Nested Pyramid Structures: Political Parties in Taiwanese Elections*

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ABSTRACT The nature of the political party in Taiwan has been insufficiently problematized in recent writings on the island's elections. Based on field research this article argues that the informal structure of political support in Taiwan takes the shape of nested pyramid structures, built of successive dyadic support relations between politician and supporter and two politicians at different hierarchical levels, culminating in a handful of top political leaders. The political party is only the widest kind of support network, and in lower-level elections not the central agent. The dyads in Taiwan politics differ from traditional patron–client relations in being more dynamic, equal and voluntary. This informal political structure coupled with generally weak party loyalty and large benefits of incumbency produces pervasive party instability and subsequent election instability at higher election levels. The number of top political leaders and relations between them are critical in structuring the party scene.

Taiwanese elections are enigmatic. In the 2000 presidential elections, Chen Shui-bian of the then-opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, *minzhu jinbu dang*), surprised by winning against the prediction of many pundits. Then, following a chaotic first 18 months of DPP rule dotted by government mishandling, a deteriorating economy, record unemployment and strained cross-Strait relations, one could have been forgiven for predicting a ruling party disaster at the December 2001 legislative election polls. Instead, the DPP won (with 36.6 per cent of the vote), while the former ruling party Kuomintang (KMT) lost 55 seats out of 123 (31.3 per cent). Yet, just half a year later the DPP got only 5 per cent of township representative seats in local elections, while the KMT carried away more than 50 per cent[1] of the vote.[2]

The paradox of significantly diverging party election results was identified by Joseph Bosco in 1994.[3] However, recent writings on Taiwan's elections seldom dwell on the nature of the Taiwanese political party more generally and how this shapes campaigning and influences election outcomes. While several writers have noted the KMT's organiza-

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1. Includes party-nominated and non-nominated KMT candidates.
2. *Taipei Times*, 9 June 2002, p. 1.
3. Joseph Bosco, "Faction versus ideology: mobilization strategies in Taiwan's elections," *The China Quarterly*, No. 137 (1994), pp. 28–62.

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tional/structural advantages compared with the DPP,[4] the data reviewed in this article highlight the structural constraints facing *all* political parties in Taiwan, and the restricted role of parties at lower levels of elections.

Some scholars have claimed that Taiwan's party structure exhibits a high degree of stability,[5] and that the party system is relatively well-institutionalized[6] while others attribute factionalism and instability in the party structure mainly to the single nontransferable vote (SNTV) election system.[7] But SNTV cannot explain why local factions have been strong in sub-national executive elections such as county magistrates and township executives, which use the single-member district (SMD) election system. Furthermore, new parties frequently originate in struggles at the highest level of politics, where SNTV is less relevant. In this article it is argued that Taiwan's informal political structure, coupled with generally weak party loyalty and large benefits of incumbency produce pervasive opportunistic competition over resource control (including nomination power), which the SNTV election system exacerbates, but cannot entirely explain. Without a change in these three elements, the party scene is inherently unstable, resulting in big vote swings for parties in higher elections.

The article suggests a framework for integrating data from various election levels. While the framework does not purport to explain all election behaviour, it suggests a way to bridge analysis of Taiwanese elections at different election levels. It argues that the structure of political support in Taiwan takes the shape of nested pyramid structures,[8] where the party is only the outermost layer of support networks, built of successive dyadic relations between politician and supporter, or two politicians at different hierarchical levels. The operative principles of this

4. Shelley Rigger, "The Democratic Progressive Party in 2000: obstacles and opportunities," *The China Quarterly*, No. 168 (2001), pp. 944–959. Alexander Ya-li Lu, "Political opposition in Taiwan: the development of the Democratic Progressive Party," in Cheng Tun-jen and Stephan Haggard (eds.), *Political Change in Taiwan* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), pp. 128–134. Liu I-chou, "The electoral effect of social control on voters: the case of Taipei" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1990), pp. 23–34.

5. John Fuh-sheng Hsieh, "Whither the Kuomintang?" *The China Quarterly*, No. 168 (2001), pp. 931–940.

6. Hans Stockton, "Political parties, party systems, and democracy in East Asia – lessons from Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2001), pp. 94–119.

7. Wang Yeh-lih, "The political consequences of the electoral system: single nontransferable voting in Taiwan," *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 8 (1996), pp. 96–104. Lin Jih-wen, "Consequences of the single nontransferable vote rule. Comparing the Japan and Taiwan experiences" (PhD dissertation, UCLA, 1996). Huang Teh-fu, "Party systems in Taiwan and South Korea," in Larry Diamond *et al.* (eds.), *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 144–47. John Fuh-sheng Hsieh, "The SNTV system and its political implications," in Tien Hung-mao (ed.) *Taiwan's Electoral Politics and Democratic Transition: Riding the Third Wave* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 193–212.

8. This concept fuses two common characterizations of Chinese social relations and societal structure: "the spider at the centre of a web" and the hierarchy.

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informal structure of support[9] are particularism,[10] personalism[11] and opportunism.

A Framework for Analysing Elections in Taiwan

F.G. Bailey introduced an important distinction in politics between "moral teams" and "contract teams." In moral teams the group had an ideologically motivated core of supporters – "faithful" – whereas ties in contract teams were particularistic relationships between a patron and a client – "hirelings." A crucial distinction was that members of contract teams more easily changed their allegiance as membership depends on a positive flow of transactions to supporters, and by implication possession of political resources.[12] Asian political cultures have frequently been seen as permeated by patron–client type relationships.[13] In Taiwan the "KMT model" of ruling also heavily relied on co-opting local elites by offering political favours to loyalists.[14]

A feature running through Taiwanese politics is that incumbency offers substantial material advantages and control over resource allocation. The pragmatic rationale for participating or helping out in elections – being in on the resource allocation – is perhaps most obvious at the intermediate level, dominated by local factions (*difang paixi*),[15] but the same feature extends throughout the system. When still ruling, the KMT had many means with which to distribute benefits to party loyalists. Just as a local faction controlling a county magistrate (*xianzhang*) position could use the magistrate's budget power to benefit loyalists, or a borough warden (*lizhang*) could reward supporters, the KMT used subsidies for public construction to favour KMT-controlled areas.[16]

While the KMT – like the DPP – has an ideologically motivated core of supporters, generally Taiwanese politics is slanted towards the pragmatic and transactional contract team model of politics. As one informant

9. Cf. Lowell Dittmer, "Chinese informal politics," *The China Journal*, No. 34 (1995), pp. 1–34.

10. Bruce Jacobs, "A preliminary model of particularistic ties in Chinese political alliances: *Kan-ch'ing* and *Kuan-hsi* in a rural Taiwanese township," *The China Quarterly*, No. 78 (1979), pp. 237–273.

11. Note that this view contradicts Stockton, "Political parties, party systems, and democracy," pp. 105,109.

12. Frederick G. Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils. A Social Anthropology of Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985 [1969]), pp. 28–49.

13. James Scott, "Patron-client politics and political change in Southeast Asia," in Schmidt *et al.* (eds.) *Friends, Followers and Factions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 47–51. Jean C. Oi, "Communism and clientelism: rural politics in China," *World Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1985), pp. 238–266.

14. Wu Nai-teh, "The politics of a regime patronage system: mobilization and control within an authoritarian regime" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1987).

15. There are also central-level party factions. For lack of space we will mainly deal with local factions. For a comprehensive account, see Chen Ming-tong, *Paixi zhengzhi yu Taiwan zhengzhi bianqian* (*Factional Politics and Taiwan's Political Transformation*) (Taipei: Mingdan chubanshe, 1995).

16. Luor Ching-Jyuhn, "Buzhu yusuan da bing de fenpei: Shei ying le? Shei shu le? Weishenme?" ("Dividing the subsidy budget cake: Who won? Who lost? Why?") in Luor Ching-Jyuhn (ed.), *Taiwan fenpei zhengzhi* (*Taiwan Distributive Politics*) (Taipei: Qianwei, 2001), pp. 115–150.

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Table 1: **Current Elections in Taiwan. Data from Latest Elections**

Election	*Candidates*	*Valid votes per candidate (average)*
High		
President	2	6,457,211
Taipei and Kaohsiung city mayor	7	304,867
Intermediate		
County magistrate/city mayor	88	95,388
Legislator	455	22,699
Taipei and Kaohsiung city councillor	242	8,578
Township executive	881	6,892
County/city councillor	2,057	3,420
Local		
Township representative	7,297	933
Borough warden/village head	20,465	402

Source:
Taiwan Central Election Commission (www.cec.gov.tw).

told the author, both he and his father were KMT members, but they never voted for the party and actually hated it (they are now DPP supporters).[17] This seeming paradox is explained by the fact that they joined the KMT because of strong workplace pressure and the benefits associated with party membership, similar to the factory social order in Communist China described by Walder.[18] Consequently, the KMT's mass support was built on feet of clay.[19]

The number of fluid swing voters (non-party attached) in Taiwan is significant.[20] However, these swing voters differ in one crucial aspect from independent/non-partisan voters in, for example, the United States: they are not politically apathetic.[21] Their level of involvement in politics is often high, but the object of their support easily changes. This is a major source of instability in Taiwanese elections.

For the purposes of this article, Taiwanese elections can be divided into

17. Interview, Tainan county, June 2002.
18. Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism. Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 162–186.
19. Other scholars have claimed that the KMT has an extraordinarily broad social foundation, and enjoys broad support because of its policy successes. Hsieh, "Whither the Kuomintang," pp. 936–38. Rigger, "The Democratic Progressive Party in 2000," pp. 947–49.
20. Wu Nai-teh, "Jiating shehuihua he yishi xingtai: Taiwan xuanmin zhengdang rentong de shidai chayi" ("Family socialization and ideology: generational discrepancies in Taiwan voters' party identification"), *Taiwan shehuixue yanjiu* (*Taiwan Sociological Research*), No. 3 (1999), p. 68.
21. Alexander C. Tan *et al*., "What if we don't party? Political partisanship in Taiwan and Korea in the 1990s," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2000), pp. 67–84.

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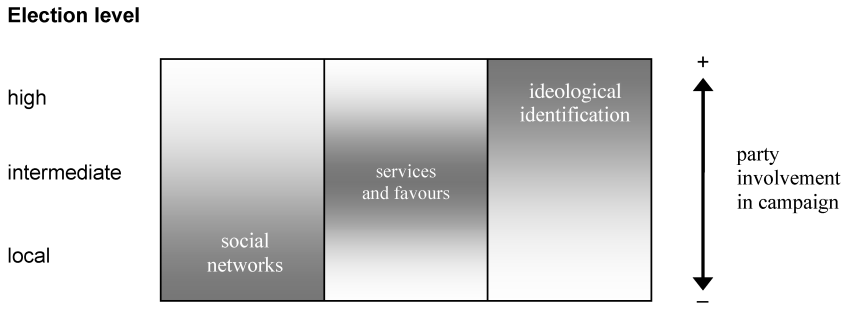


Figure 1: **Relative Importance of Three Features in Local, Intermediate and High Level Elections and Party Involvement in Campaign Activities**

three levels[22] based on election district size and party involvement in the campaign: the local, intermediate and high level (Table 1). It is suggested that three key features are decisive in Taiwanese elections: social networks, dispensing of services/favours and ideological identification (Figure 1). While none of the three features is entirely excluded from any election, there are clear variances in their relative importance at different election levels that imply differences in campaigning and party election outcomes. The scheme is necessarily an abstraction and simplification for analytic purposes of a very complex scene. In practice, favours and services play a role also at the lowest and highest levels and social networks extend all the way to the top. Nevertheless, as shown below, at each level one feature dominates and structures the way campaigns are organized.

The personal appeal of a candidate is important, but fuses with the three key features. In high-level elections, charisma joins ideological identification, whereby support for one of the top leaders indirectly signifies support for an ideological position. Politically relevant issues similarly tend to follow a clear ideological line of division and are seldom crucial for election outcomes by themselves. At the intermediate-level, politicians who are accomplished at providing services also tend to have the strongest appeal. Candidates basing their campaign purely on personal charisma did well in the early days of the opposition movement, when few dared to oppose the regime. Now they tend to succeed mostly in Taipei city (such as Sisy Chen), where direct voter mobilization is relatively unimportant.

Generally speaking, the higher the election level, the greater the party's role. The size of the election district has a decisive influence on election strategy. If one is able to know voters personally, election victory will rely almost entirely on successful mobilization of social networks and

22. For a schematic presentation of the formal administrative levels in Taiwan, see Joseph Bosco, "Taiwan factions: *guanxi*, patronage, and the state in local politics," *Ethnology*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1992), p. 179.

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there will be very little party influence or issue/ideological content, whereas territorially-based local factions seldom play a critical role in presidential and big city mayoral races. But while the protagonists differ, control over resource allocation is at stake at all levels.

Local-level Elections: Social Networks are Crucial

Personal relationships are key to understanding Taiwanese politics.[22] But there are different kinds of relationships. The political alliances that are most useful in elections are typically those between politicians from the same party and party/local faction in the same geographical area but at different hierarchical levels, because such dyads are in a position to offer mutual help without being each other's competitors. Politicians acting as vote brokers (*zhuangjiao*) to another politician will mobilize their own supporters to vote for the other politician (*la piao*).[24]

When higher-level politicians support lower-level politicians they will be seen on numerous posters and leaflets shaking hands with the other politician and will appear on stage at rallies for the other politician. Sometimes two politicians at different levels even share a campaign headquarters. Such dyadic relations also tie election levels together; a borough warden may support a city councillor, who in turn supports a mayor or a legislator, who then supports one of a few top politicians.[25] A major part of the campaign involves establishing and strengthening existing relations to key supporters. The defining criteria of a good vote broker are an extensive social network (*renmai*), social prestige and good reputation, and trust between the candidate and the vote broker. Because of the final criterion, the most effective vote brokers are personal friends of candidates or their families. Only when no such people are to be found are other people used.[26] At the local and intermediate levels, politics in Taiwan is a kind of family business.

The roots of local factions are in social networks, often centred on "power families" (*wangzu*) – comprised of family, relatives and loyal friends – of which the Chiayi Hsu's and the Kaohsiung county Yu's are famous examples.[27] Local factions grew from territorially based social networks, which co-operated in irrigation committees and credit co-operatives and participated in local elections during the Japanese time. They were in an advantageous position to form competing teams when county

23. Cf. Dittmer, "Chinese informal politics," p. 10.

24. Shelley Rigger, "Machine politics in the new Taiwan: institutional reform and electoral strategy in the Republic of China on Taiwan" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1994), pp. 153–226.

25. Author's field observations. See also Shelley Rigger, "Grassroots electoral organisation and political reform in Taiwan and Mexico," in Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins (eds.), *The Awkward Embrace: One-Party Domination and Democracy* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 1999), p. 304.

26. Interviews with campaign personnel in southern Taiwan, November 2001–July 2002.

27. For a book on the emergence of Taiwan's power families, see Sima Hsiao-ching, *Taiwan wu da jiazu* (*Taiwan's Rich and Powerful Families: The Old Monies*) (Taipei: Yushan she, 2000).

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magistrate elections were initiated in 1950–51, which led to their formalization as factions at the intermediate level.[28]

The local election level differs from higher levels by the general closeness of relations, as a village or a borough is small enough for people to know each other.[29] In relationships with an affective element,[30] pleas for campaign help are almost impossible to refuse.[31] However, help offered during the campaign is not entirely altruistic. It is a favour akin to Mauss's gift and needs to be reciprocated.[32] Money and gifts given to loyal supporters during the campaign is a token intended to strengthen the relationship. The higher the election level, the more money becomes involved (vote-buying and donations), and the more calculation goes into support.

While the borough warden position, for example, is almost powerless in terms of policy implementation, it carries some financial benefits and significant nomination power in the community setting. Friends and relatives who help out in elections are repaid as the winning network takes all local positions.[33] As neighbourhood heads (*linzhang*) are customarily appointed by borough wardens and become their vote brokers, there is a significant incumbent's benefit involved with regard to future elections.[34] In one election an incumbent DPP borough warden got 63 per cent of all votes in his own borough, while in 49 other boroughs his average was 3 per cent.[35]

Although Taiwanese often refer to all factions below the central level as *difang paixi*, there is a difference in degree of formalization between factions at the intermediate level and grassroots social networks.[36] The former are semi-institutionalized with a name, leadership and long history. The latter are informal networks of friends, relatives and associates, which nevertheless can form quite stable support networks in areas of low mobility. While there are sometimes connections between formalized

28. Some local factions were purposefully created by the KMT. Liao Chung-jun, *Taiwan difang paixi ji qi zhuyao lingdao renwu* (*Taiwan Local Factions and their Main Leaders*) (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 2000).

29. Township representatives' election district (commonly 2–3 boroughs) depends on the population.

30. Many scholars have depicted a continuum of relations in Chinese society between instrumental and affective/emotional relations. Hwang Kwang-kuo, "Face and favor: the Chinese power game," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (1987), pp. 944–969. Guo Xuezhi, "Dimensions of *guanxi* in Chinese elite politics," *The China Journal*, No. 46 (2001), pp. 72–88.

31. The obligation to reciprocate favours is strong in Chinese society. Sun Lung-kee, "Contemporary Chinese culture: structure and emotionality," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 26 (1991), pp. 1–41.

32. According to Mauss, there is no such thing as a gift which is given without an expectation of something in return. Marcel Mauss (W.D. Halls), *The Gift. The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 1990 [1925]).

33. Interviews with residents, Tainan county, June 2002.

34. Interview with experienced campaign participant, Tainan county, June 2002.

35. Tainan city election commission city councillor and borough warden election reports 2002.

36. Scholars seldom differentiate clearly between these two. E.g. Rigger, "Grassroots electoral organization," pp. 305–307.

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local factions and grassroots social networks, they tend to be based on informal personal relations between a person at each level.[37]

The Party's Role in Local Elections

In stark contradiction to the importance of family and friends in local elections, the party is almost non-existent. The DPP has all but neglected the most local level, especially the boroughs/villages, fielding few candidates and winning even fewer seats, while the KMT, which traditionally has strong support at the local level, is not very actively involved either.[38] In Tainan city – a DPP stronghold – the DPP fielded only 19 candidates in 256 boroughs in the 1998 borough warden elections, of which five were elected. Rather than contest, the DPP has attempted to abolish the borough/village and township elections altogether.[39]

The KMT helps party-nominated candidates in local elections by providing party cadre assistance, help in printing election material and limited financial assistance; otherwise candidates are on their own. Same-party candidates wage separate campaigns with their own strategy, organization and voter-base. Even party candidacy is often elusive at the local level. In borough warden elections most people are KMT party members but not all of them flaunt the party banner, while many prefer to campaign as independents. The party therefore counts three kinds of candidates: party nominees (*dang timing de*), other candidates who are party members, and "party friends" (*dang you*), that is candidates inclined towards the party but not displaying their party membership.[40] The KMT's strong local "support" is then to a large extent an illusion and more reflective of the lingering one-party legacy than a sign of real support.

Election outcomes on the most local level tend to be stable, as many of those bothering to vote are part of one or another social network competing for local influence. An analysis done by the author of data from 256 boroughs in Tainan city borough warden elections in 1994 and 1998 showed that the likelihood of incumbent wardens retaining their position when running for re-election was 75 per cent.[41] At the local level, a personal relationship with a candidate invariably overrides party loyalty. Parties thus ignore the very local level because of the difficulty in influencing the outcome.[42] Nevertheless, the KMT tries to mobilize its "grassroots" in higher elections, although success is not guaranteed.

37. Interviews with ex-legislative assistant and journalist, Taipei, February 2004. Also Lin Liyu, "The voter-candidate connection in Taiwan: a contribution to the theory of voter rationality" (PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, 1993), p. 179.
38. Interview with KMT city councillor (formerly head of Borough Wardens' Association), Tainan, June 2002.
39. *Taipei Times*, 11 May 2002, p. 3.
40. Interviews with KMT local party official, southern Taiwan, June–July 2002.
41. Tainan city election commission borough warden election reports 1994 and 1998.
42. Displaying party symbols in local elections may even be offensive to some voters. Interview with DPP local party official, southern Taiwan, July 2002.

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Intermediate-level Elections: Dispensing Services and Favours

If direct personal relations are crucial to election success in the smallest of communities where it is theoretically possible to know everyone, the ability to deliver favours and services is often used by voters to assess a politician's competence and capability at the intermediate level. There are several forms of patronage. For bigger supporters who act as donors to the campaign, such as wealthy businessmen, return favours often take the form of tangible benefits to their businesses.[43] Ordinary supporters receive lesser benefits, usually dispensed through "service centres" (*fuwuchu*).

Taiwanese politicians traditionally maintain one or more service centres. Requests directed to the service centre usually involve seeking help to deal with some small administrative problems or participating in family events. Because of the nature of the services offered, politicians targeting a mainly middle-class educated urban population more accustomed to seeking help through regular channels increasingly manage without service centres. The services provided depend on the candidate's former profession, personal contacts and interests. For example, a lawyer running for legislative office enlisted 25 of his lawyer friends to offer free legal consultation to voters.[44] Some of the most common services offered are free legal counselling in minor legal problems, free medical consultation, help with job-seeking, financial or tax consultation, and help with military service relocation.[45] Two legislative assistants working in a legislator's office in Taipei even reported receiving requests for help in finding a spouse![46]

In principle, services are given to anyone asking. In practice, there are several ways to ensure that primarily supporters benefit.[47] Lists of campaign donors and people who have pledged their support are actively collected. Poor people sometimes give token donations as small as NT$100 for this reason.[48] In small communities this is not even necessary, as everyone knows whom everyone else supports. Those asking for help are mostly supporters. When they do, they always make it known to the politician that they know someone, such as a *zhuangjiao*, who is important to the politician, which gives an incentive to help.[49] Benefits are particularistic and discriminating.

Rendering services and favours to loyalists is at the heart also of the rationale for forming local factions. Local factions often command stronger loyalty at the intermediate level than parties, especially in rural

43. See Chen Tung-sheng, *Jinquan chengshi. Difang paixi, caituan yu Taibei duhui fazhan de shehuixue fenxi* (*Money-power City. A Sociological Analysis of Local Factions, Financial Groups and Taipei City Development*) (Taipei: Juliu tushu, 1995). Bosco, "Taiwan factions," pp. 169–173.

44. Interviews with campaign personnel, Tainan and Kaohsiung, November 2001.

45. Interviews with service centre personnel, Tainan, November 2001 and June–July 2002.

46. Interview with two legislative assistants, Taipei, August 2002.

47. See Lin Liyu, "The voter-candidate connection," pp. 183–85, on the meaning of "service" (*fuwu*).

48. Author's field observations.

49. Interview with an ex-legislative assistant, Taipei, February 2004.

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areas, as they are in a more direct position to dispense political favours through controlling key local offices, both within the formal political structure and in the semi-official Farmers Associations, irrigation committees and associated financial institutions. During the 1990s, local faction-supported politicians strengthened their hold also of the Legislative Yuan.

Following the DPP's ascendancy and especially Chen Shui-bian's 2000 victory, many local factions switched from supporting the KMT to supporting the DPP. Of 15 candidates running in the combined legislative and county magistrate elections in Chiayi county in late 2001, ten had switched party in the last three years, while the two most prominent KMT candidates did not advertise their party affiliation.[50] But local faction support comes with a price. As the KMT previously, DPP has had to reward its local faction supporters for their support; for example the Yu faction of Kaohsiung county received several political posts after the Chen victory, foremost the position of interior minister (Yu Chen-hsien).[51]

The Party's Role in Intermediate Elections

At the intermediate level the party's role is often mediated by local factions, whose main function is election mobilization, frequently greased by vote buying.[52] In county magistrate and city mayor elections, local factions accounted for on average 76 per cent of KMT-held offices from 1954 to 1993.[53] In areas where local factions are strong they can often swing election results more effectively than parties. A telling example is the windfall victory of Lin Dai-hua, a young politically inexperienced DPP candidate in Kaohsiung county, who got a legislator's seat in 2001 with the fifth-highest vote on the whole island. Her father is the mayor of the biggest township in the county and factional heavyweight in a DPP-leaning local faction. In an interview with the Lin family, her brother told the author that without their father's help Lin Dai-hua would not have stood a chance.[54]

Under SNTV, used in non-executive elections in Taiwan, voters cast a single vote for a candidate in their election district. Unlike proportional election systems all candidates compete directly against each other also within the same party.[55] This gives rise to intense intra-party competition and makes vote-allocation (*pei piao*) and vote-equalization prime objectives for political parties, due to a roughly calculable vote threshold required to be elected.[56] The KMT traditionally used local factions in the

50. *Taipei Times*, 28 November 2001, p. 9.
51. *Taipei Times*, 5 August 2003, p. 2.
52. See e.g. Rigger, "Machine politics," pp. 201–226.
53. Reworked from data provided by Chu and Lin, "Political development in 20th century Taiwan," p. 116.
54. Interview, Kaohsiung, November 2001.
55. Lin Jih-wen, "Consequences of the single nontransferable vote rule," pp. 50–52.
56. Wang, "The political consequences of the electoral system," pp. 90–95.

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Table 2: **Vote Concentration in Polling Stations in Tainan City Councillor Elections 2002**

Voting district	*Polling stations*	*Candidates*	*Candidates with most votes in at least one polling station*	*Polling stations with top candidate over 25% of votes**	*Polling stations with top two candidates over 50% of votes**
A	74	16	11	51.4%	37.8%
B	88	21	13	19.3%	6.8%
C	72	8	7	43.1%	27.8%
D	73	20	12	37.0%	13.7%
E	28	7	5	92.9%	82.1%
F	83	27	18	53.0%	25.3%

Note:
*Invalid votes excluded.
Source:
Tainan city election commission 15th city councillor election report.

countryside and "responsibility zones" in the cities to mobilize and allocate votes to party candidates.[57]

In Table 2, data from the 2002 Tainan city councillor elections are summarized to give an indication of how common vote concentration is. Concentration usually occurs in geographical clusters of adjacent polling stations or boroughs, switching conspicuously from one candidate to another. The clusters tend to be around the candidate's home or service centre, in so-called military dependents' villages (*juancun*), which heavily concentrate their votes on Mainlander candidates, or in boroughs where the borough warden helps the candidate gather votes.[58] Support networks in lower-level elections in Taiwan are then strongly territorially based.[59] Vote concentration decreases with the growing size of the election district.[60]

The party's main weapon in elections is party nomination. Given scarce party nominations and higher party loyalty, mobilizing voters at higher election levels can be quite effective. When the incumbent mayor of Tainan city fell out of favour with his party (DPP) which then supported another candidate instead, the mayor's votes fell dramatically

57. Liu I-chou, "The electoral effect of social control on voters," pp. 57–86. Lin Liyu, "The voter-candidate connection," pp. 143–193.
58. Interviews with DPP city councillor and her campaign personnel, Tainan, August 2002.
59. Interviews with DPP local official and city councillor in southern Taiwan, July 2002. Lawrence Crissman, "The structure of local and regional systems," in Emily M. Ahern and Hill Gates (eds.) *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), pp. 108–110.
60. An alternative explanation claims that SNTV elections foster factionalism and vote concentration, while SMD produces more dispersed vote shares. Lin Jih-wen, "Consequences of the single nontransferable vote rule," pp. 152–55.

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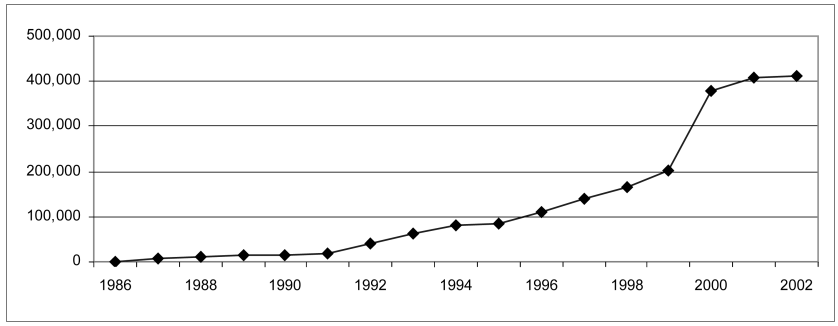


Figure 2: **Development of DPP Party Membership**

Sources:

DPP party website (www.dpp.org.tw). Figures given by local party officials confirm these trends. Interviews, Kaohsiung and Tainan, November 2001 and June 2002.

to 9,520 (2.9 per cent) from 116,145 (35.7 per cent) three years earlier. Successful independent politicians therefore join a party if they intend to make a political career beyond local politics.[61] A party's attractiveness to a politician is significantly enhanced by its control of the executive branch and associated resources. Because the roots of the politician's support (personal social networks, local factions) are usually established independently of the political party, individual politicians tend to maintain a relatively large degree of independence from the party.

In distinction to vertical dyadic relations, party-sanctioned co-operation and vote-equalization between candidates at the same election level is usually a temporary and unstable election alliance, which under SNTV works only if a conservative nomination strategy is followed, voters vote according to party wishes and candidates refrain from competing against each other. DPP has pulled this off a couple of times in legislative elections. More often, the key criterion for the success of co-operation between politicians – mutual benefit/interest – is not met and same-party candidates fight each other for nomination and office.[62]

High-level Paradox: Party Opportunism amid Ideological Steadfastness

Anecdotal and statistical evidence from Taiwan suggests that many people are exceedingly pragmatic about their party allegiances, while bandwagoning is rampant. DPP party membership recorded a conspicuous jump in the year the party captured the presidency (Figure 2). Meanwhile, the KMT, after organizing a re-registration following its defeat, discovered that it had lost almost two-thirds of its members,[63]

61. Interview with an independent-turned-DPP city councillor, Tainan, July 2002.
62. Lin Jih-wen, "Consequences of the single nontransferable vote rule," pp. 56–61.
63. *Taipei Times*, 30 January 2001, p. 3.

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even though the party was offering accident insurance coverage as an incentive to those who renewed their membership. A local KMT official estimated that 30–40 per cent re-registered because someone they know asked them to register, not out of conviction.[64]

The same pragmatism applies to politicians. Sensing a change in the wind, several politicians, local factions and civic organizations had already begun to reposition themselves before the 2000 presidential elections and numerous politicians and civil servants either switched party[65] or "came out of the closet"[66] after Chen's victory. The victory ushered in a takeover process within the administration and state-owned enterprises, with old KMT hands being exchanged for DPP supporters.[67] In 2002, an interviewed local KMT official complained that when the local KMT branch asked local government officials to join party-affiliated associations, they all refused, fearing for their jobs in a DPP-led administration. While some younger KMT officials switched sides, many older ones sought an exit through party pensions granted after 18 served years. Several labour unions, associations and business groups also moved closer to the DPP.[68]

Party loyalty is in short supply in Taiwan.[69] However, opportunism towards political parties does not mean ideological *laissez-faire*. The pan-blue/pan-green divide is wide and the general "blue" or "green" orientation among people appears very solid and unchangeable. This stability is easily taken to imply stability in party structure.[70] But it is not the party structure that is stable but the underlying ideological divide. There is a basic support for either side, which more or less cuts the island politically in half on a north–south axis, as was evident in the last island-wide county magistrate/city mayor elections. The gist of the divide is a decades-long movement to "localize" (*bentuhua*) the use of power[71] and allocation of resources in Taiwan by those who were on the losing end during the old regime (pan-greens), and reaction to this by those who stand to lose the most from localization (pan-blues) such as those linked to the KMT-state[72] (many Mainlanders) and those who benefited from

64. Interviews in southern Taiwan, June 2002 and March 2004.

65. *Taipei Times*, 28 November 2001, p. 9.

66. In a conspicuous coup, around 50 new members, comprising top executive officials and social or intellectual elite joined the DPP simultaneously in July 2002. *Taipei Times*, 29 July 2002, p. 1.

67. Interview with DPP legislator, Taipei, August 2002.

68. Interviews with DPP and KMT officials, Tainan, July 2002 and February 2004.

69. Scholars have noted the weakness of political parties in so-called Third Wave democracies and the difficulties they encounter in rooting themselves in society. Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, "Hong Kong's stunted political party system," *The China Quarterly*, No. 172 (2002), pp. 1010–28.

70. Hsieh, "Whither the Kuomintang?" pp. 931–940.

71. Michael Kau Ying-mau, "The power structure in Taiwan's political economy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1996), pp. 287–305.

72. Previously, subsidies on government employees' pension coverage, interest rate benefits, and children's education disproportionately benefited Mainlanders, which clustered in government professions. Wu Nai-teh, "Binlang he tuoxie, xizhuang ji pixie: Taiwan jieji liudong de zuqun chayi ji yuanyin," ("Beetlenuts and slippers, suits and leather shoes: ethnic

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KMT-patronage through local factions (mainly native Taiwanese).[73] The latter group is more easily co-opted by the pan-greens.

The resource allocation struggle came to a head several times after Chen became president. A government plan to cut the budget allocation ratio for Taipei and Kaohsiung while increasing the share for other cities and counties[74] prompted Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou (KMT) to draft amendments to the Financial Allocation Law, hastily pushed through by pan-blue politicians just before a new legislative session convened which would reduce their strength. The "Ma amendments" would have increased central government redistribution of tax revenue to local governments and guaranteed a fixed percentage allocation for Taipei, a pan-blue stronghold.[75] The amendments were overturned. The government instead proposed its own amendments that would have made tax redistribution to townships and villages – a KMT stronghold – subject to county governments, where the DPP is stronger, but these also failed to pass.[76] The township level – financially dependent on redistributed tax revenue – benefited when the KMT was still in power. Not surprisingly, local KMT township executives in DPP-controlled counties[77] now complain of discrimination.[78] The Chen government also introduced an old-age pension of NT$3,000 a month for those not already eligible for other pensions, and raised the monthly stipend for senior fishermen and farmers by NT$1,000.[79] These measures were expected mainly to benefit pan-green voters.

The independence/reunification issue forms a second dimension of the pan-blue/pan-green divide but is perhaps better described as a question of how close relations Taiwan should maintain with Mainland China.[80] Here positions range from a total divorce (Taiwan Solidarity Union) to very close relations (New Party). The ideological dividing line runs between those wanting closer ties and those seeking to maintain the distance. The controversy manifests itself whenever political issues touch upon this, such as allowing direct flights to China, changing passport names or the writing system used on street signs.

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footnote continued

differences and causes for Taiwan's class mobility"), *Taiwan shehui yanjiu* (*Taiwan Sociological Research*), No. 1 (1997), pp. 137–166.

73. See Chang Mao-kuei, "Toward an understanding of the *sheng-chi wen-ti* in Taiwan," in Chen Chung-min *et al.* (eds.) *Ethnicity in Taiwan. Social, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1994), pp. 112–141.

74. *Taipei Times*, 10 January 2002, p. 8.

75. *Taipei Times*, 7 February 2002, p. 3.

76. *Taipei Times*, 23 May 2002, p. 1.

77. Part of central government funding to townships is channelled through county governments.

78. Interview with KMT township executive, Tainan county, June 2002. *Taipei Times*, 6 August 2003, p. 1.

79. *Ibid*. p. 8.

80. The issue early proved a counterproductive election strategy. Shelley Rigger, "Social science and national identity: a critique," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (1999/2000), pp. 537–544, 550–51.

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The Party's Role in High-level Elections

The higher up one goes in Taiwan's elections, the more intimately involved the party becomes, as high-level elections are crucial in terms of resource allocation power and party organizational capabilities are needed in SMD elections where the district is large. Financial resource control in Taiwan is centralized, with locally collected taxes being routed through the central government and redistributed to local governments. Of the redistributed money Taipei and Kaohsiung cities take close to half, while all other cities, counties, townships and villages share the rest.

In high-level elections (president, Taipei and Kaohsiung mayors), local factions are less able to wield influence as they are territorially-based and stronger in the countryside: factional heavyweight Chang Po-ya got only 1.7 per cent of votes in the 2002 Kaohsiung city mayor election, which is not her home area. Independent candidates lacking party nominations also have a hard time winning. Shih Ming-teh, one of the charismatic leaders of the opposition movement, got only 1.1 per cent of votes in the same Kaohsiung mayoral election, despite Kaohsiung being one of the bases of the opposition movement. While independents and non-party nominated candidates currently hold 63 per cent of borough warden and village head positions and 58 per cent of township representatives, 35 per cent of city and county council seats and even 29 per cent of township executives, only 6 per cent of legislators are independent.[81]

Particularistic mobilizing does not disappear in high-level elections, but it is guided by the party: for example, the local KMT headquarters contacts party sympathizers, who are tasked with persuading friends and relatives in the district to vote for party-favoured candidates. Regular contact is also maintained with key people within organizations and associations (party vote brokers) facilitating their help in vote mobilization during elections.[82] Voters are more prone to vote ideologically in high-level elections, as the positions at stake are able to influence larger issues. In 1994, the highly ideological New Party (NP, *xin dang*) got 30.2 per cent of votes in the Taipei city mayoral election, but 20.9 per cent in the Taipei city councillor election. Campaigning in high-level elections therefore makes heavy use of symbolic issues, cues and associations revolving around the pan-blue/pan-green political divide. Parties try to associate themselves with either pan-blue or pan-green symbols and issues.[83] Voters also tend to move within these ideologically delimited areas.

However, political parties and politicians are only the temporary representatives of the basic ideological forces and can easily fall from grace if they are perceived to betray their basic values[84] or fail to build a strong party structure. In 1993 the NP came out of the blue as a splinter

81. Taiwan Central Election Commission (www.cec.gov.tw).

82. Interview with local KMT party official, southern Taiwan, August 2002.

83. Dafydd Fell, "Party platform change in Taiwan's 1990s elections," *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2002), pp. 31–60.

84. When KMT legislator Lin Nan-sheng cast the decisive vote for a DPP candidate to head the Examination Yuan, his voters were furious and wanted him expelled from the party. Interview with local KMT official, southern Taiwan, July 2002.

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group from the KMT to take 12.8 per cent of votes in the 1995 legislative election on the back of voters disaffected with a localizing KMT. Only six years later the NP was reduced to one legislative seat representing Kinmen on the mainland coast. At the same time, two new shooting stars appeared: the People First Party (PFP, *qin min dang*), which represents the pan-blue camp, got a 20.3 per cent vote in its first appearance, while a new pan-green group, the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU, *Taiwan tuanjie lianmeng*), got 8.5 per cent.[85]

The personalized nature of Taiwanese politics extends all the way to the top where personalism marries ideology. A handful of very visible top leaders, also referred to as *tianwang* – "heavenly king" – are a kind of charismatic hero for their supporters. They frequently come to embody a certain ideological position, most clearly in the case of former president Lee Teng-hui. Parties are often built around such personages. The PFP formed around Soong Chu-yu, who lost the presidential elections in 2000, while the TSU formed around Lee Teng-hui. Lesser politicians tend to switch party following their patron. The most dramatic example is Soong Chu-yu's falling out with Lee Teng-hui, which resulted in a drove of KMT politicians following Soong to the newly-founded PFP.

Lower-level political leaders and other politically-active people tend to be more motivated by their own career prospects than just by reaping the passive benefits of support, and are therefore profoundly opportunistic. Party loyalty in Taiwan is particularly low when the incumbent party is likely to lose an impending election.[86] Perhaps this was also the case when the director of the DPP's Panchiao city office, at a time when Chen Shui-bian was trailing far behind in the presidential election polls, resigned from the DPP and joined the KMT, announcing his support for Lien Chan, and allegedly taking 250 DPP members from Panchiao with him.[87] The relationship between the party and its politicians is more co-existence in a mutually beneficial relationship than based on shared ideological conviction.

Nested Pyramid Structures

The centrality of dyadic mutual support relations applies whether within the context of a party or a faction, or outside these. The dyads in Taiwan politics extend beyond traditional patron–client relations[88] in that they are more dynamic, equal and voluntary. Today's affluent Taiwanese are rarely dependent on any particular patron: services/favours add value, but are not the lifeline. Some dyads are mere short-term election alliances,[87] in some the emotional bond is more important than the material

85. *Taipei Times*, 2 December 2001, p. 1.
86. 20–25% of the names on the two 2004 presidential teams' key supporter lists in Tamsui township appeared on both lists, while only 9 borough wardens in 43 boroughs dared openly support either side. *Lianhe bao*, 10 February 2004.
87. *Taipei Times*, 2 October 2003, p. 4.
88. Scott, "Patron-client politics," pp. 124–26.
89. Party heavyweights sometimes campaign for candidates they dislike because of mutual interest in party victory. Interview with campaign organizer, Tainan, November 2001.

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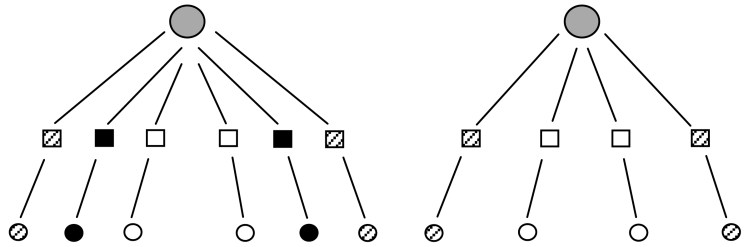


Figure 3: **Candidates With and Without Local Faction Support**

benefits,[90] while in others loyalty is based on more abstract ideological reasons and the ability of a politician to embody these. The common denominator is that support/loyalty is primarily based on relations between two people rather than a person and an organization,[91] making the party in some respects even a "dependent variable." A semblance of connection is maintained, for example, by meticulous organization of "hand-shaking" with voters.[92]

Structurally, we can then see political support networks in Taiwan as nested pyramid structures: individual politicians and their personal networks combine forces to form larger agglomerates of dyadic support networks (factions), which in turn form yet larger agglomerates of factions (parties). The structural situation is depicted in Figure 3; the big circle denotes a top politician, the squares are lower-level politicians/opinion leaders and the small circles ordinary supporters. The diagonally lined objects stand for party networks, black for local factions and white for politicians' personal social networks. Previously a KMT candidate at the top (Figure 3 left) would in addition to the party's support and her/his own support networks also have the support of local factions, whereas a DPP candidate (right) usually lacked this support. Now as some local factions support the DPP the situation is more even in this respect.

At the most local level, social networks are based on longstanding stable personal relationships. It is very hard for new parties to gain a foothold in local elections and election results show significant stability. At higher levels, relationships are more a means to personal ends, while party loyalty often remains secondary to personal loyalties and opportunism flourishes. Leadership contests significantly affect the stability of the party structure, due to the described structure of support. At the highest level of politics a key change since political liberalization in 1987–91 has been the multiplication of contenders for leadership. From one undisputed leader in Chiang Kai-shek and then Chiang Ching-kuo, there emerged two serious contenders in the early 1990s, Lee Teng-hui

90. Cf. Guo Xuezhi, "Dimensions of *guanxi*," pp. 86–88.

91. Fei Xiaotong, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992 [1947]), pp. 62–63.

92. Lin Dai-hua reported having shook approximately 100,000 hands during her campaign for the legislature. Interview, Kaohsiung, November 2001.

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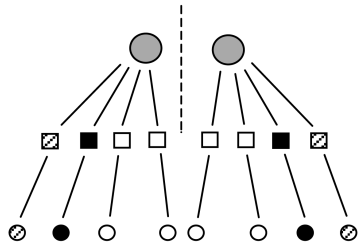


Figure 4: **Two Competing Leaders in a Party Causing Party Split**

and Hau Po-tsun. In the mid-1990s Lee Teng-hui was momentarily the almost unchallenged leader, but afterwards contenders proliferated with Chen Shui-bian entering the scene, Soong Chu-yu falling out with Lee Teng-hui, Lien Chan taking over the helm of the KMT and Ma Ying-jeou rising to become Taipei mayor.

We postulate that political parties in Taiwan will tend towards disintegration unless they have been brought into one unified pyramid structure, where party networks and factional support networks all support the same top politician. If there are two competing party heavyweights, party support networks easily split as personal loyalties trump party loyalties; and factions (both local and party) have to choose sides, possibly leading to a party split, as happened to the KMT following the 2000 presidential elections (Figure 4).

In the 2004 presidential elections, the Lien/Soong team had a powerful common interest: fighting each other would be disastrous for both. But to reiterate, such horizontal co-operation is precarious in Taiwan, where political support tends to be vertical and personalized, while benefits tend to be particularistic and exclusive. Horizontal co-operation is likely to last only as long as mutual benefit is assured. The rapid failure of the New Party could be because it maintained a relatively horizontal structure, which proved to be an unsustainable party basis once enthusiasm for its ideological position – close ties with China and anti-corruption – cooled. The ultimate test of our disintegration hypothesis is if a party survives the disappearance of its leading figure. Could PFP take the demise of Soong in its stride?

The hodgepodge of networks that form the DPP has held together mainly because the party has in later years managed to contain internal struggles to achieve the common goal of snatching power. Chen's victory introduced a measure of hierarchy among DPP party factions, further strengthened by his taking over as party chairman and by instituting regular co-ordinating meetings with local faction-backed party heavyweights and party central leadership.[93] But for a ruling party stability is dependent on incumbency: internally there is no incentive to challenge

93. Several interviews with political elite, Taipei, August 2002.

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the order as long as the order benefits everyone within it. But could the DPP have avoided an internal power struggle if Chen had lost the presidential election?

Concluding Remarks

This article has suggested that the roots of instability in Taiwan's party structure lie deeper than just the SNTV election system. The informal structure of political support (nested pyramid structures) combined with considerable rewards of office and low party loyalty have ushered in a profoundly opportunistic political environment with "winner-takes-it-all" politics[94] and consequent election volatility in high-level elections. Taiwanese political parties cannot automatically count on voter loyalty in the face of defeat.

The weakness of party loyalty and rampant opportunism has its historical roots. The KMT integrated party and state[95] but had a more tenuous relationship with society. Party membership could carry benefits and many joined the party more because of those benefits than from ideological conviction. Being within the party or outside was then almost tantamount to being within or without the system.[96] But such party loyalty is dependent on incumbency. Change at the top easily leads to significant "bandwagoning," which locals have come to refer to as the "watermelon effect" (*xigua xiaoying*) – the bigger slice attracts people, especially at the intermediate level.[97]

In Bailey's terms, while the DPP slowly expanded its core followers since its founding, Chen Shui-bian's victory in 2000 brought lots of hirelings to the party's fold, while concomitantly the KMT lost many of its hirelings. Whether instability in the party structure is transitional remains to be seen. Inertia in informal political structures suggests that instability in Taiwan's party structure will persist for some time. What should be clear is that the number of top political leaders and relations between them are pivotal to the structuring of the party scene.

94. Tang Tsou, "Chinese politics at the top: factionalism or informal politics? Balance-of-power politics or a game to win all?" *The China Journal*, No. 34 (1995), pp. 95–156.

95. Kuo Cheng-tian, "Taiwan's distorted democracy in comparative perspective," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2000), pp. 90–98.

96. A recent article similarly argued that the LDP in Japan formed a political system in its own right. Jean-Marie Bouissou, "Party factions and the politics of coalition: Japanese politics under the 'system of 1955'," *Electoral Studies*, No. 20 (2001), pp. 581–602.

97. Cf. Avery Goldstein, *From Bandwagon to Balance-of-Power Politics: Structural Constraints and Politics in China, 1949–1978* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 57.

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