

# The Taiwan Presidential Election and Its Implications for Cross-straits Relations: A Political Cleavage Perspective

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On March 20, 2004, Chen Shui-bian of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) defeated Lien Chan, the candidate of the Kuomintang-People First Party (PFP) alliance, by a razor-thin margin of less than thirty thousand votes (0.228 percent of the votes cast) in Taiwan's presidential election. The election result was rejected by Lien Chan and his vice-presidential candidate, James Soong Chu-yu of the PFP, who have subsequently launched lawsuits to seek judicial decisions against the validity of the election and that of the election result, respectively.

The election and the following disputes fully exposed the cleavages among the ethnic communities in Taiwan and the controversies on the identity question. There are doubts as to whether the democratic institutions are strong enough to overcome the cleavages and controversies; at least, the pro-Beijing mass media inside and outside China have exploited the confrontations to discredit the democratization process in Taiwan. There are also worries that Chen's narrow victory and the related political disputes will weaken his administration in the following four years. Finally, although Chen's electoral victory was not a surprise to Beijing, the Chinese leadership is seriously concerned with Chen's plans for a referendum in 2006, in coordination with revisions of the constitution, paving the way for the independence of Taiwan. Such developments may well lead to war across the Taiwan Straits and seriously damage the peace and security in the Asia Pacific region.

This article attempts to examine the political cleavages among the ethnic communities in Taiwan and the associated differences on the issue of reunification/independence. It will also study the presidential election, the campaign activities, and the causes of Chen's electoral victory. Finally, Beijing's position regarding the election and its strategy toward Taiwan in the foreseeable future will be analyzed.

### **The Most Significant Political Cleavage in Taiwan's Presidential Election: Differences among Ethnic Communities Compounded by the Reunification/Independence Controversy**

Lipset and Rokkan's concept of cleavage structures may be adapted to help understand Taiwan's electoral politics.<sup>1</sup> Their classification of cleavage systems identifies each political party with a particular section of the electorate, either a community irrespective of its social structure or an interest group irrespective of its members' residential location. The party is assumed to promote their interests.

Since most political parties begin small (the DPP in Taiwan is no exception), they would benefit if they enjoy strong support in certain communities. This support hopefully will remain stable, and efforts will normally be made to consolidate such support so that through voter mobilization, the party is not just perceived as trying to win votes in a general election, but also is seen as involved in many significant aspects of community life. The party then needs to expand its influence into other communities, so as to build a substantial parliamentary representation or a majority in a presidential election.<sup>2</sup>

Political cleavage analysis assumes that voting behavior and voters' choices have definite social foundations; they reflect the basic contradictions in the social structure at a specific point in time. These basic contradictions in turn are the results of historical processes.<sup>3</sup> In Northern Ireland, for example, religious differences, Catholicism versus Protestantism, constitute the most significant political cleavage that has been the most important variable influencing voting behavior. Although political cleavages exist in almost every society, they may not have the chance to be reflected in democratic elections and serve as the basis for political coalitions. In the case of Taiwan, the most significant political cleavage has been the differences among the ethnic communities compounded by the reunification/independence controversy. This political cleavage serves as the foundation of the two broad political coalitions, the pan-blue alliance constituting the Kuomintang, the PFP, the New Party, and so on and the pan-green alliance constituting the DPP, the Taiwan Solidarity Union, and so on.

#### *The four major ethnic communities in Taiwan and their distribution*

The original inhabitants of Taiwan are categorized by anthropologists as Malay-Polynesians, and they are commonly known as the Tagasago tribe in Tai-

wan. Apart from the Pingpu peoples, who are now extinct because of assimilation with Han Chinese in the last three centuries, these aborigines are now divided into nine groups distributed mainly in the mountainous areas of the island, especially along the central mountain range along Taoyuan county, Miaoli county, Nantou county, Chiayi county, Tainan county, Kaohsiung county and Pingtung county, as well as in Hualien city, Hualien county, Taitung city, Taitung county, and the Orchid Island in eastern Taiwan. Their physical features and dialects are close to those of the aborigines in the Philippines, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Pacific Islands.<sup>4</sup>

The Han Chinese are roughly divided into three communities. The Southern Fujianese (Minnan people) refer to the Han Chinese who moved to Taiwan between the seventeenth century and 1945 from southern Fujian, especially from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou. They mainly concentrate in central and southern Taiwan, that is, Taichung city, Taichung county, Nantou city, Nantou county, Yunlin city, Yunlin county, Chiayi city, Chiayi county, Tainan city, Tainan county, Kaohsiung municipality, Kaohsiung county, Pingtung city, and Pingtung county, as well as in Taipei municipality, Taipei county in the north, Ilan city and Ilan county in the northeast, and Penghu (Pescadores) county in the middle of the Taiwan Straits. The Hakka people are the descendants of the Han Chinese who emigrated to Taiwan from Guangdong (Mei county and related areas) between the mid-nineteenth century and 1945. They now tend to settle more in Taoyuan city, Taoyuan county, Hsinchu city, Hsinchu county, Miaoli city and Miaoli county in the north, as well as parts of Pingtung county in southern Taiwan. Mainlanders literally mean those who arrived at Taiwan from Mainland China in the 1945–49 period and their descendants. Most of them now live in Taipei municipality and Taipei county, as well as in the outlying islands of Kinmen and Matsu.

“Benshengren (natives of the province)” literally refer to those who originally lived in Taiwan. In the narrow sense, benshengren only include the Southern Fujianese, though in the broad sense, benshengren also include the aborigines and the Hakka people. Southern Fujianese often call themselves Taiwanese as well.<sup>5</sup>

Distinctions between Mainlanders and benshengren, however, have never been very accurate. For example, in Kinmen and Matsu, descendants of Mainlanders and Mainlanders who speak Southern Fujianese are often perceived as benshengren, while in Taipei, some Southern Fujianese who cannot speak their native dialect are often treated as Mainlanders. In the military quarters districts in Kaohsiung and Tainan, many descendants of Mainlander fathers and benshengren mothers speak excellent Southern Fujianese, but they are still categorized as Mainlanders. In many ways, the Mainlander and benshengren categories are often nothing more than central identification symbols used in political mobilization exercises, especially during elections.

*The respective sizes of the ethnic communities and their traditional voting inclinations*

The aborigines amount to about four hundred fifty thousand (2 percent of the total population); they largely support the Kuomintang and the PFP and predominantly prefer the maintenance of the status quo in relations with Mainland China. Southern Fujianese number about 14.7 million (64 percent of the total population), and they favor the maintenance of the status quo politically. The Southern Fujianese in central and southern Taiwan as well as in Ilan support the DPP; and an increasing segment of them is inclined to support Taiwan independence and to change the name of the state from the Republic of China to the Republic of Taiwan. There are roughly 4.6 million Hakka people (20 percent of the total population). They tend to favor the Kuomintang and the PFP politically, and a majority of them support the maintenance of the status quo in cross-strait relations. Mainlanders number about 3.2 million (14 percent of the total population). They normally support the Kuomintang and the PFP; while inclined to accept the status quo in relations with Beijing, the majority do not want to rule out the option of reunification with China.<sup>6</sup>

On the basis of opinion surveys over the past two decades and more, it appears that the differences among the ethnic communities, compounded by the reunification/independence controversy, gradually developed since 1947 have become a long-term and consistent factor affecting voting behavior and voters' choices. On issues related to Mainland China, people on different sides of the political cleavage will naturally espouse confronting positions. In general terms, those who do not want to rule out the reunification option tend to vote for the candidates of the Kuomintang and PFP, who enjoy the support of the vast majority of the Mainlanders, a majority of the Hakka people, a majority of the aborigines, and a minority of the Southern Fujianese. On the other hand, those who are more inclined to support Taiwan independence tend to favor the candidates of the DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union, who have secured the support of a majority of the Southern Fujianese, a very small segment of the Mainlanders, and a small minority of the Hakka people and the aborigines. The above is only a general impression broadly shared, and there are many exceptions to the rule; for example, the leaders of Taiwan's student movement have formed the Association of Mainlanders in Support of Taiwan Independence (Waishengren Zhichi Taiwan Duli Houyuanhui).

### **Historical Roots of the Political Cleavage Based on Ethnic Communities**

*Treaty of Shimonoseki and the independent Taiwan state*

In May 1895, China and Japan concluded the Treaty of Shimonoseki after the former's defeat. In addition to paying a war indemnity of 200 million taels of sil-

ver, the Manchu Dynasty also ceded Taiwan and the Pescadores to Japan. The Taiwan governor, Tang Jingsong, was informed only after the conclusion of the treaty that Taiwan was no longer Chinese territory, and that all Chinese officials should return to Mainland China. The scholar-officials in Taiwan strongly felt that they had been betrayed; they supported Tang as their leader and established the Taiwan Independent State (Taiwan Duliguo). Later in the month, the Japanese armed forces landed in Keelung and occupied Taipei in three days. In the following October, the Japanese took Tainan, and the whole of Taiwan was effectively governed by Japan for five decades. Some resistance leaders fled to Mainland China, and Qiu Fengjia and others produced some memorable poetries. Many treatises advocating the independence of Taiwan considered this cessation of Taiwan to Japan a betrayal by the central authorities, which marked the beginning of a consciousness of a Taiwan nation and the independence of Taiwan.<sup>7</sup> In other words, Taiwan people have to rely on their own action to prevent another betrayal by the Chinese authorities.

#### *The February 28 incident and the era of white terror (1947–54)*

On February 27, 1947, an antismuggling team of the Monopoly Bureau under the Office of the Chief Executive of Taiwan was surrounded by a crowd in Taipei in the arrest of a woman selling tobacco without paying taxes. In the confusion, a team member fired, killing a bystander. The incident angered the people, and over six hundred people blockaded the Taipei police office, which gave shelter to the officials of the Monopoly Bureau. Riots broke out the next day when the incident was reported by a newspaper. The mob attacked government buildings, and the riots spread from northern Taiwan to the south. The Chief Executive, Chen Yi, could no longer control the situation. On March 9 and 10, tens of thousands of Kuomintang soldiers landed in Keelung and Kaohsiung; Chen Yi began to crack down on the opposition, closing newspapers and arresting and executing opposition leaders. It was estimated that between March 12, when the suppression began, and May 15, when Chen Yi was replaced by Wei Daoming, at least eight to ten thousand people lost their lives in the suppression, and many more thousands were either injured or arrested.<sup>8</sup>

The Kuomintang authorities' suppression continued for some years. Their secret agents and police imposed a "white terror" in Taiwan, and the opposition was persecuted under the labels of Communists, Communist-sympathizers, and rebels. In the autumn of 1949, the Kuomintang was clearly defeated by the Communist Party of China in the civil war, and the Chiang Kai-shek government fled to Taiwan. The Kuomintang authorities were in a state of paranoia, and they imposed martial law in Taiwan in January 1950. The crackdown became even harsher. Relative stability and calm returned after the conclusion of the U.S.-Taiwan (Republic of China) Mutual Defense Treaty in 1954, and the reign of white terror gradually receded.<sup>9</sup>

The February 28 incident and the subsequent era of white terror generated much anger in Taiwan. This anger has been perceived as the beginning of the Taiwan independence movement by the opposition (*dangwai*), which later developed into the DPP.

### *Ethnic cleavages, the independence/reunification controversy, and elections*

Since the February 28 incident, ethnic cleavages have often emerged as identity and ethnic confrontations, and they have become the most significant socio-political issue in Taiwan. Until the 1970s, Mainlanders monopolized the military, as well as the secret police, intelligence apparatus, and the civil service. *Benshengren* tended to concentrate on business activities and avoid politics. Since the 1980s, as relations with Mainland China have become a priority item on the policy agenda and democracy has been making progress, ethnic cleavages have largely been transformed into the independence/reunification controversy. Support for reunification or independence has become the most significant arguments in elections, and these arguments have been most effective in mobilizing voters.

The independence/reunification controversy has been sharpening since the first direct election of the president in 1996, though the significance of the controversy declines as one moves down the level of elections. The DPP candidates often attempt to label their competitors as anti-Taiwanese (blocking the Taiwanese from becoming true masters), guilty of betrayal of Taiwan, and so on. Within this context, campaign issues such as referendums in general, referendums on joining the United Nations, referendums on independence/reunification, and referendums on dismantling the Chinese missiles aimed at Taiwan define the positions of the candidates and guide the choice of voters.

## **Dynamics of the 2004 Taiwan Presidential Election**

### *Early expectations*

There are many studies on elections in Taiwan, and the educated public are very absorbed in related discussions. Regarding the presidential election in March 2000, the conventional wisdom was: if Lien Chan and James Soong Chu-yu had been able to cooperate, they would have been able to defeat Chen Shui-bian. (They respectively received 23.10 percent, 36.84 percent, and 39.30 percent of the votes.)

There was a conspiracy theory that the incumbent president and the chairman of the Kuomintang at that time, Lee Teng-hui, did not wholeheartedly support Lien Chan, and that Lee in fact secretly supported Chen Shui-bian. This was often seen as an important factor for Chen's electoral victory. There were many explanations for the above position of Lee. One hypothesis was that Lee was committed to the independence of Taiwan, and his relationship with Chen Shui-

bian might be compared to that between Moses and Joshua. Another hypothesis was a second-best choice scenario. According to this hypothesis, Lee actually preferred Lien, because if Lien had won the presidency, Lee would have been able to retain the chairmanship of the Kuomintang and his political influence. However, if Soong won, Lee believed that he would be persecuted politically because of their differences and also because of Soong's personal character. Hence, when Lee discovered that Lien was no match for Soong, he decided to switch to the support of Chen.

This second-best choice scenario actually emerged earlier in December 1994 in the Taipei mayoral electoral race among the Kuomintang candidate Huang Ta-chou, the New Party candidate Jaw Shau-kong, and the DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian. As Huang Ta-chou was perceived to be in the losing position and Jaw, who was highly critical of Lee Teng-hui and the Kuomintang, was leading, it appeared that the Kuomintang in the final stage of the election dumped Huang and supported Chen, paving the way for Chen's electoral victory.

In presidential elections in Taiwan, it is common knowledge that the uncommitted voters with no party preference constitute the crucial factor. According to the survey of *China Times* released on July 4, 2003, 85 percent of the voters in the pan-green alliance supported Chen Shui-bian, while 90 percent of the pan-blue alliance supporters planned to vote for Lien Chan. Among those who had no obvious preferences for political parties, 46 percent supported Lien Chan. Twenty-seven percent of respondents remained undecided; hence, they (about 13 percent of the voters) would be decisive in the coming presidential election.<sup>10</sup>

According to Wong Ka-ying in September 2003, it would be immature then to conclude that Lien would defeat Chen, despite his early lead. Wong considered that Chen's chance of winning the election should not be underestimated, as 27 percent of the electorate had not made up its mind. The pan-blue camp obviously enjoyed a distinct advantage at that time, but there were still many favorable cards in Chen's hands. First, there were many contradictions within the alliance between the Kuomintang and the PFP, as well as within the Kuomintang; therefore, the DPP would exploit its advantage as the governing party to attract defectors from the two opposition parties. Further, in the year 2000, the Kuomintang, as the governing party, engineered the "Chung Sin cheques scandal," which cost James Soong the presidential election in that year. The DPP was expected to use the same tricks to discredit Lien Chan and James Soong in the 2004 presidential campaign. Throughout their political careers, they had unavoidably made many deals with various business groups, and negative campaign tactics would have had a more severe adverse impact on the pan-blue alliance than its adversary. This was especially true because the DPP administration controlled the police and judicial organs.

During elections in Taiwan, local factions and support groups often play important roles. The DPP tried hard to absorb such local factions and groups to

expand its share of votes. Finally, in the months before the election, the DPP administration was expected to introduce new policies and inject more resources to stimulate the economy to overcome its weakness in terms of unsatisfactory economic performance.<sup>11</sup>

In view of the above factors, it was not surprising that since February 14, 2003, when the Kuomintang and PFP alliance was formed, support for the Lien Chan–James Soong ticket had been in decline. Their initial lead of 20 percent of the votes, which conformed to the respective shares of votes received by the three presidential candidates in the March 2000 election, gradually narrowed. At one point, the two alliances secured an equal share of the vote; and on the day before the election, the pan-blue alliance was said to be leading by 3 percent.

The DPP, as usual, demonstrated its sophistication in manipulating the campaign agenda. The political issues raised by the DPP—referendums and constitutional revision—dominated the campaign debates and successfully mobilized its supporters while diverting attention from the performance of the economy. On the other hand, the Lien Chan–James Soong ticket failed to change its aged, worn-out image and present a new attractive platform. It could not even focus on its strength, the economy.

Nevertheless, given the fact that about 27 percent of the entire electorate remained undecided and the 3 percent lead of the pan-blue alliance, the underground bookmakers seemed to believe that Lien Chan would win. In the week before the election, they offered the odds of one for one on Lien Chan's victory by a margin of 0.5 to 0.65 million votes.

### *The crucial dynamics*

Recent presidential elections in Taiwan were very fluid, so much so that unless a candidate can lead by over 20 percent in opinion surveys, the outcome remains uncertain. In the last presidential election in 2000, for example, James Soong at one point led Chen Shui-bian by 24 percent, but his inept response to the “Chung Sin cheques scandal” finally caused his loss by 3 percent of the vote.

In many ways, the pan-green alliance was more united than its competitor in the 2004 presidential election. In 2003, the pan-blue alliance won the county magistrate by election in Hualien, which to a considerable extent represented a success of the alliance. But even in this electoral success, the alliance still exposed many problems in coordination and the maintenance of solidarity. Conflicts of interest could not be avoided. Other electoral contests would be more complicated, and the problems would exacerbate. Further, the general perception of Lien Chan was that he lacked charisma, and James Soong's appeal had been in decline too since the end of his term as provincial governor. Hence, the team's capabilities to attract new voters were unsatisfactory; it did not have strong campaign managers and resources were limited.

In comparison, the Chen Shui-bian–Annette Lu Hsiu-lien ticket was handicapped by the team’s lackluster performance the past four years. The economic difficulties and the high unemployment rate were significant weaknesses. As the party in power, however, the Chen–Lu ticket controlled the government machinery, and its resource base for the first time was stronger than that of the pan-blue alliance. It was in a much better position to engage in absorption of local groups and defectors. The DPP’s electoral machinery was recognized for its expertise in publicity work and voter mobilization. Its superior performance naturally was an important factor for its electoral success.

The Chen–Lu team fully exploited its advantage as incumbents to define the campaign issues. Their proposals regarding referendums and constitutional revision emphasized the political cleavages based on ethnic communities and were highly effective in mobilizing the DPP’s traditional supporters, who pledged that though their bellies had flattened because of hunger, they would still vote for Chen Shui-bian. The pan-blue alliance’s incompetence in campaign management was fully demonstrated by its failure to highlight Taiwan’s economic difficulties, the lack of progress in educational reforms, and other issues, and allowed the alliance’s adversary to control the agenda of the political debates. Its campaign team, dominated by former technocrats in the bureaucracy, was unsophisticated and lacked innovation and creativity. The above situation allowed the DPP to attack the Lien Chan–James Soong ticket for lack of identification with the Taiwanese, betrayal of Taiwan interests, and blocking the Taiwanese from becoming their own political masters in opposing referendums.

By February 28, 2004, when former President Lee Teng-hui organized the “Hand-in-Hand Peace Campaign” activity to show support for the pan-green alliance in which 2.2 million people took part, the gap between the presidential candidates had narrowed to about 3 percent or less. There were a number of significant unpredictable variables. The attitude of the Chinese leadership could affect the voters’ mood in Taiwan. Sharp criticisms of Chen Shui-bian could easily generate sympathy for him, and the Chinese authorities had exercised much self-restraint in the campaign period. There was, however, a concern that a “hawkish” statement from Beijing at a critical moment might tip the balance in favor of the pan-green alliance. Divisions within the pan-blue alliance could also create complications. It was believed that some members of the Kuomintang would like to see Ma Ying-jeou assume chairmanship of the party and become its presidential candidate in the next election in 2008. They would not mind to see Lien Chan’s defeat, and therefore might not be too eager to vote for him. Finally, both camps were well prepared for negative campaign tactics, and it was generally believed that they had proof of their opponents’ scandals in their hands, to be released at appropriate times.

Analysts easily pointed out that Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji’s serious warning against Taiwan at a press conference of the National People’s Congress three

days before the election and the open support for Chen Shui-bian by a group of respected public opinion leaders (qingliu), headed by the popular Nobel laureate Lee Yuan-tseh, seven days before the election were important factors contributing to Chen's electoral victory in 2000.

As the presidential race was so close, much would depend on the events in the final week. Nobody had expected that an assassination attempt in the early afternoon of the day before the election secured some sympathy votes for Chen and helped him defeat Lien Chan by an extremely narrow margin of 29,518 votes, 0.228 percent of the total.

### *Three crucial factors for Chen Shui-bian's narrow victory*

There are many causes of the Lien Chan–James Soong ticket's electoral defeat. How did the pan-green alliance manage to recover from such a huge early lead by its adversary? It appeared that it was especially successful in the following aspects.

### **Hakka policy**

Hakka people, who mainly live in northwestern Taiwan in the Taoyuan, Hsinchu and Miaoli areas, traditionally supported the Kuomintang and PFP. In the 2004 presidential election, however, the Chen–Lu ticket won 35.94 percent of the votes in Hsinchu county, 44.88 percent in Hsinchu city, 39.25 percent in Miaoli county, and 44.68 percent in Taoyuan county, in comparison with 24.75 percent of the votes in Hsinchu county, 33.79 percent in Hsinchu city, 26.81 percent in Miaoli county, and 31.72 percent in Taoyuan county in the presidential election in 2000. James Soong was highly popular in the Hakka community in northern Taiwan in the 2000 presidential election; he won 51.58 percent of the votes in Hsinchu county, 42.83 percent in Hsinchu city, 49.64 percent in Miaoli county, and 43.83 percent in Taoyuan county in the triangular race. His appeal to the voters in these places obviously declined in 2004. Among the Hakka community in southern Taiwan, Chen's popularity was already considerably higher than that of his two competitors in the 2000 presidential race; he won 41.9 percent and 51.6 percent of the votes in Kaohsiung county and Pingtung county, respectively.<sup>12</sup>

Right in the beginning of his first administration, Chen Shui-bian already appreciated the significance of the Hakka votes in northern Taiwan. Chen established the Council for Hakka Affairs in the Executive Yuan in June 2001, headed by Yep Chu-lan. In fact, because of Yep's success in delivering votes to the DPP, she was promoted to Vice-Premier after the 2004 presidential election. Chen often visited the Hakka areas in Taoyuan, Hsinchu, and Miaoli, and offered generous funding for infrastructural development at the grassroots level. In September 2000, five of

the radio frequencies that were left unoccupied were released for Hakka and aboriginal programming.<sup>13</sup> Later, his administration offered NT\$1.2 billion for the initial three-year budget of a Hakka television station. These efforts already secured reward in December 2001, when the gap between the pan-green alliance and the pan-blue alliance among the Hakka voters in northern Taiwan in the county/city elections (mayoral elections and county/city council elections) narrowed to less than 0.3 million votes from 0.65 million votes in the previous presidential election in March 2000. The pan-green alliance succeeded in exploiting the control of government resources to attract the crucial Hakka votes in northern Taiwan.

The initial success in 2001 encouraged the Chen Shui-bian administration to reinforce its efforts. Despite financial difficulties, the Chen administration continued to promise new “carrots” for the Hakka community in northern Taiwan before the presidential election. These “carrots” included reductions in university tuition fees and other charges, increases in funding for loans for young people to start businesses, rises in subsidies for elderly farmers, provision of funding support for infrastructural projects for farmers and fishermen, enhancement of subsidies for the aborigines as well as for the handicapped and underprivileged groups, provision of various local subsidies, including those for construction projects, expansion of the scope for preferential rents and taxation to encourage enterprise investment, reduction of prices for social services, etc. It was estimated that this election largesse exceeded NT\$100 million.

### **Policy toward Central/Southern Taiwan**

As explained earlier, because of the distribution of the ethnic communities, central and southern Taiwan have been strong bases of support for the pan-green alliance. Chen Shui-bian himself came from a village called Hsichuang in Tainan county. When the Kuomintang was in power, the government’s development policy obviously favored northern Taiwan, creating a wealth gap between the island’s northern and southern parts. This wealth gap naturally generated dissatisfaction, which had been mitigated by the impressive economic growth but at the same time exacerbated by the political cleavage based on the ethnic communities. The majority of the people in southern Taiwan are Southern Fujianese, many of them have much dissatisfaction against the Kuomintang, and they favor the DPP for the promotion of a strong Taiwanese identity. In local elections, such political inclinations are less conspicuous; but in a major election choosing one single candidate such as the presidential election, support for the DPP in southern Taiwan is highly pronounced. A higher proportion of voters in southern Taiwan belongs to the working class. They tend to be more tradition-bound, more grassroots-oriented, and more inclined to engage in political confrontations.

Since the DPP has come to power, the Chen Shui-bian administration has been trying to reverse the historical legacy. In allocation of resources and in policy pref-

**TABLE 1. Voting in the Taiwan Presidential Election on March 20, 2004**

Region	Number of valid votes	Chen Shui-bian/ Annette Lu Hsin-lien		Lien Chan/ James Soong Chu-yu	
		Number of votes	Share of votes (%)	Number of votes	Share of votes (%)
Total	12,914,422	6,471,970	50.11	6,442,452	49.89
Taiwan Province	10,394,658	5,279,338	50.79	5,115,320	49.21
Taipei County	2,130,880	1,000,265	46.94	1,130,615	53.06
Ilan County	256,209	147,848	57.71	108,361	42.29
Taoyuan County	1,004,458	448,770	44.68	555,688	55.32
Hsinchu County	257,603	92,576	35.94	165,027	64.06
Miaoli County	314,486	123,427	39.25	191,059	60.75
Taichung County	850,561	440,479	51.79	410,082	48.21
Changhua County	733,424	383,296	52.26	350,128	47.74
Nantou County	300,328	146,415	48.75	153,913	51.25
Yunlin County	403,035	243,129	60.32	159,906	39.68
Chiayi County	317,655	199,466	62.79	118,189	37.21
Tainan County	651,211	421,927	64.79	229,284	35.21
Kaohsiung County	728,202	425,265	58.4	302,937	41.6
Pingtung County	515,117	299,321	58.11	215,796	41.89

Taitung County	116,585	40,203	34.48	76,382	65.52
Hualien County	179,542	53,501	29.8	126,041	70.2
Penghu County	44,801	22,162	49.47	22,639	50.53
Keelung City	222,565	90,276	40.56	132,289	59.44
Hsinchu City	215,742	96,818	44.88	118,924	55.12
Taichung City	564,193	267,095	47.34	297,098	52.66
Chiayi City	152,878	85,702	56.06	67,176	43.94
Tainan City	435,183	251,397	57.77	183,786	42.23
Kaohsiung Municipality	899,073	500,304	55.65	398,769	44.35
Taipei Municipality	1,588,249	690,379	43.47	897,870	56.53
Fujian Province	32,442	1,949	6.01	30,493	93.99
Kinmen County	28,134	1,701	6.05	26,433	93.95
Lienchiang County	4,308	248	5.76	4,060	94.24

*Source.* Central Election Commission, Taiwan.

erences, it has been attempting to narrow the north/south divide. For example, when Chen met the cadres of the Council of Agriculture in southern Taiwan, he declared that he would not abolish the council and its subsidiary organizations, would not allow banks to take over the council's credit department, which had gone bankrupt, and would not allow the confiscation of the assets of the council and its subsidiaries. He also instructed the Executive Yuan to raise the monthly subsidies for elderly farmers from NT\$3,000 to NT\$4,000. Chen's administration offered NT\$60 million through the Council of Agriculture to help build a large logistics center in Kaohsiung for the farmers' organization there; it also offered NT\$40 million for the construction of a modern cold-storage facility for the local fishermen's organization. Further, to reduce the adverse impact of Taiwan's entry into the World Trade Organization on agriculture and farmers' livelihood, the Chen administration pledged to contribute NT\$25 billion in 2005 to a relief fund to compensate for damages caused by agricultural imports; it is hoped that the annual contributions from the central government would establish a relief fund amounting to NT\$100 billion. The above measures were aimed at consolidating support for the DPP in the south to ensure its major victory in its traditional base of support.

### **Succession Problem within the Kuomintang**

In the presidential election campaign, Lien Chan, as chairman of the Kuomintang, vaguely indicated that if he became president, he would "possibly" give up the party chairmanship to a "new person." He did not, however, say that he would support Ma Ying-jeou, the highly popular Taipei mayor, as his successor, nor did he pledge that he would not run for president in 2008. There was a lot of suspicion that James Soong, chairman of the PFP, would not be satisfied with the largely ceremonial position of vice president, and he too had not promised that he would not run for president in 2008. Hence, it was speculated that some supporters of the Kuomintang might abstain or cast invalid votes so as not to block the chances of the younger generation's political leaders, such as Ma Ying-jeou, Wang Jin-pyng, speaker of the legislature, and Jason C. Hu, mayor of Taichung.

Some observers suggested that among the 0.33 million invalid votes cast in the 2004 presidential election, which was an unusually high figure, one third could have been cast by Kuomintang supporters because of the above consideration. Similarly, perhaps up to 2 percent of the voters (about two hundred sixty thousand) abstained from voting because of the same factor. The latter speculation was partly premised on the fact that the voter turnout rate in the 2004 presidential election was only 80 percent, 2 percent lower than that in the 2000 presidential election, though arguably the 2004 electoral race was even more heated.

In Taipei and Taichung, with Kuomintang mayors, the pan-blue alliance did not secure the expected large margins of victory. In Taipei, it won by 207,000 votes, and in Taichung, it only won by 30,000 votes, considerably lower than the

anticipated margins of 300,000 votes and 100,000 votes, respectively. In comparison, the pan-green alliance secured major victories in their strong bases of support as expected: it won by 190,000 votes in Tainan county, 67,000 votes in Tainan city, about 100,000 votes in Kaohsiung municipality, 120,000 votes in Kaohsiung county, and 83,000 votes in Pingtung county.

In sum, the Lien Chan–James Soong ticket appeared like an old double-hump camel that had gone through the administrations of Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo, and Lee Teng-hui. This camel had enjoyed the power, wealth, and prestige of the Kuomintang regime in Taiwan, but it also had to assume the burden of the regime’s legacy, such as the February 28 incident, the era of white terror, the neglect of development in southern Taiwan, and so on. Moreover, both Lien Chan and James Soong had been heavily involved in the corruption and engagement of criminal gangs during Lee Teng-hui’s twelve years of administration as Lee’s key lieutenants in different periods. The assassination attempt on the day before the election was the last straw that finally broke the camel’s back.

### **The Hong Kong Factor**

Political development in Hong Kong had not been a crucial factor in Taiwan politics, as it made little impact on the island. In fact, the DPP, in contrast to the Kuomintang, did not have any support group in Hong Kong before Chen Shui-bian became president. The Chen administration did not seem to have taken a strong interest in Hong Kong affairs, either. However, the DPP had the shrewd political sense to exploit the failure of the “one country, two systems” model in the territory in support of its presidential election campaign in 2004.

One week after the massive protest rally in Hong Kong on July 1, 2003, in which more than half a million people took part, President Chen Shui-bian openly stated that “one country, two systems” only meant “suppression” and “control”; hence, there were so many Hong Kong people protesting against the C. H. Tung administration. The Chen Shui-bian–Annette Lu Hsiu-lien ticket then launched all-out attacks to discredit the pan-blue alliance for advocating the position of “one China, subject to each side’s interpretations.” The latter was labelled as “Taiwan traitors,” “betraying Taiwan” to accommodate Beijing. Soon after his electoral victory, President Chen Shui-bian stated in an interview by the *Washington Post*:

As we have observed the events in Hong Kong over the past year, I think our observation only further strengthens the conviction of the 23 million people of Taiwan in rejecting the “one country, two systems” formula. We have observed major problems with “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong. . . . But it is unthinkable for people in Hong Kong to elect directly their Chief Executive. . . . The failure of “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong has contributed to the rise of Taiwan identity and the rise of Taiwan awareness. That is why I was given the privilege of being elected in 2000 and re-elected for a second term this year.<sup>14</sup>

## **Political Developments in the Wake of the Election**

Most people in Taiwan accept that elections in recent years were largely fair, and the presidential election in 2004 was no exception. Their confidence was largely based on the fact that all parties concerned had been closely monitoring the campaign and election processes, in view of the high stakes; given that the rule of law and freedom of the mass media prevailed, it would not be possible to engage in gross bribery and violations of the law in pursuit of an edge in the election. Such attempts would probably have backfired.

Most people, however, did not rule out that both sides might be tempted to engage in all kinds of tricks and conspiracies.<sup>15</sup> Smear tactics were anticipated almost by all parties concerned. It was generally expected that the Chen Shui-bian Administration would fully exploit its advantage as the party in power, just as the Kuomintang administration had done before. Naturally, even in the well-established Western democracies, incumbent governments enjoy certain privileges that must not be over-exploited, so as to avoid possible backlashes. Although supporters of the pan-blue alliance were quick to accuse the Chen–Lu ticket of all kinds of unfair practices, voters in favor of the pan-green camp would indicate that elections in recent years were much fairer than those held in the Kuomintang era. When the pan-blue alliance demanded a re-count of the votes during the post-election controversy, few expected that too many irregularities would be discovered, as activists from both camps had been closely monitoring the voting process in every voting station. Most political observers, domestic and foreign, tend to agree that elections in Taiwan have become cleaner in the recent decade, but, despite the improvements, all kinds of deals between local political bosses or the triads and the major parties still exist.

The narrow margin of Chen's victory, the perception of a conspiracy, and the potential terrible blow to the Kuomintang and the PFP aroused much passion among the staunch supporters of the Kuomintang–PFP alliance, causing widespread protest activities in Taipei and other places. These protest activities challenged the legitimacy of the electoral process. The legitimacy of the second Chen Shui-bian administration was compromised. But, with the benefit of hindsight, the impact of such protest activities was exaggerated at that time. The controversy was more serious than that over the vote count in Florida in the U.S. presidential election in 2000, but the protest activities basically involved no violence. They were an expression of anger and frustration, but could not be sustained despite the significant political cleavage. After all, the people in Taiwan wanted life to be back to normal and preserve the stability and prosperity that they treasure. There were worries that the political cleavage might further deepen, and that the democratic institutions might not be able to reduce its significance. But there was also a clear consensus that democracy must be preserved and allowed to function. Thus, acceptance of the election result gradually

emerged in the pan-blue camp despite the lingering belief that a conspiracy had been involved.

Immediately after the election, the Kuomintang–PFP alliance launched lawsuits at the Taipei High Court to secure an “invalidation of the election” and an “invalidation of the election outcome,” according to the Statute on the Election and Recall of the President and the Vice President and Its Implementation Regulations (ch. 6, art. 92–102). If the judiciary decides to invalidate the election, then another election has to be held. If it decides to invalidate the election result, then the Chen–Lu ticket must hand over their power to the Lien–Soong team. The strategy of combining a massive protest movement and litigation to alter the election result, however, had little chance of success.

Litigation can be a highly time-consuming process. The first trial can last for six months, and the first appeal can last for another six months. Further appeals are also possible, and the judicial process may even outlive Chen Shui-bian’s second term. It is also unlikely that a re-count of the votes will allow the Lien–Soong team to secure 29,518 votes and more to overcome the margin of defeat. As explained above, a massive protest movement rapidly lost the support of public opinion and could hardly sustain until the presidential inauguration ceremony on May 20. The only chance for the Kuomintang–PFP alliance was to secure hard evidence soon to prove that the DPP was solidly behind the assassination-attempt conspiracy.

By the summer of 2004, criticisms began to center on Lien Chan and James Soong. Many supporters of the pan-blue camp believed that they should retire and make way for the younger generation of leaders; there was also dissatisfaction with their failure to bring about a merge of the two parties and other groups within the pan-blue alliance. Under such circumstances, the pan-blue alliance is not expected to do well in the legislature elections to be held in December 2004. The by-elections of the Kaohsiung municipal council already issued a strong warning to the alliance.<sup>16</sup> If the Kuomintang and the PFP do not act quickly and decisively, it is possible for the former to enter into a long period of serious decline and the latter to become a bubble, like the New Party before it. The DPP may then become the predominant party, like the Kuomintang in the last century. This may not be the best scenario for the development of democracy in Taiwan.

### **Implications of Chen’s Victory for Relations across the Taiwan Straits**

It is generally believed that the Chinese authorities were quite well prepared for Chen’s electoral victory, which did not come as a surprise. In view of the lawsuit launched by Lien Chan and James Soong to declare the election as well as the election of Chen Shui-bian null and void, and the controversy over the election’s legitimacy, which generated a potential political and constitutional crisis, Beijing decided to delay its response. Obviously, Chinese leaders would like to

study the contents of President Chen Shui-bian's inaugural address first. In the intermediate term, they would closely monitor Chen's plan on constitutional revision or the promulgation of a new constitution.

In the 2004 presidential election campaign, anti-China sentiments and the reverse side of it, the love Taiwan campaign, were fully exploited by the DPP. The political cleavage based on ethnic communities was exacerbated, and its associated issues suppressed normal policy debates. At least half the people in Taiwan accepted Lee Teng-hui's position of "two separate states" or Chen Shui-bian's idea of "one state on either side of the Taiwan Straits." The original position of the Kuomintang and the PFP—"one China, which is the Republic of China," "one China, subject to its respective interpretations," "Communist Party of China is not China, and China cannot be equated with the Communist Party of China"—has been overshadowed. They have been forced to adjust their position and shift closer to that of the pan-green camp. This is a serious challenge to Beijing's Taiwan policy and will have an unfavorable impact on relations across the Taiwan Straits in the foreseeable future.

Apparently, Chinese leaders have given up hope for the Chen Shui-bian administration. They do not expect meaningful negotiations to take place, and they are even reluctant to engage in negotiations on direct transport links and other issues so as not to enhance the political capital of the Chen Shui-bian administration. China's Taiwan policy is largely one of deterrence, and it consists of three elements. Diplomatic efforts have been stepped up to ensure that countries with formal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China will continue to uphold the "one China" position, and countries with influence on Taiwan, ranging from the United States to Singapore, have been persuaded to warn the Chen Shui-bian administration against moving too far down the road of independence. Since most governments concerned want to preserve peace in the Taiwan Straits, and are convinced that the Chinese leaders will likely exercise the military option if the Chen Shui-bian administration dares to challenge their baseline, the Chinese leaders have been rather successful in their efforts of persuasion.

At the same time, the Chinese authorities have begun exerting pressure on Taiwanese business groups that strongly support the DPP and the Chen Shui-bian administration. At this stage, the targets are extremely limited and the pressures are relatively subtle, but a warning has been issued and a demonstration effect has been generated.<sup>17</sup> For many years, an important element of Beijing's Taiwan policy has been "yishang weizheng (use the business community to exert pressure on the government)"; and in view of the increasing economic integration across the Taiwan Straits, this united front policy will likely be effective. Businessmen in Taiwan may not support Beijing's Taiwan policy, but few would be willing to antagonize the Chinese authorities because it will lead to damages to their business interests.

As relations across the Taiwan Straits deteriorate, and as Chinese leaders acutely want to deter the Chen Shui-bian administration from revising the constitution or promulgating a new constitution and holding a referendum on the issue, the military option has become more significant. There were reports in July 2004 that the Central Military Commission of the Communist Party of China proposed to resolve the Taiwan question around 2020 in a recent meeting, thus setting a timetable as well as a deadline for the acquisition of the capabilities for the exercise of the military option.<sup>18</sup> Under such circumstances, an arms race across the Taiwan Straits has been escalating. China has been buying Su-27 and Su-30 advanced fighters, as well as Sovremenny-class destroyers and Kilo-class submarines from Russia, and the Bush administration has been pushing Taiwan to secure Kidd-class destroyers, diesel-powered submarines, PAC-3 anti-aircraft missiles, and other such weapons. The hundreds of short-range missiles deployed along the coast of eastern China facing Taiwan have provided a convenient excuse for the latter to seek participation in the U.S.-led theater missile defense program in the Asia-Pacific region.

The real test will come in 2006–08, when the Chen Shui-bian administration enters its final two years. As the second-term president who cannot run again, Chen may be tempted to push Taiwan further down the road of independence and thus establish his historical status as the founder of an independent Taiwan. He has already announced plans for a major constitutional revision or even the promulgation of a new constitution, as well as a referendum on the issue. These developments are perceived as highly provocative in the eyes of the Chinese leadership and may well lead to a confrontation across the Taiwan Straits. The best scenario is that Chen will respond to international pressure and seek to formulate his constitutional amendments in a way that will generate no more than a strong condemnation from Beijing.

## **Conclusion**

The dominant feature of politics in Taiwan in the past decade and more has been the differences among the ethnic communities, compounded by the reunification/independence controversy. This significant political cleavage has been an obstacle to the development of a mature political culture in support of strengthening democratic institutions. Theoretically, the peaceful replacement of the Kuomintang by the DPP (*zhengdang lunti*) will help to resolve the grievances of the *benshengren*. Since the pan-blue alliance and the pan-green alliance have to work hard to secure the support of those who hold the middle ground in order to win elections, both camps will have to narrow their policy differences. Unfortunately, while this is true to a large extent, even with regard to Taiwan's relations with Mainland China, the latter has become the predominant issue, so much so that the political cleavage has probably become even more significant in this relatively early stage of democratization.

Pressures from the Chinese leadership in securing a breakthrough in the relations across the Taiwan Straits have also served to exacerbate the political cleavage. Attitudes and positions on Taiwan's Mainland China policy assume a very important role in shaping voting behavior and support for political parties. As long as such pressures exist, it will be difficult for other policy issues to gradually occupy the central stage in the political process and allow political consensus to strengthen, so as to facilitate changes of government on the basis of performance. The statement by the beshengren in southern Taiwan in the recent presidential election that they would still vote for Chen Shui-bian even though their bellies were flat was highly illustrative.

Though the significance of the political cleavage and the post-election protests in 2004 cast doubt on the legitimacy of the electoral process, it has to be recognized that democratic institutions are gradually taking root in Taiwan. The institutionalization of democracy in the short term has not contributed much to the reduction of the political cleavage, but in the long term it is expected to have a positive effect. In the coming years, however, the Chen Shui-bian administration's plan of revising the constitution or promulgating a new constitution will likely exacerbate the political cleavage and escalate tension across the Taiwan Straits. Further, if the DPP emerges as the predominant party while the Kuomintang and the PFP continue to decline, this institutionalization process will not be smooth.

#### NOTES

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3. Douglas W. Rae and Michael Taylor, *The Analysis of Political Cleavages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Keith Dowding and Desmond King, eds., *Preference, Institutions, and Rational Choice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); and Arend Lijphart, "The Cleavage Model and Electoral Geography: A Review," in *Developments in Electoral Geography*, ed. R. J. Johnston, F. M. Shelley, and P. J. Taylor, 143–50.

4. See the chapter on "People and Language" in *Taiwan Yearbook 2004* (Taipei: Government Information Office, 2004).

5. See Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1–10.

6. The information and statistics in this paragraph are provided by the Government Information Office, Executive Yuan, and the Central Election Commission; they are all updated through the end of 2003.

7. See Chen Longzhi, *Taiwan de Duli yu Jianguo (The Independence of Taiwan and the Establishment of a Taiwan State)* (Taipei: Yuedan Chuban Gongsi, 1994), 21–67; and Song Zelai, *Taiwan-ren de Siwo Zhuixun (The Self-Search of Taiwanese)* (Taipei: Qianwei Chubanshe, 1988), 93–130.

8. For an analysis of the incident and its significance, see George H. Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); and Lai Tse-han, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Won, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 181–322.

9. A good reference may be Li Ao, *Guoanju Baise Kongbu Dangan (The White Terror Files of the National Security Bureau)*, vols. 1 and 2 (Taipei: Tianyuan Chubanshe, 1988). This book is still

banned in Taiwan. According to Li Ao, the files contain about twenty-four thousand cases. There was only one case of death penalty for engaging in the “Taiwan independence movement.” The vast majority of the other cases were for rebellion, punished by the death penalty, life imprisonment, or prison terms exceeding ten years.

10. *China Times* (Taipei), July 4, 2003.

11. *United Daily News* (Singapore), September 17, 2003.

12. Central Election Commission, Taiwan, <http://www.cec.gov.tw/>.

13. Government Information Office, *The Republic of China Yearbook 2001* (Taipei: Government Information Office, 2001), 281.

14. “Taiwan’s President Chen Shui-bian,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 2004.

15. For an account of these tricks and conspiracies, see Zhan Yixia, *Maipiao Chanhuilu (Confessions on vote-buying)* (Taipei: Shangzhou Chubanshe, 2003). Zhan was basic-level party organization secretary of Kuomintang’s Taipei County office.

16. During the Kaohsiung municipal council by-elections in July 2004, the first elections to be held after the presidential elections, the DPP secured major gains. The victory of the Taiwan Solidarity Union was especially impressive. The Kuomintang managed to hold its positions, but the PFP failed in all races, indicating the further decline in electoral support for the pan-blue camp in southern Taiwan. See, for example, Luo Fan, “Fanlan Lianmeng Mianlin Benpan Weiji (The Pan-blue Alliance Faces a Crisis of Collapse),” *Open Magazine* (August 2004): 57.

17. In late May 2004, *People’s Daily* attacked Hsu Wen-lung, founder of the Chi Mei Group and the sixth on the *Forbes* list of Taiwan’s richest men, as the negative model of the unwelcome Taiwan opportunist. Hsu was described as a “big shot for Taiwan independence” who has “amassed a fortune” in China. There were rumors in the Taiwan media that officials in China’s Zhejiang province would start obstructing Chi Mei Group’s plan to build a factory there to assemble flat-screen monitors. Hsu was an advisor of former President Lee Teng-hui and he endorsed Chen Shui-bian for president in 2000. See Jason Dean, “Standing Up in the Wind,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* 167, no. 30 (July 29, 2004): 33.

18. See Xue Litai, “Zhongguo Duanqi Wufa Gongtai (China Cannot Attack Taiwan in the Short Term),” *Apple Daily* (Hong Kong), July 26, 2004.

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