

**AUTHORITARIAN LEGACIES, PARTY SYSTEM INSTITUTIONALIZATION, AND THE
TAIWANESE DEMOCRATIC MIRACLE**

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“To Barrington Moore's famous thesis, ‘No bourgeois, no democracy,’ we can
add a corollary: ‘No coherent party system, no stable democracy.’”
-- Larry Diamond, “Toward Democratic Consolidation”

Taiwan is one of the most successful cases of the “Third Wave” of democratization—that is, countries that began to undergo political liberalization during or after the mid-1970s. Although it has struggled through periods of intense partisan conflict along the way, today Taiwan scores at or near the top of most indicators of democracy: free and fair elections, constraints on executive authority, respect for rule of law, protection of human rights, responsiveness and accountability of government, respect for freedoms of speech and assembly, and so forth. Unlike in other Third Wave democracies in the region such as Thailand and the Philippines, since the transition to democracy in the early 1990s, elections in Taiwan have never been interrupted or suspended, there are no reserved policy domains for unelected officials, and leaders have never been removed through extra-constitutional means. Indeed, the interruption or suspension of the electoral process is all-but-unthinkable in Taiwan today, and polls of mass public opinion and political elites alike confirm that for the large majority of citizens, democracy is now “the only game in town.”¹

What explains this successful democratic consolidation? Much of the existing writing on Taiwan’s democratization points to aspects of its modernization: a well-educated population, developed economy, large middle class, and vibrant civil society sector that has advocated for democratic accountability. But an underappreciated part of Taiwan’s consolidation is its well-institutionalized party system.² A growing political science literature suggests that democracies are more likely to survive and prosper if they have stable patterns of inter-party competition and parties that are well-organized and deeply rooted in society, which provide mechanisms to translate the demands of disparate interest groups and individual citizens into coherent, broadly

¹ For recent evidence of Taiwan’s democratic consolidation, see, e.g., McAllister 2016, Sanborne 2015, and Templeman et al. 2016.

² Recent exceptions which have explicitly mentioned Taiwan’s party system as a source of democratic stability include Hellmann 2011, Mobrand 2014, and Cheng and Hsu 2015.

beneficial public policies, and a way for citizens to hold their governments accountable at the ballot box.³

Compared to other Third Wave democracies, Taiwan’s party system is quite institutionalized. The Kuomintang (KMT) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the same two parties that finished 1-2 in the first fully democratic legislative elections in 1992, finished 2-1 in 2016. No other party has ever supplanted either one as the ruling or primary opposition party. Both have hierarchical, centralized party organizations that integrate local branches across almost all jurisdictions into a national structure. Both enjoy the firm loyalty of core partisans who make up a significant share of the Taiwanese electorate. Both have staked out coherent, distinct positions on the “China question”—the most fundamental divide in Taiwanese politics. And each remains the primary threat to unseat the other in almost every election around the island. In contrast to those of other countries in the region that are weakly institutionalized (South Korea), unstable and volatile (Thailand, Indonesia), inchoate (Myanmar), predominant (Japan), dominant (Singapore, Malaysia, and Cambodia), or atomized (Philippines), Taiwan’s party system is a model of competitiveness, consistency and stability.

The sources of party system institutionalization in Taiwan in turn can be traced back to two factors: the authoritarian legacy of the martial-law-era KMT regime, and the emergence of the China question as a fundamental, polarizing divide in Taiwanese politics. In particular, the KMT’s ability not only to survive the transition to democracy intact but to win elections and prosper after political liberalization aided the institutionalization of a competitive party system oriented around a single primary cleavage. This, in turn, provided Taiwanese voters with a credible opposition alternative to the ruling party, enhanced the responsiveness of governments to citizen demands, and encouraged greater provision of public goods and development of broad, programmatic policies rather than narrowly targeted, clientelist ones. Thus, the comparative literature linking party system institutionalization to democratic quality and consolidation implies that Taiwan’s democracy has done so well because of, rather than despite, the legacies of the pre-democratic era.

³ Scott Mainwaring has done the most to develop the concept of party system institutionalization and to promote its study. Among many publications, see especially Mainwaring and Scully 1995, Mainwaring and Torcal 2006, and Mainwaring 2018. For other especially influential articles, see Randall and Svåsand 2002; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; and Dalton and Weldon 2007.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. The first section makes the case that the quality of Taiwan's democracy is in fact relatively high, and compares favorably to most other Third Wave democracies on most dimensions. Much writing about contemporary politics in Taiwan is quite negative in tone, lamenting the persistence of apparent democratic shortcomings such as deep partisan polarization, vote-buying and other forms of political corruption, and unresolved controversies about Taiwan's authoritarian era under the KMT. But from a comparative perspective, these challenges are neither unique to Taiwan nor particularly severe, and at least one, political polarization, has probably had a net *positive* effect insofar as it has contributed to the institutionalization of the party system.

In the second section, I discuss the concept of party system institutionalization (PSI), and I review the arguments and evidence that show a link between PSI and democratic consolidation and quality. I then present evidence that Taiwan's party system institutionalization is quite high: electoral volatility is among the lowest of all Third Wave democracies, the two major parties both have well-developed, vertically integrated party organizations, partisanship in the electorate is rather high, and most voters can easily identify where all significant parties stand on the China question. The fourth section considers the sources of party system institutionalization in Taiwan, emphasizing two key factors: the enduring legacies of the KMT party-state, and the continuing salience of the China question over other potential ideological conflicts.

In the final section, I consider some of the implications of this argument for how we think about what "ails" Taiwan's democracy today. The authoritarian legacy of the KMT party-state, and the survival of the KMT into the democratic era as one of the two major political parties, is often portrayed as something that has badly "distorted" Taiwan's democracy and hindered democratic consolidation. But the persistence of the KMT as a major electoral force, and in particular as a credible threat to retake power even after it lost control over the central government in 2000, has also had unambiguously positive consequences for the party system, and thus for democratic accountability. Second, the "China factor," however it is defined—as an ethnic or sub-ethnic conflict, as a struggle over national identity, or simply as a question of how best to handle relations with the PRC—is also widely assumed to be a unique challenge that has weakened support for democracy and inhibited what would otherwise be a smooth consolidation of democratic value and practices. This assumption, too, needs to be questioned: political polarization over the China question has contributed to consistent differentiation of political

parties, provided voters with a clear way to signal their preferences on cross-Strait relations, and made the ruling and opposition parties highly attuned to shifts in public opinion on this critical dimension of politics in Taiwan.

These features set Taiwan's political system apart from many other Third Wave democracies, where the persistent weakness of ideological and programmatic electoral accountability, the instability or outright collapse of party systems, and the subsequent rise of illiberal populist candidates have been common over the last decade. The irony is that the unique factors that have made democracy in Taiwan appear precarious to so many observers at so many moments have in fact been key to its survival over the long run.

1. How Good is Taiwan's Democracy Today?

Taiwan is one of the resounding success stories of the Third Wave of democratization. At the start of its transition to democracy in 1986, the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan was a deeply repressive autocracy. The ruling Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT), remained intertwined with and dominant over state institutions at every level, which it maintained represented "all of China" and therefore could not hold elections until the ROC recaptured control of the Chinese mainland. The regime's twin parliamentary bodies, the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan, were dominated by aging representatives elected in mainland China in 1947-48, nearly 40 years before.

Ten years later, Taiwan had become a liberal democracy and one of the freest regimes in Asia. In defiance of strictures against opposition parties, opponents of the regime founded a new party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), and were permitted to compete in supplementary legislative elections in December 1986. Martial law was formally lifted in July 1987, reestablishing suspended provisions of the constitution. President Chiang Ching-kuo, son of the ROC's long-time strongman, Chiang Kai-shek, died unexpectedly in January 1988 and was succeeded by the vice president, Lee Teng-hui, in accordance with the constitution. As the first Taiwanese-born president of the ROC, President Lee pushed forward a series of liberalizing changes to the political system, including the rollback of laws restricting speech and assembly, the abolition of the powerful and feared Taiwan Garrison Command, and the introduction of fully democratic elections to the National Assembly and Legislative Yuan. The transition to

democracy culminated in the first direct election of the president in 1996, which Lee won. Finally, over 50 years of KMT rule on the island abruptly ended with the upset victory in the 2000 presidential election of the DPP’s Chen Shui-bian.

Equally impressive is what has followed. Although it has struggled through periods of intense partisan conflict along the way, today by most measures Taiwan’s democracy appears to be of high quality and well-consolidated. For instance, in 2017 Freedom House ranked Taiwan “free” with an overall score of 93/100, second in East and Southeast Asia only to Japan’s score of 96, and significantly better than Mongolia (85), South Korea (84), the Philippines (62), Indonesia (64), East Timor (69), Hong Kong (59), Singapore (52), Thailand (31), Myanmar (31), and Cambodia (30).⁴ Taiwan also appears at or near the top of other democracy indices that rank the region’s regimes, such as the Polity IV project⁵, the Varieties of Democracy project⁶, and the Bertelsmann Transformation Index.⁷ Taiwan also scores high on rule of law⁸ indicators, electoral integrity⁹, and freedom of media—Reporters without Borders ranks it as the freest media environment in Asia, significantly above both Korea and Japan.¹⁰

Further afield, as the Freedom House scores in Tables 1 (Asia) and Table 2 (other Third Wave democracies) show, Taiwan now compares favorably to almost all other Third Wave democracies, including nearly all of the post-communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the successors to military dictatorships in Latin America. Of the 15 Third Wave cases shown in Tables 1 and 2, only Chile and the Czech Republic are at a comparable level today. Some of Taiwan’s move up the rankings is due to what Larry Diamond has termed the “democratic recession”—a global backsliding in democratic practices beginning around 2006 that has accelerated in recent years and has included several prominent countries in Taiwan’s peer group.¹¹ But Taiwan’s own quality of democracy has also improved over the past few years,

⁴ Freedom House 2018 Freedom in the World Report, at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018>

⁵ Polity IV project website at: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>

⁶ Huang 2017 summarizes the Variety of Democracy (V-Dem) data on Taiwan’s democracy. The V-Dem project website is at: <https://www.v-dem.net/en/>

⁷ Bertelsmann Transformation Index, at: <http://www.bti-project.org/en/home/>

⁸ World Bank country report page for Taiwan, at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/227801467992823638/Country-data-report-for-Taiwan-China-1996-2014>; see also the GAN Business Anti-Corruption country report on Taiwan, at: <https://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/taiwan>

⁹ Norris 2016.

¹⁰ Reporters without Borders 2017 country report, at: <https://rsf.org/en/taiwan>

¹¹ Diamond 2015.

according to Freedom House, with incremental gains noted in electoral processes, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and rights.

Table 1.

Freedom House Rankings by Year, NE Asian Regimes				
Year	Taiwan	Korea	Japan	Mongolia
2014	88	85	90	86
2015	88	84	94	86
2016	89	83	96	86
2017	91	82	96	85
2018	93	84	96	85

Table 2.

Freedom House Rankings by Year, SE Asian Regimes							
Year	Philippines	Indonesia	Thailand	Myanmar	Cambodia	Singapore	Malaysia
2014	63	64	54	26	30	51	29
2015	63	64	33	25	31	51	46
2016	65	65	32	28	32	51	45
2017	63	65	32	46	31	51	44
2018	62	64	31	31	30	51	45

Table 3.

Freedom House Rankings by Year, Other Leading Third Wave Democracies						
Year	Taiwan	Chile	Peru	Poland	Hungary	Czech Republic
2014	88	95	71	93	88	94
2015	88	95	71	93	82	95
2016	89	95	71	93	79	95
2017	91	94	72	89	76	94
2018	93	94	73	85	72	93

The picture painted by these comparative indices suggests that Taiwan's democracy is in better shape than many people in Taiwan generally give it credit for.¹² Much domestic writing about contemporary politics in Taiwan is quite negative in tone, lamenting the persistence of apparent democratic shortcomings such as partisan polarization¹³; corrupt, biased, or unprofessional judges and civil servants¹⁴; Chinese influence on Taiwan's media¹⁵, civil society¹⁶, and business groups¹⁷; and unresolved controversies over the legacies of the authoritarian era under the KMT.¹⁸ But from a comparative perspective, these challenges are neither unique to Taiwan nor particularly severe. Taiwan has, for instance, never experienced significant military intervention in politics, in contrast to Turkey and Thailand.¹⁹ It has not seen the impeachment and removal of a sitting president for corruption, as in Korea and Peru in recent years. Its civil service, judiciary, and other accountability institutions remain, by most accounts, able to monitor and check malfeasance by public officials, to prosecute criminal behavior without regard to the identity of the accused, and to respect the human rights of criminal defendants, in stark contrast to the impunity with which public officials operate in the Philippines, Mexico, and parts of Indonesia. And it remains best known for its fiercely competitive elections, including colorful campaign rallies, broad respect for freedoms of assembly and speech, and wide trust in the legitimacy of the electoral process and acceptance of the results by winners and losers alike.²⁰

For those scholars who not only acknowledge Taiwan's place at the forefront of Third Wave democracies but seek to account for the high quality of its democracy, explanations tend to emphasize a handful of general factors: a large middle class, a well-educated citizenry, relatively equitable distribution of wealth, a robust and critical media, active civil society groups, and international factors such as demonstration effects in other regional countries, the influence of the United States, and the effects of cross-Strait relations. While none of these is wrong, strictly

¹² On this point, see especially Rigger 2018.

¹³ Mattlin 2011; Huang 2011.

¹⁴ Wu 2012.

¹⁵ Hsu 2014.

¹⁶ Hsiao and Kuan 2016; Kaeding 2015.

¹⁷ Lin and Lee 2017.

¹⁸ Hwang 2016; Schafferer 2010.

¹⁹ Croissant et al. 2013; Esen and Gumuscu 2017.

²⁰ Dickson 2018.

speaking, they all in my view overlook a particularly important variable in democratic consolidation, and also in the quality of democracy: party system institutionalization.

This oversight is understandable, as the concept itself in its modern form is only about 25 years old, and it is only in the last decade that research has demonstrated a significant link between features of a democracy's party system and other outcomes correlated with quality of democracy and democratic survival. But it has meant that most observers of Taiwanese politics who are not familiar with this literature badly undervalue the stability of its party system. Thus, in the next section, I discuss this concept in more detail and lay out some of the evidence for the centrality of party system institutionalization to democratic performance.

2. What Is Party System Institutionalization, and Why Is It Good For Democracy?

The concept of party institutionalization can be traced back to Samuel Huntington's foundational work, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.²¹ Huntington's central thesis was that the institutionalization of political parties, whether in democracies or autocracies, was particularly important for the establishment and maintenance of political stability. The rapid changes in social orders in much of the developing world, Huntington argued, simply could not be effectively managed without the presence of hierarchical, disciplined, well-organized political parties with broad geographic coverage and penetration down to the local level. The presence of institutionalized political parties provided the structure to channel and shape social demands and to provide effective governance in response. Democratic regimes where highly institutionalized parties existed to perform this function would be more politically stable over the long run as a result. In democracies without well-institutionalized parties, however, politics would usually become an arena for politicians to gain and retain power without advancing the broader public interest or responding to popular demands, and this dysfunction would frequently lead to the breakdown of democratic politics and its replacement by a non-democratic alternative, or a collapse into prolonged political instability.

More recent research on links between institutionalization and democratic consolidation has shifted from Huntington's analytical focus on political *parties* to a broader one on the

²¹ Huntington 1968.

properties of political party *systems*. This shift began with a now-famous piece by Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully published in 1995, which conceptualized party system institutionalization as including four components²²:

1. Stability in the nature of inter-party competition over multiple election cycles. This component has typically been measured using *electoral volatility* scores.
2. The “rootedness” of political parties in society, often measured by *partisanship*.
3. The legitimacy attributed to political parties and the electoral process, measured via public opinion surveys or turnout rates.
4. The institutionalization political party organizations, measured in various ways: party membership numbers, the number of branches, the presence of mechanisms for making and enforcing party decisions on the membership, regularized procedures for choosing candidates for office and selecting policies to support, and so forth.

It remains an open question among political scientists as to what degree all of these elements are linked to one another, and whether individual components such as partisanship or party organization can independently contribute to the quality of democracy even as others remain under-developed.²³ But there is a general consensus that a well-institutionalized party system is essential to a well-functioning democracy in the long run. High party system institutionalization (PSI) ensures greater stability and predictability to many democratic political processes, which in turn enhances both democratic responsiveness and accountability.²⁴ These processes include the three fundamental roles of parties that John Aldrich described almost 25 years ago²⁵: they regulate competition for political offices, encourage the formation of durable policy coalitions, and provide economies of scale for candidates and information shortcuts for voters in election campaigns.

First, a stable, well-institutionalized party system effectively *regulates competition for political office*. When all significant parties are disciplined, hierarchical organizations that stick to a dedicated set of positions in the policy space, they also help generate collective

²² Mainwaring and Scully 1995.

²³ See, for instance, Hellmann 2013.

²⁴ Mainwaring and Torcal 2006.

²⁵ Aldrich 1995.

responsibility among their office-holders and other party members. The fates of elected officials and their challengers depend to a greater degree on the fates of their parties at election time, rather than their individual behavior, reputation or following. In contrast, when party system institutionalization is low, collective responsibility also tends to be low: the fates of elected officials are not closely tied to their parties, and they can potentially escape eviction from office even if they are part of a ruling coalition that has done unpopular things. High PSI also prevents rampant party-switching: elected politicians cannot escape collective punishment from voters by simply fleeing to another party. Instead, parties in high PSI systems tend not to nominate party-switchers, instead rewarding party members who work their way up the hierarchy, take actions that benefit the party's collective interests, and remain loyal to the party in bad times as well as good.

An especially important benefit of high party system institutionalization is to create high hurdles for outsider candidates to win elections and take power. Outsider candidates, as Scott Mainwaring argues at length, present a significant threat to the quality, and even survival, of democracy.²⁶ Outsider candidates often campaign as anti-system candidates, attacking all existing political parties and advocating for radical change of the political system. They tend to be inexperienced in politics and have not previously held leadership positions, and as a result they are typically less committed to established patterns of governance. In addition, they are less committed to strengthening existing institutions, especially if it requires sacrificing or compromising on their policy preferences. And they tend to have much shorter time horizons than establishment politicians: they have not usually had a long career in politics, and they do not expect to be supported in office by a durable party or coalition, so they typically make decisions with an eye toward immediate political payoffs rather than on long-term considerations.

Political outsiders pose a challenge to the stability of all democracies, but the problem is especially worrisome in presidential regimes where the chief executive is elected independently of the parliament, does not depend on a party's support for his or her office, and cannot be removed from power through normal parliamentary procedures. As Steven Fish has shown, strong legislatures that can effectively check presidential power are associated with better democratic outcomes in presidential regimes.²⁷ Legislative independence is aided by the

²⁶ Mainwaring 2018.

²⁷ Fish 2006.

presence of legislators with long experience in government and lawmaking, a strong sense of institutional prerogative and interests, and independent bases of authority.

When presidents come into office without a parliamentary majority, as is most often the case with outsider candidates, conflict with the legislature is almost inevitable. Because they railed against existing parties on the campaign trail, outsiders are usually reluctant to engage in an about-face and seek their cooperation after elections, and to engage in the give-and-take negotiations that pre-existing institutions require of them. Instead, outsider presidents frequently attack the whole existing political system and try to expand presidential powers and undermine institutions of horizontal accountability, including the legislature, the courts, and other independent agencies such as anti-corruption bodies or the electoral commission. In the most extreme cases, outsider presidents have succeeded in closing down parliaments, writing completely new constitutions, and ruling by executive diktat, as in Peru under Fujimori and Venezuela under Chavez. In these and other cases, the rise to power of outsider candidates with strong anti-democratic tendencies was made possible by the decline and collapse of existing party systems.²⁸

Second, a well-institutionalized party system *ensures durable policy coalitions*. As Aldrich observed in *Why Parties?*, political parties offer a lasting solution to a serious problem facing politicians who share similar policy preferences: the fundamental instability of any set of policy choices. As social choice theorists showed long ago, under a simple majority voting rule, there is always a policy alternative that can beat the status quo, no matter what the underlying distribution of preferences.²⁹ Control of the voting agenda then can be manipulated to achieve virtually any outcome in the policy space. Without some kind of restrictions on what proposals can be introduced, and the order in which they will be considered, law-making in representative democracies is in danger of devolving into never-ending cycles of policy instability.

Parties provide a solution to this problem.³⁰ Disciplined party organizations commit groups of elected officials to support a limited set of policies for the period of time they are in office, and to band together to exercise control over the policy agenda. Likewise, opposition parties incentivize their candidates to critique the majority and offer policy alternatives in hopes

²⁸ Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Leongomez 2006.

²⁹ The seminal article here is McKelvey 1976. See also Shepsle 1979 and Miller 1983.

³⁰ See Aldrich 1995, Ch. 3.

of winning the next election. The consequences of high party system institutionalization for policy outcomes are profound. First, the presence of well-organized, centralized and disciplined parties in government provide much greater policy stability and predictability. The agents of the state—civil servants, security forces, teachers, firefighters, and so on—know roughly what one ruling party or coalition seeks to achieve in policy terms, and can anticipate and plan for more than one budget cycle. Ordinary voters, too, can make a reasonable guess about the viable party alternatives, and what each party will attempt to do if it wins power. By contrast, when party system institutionalization is low, neither the party choices nor the policies they are likely to try to enact are clear—most voters have no idea who will win the next election or what they will actually try to do, and voting is a stab in the dark.

The presence of stable parties and policy coalitions also encourage the development of longer time horizons in politics. If the ruling party or coalition will clearly endure on the political scene, its leaders can invest in programs or policies that may be costly in the short run but have substantial long-term payoffs, because they expect still to be around to claim credit when the benefits become apparent to voters. One example is technological innovation, which often requires huge up-front investments with an economic payoff not fully realized for multiple terms in office, and sometimes not for decades. Some evidence for this link comes from a recent book³¹ by Joel Simmons, who demonstrates a clear positive association between PSI and economic development—well-institutionalized ruling parties, he finds, are systematically more likely to accept the deferred returns that are necessary to encourage innovation and the adoption of new technology, and to channel investment for the long run. High party system institutionalization may also be associated with greater commitment to the rule of law and institution-building, as ruling parties that face a predictable but serious set of challengers have incentives to create institutions that will endure well beyond their time in office, and that will protect their policy interests even if the power-holders change and they are forced into the minority.³²

Third, high party system institutionalization means that party labels *provide valuable information cues to voters* in election campaigns, and as a consequence it has the salutary effect of enhancing electoral accountability. Well-institutionalized parties are more likely to develop meaningful party “brands” that stand in the public eye for a distinct and relatively stable set of

³¹ Simmons 2016.

³² See Mainwaring 2018.

policies, values, and capabilities. Voters who otherwise have little way of distinguishing between policy differences on complicated and highly technical issues can use party labels as a simplifying shortcut to identify candidates who share their values, beliefs, and broad policy goals. At a minimum, a stable party system allows voters to identify who is in power, versus not, and who are the viable alternatives to the incumbents. The ability of voters to “throw the bums out” by casting votes against ruling elites is only constraining if they also are willing to reward elites that perform well by reelecting them. And highly institutionalized party systems help to make this choice as clear as possible.³³

Particularly important here is the development of *partisanship*—a psychological bond with a political party that is “one’s own,” or the party that most consistently has one’s values, beliefs, and interests at heart. Partisanship has a bad popular reputation, especially in democracies like Taiwan’s where it is blamed for exacerbating social divisions, providing fuel to the fire of political controversies, and creating an unwillingness on the part of political elites to compromise with one another.³⁴ But among political scientists, there is widespread agreement that partisanship serves an extremely valuable role in the democratic process: it anchors party systems.³⁵ The need to respect the wishes of core partisans discourages parties from making radical shifts in policy once in office, commits most if not all of their elected members to a common platform, and increases the sense of collective survival, accountability, and responsibility.

It is true that the deep, uncompromising polarization of political parties poses a threat to democratic survival—for a particularly severe example, see the events surrounding the most recent series of military coups in Thailand.³⁶ But there is also another, equally serious threat to democratic accountability that stems from the lack of a clearly identifiable and consistent opposition—what Dan Slater has termed “promiscuous power-sharing.”³⁷ When at least some members of all significant parties are willing to cooperate with the government, often in exchange for policy concessions or financial benefits, democratic accountability suffers: it

³³ Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister 2011.

³⁴ E.g. Chu and Chang 2017; Fell 2013.

³⁵ Dalton and Weldon 2007.

³⁶ Pongsudarak 2008. The problem of hyper-partisanship in the United States, another prominent cautionary tale, has been compounded by the weakness of party organizations. The existence of open primaries and the widespread influence of outside interest groups on candidates of the two major parties is at least as problematic as the presence of partisanship per se. On this point, see Anzari 2016 and Masket 2011.

³⁷ Slater and Simmons 2013; Slater 2018.

becomes much more difficult for voters to “throw the bums out” at election time since all the viable choices are part of the “bums”! When partisanship runs high, conversely, the natural outgroup hostility that comes with it limits the ability of opposition party elites to make unprincipled compromises, and preserves a sense of a distinct alternative to the party or coalition in power. The more political parties share a collective identity and responsibility, the more direct the task of the voter: to assign credit for policies they like and blame for those they do not, and to vote accordingly.

In fact, there is growing empirical evidence that some degree of political polarization may actually be beneficial for democracy, and that this effect operates through its impact on the party system. Russell Dalton, for instance, has shown a clear link between political polarization, measured as the ideological range of positions taken by significant parties in the party system, and the institutionalization of the party system.³⁸ More recently, Ching-hsing Wang has found that political polarization is *positively* associated with democracy, contrary to the expectation that prolonged partisan conflict will lead to democratic crisis and breakdown.³⁹

More broadly, in his most recent book on the topic of party systems in Latin America, *Mainwaring* and many of the contributors provide compelling empirical evidence of a close link between party system breakdown and declines in the quality of democracy. Conversely, he demonstrates, as party system institutionalization rises, the quality of democracy does as well, so that high PSI is positively associated with high quality of democracy. It is not a coincidence, he asserts, that the best-regarded democracies in Latin America, Chile and Uruguay, also have the most stable, institutionalized party systems. Thus, if we want to understand Taiwan’s high quality of democracy ratings, then its high level of party system institutionalization seems like an important part of the explanation. It to establishing this fact that I turn next.

3. Taiwan’s High Level of Party System Institutionalization

Having defined and defended the importance of party system institutionalization to democracy, let us now turn to the case of Taiwan. Put simply, Taiwan has one of the most highly

³⁸ Dalton and Tanaka 2007; Dalton and Weldon 2007; Dalton 2008.

³⁹ Wang 2014.

institutionalized party systems of any of its Third Wave democracy peers. Measures of electoral volatility, of partisanship, and of party organization all reflect a party system that is deeply rooted in society and resistant to rapid change.⁴⁰

The first of Mainwaring and Scully's components of PSI is the stability of interparty competition over time. This component is typically operationalized as *electoral volatility*—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.⁴¹

In Table 4 below I have calculated this measure for each election to the Legislative Yuan from 1992 to 2016; to provide a context in which to situate these scores, Table 5 reproduces the electoral volatility scores for the rest of Asia calculated by Hicken and Kuhonta.

⁴⁰ Cf. Cheng and Hsu 2015.

⁴¹ Hicken and Kuhonta 2011, p. 580.

Table 4.

Electoral Volatility in Taiwan, 1992-2016	
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 5.

Electoral Volatility in Asia*					
	Years	Number of Elections	Volatility: 1st and 2nd Elections	Volatility: Last Election	Average Volatility
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

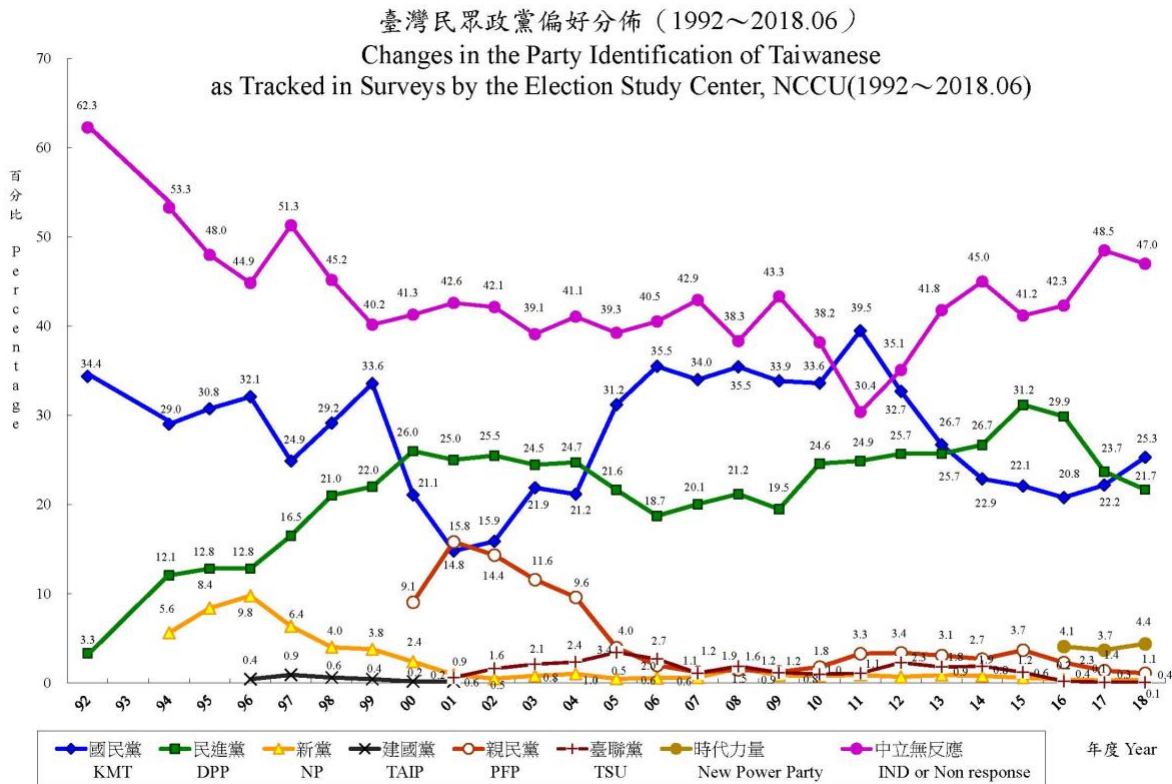
* Source: Hicken and Kuhonta 2015, p. 12.; author's calculation for Taiwan

As the data in the tables show, Taiwan's party system has remained fairly stable over this time period, with an average volatility score of 15.4. This 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 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 (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 stability of Taiwan's party system makes it appear more like that of a developed democracy than a young Third Wave case.

Mainwaring and Scully's second component is partisan attachment, or *partisanship*. Here the common measure is taken from a party identification question asked in public opinion surveys of the general population. Figure 1 reproduces the well-known data on partisanship collected since 1992 by the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University.⁴²

Figure 1.

⁴² Available at: <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?class=203>



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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 significantly over this period, ranging from as high as 69.5% in 2011 to as low as 51.5% in 2017. But, with the exception of a brief period in 2001, the KMT and DPP have together retained the largest number of partisans over Taiwan’s entire democratic history, outpacing all other competitors in the electorate. 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.

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 held steady since 2016. The NPP is a new party that burst onto the political scene during the 2016 election campaign, winning 6.1% of the party vote and five seats in the legislature, and their relative success inspired a fair amount of breathless 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. Yet these 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. Partisanship in Taiwan remains strong and persistent enough to anchor the party system into two major camps and to raise a high bar for third-party challenges.⁴³

The third component that Mainwaring and Scully defend is the legitimacy of political parties. This dimension has been mostly ignored in subsequent work, so I leave it aside here, although it is worth noting that in public opinion surveys, most Taiwanese consistently recognize the right of political parties to contest elections and acknowledge the legitimacy of the electoral process.⁴⁴

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 two largest parties, the KMT and DPP, are both highly institutionalized: both have well-developed 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: they have both survived long periods in political opposition, rapid rises and falls in political fortunes, and multiple changes in party leadership. This persistence of robust party organizations is particularly noteworthy because Taiwan is a presidential regime, and there is a strong tendency for presidents to dominate and hollow out the

⁴³ On this point, see also McAllister 2016, and Yu 2017.

⁴⁴ Sanborn 2015.

organization of their political parties; when presidents leave office, their political parties frequently struggle to survive as coherent, meaningful organizations.⁴⁵

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 made a point of pledging 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 has become increasingly dominated by the personality and preferences of its chairman, Huang Kuo-chang,⁴⁶ and it remains an open question whether it will retain its initial deliberative democratic impulses or instead follow Michel's "iron law of oligarchy" and become increasingly hierarchical and bureaucratic in order to survive in the political system.

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.⁴⁷ Fell finds that, while party-switching is not exactly rare, 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 there 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 organization 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

⁴⁵ Shugart and Samuels 2010.

⁴⁶ Liao et al. 2016.

⁴⁷ Fell 2014. See also his recent work on party "merger and takeover attempts" (Fell 2017).

of PSI. From 1992 until 2008, Taiwan’s legislators were elected using SNTV in multi-member districts, which provided realistic opportunities for parties winning as little as five percent of the vote to capture seats. And since 2008, parties winning at least 5% of a separate party list vote are guaranteed seats from the PR portion of the electoral system. Thus, Taiwan’s electoral system, while not especially proportional, also has had a rather low threshold of exclusion for party entry. Yet the vast majority of new parties that have run candidates in legislative elections, it turns out, have had no success. The exceptions have been a very specific kind of party: those which took more extreme positions on the “China question” than the DPP or KMT. In 2001, for instance, both the PFP, which took up a position to the right of the KMT on cross-Strait relations, and the TSU, which took up a position to the left, 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 significant (at least 3) seats in the legislature since 1992. The parties in the current legislature are no exception. In particular, 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 position that it has only amplified since its legislators took up their seats in 2016. 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.

4. Taiwan’s Well-Institutionalized Party System: Where Did It Come From?

To this point I have shown, first, that Taiwan’s democracy looks quite good in comparative perspective, second, that party system institutionalization is a key variable in the quality of democracy, and third, that Taiwan has enjoyed a highly institutionalized party system for most of its democratic history. This in turn raises the question: *why* is Taiwan’s party system so well-institutionalized, when so many of the other Third Wave democracies have been beset by wild swings in voting patterns, fragmented and ephemeral party coalitions, little ideologically or programmatic differentiation among political parties running for office, and partisanship that is weak or absent altogether in their electorates? The answer I offer in this section is twofold: the

legacy of the authoritarian KMT party-state regime, and the China factor in Taiwanese politics. I review each in turn.

First, the nature of the Leninist-style KMT regime during the authoritarian era, along with the gradual, regime-led process of the transition to democracy, fundamentally shaped the party system that eventually emerged in the democratic era. Even under martial law, competitive local elections had been permitted, even encouraged, by the KMT leadership. Elections served as a way to add some degree of legitimacy to the regime's claim to be "Free China," but more importantly, they served the same purposes that elections do in most authoritarian regimes that permit them—as a tool to identify and recruit new political talent into the party, to solidify the KMT's connections to local factions and coopt them into the party, to demonstrate the party's popularity and strength, and to act as a source of information about regime performance. To accomplish these tasks, the KMT developed a dense, hierarchical set of party networks that extended vertically down to the village and city ward level, where most elected leaders were party members, and horizontally into the most remote corners of Taiwan such as indigenous villages in the mountain highlands, where as much as 25% of the adult population joined the KMT.⁴⁸ These networks served a variety of purposes, but a critical one for most of the martial law era was the mobilization of supporters at election-time. The party used its financial and informational advantages to drive up turnout for KMT candidates and ensure that the party won the vast majority of contested offices.

These elections were hardly democratic, and they ultimately presented little immediate threat to the KMT's grip on power as long as the central government remained off-limits to contestation. Nevertheless, as TJ Cheng and Yung-ming Hsu argue, the fact that the KMT allowed open competition for local offices incentivized party leaders to build a hegemonic party organization that could turn out voters and win elections.⁴⁹ The existence of this organization, in turn, helped focus dissent on elections and channel opposition to the regime into electioneering. Thus, when the DPP was founded, it was created first and foremost as a vehicle for coordinating election campaigns of non-KMT candidates, and it retained its electoralist orientation even as it used civil disobedience on the streets and grandstanding in the legislature to push for greater liberalization and reform of the political system. Moreover, in order to challenge the KMT's

⁴⁸ Dickson 1993.

⁴⁹ Cheng and Hsu 2015.

formidable political organization in elections, the DPP built its own centralized, hierarchical and relatively disciplined party organization, one that, in an ironic twist, copied its basic form and incentives from the KMT.⁵⁰

As a consequence, the party system was quite highly institutionalized even at the beginning of the democratic era. The organizational capacity that the KMT and DPP enjoyed gave them a lasting advantage over new entrants into the party system, and it allowed them to frame issues and mobilize voters in ways beneficial to their mass appeal over newer, smaller parties. In particular, unlike many authoritarian successor parties around the world at the same time, the KMT not only survived the transition to democracy, but flourished. It retained control of the legislature and presidency when these bodies were first directly elected, and its party resources, membership and share of partisan supporters in the electorate initially dwarfed that of all other challengers, including the DPP. As Cheng and Hsu argue, it was greatly aided during the transition by a robust economy and a long track record of economic growth with equity, which provided a significant boost to its popularity and electoral fortunes even after it lost the presidency in 2000.⁵¹ The KMT's ability to retain its resource and reputational advantages, as well as its China-friendly position to the right of the DPP, allowed it to emerge from this defeat as the indispensable alternative to the DPP, and to stabilize the party system over the next several election cycles.

The second factor contributing to party system institutionalization is what I term the “China question.”⁵² Scholars as a whole have been inconsistent in how they refer to this fundamental cleavage in Taiwan politics. One is to speak of the China question as primarily a (sub)-ethnic divide between mainlanders who came over to Taiwan with the KMT in 1949 versus *benshengren* “natives” of Taiwan, and of the differential treatment these two groups received under the KMT regime during the authoritarian era. Another is to characterize the cleavage as primarily one over national identity, driven by an ongoing tug-of-war between exclusive, competing Chinese and Taiwanese national projects which neither side is strong enough to win

⁵⁰ Rigger 2001.

⁵¹ Cheng and Hsu 2015, p. 133.

⁵² Note that by emphasizing the importance of the China question to party system institutionalization, I am taking a position at odds with Cheng and Hsu 2015, who argue that what they term “identity-based political cleavages” were not sufficient to contribute to high PSI. My own view is that, if one includes cross-Strait policy in this fundamental cleavage, then it is clear the disputes over how to handle relations with the PRC were salient and polarizing enough to make a lasting contribution to the development of partisanship in Taiwan.

outright. A third way is to emphasize the policy dimensions of the “China question,” and to characterize it as primarily a struggle over competing proposals for how Taiwan’s leaders should handle relations with the People’s Republic of China. Rather than defend one of these visions over others, here I will simply note that there is considerable overlap between the identities of each party’s core partisans, the identity symbols that they embrace or avoid in their campaigns and public statements, and their positions on how best to manage cross-Strait relations—enough so that one can speak accurately of a single, fundamental political dimension along which all major political parties must take distinct positions in order to be viable at election-time.

This cleavage emerged as Taiwan democratized in the early 1990s, when the axis of partisan competition rapidly reoriented away from pro-vs-anti-regime issues and toward the “China question.” Since at least the election of Chen Shui-bian in 2000, the two major parties have taken distinct positions on these issues and drawn support from segments of the electorate that hold distinct views on this question. In turn, partisanship has grown rapidly as Taiwanese elites, media, and society became more polarized along this dimension, helping to solidify the leading positions of the more China- and mainlander-friendly KMT and the more pro-independence, *bensheng*-friendly DPP.⁵³ Indeed, it appears that the sharp political polarization of the mid-2000s, which drove many observers of Taiwanese politics to despair about the long-term prospects of its democracy⁵⁴, also had the unexpected benefit of deepening partisan attachments, sharpening policy differences between the major parties, and presenting a clear alternative choice to the increasing numbers of voters unhappy with the direction of the Chen Shui-bian government. The result was a landslide victory for the KMT in the 2008 presidential and legislative elections, and a significant change in cross-Strait policy under Chen’s successor Ma Ying-jeou.

A similar dynamic occurred in reverse over President Ma’s two terms in office; by 2014, the deepening unpopularity of his cross-Strait policies culminated in a student-led protest and occupation of the legislature, which effectively blocked the adoption of a trade agreement signed the previous year with Beijing. By the end of his second term, Ma and the KMT were deeply unpopular, and the DPP became the main beneficiary in the 2016 election when it won both the presidency and a majority in the legislature. Thus, over the last 20 years, partisan polarization

⁵³ Yu 2005; Fell 2013; Hsieh 2014.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Copper 2009.

around the China question has arguably helped to strengthen the mechanisms of electoral accountability and responsiveness to public opinion in Taiwan.

Part 5. High Party System Institutionalization and the Threats to Democracy in Taiwan

Let us pause here and recap the argument. I have asserted, first, that Taiwan’s democracy has actually fared quite well in recent years, compared both within the Asia-Pacific region and to other Third Wave democracies around the world. Second, I have noted the comparative evidence for a link between party system institutionalization and the quality of democracy: high PSI is associated with greater stability and predictability of electoral politics, greater collective responsibility in government, better information cues and more easily identifiable alternatives for voters, and consequently more direct and effective electoral accountability and responsiveness. Third, I made the case that Taiwan has unusually high party system institutionalization for a young Third Wave democracy. And finally, I linked this pattern back to two sources: the survival of the formerly hegemonic ruling KMT into the democratic era and its effect on opposition party development, especially the DPP; and the emergence and persistence of the “China question” as the fundamental, polarizing political cleavage in Taiwanese politics.

If one accepts the argument to this point, then we are faced with a rather ironic conclusion: the same two factors that many critics decry as problems that have “distorted” its democracy have, in fact, been crucial to its success. The deeply-held partisanship of supporters of the two major political parties and the polarization of political elites, the hypercritical partisan media, the intensity of political feelings and activism throughout much of the island’s electorate—these factors have, by helping to stabilize the party system, actually *enhanced* the responsiveness and accountability of the island’s elected leaders. And that, in turn, has contributed to the high quality of Taiwan’s democracy.

This is most certainly *not* the view one gets when reading much of the literature on Taiwan’s democracy, however. For instance, in *Politicized Society: The Long Shadow of Taiwan’s One-Party Legacy*, a book first published in 2011 but recently updated, Mikael Mattlin argues that Taiwan’s democratic consolidation remains incomplete because of the persistence of political polarization. “The intense politicization of society,” he writes, “has brought about a

decrease in social trust, a general lack of trust in political institutions and a loss of faith in representative democracy.” He attributes this “structural politicization” in part to the fact that the old dominant party has been “incompletely dismantled” and in part to the fundamental nature of political conflict over national identity and Taiwan’s relationship with mainland China. As a consequence, Mattlin argues, “Taiwan’s political transition seems to have become stuck at a halfway house.” (p. 19).

Similarly, J. Michael Cole, the editor of the Taiwan Sentinel website and the author of frequent English-language jeremiads about Taiwan politics, argues in a recent book that Taiwan’s democracy “hasn’t fared that well” and maintains many elements of an “illiberal democracy.” The blame for these apparent illiberal tendencies, Cole argues, should be attributed first and foremost to the persistence of the KMT:

“Given its Leninist roots, the KMT was never intended to operate as a political party in a pluralistic environment. Though survival compelled it to adapt and eventually to democratize the system over which it had ruled as an authoritarian regime for 40 years (or nearly 80 if we include its time in China), the KMT has yet to divest itself of all the advantages it accumulated under authoritarianism. This includes immense wealth, deep and far-reaching connections within the business community, indirect control of or substantial influence over the media, privileged relationships with the military and security branches, and a tendency to treat internal dissent undemocratically... The KMT adapted, and it adapted well [to democracy], but by joining the democratic game it also warped the ideal” (pp. 51-2).

Views like Cole’s are widespread among green-leaning commentators and academics, who frequently bemoan the fact that the KMT survived into the democratic era and continues to play a leading role in politics.⁵⁵ In this view, its authoritarian inheritance, including a murky collection of businesses, investment holding companies, buildings, and other assets that it acquired during the authoritarian era, have given the party an unfair advantage in contested elections; if they playing field were really level, it would have faded into oblivion a long time ago. Thus, the current DPP government is justified in seeking to force the KMT to provide a full

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Schafferer 2010.

accounting of its finances and disgorge any “ill-gotten assets” back to the state from which it acquired them.

On the other side, a number of blue-leaning writers and scholars can be found lamenting the deliberate emphasis of the DPP on divisive national identity issues, the harsh criticism levied against President Ma’s cross-Strait policies, and above all the fact that the opposition party not only got away with regular, extra-legal obstruction of the lawmaking process, but also reaped a huge electoral reward to boot.⁵⁶ For instance, in a recent assessment of the state of contemporary democratic practice in Taiwan, Yun-han Chu and Yutzung Chang write,

“The most difficult challenge for Taiwan’s elected leaders is how to navigate through a highly turbulent, volatile and polarized society. Over the last fifteen years or so, Taiwan has acquired all the elements of an ungovernable society. First there is a total breakdown of trust and mutual respect between the two contending political blocs, the so-called Blue camp and the Green camp. Their mutual hostility has burned down all the bridges and ruined even a facade of civility and courtesy. The rules of engagement are nothing but political strangling and annihilation. Democratic norms and procedures are oftentimes twisted or ignored for the sake of partisan gains. The hasty move of the DPP government under Tsai Ing-wen to purge the KMT of its party-owned assets in the name of ‘transitional justice’ is the most revealing example.”⁵⁷

While much of this is no doubt true, in my view it overlooks the more fundamental, long-run benefit of party system institutionalization. It is precisely because the DPP and KMT have engaged in a long-running, high-salience struggle for political power that voters are able to distinguish between them, and to weigh in on their respective approaches to cross-Strait relations at the ballot box. If the comparative literature on PSI is to be believed, the presence of a credible opposition alternative to the ruling party with a clearly defined set of policy positions will, over the long run, enhance the responsiveness of governments to citizen demands, encourage the

⁵⁶ Among the more thoughtful critiques are Chu and Chang 2018 and Hsieh 2014. Hsiung 2017 is a more extreme version. Copper 2009 is similarly critical of the DPP’s use of symbolic national identity issues for electoral ends, but focuses on the Chen Shui-bian era.

⁵⁷ Chu and Chang 2018, p. 83.

development of broad, programmatic policies rather than narrowly targeted, clientelist ones, and contribute to more effective provision of public goods.

That is, Taiwan's democracy has done so well because of, rather than despite, the legacies of the pre-democratic era and the salience of cross-Strait relations. And if reformers push too hard to disrupt the current party system in a misguided attempt to resolve these "distortions," they might end up doing more harm than good to Taiwan's democracy in the long run.

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