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New Government, New Language? The Third Way Discourse in Taiwan

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Abstract

The Third Way started as an Anglo-American ideological and political venture. It was soon followed by major European leaders, among other worldwide government heads of state, who sought to emulate the result of a high command of electoral support and a resolution to the consequences of globalisation. Despite criticism by academics and commentators for having lack of content and substance, the Third Way appeared to be rather successful in recruiting allies, especially among Western democracies. Unlike other nations in East Asia, Taiwan is involved with this arguably prominent political project of the 21st century.

The New Middle Way is not only the political idea that seemingly pushed Chen Shui-bian into office, but also appears to be the ideological foundation of his governance. This paper focuses on the political language of Chen in order to analyse and comprehend the implications of the New Taiwan Middle Way. One way to understand Chen's New Middle Way is to look into the language of the DPP, particularly of Chen. To get behind the rhetoric and decode the factual meanings of the discourse, a wide range of political speeches and texts are examined. By examining the New Taiwan Middle Way, we not only gain a different perspective on Chen's bid for the presidency, but also capture valuable insights into his governing approach.

The paper argues that the effect of the New Taiwan Middle Way before the presidential election was to achieve the political objective of Chen Shui-bian. Though the DPP did not hold the majority of the seats in the Legislative Yuan prior to the December 2001 election, the New Middle Way may have served as symbolic means to an end to resolve the deadlock within the legislature. In these ways, the significance of the New Middle Way for Taiwan is to be concluded.

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Introduction

After its defeat in the 2000 presidential election in Taiwan, the long-established Kuomintang (hereafter KMT) ended its over 50 years of dominated power. The power was peacefully transferred to the growing Democratic Progressive Party (hereafter DPP), which was established barely more than 16 years ago (Rigger, 2001). This democratic transition of the highest office for the first time in history has Taiwan taking a giant leap toward a full democracy (Copper 2000: 3; Rigger 2001: 2). During the presidential election, the three major candidates were running neck to neck, so the presidency did not come easy for the DPP candidate, Chen Shui-bian. His campaign ideology, the New Middle Way, very much resembling the Third Way of the Western Democracies along the same period of time, may have helped to turn the tide in his favour. Chen (2000: 120 and 123) stated in regards to the Third Way that for him it was an 'issue of renewed interest and concern', a 'valuable tool of reference', and that leaders of the Third Way 'have given me tremendous inspiration, motivating me to raise the New Middle Road as the core thinking of my presidential campaign'. Early in the spring of 1999 Chen (2000: 120) first publicly proposed his New Middle Way. In July, he formally presented his New Middle Way to the DPP Provisional National Party Delegate Convention as not only the 'core philosophy to drive my presidential campaign' but also as 'an effective means for Taiwan to succeed in the competitive global arena' (Chen 2000: 123). After he was elected in March 2000, the New Middle Way was promoted to be the White Paper[1] of the government. In the first year of his presidency, Chen openly spoke of and advocated the New Middle Way on more than 30 different occasions. It is significant for us to realise that the New Middle Way is clearly the focus of Chen's governing approach.

One way to understand Chen's New Middle Way governance is to look into the language of the DPP, particularly of Chen. As argued by Fairclough (2000: 3), 'Political differences have always

[1] '*The Third Way for Taiwan: A New Political Perspective*', White Paper, The Office of the President of the Republic of China (hereafter R.O.C.), available from World Wide Web: http://www.president.gov.tw/1_president/index_e.html. The text of the White Paper is also a public lecture on 6 December 1999 given by the then presidential candidate Chen Shui-bian, which was hosted by the London School of Economy and Political Science and chaired by Anthony Giddens, during a European tour to promote his international credibility.

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been constituted as differences in language, political struggles have always been partly struggles over the dominant language . . . '. Thus, language has always been crucial in politics and in analysing politics. This paper is about the rhetoric and substance of the language of the DPP. Employing a new political approach means more than just reflecting a shift in political ideology, it also indicates how language should be perceived by the public. The perception associated with the people in Taiwan that Chen's New Taiwan Middle Way was understood is important in order to analyse and comprehend the New Taiwan Middle Way. The concept of the New Middle Way is continuously constituted as the political discourse referring to Chen's governance in speeches, newspaper articles and commentaries, interviews and so forth. The discourse of the New Middle Way in Taiwan politics thus deserves our attention in order to grasp as well as to examine this 'new political perspective' as Chen asserts explicitly in the government's White Paper.

Method

The materials used in this section are based upon a selective range of texts related to the New Taiwan Middle Way. These documents are 'open-published' which means that they are in general circulation, including the DPP publications (e.g. the election manifesto, books and pamphlets), government documents (such as the White Paper and other official publications), speeches by Chen Shui-bian, other DPP leaders and government officials, newspaper articles and commentaries (i.e. based upon the two biggest newspaper groups in Taiwan—*China Times* and *United Daily Newspaper*, hereafter *UDN*). Most of my effort has been concentrated on the White Paper, official speeches and texts of Chen, supplemented by newspaper articles and commentaries for several reasons. First, Chen has been a dominant figure in the DPP for a considerable period of the DPP's history. The new political perspective advocated by him is regarded as the mainstream of the DPP and the current administration. Second, since the two chosen newspapers have the widest readers across Taiwan, they not only have comprehensive archives that make it handy for researchers, but also very much reflect the conventional opinions of the general public.

The definition of 'discourse', according to the Cambridge dictionary, refers to 'communication in speech or writing'. It is argued that

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discourse contains all features of communication, including its content, author, authority, audience and objective (e.g. Ang 1991; Fairclough 1992; Jupp and Norris 1993). Thus, words and their meanings can vary depending on the occasion they are conducted, who the targeted audience is, etc. Discourses are often related to power; therefore, to conduct discourse may indeed imply an exercise of power. Over four hundred pieces of Chen's speeches and news releases, dated from March 2000 when he was elected to the end of September 2001, have been examined, including the White Paper entitled '*The Third Way for Taiwan: A new political perspective*'. The White Paper forms the foundation of this analysis. A number of main themes that form the distinctive elements of the 'Third Way' for Taiwan have therefore been identified. They are 'New Middle Way', 'Globalisation', 'Knowledge-based Economy', 'Green Silicon Island', 'Taiwan First', 'Social Justice', etc. Potentially, any speech or document text that explicitly has one of the identified keywords is considered as conducting the New Taiwan Middle Way discourse, regardless of if the 'New Middle Way' is directly mentioned in the texts or not.

Figure 1 shows the number of appearances of the New Middle Way and its main themes in the official news releases of the President's office between March 2000 and September 2001. The source of the materials used can be found at the President's website[2]. Each piece of either speech or news release is accounted for once if the identified themes appear, even if the individual theme appears more than one time in the article. For example, the White Paper has all of the major themes identified, but it is only counted as a single occurrence, although themes like 'New Middle Way', 'globalisation' and 'Green Silicon Island' appear several times. The number of occurrences of the 'New Middle Way' occurring an estimated 34 times gives evidence of its importance. The keyword 'globalisation' ranks the highest, occurring more than 180 times, among the major themes of the New Middle Way. It is statistically significant, as indicated by Figure 1, that President Chen has built a new political discourse—the New Taiwan Middle Way, as his governing ideology. The political discourse of the 'New Taiwan Middle Way' is constructed on certain assumptions about

[2] The News Releases of the president's website offers a comprehensive archive of Chen's news coverage, available from the World Wide Web: http://www.president.gov.tw/1_news/index_e.html. The archive is searchable simply using keywords. Although the website has an English version, it appears to be selective and exclusive. I thus also use the Chinese version to supplement the shortcomings of the English one.

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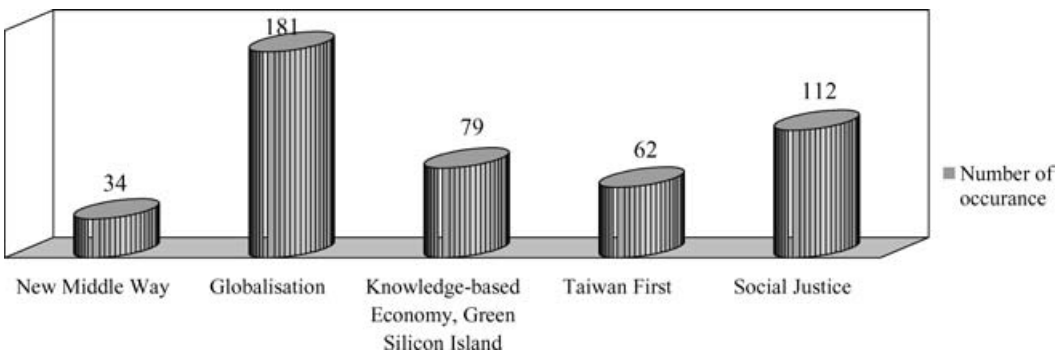


Figure 1. The number of occurrences of the New Middle Way and its major themes in the news releases of the President's Office, R.O.C.

the modern global economy and about politics. My main concerns are drawn from the following questions.

- What perceptions of the modern economy and politics are built up in the texts of the new DPP government?
- What are the processes of the globalising world according to President Chen?
- In what documents and texts does the New Middle Way discourse appear, and who is the targeted audience of the discourse?
- Who conducts the discourse and whom do they represent?

Two difficulties arise for this study. First, is related to analysing the transcriptions of speeches and interviews listed under source. It has been argued that 'It is misleading to use the punctuation conventions of written language to transcribe spoken language, because the latter is not made up of sentences beginning with capital letters and ending with full-stops' (Fairclough 2000: 20). Indications of what words sound like, i.e. marking stress, intonation, pause, etc. should be provided. We are conscious of this shortcoming, however, it goes beyond the scope of the paper. Second, the majority of the source is written in Mandarin Chinese and needs to be translated into English for analysis. During the translating process, matching the precise meaning of a different language can be a delicate process. In addition, personal preference in terms of choosing the 'matching words/phrases' may show a discrepancy. However, we are fully informed with the problems, and attempts are made to keep the translations as 'accurate and unbiased' as possible.

We shall now focus on the main themes of Chen's White Paper and speeches in order to understand the new government's political emphases and policy concerns. At various points, extracts of Chen's material shall be inserted for illustrative purposes, and critical comments will be provided.

The Globalising World

As shown in the Figure 1, 'globalisation' not only has the highest occurrence among the other keywords of the New Middle Way, but also is the foundation and background, according to Chen, for the New Middle Way to come into existence. We shall start with the following extract from the White Paper on the section of 'Globalisation's Challenge for Taiwan' because it clearly illustrates

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the new government's vision of a globalising world in both economic and political aspects:

'Ever since the end of the Cold War, economic globalisation has accelerated. Goods, personnel, capital, and information have transcended national borders and geographic divides to penetrate all corners of the world. Channels of globalisation have brought great profits yet at the same time introduced great risks for industrialised nations. Even countries like Taiwan and other East Asian tigers face a serious challenge. The cheaper labour costs of China and Southeast Asia have replaced the traditional competitive advantage of Taiwan, and we face a situation of capital outflow and labour unemployment. Today, whether we are situated in the East or West, the economic challenges of globalisation are unavoidable, and this is the common context under which both Taiwan and the United Kingdom must formulate our Middle Ways.
At the same time, since the end of the Cold War confrontation between East and West on the European continent, in the Asia Pacific region, in particular China, Japan, the United States and Russia, there is a clear realignment of power. As the new international order is reconstructed, the greatest mission of Taiwan's new leader is to consolidate our democratic system and enforce our national security. This also constitutes the unique background to my Taiwan version of the New Middle Way, centred on national security... (The White Paper 2000)

The first part of the extract is of some interest because it not only clearly demonstrates the vision of Chen's government that globalisation and the new global economy are inevitable, but also points out that Taiwan, as its British counterpart, must search for a third way to overcome its altered obstacles. The second part demonstrates a more characteristic element of the New Taiwan Middle Way centred on Taiwan's security issues. To many people, this does not provide sufficient and persuasive information to explain whether it is because the existing means are outdated and incapable of solving the upcoming challenges of globalisation or because of some other reason. Globalisation's challenges for Taiwan, according to the White Paper, are twofold—economic and political. I shall hence tackle the two aspects accordingly, starting with Taiwan's economic challenge.

The aspect of global economy

The perception of the present-day global economy as recognised by Chen is one that is unstoppable, inevitable, powerful and able to 'penetrate all corners of the world' (Chen 1999) in terms of goods, personnel, capital and information. It is this recognition of economic

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globalisation (in addition to a political one which will be discussed later) that a middle/third way comes into existence to combat the existing and incoming problems of our society.

Taiwan's experience of globalisation throughout its history characterised by Chen in the White Paper is noteworthy. He says that the first wave of globalisation occurred in the seventeenth century, Taiwan's sugar, tea and camphor made their way through the channels of trade to the Spanish, Dutch and British, to reach the shores of Europe. The second wave of globalisation, according to Chen, was after the Second World War. Taiwan's products, through low labour cost manufacturing, were exported to all corners of the world. Chen (1999) goes on to state that another wave of globalisation is now happening and 'in this new trend, Taiwan's fate is closely intertwined with all other developed countries'. Chen interestingly distinguishes three distinctive waves of globalisation that Taiwan has experienced. Globalisation has generated numerous debates from the 1990s to the present time (e.g. Waters 1995; Bauman 1998; Hirst and Thompson 1999; Olds, Dicken and Kelly 1999; Held and McGrew 2000). The debate over globalisation is far from settled. Many analysts hold sceptical views on the contemporary 'globalisation' without giving it their full recognition. Yet Chen (1999) uses words such as 'channels of globalisation', 'great profits' but 'great risks' and 'a serious challenge' to describe the global economy in its present form. The consequences of economic globalisation to Taiwan are illustrated as increasing 'labour costs' and therefore Taiwan suffers 'capital outflow' and 'labour unemployment' (Chen 1999). We might want to ask that if the outcome of the global economy of our time is apparent, why are the processes and the actors in these processes implicit. Little to no information is given. Instead, the discussion is directed to the competition between countries over 'cheaper labour costs' (Chen 1999). Chen (1999) presupposes the existence of a new global economy as a fact of the modern world that we take for granted and cannot change. It would be interesting to know whether Chen holds tight to this belief during private discussions with his aids and allies. Chen's unconditional acceptance of globalisation linked with Taiwan's fate does not seem convincing, and lacks the analysis and critique of modern capitalism.

One way to interpret the first part of the extract above tactically is that it allows Chen to manipulate the language, that is to recognise and to give credence to a new global economic order without giving further information. Such an obscure manner of acknowledging 'globalisation'

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in the core of the New Taiwan Middle Way discourse may have political importance, especially during a major election, such as the presidential election. The presidential election in Taiwan requires only a plurality to win. The outcome of the election can be changed if one candidate succeeds in gaining a small number of votes from his/her contenders when the race is running neck to neck. The issue is twofold. One is how votes maybe shifted from one candidate to the other(s). Another is that to what extent the candidates can strategically manoeuvre the swing through their campaign. Over the last ten years, the DPP has been desperately trying to expand its constituency, including securing its existing supporters. In terms of the economic aspect, the orthodox image of the DPP was seen as more of a 'grass-root' party that did not prioritise the business class. As time has gone by, the DPP has changed its nature to a more business friendly party. The party has realised that the only way to get into office is not only to secure core supporters, but also to enlarge its electorate territory. This is more apparent during the presidential election because it is a single-member district (SMD) plurality system in Taiwan. This electoral scheme is used for electing executive officers, including county and city chiefs, Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral and presidential elections. In this electoral scheme, the candidate who gains more votes than the others is elected, regardless if he/she has a majority or not (Hsieh 2001). Thus, it means that the DPP has to address diverse and possibly adversarial constituencies simultaneously. From this perspective, there is an unusual advantage in vagueness. In other words, Chen expresses 'globalisation' in ways that are ambiguous and does not provide detailed knowledge or explanations. The more indefinite a candidate is, the fewer limitations he/she has to various interpretations by a socially and ethnically diversified citizenry.

Taiwan's response to the global economy and ecology

Chen (1999) proposes to evolve Taiwan towards 'a knowledge-based, normalised economic system—the Green Silicon Island'. According to the White Paper, Taiwan's comparative advantage in information technology is the driving force for his vision of developing Taiwan into the Green Silicon Island. The high-tech industry, located in Hsin-chu and Tainan Science-based Industrial Parks, manufactures a significant percentage of the world's computer hardware. Table 1 shows Taiwan's computing products share in the world market. As shown in Table 1,

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TABLE 1
World Market shares of Taiwan's Major Computing Products (Hardware)

Share of World Market	Portable computer	Monitor	Desk-top computer	Mainboards	CD ROM/DVD	Case	Scanner	Keyboard	Computer mice
1997–1998	40%	58%	17%	61%	34%	75%	81%	65%	60%
1998–1999	49%	58%	19%	64%	34%	75%	91%	68%	58%

Source: Institute for Information Industry, Market Intelligence Centre, R.O.C.

a number of major computing products occupy more than half of the world market. The software development in Taiwan also reaches world-class status. For a small island like Taiwan to achieve such a glorious success, it is desired to promote the existing advantage of Taiwan's IT industry to drive the nation's modernisation and raise international competitiveness. This advantage in IT industry, in Chen's (1999) term, is 'Taiwan's chief opportunity'.

He argues that the current rapid industrialisation accompanied with the environmental destruction must be transitory. Chen (2000: 219) argues that '[G]iven the limited nature of the resources at our disposal, integration of resources demands extensive consideration and investigation'. To achieve both environmental conservation and technological advancement, Chen (1999) believes that it is time to transcend high pollution and resource consuming industries into 'knowledge-based' and 'information-based' ones. The conventional economic growth extracted at the cost of natural resources depletion has jeopardised the environment fundamentally. Therefore, it is particularly important to retrench the consumption of the natural resource.

Conversely, Taiwan, formerly known as a manufacturing power, can no longer compete with China's low-wage labour. It is noteworthy that Chen (2000: 223–4) does not only see this as an obstacle but also as an opportunity to participate in China's modernisation, so that China could faster become a developed state. Taiwan needs to shift its industry into service and high-tech development in order to survive global economic competition. The advocacy of building Taiwan into a 'knowledge-based economy' and the 'Green Silicon Island' for Chen and his administration has been a consistent one. The idea appears frequently in his News Release[3] including occasions such as official

[3] See, for example, 'Inaugural Speech', 20 May 2000; 'Address to World Congress of Information Technology', June 12, 2000; 'Address to the Twenty-fourth Annual Joint Business Conference of The ROC-USA Business Council and The US-ROC Business Council', 14 June 2000; 'President Chen meets with President of Ohio

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speeches, press conferences, and meetings with domestic and foreign delegates, and in his autobiography (Chen 2000: 217–24). However, it is interesting to note that the phrase and possibly the idea of the 'Green Silicon Island' did not originate from Chen, according to a journalist—Wu Chung-hsin[4] who at one time was Chen's close ally and speechwriter.

The analysis should also be concentrated on president Chen's addresses during the Economic Development Advisory Conference (hereafter EDAC). Chen set up the EDAC, and other cross-party summits, as an attempt to reach a consensus with opposition leaders on how to revitalise the economy and to formulate a positive plan toward cross-Strait relations. The EDAC needed to be more significant than just a symbolic goodwill gesture by Chen to the opposition party, who at that time held the majority in the Legislative Yuan. Many of Taiwan's unresolved political and economic problems, such as China and Taiwan's relationship, are seen as factors that affect cross-strait economic and trade relations, and are expected to be brought up for debate. Taiwan and China, political issues aside, are closely connected by a vast majority of Taiwanese businessmen who invest and work in China.

Economic recovery was regarded as the most urgent task facing the DPP government. During a televised speech *Marking the First Anniversary of the New Administration* on 18 May 2001, Chen proposed the idea of convening the EDAC by arguing that the greatest challenges for Taiwan at this point lie in how to overcome the global economic recession and the structural transformation of domestic industry. He conceded that the public is not concerned about whether the current or former government is responsible for economic stagnation or the

State University William Kirwan', 19 June, 2000; 'Presidential Press Conference', 20 June 2000; 'President Chen meets with Environmental Experts', 26 June 2000; 'President Chen's National Day Message', 10 October 2000; 'A Green Silicon Island', Chang Chun-hsiung, Premier, R.O.C., *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 16 December 2000; 'President Chen Delivers a Speech at the Paraguayan Congress', 31 May, 2001; 'President Chen's Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the EDAC', 24 August 2001; 'President Chen Meets with the Founder and Chairman of Clean Up The World Ian Kiernan', 7 September 2001. The list above available from the web address in Note 2.

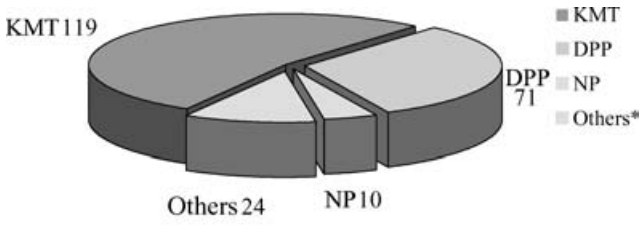
[4] In his book entitled 'Chyuan Lih Dih Aw Mann' (in Chinese) (The Arrogance of Self-Righteousness), Wu reveals that Chi-long Lin is the person who created the phrase—Green Silicon Island—for Chen to use during the presidential election campaign. Wu Chung-hsin, who had once been a political advisor to Chen, claims to be the actual co-author of Chen's biography—'The Son of Taiwan'. Wu's relationship with Chen deteriorated markedly after Chen took office in May 2000; according to him, it was because of Chen's arrogance after being elected.

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rising unemployment rate. Nor is the public willing to witness the constant disputes between the administration and legislature. From a long-term perspective, Taiwan is to experience enduring low rates in both economic growth and employment. Chen insisted that this will be the challenge that Taiwan must confront, and the government cannot battle it without the help from the opposition parties plus the private sector. In this context, Chen convened the EDAC from across party and social boundaries, including representatives from the ruling and opposition parties, scholars, entrepreneurs and blue-collar workers to contribute their knowledge to Taiwan's long-term economic development. President Chen has also made a public apology (*The Taiwan Economic News*, 28 May 2001) for Taiwan's economic growth rate being at an historical low after he took office in May 2000. Chen promised that he would convene a cross-party economic development advisory council through the Presidential Office to deal with Taiwan's economic transformation. However, he also points out that the current economic problems in Taiwan involve confidence in addition to political setbacks. In terms of boosting confidence during the economic slump, Chen quotes the words of the US president Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression of the early 1930s, 'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance', during his *Remarks at the opening ceremony of EDAC* on 24 August 2001. Chen concludes by stressing that 'we are not afraid of economic recession. What we fear is the loss of courage to overcome economic difficulties.' In Chen's words, he argues that 'during the past year, political stability has directly affected economic development and the confidence of the people. Only with reconciliation and cooperation between the governing and opposition parties can our citizens maximise the benefits from stable national development'.[5] This is the core belief of the New Taiwan Middle Way advocated by Chen and the motivation behind why he set up a cross-party EDAC

[5] '*President Chen's remarks at the closing ceremony of the EDAC*', 26 August 2001, News Release, The Presidential Office. On various occasions, Chen has mentioned the similar concept that all political parties should work together to ensure the best interests of the Taiwan people. For example, see 'President Chen Meets with Members of the Legislative Group Known as the Reform Society', The Presidential Office, 20 June 2001; 'President Chen's Remarks at the opining Ceremony of the EDAC', News Release, The Presidential Office, 24 August 2001; 'President Chen Meets with Overseas Chinese Representatives from Europe and Africa', News Release, The Presidential Office, 11 September 2001.

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Others*: small parties and independents
Source: Legislative Yuan, February 2000.

Figure 2. Legislative seats held by each party (Total: 224, I seat vacant) in 2000

to help stabilise the political situation. Nevertheless, one thing here is quite worthy of attention. Chen's administration was regarded as a minority government in terms of the legislative seats occupied by the DPP legislators. The distribution of legislative seats held by each party is shown in Figure 2.

The DPP held only 71 out of a total of 225 seats in Legislative Yuan. The majority of seats were held by the KMT or pan-KMT[6] legislators. Because of this legislative disadvantage, Chen's administration has been facing difficulties with the legislature. The DPP members (first time in office in history) have blamed the opposition parties (mainly, the KMT, first time in opposition) for not being cooperative and supportive in the Legislative Yuan of the policy bills submitted by the Executive Yuan, which has made it difficult for the DPP administration to govern. Although Chen has voiced that a transition period of adjustment must be experienced for both the governing and opposition parties. However, the deadlock between the DPP and pan-KMT legislators has not been resolved since Chen was elected. The Taiwanese people have started to grow impatient and have shown confusion and frustration because of the economic recession and growing unemployment rate. The legislature election in December 2001 was regarded as crucial for the success of Chen's remaining presidency because a stable majority in the legislature is required to support his policies. Nevertheless, the logic of the New Middle

[6] The pan-KMT camp includes the KMT, the New Party (NP), and the newly formed People's First Party (PFP). James Soong and his supporters established the PFP after the presidential election 2000. James Soong, the ex-Taiwan Provincial Governor (the post has been abolished due to the Constitutional reform in 1998) and the ex-KMT heavyweight, gained the second highest votes with a slim margin behind Chen roughly by 2.5%.

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Way, according to Chen, is to resolve the deadlock between the DPP and KMT. Why do the disputes still remain? Whether or not it is because the New Middle Way merely serves a rhetorical purpose or if the KMT is disagreeing for the sake of disagreeing, remains uncertain. Despite his assertion that the consensus and conclusions attained at the EDAC and the willingness to organise a coalition government would not be changed regardless of the outcome of the legislature election in December 2001[7], Chen appears to be rhetorical and symbolic under the current political circumstance because in all practicality there are too many variables to be considered in terms of the formation of a coalition government, who should lead in forming the coalition, the usual constitutional practice, etc. Chen's affirmation on establishing a coalition government after the legislature 2001 election was highly unpredictable, given the complexity of the present political environment in Taiwan.

Chen has reiterated the New Taiwan Middle Way, as the core principle of his administration. The keywords such as 'knowledge-based economy', 'Taiwan first', 'social justice', 'globalisation', 'Green Silicon Island', etc. have been highlighted through various means, such as Chen's speeches, interviews official documents and publications. During his remarks at the opening ceremony of the EDAC, the historical significance of the EDAC stressed by Chen is fourfold. First, he points out that it is the first cross-party conference to address Taiwan's economic problems since the landmark transition in May 2000 from the KMT rule to a DPP-led administration. Second, it would focus on the common interests of the people. Third, the consensus decisions are being made from the grassroots upward–a 'bottom-up' approach. Fourth, the event is an effort to gather the ideas and capabilities of the people, politicians, labour, scholars and government agencies, so as to provide the executive branch with policies to implement. However, a disproportionate number of four labour representatives among 120 advisors[8] in the conference were nominated to participate the EDAC in accordance with Chuang

[7] Chen has voiced the idea of organising a coalition government on a number of occasions. See, for example, 'Televised Speech Making the First Anniversary of the New Administration', 18 May 2001, and 'President Chen's Remarks at the Closing Ceremony of the EDAC', 26 August 2001.

[8] The list of the EDAC members, as published by the Office of the President, is as follows: 35 ex officio members, 24 delegates including legislators and members recommended by political parties, 16 administrative delegates, 35 delegates from the academic and industrial sectors, and 10 members designated by President Chen.

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Miao-tzu, Secretary General of the Committee of Actions of Labour Legislature (News reports, 27 August 2001; Taipei Times, 27 August 2001). In this case, for workers to articulate their opinions at the conference seems very unlikely. It has already been argued that the outcome of the EDAC on the labour policy is a step back for Taiwan's workforce, and workers have suffered one defeat after another, despite Chen stressing that no decisions would be made without respecting the opinions of all political parties and the broad counsel of public opinion (UDN, 8 June 2001). While the unemployment rate is rising to a historical high and the further threat of unemployment issues facing the World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership, to 'ensure labour welfare' as Chen speaks, can be a tough challenge for his government. It is probably too early to make any judgement. Whether the voice of labour as opposed to capital can be heard and received remains uncertain.

In response to Taiwan's WTO membership and its ever growing cross-strait trade exchanges, the government has recently adopted the policy of replacing the 'no haste, be patient'[9] policy with a new principle of 'active opening, effective management' as proposed by the EDAC. Such a change of policy direction, opting for a more active approach to handling economic and investment ties with China, shows the 'newness' of its approach. The economic integration of Taiwan and China serves the interests of both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and enables cross-strait ties to move a step forward. This would lead to greater integration beyond the economic field and be conducive to resolving the independence or unification dichotomy for cross-strait relations.

The following extract of Chen's *Remarks at the closing ceremony of the EDAC* on 26 August 2001 is a case in point. It summarises the core values of the New Taiwan Middle Way vis-à-vis the global economy and ecology. Chen reassures the people that the New Middle Way is indubitably his governing ideology to lead Taiwan to prosperity, and their utmost interests are therefore to be guaranteed.

'During . . . the [EDAC], I have listened carefully to the comments of every conference member . . . have also noticed there are different opinions being

[9] The policy implemented in 1996 by the former president Lee Teng-hui was in part an attempt to punish Beijing for using the Taiwan Strait as its missile shooting ground the year prior. Its policy placing a US$50 million ceiling on single investments and banning the production of high-tech products in China was due to the fear that Taiwan would become overly dependent on China economically.

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expressed outside this convention center . . . have heard what those people had to say. In fact, my initial intention in holding the [EDAC] was to incorporate a plurality of opinions and ensure the welfare of all citizens . . . only by enhancing the ROC's national strength will we be able to ensure the maximum interests of the people . . . only by setting a correct direction for our economic development will we be able to safeguard a sustainable environment, labour's rights and interests, welfare of the disadvantaged, and social justice.

This is the 'new century, new nation, and the new middle way' that I have always stressed. Twenty-first century Taiwan must find a stable and balanced 'third way' between economic development and environmental protection, between industrial investment and welfare of the disadvantaged, and between corporate and labour interests, and it has to be carried out with the cooperation of the government and the private sector.'

There is hardly a political division between left and right in Taiwan. Instead, the driving force behind the foundations of the New Taiwan Middle Way, despite economic globalisation, we believe, is the constant struggle to choose between 'pro-independence' and 'pro-unification'. This would lead us now into the political dimension.

The global political dimension

The political dimension, according to Chen, also characterises the distinctive nature of the New Taiwan Middle Way. What is interesting in the second part of the White Paper extract is that he is concerned about democracy and national security of Taiwan; Chen represents it as 'neo-internationalism' of sorts. He constructs Taiwan's democracy and cross-strait relations through a discourse that is more often applied to explaining international political affairs such as '. . . between East and West on the European continent, in the Asia Pacific region . . . a clear realignment of power' and '. . . the new international order is reconstructed . . . ' (Chen 1999) in order to elude the DPP's pro-independence stance. How to manage the cross-strait relationship has been one of the most demanding tasks for the DPP government. It is a sensitive and delicate political issue for the governance of the R.O.C. Additionally, due to the rapid economic development in China during the past few years a growing concern over the economic issues has come into place. It is even more so for the DPP government because of its pro-independence stand towards cross-strait relations. In China's view, the DPP is not regarded as a

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'unification friendly' party in Taiwan. However, the objective here is not associated with the question of whether Taiwan should be independent, but the manner of the language that Chen employs to form the discourse to deal with this complicated matter of cross-strait relations.

Taiwan's response to the new political order

We shall now look into Chen's standpoint represented in the discourse on cross-strait relations during his campaign time. At a meeting with a delegate of The American Institute in Taiwan, Chen reiterates his call for Taiwan Independence by saying that it is something that the majority of Taiwanese want (*Taiwan News*, 14 December 1999). He goes on further to say that Taiwan independence is not only a fact but also a shared wish and desire of more than 90 per cent of Taiwan's people. Chen starts his presidential campaign by retreating the DPP's tough stance on independence for fear that an aggressive approach would frighten off voters who believe that a military attack from China is imminent once Taiwan declares independence. However, Chen suggests constitutional reforms in his campaign White Paper in terms of Taiwan's ambiguous status defined by the Constitution. (*UDN*, 21 December 1999; *China Times*, 22 December 1999). He believes that the R.O.C. Constitution that has been practiced in Taiwan since the post-war should be amended to clearly enunciate Taiwan's status as a nation with independent sovereignty. Vis-à-vis the issue of territory, the Constitution states that the R.O.C. 'in accordance with its existing national boundaries shall not be altered except by resolution of the National Assembly' (Article 4). Instead, an appropriate and unequivocal definition of the R.O.C.'s territory, in Chen's viewpoint, should only cover Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, Matsu and peripheral islands. An additional emphasis made by Chen that the general public in Taiwan through a referendum must endorse any changes to the status quo. He argues that any decision to change the current status must have the consent of the Taiwanese people and thus referendum should be legalised for any issue related to China, any form of merger with China or any agreements on changing Taiwan's status quo. In relation to PRC President Jiang's reiteration of the 'one country, two systems' model as a means to resolve the 'Taiwan question', Chen comments that the recipe is unacceptable for Taiwan's people. Under the title of 'A Taiwan Candidate Has Beijing Baring

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Its Teeth', *Business Week* (17 January 2000; see also *UDN*, 8 January 2000) reports that although Chen has mitigated his stance on Taiwan independence by saying that Taiwan's political status would have to be determined by a popular referendum, he persists that the Taiwanese people have the ultimate right to decide their own future. The article argues that 'If Chen is elected president, his views could trigger a crisis even without a referendum'.

At his presidential campaign headquarters, Chen declares that the question of whether Taiwan is to be independent does not currently exist because Taiwan is already a sovereign, independent country (*China Times*, 16 January 2000). In addition, he asserts that there is no need for Taiwan to change its name, and the only remaining questions are how to ensure Taiwan's security and protect its interests. By stating so, Chen not only assured Taiwanese that R.O.C. would not be replaced so that China will not attack, but he also was able to manipulate the political discourse from discussion about the DPP's pro-independence stance to the importance of national security and interests. By the end of January 2000, Chen announced a proposal on cross-strait relations aimed to exercise some spin control on the DPP's belief of Taiwan independence. The main element of the proposal is a 'no Taiwan independence if no mainland invasion' statement. The objective of this pledge is to overcome fears from the voters who do not support the DPP's independence platform and believe that if Chen wins the presidential election, China could take military action against Taiwan. In the past, Chen has strongly been opposed to Beijing's 'one China' principle. During an interview with *Business Week* on March 8th 2000[10], a few days before Election Day, Chen elaborated the DPP's stance on Taiwan independence and cross-strait issues. 'Did you change your pro-independence policy in order to get elected?', he was enquired. Unsurprisingly, his response was interestingly peculiar and relatively unrelated: 'As Taiwan's new leaders, our duty is to make sure our right to sovereignty lasts forever. Taiwan's sovereignty must be complete, and it cannot be swallowed up by any country. Taiwan is an independent country now, and I want this to remain so forever. That's why I say: Long live Taiwan!'. The answer Chen provided was apparently not related to the question at all. On the one hand, it tells us that the DPP and Chen may have symbolically voiced an amendment

[10] See, 'Candidate Chen: our platform is not independence, it is self-determination', International-Asian cover story, Business Week, available from World Wide Web: http://www.businessweek.com/2000/00_12/b3673016.htm

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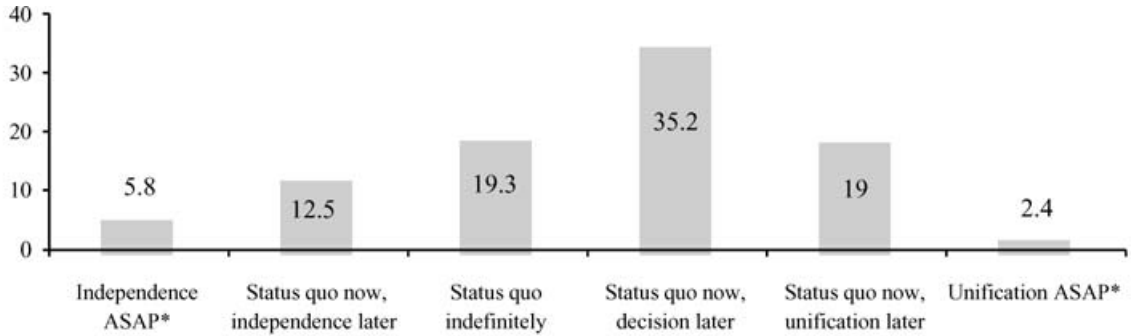
to their pro-independence stance; however, their real belief may have never been reconsidered and challenged. On the other hand, 'Taiwan is an independent country... I want this to remain so forever' is self-evident to us that Chen has a pro-independence stance. Then he was asked about the DPP's cross-strait policy. His reply was the DPP's platform is usually misunderstood. The DPP's platform is not independence, but self-determination through a 'national plebiscite'. This answer disregards the historical fact that the DPP has advocated Taiwan independence throughout its history since 1986.[11]

The preferences for independence or unification conducted three weeks before the election are indicated in Figure 3. As can been seen from the data, the people who support 'independence asap' are twice as many to those who support 'unification asap', accounting for 5.8 percent and 2.4 percent respectively. Yet, they are the minority among Taiwanese people. Instead, the people who prefer to remain 'status quo' form the majority, accounting for more than 85 percent. However, this is divided into four sub-divisions—'status quo now, independence later', 'status quo indefinitely', 'status quo now, decision later' and 'status quo now, unification later', accounting for 12.5, 19.3, 35.2 and 19 percent respectively. One-third of Taiwanese support 'status quo now and decide later' which forms the largest group above all other divisions. Figure 3 somehow indicates the pragmatic approach of the Taiwanese people while dealing with the independence vs. unification issue. This opinion poll not only contradicts what Chen proclaimed that more than 90 percent of Taiwanese desire Taiwan independence, but also explains why the DPP and Chen had to shift

[11] According to the political platform of the DPP adopted by its First National Party Congress on 10 November 1986 and last modified on 19 March 1995, it clearly states that 'The Establishing of a Sovereign and Independent Republic of Taiwan', although 'the establishment of a sovereign Taiwan Republic... shall be determined... through a national referendum' (see the document on http://203.73.100.104/platform/a.htm). 'Taiwan Republic' or 'Republic of Taiwan' was used in the document of the DPP's political platform. The DPP has also adopted two Resolutions (417 and 1007) in April 1988 and October 1990 respectively to promote the so-called 'Taiwan Independence Clause'. The 417 Resolution completely rejects the P.R.C.'s claim of sovereignty over Taiwan. The 1007 Resolution represents that Taiwan's sovereignty does not cover Mainland China and the People's Republic of Mongolia. Not until May 8, 1999, the DPP's National Party Congress passed the 'Resolution Regarding Taiwan's Future' (see the document on http://203.73.100.104/china/china-faq.htm) regarding its new stance on cross-strait relations and China policy, the provocative phrase such as 'Taiwan Republic' or 'Republic of Taiwan' is no longer seen in the document. There is clear evidence on the DPP's China policy stance moving towards a less radical middle ground.

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* ASAP: as soon as possible
Respondents: Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviewers with 1067 valid samples on 23-26 February 2000.
Source: Mainland Affairs Council, R.O.C.

Figure 3. Unification or Independence?

their pro-independence stance towards the middle ground to gain votes.

As the election day got closer, Chen said that it would do no harm to discuss the 'one China' issue as long as Taiwan and China are under the premise of equal status. Considering the DPP's firm belief of Taiwan independence and its reconcilability with China, Chen's proposal on cross-strait relations can be regarded as an olive branch to Beijing by softening his pro-independence stance. His soft-pedaling on the independence issue signifies a retreat from the DPP's basic platform, at least in a tactical sense. Taking a closer look at Chen's proposal on cross-strait relations, one will realise that the changes are not substantial but superficial and symbolic. For one thing, if the DPP had revised its Charter on the independence platform, it would have appeared to be more substantial and persuasive. However, Chen is merely attempting to make some minimum adjustments on the pro-independence stand to ease the tension across the Strait and to secure the maximum number of votes. While there is a warning from China that says 'independence means war' and pressures from the presidential election, little space remains for Chen not to draw back his pro-independence stance. Election rhetoric aside, Chen's plan does reflect some form of pragmatism because the DPP and Chen realised that the majority of the constituencies have a preference that Taiwan should remain status quo of de facto sovereignty separating from China instead of independence or unification. Changes, even if they are superficial and rhetorical, have to be made in response to the mainstream opinion of Taiwanese.

Chen's cross-strait proposal differed marginally to the mainland policies outlined by the two other major presidential contenders—the KMT candidate Lien Chan and the ex-KMT dissenter James Soong. On relations with long-term rival China, a common stance indeed existed among the three major candidates. That is, they all stress the point of 'Taiwan first' while addressing key issues with Mainland China, Taiwan's interests must be defended and be treated as a priority. Lien and Soong both claimed that the R.O.C. has been an independent, sovereign state since 1912. In contrast, Chen asserted that Taiwan has been independent since 1949, the end of the civil war between the Nationalist and Communist forces. However, it is worth noting that Chen felt more comfortable to use 'Taiwan' instead of its formal name 'R.O.C.'. This difference between 'Taiwan' and 'R.O.C.', though small and compatible for most Taiwanese people, is somehow significant and fundamental in

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terms of context on cross-strait relations. It reveals that Chen and the DPP are reluctant to move away from their pro-independence platform.

We can see an inconsistency in Chen's cross-strait relations throughout his presidential campaign period at least on a rhetoric level. At times, he voiced 'Long Live Taiwan Independence' (*China Times* and *UDN*, 3 December 1999). Other times, he claimed that independence is no longer an issue because Taiwan is already a sovereign, independent country. Sometimes, he even said that 'one China' issue could be discussed and he is willing to visit China as a goodwill gesture. This inconsistency on cross-strait relations has appeared throughout the New Middle Way discourse, and has not only confused the Taiwanese electorate and China, but has also reduced the credibility of his determination on the New Middle Way approach to merely as a rhetorical significance. After being elected in March 2000, however, Chen has become pre-occupied with Taiwan's economic recession. The cross-strait relations were shifted from a political consideration towards an economic one, which focuses more on market principles and mutual benefits between Taiwan and China.

A speech given by Taiwan's official spokesman—Su Tzeng-ping on 28 June 2001, entitled '*Taiwan's New Middle Way, An Assessment*' to a select audience jointly organised by the Centre for European Policy Studies and the European Institute for Asian Studies reinforces a powerful signal that the determination is of sticking to the New Middle Way approach for Chen's administration. He speaks of 'monumental' changes, which have been taking place in Taiwan: the victory of the DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian in March 2000 presidential election and its implications on cross-strait relations. 'What was the key?' Su asks. The answer 'lies in Chen Shui-bian's middle way approach.' The peaceful transformation of political power from the more than one-hundred-year old KMT to a less than 15-year old DPP is significantly the consolidation of a democratic Taiwan. Additionally, in light of Su's speech, cross-strait relations would not be a 'zero-sum' game, but continuously showing sincerity and goodwill gestures in order to end the long-term dispute between Taiwan and China. The DPP and Chen's advocacy of Taiwan's de jure independence from China in the past is generally recognised. 'But both Chen and the DPP transformed themselves gradually and measurably throughout the 1990s', argues Su. During the National Party Congress in May 1999, with a 10 to 1 margin the DPP amended its China policy by passing the

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'Resolution Regarding Taiwan's Future'.[12] Regarding the resolution, Su's asserts that:

> [T]he DPP acknowledged that Taiwan, with the Republic of China as its formal national title, has been a sovereign country, and the sovereign status can only be altered through a democratic process such as a plebiscite. This resolution was to replace and nullify the commonly known Taiwan's de jure Independence Platform. With this resolution, the DPP pursuit of Taiwan's de jure independence is only a distant past. This transformation of the DPP is very significant. But it is not surprising to see the change taking place over time, for open public debate and the institutionalisation of public opinion have affected all political parties in Taiwan . . . there is a solid majority in Taiwan who supports the middle way on the cross-Strait issue. (Su 2001)

However, if we take a close look at the 'Resolution Regarding Taiwan's Future', we would be able to identify several interesting and controversial points regarding the credibility of Su's speech above. The resolution document includes three parts: Preface, Proclamation and Explanation. First, the preface states the following points: 'the direct presidential election', 'abolish the provincial government' and Taiwan as an 'independent' country, that comprises all of the political situations with which China is not comfortable. Second, there are seven points listed in the proclamation section. None of the seven points uses Taiwan's formal national title—the Republic of China, whilst talking about the country's relations with China. Instead, it emphasises that a referendum should be enforced in relation to deciding Taiwan's future; One China principle is fundamentally inappropriate for Taiwan and should be renounced; Taiwan should seek international recognition, including the United Nations; All political parties must establish 'bi-partisan' consensus to deal with China's aggression and ambition. All of these strongly suggest that the DPP has not transformed itself gradually and measurably as proposed by Su. The reason that the DPP is interested in having a dialogue with China on economic issues is probably due to the pressure from the current economic condition in Taiwan. Third, in the explanation part, revisions of the constitution on national jurisdiction and to develop a new national identity are brought up. Fourth, 'Taiwan's independent sovereignty' or 'Taiwan's sovereign independence' materialises at least

[12] The resolution updated the changes to the DPP's China policy into the party platform. It represents more closely the viewpoints of the Taiwanese, and reflects on the DPP's intention to reach beyond core supporters. The DPP's China policy, available from the World Wide Web: http://203.73.104/china/china-faq.htm.

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eight times in the document. Fifth, the 'Republic of China', Taiwan's formal national title argued by Su in the extract above, comes into sight on only two occasions in the entire document: 'Taiwan, although named the Republic of China under its current constitution, is not subject to the jurisdiction of the People's Republic of China' and '. . . Taiwan no longer insists on using the Republic of China as the sole national name to participate in various governmental and non-governmental international organisations.' It is not judgmental to argue that the two occasions when the R.O.C. was mentioned in the 'Resolution Regarding to Taiwan's Future' appear to be antagonistic in attitude and reluctant to recognise it as Taiwan's formal national title. If these are the gradual and measurable transformations of the DPP and Chen on cross-strait relations as proclaimed, Su's remarks could be merely propaganda with desperation.

Taiwan's New Middle Way

Chen spotted two important events associated with the Third Way movement. The two events, according to the White Paper, were the meeting following the fiftieth anniversary summit of NATO and the one in Florence, Italy. These Third Way discussions have enlightened Chen and helped him to conceptualise Taiwan's future path—the New Taiwan Middle Way.[13] In Chen's autobiography (2000: 119), he states that 'Among today's international political leaders, I admire British Prime Minister Tony Blair the most'. In a similar manner, according to the *Economist* (25 March 2000), it says that Chen 'admires Tony Blair's search of a Third Way'. This Third Way phenomenon between Taiwan and Britain, and indeed a number of Western democracies and other countries around the world, represents the evidence of ideological diffusion, lesson-drawing and possibly a policy learning process among these countries. As argued in the White Paper, Chen says that 'The fate of an island nation is closely connected to the process of globalisation, and for both Britain and Taiwan, the Third Way is a proposal to meet its challenges'. Similarly, in *The Son of Taiwan*, Chen asserts that

[13] See for example Chen Shui-bian(2000 pp. 119–37); also the preface written by Chen Shui-bian (1999 pp. 1–6) in 'Dian-Fuh-Tzuoo-Yow' (in Chinese) (Capsize Left and Right) (translation of Blair's three books, The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century, New Britain—My New Vision of a Young Country and Leading the Way: a New Vision for Local Government).

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'[T]he Third Way has become a main tenet of political thinking in Europe and America in recent years. How to learn from their new thinking and apply it to political renewal in Taiwan has made it a valuable tool of reference' (Chen 2000: 120). He goes on to state that '[G]ranted, conditions in Taiwan differ from those in Europe and America, and I appreciate that the thoughts and inspiration gleaned from looking to other countries for examples must be translated into a political philosophy tailored to suit Taiwanese society' (Chen 2000: 123). These messages also map out the legitimacy of the New Middle Way for Taiwan because it has been pioneered by a number of western left-wingers or social democrats. Some of them not only have resumed office from their right wing counterparts after a considerably period of time, but have also refined policy implementation with promising results.

The New Middle Way is pervasively represented in the discourse of the DPP governance to resolve themes that conventionally have been regarded as incompatible with each other. The extracts below are some of the explicit examples of this. (Also recall the extracts in the earlier sections.)

'. . . a balance between ecological preservation and economic development . . . develop Taiwan . . . green silicon island' (President Chen Inaugural Speech, 20 May 2000)

'. . . he . . . has concluded that the best way is to reconcile the differences of the various political forces in Taiwan . . . as a 'new middle path' . . . balance and sharing . . . must be taken into account in juggling the conflicting interests of various forces, such as balancing the interests of the poor against those of the rich, urban against the rural, industrial development against the environment, as well as Taiwan against mainland China. Only a balanced approach can make possible a sharing of interests and best serve the needs of all sections of society . . . ' (President Chen Meets with President of Ohio State University William Kirwan, 19 June 2000)

'The satisfactory conclusion is proof that governing and opposition parties, labour and management . . . representing a broad spectrum of opinions . . . ' (President Chen's Remarks at the Closing Ceremony of the EDAC, 26 August 2001)

Such usages of language draw attention to assumed irreconcilable themes while simultaneously opposing them. In other words, by so doing, it not only goes against the conventional expectations of the audience or readers, but also surprises them. So how are we to understand the aspiration to reconcile themes, which have typically been treated as incompatible? A reasonable interpretation would be that Chen has found a balance between contrary themes. The

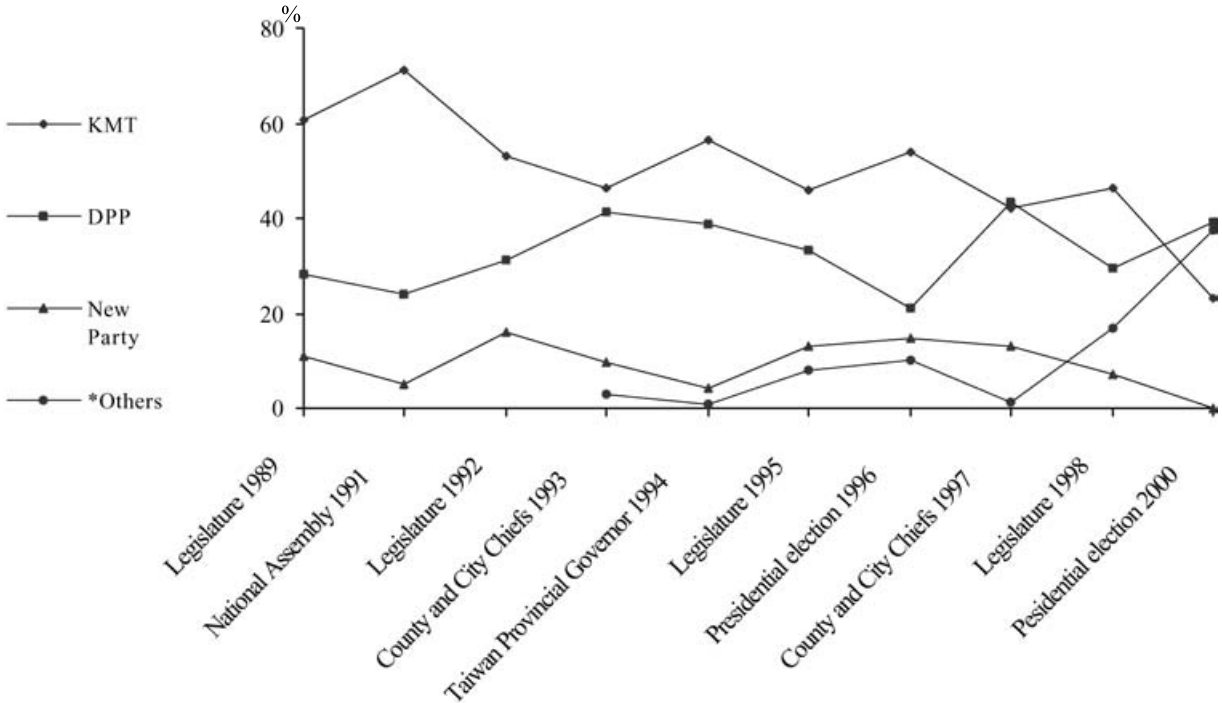
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'newness' of the New Middle Way may therefore be constituted. The point however, from a language perspective is that the contentious and sometimes frankly implausible nature of themes on cross-strait relations is made up by what we call the rhetoric of the New Taiwan Middle Way. Formulations of the New Middle Way are conducted in the unusual manner as discussed above. This manner of rejecting conventional belief and asserting surprising compatibilities not only defocuses the question of how the themes are to be reconciled realistically; it also generates public awareness that some quite different pairings of themes are equivalent. For example, the antagonism between 'environmental conservation' and 'economic development' is quite different from that between 'Taiwan's de facto independent' and 'normalisation of cross-strait relations based on market principles and mutual benefits'. The former can possibly be resolved and implemented through a variety of principles, including promoting a knowledge-based economy, using resources effectively and prioritising environmental protection. The latter, however, involves the most controversial, emotional, provocative and sensitive issue that exists between Taiwan and China. Whilst the fundamental dispute of Taiwan's sovereign status continues to exist, seeking economic cooperation and mutual benefits does not seem plausible. Nevertheless, these can be rhetorically effective and persuasive to Taiwanese people. During an election campaign, this is especially apparent.

It is not difficult to understand why Chen has taken on this New Middle Way approach. Figure 4 demonstrates the vote gains for the political parties during major elections of the last decade. As can be seen, the percentage of votes gained by the political parties has fluctuated, albeit a gradual decline for the KMT is apparent. For instance, the votes DPP won reached a peak of 43.32 percent in 1997s county and city chief's election and a low of 21.13 percent in 1996s presidential election. In fact, the lowest figure for the DPP in the 1996 presidential election may have contributed to the strong support of Taiwan independence from its candidate. Since its founding in 1986, the DPP has never won more than 36 percent of the popular votes in any election at the central government level. Did the voters have enough confidence to elect the 16-year-old DPP to the highest office remained the most important question. Chen's pro-independence leanings obviously stood in his way of gaining office. Undoubtedly, to attain a point of equilibrium between the DPP's aspiration for Taiwan independence and the status quo preference of the mainstream

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*Others: small parties and independents
Source: Central Election Commission, Ministry of the Interior

Figure 4. Votes won by political parties in major elections over the last decade

voters was the priority for Chen to be elected in the neck-to-neck presidential race. Candidates, in order to win the presidential election, have had to make 'Taiwan first' a key issue during their campaigns and to claim Taiwan's independent sovereignty even for those pro-unification candidates. Without sovereign independence, it would not be legitimate for Taiwan to elect its own president and to pursue diplomatic recognition with other countries. The hostile White Paper, which Beijing released prior to Taiwan's presidential election on 21 February 2000, made cross-strait relations an even bigger theme. Each candidate demonstrated an all-out effort to convince the voters that he was the presidential aspirant best suited to preserve peace and stability between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Aware that most voters preferred to maintain cross-strait status quo, the three major candidates all moved toward the middle ground by devoting their campaign strategies to ensure the electorate a peaceful co-existence with China and national security and avoided talks about Taiwan's sovereignty issue. The traditionally pro-independent DPP, for example, assured the public in a TV commercial that Taiwan would continue to enjoy a peaceful and stable living environment if its candidate won the election. Additionally, Chen pledged that if elected he would not declare independence without authorisation, but the question should only be decided by virtue of a referendum of the Taiwanese people. However, in a public forum in December 1999, Chen could not resist loudly exclaiming 'Long live Taiwan independence!'

Chen has reiterated the New Middle Way as a guiding principle of his administration on many occasions. Key themes, such as 'knowledge-based economy', 'Taiwan first', 'social justice', 'globalisation', 'Green Silicon Island', etc., have been conducted into the discourse through various means, such as Chen's speeches, interviews, as well as official documents and publications. The New Middle Way in Taiwan can be regarded as a political discourse summed up by the elements of other political discourses, of pro-independence and pro-unification in Taiwan, and of the social democracy and neo-liberalism in the West. As argued earlier, the most important step in constructing the logic of the New Middle Way in Taiwan's economy, according to Chen, is a globalised market that is based on a knowledge economy, which would boost the economy without further damage to the environment. Only by increasing Taiwan's competitiveness, promoting a knowledge-based economy as well as ensuring greater social justice and sustainable environment, can the goal of making Taiwan prosper in the severely competitive global market be achieved. Politically, the New Middle

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Way emphasises a new vision for establishing a middle ground to tackle the conflict among different ethnic and political lines, as well as the preferences for Taiwan independence or unification with China through embracing pluralism and putting aside radicalism. When the New Middle Way is summarised by Chen and his allies, it is centered on 'national security', and usually in terms of the rhetorical reconciliation between 'economic development' and 'environmental protection and social justice' or 'industrial investment' and 'welfare of the disadvantaged' or 'corporate' and 'labour' interests or other equivalent terms. These have to be implemented through the partnership of government and private sectors. With regard to cross-strait relations, the preferences for independence or unification with China are to be normalised through comprehensive dialogue with China. The New Middle Way appears to be a magic phrase that is capable of accommodating all kinds of good things together in a harmless and seemingly coherent manner. It is this flexible nature of the New Middle Way that enables Chen to pay lip service to claim whatever the term means depending on the audience and to conduct the discourse whenever is convenient.

We should be neither understating nor overstating the significance of the New Taiwan Middle Way. It is an attempt made by Chen and his administration to conduct the New Taiwan Middle Way discourse. In terms of the economic arena, the New Middle Way appears to be feasible and plausible. By contrast, the inconsistent images of Chen not practising what he preaches in the light of the political aspect may damage the integrity and reduce the significance of the discourse. It is also arguable in terms of the 'newness' of its approach. The New Middle Way discourse has appeared to be exclusive to a small group of politicians and academics and has been rather limited in popularity, despite all of the sloganeering the DPP and Chen have done. At the same time, there were some indications that it was becoming an internationally powerful mobilising concept for the 'progressive governance', of which Chen is keen to be a part. Despite the fact that Chen has oft-repeated his new middle approach that is meant to transcend the dichotomy of independence and unification among other important issues concerning Taiwan's future, whether the New Taiwan Middle Way has been more than rhetoric remains to be seen.

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