

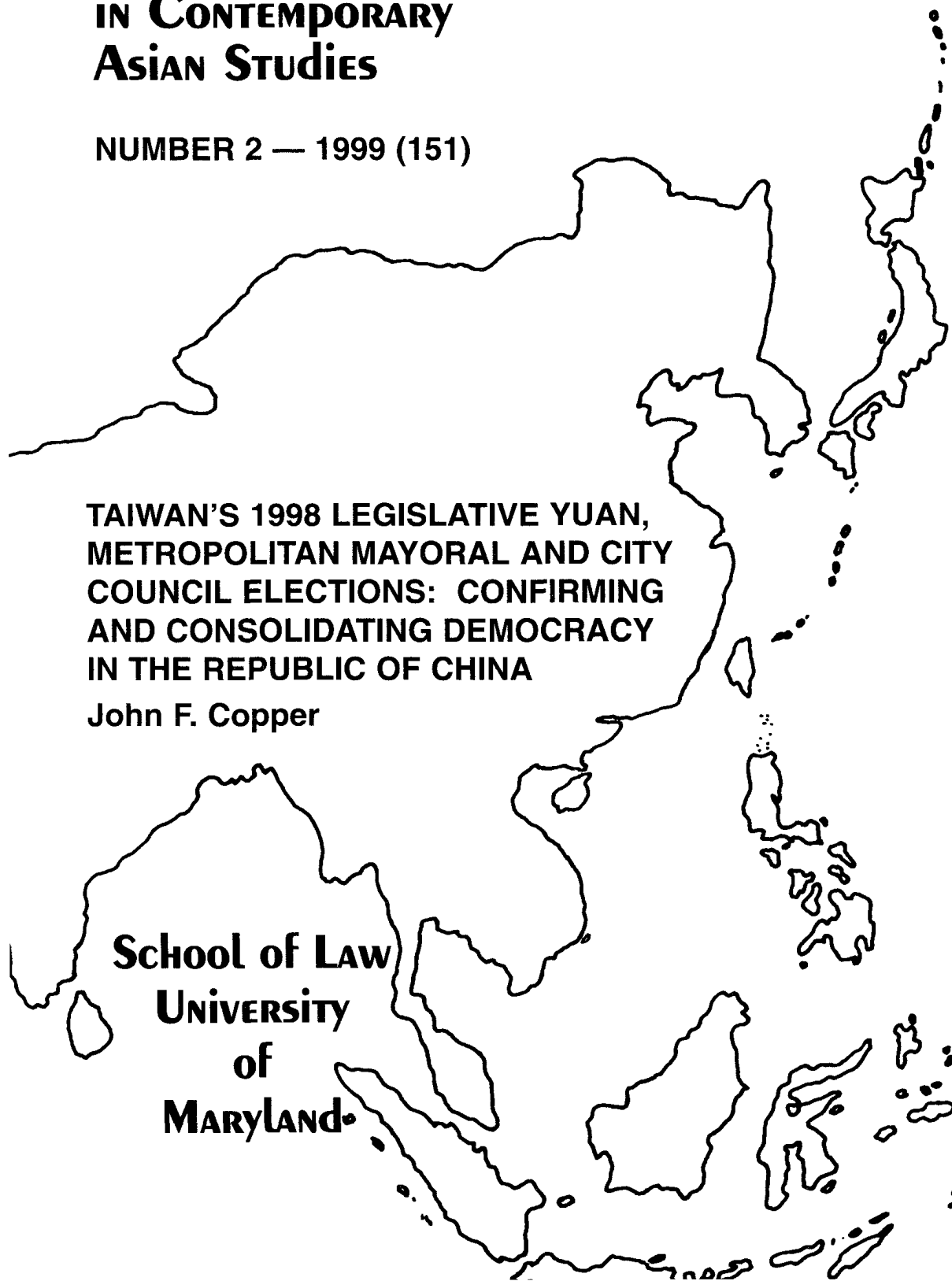
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**TAIWAN'S 1998 LEGISLATIVE YUAN,
METROPOLITAN MAYORAL AND CITY
COUNCIL ELECTIONS: CONFIRMING
AND CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRACY
IN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

John F. Copper

**School of Law
UNIVERSITY
of
MARYLAND**



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*By John F. Copper**

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I. INTRODUCTION

On December 5, 1998, voters in Taiwan (the nation officially known as the Republic of China) went to the polls to cast ballots to choose delegates to the nation's lawmaking body of government, the Legislative Yuan.¹ The electorate in Taipei and Kaohsiung metropolitan cities also voted for mayors and city councils.²

This election was Taiwan's ninth competitive election at the national level (the tenth if the 1994 election of Taiwan's provincial governor, the provincial assembly, metropolitan mayors and city councils is counted as a national election, which it was in most respects). It was the nation's fifth non-supplemental or plenary election. It was Taiwan's third non-supplemental election for the Legislative Yuan. It was the second election for metropolitan may-

* John F. Copper is the Stanley J. Buckman professor of International Studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee.

1. The Legislative Yuan, or the lawmaking body of government in the Republic of China, is one of the three main branches of government and one of three elected bodies of government. The other two are the President and National Assembly; the Control Yuan used to be an elected body, but is not now. The National Assembly amends the Constitution among other duties and is much less important than the Legislative Yuan.

2. Taipei, which is the nation's capital and largest city, and Kaohsiung, which is its second largest city and its main industrial city and largest port, have the status as metropolitan cities. This gives the governments of these cities special constitutional status and requires special elections to select mayors and city councils.

ors. It was the eighth for the Taipei city council and the fifth for the Kaohsiung city council.³

Four new parties, in addition to three older parties, competed for seats in at least one part of the election. Two of the new parties campaigned for Taiwan's independence: the Taiwan Independence Party and the New Nation Party. In fact, this was the major tenet in the campaign platforms of these two parties. Two other "parties" were in essence groups or alliances of independent candidates that *ad hoc* formed a loose party organization, encouraged to do so by Taiwan's election law, in particular to win at-large votes if they collectively gained more than 5 percent of the total vote. A sizeable number of unaffiliated independent candidates also ran.

All of the political parties mentioned above, plus the Green Party, hosted candidates. These parties, in addition to several other small parties that marginally campaigned, brought the total number of parties participating to 12. The three major parties, the ruling Nationalist Party or Kuomintang (KMT), the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the New Party (NP), dominated the campaign.

Candidates vied for 225 seats in the Legislative Yuan: 176 district seats and 49 at large seats, of which 41 constitute a national constituency and 8 represent Chinese living overseas. There were 402 candidates to contest seats from 29 regional constituencies and two districts representing the plain and mountain Aborigines. There were a total of 499 candidates counting those seeking seats in the national constituency or those representing Overseas Chinese. There were 110 candidates for 52 Taipei city council seats and 105 for 44 Kaohsiung city council seats. There were 14.96 million eligible voters (including 1.87 million that also voted in the Taipei mayoral and city council elections and 1.00 million that voted in the Kaohsiung elections).⁴

3. For an assessment of previous elections, see John F. Copper with George P. Chen, *Taiwan's Elections: Political Development and Democratization in the Republic of China*, Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 1984; John F. Copper, *Taiwan's Recent Elections: Fulfilling the Democratic Promise*, Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 1990; John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 1991 and 1992 Nonsupplemental Elections: Reaching a Higher State of Democracy*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994; John F. Copper, *Taiwan's Mid-1990s Elections: Taking the Final Steps to Democracy*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998. See chapter 2 of *Taiwan's Mid-1990s Elections* for the case that the provincial election in 1994 was in many respects a national election.

4. "More than 600 candidates to run in upcoming election," *China Post*, October 23, 1998, p. 2.

The Legislative Yuan had been enlarged by 61 seats from the one elected in 1995, by a constitutional amendment passed in 1997. The body was increased in size in part to accommodate delegates from the Taiwan Provincial Assembly, which was to be disestablished in late December 1998 as part of efforts to downsize the provincial government. Nearly three-fourths of Taiwan Provincial Assembly delegates were candidates for seats in the Legislative Yuan.

Going into the election, the ruling Nationalist Party, or KMT, held 81 seats in the Legislative Yuan—slightly less than a majority. (It had won a majority in the last election, but lost seats because Vincent Siew left to become premier, and because of expulsions and deaths.) The Democratic Progressive Party held 45 seats, the New Party 15, and independents 16.

All of the three major parties nominated a smaller number of candidates per seat than in the previous election in order to prevent intra-party competition. The ruling Nationalist Party nominated 115 candidates for Legislative Yuan seats; the Democratic Progressive Party picked 79; the New Party hosted 36.⁵

A number of opinion polls taken before the election were proven wrong, particularly in the case of the Kaohsiung mayoral race. According to many polls, the KMT incumbent was predicted to win easily. Instead he was defeated. The surveys taken on the Taipei mayorship generally put the two leading candidates in a race too close to call, though a very late poll put the DPP's incumbent mayor ahead; he lost.⁶ Polls predicting the results of the Legislative Yuan election were more accurate.

A downturn in the economy and increased economic insecurity in the context of the "Asian meltdown" caused contributors to give less to the parties than in previous campaigns and forced the parties to operate on smaller budgets and change somewhat their types of campaigning and campaign advertising. This may have also made the election a cleaner one in terms of vote buying.

The campaign was full of excitement, antics and campaign tricks. Accusations about sexual improprieties abounded, as well as finger pointing regarding corruption and malfeasance in office. There were a number of law suits; in some cases candidates sued other candidates. Ethnic politics became a central part of Taipei mayoral race. Reports circulated about a number of other things,

5. Details on the candidates and numbers can be found below.

6. These and other polls are cited below.

including speculation that President Lee did not support his party's candidate for the Taipei mayor and hoped that the DPP candidate would win. Lee, however, campaigned for MA Ying-jeou, candidate of the ruling Nationalist Party for Taipei mayor, thus dispelling this rumor.

The results of the election constituted a significant victory for the ruling Nationalist Party. The ruling party won a strong majority in the Legislative Yuan and made gains in the metropolitan city councils. Of greater notice, however, was the fact that the KMT won the Taipei mayor race. This election attracted the most attention and a big voter turnout. It was seen as a barometer for assessing who was the overall big winner in the election. It was seen as a position that would be a springboard for the presidency in 2000, inasmuch as incumbent DPP mayor CHEN Shui-bian had been often touted in the press as the best presidential candidate to replace LEE Teng-hui two years hence.

Most experts, as well as the media, interpreted the election results as a setback for both the Democratic Progressive Party and the New Party. Hopes that the DPP might win the presidential race in 2000 were dampened. The New Party's performance was so poor that its future as a political party was brought into question.

The United States government paid an inordinate amount of attention to this election.⁷ The White House and the Department of State were worried that the opposition Democratic Progressive Party might win and win big. On top of a landslide victory in local elections in November 1997, this would, it was thought, have positioned the DPP for a victory in the 2000 presidential election. In view of the DPP's support of an independent Taiwan and Beijing's threats to use military force against the island if Taiwan were to officially declare itself separate from China, and in view of the 1996 missile crisis, which caused a face-off between Washington and Beijing, the United States hoped for a KMT victory, especially in the Taipei mayoral election. Whether this would help the KMT, or cause a backlash, was not certain until the votes were counted.

What role Beijing might play in the election, in view of its interference in 1995 and 1996 when it conducted missile tests in the Taiwan Strait to intimidate the government and the electorate, was also an issue that was pondered throughout the campaign. As it

7. For background, see John F. Copper, "A U.S. Negotiating Role in Resolving Beijing-Taipei Differences," *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Summer/Fall 1998, pp. 384-417.

turned out, Beijing did not repeat its performance. It was pleased by the results of the election, but was hesitant to say so.

The election was thought to have important implications for the nation's political party system. The previous Legislative Yuan election had been a three-party contest. But the New Party had not fared so well in subsequent elections, and it did not in this one. Nor did any party other than the KMT and the DPP do well. The conclusion—for the moment anyway—was that a two-party system is again evolving.

Observers spoke of Taiwan's democratization when reporting or analyzing the election. Few, however, spoke of the election as furthering democratization, as, to most, Taiwan had already become a full-fledged democracy. This election was seen rather as "conforming" or "helping consolidate" the country's democratization.

Events during the months and weeks preceding the election had considerable impact on both the campaign and on election results. Until the votes were counted, though, it was uncertain how the political year would influence voters. Of special significance was the economic downturn, which might have been blamed on the KMT, since it was the ruling party. An alternative view, however, was that the ruling party was not to blame and that Taiwan was faring better than the rest of Asia; if there were economic difficulties, it would be better to keep the KMT in power. Local elections also had an impact, as did relations with Beijing. As it turned out, the conservative view that it is "best not to change boats in mid-stream" was the way most voters saw the situation.

II. PREELECTION POLITICS IN TAIWAN

As has been true of other elections in Taiwan, events during the months leading up to this election influenced voters going to the polls to cast ballots, as did local elections held during that period. Generally, the preelection situation or events and politics before December 5 seemed to favor the ruling Nationalist Party, but to most observers this was by no means certain.

The most salient event of the one year-plus preceding the voting in December 1998 was a local election held in November 1997. This election for county magistrates and city mayors, in other words local executives, ended with a resounding victory for the opposition Democratic Progressive Party. The DPP nearly doubled the number of local executive offices under its control and, after the election, had placed executives in office with jurisdiction over more than 70 percent of the nation's population. The opposition party

won 43 percent of the popular vote—more than the ruling KMT for the first time in any major election. The New Party also performed poorly, prompting some pundits to speculate as to its demise. DPP leaders and the media talked after the election about a “new order.”⁸

The election results were not only literally a shock for the Nationalist Party, but resulted in increased optimism within the DPP that it would do well in coming elections and could win control either of the legislative branch of government in 1998 or the presidency in 2000—or both. It also caused consternation elsewhere, namely in the United States and in Beijing.

Inasmuch as the Democratic Progressive Party formally advocated Taiwan's independence (such a tenet being in the party's charter), and in view of the fact that the leaders in the People's Republic of China vowed to employ military force against Taiwan in the event it declares independence, the results of this election were quite disconcerting to the Clinton Administration. Both the White House and the Department of State sought to avoid another confrontation with Beijing in view of the seriousness of their face-off in 1996 during the run-up to the March presidential election in Taiwan, when the People's Liberation Army conducted missile tests near two of Taiwan's port cities (Kaohsiung and Keelung) to intimidate voters.⁹

In fact, fearing another such crisis might be generated by this event and apprehension that it might devolve into another confrontation with Beijing, the Clinton Administration sent a host of representatives, including a number of former high level defense and foreign policy making officials to Taipei, to check out the situation

8. For details, see Eric P. Moon and James A. Robinson, “Taiwan's 1997 Local Elections: Appraising Steps in Democratization,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, Volume 5, Number 1 (April 1998).

9. For details of the missile tests and their impact both on Taiwan and the United States at the time, see Copper, *Taiwan's Mid-1990s Elections*, *supra* note 3, chapter 4. Recently it has been reported by the Washington Post that the tension between Washington and Beijing was greater than was originally reported. On June 21, the Washington Post reported that Secretary of Defense William Perry, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake and Secretary of State Warren Christopher all threatened Liu Huaqiu, who was visiting Washington at the time, with “grave consequences.” Two days later, President Clinton ordered the largest concentration of naval power in the region since 1958. One U.S. official said “It was very tense. We prepared. war plans, the options.” The report also stated that one of the missiles flew almost directly over Taipei, something that was not reported at the time and that the nuclear threat was more serious than it seemed at the time and immediately thereafter. See “U.S., PRC on verge of war in 1996: report,” *China Post*, June 22, 1998, p. 1.

and "talk sense" to those favoring independence. Their exhortations were entertained politely by government and opposition leaders in Taiwan, but it was uncertain what real effect they had. In short, there remained considerable anxiety in Washington that the DPP might ignite a U.S.-China conflagration. Some observers in Taiwan noted this seemed to mirror a change in policy by the United States government—which had heretofore favored democratization in Taiwan and as a result had sympathized with the opposition DPP.

In mid-January, Joseph Nye, former Clinton Administration Assistant Secretary of Defense, visited Taipei. Nye said publicly, from what was clearly a prepared text, that the United States is concerned about Asian stability and security. He likewise noted, not just parenthetically, that "as long as Taiwan does not declare independence, China will have no excuse to attack Taiwan." He also used a phrase that might have suggested a change in thinking in Washington or even a new U.S. policy: "strategic clarity and tactical ambiguity." Nye's visit and comments were interpreted locally as a warning to the DPP in the context of their November election victory that proclaiming independence, given the opposition party's new status, was even more dangerous.¹⁰

Just days later, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, former National Security Advisor (in the Bush Administration) Brent Scowcroft, and former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili also visited Taipei. Perry advised Deputy Foreign Minister David Lee that Beijing is "pragmatic and realistic" and is open to talks with Taipei "without preconditions." The general message the group sent was that talk about independence should be dampened and that the U.S. would like to see a productive dialog between Taipei and Beijing.¹¹

Nye, former Clinton national security adviser Anthony Lake, and former chief diplomatic representative in Taipei and former ambassador to China, James Lilley, made subsequent appearances in Taiwan. Together they sent the signal that the United States was concerned that a DPP victory at the national level would spark serious tensions between Taipei and Beijing. Meanwhile they tried to refute the notion (commonly stated by DPP officials and supporters) that declaring independence would give Taiwan greater inter-

10. Virginia Sheng, "U.S. defense expert urges stability," *Free China Journal*, January 16, 1998, p. 2.

11. Weiling Liu, "Lee receives U.S. defense experts," *Free China Journal*, January 23, 1998, p. 2.

national recognition and more U.S. weapons. According to some media experts in Taiwan, the United States would not support Taiwan's independence and it was, at this juncture, saying so unequivocally.¹²

On March 5, Anthony Lake gave a public speech in Taipei entitled "Taiwan and the United States: Security and Stability in a Time of Change." Some labelled this the "carrot" to go along with the "stick" used earlier. He said in his address that Taiwan deserves international status commensurate with its political and economic accomplishments and specifically mentioned membership in the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. He also stressed, however, the importance of Taipei-Beijing talks.¹³

In late June, when President Clinton visited China, the United States obliquely sent an even stronger signal to Taiwan that Washington wanted Taipei and Beijing to negotiate their differences and did not support an independent Taiwan. Clinton, as a matter of fact, shocked Taiwan when he publicly concurred with Beijing's "three nos policy" and declared that the United States did not support an independent Taiwan, one China and one Taiwan, or Taipei's participation in international organizations that assumed statehood for membership. Some in Taiwan reacted with horror; others with anger. It seemed, however, that the majority did not panic and viewed President Clinton's declarations as a calculated warning against provoking Beijing with a declaration of independence motivated by fear that it would ignite an armed conflict in the Taiwan Strait.¹⁴ As a matter of fact, many in Taiwan interpreted Clinton's simultaneous call for an end to the cross-strait deadlock not as suggesting the United States was "selling out" Taiwan, but as a positive sign.¹⁵

12. *Ibid.*

13. "Week in Review," *Free China Journal*, March 6, 1998, p. 1.

14. A protest demonstration of 1,500 people was held in Taipei. However, it was not nearly as large as some recent labor protests. Protestors held placards saying "Taiwan is not for sale," or similar statements. Still, an opinion poll taken at this same time indicated that 69.2 percent of citizens want direct communications, transportation links and commerce with China. See "1,500 protest against 'one China' policy," *China Post*, June 28, 1998, p. 15.

15. See, for example, "Clinton calls for an end to cross-strait deadlock," *The China Post*, June 28, 1998, p. 1 and an editorial entitled, "Summit fears prove unfounded," in the same paper on page 4. In a front-page story on July 1, when President Clinton concurred with Beijing's three nos, the subheading to the story was "In clearest statement yet, U.S. says it opposes independence."

The next several days, or what might be called the post-Clinton visit to China withdrawal, was characterized more by a sigh of relief than renewed fear in Taiwan, particularly since some of the political parties and a number of candidates had exploited the situation to gain media attention by engaging in highly pessimistic and sensational statements such as suggesting the United States would sign a "fourth communiqué" with Beijing and completely abandon Taiwan.¹⁶ Soon it became very apparent that the visit was something that neither the Democratic Progressive Party nor the New Party could easily exploit, inasmuch as the public was not really alarmed and many who were expressed their concern that some groups in Taiwan (meaning independence advocates and anyone who did not support Taipei's current policies) might provoke a crisis. Taipei mayor CHEN Shui-bian, one of the vocal members of the DPP regarding Taiwan independence, thus declared that he felt the trip had not hurt Taiwan.¹⁷ DPP chairman HSU Hsin-liang made a statement saying that Clinton had not made any concessions and that Taipei should pursue talks with Beijing more actively.¹⁸ Hsu subsequently proposed a "one system, one country" formula (meaning unification would follow democratization in China). His bromide, however, drew fire from top officials of his own party and seemed to mirror a deep-seated division in the DPP on this issue. Party Secretary-General CHIOU I-jen called Hsu's idea "very lousy" strategy.¹⁹ If any conclusion could be drawn about the impact of the Clinton trip on Taiwan politics, it was this: the DPP was split on what action to take and was faced with a serious dilemma, as was the New Party. The KMT's policies seemed to have support in the party and outside.

After the Clinton trip, William Perry, in a seminar on July 13, proposed a "three-stage plan" for the development of cross Taiwan Strait relations. He also talked about the "track two" concept, urg-

It should be noted also that President Clinton put nothing in writing regarding the "three nos" and, in subsequent statements, he and others in the Administration denied strongly that Washington's policy toward Taiwan had changed. Moreover, Congress subsequently passed resolutions favoring Taiwan.

16. It is noteworthy that the three major political parties all sent delegations to the United States before the trip to express concern about a new direction in Washington-Beijing relations. See editorial cited in *ibid*.

17. "No false optimism on Beijing summit: experts," *China Post*, June 29, 1998, p. 20.

18. Sofia Wu, "Clinton firm on Taiwan: DPP," *The China Post*, June 28, 1998, p. 16.

19. Stephanie Low, "Hsu's 'one system' proposal blasted," *China Post*, July 8, 1998, p. 20.

ing Taipei to set up a second dialog channel with the United States that would give Washington a parallel channel of communications with Taipei and Beijing.²⁰ The suggestion was clear that Washington wanted to be involved and expected productive talks between Taipei and Beijing and was not happy about the advocacy of independence.

At this juncture and due to what might be seen as intense lobbying, pressure and exhortations on the part of Washington, it was uncertain how the U.S. factor and Taiwan independence might play with the voter in December. But it did prompt discussions and various meetings to discuss Taiwan's relations with the People's Republic of China, including the matter of independence. It also ostensibly led to overtures by both sides that some interpreted as leading directly to talks later in the year.

To what extent the government sought negotiations with Beijing and to what degree it responded to U.S. pressure is difficult to assess. In any event, Taipei made serious efforts to seek a reconciliation with China early in the year and the ruling Nationalist Party was way ahead of the DPP in terms of advocating and promoting talks. Even before Washington launched its efforts to dampen talk about independence just cited, government officials were trying to arrange a meeting. In late 1997, Vice President LIEN Chan declared, in response to Beijing's three nos, that Taipei also had three items that it opposed: Taiwan independence, hasty reunification and confrontation. He mentioned also "three musts": maintain peace, continue exchanges and search for a win-win situation.²¹ The government further proposed, which some interpreted as a genuine effort to get talks started (even though this was heard before), that talks begin with non-political and technical matters.²²

The DPP continued to suffer from very profound internal differences on the issue of negotiations with Beijing. In fact, the November election victory appeared to greatly accentuate these differences. The moderate Formosa faction, led by party chairman HSU Hsin-liang, advocated a policy of engagement. The more radical New Tide faction pushed the idea of a balance of power in the Taiwan Strait and argued that China would someday invade Taiwan but the United States would protect the island. Thus, its position

20. Virginia Sheng, "Taipei reiterates eagerness to improve cross-strait ties," *Free China Journal*, July 17, 1998, p. 1.

21. Weiling Liu, "Peking urged to start up 'no preconditions' talks," *Free China Journal*, January 3, 1998, p. 1.

22. *Ibid.*

was that Taiwan should put more efforts into seeking ties elsewhere, saying that there is no real need for talks with Beijing. It also promoted using the "three links" with China as a bargaining chip. The smaller Justice Alliance and Welfare State Alliance factions sided with New Tide.²³

In February, the DPP held a symposium on China policy to try to resolve differences within the party on certain tenets of policy relating to cross-Strait relations. The various factions agreed that Taiwan enjoyed sovereignty and that this should not be the subject of negotiations. They concurred that the Formosa faction's "Go West policy (of more extensive relations with China) and the New Tide faction's "base strengthening" (focus attention on domestic development) could be combined. Former DPP chairman, SHIH Ming-teh, who chaired the meeting, went even further and proposed a "Greater China Commonwealth." Notwithstanding a facade of agreement, however, differences remained quite acute.

Taipei mayor CHEN Shui-bian did not attend the meeting. He told reporters at the time, as had been his position for some time, that the issue of Taiwan independence should be resolved by plebiscite. The World United Formosans for Independence, a radical organization with strong ties to the DPP, proposed cutting all links with China, economic and otherwise. Clearly the opposition party was still experiencing serious discord on China policy. It was also obvious that its ideas about relations with Beijing were still in the formulation stage.²⁴

On the heels of this meeting, Premier Vincent Siew announced that he had received a positive letter from Chinese leaders in Beijing regarding talks. Patently, the DPP had had no input regarding the negotiating process that was going on. In fact, some observers opined that the DPP looked silly making all kinds of suggestions after which the government proceeded without consulting DPP leaders. The New Party also held discussions on China policy, but it was clear that its ideas were either nearly identical to those of the ruling Nationalist Party or seriously divided party members, or both.²⁵

23. See Virginia Sheng, "DPP's mainland policy sparks intraparty clash," *Free China Journal*, January 16, 1998, p. 2.

24. See Virginia Sheng, "DPP factions unite in mainland policy meeting," *Free China Journal*, February 20, 1998, p. 1.

25. Weiling Liu, "Siew sees letter from mainland's ARATS as a positive sign," *Free China Journal*, February 27, 1998, p. 1.

At this juncture, the New Party faced a serious intraparty feud, to some degree precipitated by the China policy issue. Ten members of the party proposed a "one China, two Chinese states" policy. Others objected, saying that advocating unification was in the party's platform (which it was). In fact, like the DPP, the New Party seemed to be "locked in" to a policy that was difficult to defend and which might hurt it at the polls in December. LEE Ping-nan, as a consequence of the feud, resigned as head of the party's Policy Research Committee. Party heavyweights WANG Chien-shien and JAW Shau-kong engaged in bitter public accusations that prompted the former to comment that the party may not stay together to the end of the year."²⁶

In October, the issue of Taiwan's relations with Beijing got renewed attention when Taipei dispatched KOO Chen-fu, head of the Straits Exchange Foundation (a non-governmental body formed in 1991 to handle unofficial relations with the mainland) to Beijing to talk to Chinese leaders about matters of mutual concern. The visit formally constituted a clear thaw in relations—relations that had deteriorated after President Lee Teng-hui visited the United States in June 1995, which deeply angered leaders in Beijing.

A poll taken shortly before the trip showed 56 percent of those surveyed supported a political dialogue.²⁷ The trip was, moreover, considered a success in part because the government did not create high expectations, an agreement was signed to continue visits and Koo's counterpart accepted an invitation to visit Taipei. It was also widely reported in Taiwan that Koo's visit with President and Chinese Communist Party general secretary JIANG Zemin was cordial and that Jiang talked extensively about democratization, which could be translated into better cross-strait relations.²⁸

A poll taken subsequent to the visit indicated a very high level of public satisfaction with the trip (41.6 percent supporting as compared to 13.2 percent opposed). The same poll reflected an overwhelming belief that the Nationalist Party was best qualified to represent the interests of the country in future talks (42.7 percent compared to 9 percent for the Democratic Progressive Party, 0.9

26. Weiling Liu, "New Party clouded in uncertainty following yet another feud," *Free China Journal*, March 13, 1998, p. 2.

27. Julian Baum, "Talking Heads," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 15, 1998, p. 28. The poll was done by Gallup and the Review.

28. Julian Baum, "One-Track Mind," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 29, 1998, p. 24.

percent for the New Party and 0.1 percent for the Taiwan Independence Party).²⁹ Clearly, the talks with Beijing helped the KMT.

In the wake of the Koo trip to the People's Republic of China, the Clinton administration dispatched Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, also known for his diplomatic talents (having served as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations), to Taipei. The trip appeared to up-grade Taiwan's status in the United States, a view that was underscored when Beijing protested the visit, saying that a top government official going to Taipei violated U.S.-China agreements. Richardson met with President LEE Teng-hui and announced to the press that the United States planned to send more high level officials to Taiwan.³⁰

In late November, China's President JIANG Zemin visited Japan on a well-publicized foreign policy trip, seeking among other goals Tokyo's acceding to Beijing's "three nos" policy on Taiwan and clarification of Japan's defense ties with the United States that might include Taiwan. Tokyo refused to sign on to the "three nos" and hardly expressed any willingness to discuss security ties with the United States. Some attributed Japan's stance and what looked to be a failed mission for Jiang as, in part, the effectiveness of Taipei's diplomacy.³¹ Clearly the government and the ruling party in Taiwan looked good.

Another issue that looked like it might influence the outcome of the election was the economy. As in Western democracies, many citizens in Taiwan vote their pocketbook. In the past, good economic news tended to help the Nationalist Party as it was the party that engineered Taiwan's economic miracle. Economic growth as a campaign issue, however, faded in importance, though the KMT was still seen as the party that can best manage the economy. The increased concern about the country's economic health in the months leading up to December 5 was seen both as hurting the ruling party since the problems were happening on its shift, and also as a potential boon since it was regarded as the party best able to do something about the problem. The bottom line was that it helped the KMT more than it hurt the ruling party.

During 1997, the economic news was good, but guardedly so. Several East Asian economies were in turmoil and threatened to

29. *Id.*, p. 25. The poll was taken by Gallup and the Review.

30. "US to send more envoys to Taiwan," *China News*, November 12, 1998, p. 1.

31. Peter Landers and Susan V. Lawrence, "Sorry, No Apology," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 10, 1998, p. 21 and Todd Crowell and Murakami Mutsuko, "Taiwan's Lobby in Japan," *Asiaweek*, December 11, 1998, p. 22.

impact Taiwan. On the other hand, Taiwan did better than the previous year with 6.8 percent growth in the gross national product, ranking number 7 in the world in economic expansion (compared to number 18 in 1996).³² Inflation was below 1 percent and unemployment was below 3 percent. Early in 1998, Taiwan was ranked by the U.S.-based Business Environment Risk Intelligence 16th in the world in competitiveness, up seven notches from the previous ranking, and the third best place in the world to invest.³³

In April, however, it was revealed that Taiwan had experienced a quarterly drop in exports for the first time in 17 years. Foreign sales had dropped by 6.4 percent from the previous year. Since trade accounts for 80 percent of the country's gross national product and Asia buys more than half of Taiwan's exports, the reasons were obvious: the so-called "Asia meltdown." Still, this information evoked concern and some pessimism as forecasters revised downward growth predictions for 1998 to below 6 percent. Meanwhile, there was some fear expressed by economic experts that a fall of the Japanese yen would have a further bad impact on Taiwan's exports.³⁴

Reflecting widespread apprehension about economic conditions, on May 1, Taiwan witnessed its largest Labor Day rally in history. More than 20,000 marched in Taipei, making demands for more employment opportunities, job security, and the like.³⁵ Not longer after, it was reported that Taiwan had lost its developing nation status because its per capita gross national product had passed U.S.\$10,000 annually. It was said to have exceeded \$13,000 in 1998.³⁶ Balancing this, however, it was also reported soon after this that the Republic of China was ranked sixth in the world in competitiveness by the Swiss-based Economic Forum.³⁷

In July, when figures were published on the performance of the economy in the first half of the year, showing exports were down by

32. Deborah Brown, "Economic forecast adjusted to 6.18%," *Free China Journal*, February 27, 1998, p. 3.

33. Jessie Cheng, "Taiwan rated 3rd best place for investors," *id.*, April 24, 1998, p. 8.

34. Julian Baum, "Export Shock Hits Growth," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 23, 1998, p. 83.

35. Linda Chang, "Workers stress grievances in biggest-ever labor rally," *Free China Journal*, May 8, 1998, p. 4.

36. Philip Courtenay, "Loss of 'developing' status no real problem for Taiwan," *Free China Journal*, June 5, 1998, p. 6.

37. Jessie Chang, "Taiwan ranks 6th in competitiveness," *Free China Journal*, June 12, 1998, p. 8.

over 7 percent, the media began to criticize the government for continuing to publish unrealistic predictions on economic growth. Some charged that a decline in imports suggested a decline in investments, indicating a significant drop in future growth.³⁸ Clearly, concern and pessimism about the future of the economy were growing.

In August, the Director General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics reported that the current growth in the gross national product was 5.3 percent—the lowest in 13 years.³⁹ On the heels of this announcement, the Council for Economic Planning and Development said that the main economic indicators they use to assess the health of the economy pointed to a recession, based on a drop in six of seven figures reflecting economic health. Among the figures were a 15 percent increase in company closures, unemployment of 2.93 percent and a decline in exports. The Council added that there was little hope of increasing exports to stimulate the economy because of sour economic conditions in many of the countries in East Asia which buy Taiwan products. The report made headlines in the local press.⁴⁰ The news also sent the Taix (Taiwan's stock market index) down to a 21-month, low in spite of efforts by the government to build confidence with an economic stimulus package.⁴¹

In September, the Council for Economic Planning and Development reported that unemployment had broken the 3 percent ceiling and was higher than it had been for two years. The Council disclosed that the unemployment figure was 9.31 percent for the age group 15 to 24, indicating that recent high school and college graduates were having difficulties finding jobs. On the other hand, the Council predicted a fall in unemployment in coming months owing to the government's stimulus package that was forecast to create 120,000 new jobs.⁴²

In early November at the critical run-up period before the election, the stock market fell precipitously on news of two large conglomerates in Taiwan defaulting on stock purchases. This large

38. See the editorial "In search of economic reality," *China News*, July 10, 1998, p. 6.

39. Deborah Shen, "Economic growth set for 13-year low," *Free China Journal*, August 21, 1998, p. 8.

40. "Economy in recession: CEPD," *China Post*, August 28, 1998, p. 1.

41. Tsering Namgyal, "Siew acts to boost confidence," *China News*, August 29, 1998, p. 1.

42. "Jobless rate rises," *China News*, September 24, 1998, p. 1.

drop, in fact, caused 29 stocks to fall the daily allowable limit (7 percent of their value).⁴³ Speculation followed, as well as media predictions, that the situation threatened the financial health of the nation.⁴⁴ The situation, in fact, prompted Premier Vincent SIEW to quickly put into effect a bailout plan and take other measures to ensure that panic did not ensue.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, it was reported that foreign direct investment in Taiwan was off 22.4 percent compared to November 1997.⁴⁶

It was uncertain in the months or weeks leading up to the election how economic conditions in Taiwan were influencing potential voters' views of either parties or candidates. It was clear, however, that there was an impact on campaign spending. It was reported that corporate donors were giving only one-half to two-thirds of the money usually contributed to campaigns or that was expected during this campaign.⁴⁷ The Nationalist Party was affected more than the other parties because it has always received more money from corporate givers than the Democratic Progressive Party, which obtains more funds from direct fund-raising, or the New Party, which operates on a much smaller budget. The KMT was also impacted by the fact that the economic downturn had resulted in lower profits from Nationalist Party-owned businesses.⁴⁸

In addition to the China issue and the economy, the downsizing of the Taiwan Provincial Government was also a major matter that attracted media attention during the year and in the months and weeks leading up to the election. The controversial decision to do this was made at a National Development Conference at the end of 1996 and constitutional amendments and rulings by the Council of Grand Justices subsequently rendered it legal. Since the action was made possible by compromises reached by the ruling Nationalist Party and the Democratic Progressive Party, it could not be construed as a partisan issue, except perhaps by the New Party, which

43. Tsering Namgyal, "Stocks plunge on default," *China News*, November 4, 1998, p. 1.

44. See "A looming financial crisis threatens Taiwan's prosperity," *The China News*, November 4, 1998, p. 6.

45. "Siew unveils bailout plan," *The China News*, November 4, 1998, p. 2.

46. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 31, 1998 and January 7, 1999, p. 119.

47. Myra Lu, "Belt-tightening hits candidates," *Free China Journal*, November 14, 1998, p. 1.

48. Head of the KMT's Business Management Commission, Liu Tai-ying, stated that the profits of KMT-owned businesses were down by NT\$2 billion. See "Taiwan leaders devise plans to battle financial difficulties," *China News*, November 12, 1998, p. 1.

opposed it. The matter of it signifying Taiwan independence was defused by allowing the provincial government to continue to exist in a very truncated form. On the other hand, the controversy surrounding the dismantling of the provincial government did not help the image of the ruling party, inasmuch as James SOONG had become the first elected governor in 1994 and was very popular, and was at odds with President Lee and other Nationalist Party leaders. Neither did the fact that much of the money controlled by the provincial government was transferred to the central government, where corruption was rife and where officials seemed to have their eyes on the funds for less than legitimate purposes.

The DPP also sought to make the downsizing laws contentious by arguing that they had not been followed and by issuing challenges in the Legislative Yuan. On the other hand, many provincial government officials became candidates for Legislative Yuan seats, giving the Nationalist Party an increased number of well-known and talented candidates. All in all, the issue seemed to cut different ways and did not seem to give a big advantage to any party.⁴⁹

A number of other events occurred during the year which seemed to influence the election. In June, documents regarding bids for contracts on a rapid transit system linking Taipei with the CHIANG Kai-shek International Airport in Taoyuan were seized by the Taipei District Court, precipitating a scandal and portending serious corruption.⁵⁰ In July, a scandal broke out in the Ministry of Justice when the head of the investigation bureau of the Ministry of Justice contended that the minister falsely accused him of rape. The incident made headlines and in the minds of some observers suggested the government was in disarray. Premier Siew had to intervene to try to settle the matter.⁵¹ In November, three high-ranking military officers were found guilty and sentenced for accepting kickbacks in military procurement. This had been a festering problem in Taiwan, but reached a climax at an inauspicious time and created headlines that the government certainly did not want.⁵² These events seemed

49. See Crystal Hsu, "Reaction mixed to TPG downsizing," *China Post*, September 9, 1998, p.

50. "Papers seized over MRT bid," *China News*, June 18, 1998, p. 1.

51. "Heads set to roll in MOJ scandal," *China News*, July 13, 1998, p. 1.

52. Cadalina Lin, "Three officers sentenced in a military kickback scandal," *China News*, November 6, 1998, p. 1. Several military officers had been arrested and held earlier in the year. See, for example, Pingling Hsu, "5th military officer held over scandal," *China Post*, March 19, 1998, p. 19.

to hurt the ruling Nationalist Party's chances with the voters in December.

III. THE CAMPAIGN

Whereas the formal campaign period, when candidates participate in government sponsored forums to present their views to the electorate and "get out the vote," is very short, the informal campaign period is not. It began very early, in fact many months before the election. It is probably accurate to say that the parties and some candidates began "gearing up" very early in the year. Nationalist Party officials began thinking seriously about the December election shortly after their party's setback in the November 1997 election. Both the Nationalist Party and the Democratic Progressive Party began to posture and look for major campaign issues at this time. They did so even more two or three months later, when the issue of relations with the People's Republic of China became widely debated.

Like DPP officials, leaders of the New Party viewed the China issue as causing a serious party split and even threatening its performance in the year-end election. The economy and relations with the United States were certain to be discussed, but it was uncertain if party lines would be clear and which parties might benefit from their positions. At this same time, it became clear to Taiwan Provincial Assembly delegates that they had to seek positions in the Legislative Yuan to maintain their status as lawmakers.

In March, the three main political parties started their nominating processes. The Nationalist Party announced that candidates must file by March 9 and that a list would be released later in the month. In 1989, the KMT had adopted party primaries as a means of choosing candidates but subsequently decided to abandon them because they were so divisive.⁵³ They did not go back to primaries except for choosing mayoral candidates. The Nationalist Party chose its candidates with input from party cadres, and examination of candidates' qualifications, the recommendations of lower party officials and finally by the Central Standing Committee. The Democratic Progressive Party stated that candidates must file by March 6 and that a party primary would be held on March 29. DPP leaders

53. For details on the establishment of primaries, see James A. Robinson and Julian Baum, "Party Primaries in Taiwan: Footnote or Text in Democratization," in John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 1991 and 1992 Non-Supplemental Elections: Reaching a Higher State of Democracy*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994.

hailed primaries as advancing Taiwan's democratization. JAW Shau-kong, the New Party's newly appointed campaign manager, also came out in support of party primaries, but said the details had not yet been resolved.⁵⁴

On March 29, the DPP held island-wide primaries to select candidates for the Legislative Yuan race as well as the contests for metropolitan city council seats. Those primaries got a turnout of 60 percent of voters. The results, according to party decisions, would be used to pick at-large Legislative Yuan candidates and, in combination with follow-up public surveys, would decide other nominees. The vote tallies, however, were skewed by the fact that, according to party rules, one-fourth of candidates had to be female and the party had to have at least one Aboriginal member of the Legislative Yuan. Also, CHEN Shui-bian was uncontested as candidate for Taipei mayor. Frank HSIEH won a much larger vote than one other competitor to be the party's nominee for Kaohsiung mayor and essentially was unchallenged. Legislator CHANG Chun-hung headed the list for an at-large seat and Parris CHANG for an Overseas Chinese seat in the Legislative Yuan.⁵⁵

The holding of primaries demonstrated the DPP's determination to make the process more democratic. The party lowered party membership dues to U.S.\$30.67 to get more people to vote, again in the spirit of making the process democratic. It took steps to publicize the process and get out the votes. Yet the system was also very flawed. It created many new "pocket members" of the DPP: people whose fees were paid by someone else who asked for (in essence bought) their votes. According to party statistics comparing party membership lists and voters in the primaries, as many as 25 percent of primary voters were of this type. Some party leaders subsequently strongly criticized the system. The process also resulted in two top DPP leaders not being nominated: SHIH Ming-teh, a former DPP chairman and past DPP spokesperson, and Sissy CHEN, a very well-known party activist. Party Secretary-General CHIOU I-jen declared that the primary system had been modified already seven times and still needed to be changed.⁵⁶

In April, the Independents Alliance, a group of six independent legislators, announced that they expected to form a political

54. See Virginia Sheng, "KMT, DPP start nominating process," *Free China Journal*, March 6, 1998, p. 2.

55. See Virginia Sheng, "DPP holds nominee primaries," *Free China Journal*, April 3, 1998, p. 2.

56. *Ibid.*

“group” or informal party in June and began to try to recruit candidates. Among them were former Control Yuan head and independent presidential candidate (in the 1996 presidential election), CHEN Li-an. According to a major Taiwan newspaper, the *China Times*, Kaohsiung Mayor WU Den-yih and National Policy Advisor to the President, HUANG Shih-cheng were also being considered. (Wu at this time faced a strong challenge by several KMT members for the party’s nomination.) The organization, in addition, planned to target KMT members who were denied their party’s nomination in recent local elections. One member of the Alliance said he expected the Independents Alliance to field candidates in all 29 regular electoral districts (but not including two Aborigine districts) and predicted it would win 15 district seats and four at-large seats and would bloc the KMT from winning a majority in the Legislative Yuan.⁵⁷

In early May, WANG Chien-shien, representing the New Party, declared his candidacy for Taipei mayor. Wang was a founder of the NP and recent secretary general of the party and was also a former heavyweight member of the Nationalist Party. He was Minister of Finance in the early 1990s and was the second largest vote-getter in the 1992 Legislative Yuan election (at that time still a member of the Nationalist Party but running as an independent). Wang was considered to have a chance of defeating CHEN Shui-bian if Governor James SOONG, MA Ying-jeou or Presidential Advisor WU Po-hsiung did not end up as the Nationalist Party’s candidate and many KMT votes then were steered to Wang. In fact, it was reported that Wang had contacted the three and all said that they would not run. Wang even suggested he would appoint a KMT member deputy mayor if he won. Wang, when he announced his candidacy, declared that he would eschew vote-buying, free banquets and excessive use of campaign banners that cause litter, and said her deplored corruption in political campaigns and in government.⁵⁸

The campaign, many pundits said, really started after May 30 when MA Ying-jeou, former Minister of Justice, registered to run for the Taipei mayorship race just before the final deadline ar-

57. Susan Yu, “New alliance courting heavyweights,” *Free China Journal*, April 10, 1998, p. 1.

58. Weiling Liu, “Wang named New Party’s candidate,” *Free China Journal*, May 15, 1998, p. 2.

rived.⁵⁹ Ma, who had resigned from government service in May 1997 in protest over political corruption, had been in public service for a number of years. He began as an interpreter for President CHIANG Ching-kuo and from there moved to head the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission from 1988 to 1991, after which he was vice-chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council. He served as Minister of Justice from 1993 to 1996, at which time he built a sterling reputation for unflinching honesty and for doing something about vote buying and other forms of political corruption. In fact, he became disliked, even hated, in his own party for the crackdowns he ordered, which landed many members of the Nationalist Party in jail. Ma was also considered charismatic and handsome (a factor especially important to women voters), though he had no experience campaigning for elective office.

For some months, the media had said (backed up by polling data) that Ma, along with Provincial Governor James SOONG, were the only possible candidates that could defeat incumbent mayor CHEN Shui-bian. Until his last minute decision Ma had said that he would not run, citing the government's and ruling party's inattention to the corruption problem as his reason. He changed his mind after a petition with 20,000 signatures was presented to him. Some said, however, that his father, who registered for him, instructed him to run, and for reasons of filial piety, he could not defy his father's wishes. In any event, Nationalist Party officials, who had been in the doldrums because of the lack of a "winner" candidate, changed their perspective immediately. On June 2, Foreign Minister Jason HU and former Yunlin County Magistrate LIAO Chuan-yuh, withdrew their candidacies, and a party primary to pick a candidate was canceled. Ma's entry into the race, in fact, quickly improved the KMT's morale and appeared to make a broad ruling party win in December more likely.⁶⁰

A poll taken just before Ma's announcement showed that Chen would defeat Ma if he were to run, but by a very small margin. After Ma officially entered the race, polls taken by Taiwan's two largest newspapers, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, both indicated Ma would win. Mayor CHEN Shui-bian, however, did not openly express concern about Ma and said that he

59. Observers noted that the political atmosphere changed at this time and interest in the election increased markedly. The Nationalist Party was given a boost and the Democratic Progressive Party began to campaign actively.

60. Frank Chang, "Ma enters race for Taipei mayor," *Free China Journal*, June 5, 1998, p. 1.

would work on continuing municipal reform. The New Party was upset with the decision, thinking that, as noted above, with possible KMT support, its candidate WANG Chien-shien might win.⁶¹ Wang considered Ma's decision to run a betrayal; but he pledged to stay in the race.

Chen graduated number one in his class from the law school of Taiwan's best university and subsequently worked as a lawyer. He was a Taipei city council member from 1981 to 1985, a legislator from 1989 to 1994, and was elected mayor in 1994. He was considered charismatic and a good mayor (with 70 percent job approval ratings) and seemed to be in a strong position to win another term. He had the advantages of the incumbency and being Taiwanese in a city with a strong "ethnic" Taiwanese majority.⁶²

The squaring off of candidates for Taipei mayor meanwhile generated increased speculation about likely candidates for the presidency in 2000. Chen had long been considered a strong possibility for the Democratic Progressive Party's nomination and given the DPP's strong showing in the November 1997 election, as noted above, was considered by many a likely winner. The New Party at this time offered speculation that President Lee (whom the NP doesn't like) would run again with Chen on the ticket with him, suggesting a KMT-DPP joining of forces or merger to create once again a one-party system. Vice President LIEN Chan was considered the KMT's most likely candidate (assuming President Lee would not run again as he publicly so stated) and reports were heard that Governor James SOONG or Premier Vincent SIEW would be on the ticket with him. Speculation also arose at this juncture about a Soong-Ma ticket or a Ma candidacy of some kind.⁶³

In mid-June, the Nationalist Party picked incumbent WU Den-yih as its candidate for Kaohsiung mayor; there had been considerable rancor over the nominating process in part because of incumbent Mayor Wu's failure to decide whether to run.⁶⁴ Eventually, party leaders were able to cool tensions in the party over the nomination and the other contenders generally bowed out gracefully.⁶⁵

61. *Ibid.*

62. See Frank Chang, "Candidates grapple for reins of power in Taipei, Kaohsiung," *Free China Journal*, November 27, 1998, p. 4 for further details on candidates' backgrounds.

63. Ben Wu, "NP leader sees Lee-Chen ticket for presidency," *China Post*, June 18, 1998, p. 19.

64. "Dissent brewing in KMT over Wu's bid," *China Post*, June 4, 1998, p. 14.

65. "KMT chooses Wu for Kaohsiung bid," *China Post*, June 18, 1998, p. 19.

President Lee then met with both Ma and Wu and pledged full support to both, confuting reports that Lee did not like Ma because of his criticism of the government when he resigned from office in 1997 in protest over corruption. There were also rumors that Lee would not campaign for Ma.⁶⁶

Changing the campaign climate somewhat, in mid-June, the ruling Nationalist Party won 45 percent of seats in township council races and elections for wardens in villages and burroughs. The opposition DPP won only 4 percent and 1.5 percent of the seats, respectively. Independents won 50 percent of the seats. The KMT dropped slightly from what it had held, yet did better than most expected. The DPP did much poorer than anticipated. The ruling party's performance in the eyes of most observers was cautiously called a victory.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Democratic Progressive Party elected LIN Yi-hsiung its new chairman. Lin had a reputation for taking a much stronger position on Taiwan independence than outgoing chairman HSU Hsin-liang; his election to the top DPP post thus signaled a return to a harder line on the independence issue. Promptly DPP officials, including Lin, met with leaders of the Taiwan Independence Party (a two-year old party that was formerly a faction in the DPP, which split off saying that the DPP had abandoned its stance on Taiwan independence). Shortly thereafter, Mayor CHEN Shui-bian, who also met with Taiwan Independence Party people, talked of cooperation. Chen was quoted as saying at the time that: "If Taiwan cannot free itself from the myth that it is part of China, it will have no future."⁶⁸ The DPP's more moderate shift on the independence issue over the last few years now seemed to be going in the other direction and Chen was in some part being identified with this reversal.

Both the election of a new party chairman and President Clinton's visit to China exacerbated fissures in the DPP about the independence issue. The outgoing chairman called for improved ties

66. "Lee meets mayoral candidates," *China News*, June 25, 1998, p. 2.

67. Frank Chang, "KMT captures 45% of seats in solid grassroots showing," *Free China Journal*, June 19, 1998, p. 2. The argument that the KMT "won" the election was based on its holding a big lead over the DPP and that its performance was much better than in the November 1997 local elections.

68. Virginia Sheng, "DPP election win may unite opposition forces," *Free China Journal*, July 3, 1998, p. 2.

with China and less emphasis on the independence issue.⁶⁹ However, the Justice Alliance (faction of the party), led by SHEN Fu-hsiung and Parris CHANG, called for a return to past DPP foreign policy ideals and asserted that only democracy can serve as a bargaining chip and safeguard Taiwan's sovereignty and its future. SHIH Ming-teh, head of the New Tide faction, labeled the call for immediate independence "stupid."⁷⁰

In August, Legislator LO Fu-chu announced that he indeed planned to form an "alliance of independents" to run as a "party" in the December election. He said his target was 24 candidates. Observers opined that his group might be able to win 7 percent or more of the popular vote for the Legislative Yuan, which could be quite significant. Lo predicted at least 5 percent, which would give his alliance at-large seats. Lo subsequently met with John CHANG, secretary-general of the Nationalist Party, to discuss his plans. Chang asked the group to cooperate with the ruling party and not compete with it. Lo said that since most of his candidates were from the KMT, but were disgruntled because of internal party strife or because of not being nominated, they needed an opportunity; if his alliance did well it would help the KMT in the long run.⁷¹ The group subsequently took the name Non-Partisan Alliance.

Coinciding with this event, the Nationalist Party held a plenary meeting of the 15th Central Committee and discussed cross-Strait relations and the year-end election. Efforts were made to build party unity. The downsizing of the provincial government was, however, very distracting and in many ways overshadowed other issues. At this juncture, there was considerable doubt cast that the ruling party was unified or was prepared for the coming election.⁷²

Also in August, the New Party held its primaries. It had unprecedented open primaries (meaning anyone from any party or even those without party affiliation could vote) in order to make the process more democratic. But this also created serious problems of vote-buying and untoward influence by groups from other political parties. The New Party was forced to offer rewards for those

69. Alice Hung, "DPP leader wants better mainland ties," *China Post*, June 18, 1998, p. 19.

70. Jane Rickards, "Justice Alliance deepens DPP split," *China News*, July 10, 1998, p. 2.

71. Frank Chang, "Legislators establish alliance," *Free China Journal*, August 14, 1998, p. 1.

72. Cadalina Lin, "KMT session ends with angry words," *China News*, August 24, 1998, p. 2.

who turned in those who infringed upon the rules and even hired detectives to find violators. Following a number of disciplinary incidents and the party disqualifying several candidates, JAW Shau-kong, campaign manager for the party, said that the "primaries have become like mirrors which reveal the monstrous side of human nature." Other party leaders expressed dismay with the system for a variety of reasons, in part because it failed to nominate some well qualified party members due to "outside interference." CHOU Yang-shan, former head of the party's election and development committee, attacked Jaw, saying he was the "wrong man" for the job. Other accusations followed.⁷³ In short, the primary process caused serious problems for the New Party and what was an attempt to promote democracy became nothing less than an abject failure.⁷⁴

Nearly coinciding with the New Party's primary problems, another party alliance formed. Legislator Robert HSU formed the Democratic Alliance, an organization very similar in make-up, organization and objectives to the Non-Partisan Alliance. Hsu said his group hoped to win more than 5 percent of the vote and therefore also be granted at-large seats. Membership in the Democratic Alliance consisted of a number of KMT members who were stripped of their party membership for running without the party's endorsement in the 1997 local elections, or members that had not been nominated by the ruling party for this election. Premier Siew and a number of other top KMT leaders met with the Alliance and even sent them congratulatory messages.

Observers noted that the KMT might need coalition partners to rule after the election and was making plans for this by inviting many members, especially those who won seats in the Legislative Yuan, back into the party. Other observers, however, said victories by the alliances and too many wins by independents could deny the KMT a majority in the Legislative Yuan and therefore would be disruptive.⁷⁵ However, in the short-run nothing could be done about this forming of alliance "parties."

In September, the Taipei District Court handed Taipei Mayor CHEN Shui-bian a setback when it ruled that one of the alleged

73. "NP dissent reaches boiling point," *China Post*, September 2, 1998, p. 20.

74. Frank Chang, "More primary hopefuls disqualified," *Free China Journal*, August 21, 1998, p. 2 and Frank Chang, "Controversies mar primaries by New Party," *Free China Journal*, September 4, 1998, p. 1.

75. Frank Chang, "Independents set up alliance for elections," *Free China Journal*, September 4, 1998, p. 2.

“sex parlors” that lost electric power upon his orders was due compensation.⁷⁶ Under Chen’s leadership, the city government had launched an all-out crackdown in the fall of 1996, pleasing a lot of residents but also angering many business operators.

By October, it was clear who the players would be in the December election contest. There were essentially seven parties/alliances running, though there were also some very small parties involved in the campaign. The seven were: the ruling Nationalist Party; the main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party; the second opposition party, the New Party; the Taiwan Independence Party; the New Nation Alliance; the Non-Partisan Alliance; and, the Democratic Alliance. The Taiwan Independence Party and the New Nation Alliance had very similar platforms: the separation of Taiwan from China. The Non-Partisan Alliance and the Democratic Alliance both had flexible agendas and lacked a clearly stated platform. Both were little more than “umbrella organizations” for independents that sought to win at-large seats and a better bargaining position after the election.

The ruling Nationalist Party was the only party to nominate enough candidates to win a majority in the Legislative Yuan (with 108 candidates decided and seven more yet to be named). The Democratic Progressive Party nominated only 79 candidates to avoid their candidates from competing with each other and splitting the party’s vote.⁷⁷ Both parties nominated fewer candidates than in the previous election. The New Party nominated 27. It was still uncertain at this point how many candidates the other parties or alliances would field. The two independence parties were obviously poised to compete with each other. There had been speculation that the two alliance “parties” might cooperate, but that was apparently not happening.⁷⁸ The two “alliances” were also going to compete.

The campaign themes and strategies also began to gel at about this time, as did the issues. The Nationalist Party’s strategy included promoting the view that it was the moderate party on most issues, especially on relations with China and that it was the best qualified to deal with economic problems. Some party leaders played upon public insecurity over both issues by pushing the idea that it was best to keep that party in power which was making effective policies

76. “Taipei mayor can’t win ‘em all,” *China News*, September 21, 1998, p. 2.

77. This is a problem in Taiwan’s single-vote, multi-member districts and is therefore something the parties watch out for.

78. Myra Lu, “Elections could change ROC political landscape,” *Free China Journal*, October 2, 1998, p. 1.

to deal with these problems and not "change horses in mid-stream." KMT strategy also focused on using President Lee's popularity and prestige to help the party.⁷⁹

The Democratic Progressive Party platform included promises to make the government more efficient, get rid of corruption, and promote equal and beneficial relations with China. The party's slogan was: "Trust the DPP. You can do better." Specific campaign pledges included not using power, prestige or information while in office for personal gain, not serving as a manager or chairman of a board of a profit-making company while in office or for two years after, abstaining from involvement in political decisions involving property of friends or relatives, and disclosing political contributions.⁸⁰

The New Party stressed clean politics and condemned the use of money in political campaigns. It portrayed itself as a "poor" party that had to campaign on a very limited budget. As in past campaigns, the New Party stressed issues and tried to appeal to intellectuals and the middle class. It condemned class and "ethnic" politics as divisive. The NP also advocated opening direct links across the Taiwan Strait (saying that people travelling from Taiwan to China had spent an extra \$120 million because of the ban on direct airlinks), a system of voluntary military service, and streamlining the bureaucracy.⁸¹ This seemed to be a non-controversial way of advocating the unification of China.

Two months before the election, the campaign seemed to be in high gear. Taipei mayor CHEN Shui-bian adopted a slogan saying that the election contest is "between Taiwan's Chen and China's Ma" thereby injecting divisive ethnic politics into the campaign. He also asserted that Ma is a "mouthpiece for mainland China." Some pundits said this tack reflected the fact that Chen was desperate, with some polls showing he would lose the election to Ma. Others said it was simply a good campaign tactic. Ma retorted that the charge was a smear and that Chen using ethnicity in the campaign amounted to "a walk down the regressive road." Chen's slogans even came up in a Legislative Yuan session when several members

79. See Myra Lu, "Elections could change political landscape," *Free China Journal*, October 2, 1998, p. 1.

80. Jane Rickards, "DPP promises cleaner, leaner government," *China News*, September 24, 1998, p. 2.

81. See "Wang inspires New Party campaign," *China News*, November 23, 1998, p. 2. Most of the campaign tenets of the New Party had been heard earlier.

criticized Chen and charged his statements were "malicious."⁸² The timing of Chen's ethnic charges was bad inasmuch as KOO Chen-fu began his trip to the Mainland at this time to renew cross-Taiwan Strait talks.

This controversy helped spark strong interest in the first debates of the campaign—debates among the three candidates for Taipei mayor. Eight million people in the Taipei area watched on television or listened on the radio, giving it a whopping 67 percent audience share. Presentations and media questions that followed focused on the administration of the city, the provincialism issue, unification versus Taiwan independence, and the personalities of the candidates. Incumbent Mayor Chen boasted that he had made major improvements in the city's transportation system, that crime had decreased in the city during the first part of the year (in contrast to other cities in Taiwan), that *Asiaweek* magazine had rated Taipei among the top ten cities in Asia and that the city had for the first time received an ISO certification for quality residential services.

Candidate Ma said that long-term infrastructure building had been ignored, and that crime was high (and also cited *Asiaweek*, which ranked Taipei 31 among 40 East Asian cities in this category). He also blamed the city government for lack of concern about flooding and land development. The New Party's Wang also assailed Chen for the crime problem in Taipei and verbally indicted him for lack of feeling for the people. All three parties declared their candidates winners of the debate.⁸³

On November 1, debates were also held in Kaohsiung among the four mayoral candidates there. Incumbent Mayor WU Den-yih vowed to continue to make Kaohsiung a world class city and continue infrastructure projects, improve education, and attract multinational corporations by building "economic parks." The DPP's candidate Frank HSIEH called for better water and transportation facilities and criticized Wu for failing to complete most of the 20 major construction projects that he had promised in the previous campaign. New Party candidate WU Chien-kuo also attacked the incumbent mayor on the issues of water control and transportation and chided the city's high unemployment rate. Independent candidate CHENG Teh-yao, a physician, complained of poor medical

82. Frank Chang, "Chen's slogans said malicious," *Free China Journal*, October 16, 1998, p. 2.

83. Frank Chang, "Mayoral hopefuls hold first debate," *Free China Journal*, October 30, 1998, p. 2.

services in the city and the influx of foreign laborers that had taken jobs away from local citizens.⁸⁴

President Lee and Vice President LIEN Chan joined the fray at this time, campaigning for KMT candidates. Lee emphasized the large number of bills pending in the Legislative Yuan (over 1,000 he said) that needed prompt passage, which a Nationalist Party victory would ensure. Lien's role was "integrating" the party's strategy. Both made special campaign appearances for the two KMT mayoral candidates.⁸⁵ Governor James SOONG also made appearances on behalf of various candidates and attracted large audiences. Meanwhile, rallies sponsored by the Democratic Progressive Party were not getting large audiences. Some reporters thought this was because the party did not have a star who attracted public attention other than CHEN Shui-bian, and he was tied down with his campaign in Taipei. DPP Chairman HSU Hsin-liang organized an island-wide tour using a bus decorated to look like a ship. This ship was called the "Golden Titanic", but it seemed to yield only mediocre results.⁸⁶

A month or so before the balloting, the campaigning also turned nasty with accusations and rumor-mongering becoming widespread. The campaign was especially vicious in the Taipei mayoral race. Mayor Chen and the DPP continued to try to play the "ethnic card" against Ma, accusing him of being a puppet of Beijing and not caring about Taiwan. Chen labelled Ma a member of the New Party that "would sell out Taiwan." Deputy Mayor LIN Chia-cheng accused Ma of being a "black official"—one who found government employment without passing the civil service examination. Mayor Chen frequently referred to Ma as "Sonny Boy Ma," mocking his youthful appearance and good looks. The DPP even accused Ma of breaking his promise not to run for the office and for abandoning his students by giving up his professorship in the middle of the semester.⁸⁷

Ma retorted, calling Chen a "narrow-minded politician," though in general Ma's attacks were more polite and rather muted.

84. Frank Chang, "Kaohsiung candidates hold TV debate," *Free China Journal*, November 6, 1998, p. 2.

85. Deborah Kuo, "Lee on the stump to drum up support for Ma's campaign," *China Post*, November 15, 1998, p. 13.

86. "KMT superstars outside DPP's," *China News*, November 6, 1998, p. 2.

87. See Christopher Bodeen, "A touch of Las Vegas enters local politics," *China Post*, November 17, 1998, p. 2. See also Eric P. Moon, "Taipei campaign: from issues to insults," *China Post*, December 1, 1998, p. 4.

Other KMT leaders were not so polite, referring to whoremongering among Chen's staff, corruption in Chen's administration, and much more. The ruling party made issue of Chen taking a long leave of absence to campaign and in so doing avoiding a review of his administration by the Taipei City Council. Strong accusations were made about Chen trying to divide society on ethnic grounds and thereby fomenting tension and ill-will among citizens. Some even accused him of racism and compared him to Hitler, saying that he would roll back democratization by 20 years.⁸⁸

Nor did the New Party refrain from these kinds of attacks. The party published campaign literature depicting President Lee as the devil and MA Ying-jeou as "an innocent sucker duped by Lee." Campaign materials made reference to James SOONG who had been betrayed by President Lee, and accused Lee of being a closet advocate of Taiwan independence, trying to return Taiwan to dictatorship, and conspiring with CHEN Shui-bian. Allegations were also heard to the effect that Lee wanted to merge the Nationalist Party and the Democratic Progressive Party and return to one-party rule.⁸⁹

Negative campaigning and vicious personal attacks were not limited to the Taipei campaign. In Kaohsiung, a female DPP member accused incumbent Mayor WU Den-yi of visiting an "underground nightclub" and sexually harassing a waitress. She demanded Wu drop out of the race.⁹⁰ Not long after this accusation, a DPP city council candidate charged Mayor Wu had had an extra-marital affair with a female journalist and said there were secretly recorded conversations between Wu and the journalist that would prove the allegations. Wu denied the charges and accused the DPP of dirty politics and fabrication.⁹¹

The various parties and candidates also announced a number of policies and positions on issues and took other steps to attract attention to their campaign or curry voter favor. Many of these are both interesting and shed light on the parties' and candidates' tactics and strategies.

Democratic Progressive Party officials accused the Nationalist Party of diverting many of the resources of the provincial government, which in large part was being disestablished, to the central

88. *Ibid.*

89. Jane Rickards, "New Party ads show Lee as the devil," *China News*, November 25, 1998, p. 2.

90. "Kaohsiung mayor accused of misconduct," *China Post*, October 8, 1998, p. 20.

91. "Wu scandal tapes under investigation," *China News*, November 25, 1998, p. 2.

government illegally, thereby giving the KMT extra funds to use in the election. They also charged this was the source of increased corruption. DPP officials decried violations of agreements between the two parties and charged that much of the money should go to local governments (which the DPP controlled).⁹² DPP officials also met with foreign dignitaries to demonstrate their abilities at diplomacy.⁹³ And a DPP legislator called for social service to replace military service.⁹⁴ The DPP also cried foul when the ruling party pushed through legislation less than two months before the election to increase veterans' benefits.⁹⁵

The New Party issued a call for mayoral candidates to sign a pledge not to run for president in 2000 if they were elected. The party also published a poll showing the DPP with a better approval rating than the KMT and indicating it would be the big winner in the December election.⁹⁶ The party's intent (in view of the fact this poll was contradicted by other opinion surveys) seemed to be to frighten voters and get more votes by offering itself as a clean party that was an alternative to the KMT.

During the run-up to the election it was reported that the Chinese People's Liberation Army would again conduct missile tests as it had done during the 1995 and 1996 elections, when it tried to intimidate the government and populace of Taiwan and tried to influence elections. The report said that China would, in fact, test its new Dong-Feng 31 inter-continental ballistic missile. No mention was made concerning whether the tests were supposed to send a signal to Taiwan or to the United States, or both, or where the missiles would land.⁹⁷ In any case, the report brought back memories of the two previous national elections. In the end, however, no missile tests were done.

92. "Who gets the cash from downsizing," *China News*, September 8, 1998, p. 2 and Mahlon Meyer, "Downsizing farcical: DPP," *China News*, September 9, 1998, p. 2.

93. Mahlon Meyer, "DPP shows it can wine and dine foreign community," *China News*, September 10, 1998, p. 2.

94. Jane Rickards, "DPP legislator calls for social service choice," *China News*, September 10, 1998, p. 2.

95. Irene Lin, "Veterans' benefits decried as vote ploy," *China Post*, October 14, 1998, p. 19.

96. Cadalina Lin, "New Party deems DPP as big poll winner," *China News*, September 10, 1998, p. 2.

97. Bernard T.K. Joei, "PRC 'doublespeak' bars understanding," *China Post*, November 17, 1998, p. 17. Author cites a report in the *Washington Times*.

IV. ELECTION RESULTS

The consensus among the media, election observers, party leaders and the population was that the Nationalist Party won a very solid and important election victory. This was true of the Legislative Yuan election, as well as the Taipei mayoral race. The exception was the Kaohsiung mayoral race.

In the most important race (though not the one that attracted the most attention), the Legislative Yuan contest, the Nationalist Party won 123 seats (96 directly elected districts seats and 27 ex-officio seats, 23 of which were national constituency seats and 4 of which were Overseas Chinese seats) with 46.43 percent of the popular vote. It gained in the popular vote column over the last election (getting 46 percent in 1995) as well as in the number of seats (85 in the 1995 election) and percentage (55.1 compared to 51.5 percent in 1995) of seats. Most important, it made a sizeable gain in the number of seats over a simple majority needed to pass legislation. After the 1995 election, it had only a six seat margin; after this election it had eleven seats more than a majority.⁹⁸

In the Taipei mayoral race, the KMT's standard bearer, MA Ying-jeou, won 51.12 percent of the popular vote to defeat incumbent Mayor CHEN Shui-bian by more than 78,000 votes—a very healthy margin. In 1994, the ruling Nationalist Party's candidate received only 25.89 percent of the vote—in fact, coming in last in a three-way race. In the Taipei city council contest, the KMT won 23 seats compared to 18 in 1994 for a gain of 5 seats; this was not a majority but amounted to 44 percent of the seats or more than any other party got (which was not the case in 1994).⁹⁹

The Nationalist Party lost the Kaohsiung mayoral race by a very slim margin of just over one-half of one percent of the popular vote. Compensating to some extent for this setback, the KMT won 25 seats on the Kaohsiung city council, besting what it did in 1994 by 2 seats. The KMT also did better than the nearest competitor, the Democratic Progressive Party, by more than two and one-half fold while winning a majority of seats plus one.¹⁰⁰

98. This data was in virtually all of Taiwan's newspapers on December 6. For a good summary, see Myra Lu, "KMT wins Taipei, bolsters its majority in Legislature," *Free China Journal*, December 11, 1998, p. 1. For a comparison with the most recent Legislative Yuan election, see Copper, *Taiwan's Mid-1990s Elections*, *supra* note 3, chapter 3.

99. For a comparison with the previous metropolitan mayoral and city council races, see Copper, *Taiwan's Mid-1990s Elections*, *supra* note 3, chapter 2.

100. *Ibid.*

The main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, won 29.56 percent of the popular vote to take 70 seats (52 district seats, 15 national constituency seats and 3 Overseas Chinese seats) in the Legislative Yuan. This was a significant decline for the party. The DPP won 33 percent of the popular vote in 1995. It gained in the number of seats in this election over 1995 when it won 54 seats, but this was due only to an increase in the number of seats in the lawmaking body; it obtained a lower percentage (31.1 percent compared to 32.9 percent) and was much further from the majority it would need to control the lawmaking body. Clearly, the DPP's ability to influence legislation as well as debates in the Legislative Yuan diminished as a result of this election.

The DPP's incumbent Mayor CHEN Shui-bian lost the hotly fought Taipei mayoral race with 45.9 percent of the popular vote. The DPP gained one seat in the Taipei city council, with 19 seats or 37 percent of the total; this could hardly be considered a victory, however, since its main rival, the KMT, gained more.

The DPP won the Kaohsiung mayor's race, but by a very slim margin. In the Kaohsiung city council race, however, it lost one seat, winning ten seats or 23 percent of the seats in that 44 member body. This gave the DPP control of Taiwan's second largest city and certainly increased leverage over the nation's business, especially manufacturing and foreign trade. However, this was hardly compensation for losing Taipei.

The New Party performed even worse. It got only 7.06 percent of the popular vote in the Legislative Yuan race, winning only 11 seats (7 from the district races, 3 from the national constituency and 1 from the Overseas Chinese). This amounts to a drop of nearly 6 percent in popular vote (from 12.95 percent in 1995) and a decline of 10 seats (from 21 in 1995). In the Taipei mayoral race, the New Party candidate won only 2.97 percent of the vote, compared to 30.17 percent in 1994. In the Taipei city council race, it won 9 seats compared to 11 in 1994. In the Kaohsiung mayoral race, the NP won only 0.81 percent of the popular vote (compared to 3.45 percent in 1994) and 1 city council seat (compared to 2 in 1994). All of these setbacks appeared to bode very badly for the New Party. In fact, it evoked renewed speculation about the future of the party.

The two pro-independence parties also performed very badly. The Taiwan Independence Party won 1 seat in the Legislative Yuan and nothing in either of the city council races; the New Nation Alliance won nothing. Other smaller parties essentially failed to perform at all. The two groups of independent candidates, however,

did better. The Democratic Alliance, comprised mainly of Nationalist Party candidates who did not get the endorsement of their party, won four seats. The Nonpartisan Alliance got three seats. Neither, however, won five percent of the vote and therefore failed to qualify for at-large seats. Other independents took a total of 12 seats. In sum, non-affiliated candidates won a total of 19 seats in the Legislative Yuan, one seat on the Taipei city council and 10 seats on the Kaohsiung city council.

After the vote tallying was done, John CHANG, secretary general of the Nationalist Party, said that the party had achieved its goal: to control the Legislative Yuan "substantially." He then predicted that the election outcome would significantly facilitate the ruling party's effort to pass legislation. In the way of further analysis, he declared that the KMT's victory indicated that the moderate, middle-of-the-road stance of the ruling party "won the people's approval" and that the election furthered the democratization process.¹⁰¹ Chang also said that KMT "spirits were high" and asserted that the victory would bode well for the 2000 presidential election.¹⁰²

DPP Chairman LIN Yi-hsiung described his party's performance as a defeat, but said that the party was not discouraged. He said he was especially disappointed with Mayor Chen's defeat, considering his 70 percent approval ratings going into the campaign.¹⁰³ Lin subsequently spoke of resigning from his leadership position of the party. CHIOU I-jen, secretary-general of the DPP, expressed pessimism and dismay with the election results. He even cited concern about Taiwan politics reverting "to a time when the KMT dominated."¹⁰⁴

JAW Shau-kong, campaign manager for the New Party, apologized for the defeat and said that his party's limited support base was the reason for the party's poor performance. He also admitted that the election results reflected a public endorsement of President LEE Teng-hui's policies. But he said that the "dismal results" did not mean an end of the party.¹⁰⁵

101. Stephanie Low, "KMT retains control of legislature," *China Post*, December 6, 1998, p. 1.

102. Myra Lu, "KMT wins Taipei, bolsters its majority in Legislature," *Free China Journal*, December 11, 1998, p. 1.

103. *Ibid.*

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*

In the Taipei mayoral race, winner MA Ying-jeou said politely that his victory should be attributed to all of the people who helped him. He paid respect to his rivals and promised to consider their platforms when making future policy. Ma also said that his victory should be attributed to the "New Taiwanese" concept promoted by President LEE Teng-hui.¹⁰⁶

Following the vote counting, CHEN Shui-bian said he needed time to reflect on his career. The next day he compared himself to Winston Churchill, who defeated the forces of authoritarianism and won democracy for Britain but then failed to win reelection. He also declared that the road to reform was not lost, but needed to become stronger. He asserted that "I always stand with the people of Taiwan." Chen's supporters were obviously disappointed, but they did not see this defeat as ending his political career. Chen met a crowd carrying his handicapped wife, which chanted "Hello President" (making reference to Chen winning the 2000 presidential race).¹⁰⁷

WANG Chien-shien commented to reporters on the eve of the election, saying that he did not feel he was defeated since he ran a clean campaign. He also said that he would remain in the party. He remarked that he thought that Ma would be a good mayor but advised him to pay more attention to social welfare and "illegal houses" in the city.¹⁰⁸

Frank HSIEH declared after the vote counting that his win was a "miracle." He went on to say that Kaohsiung City Hall workers did not have to worry about their jobs. He also asserted that he would fulfill his campaign promises.¹⁰⁹

WU Den-yi conceded defeat and left post-election commenting mainly to his campaign staff. The two other candidates did likewise.

Why did the Nationalist Party do so well in this election?

It seemed that before and during the campaign cross-strait relations and concern about the economy were two major political

106. See "Taipei: Ma Ying-jeou; Kaohsiung: Frank Hsieh," *China Post*, December 6, 1998, p. 1 and Crystal Hsu, "Ma thanks staff, family; Chen despondent," *China Post*, December 6, 1998, p. 20

107. "DPP sources expect Chen to run for president in 2000," *China News*, December 7, 1998 (no page number given; from internet item #11).

108. "NP mayoral candidate wishes Ma well," *China News*, December 7, 1998 (no page cited; from internet).

109. "Hsieh calls win a 'miracle,'" *China News*, December 7, 1998 (no page cited; from internet).

issues that concerned the electorate and both were going to help the KMT win votes. The government, and by extension the ruling party, appeared to have formulated popular positions on both. In retrospect this was certainly the case. The KMT was seen as the moderate party compared to its rivals' "radical" positions on the matter of cross-strait relations as reflected consistently by polling data. The public favored the status quo, which was the policy of the ruling party. Its managing of foreign policy generally, as reflected by top U.S. officials visiting Taipei in the weeks preceding the voting and several favorable motions by the U.S. Congress and Japan rebuffing Beijing's proposal to sign on to its "three nos" policy, made the government's foreign policy look good.¹¹⁰

While the economy was experiencing problems, the insecurity this generated caused voters to want to both stick to the party in power and to perceive that the Nationalist Party, because of its past ability to engineer economic growth, was the party to count on. The economy, simply by becoming a bigger issue to voters, ostensibly helped the KMT. Moreover, the government and the Nationalist Party did not get blamed for the economic downturn by very many voters. For the most part, in the minds of the electorate, it deserved praise for keeping the economy stable and growing (though at a slower rate) in the midst of a storm, the Asian meltdown. Voters were aware that elsewhere in the region there were much more serious problems and concluded that the government and ruling party were doing a good job and that they could continue to do so.¹¹¹

The issue of downsizing the government seemed like it might cause many people who supported the provincial government to turn against the KMT. In fact, at least one poll indicated this.¹¹² But this did not happen. Provincial government leaders ran for seats in the Legislative Yuan, thus defusing this issue to a considerable degree. In fact, the large number of good candidates from the provincial government, especially the Provincial Assembly, helped the KMT, since it gained more talent—the majority of provincial assembly members having affiliation with the Nationalist Party. The downsizing plan was bipartisan as it started and Nationalist Party officials were quite successful in keeping it from being perceived as changing to become partisan. Finally, many who opposed downsiz-

110. This view can be confirmed by opinion polls taken on foreign policy issues at the time of the election.

111. See, for example, Russell Flannery, "Taiwan's Economy Is Plus for Nationalists," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, December 4 and 5, 1998, p. 4.

112. See "TPG workers down on KMT," *China News*, October 8, 1998, p. 2.

ing favored honesty and efficiency in government and cutting the provincial government seemed to genuinely promise to facilitate that.

MA Ying-jeou's surprising performance in the Taipei mayoral campaign had "coattails" or, as in the words of some observers in Taiwan, there was a "Ma effect." So much public attention focused on Ma during the days leading up to the election because of the nature of the race (the DPP playing the "ethnic card," the polls suggesting a very tight race, the much bigger role of the electronic media, and even widespread betting on the results).¹¹³ He made an impressive case on most issues. He changed the ruling party's image from a corrupt party that engaged in vote buying and cavorted with gangs and other criminals to a more honest party. He portrayed the KMT as a party of ideas and a party of the future. He helped win the female vote. His campaign performance clearly improved the party's status with voters and thus improved the chances of other candidates running for office.

Similarly, President LEE Teng-hui helped ruling party candidates win. Notwithstanding Lee's falling public opinion ratings since he was elected in 1996, he remained generally a popular figure in Taiwan and a political leader whose views are widely respected. Moreover, he was very effective in campaigning where it mattered, and in promoting the idea of a "new Taiwanese," thereby undercutting the DPP's attempt to play ethnic politics. Being Taiwanese, he was especially effective at this. He played an especially important role in helping MA Ying-jeou. Meanwhile he created his own "Lee effect."

The Nationalist Party also won with better organizational skills and more impressive campaign strategies and tactics. Money also seemed a factor, even though it was less important than in previous election campaigns because of the economic downturn. However, in this realm, the KMT still had an edge over other parties. In fact, the ruling party may have been especially advantaged in this realm because it still had more money than the other parties, yet suffered less than in previous elections from public concern about money politics and vote-buying. There was still another point to consider: vote-buying in this election was less blatant and became more like that in other democratic countries, where candidates promise con-

113. See Jim Hwang, "Let Someone Else Try," *Free China Review*, February 1999, pp. 38-44.

stituents something if they are elected.¹¹⁴ The opposition parties found it difficult to say anything about this trend. In addition, both the DPP and the NP were hesitant to say much about it (for reasons of political correctness, which is a factor in Taiwan's politics these days), it being more common among the Aborigines and other minority groups. Some election observers said, for example, that KMT officials made monetary promises to Aboriginal chieftains and they delivered the votes.¹¹⁵

Finally, the KMT in the last analysis was not as split and distracted by in-fighting as compared to the other parties. It avoided what might otherwise have been serious problems by not having primaries. It managed to foster party unity pretty well during the campaign, especially in the weeks leading up to the election. Dissenters made less trouble than they might have otherwise when compared to past election campaigns because of good party leadership and no doubt because they were able to run without party nomination and had an "alliance" to help them.¹¹⁶

Why did the Democratic Progressive Party perform poorly or lose?

As the ruling Nationalist Party's positions on foreign policy and the economy succeeded, the DPP's failed. It lost voter support by appearing too hardline on the issue of talks with Beijing and in its support of independence. The public, in fact, feared that the main opposition party might ignite a conflict with China. The party was also very divided on the issue of the permanent separation of Taiwan from China and was at odds with two parties that took a tough stance on independence. In fact, rather than helping the DPP improve its image by leaving and forming a separate party, the parties advancing Taiwan independence hurt the DPP because they were perceived as radical and a number of DPP candidates maintained ties with them. Perhaps even more damaging to the DPP during the campaign was the fact the DPP never stated a clear policy on this issue. The DPP seemed both confused and indecisive

114. *Id.*, p. 41. The author quotes a number of scholars who say that vote-buying has decreased and in this election was not very prevalent, especially in the cities, and that it has taken the form more of campaign promises than simply paying a voter to vote a certain way.

115. The author was in Taiwan during the campaign and heard this stated by other observers.

116. A number of observers noted that John Chang, Secretary General of the Nationalist Party, was low-keyed but very effective and probably prevented a lot of party infighting.

about its stance on both relations with China and independence. For example, CHEN Shui-bian had a reputation for taking a hard line on independence; yet he travelled to Washington to talk to U.S. officials suggesting just the opposite.

DPP leaders tried to create concern about the economy and blame the ruling Nationalist Party and the government for the problems. This did not work. Other countries in the region were much worse off. Efforts to make the economy a matter of equity or class struggle likewise had few takers. Clearly Taiwan's economic problems were a matter for the whole nation. As in the past, the DPP's reputation among voters for managing the economy was not good and voters considered this when casting their votes. In other words, the economy became a more important issue than in other recent elections.¹¹⁷

The main opposition party also made a mistake playing the "ethnic card." This came off as creating divisions in the society and in the nation, as mean politics, as desperation. Though it was used primarily in the Taipei election it was noticed by voters throughout the country. The KMT and the New Party both deftly counterattacked on this issue and made the DPP appear uncompromising and radical. In other words, they created a backlash.

The DPP was also suffering from internal dissent, not just differences of opinion on the issue of relations with China and independence. It was divided on other issues as well. Picking a new chairman during the campaign seemed unwise. So was the use of some strongarming tactics against some candidates. The party's platform and campaign strategies were problems. The primaries were very divisive. Too much of its energy was devoted to winning the Taipei mayoral election. It lacked national figures and CHEN Shui-bian was too busy with his campaign to help other DPP candidates.

What are the explanations for the New Party's terrible performance?

The New Party clearly suffered from more serious internal problems during the months leading up to the election and even during the campaign, particularly when compared to those of other parties. Its top leaders publicly attacked each other sometimes at a personal level and often on very fundamental issues in the days leading up to the voting. This was very damaging to the party's mo-

117. Russell Flannery, "Taiwan's Economy Is Plus for Nationalists," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, December 4 and 5, 1998, p. 4.

rale and its image. The party as a consequence generally seemed directionless and leaderless before and during the campaign period. Defections during the critical days of the campaign also had a very negative impact.¹¹⁸

The New Party attracted very little voter interest and won very little support for either its foreign policy or its economic policies. These were big issues in the campaign and this hurt the party's chances of getting its candidates elected. On the issue of relations with China, the party seemed to retreat; it did not dare advocate unification. It too, like the DPP, was a victim of its party charter, which called for the reunification of Taiwan with China.

One of the New Party's central tenets in past elections and its hallmark, clean government was also less of a hot-button issue in the context of foreign policy and economic issues that were more important; it also appeared to some extent to be an old issue with voters. Certainly, there were no big scandals to talk about and party workers could not be energized by related issues such as vote buying, politicians' ties with gangs or criminals or on the issue of crime since there were no alarming events during the campaign period. The fact that there was less money available to candidates and parties because of the economic downturn meant a less corrupt election, or so it seemed. This dampened the NP's exhortations to promote an honest election and cleaner politics.

Finally, again like the DPP, the campaign for mayor of Taipei dominated the New Party's endeavors. The fact that many supporters and voters defected to Ma in hopes of defeating Chen, knowing that Wang had no hope of winning, undermined the party's efforts overall. A New Party heavyweight and former head of veterans' affairs in the government, HSU Li-lung, actively campaigned for Ma.¹¹⁹ There was no doubt that many New Party supporters voted for Ma, simply by looking at the fact that the New Party candidate got only 2.9 percent of the popular vote in the mayoral race, while its standard bearers won over 18 percent in the Taipei city council race.

What can be said specifically about the mayoral race candidates to explain the winners and losers?

118. Several top New Party members left the party to rejoin the KMT or become independents, some of them candidates for office. See "New Party Loses yet another key member," *China News*, October 13, 1998, p. 2.

119. "NP rails against Chen's tactics," *China News*, October 13, 1998, p. 2.

MA Ying-jeou's victory can be explained partly in terms of the Nationalist Party's landslide win cited above. In addition, Ma turned out to be a good campaigner. Going into the campaign, this was an unknown; Ma proved himself. Most observers said he was articulate and polite as well as humble and self-effacing. His educational background was a plus as it usually is in Taiwan's elections. His reputation for honesty no doubt helped a lot, so did his good looks in terms of attracting the female vote. Although voting results did not indicate how the female vote went, it must have gone strongly to Ma in view of the fact that many women voters were undecided in the last days of the campaign and Ma won much bigger than the opinion polls suggested.¹²⁰

Ma did well in getting Taiwanese vote (the same amount as Chen or 44 percent) while getting most of the Hakka (61 percent compared to Chen's 21 percent) and Mainland Chinese vote (76 percent compared to Chen's 7 percent). Thus, one might say he created a backlash on the ethnic issue. He won many New Party votes. In fact, 77 percent of those who said in earlier polls that they "leaned toward Wang" ended up voting for Ma. He also got 83 percent of those who voted for JAW Shau-kong in the election four years previous. In other words, the KMT's strategy of "respect Wang, but protect Ma" worked.¹²¹

Chen no doubt was hurt by his stance on independence, which was more strongly pro-separation than most in his party. He also was hurt by trying to play the ethnic card, as well as the economy. He had alienated some voters by his crackdowns on immoral activities during his four years as mayor. Some people also reported that they regarded him as arrogant and abrasive. This, in particular, may have cost him female votes or at least made his appeals to women voters less effective.

Chen also seemed to have more difficulty running as an incumbent and against Ma than competing against the candidates he faced in 1994. Some observers opined that due to his aggressive nature and his background in playing aggressive protest politics, he was a better campaigner out of office than in office. A few pundits, however, put a much different twist on his campaign, saying that he did very well and even better than in the previous campaign. He did win 46 percent of the vote compared to 43 percent in 1994. Further-

120. Bernard T.K. Joei, "Looking Back, Looking Forth," *Free China Review*, February 1999, p. 48.

121. "New Party votes handed Ma victory," *China News*, December 7, 1998 (no page cited; from internet).

more, this must be seen against alleged help he received from the KMT in 1994 when it was obvious their candidate would not win and they hoped to keep JAW Shau-kong of the New Party from becoming mayor.¹²²

Frank HSIEH's victory came at least in part from effective and persistent campaigning and probably from his underdog status, since the polls quite consistently showed that he would lose. He certainly did not become discouraged by the opinion surveys published almost daily during the campaign, which showed that he would lose by a sizeable margin. He was also advantaged by the fact that Kaohsiung was a DPP stronghold. Finally, the opposition party's views on China and independence did not seem to hurt him as they did CHEN Shui-bian.¹²³

WU Den-yih's efforts were doubtless hurt by the fact that many in his constituency felt that he had sufficient time to complete many of the projects he had promised years earlier and had not finished. In short, he did not have the reputation of being a mayor who got things done. In fact, some important problems stood out as matters that were ignored or only partially resolved. Wu was assailed during the campaign by all of the other candidates for poor performance in dealing with water quality, flood control, roads and a number of other problems. Some observers say that Wu for this reason lost the support of the Wang, Chen and Chu families that have dominated Kaohsiung politics for years, and that cost him the election.¹²⁴ Wu also was unable to decide whether to run, thereby early-on confusing his supporters.

Wu's campaign organization was not good and lacked direction. His campaign literature focused on his opponent serving as a defense attorney for the killer of the daughter of PAI Ping-ping (a very famous case that attracted much attention in Taiwan but which by the time of the election was considered history by many voters) and her testimony against Hsieh; this was seen as bad campaigning and backfired badly.¹²⁵ The ruling party may also have had too much confidence in Wu and put too much stock in polling data that suggested he would win without difficulty. Finally, he may have lost

122. See Copper, *Taiwan's Mid-1990s Elections*, p. 50 for further details.

123. "Hsieh calls win a 'miracle,'" *China News*, December 7, 1998 (no page number cited; from internet).

124. Bernard T.K. Joei, "Looking Back, Looking Forth," *Free China Review*, February 1999, p. 46.

125. "Campaign literature helped Hsieh defeat Wu," *China News*, December 7, 1998 (no page cited; from internet).

sufficient votes because of his alleged involvement in a sex scandal to cause his defeat.¹²⁶

How can these election results and the various interpretations been seen in terms of shifts in political power, the democratic processes and other trends?

First, the gain in popular vote over the last Legislative Yuan election and the larger margin between it and the Democratic Progressive Party: 46.43 versus 29.56 or a 16.87 percent spread (compared to 13.43 percent difference in 1995) reflects a reversal in the gradually diminishing popular support for the Nationalist Party and instead marks at least a temporary decline in support for its main rival, the Democratic Progressive Party. The KMT also won in popular vote for the mayoral races when averaging the votes in the two cities. The KMT got 50.09 compared to the DPP's 46.87.¹²⁷ This was a much improved performance over the previous metropolitan city mayoral races and seemed to reflect a change in fortunes for the ruling Nationalist Party in the big cities. One cannot say, however, that this is a permanent trend or perhaps even very significant other than that it altered what seemed to be a fairly consistent KMT decline and a steady DPP rise. Alternatively, it reflects up and down cycles for both parties in terms of their fate in elections since the 1980s.

The KMT performance was significant in some other ways, suggesting that its victory is more meaningful than simply constituting a revival in voter preference. KMT candidates won in all of the voting districts in Taiwan save three: Nantou County and Taipei districts one and two. Since the Nantou executive office was held by an independent, this means that Nationalist Party standard bearers won in all but two districts where the Democratic Progressive Party controlled the executive branch of government (meaning the magistrate or mayor) in the district.¹²⁸ This rebutted the notion that the November 1997 election, which put the opposition party in control of the executive offices of most of the country, would help elect DPP candidates to the Legislative Yuan or that national elections would follow the trend of local elections.

By winning the Taipei mayoral race and by getting more votes in the two metropolitan cities combined, as well as by winning in a

126. "Hsieh upsets Wu in Kaohsiung," *China News*, December 6, 1998 (no page number cited; from internet).

127. See *Taiwan Daily News*, December 6, 1998, p. 7 for this average.

128. For a detailed map, see *Chung-kuo Shih-pao* (China Times), December 6, 1998, p. 5.

number of urban districts, the election likewise seemed to offer proof to contradict the notion that the Nationalist Party had not become a party of rural Taiwan as voting trends in previous elections seemed to indicate.¹²⁹ Though it is certainly too early to say whether this is an important trend or to suggest that the ruling party is not being relegated to the status of a rural party, it did provide some proof of this.

The Nationalist Party victory in the Legislative Yuan, of course, means that the ruling party will not have to rely on votes from members of the other parties or independents as often as during the last three years. Even considering the fact that the ruling party has been short on party discipline in recent years, especially when considering that a number of the members of the two "alliances" and other independents may return to the ruling party (those who left) or vote with the KMT, the DPP is not likely to influence nearly as much legislation or control the agenda of legislative sessions for the next three years.

The KMT victory in the Taipei mayoral race means that the main opposition party no longer controls the capital city and will not henceforth be able to embarrass and harass the Nationalist Party and the government by taking actions against either. The KMT had long chafed at the DPP controlling the capital city, which had resulted in local fights over KMT buildings, statues of CHIANG Kai-shek and previous national leaders. Now the ruling party can reverse some of the changes and set a different tone in the city that is the center of government, commerce and more in the Republic of China. The DPP also lost its ability to use control of the capital city to promote *de facto* foreign relations by inviting foreign dignitaries, establish sister city relations and the like. All of this is quite important.

The Nationalist Party's victory also has some broader and more long range implications. This election appeared to reverse a long-term decline (punctuated by some gains, for example in the 1991 National Assembly election) in the ruling party's fortunes at the polls. In the past, many said that this was necessary in order for Taiwan to be a democracy, since democracy requires party competition. Extrapolating from this, it was argued that this would eventually bring the opposition Democratic Progressive Party to power or would result in coalition governments. Some are now doubting this

129. This issue has been discussed by the author in his previous writings on Taiwan's elections. See sources cited in footnote 3.

view and are saying that democracy is possible even though the KMT has not been defeated.

The explanation for this is that the KMT stands for moderation, and is seen by the electorate as a middle-of-the-road party between the Democratic Progressive Party on the far left and the New Party on the far right, and represents the majority of citizens. Thus, it is natural that it remains the majority party and the ruling party. Clearly, on some important issues the Nationalist Party represents the majority view and in this election that was particularly noticeable. On relations with China—independence versus unification—the KMT stood for the status quo, which opinion polls have shown is the view of the large majority of citizens. On the economy, its policies were seen as both rational and popular.

On a number of other issues the KMT also seemed to represent the moderate majority. For example, the KMT's moderate image also showed on the ethnic issue. It has the reputation of being Taiwan's only multiethnic party and the party which advocates unity as opposed to divisive ethnic politics, especially compared to the Democratic Progressive Party. Former Mayor CHEN Shui-bian tried to play the ethnic card and lost the election. LEE Teng-hui spoke of the "New Taiwanese," suggesting that it is best to put an end to ethnic differences.

An alternative view is that the KMT's performance was not good enough to warrant turning Taiwan's political system into a one-party dominated system, and that its fate in elections, as well as the strength of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, goes in cycles. The ruling Nationalist Party suffered a setback in the previous Legislative Yuan election and in the previous Taipei mayoral race. The logic goes that winners become complacent; losers learn from their defeats. Certainly, the KMT win was not a momentous one. The opposition Democratic Progressive Party won the Kaohsiung mayoral race and did not suffer a major setback anywhere else except perhaps the Taipei mayoral race.

Some commentators saw the election results as simply what was normal given the realities of Taiwan's politics. In other words, the KMT did well mainly because the New Party faltered. Many had predicted this. The New Party was an upstart party of disenchanted KMT members, mostly Mainland Chinese. It failed to win Taiwanese support, did not have any overriding issues and did not become a national party. Many are, in fact, predicting the demise of the New Party and a return to two-party politics after a temporary "fling" with a three-party system. If one sees the KMT's

gains as mainly the New Party's losses and looks at the small decline of the DPP, a very different conclusion is in order.

A number of "big guns" from all three parties, especially the Democratic Progressive Party and the New Party, failed to win election or reelection. This can probably be attributed in large measure to defective primaries (in the case of the two opposition parties) and infighting in the parties. Frank HSIEH's campaign slogan "Let Someone Else Try," which was central to what MA Ying-jeou's campaigners were saying may have influenced voters across the board. There also seemed to have been some dissatisfaction with politicians in the minds of the voters, even though the vote was generally conservative and voters paid attention to candidates' records.¹³⁰

Looking at the make-up of the new Legislative Yuan, almost 20 percent of the elected delegates or those representing districts were women—19.89 percent. Of the fifty-seven members of the Taiwan Provincial Government who ran, 44 were elected (among which were 30 representing the KMT and 10 from the DPP). Speaker of the Taiwan Provincial Assembly, LIU Pin-wei, was elected. This will doubtless give former Governor James SOONG some influence with the new Legislative Yuan. There has been talk since the election of a "Soong factor" in the new Legislative Yuan. The winners were generally young; again looking at those who were chosen by the electorate, more than 60 percent were under 50, and more than 16 percent were under 40.¹³¹

Among some controversial candidates that won were WU Tze-yuan, HUANG Yi-chiao and LIN Ruey-tu. Wu, the former county commissioner in Pingtung County, had been sentenced to life in prison for corruption. He was released from jail on NT\$3.6 million bail before the campaign. He won the second highest number of votes in Pingtung County. Huang, who was spokesman for the Taiwan Provincial Government, stepped down amidst a scandal about his sexual involvement with a news reporter. The scandal was detailed in a book written by the reporter. Lin, a Taipei City Council deputy, had insinuated during the campaign that Taipei Mayor

130. Jim Hwang, "Let Someone Else Try," *Free China Review*, February 1999, p. 44.

131. See data charts in *Tai-wan Jih-pao* (Taiwan Daily), December 6, 1998, p. 12. Ages of winning Legislative Yuan candidates are as follows: two delegates (1.14 percent) under 30, 27 (15.34 percent) aged 30 to 39, 81 (46.02 percent) aged 40 to 49, 55 (31.25 percent) aged 50 to 59, and 11 (6.25 percent) over 65.

CHEN Shui-bian had patronized prostitutes in Macao. All three were independents.¹³²

Voter turnout in the election was high, averaging over 80 percent in the mayoral elections and more than 68 percent in the legislative election. The areas where it was high and low, however, were very different from previous elections because the mayoral elections in the metropolitan cities generated such publicity and interest in the election that voters there also turned out for the Legislative Yuan voting. Voter turnout in Kaohsiung's two districts exceeded 80 percent (80.51 and 80.40 in districts one and two, respectively) and nearly as good in Taipei (80.22 and 78.13 in districts one and two, respectively). Voter turnout was lowest among the plains Aborigines (46.96 percent), and in Hsinchu (51.99 percent) and Keelung (53.0 percent). It was not high in Kinmen (60.22 percent) or Lienchiang (58.2 percent), which traditionally have the highest turnouts.¹³³

In addition to the voting for Legislative Yuan members, metropolitan mayoral and city council candidates, some voters also were able to register their views in local plebiscites that were held at the same time. In addition to a plebiscite held in Tainan on the issue of reunification, voters in Ilan expressed their views on the country's fourth nuclear power plant. In Tainan, they cast ballots for an international airport, and in Neihu for a Buddhist General Hospital.¹³⁴

V. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the election contests held on December 5, in what was called a "three-in-one election," were significant for a number of reasons. The election will clearly have important short-term and likely some long-term effects on Taiwan's politics.

The most salient feature of the election outcome was the ruling Nationalist Party's victory. After the votes were tallied, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that the KMT won and the Democratic Progressive Party and the New Party lost. This will surely mean that the ruling party will have better control over the legislative branch of government, as well as metropolitan Taipei.

132. Stephanie Low, "KMT retains control of legislature," *China Post*, December 6, 1998, p. 30.

133. See *Chung-kuo Shih-pao* (China Times), December 6, 1998, p. 5.

134. "Local plebiscite topics compete for attention," *China News*, December 6, 1998 (no page cited; from internet).

More specifically, the outcome of this election will affect legislation in the coming Legislative Yuan in favor of the KMT's agenda. It will make it considerably less necessary for the ruling party to cooperate with the Democratic Progressive Party, as was often the case since the last election. A rather large number of bills are pending in the Legislative Yuan and the gains made by the Nationalist Party will mean that more of these will be passed into law than would otherwise have been the case. Some of these will certainly have a lasting impact, especially those that relate to altering the nation's polity—and this is an issue before the government, the political parties and even the populace at this juncture.

Such legislation assumes of course, the ruling party will be able to maintain a certain level of party discipline. The KMT's election win may well affect this, though it could have either a positive or negative influence. In the short-run, it will probably be a positive one. The ruling party was fairly united during the campaign and now has more confidence. Rumors about President Lee supporting CHEN Shui-bian have been dispelled. The issue of independence versus reunification seems to have been settled in favor of the status quo. Obviously the New Party will have less influence for a while on this issue. The Nationalist Party was plagued by centrifugal tendencies after the last election in having to cooperate with the DPP to pass constitutional amendments and also in a number of cases to pass bills into law. Many KMT members did not feel comfortable about this; some were very upset about speculation (as unlikely as it was) that the two parties might merge. The KMT's victory combined with the DPP's loss will change this.

The Nationalist Party victory also gives rise, as has been the case after every other important election in Taiwan for more than a decade, to discussions about the nature of the party system in the Republic of China. Whether Taiwan has a two-party system, a three-party system or something else has been the subject of speculation for some time. It looks more like a two-party system now, given the very poor performance of the New Party.

Alternatively, one might also argue that it is a one-party dominant system, given the Democratic Progressive Party's poor performance. This view is heard less, however, than talk of a return to two-party politics. Taiwan technically has a multi-party system, but it has the characteristics of a three-party, two-party and one-party dominant system. It will certainly take more time for one to finally evolve.

There has been some serious speculation about the future of the New Party as a result of this election. Some observers now question whether the NP can survive, having done so badly in this election. WANG Chien-shien did not get his deposit back because he received too few votes. The party did poorly in every phase of the election. It remains a local party. It has been marginalized on issues. It lacks funds. It is badly divided and lacks leadership. Some of its members defected during the campaign. If the New Party is to play a role in Taiwan's election politics in the future it must resolve these problems. That indeed is on the minds of party leaders.

The same concern and pessimism may also apply to the independence parties. They also have a very uncertain future. The issue of independence seems to have been resolved by the voter in this election, at least for the time being. The alliances and independent candidates fared better, yet their future is also in question.

The KMT's victory, combined with the DPP's poor performance, and the NP's dismal showing may have some unforeseen results. It could cause the DPP to regress to protest tactics and disruption, although some believe the DPP seems to have graduated beyond that. It is still a party in power in many respects. The Nationalist Party's victory will no doubt end, for all intents and purposes, New Party hopes of gaining leverage over the KMT, determining its agenda, or enlisting Nationalist Party-New Party cooperation.

The New Party will clearly not be as effective in pushing reunification, clean politics or its anti-LEE Teng-hui agenda. The KMT win may even evoke DPP-NP cooperation. These two parties have on occasion cooperated in the past. Independents will have a bigger voice and may form voting blocs or cooperate with one or more of the parties. It is very difficult to say what form, if any, coalition building in the Legislative Yuan may take in the future. It is enough to say, perhaps, that it has been introduced into Taiwan's politics in recent years and may be difficult to eradicate.

It was widely reported the this election will influence the 2000 presidential election. Certainly, it may help to choose future presidential candidates. It was often heard before the election that a defeat of CHEN Shui-bian would end his candidacy for the presidency in 2000 or at least dim his hopes of winning. There are certainly other opinions about this. Chen may not have been as damaged by his defeat.

In this connection there are two things to keep in mind. One, he is free of any obligation not to run (having promised not to if he

were reelected mayor of Taipei) and will have more time to run if he so decides. It does appear that a candidate for the presidency next year will need time to campaign and will need to start early. The two leading choices for the presidency, according to recent opinion polls, are James SOONG and Chen. Neither now holds office.

Second, Chen is still popular in his party and throughout the country. Some have noted that he is more popular in the southern part of the island than in the north and therefore his defeat in the election for Taipei mayor does not mean very much. The presidential election is of course a country-wide election. Winning the DPP's nomination is the first step and this depends upon who is competing. It is obviously too early to know where this is going. Nevertheless, in the post-election debates on this subject, Chen was still his party's top contender.

MA Ying-jeou has been touted as a candidate. But for the KMT he is probably still too young and too inexperienced. Likewise, there are too many other candidates who are his seniors and who have more support in the party. Thus it will be very difficult for him to get the party's nomination. Having said this, however, his election victory may have made him a future candidate, meaning beyond 2000. Alternatively, he may be a strong candidate for vice president. After the votes were counted there was even talk of a Soong-Ma ticket.

President Lee's hand was noticeably strengthened by the results of this election. He gained because of the KMT win. He gained by supporting Ma. He gained by promoting the "New Taiwanese" idea, which in large measure destroyed Chen's efforts to win by encouraging ethnic voting. It ended speculation that he did not like Ma or that he did not want Ma to win. Some have even speculated that it enhances any effort he may want to make to remain in office, either by extending his term (which has been proposed in order to make executive branch and legislative branch elections coincide) or by running again. This may be only academic as Lee says he will not run again. But it will in any case give him an edge in deciding who the Nationalist Party's candidate will be. He has already said that his pick is Vice President LIEN Chan.

Lien, however, remains low in the opinion polls. Former provincial governor James SOONG, who is definitely not Lee's pick, and with whom Lee has been feuding, has the highest rating. Lee's increased prestige may make it easier for him to get the party to pick Lien, or to change his mind. In either case, Lee will less likely

become a lame duck and may, in fact, become a strong elder statesman, after he retires from office in the mold of Singapore's LEE Kuan-yew.

The election may indicate what future election issues will be. The all-important issue in this election and the question which defined the parties or the "sides" was the matter of relations with Beijing or, put another way, independence versus unification. This issue, in fact, has defined the political parties for some time, with the major political parties leaning one way or the other (if the status quo can be defined as a one-China or pro-unification position). Since voter strength has remained rather constant, this issue may fade as a result of this election, especially in view of the fact that 60 percent of voters favor the status quo/reunification position and the United States and China are on this side. This may set the stage for other issues that define political parties in other countries, such as ethnicity, religion and class, even though the nature of Taiwan's society and polity, including what happened in this election, do not suggest such divisions. Taiwan may lack characteristics that define sides politically, perhaps leading to more pragmatic politics (as has been a trend for a number of years).

In this connection, the election may well have a positive impact on Taipei's relationship with both the United States and the People's Republic of China. Both were obviously pleased by the results. Both viewed the independence as provocative and a matter that might cause trouble between Washington and Beijing and neither wanted trouble with the other. It may well make negotiations between Taipei and Beijing easier.

This election, because the vote was decided on economic issues more than usual, indicates the economy may again become a defining issue in elections. Before this election, it may have faded in importance, at least as a major tenet of the Nationalist Party, because the electorate was so pleased with economic growth that they took it for granted. With global economic competition, less confidence about future growth and stability and for other reasons, including the matter of equity, it may well be a major battleground in future elections. It may also remain a more important issue if the independence/unification issues fades in importance.

Crime and corruption played a smaller role in this election. This seemed due in large part to the importance of other issues. Perhaps, however, the declining importance of the crime issue is more permanent. It clearly was not a big issue in this election even though a number of candidates tried to make it so. Citizens have

reacted strongly to increases in the rates of crime in recent years because they were accustomed to a safe society. Perhaps they are getting used to crime. Some say it is now declining anyway. Many people have also said that the press has made too much of it. The same goes for corruption. MA Ying-jeou's decision to run seemed to reflect his view (and he is certainly trusted by most people and may even be a barometer on this issue) that corruption had not become a bigger problem and may be under control. Vote buying was less an issue in this election. President Lee commented after the election that vote-buying was a part of the country's culture; he was not strongly criticized by opposition politicians or the media for his remarks. Others have noted that it evens the playing field and that it may be preferable to other forms of corruption prevalent in other democracies.

The election definitely strengthened Taiwan's claim to democracy. Though candidates, party leaders, pundits and the international media said the election contributed to Taiwan's democratization, this was definitely heard less often than in connection with previous elections. The fact that the Republic of China is a democracy is hardly in question anymore. This has been the case since the presidential election in 1996. It does, however, underscore the fact Taiwan is a democracy and that may be meaningful in terms of Taipei's dealing with Washington in the next few years, notably on the matter of Taiwan's relationship with China. It also enhances Taiwan's image in the international community at what is probably a critical juncture.

More accurately, the election provides evidence of a consolidation of democracy in Taiwan. That process will be enhanced by the fact that candidates were more civil during the campaign, that there was less violence and fewer irregularities or accusations of cheating than in previous campaigns and that there was less vote buying. And after the election was over, there were fewer challenges to what the voters had said. In short, there were noticeable advances made in the growth of a civic culture. The Nationalist Party's control of the Legislative Yuan will probably also facilitate the "fine tuning" of the political system which will doubtless be part of the legislative agenda in the next few years.

Glossary

Selected Chinese Names

CHANG, Chu-hung 張俊宏
CHANG, John 章孝嚴
CHANG, Parris 張旭成
CHEN, Li-an 陳履安
CHEN, Shui-bian 陳水扁
CHEN, Sissy 陳文茜
CHIANG, Kai-shek 蔣介石
CHIOU, I-jen 邱義仁
CHOU, Yang-shan 周陽山
CHUNG, Teh-yao 鄭德耀
HSIEH, Frank 謝長廷
HSU, Hsin-liang 許信良
HSU, Li-lung 許歷農
HSU, Robert 徐成焜
HU, Jason 胡志強
HUANG, Shih-cheng 黃石城
HUANG, Yi-chiao 黃義交
JAW, Shau-kong 趙少康
JIANG, Zemin 江澤民
KOO, Chen-fu 辜振甫
LEE, Kuan-Yew 李光耀

LEE, Ping-nan 李炳南
LEE, Teng-hui 李登輝
LIAO, Chuan-yuh 廖泉裕
LIEN, Chan 連戰
LIN, Chia-cheng 林嘉誠
LIN, Ruey-tu 林瑞圖
LIN, Yi-Hsiung 林義雄
LIU, Pin-wei 劉炳偉
LO, Fu-chu 羅福助
MA, Ying-jeou 馬英九
PAL, Ping-ping 白冰冰
SHEN, Fu-hsiung 沈富雄
SHIH, Ming-teh 施明德
SIEW, Vicent 蕭萬長
SOONG, James 宋楚瑜
WANG, Chien-shien 王建煊
WU, Chien-kuo 吳建國
WU, Den-yi 吳敦義
WU, Po-hsiung 吳伯雄
WU, Tze-yuan 伍澤元

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