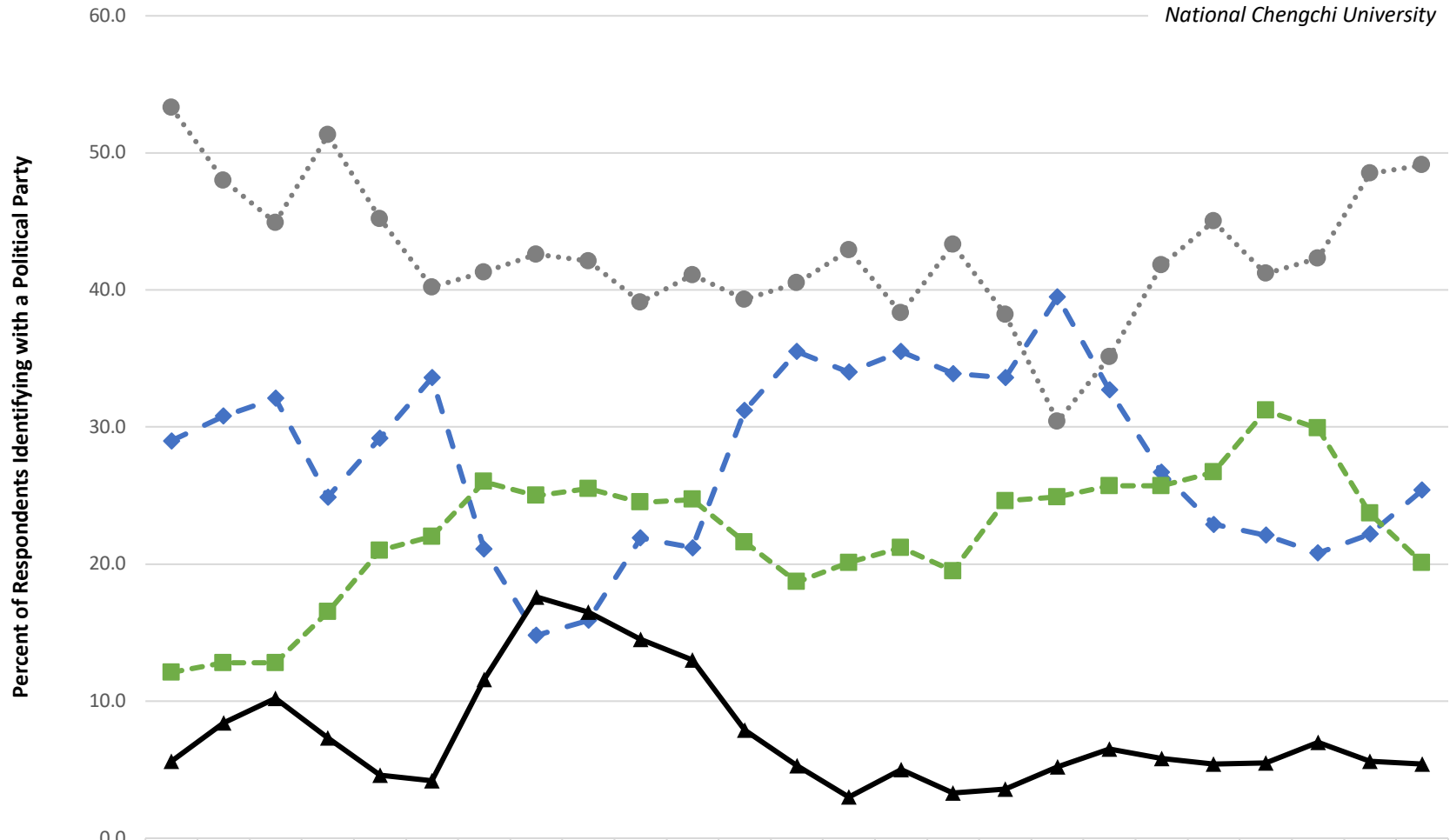
Table 2. Electoral Volatility by Seat Share in National Parliaments across Asia

Electoral Volatility in Asia*					
<i>Regime</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Number of Elections</i>	<i>Volatility: 1st and 2nd Elections</i>	<i>Volatility: Last Election</i>	<i>Average Volatility</i>
Malaysia II	1974-2013	10	8.6	4	10.1
Singapore	1968-2011	11	24.6	20.4	15.4
Taiwan	1992-2016	8	13.1	8.4	15.4
Sri Lanka	1947-2010	14	27.7	9	16.6
Japan	1947-2012	24	27.4	16.3	16.8
Philippines I	1946-1969	7	20.4	43.6	18.5
India	1951-2009	15	25.1	11.3	19.2
Cambodia	1993-2013	5	27.9	22.9	24
Indonesia	1999-2009	3	25.2	29.8	27.5
Malaysia I	1955-1968	4	38.8	36.4	30.6
Timor Leste	2001-2012	3	49	22.5	35.8
South Korea	1988-2012	7	41.9	35.2	36.5
Philippines II	1992-2013	8	57	42.9	38.3
Thailand I	1979-1991	4	40.8	32.1	38.4
Thailand II	1992-2011	8	48.7	58.2	42

* Source: Allen Hicken and Eric Kuhonta, *Party System Institutionalization in Asia*, p. 12.; author's calculation for Taiwan.

Figure 1. Partisanship in Taiwan, 1992-2018

Source: Election Study Center
National Chengchi University



	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
●-●-● None	53.3	48.0	44.9	51.3	45.2	40.2	41.3	42.6	42.1	39.1	41.1	39.3	40.5	42.9	38.3	43.3	38.2	30.4	35.1	41.8	45.0	41.2	42.3	48.5	49.1
◆-◆-◆ KMT	29.0	30.8	32.1	24.9	29.2	33.6	21.1	14.8	15.9	21.9	21.2	31.2	35.5	34.0	35.5	33.9	33.6	39.5	32.7	26.7	22.9	22.1	20.8	22.2	25.4
■-■-■ DPP	12.1	12.8	12.8	16.5	21.0	22.0	26.0	25.0	25.5	24.5	24.7	21.6	18.7	20.1	21.2	19.5	24.6	24.9	25.7	25.7	26.7	31.2	29.9	23.7	20.1
▲-▲-▲ Other	5.6	8.4	10.2	7.3	4.6	4.2	11.6	17.6	16.5	14.5	13.0	7.9	5.3	3.0	5.0	3.3	3.6	5.2	6.5	5.8	5.4	5.5	7.0	5.6	5.4

Table 3. Legislative Districts Without a DPP (KMT) Candidate, 2008-2016

District Name	2008	2012	2016
Hsinchu County 1	No DPP		No DPP
Kinmen 1		No DPP	
Lienchiang 1		No DPP	No DPP
New Taipei 9	No DPP		
New Taipei 12			No DPP
Penghu 1	No KMT		
Pingtung County 1	No KMT		
Pingtung County 3			No KMT
Taichung 2		No KMT	
Taichung 3			No DPP
Taichung 5			No DPP
Taichung 8	No DPP		
Tainan 2	No KMT		
Taipei 2			No KMT
Taipei 3			No DPP
Taipei 4			No DPP
Taipei 5			No DPP
Taipei 6			No DPP
Taipei 7		No DPP	No DPP
Taipei 8			No DPP
Taitung 1	No DPP		
Taoyuan 6		No DPP	
Total (of 73)	7	4	13

Table 4. The swing toward (against) the DPP has been relatively uniform in recent presidential elections

DPP Vote Swing in Presidential Elections, 2004-2016				
地區	Locality	DPP Swing 04-08	DPP Swing 08-12	DPP Swing 12-16
NORTH				
臺北市	Taipei City	-6.51%	2.58%	12.41%
新北市	New Taipei	-8.01%	4.52%	11.34%
基隆市	Keelung City	-8.30%	4.50%	11.45%
桃園市	Taoyuan County	-9.33%	4.50%	11.17%
宜蘭縣	Yilan County	-9.14%	3.95%	9.54%
新竹縣	Hsinchu County	-9.96%	4.95%	11.59%
新竹市	Hsinchu City	-9.58%	4.18%	11.74%
CENTRAL				
苗栗縣	Miaoli County	-10.24%	4.17%	12.27%
臺中市	Taichung City*	-10.04%	4.71%	10.32%
彰化縣	Changhua County	-9.85%	4.08%	9.98%
南投縣	Nantou County	-10.79%	4.40%	9.87%
雲林縣	Yunlin County	-8.79%	4.28%	7.59%
SOUTH				
嘉義縣	Chiayi County	-8.35%	4.13%	6.80%
嘉義市	Chiayi City	-8.45%	3.43%	8.82%
臺南市	Tainan City*	-8.64%	4.38%	9.79%
高雄市	Kaohsiung City*	-7.13%	3.67%	9.97%
屏東縣	Pingtung County	-7.86%	4.88%	8.36%
澎湖縣	Penghu County	-7.41%	3.59%	5.16%
EAST AND ISLANDS				
臺東縣	Taitung County	-7.81%	3.83%	7.91%
花蓮縣	Hualien County	-7.28%	3.42%	10.99%
金門縣	Kinmen County	-1.18%	3.34%	9.79%
連江縣	Lienchiang County	-0.93%	3.20%	8.50%
Total Swing %		-8.56%	4.08%	10.49%
Total Swing in Votes		-1027021	648629	801166

Figure 2. DPP Presidential vote swing by township, 2008-2012: Tsai Ing-wen improved on Frank Hsieh in every township

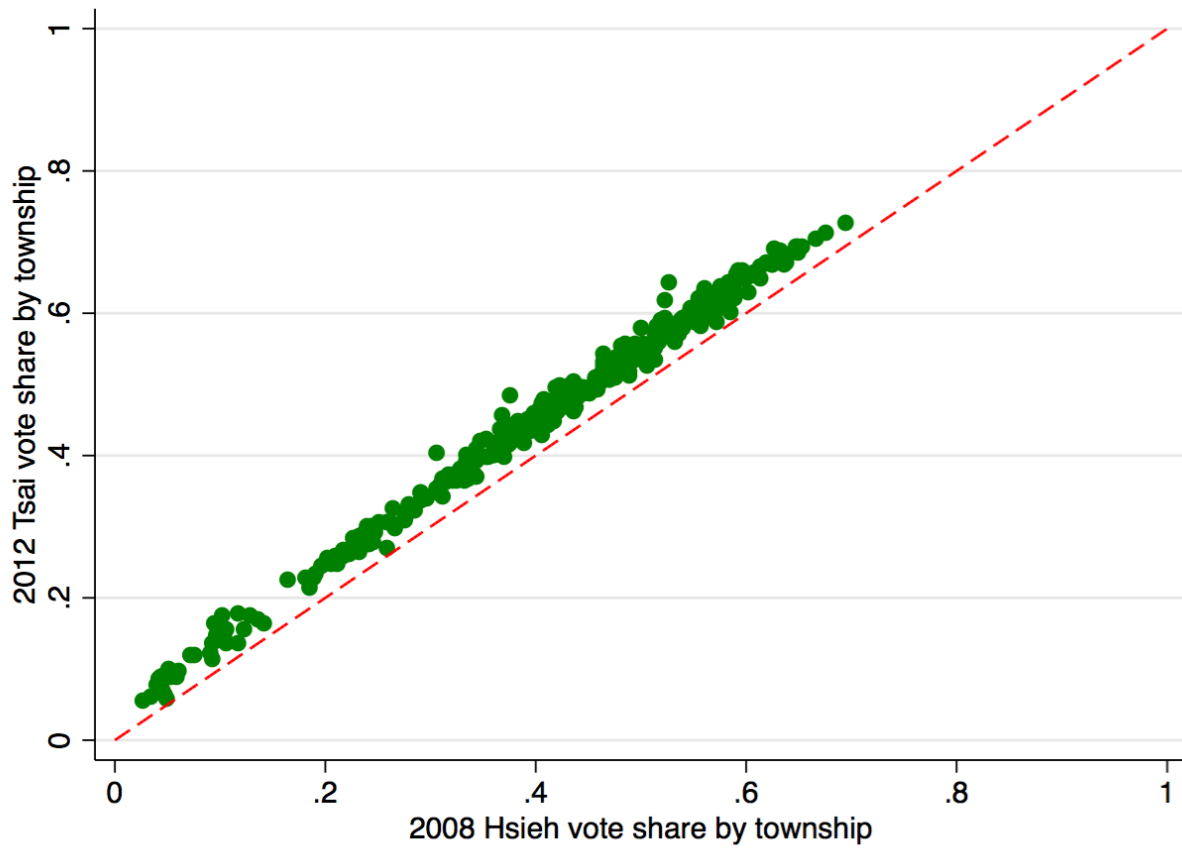


Figure 3. DPP presidential vote swing by township, 2012-2016: Tsai’s vote share increase in all but one township

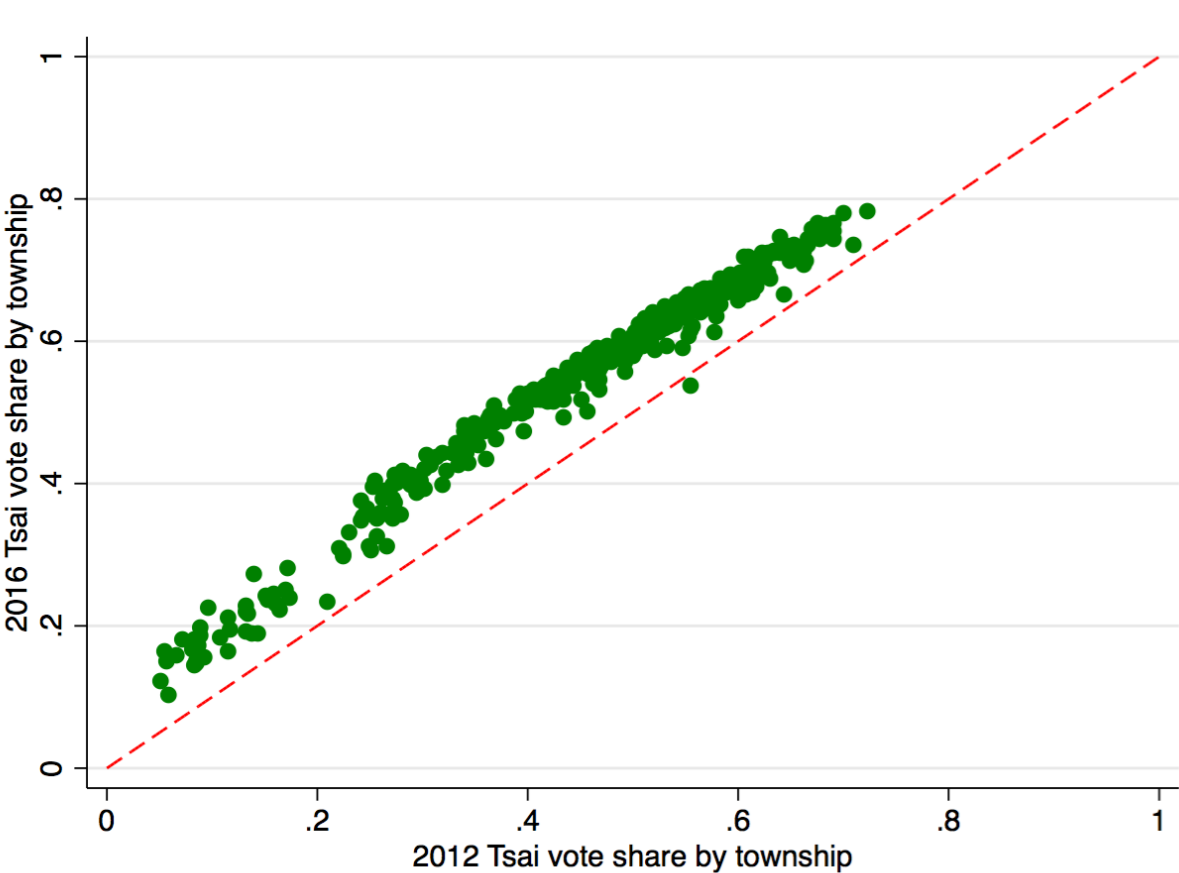


Figure 4. DPP Legislative Yuan Vote Swing by District, 2008-2012

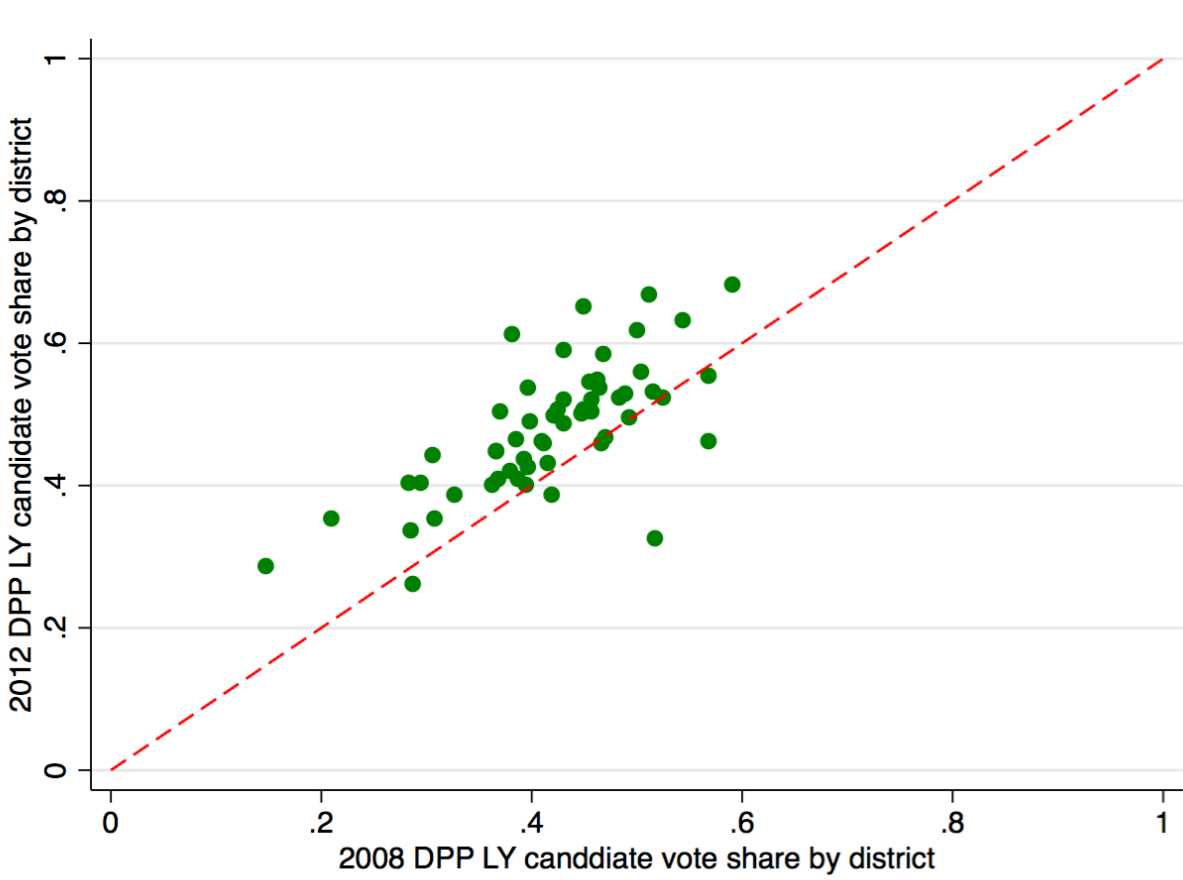


Figure 5. DPP Legislative Yuan Vote Swing by District, 2012-16

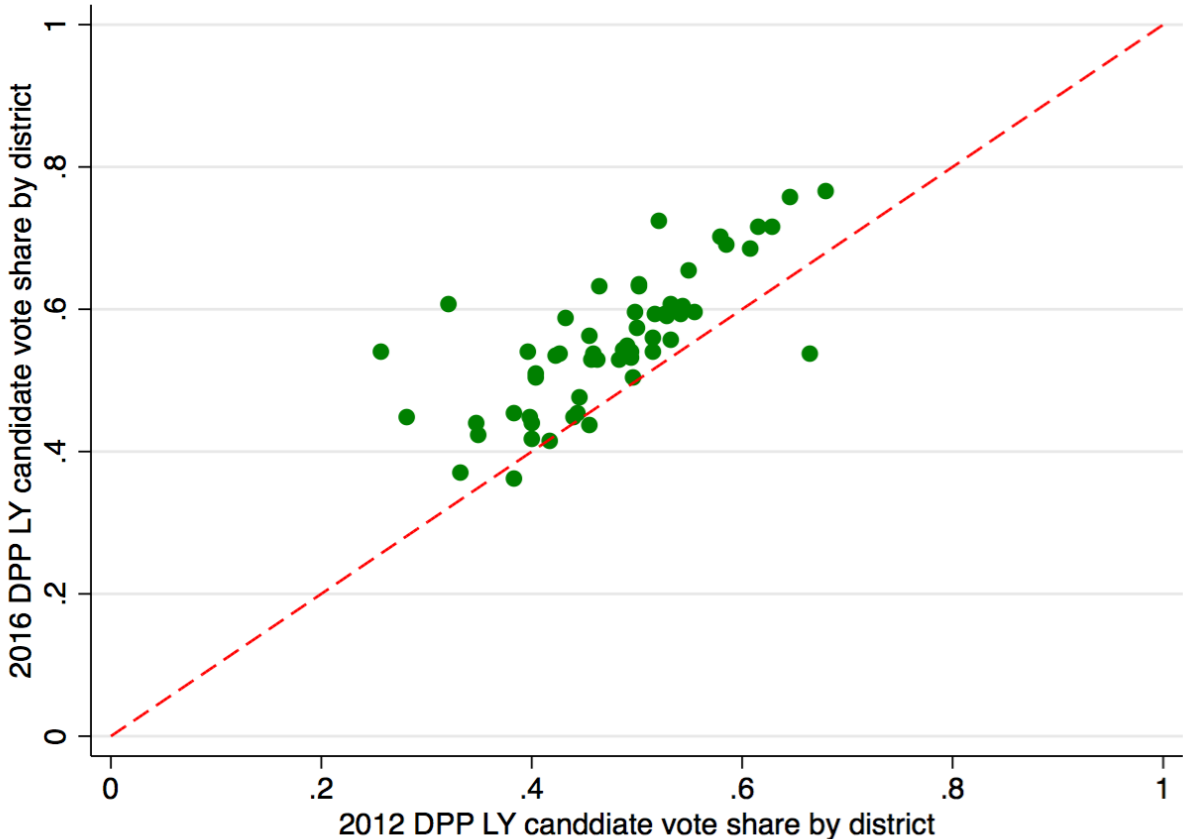


Figure 6. A “major” realignment: a new dimension of competition breaks apart existing party coalitions

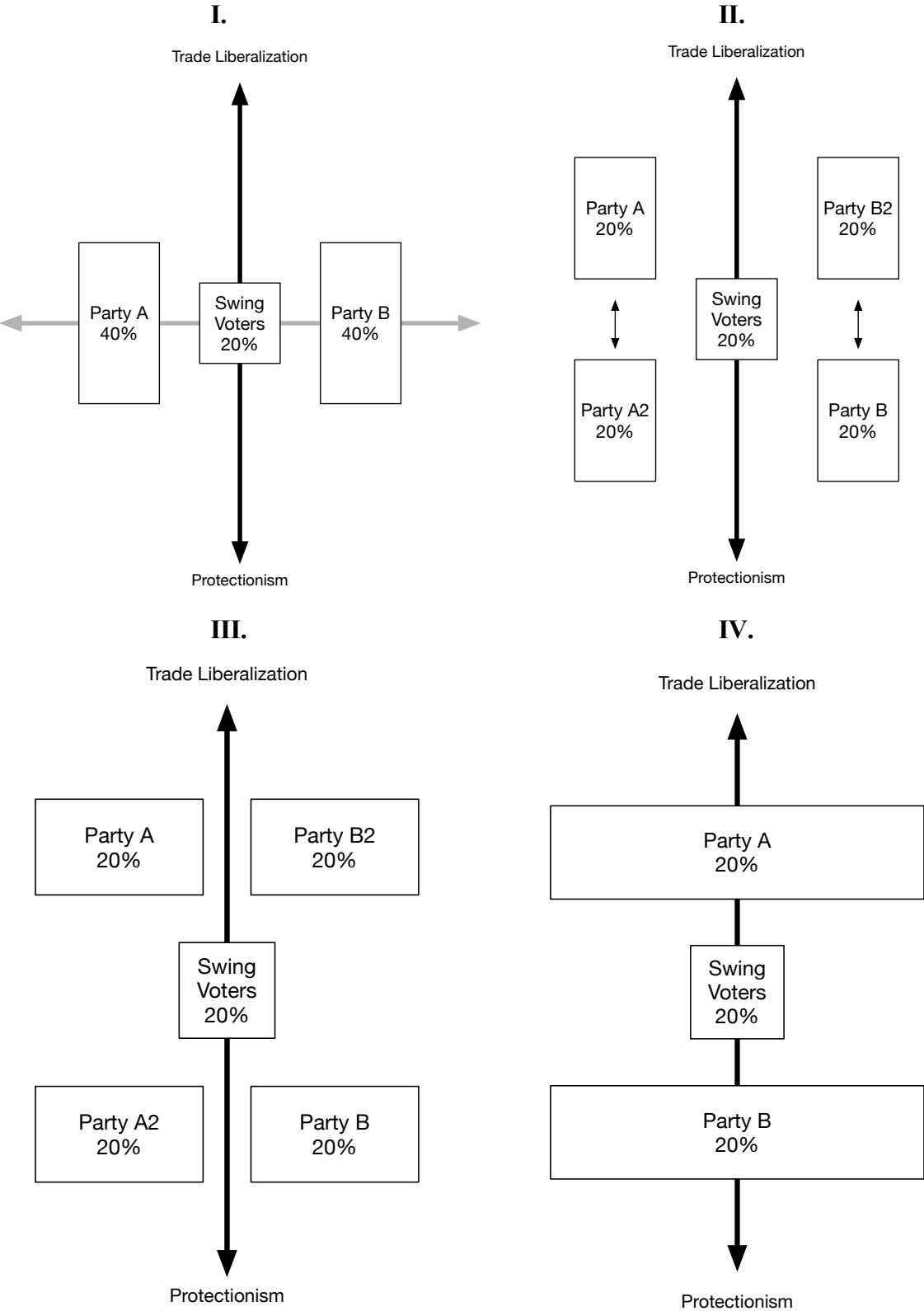


Figure 7. A “minor” realignment: the party system shifts from parity to a 45-35 advantage for Party B.

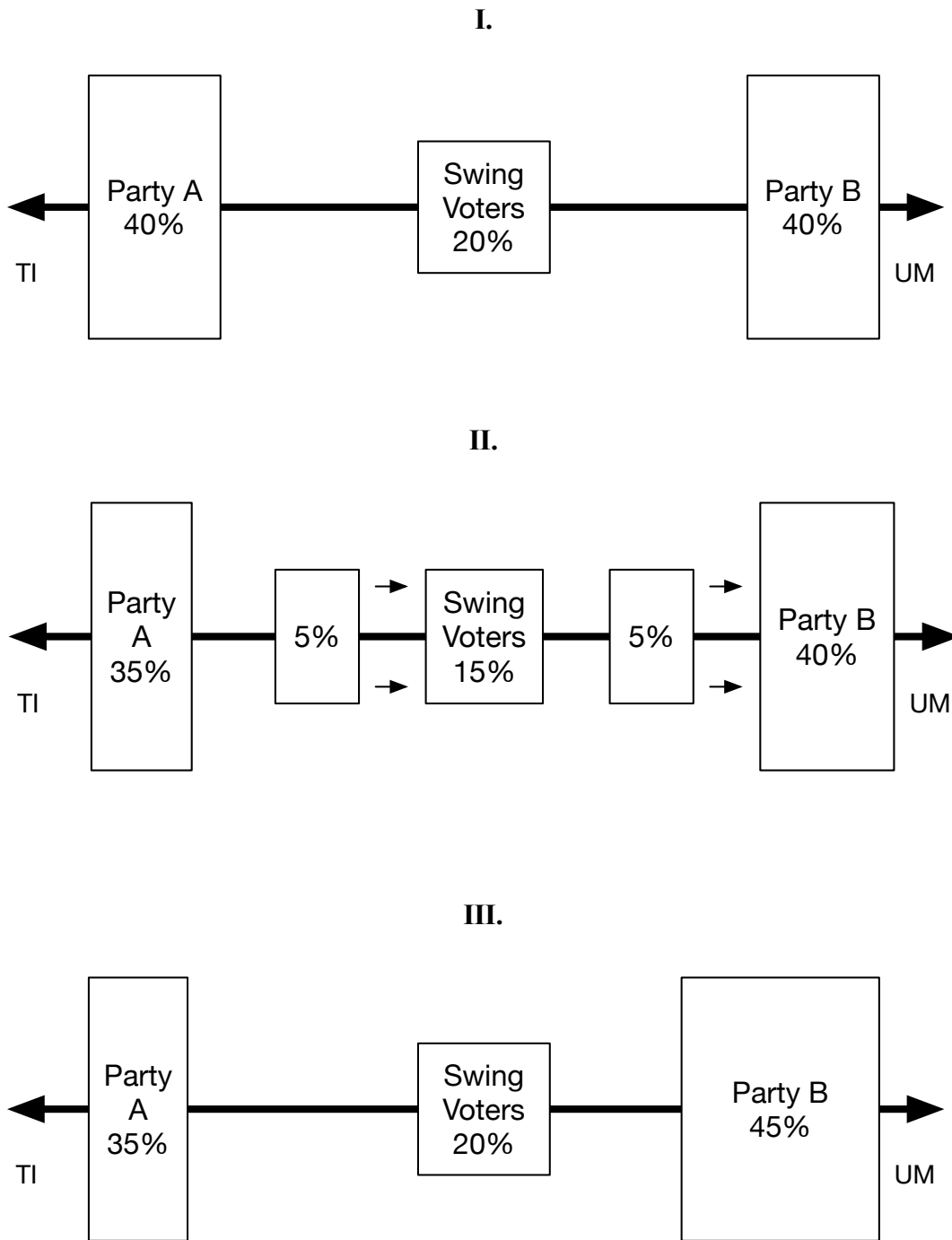


Figure 8. NPP district candidates performed similarly to other DPP nominees in 2016, while other DPP-endorsed third party candidates did worse

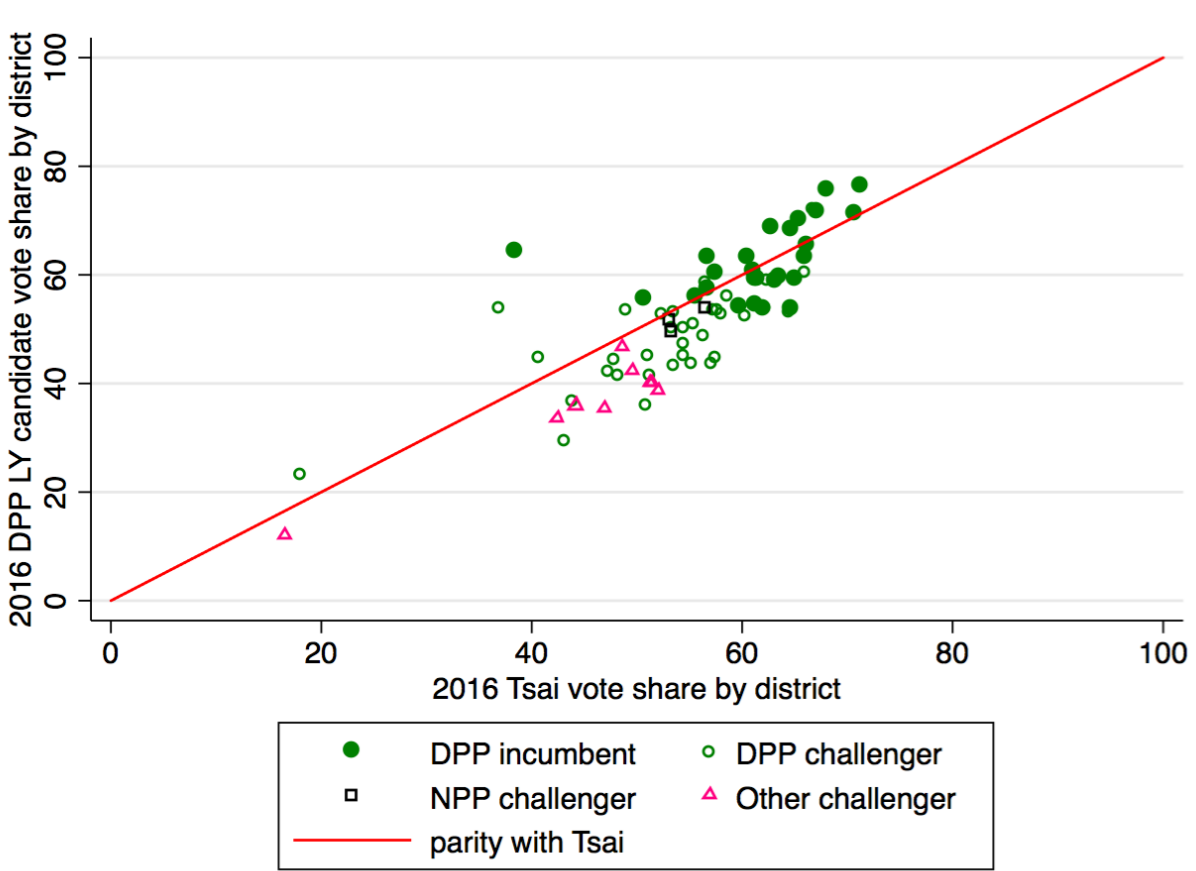


Table 5. The New Power Party was the only new party to cross the 5% party list threshold

Party List Vote Shares, 2016 Legislative Yuan Election				
English Name	Chinese Name	Party List Votes	%	PR Seats won
Democratic Progressive Party	民主進步黨	5,370,953	44.04%	18
Chinese Nationalist Party - Kuomintang	中國國民黨	3,280,949	26.90%	11
People First Party	親民黨	794,838	6.52%	3
New Power Party	時代力量	744,315	6.10%	2
New Party	新黨	510,074	4.18%	0
Green Party - Social Democratic Party Alliance	綠黨社會民主黨聯盟	308,106	2.53%	0
Taiwan Solidarity Union	台灣團結聯盟	305,675	2.51%	0
Faith and Hope League	信心希望聯盟	206,629	1.69%	0
Republic Party - Minkuotang	民國黨	197,627	1.62%	0
MCFAP	軍公教聯盟黨	87,213	0.72%	0
Non-Partisan Solidarity Union	無黨團結聯盟	77,672	0.64%	0
Trees Party	樹黨	77,174	0.63%	0
Chinese Unionist Party	中華統一促進黨	56,347	0.46%	0
Health Alliance	健保免費連線	51,024	0.42%	0
Free Taiwan Party	自由台灣黨	47,988	0.39%	0
Peace Dove Alliance Party	和平鴿聯盟黨	30,617	0.25%	0
Taiwan Independence Party	台灣獨立黨	27,496	0.23%	0
Great Love Constitutional Reform Party	大愛憲改聯盟	15,442	0.13%	0
Total, parties winning seats		10,191,055	83.56%	34
Total, parties not winning seats		1,999,084	16.40%	0