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## The Party System Before and After the 2016 Elections

*Kharis Templeman*

**Taiwan stands out among the third-wave democracies for the remarkable stability of its party system.**<sup>1</sup> Ever since Taiwan's first fully democratic legislative election was held in 1992, the two leading political parties have remained the same: in 1992, the Chinese Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) finished first and second, and in 2016 they finished second and first. Despite significant 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."<sup>2</sup> Whether we characterize it primarily as a divide over (sub)ethnicity, over national identity, or over competing visions for how to handle cross-strait relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), the China question has long been the most salient divide in Taiwanese politics.

Since at least the early 2000s, all significant political parties in the party system have taken distinct positions on the China question.<sup>3</sup> As any observer of Taiwanese politics knows, to the right of the median is the KMT, which has favored 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 (not to be confused with the New Power Party [NPP]) and the more centrist People First Party (PFP) of James Soong, which together have formed what in Tai-

wanese 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 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 past two decades of public opinion research on Taiwanese politics, the single most robust finding is that attitudes toward the China question have increasingly come to determine vote choice in national elections.<sup>4</sup> As the five significant parties repositioned themselves into two camps in the early 2000s, segments of the electorate followed them and resorted into the political camp closest to their own views.<sup>5</sup> Ever since, as this body of research has repeatedly shown, the major parties have differentiated themselves primarily through their 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-versus-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.<sup>6</sup>

These expectations were driven in part by developments overseas. After the global financial crisis in 2008–2009 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.<sup>7</sup> New anti-establishment candidates and parties popped up throughout the democratic world on both the traditional left and right, and in many cases they quickly became a serious electoral threat.<sup>8</sup>

This pattern was particularly pronounced in the countries 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 eurozone, 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 anticorruption 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 Euroskeptical 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 Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. In France, the traditional 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 Mélenchon of La France Insoumise. That campaign ended with the election as president of Emmanuel Macron, a former Socialist Party cabinet minister, at the head of La République En Marche!, a completely new centrist party that included defectors 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, 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, and Taipei; proposals to allow imports of US beef and pork; and the negligent death of a conscript in military custody.<sup>9</sup> 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-Straits rapprochement.

The December 2014 local elections put an exclamation point on the swing in public opinion against the ruling party.<sup>10</sup> The KMT was trounced: going into the election, it held fifteen of twenty-two county executive and city mayor seats, but lost nine to either the DPP or independent candidates. The headline result was in Taipei, traditionally a pan-Blue stronghold, where a DPP-supported independent candidate and political novice, Ko Wen-je, handily won the election over KMT nominee Lien Sheng-wen (Sean Lien).

Particularly noteworthy was that Ko positioned himself 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, nonpartisan professional expertise (he was an emergency room physician at National Taiwan University hospital), 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-versus-Green competition over cross-strait relations.<sup>11</sup>

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 of the two main political camps by emphasizing distinctive positions on crosscutting 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 (NPP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the Green Party of Taiwan (GPT).<sup>12</sup> 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-versus-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 Republic Party, or Minkuotang (MKT), which began as a personal vehicle for 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 (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 founded by a breakaway group from the GPT. In total, eighteen 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 "nontraditional" 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

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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 both of the 5 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” 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.

Thus, viewed over a time span of decades, the primary impression one gets of Taiwan’s party system is continuity rather than change. At the time of this writing, shortly after the January 2020 elections, the China question is still at the heart of Taiwanese party politics. And despite the staying power of the NPP and the strong showing of Ko Wen-je’s newly founded Taiwan People’s Party (TPP) in the 2020 elections, the DPP and KMT still remain the primary competitors. Furthermore, 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. On balance, there is little evidence to support the claim that 2016 was a “critical election” that fundamentally reordered the previous patterns of party competition. I conclude this chapter with some thoughts about how the consistency and stability of Taiwan’s party system has contributed to the quality of its democracy and helped buttress the overall legitimacy of the political system.

### **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 (PSI) is the degree to which the patterned interactions among significant 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.<sup>13</sup> 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 interparty 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.<sup>14</sup>

*Electoral Volatility*

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 5.1, I have calculated this measure for Taiwan for each election to the Legislative Yuan from 1992 to 2020; to provide a context in which to situate these scores, Table 5.2 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.<sup>15</sup>

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 14.8. This measure puts Taiwan at the low end of the region; only Singapore and Malaysia, both longtime 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 postwar period was a dominant-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

**Table 5.1 Electoral Volatility in Taiwan, 1995–2020**

	Volatility
1995	13.1
1998	12.4
2001	33.5
2004	10.3
2008	22.9
2012	7.2
2016	8.4
2020	10.6
Average	14.8

*Source:* Author calculations.

*Note:* Scale of 0 to 100, with a higher score indicating greater volatility.

Table 5.2 Electoral Volatility in Asia

Regime	Years	Number of Elections	Volatility: First and Second Elections	Volatility: Last Election	Average Volatility
Malaysia II	1974–2013	10	8.6	4.0	10.1
Taiwan	1992–2020	9	13.1	10.6	14.8
Singapore	1968–2011	11	24.6	20.4	15.4
Sri Lanka	1947–2010	14	27.7	9.0	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	24.0
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	49.0	22.5	35.8
South Korea	1988–2012	7	41.9	35.2	36.5
Philippines II	1992–2013	8	57.0	42.9	38.3
Thailand I	1979–1991	4	40.8	32.1	38.4
Thailand II	1992–2011	8	48.7	58.2	42.0

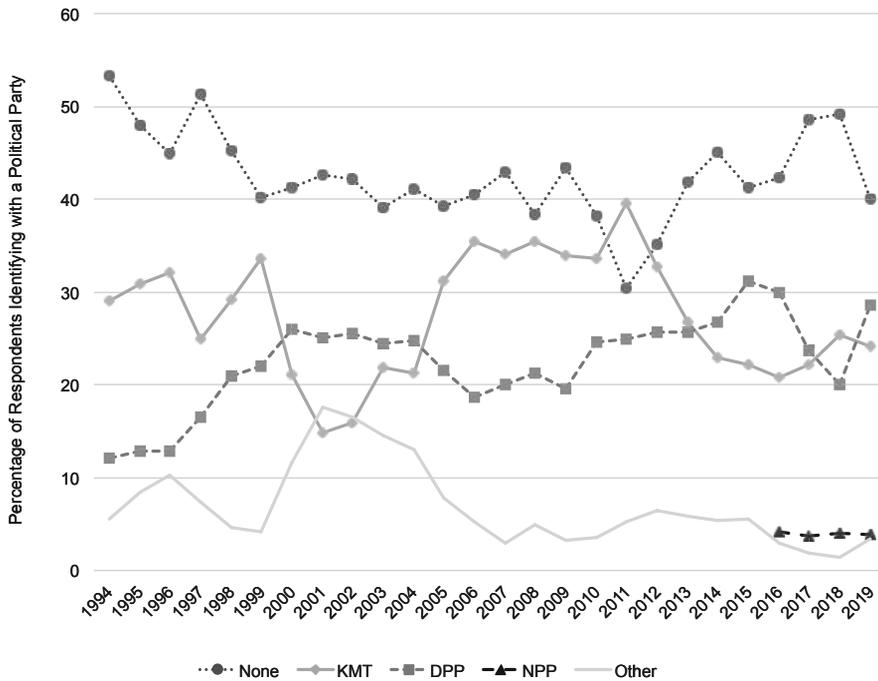
Source: Hicken and Kuhota, *Party System Institutionalization in Asia*, p. 12; author calculation for Taiwan.  
 Note: Volatility scale is 0 to 100, with a higher score indicating greater volatility.

2006 coup (42.0). Allen Hicken and Eric 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 volatility of Taiwan's party system makes it appear more like that of a developed democracy than a young third-wave case.<sup>16</sup>

### 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 5.1 reproduces the well-known data on this question collected regularly since 1994 by the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University.<sup>17</sup>

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 sup-

**Figure 5.1** Partisanship in Taiwan, 1994–2019

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

porters 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 repeated itself in the 2016–2020 election cycle, as the DPP slumped following its high point in 2016 while the KMT showed a modest recovery, to the point where in 2018 there were more self-identified KMT partisans than DPP ones in the electorate.

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 has remained small since its founding. 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 realign-

ment of Taiwan's party system around issues orthogonal to the China question and a potential end to the old Green-versus-Blue duopoly.<sup>18</sup> 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 was sometimes portrayed as after 2016.<sup>19</sup> After the 2020 elections, similar breathless forecasts are being made about the bright future of Ko Wen-je's new Taiwan People's Party, which won five seats on more than 11 percent of the party-list vote and surpassed the NPP as the third-largest party in the Legislative Yuan. But past experience should lead us to be skeptical of the TPP's staying power, as well: it has no concrete policy positions to speak of and, so far at least, appears to be based solely on the independent electoral appeal of Mayor Ko. Moreover, the success of the NPP and TPP is the exception that proves the rule: for the past two decades, partisanship in Taiwan has remained strong and persistent enough to root the party system into two major camps and to raise a high bar for new third-party challenges—one that only these two parties have managed to overcome since 2001.<sup>20</sup>

#### *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 work,<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

#### *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 officeholders. And both are clearly much more than electoral vehicles for the party chairperson or highest officeholder: they have survived long periods in political opposition, rapid rises and falls in political fortunes, and multiple changes in party leadership.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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 PFP, and Lee Teng-hui in that of the TSU. As both leaders age out of politics, neither party looks like it has a particularly bright future; both were shut out of the legislature in the 2020 elections—the PFP despite James Soong’s third-party presidential campaign. The TPP, though new, appears to be in the mold of these earlier parties; so far at least, its image and political positions are inseparable from its founder, Ko Wen-je. The most interesting and uncertain case is that of 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 decisionmaking among its mostly young, politically inexperienced membership. In the run-up to the 2020 elections, however, two of its five legislators left the party and a third was expelled, and it dropped to only three seats (though it did manage to increase its party-list vote share by about 1.5 points). Having survived this near-death experience, it remains an open question whether the NPP will be able to strengthen its internal organization and to grow into more than a niche party in the system.<sup>25</sup>

#### *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.<sup>26</sup> 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., the 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 officeholders manage to win reelection 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 pro-

vide yet another alternative measure of PSI. From 1992 through 2004, Taiwan's legislators were elected using single nontransferable vote (SNTV) in multimember districts, which provided realistic opportunities in some districts for parties winning as little as 5 percent of the vote to capture seats. And since 2008, parties winning at least 5 percent of the separate party-list vote are guaranteed seats from the proportional representation (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 that took distinct positions on the China question.<sup>27</sup> In 2001, for instance, both the PFP, 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 the 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”<sup>28</sup>—and the TPP's core (some might say only) appeal is that it is between the two major camps on the China question.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

### **The 2016 Elections: Realignment or Deviation?**

To this point I have argued that Taiwan's party system is notable both for its high degree of institutionalization (PSI) and its uni-dimensionality. The previous evidence 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 lasting partisan realignment, or whether they were instead more likely a temporary deviation from the underlying pattern of partisan competition.

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”?<sup>31</sup> Political commentators often use the terms casually, without definition, and most of us have an innate sense of what is meant 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 defini-

tion, 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 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 preexisting cleavage within the electorate.”<sup>32</sup> 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 break apart and 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 accelerating a period of dealignment from the national Democratic Party and eventual realignment of white southerners toward the Republican Party, while at the same time African American voters swung decisively into the Democratic Party coalition.<sup>33</sup>

By contrast, in 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 who did not vote at all) in the previous elections 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 who will vote for Party B increases.

For instance, the 1977 Israeli election delivered for the first time a plurality of the vote (33 percent) to the right-wing Likud, over the incumbent left-wing Labor Party (26 percent). 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 the first right-wing government in Israeli history, as well as 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.<sup>34</sup>

To illustrate more clearly the difference in these two patterns of party-system change, consider the following stylized example. Let us assume a

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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.

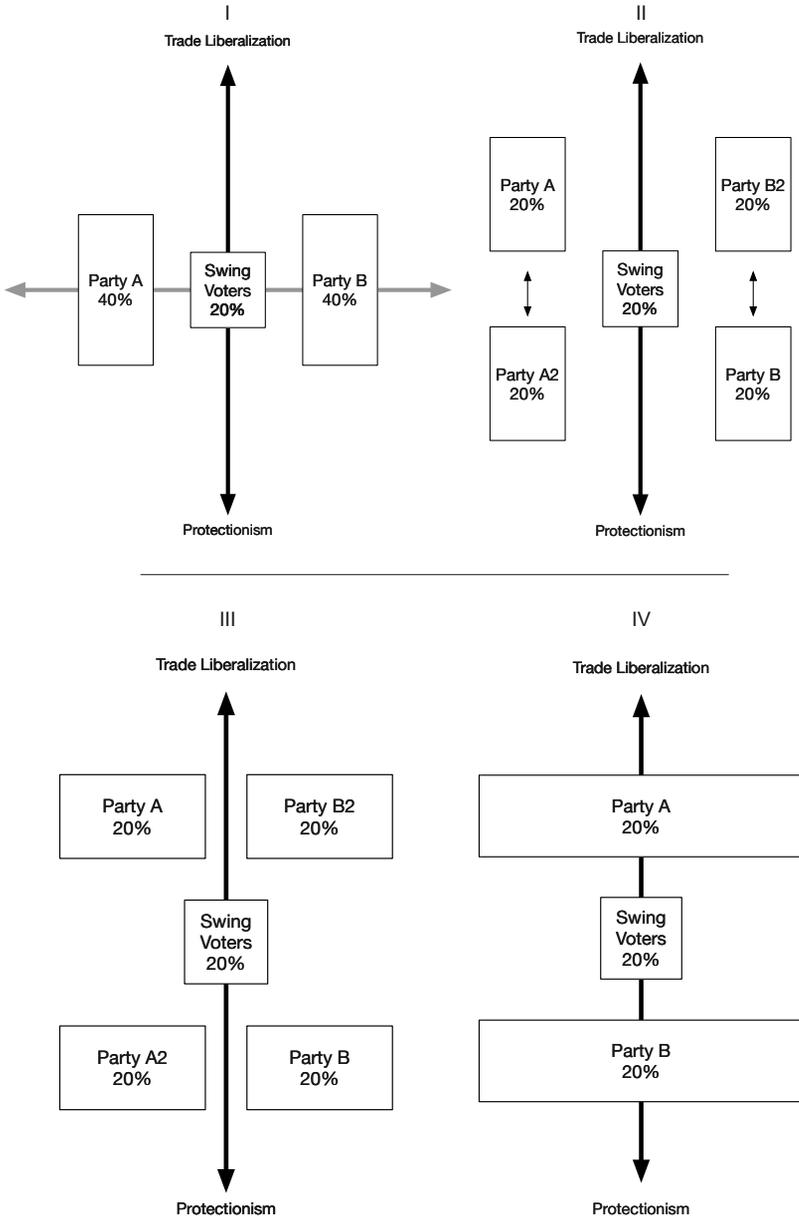
In a major critical realignment, a new crosscutting cleavage emerges that divides the coalitions of both parties. Let us take the limiting case for our example: assume this cleavage splits both parties exactly in half, with 20 percent of the electorate on each side in each party, and that this issue is so salient that partisans care more about it than whatever previously divided the two major parties, as Figure 5.2 shows. The party leaders then take opposing positions on this new issue of the day, and the electorate re-sorts into the parties that best correspond to their preferences. After the critical election, the parties enjoy the same proportion of supporters in the electorate—but 40 percent of the electorate has switched parties.

To be sure, most party-system realignments, even of the major variety, are neither this neat, nor dramatic, nor 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 scoop up the newly unaligned voters from both camps, as, for instance, the Republican Party did over the issue of slavery in the United States 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 preexisting patterns of voting.

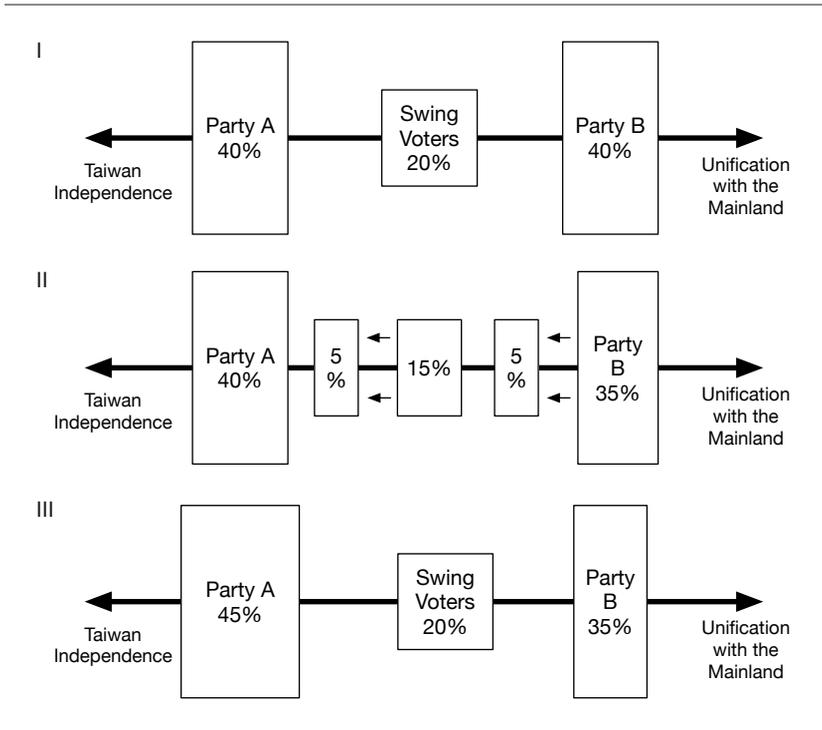
Now consider the minor version of a critical realignment, again assuming a symmetric, two-party system with each party enjoying the committed partisan support of 40 percent of the electorate, and 20 percent as swing voters. A minor realignment occurs without the emergence of a new cleavage at all, but simply a lasting defection of some partisans from one camp. In the scenario illustrated in Figure 5.3, 5 percent of the electorate “dealigns” from Party B to become swing voters, while 5 percent of the previous swing voters “realign” with Party A 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 A, which now enjoys a 45-to-35 percent lead among all partisan voters.

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 B's

**Figure 5.2 A “Major” Realignment: A New Dimension of Competition Breaks Apart Existing Party Coalitions**



**Figure 5.3 A “Minor” Realignment: The Party System Shifts from Parity to a 45-to-35 Percent Advantage for Party A**



position, and toward Party A's. Either through generational replacement, targeted appeals by Party A (or indifference from Party B), or a true reordering of preferences on the primary dimension of conflict, Party A 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.<sup>35</sup> Following the stylized example earlier, 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.<sup>36</sup> For instance, if Party B's partisans are only 35 percent of the electorate, while Party A's are 45 percent, as in Figure 5.3 after realignment, then the only way Party B 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 A.

Why might 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 Figure 5.3 after realignment, the swing voters break half for Party A and half for Party B, then Party A'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 politics, 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 should see 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-versus-Green party competition.

So how did these new, small parties fare in 2016? As Dafydd Fell has argued, they collectively enjoyed a “limited breakthrough” relative to the rather dismal experience of most previous attempts of new parties to compete for seats.<sup>37</sup> 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 all three 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.

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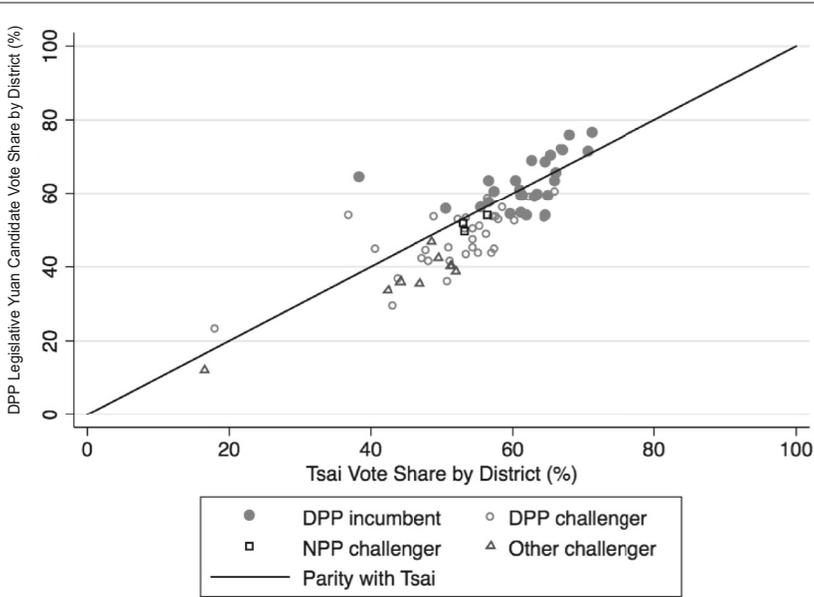
But the New Power Party's success is a bit misleading in this context, and we should be skeptical that it represents a "new kind" of politics, for at least two reasons. First, the party deliberately pursued a personality-based campaign strategy. It recruited three candidates with high name recognition to run in the district races: Freddy Lim, a lead singer for the band Chthonic; Hung Tzu-yung, the younger sister of an army conscript who died after harsh punishment while in military detention; 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 entrees into the party system.

Second, as Fell notes, the NPP coordinated very closely with the DPP during its campaign.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup>

We can get a sense of how closely the NPP's fortunes were tied to the DPP's in 2016 by comparing the party's vote shares to Tsai Ing-wen's in the districts. Figure 5.4 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 those who ran behind.<sup>40</sup>

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. By contrast, the other, non-NPP candidates who were endorsed by the DPP fared much more poorly than Tsai did in their districts. Thus we have an additional piece of evidence that the NPP was not really running an "orthogonal," antielite or antisystem 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-GPT 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 5.4 shows—they generally ran behind

**Figure 5.4 Tsai Ing-wen District Vote Share Compared to DPP, NPP, and Other Third-Party Candidates in 2016**

Source: Central Election Commission.

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 5.3 shows. The SDP-GPT Alliance won only 2.53 percent of the party-list vote, despite the distinct ideological space that the party staked out during the campaign. Other parties that highlighted positions off the Blue-versus-Green axis also fared poorly: the Faith and Hope League won 1.69 percent, the MKT won 1.62 percent, and the National Health Service Alliance won 0.42 percent. There is simply no evidence from the party-list vote to support the assertion that a latent, underserved 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.

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 TSU by the NPP. And after taking office, the NPP 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 sustain the case that Taiwan's party system went through a major realignment in 2016, and that the NPP represented the leading edge of a new kind of politics after this election.

**Table 5.3 Party-List Vote Shares in the 2016 Legislative Yuan Election**

English Name	Chinese Name	Party-List Votes	Percentage	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
Military, Civil Servants, Firefighters, Academics [Teachers], and Policemen Party	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

Source:

&lt;Author: Please include source.&gt;

***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 toward the DPP. As noted earlier, Tsai Ing-wen did ten and a half 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 percent 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 percent (down from 48.1 percent in 2012) but support for the KMT on the party ballot slumped much more dramatically, to only 26.9 percent (down from 44.6 percent 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 preceding terminology, that Taiwan's party system had undergone a minor realignment.

Yet we face a basic 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 reveal something about whether this election marked the start of a new political era, or whether it instead represented only 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 percent, it was below even the 2014 local elections (67.6 percent), and it fell a full eleven points short of the turnout of 2012 (77.4 percent) and eight of the 2020 election (74.9 percent). That means at least 1 million people who voted in 2012 did not in 2016—and almost 2 million who did not vote in 2016 voted in 2020. One likely reason for the drop in turnout in 2016 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 recur—indeed, in the 2020 elections the core pan-Blue supporters were energized by KMT candidate Han Kuo-yu, and turned out at much higher rates. 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 longtime ruling party put it at a distinct disadvantage in this election. Although incumbent president Ma Ying-jeou was not on the ballot, his own low popularity and the widespread dissatisfaction with his government were clearly factors in the KMT's own struggle to run a competitive campaign. The subsequent struggles the Tsai Ing-wen administration has had in confronting many of the same issues that dragged down President Ma are further evidence that the KMT was a more formidable opponent than its showing in 2016 indicated.

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 since then are consistent with this interpretation: President Tsai's support 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. Crucially, the KMT, not the NPP or other third-party alternatives, was the main beneficiary of the DPP's unpopularity. Then, in the 2020 election campaign, cross-Strait relations were once again front and center in the debate between the two parties: Tsai Ing-wen's reputation for caution and skepticism toward Beijing put her much closer to the median voter on this critical dimension of politics, and it ultimately delivered her and the DPP to a decisive win over Han Kuo-yu and the KMT. *Plus ça change . . .*

## **Conclusion**

Viewed over a time span of decades, the primary impression one gets of Taiwan's party system is continuity rather than change. At the time of this writing, shortly after 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 past three 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 common in Taiwan to view this exceptional stability through a negative lens, and lament the failure of parties offering clear programmatic platforms distinct from the China question 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 might become unresponsive to critical issues that do not map neatly onto the independence-versus-unification divide. Such elite drift is probably at least partly to blame for the rise in populist and Euroskeptic parties in Europe, and of Donald Trump in the United States.

Nevertheless, Taiwan's current party system has, so far at least, proven remarkably responsive to shifts in mass public opinion on the China question. When public opinion swung in favor of greater engagement with the PRC during the latter half of Chen Shui-bian's presidency, 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 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. And in 2020, the failure of KMT candidate Han Kuo-yu to reassure voters worried about sovereignty and security threats from Beijing contributed to his comprehensive defeat in the presidential election, even as public opinion polls showed support for the DPP and Tsai Ing-wen to be quite shallow in the months leading up to the elections. In addition, whichever major party is in opposition has shown an impressive ideological flexibility on most issues orthogonal to the China question, as well as a 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 reassemble 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.

From a comparative perspective, democracies with high party-system institutionalization appear to fare systematically better over the long run, in terms of both democratic quality and, more fundamentally, their ability simply to survive, than those with low PSI.<sup>41</sup> Partisanship and Blue-versus-Green competition is the object of much complaining among political observers in Taiwan, but the experience of other young democracies does not provide much evidence that weaker party organizations, a more volatile party system, and less partisanship 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 provide the foundations for a high-quality democracy that, so far at least, compares very well against its peers in the region and beyond.

## Notes

1. See Cheng and Hsu, “Long in the Making,” pp. 108–135, and the other chapters in Hicken and Kuhonta, *Party System Institutionalization in Asia*.

2. Scholars as a whole have been inconsistent in how they refer to this fundamental cleavage in Taiwanese 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-Straits 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 two decades, see, for example, Chu, “Taiwan’s National Identity Politics and the Prospect of Cross-Straits Relations”; Yu, “The Evolving Party System in Taiwan, 1995–2004”; Hsieh, “Ethnicity, National Identity, and Domestic Politics in Taiwan”; Fell, *Party Politics in Taiwan*; Hsieh, “Continuity and Change in Party Politics in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea”; Rigger, “Political Parties and Identity Politics in Taiwan”; Cheng and Hsu, “Taiwan’s Institutionalized Party System”; Sheng and Liao, “Issues, Political Cleavages, and Party Competition in Taiwan”; and Huang, “Generation Effects?”

4. For an excellent recent summary of this body of research findings, see also Achen and Wang, *The Taiwan Voter*.

5. Yu, “Partisanship and Public Opinion.”

6. For some English-language examples, see Wu, “From Identity to Distribution”; Sullivan and Thim, “Here Comes Taiwan’s Big Political Realignment”; Sia, “Nationalist Dealignment in 2014, Realignment in 2016?”; Smith, “The Coming Collapse of the KMT?”; and van der Horst, “The Rise of Taiwan’s ‘Third Force.’”

7. Armigeon and Guthmann, “Democracy in Crisis?”

8. See, for instance, Kriesi and Pappas, *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*.

9. For an introduction to these cases and a more general review of protests during the Ma era, see Chapters 12 and 13 of this volume, as well as “Taiwan, America, and Meat Wars,” *The Economist*, March 8, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/03/taiwan-america-and-meat-wars>; and “Blooded: A Conscript’s Death Has Brought the Young Out on the Streets,” *The Economist*, August 10, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21583271-conscripts-death-has-brought-young-out-streets-blooded>.

10. 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, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/taiwans-changing-political-landscape-the-kmts-landslide-defeat-in-the-nine-in-one-elections>.

11. Wu, “From Identity to Distribution”; Sullivan and Thim, “Here Comes Taiwan’s Big Political Realignment”; Sia, “Nationalist Dealignment in 2014, Realignment in 2016?”; Smith, “The Coming Collapse of the KMT?”; and van der Horst, “The Rise of Taiwan’s ‘Third Force.’”

12. The NPP and SDP were newly founded. The GPT was actually established in the 1990s but gained little traction in elections before the 2016 campaign. On the history of the GPT and the environmental movement, see Grano, *Environmental Governance in Taiwan*; Fell, “Small Parties in Taiwan’s 2016 National Elections.”

13. “Significant” is a vague 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 policymaking in the legislature; given the outsized power that individual party caucuses have in the Legislative Yuan, I define as significant any party that holds enough seats to form a party caucus.

14. Mainwaring and Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions*.

15. Hicken and Kuhonta, *Party System Institutionalization in Asia*, pp. 11–12.

16. 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 party-system institutionalization) 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 past decade.

17. Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/main.php>.

18. Wu, "From Identity to Distribution"; Sullivan and Thim, "Here Comes Taiwan's Big Political Realignment"; Sia, "Nationalist Dealignment in 2014, Realignment in 2016?"; Smith, "The Coming Collapse of the KMT?"; and van der Horst, "The Rise of Taiwan's 'Third Force.'"

19. Chen and Liao, "The Rise of the New Power Party in Taiwan's 2016 Legislative Election."

20. This is not to say that high PSI prevents 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. Admittedly, the performance of his TPP in the 2020 elections was impressive for a first-time party, and it suggests Ko has considerable independent appeal beyond any partisan considerations. But if he runs for president in 2024, as he now appears to be positioning himself to do, he will eventually have to clarify his stance on cross-Strait relations, and the usual partisan forces will then most likely work against his personal popularity, much as they did in Taipei's 2018 mayoral race.

21. For one important exception, see Croissant and Völkel, "Party System Types and Party System Institutionalization."

22. McAllister, "Democratic Consolidation in Taiwan in Comparative Perspective"; Sanborn, "Democratic Consolidation"; Shyu, "Trust in Institutions and the Democratic Consolidation in Taiwan."

23. On the DPP's organization, see Rigger, *From Opposition to Power*.

24. Samuels and Shugart, *Presidents, Parties, and Prime Ministers*. On the "presidentialization" of party organizations, see also Chapters 3 and 4 of this volume.

25. Chen and Liao, "The Rise of the New Power Party," pp. 90–91.

26. Fell, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?"; Fell, "Do Party Switchers Pay an Electoral Price?"; Fell, "Merger and Takeover Attempts in Taiwanese Party Politics."

27. Dafydd Fell, following Paul Lucardie, calls these "purifier" parties. Fell, "Success and Failure of New Parties in Taiwanese Elections," p. 216; see also the discussion in Fell, *Government and Politics in Taiwan*, pp. 115–121.

28. For evidence, see the interviews with NPP activists in Nachman, "Misalignment Between Social Movements and Political Parties in Taiwan's 2016 Election." This characterization of the NPP is my own.

29. The TPP even chose a party color, aquamarine, to highlight its intermediate positioning between the Blue and Green camps.

30. For instance, this is the primary finding of Achen and Wang's *The Taiwan Voter*; see pp. 1–25.

31. Major contributors to the literature on party realignments in the US context include Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections"; Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People*, pp. 112–125; Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*; and Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*. A thorough, although critical, review of this

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literature can be found in Mayhew, "Electoral Realignment." For a more sympathetic view and defense of the concept, see Carmines and Wagner, "Political Issues and Party Alignments." A good example of research on realignments outside of the United States is Evans and Norris, *Critical Elections*.

32. Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections," p. 4.

33. Stanley, "Southern Partisan Changes."

34. Arian and Shamir, "Two Reversals in Israeli Politics."

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

36. A. Campbell, "Surge and Decline"; J. Campbell, "The Revised Theory of Surge and Decline."

37. Fell, "Small Parties in Taiwan's 2016 National Elections."

38. *Ibid.*, p. 52; see also Nachman, "Misalignment Between Social Movements and Political Parties," pp. 887–889, and the discussion of DPP-NPP coordination in Chapter 3 of this volume.

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

40. 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 constituencies. Because indigenous voters tend to be "Bluer" than the electorate as a whole, Figure 5.4 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 constitute over 20 percent of the presidential electorate.

41. I develop this argument at length elsewhere. See Templeman, "Blessings in Disguise."

