



# Salient Issues in Taiwan's Electoral Politics\*

JOHN FUH-SHENG HSIEH

*National Chengchi University, Wensham 11623, Taipei, Taiwan*

EMERSON M S NIOU

*Duke University, Department of Political Science,  
214 Perkins Library, Durham, NC 27708-0204, USA*

Electoral politics in Taiwan has undergone drastic change in the past few years. The Democratic Progressive Party was established in 1986 and has proven to be a viable political force challenging the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) which has been the dominant party in Taiwan since 1945. The dominance of the KMT in Taiwanese politics was further threatened by the defection of some KMT members to form the New Party. The new configuration of Taiwan's party system seriously complicates Taiwan's electoral politics and increases uncertainty over the electoral fortune of each political party in future elections. The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of issues in voters' evaluations of the political parties. Information on issue positions and salience and their impact on vote choice will be helpful to understand each party's strategy in formulating its party platform to compete for votes. Survey data from the 1993 election of the county magistrates and city mayors in the Republic of China on Taiwan, collected by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University in February 1994, are used to explore voters' preferences; their perception of the parties' positions on important issues; and the weights they attach to different issues. We employ a spatial model of party competition to investigate the impact of the issues and party identification on voters' evaluation of the parties' performance. Copyright © 1996 Elsevier Science Ltd.

Taiwan was returned to China in 1945 after 50 years of Japanese colonization. Soon after, in 1949, the Nationalist government withdrew to Taiwan after being defeated by the Chinese communists. The central government of the Republic of China (ROC) was established in Taiwan on top of the provincial and local governments. Members of the Central Government legislative bodies (Legislative Yuan, National Assembly, and Control Yuan) elected in 1948 in China continued to serve, as a symbol of the ROC's claim that it still represented the whole China. It was not until 1991 and 1992, respectively, that the whole bodies of the National Assembly and

\*The authors would like to thank Sarah Brooks, Peter Ordeshook and three anonymous referees for their helpful comments.

the Legislative Yuan were elected by voters in Taiwan. Despite the fact that national elections were suspended for more than 40 years, local elections for offices such as county magistrates, city mayors, county and city councilmen, and provincial assemblymen were held regularly since 1950.

In the early years of the ROC's existence, politics in Taiwan were dominated by the KMT (Nationalist Party). It was only in the mid-1970s that a serious opposition force called *Tangwai* (literally 'outside the party') emerged to challenge the KMT. In September 1986, the *Tangwai* group established the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), marking a new era of party competition in Taiwan. Since then, the DPP has proved to be a viable political force, gaining anywhere from 25 to 40 per cent of popular supports in elections. The most significant difference between the DPP and other parties is the DPP's explicit advocacy of Taiwan independence.

In addition to the rising challenge from the outside, a power struggle within the KMT also led to the reshaping of Taiwan's political landscape. The KMT was formally run by Nationalist mainlanders but has recently been passed on to native Taiwanese who are, at best, ambivalent about the goal of unification with China. With approximately 70 to 80 per cent of the population identified as native, the reformation of the KMT's leadership was necessary to maintain KMT's dominant position. It was detrimental, however, to those who are identified as mainlanders. The internal strife within the KMT splintered the party into the mainstream and non-mainstream factions, which divided largely along the ethnic line.

Another important event that changed Taiwan's party politics occurred in August 1993 when a group of the KMT elites defected to form the New Party (NP).<sup>1</sup> They accused the KMT of being controlled by local factions, being corrupt, and of only serving the interest of the rich. The NP's platform consists of three main points: anti-money politics, representation of the interest of 'ordinary citizens' and the unification with China in the future. Later that year, the NP hastily entered the race for county magistrates and city mayors. Although it did not win any posts in the 1993 election, few would deny that the NP had fairly strong electoral support in certain parts of the island.<sup>2</sup>

This new configuration of Taiwan's party system will seriously complicate Taiwan's electoral politics and will increase uncertainty over the electoral fortune of each political party in the elections. In this new political environment, people are concerned with several questions. For example, will the DPP replace the KMT as the ruling party in the near future? Will the NP become a viable party? Is the NP perceived by voters as primarily a mainlanders' party? Can the NP successfully gain electoral support from both the KMT and the DPP supporters? What are the differences among the three parties on issues? What are voters' preferences on these issues? What are the weights voters attach to each issue? Are any specific issues important factors in determining voters' vote choice in Taiwan?

To provide empirical answers to these questions, we employ survey data regarding the 1993 election of the county magistrates and city mayors in the Republic of China on Taiwan, collected by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University in February 1994. The 1993 survey does not include the two provincial cities, Taipei and Kaohsiung, because no elections were held there due to the two cities' special administrative status.<sup>3</sup>

Section I introduces six important issues over which the three political parties competed. We illustrate the voters' preferences and their perceived positions of the parties on these issues, and the distribution of issue salience among voters. Section

II tests a simple regression model to investigate the impact of issues and party identification on respondents' party evaluation and voting choice. Section III concludes the paper.

### I. The Issues

Six general issues, four positional issues and two valence issues, are included in our study. The four positional issues regard the economy, national identity, environment, and stability. The stability issue (political reform versus social stability) pertains to the pace of political reforms which are to transform Taiwan from an authoritarian to a democratic system. This was the most important issue in Taiwan in the 1970s and early 1980s. The national identity issue (Taiwan independence versus unification) assumed a prominent role only in the mid 1980s. The economy (equity versus growth) and environment (protection versus economic development) are both newer issues, yet are becoming more salient to Taiwan electoral politics. Two valence issues, local public works and anti-corruption, have been identified by the fact that all or nearly all of the electorate holds an identical preference on each issue (Stokes, 1963). Each respondent in the survey was asked to locate her position and the parties' positions on the four positional issues. The issues are represented on an equal interval scale running from 0 to 10, where the two endpoints are identified for the issues of economy; identity; environment; and stability respectively: (0 representing equitable distribution; Taiwan independence; environmental protection; political reform; and 10 signifying economic growth; reunification; economic development; and political and social stability). The question of national identity issue, for example, was expressed in the following way:

On the issue of unification and independence, some people advocate that Taiwan should declare independence at once regardless of Communist China's reaction; some believe that Taiwan should soon negotiate with Communist China so as to accelerate the unification process; and there are others standing in between. Suppose the view that Taiwan should declare independence at once is at one extreme, represented by a score 0 and the view that Taiwan should soon negotiate with Communist China on unification is at the other extreme, represented by a score 10, then:

- a. What is your position on this issue on this scale?
- b. Where will you position the KMT on this scale?
- c. How about the DPP?
- d. How about the NP?

In the following discussion, we will provide some background information regarding each issue and report the empirical results from our survey.

#### *Economy*

The economy issue is the traditional left-right issue, involving a choice between economic growth (coded 10) on one hand and equitable distribution of wealth or income on the other (coded 0). In the last four decades, Taiwan has achieved an 'economic miracle', maintaining not only a prosperous but also an equitable economy (Kuo *et al.*, 1981). In recent years, however, while economic growth has

TABLE 1. Respondent's and political party's positions on economy issue  
Economic Equity (0) versus Economic Growth (10)

		< 5	= 5	> 5	NA
Respondent's position	Count	277	513	424	180
	Per cent	19.87	36.80	30.42	12.91
KMT's position	Count	92	235	627	440
	Per cent	6.60	16.86	44.98	31.56
DPP's position	Count	569	176	87	562
	Per cent	40.82	12.63	6.24	40.32
NP's position	Count	171	147	53	1023
	Per cent	12.27	10.55	3.80	73.39

remained strong, income and wealth distribution have worsened. Consequently, the economic growth versus equality issue has become an important issue in the political debates. The DPP has sought to capitalize on this issue in recent electoral campaigns by stressing the need to protect the broad social welfare. The NP has also utilized this issue to attract support. The KMT has been placed more or less on the defensive on this issue, having been accused of unduly tending to the interests of the rich, as opposed to the broader economic interests of the nation.

In our survey, we asked the respondents to express their own preferences and their perception of the positions of the three parties on this issue. To simplify presentation, we divide the respondents into three groups: the first group having given the score less than five, the second group, equal to five, and the third group, greater than five. The results are presented in Table 1. We can see that relative to the respondents' preference distributions, the KMT was perceived to be more pro-growth and the DPP and the NP more pro-equality.

### *National Identity*

The second issue in our study, national identity, is probably the most controversial and divisive issue in Taiwanese politics. On the one hand, some people, almost exclusively native Taiwanese, believe that Taiwan should be an independent country and should be permanently separated from China. On the other hand, many native Taiwanese and most mainlanders insist that Taiwan and mainland China should someday be reunited. In Taiwan, the KMT is commonly considered for unification, the DPP for Taiwan independence, and the NP is normally viewed as more pro-unification than the KMT, or at least more so than the mainstream faction of the KMT.

Our data show that, first, a majority of the voters (59 per cent) leaned toward maintaining the *status quo* or were pro-unification. About 13 per cent clearly expressed their preference for an independent Taiwan. Second, and not surprisingly, the KMT was viewed as pro-unification and the DPP as pro-independence. Finally, more than 70 per cent of the respondents were unable to locate the NP's position on this issue. See Table 2.

A surprising result from our data is that, of those who located both the KMT's and the NP's positions on the national identity issue, 42 per cent considered the KMT to be more pro-unification than the NP, 25 per cent of them thought that the

TABLE 2. Respondent's and political party's positions on the national identity issue  
Taiwan independence (0) versus Unification (10)

		< 5	= 5	> 5	NA
Respondent's position	Count	186	427	394	387
	Per cent	13.34	30.63	28.26	27.76
KMT's position	Count	57	208	639	490
	Per cent	4.09	14.92	45.84	35.15
DPP's position	Count	737	76	66	515
	Per cent	52.87	5.45	4.73	36.94
NP's position	Count	59	135	215	985
	Per cent	4.23	9.68	15.42	70.66

NP was more pro-unification than the KMT, and 33 per cent thought that the NP and the KMT occupied the same position. This result seems to contradict the impression held by local politicians, journalists, and the like that the NP is more pro-unification than the KMT. While this might simply reflect the NP's novelty in politics, it might also signify that the NP has successfully changed its image by playing down the national identity issue.

To further investigate this puzzle, we classify the respondents into a number of educational groups to examine whether people with education possess more 'accurate' political information. We find that the respondents with college education did have more 'accurate' information, while all other groups, including people with graduate school education, thought differently.

Another interesting question is the relationship between a person's subjective view of his ethnic identity and his preference on the unification versus independence issue. Table 3 shows that individuals who identified themselves as Chinese (Taiwanese) tended to prefer unification (independence). In all groups, there were more people on the *status quo* side or the unification side than on the independence side, but among those in favor of independence, more were from the Taiwanese group than from the other two groups.

We are interested to know as well whether the party identification of the respondent is associated with his or her preferences on the national identity issue. In

TABLE 3. Subjective identity: are you a Chinese, Taiwanese, or both?

		Count Col pct	Taiwanese	Both	Chinese	NA	Row total
Independent versus Unification	< 5		93	60	28	5	186
			21.2	10.7	8.8	6.3	13.3
	= 5		119	199	102	7	427
			27.2	35.6	32.1	8.9	30.6
	> 5		88	160	133	13	394
			20.1	28.6	41.8	16.5	28.3
	NA		138	140	55	54	387
			31.5	25.0	17.3	68.4	27.8
	Column		438	559	318	79	1394
	Total		31.4	40.1	22.8	5.7	100.0

TABLE 4. Party ID

	Count Col pct	KMT	DPP	NP	NA	Row total
Independent versus Unification	< 5	49	55	2	80	186
		10.9	31.4	3.4	11.3	13.3
	= 5	144	66	29	188	427
		32.1	37.7	49.2	26.4	30.6
	< 5	195	33	24	142	394
		43.4	18.9	40.7	20.0	28.3
	NA	61	21	4	301	387
		13.6	12.0	6.8	42.3	27.8
	Column Total	449	175	59	711	1394
		32.2	12.6	4.2	51.0	100.0

Table 4, comparing the DPP with the KMT, a higher percentage of DPP supporters wanted independence, although a sizable group (18.9 per cent) still leaned toward unification. Between the KMT and the NP, our data show that a higher percentage of the KMT supporters (43.4 per cent) favored unification than did the NP supporters (40.7 per cent). Again, this result is not consistent with the common belief that the NP is more pro-unification than the KMT. Table 4 also shows that the NP supporters were less pro-independence (3.4 per cent) than the KMT supporters (10.9 per cent). This seems to suggest that the NP's novelty and/or its strategy to play down the national identity issue may have enabled it to attract support from the more pragmatic and less ideological people in the society.

### *Environment*

The third issue, the environment, is also controversial since it involves a tradeoff between economic development and environmental protection. Given Taiwan's high priority policy on economic development, it has experienced very serious environmental problems which in recent years have caught widespread attention. Among the political parties, the DPP and the NP are commonly believed to be more pro-environment, while the KMT is often seen as more pro-economic development. Our survey results support this observation (see Table 5). The data indicate that

TABLE 5. Respondent's and political party's positions on environment issue  
Environmental Protection (0) versus Economic Development (10)

		< 5	= 5	> 5	NA
Respondent's position	Count	502	530	190	172
	Per cent	36.01	38.02	13.63	12.34
KMT's position	Count	142	321	467	464
	Per cent	10.19	23.03	33.50	33.29
DPP's position	Count	357	277	127	633
	Per cent	25.61	19.87	9.11	45.41
NP's position	Count	204	168	61	961
	Per cent	14.63	12.05	4.38	68.94

the respondents were more pro-environment than the KMT. The DPP's and the NP's positions are closer to the majority of the voters on this issue.

It should be noted that a large percentage of the voters were not able to locate the positions of the parties on this issue. Moreover, the perceived difference among parties over this issue is very small. Both of these may reflect the fact that parties have not formulated a distinguishable platform on this issue, that respondents' awareness of environmental protection is still very low, or both.

### *Social Stability*

The fourth issue centers on the debate between political reform and political and social stability. Since Taiwan has just undergone a transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system and continues to face a serious external threat from mainland China, such a debate is quite natural. The DPP, which challenges the ruling party by advocating democratic reforms is certainly on the side of political reform. The KMT's paramount concern is with social stability. The NP is positioned in between the two, although it falls closer to the KMT. Our survey results (Table 6) show that a large majority of the respondents were pro-stability. Among the three parties, the KMT was regarded as more pro-stability, the DPP pro-reform, and the NP was placed in between.

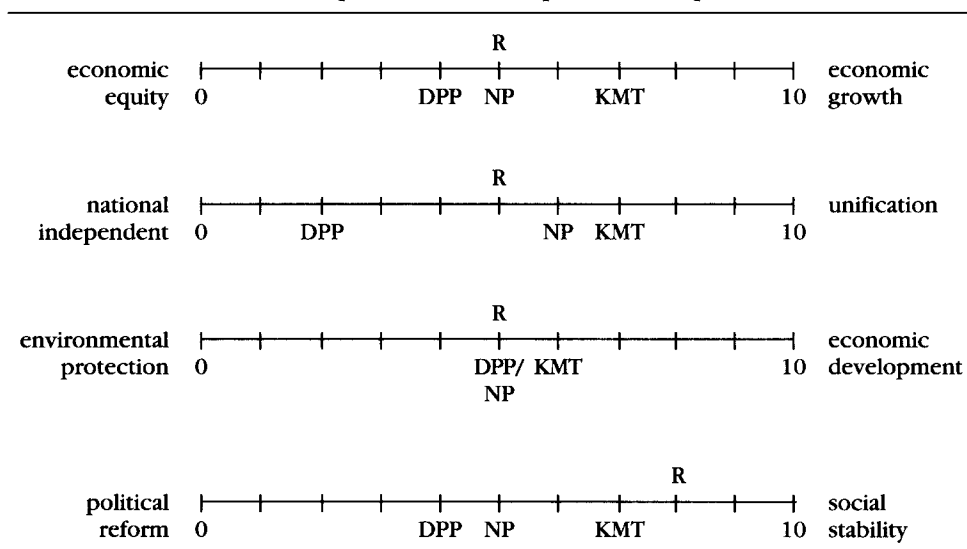
TABLE 6. Respondent's and political party's positions on social stability issue  
Democracy versus Stability

		< 5	= 5	> 5	NA
Respondent's position	Count	60	351	846	137
	Per cent	4.30	25.18	60.69	9.83
KMT's position	Count	33	239	713	409
	Per cent	2.37	17.14	51.15	29.34
DPP's position	Count	520	217	153	504
	Per cent	37.30	15.57	10.98	36.15
NP's position	Count	95	218	155	926
	Per cent	6.81	15.64	11.12	66.43

### *An Overview of the Four Positional Issues*

To have a clear picture of where the voters and parties stand, we locate the median positions of the respondents' preferences and their perceived positions of each party on these issues. As Table 7 illustrates, the median positions of the respondents on the issues of economy, national identity, environment, and stability were five, five, five and eight respectively. The KMT's perceived positions were seven, seven, six and seven, while the DPP's perceived positions were four, two, five and four and the NP's positions were perceived as five, six, five and five. The NP's median positions on the first three issues were closest to the respondents' median positions, while on issue four the KMT's median position was closest to the respondents' median position. Between the two major parties, the KMT was closer to the respondents' median positions on the two political issues (issues two and four), while the DPP's positions were closer to the respondents' median positions on the socioeconomic issues (issues one and

TABLE 7. The median positions of the respondents and parties on issues



three). The NP's positions on all four issues once again fell between those of the KMT and the DPP.

It should be noted that on all four issues, as Table 8 shows, about 90 per cent of the respondents were able to identify their own positions on the economy, environment, and stability issues, while only 73 per cent stated their preferences on the national identity issue. On all four issues, approximately 70 per cent and 60 per cent of the respondents could locate the positions of the KMT and the DPP, respectively, while only about 30 per cent could indicate the NP's positions on these issues. This result suggests that for the NP to compete with the other two parties, the first thing that it must achieve is to make its positions on these issues known to more voters.

Next, we study whether voters' preferences on these issues are associated with some demographic variables. We regress voters' ideal positions on each of the four issues on demographic variables such as age; education; ethnicity; and gender. We find that the younger generation was less pro-economic growth (significant at 0.01), more pro-environment (significant at 0.05), and more pro-reform (significant at 0.1).

TABLE 8. Respondents' awareness of party's positions on issues

Able to place:	Economy (%)	National identity	Environment	Stability (%)
self	1232 (88)	1019 (73)	1238 (89)	1265 (91)
KMT	976 (70)	918 (66)	956 (69)	1005 (72)
DPP	842 (60)	898 (64)	795 (57)	915 (66)
NP	377 (27)	427 (31)	437 (31)	486 (35)



Mainlanders were more pro-unification (significant at 0.01), female voters were more pro-stability (significant at 0.05), and respondents with higher education were more pro-environment (significant at 0.1).<sup>4</sup>

### *The Two Valence Issues*

In addition to the four positional issues, we asked the respondents to rank the parties on local public works and anti-corruption issues. The local public works issue is included in our analysis due to the fact that the survey covered the election for the county magistrates and city mayors. In local parties, this is certainly an issue of importance. As for the issue of eliminating corruption, people in Taiwan are generally very concerned about the problem of corruption in government. It is fashionable in Taiwanese politics for political parties to launch anti-corruption campaigns during election periods as this often becomes a campaign theme for candidates from opposition parties.

On each of these two issues, we ask the respondents to score the parties between 0 and 10 on their ability to do a better job. In Table 9, our survey results show that on the local public works issue, the KMT gained 35 per cent of the first place votes, the DPP 15 per cent and the NP, 2 per cent. But on the anti-corruption issue, the DPP (25 per cent) has the highest approval rate, followed by the KMT (12 per cent) and the NP (7 per cent).

TABLE 9. Political party's first place votes on the two valence issues

	KMT	DPP	NP	K=D*	K=N	D=N	K=D=N	NA
<i>Local public works issue</i>								
Count	494	209	29	135	13	11	76	427
Per cent	35.44	14.99	2.08	9.68	0.93	0.79	5.45	30.63
<i>Anti-corruption issue</i>								
Count	168	355	98	92	7	67	78	529
Per cent	12.05	25.47	7.03	6.60	0.50	4.81	5.60	37.95

\*The equal sign refers to the situation in which the respondents regard the KMT (K), the DPP (D), or the NP (N) as equally capable.

### *Issue Salience*

Included in the survey as well were questions regarding the salience of each issue. Respondents were asked to rank the four positional issues as well as the two valence issues:

In last year's election of the county magistrates and city mayors, a number of issues more or less received people's attention, such as local public works, elimination of corruption, social welfare, China's unification or Taiwan independence, environmental protection, and social stability.

- Among these issues, which issue do you feel is the most important one?
- Which issue is the least important one?

TABLE 10. The most and least important issue

Issue	Welfare	Identity	Environ- ment	Stability	Public works	Corruption	NA	Total
Most important issue:								
Count	130	27	103	478	193	197	266	1394
per cent	9.3	1.9	7.4	34.3	13.8	14.1	19.1	100
Least important issue:								
Count	28	640	24	17	14	78	593	1394
per cent	2.0	45.9	1.7	1.2	1.0	5.6	42.5	100

Table 10 presents the data. Each of the six issues was viewed as most important or least important by some portion of the population.

Two interesting observations can be found in Table 10. First, only 1.9 per cent of the respondents thought that the national identity issue was most important, while 45.9 per cent considered it the least important. Second, Table 10 shows that over one third of the respondents (34.3 per cent) thought that the stability issue was most salient among the six issues. We have shown previously in Table 6 that a large majority of the respondents (61 per cent) were in favor of stability. Together, they suggest that people in Taiwan are quite reluctant to undertake drastic changes in the political system.

Two questions on issue salience warrant further investigation. First, did those who ranked the stability issue as most important, tend to consider the national identity issue as least important, since it is a common belief that the independence of Taiwan might lead to an invasion by China? Our data show that 52.5 per cent of those who ranked stability issue as most important also ranked the national identity issue as least important. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of those who ranked one of the other issues as most important also ranked the national identity issue as least important. This suggests that there is no strong association between attitude on stability and national identity issues.

Also of interest is the question: Were those who ranked either stability as most important or the national identity issue as least important mainly KMT supporters? We find that among those who ranked the stability issue as most important 41.6 per cent were KMT supporters, 8.4 per cent DPP supporters, 4.6 per cent NP supporters, 40.8 per cent independents, and 4.6 per cent missing data. Compared to the distribution of the respondents' party identification, 32.2 per cent (KMT), 12.6 per cent (DPP), 4.2 per cent (NP), 41.6 per cent (independent), and 9.4 per cent (NA), the percentage of the KMT supporters who ranked the stability issue as most important was significantly higher. Of those who ranked the national identity issue as least important 35.8 per cent were KMT supporters, 13.9 per cent DPP supporters, 6.3 per cent NP supporters, 40 per cent independents, and 4.1 per cent missing data. This distribution is relatively equal to the distribution of party identification of the respondents.

Since each issue is regarded as most important by a portion of the respondents, it is interesting to know which issue was most salient to which group. We formulate

a logit model to study this question. The dependent variable is respondents' most salient issue. The independent variables are age; education level; ethnic origin; party identification; and gender. The results show that respondents with higher education level tended to view the economic and anti-corruption issues as more important than stability and local public works issue as most important. Female respondents placed more weight on the economic and stability issues than on the public works and anti-corruption issues. Older respondents tended to rank the environmental issue over the national identity issue as most important. The KMT supporters tended to rank economic and anti-corruption issues as lower than other issues. The DPP supporters, in contrast, emphasized the importance of national identity and anti-corruption issues over environment and stability issues. The NP supporters tended to rank the national identity and anti-corruption issues as the most important of all issues. From these results, we can infer that party identification, education, and gender are the most important demographic variables affecting the respondents' ranking of the most important issue.

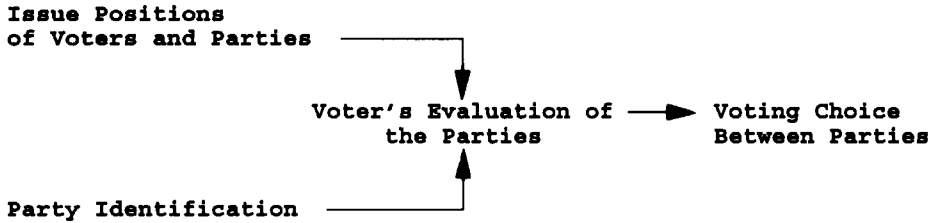
We use the same logit model to study which issue was the least salient to which group. This reveals that female respondents tend to believe that anti-corruption is less important than national identity and public works issues, while older respondents tend to think that the national identity issue is less important than the issue of anti-corruption.

## II. Issues, Party Identification, and Party Evaluation

To this point, we have discussed voters' ideal positions and their perception of the parties' positions on the six issues, the weights they attached to the issues and the demographic variables associated with the issue positions and issue salience. In this section, we examine how issues and party identification affect voters' evaluation of the parties within the Downsian spatial framework.

In this spatial model, an election is presumed to concern one or more well defined issues; each party (or candidate)—in the competition to maximize its vote share or probability of winning—advocates positions on issues, where the assembly of a party's positions on all issues is the party's platform. Alternative positions on each issue are represented as points on a line so that the set of all election issues corresponds to an  $n$ -dimensional coordinate space. Each party's platform is a point in that space. Each citizen, presumed to have a most preferred policy on each issue, and likely weighing the salience of the issues differently, votes for the party that advocates a position closest to his or her most preferred platform (Downs, 1957; Davis *et al.*, 1970; Enelow and Hinich, 1984; Niou and Ordeshook, 1992; Hsieh and Niou, 1994).

In reality, information costs often impede the voters from learning about various issues and the positions held by parties or candidates on the issues. As a result, they may delegate part or all of their voting choices to others, including political parties. According to Downs, "if a voter believes a certain party will seek to maximize votes by catering to the desires of a specific interest group or section of the electorate, and if his own goals are identical with the goals of that group or section, then he can rationally delegate all his political decision-making to that party" (Downs, 1957, 234). Party identification is thus an important factor in a voter's calculation as he attempts to select a party or a candidate. Following this approach, we formulate the following model to account for voters' evaluation of political parties, and eventually their voting choices.



Voting Choice as a Function of Issues and Party Identification

In this model, a voter's choice is determined by his evaluation of the parties. This, in turn, is a function of his party identification and of the distance between his ideal positions and the positions adopted by the parties on important issues.

To test the model, we first operationalize the variables that will be used in our model. The first variable is the respondents' evaluation of the parties, which was obtained by asking the question: "Are you satisfied with the general performance of the KMT, the DPP, or the NP?" Respondents were asked to give each party a score between 0 to 10. For each respondent, we first subtract the DPP score from the KMT score, yielding a comparative evaluation score that ranges from -10 to 10. A respondent with a positive evaluation score is more satisfied with the performance of the KMT than with that of the DPP, while a respondent with a negative score has a better opinion of the DPP than of the KMT. If the score is 0, then he or she is indifferent between the two parties. Nearly a majority of the respondents (49 per cent) were more satisfied with the KMT, while 32 per cent were indifferent, and only a minority (19 per cent) considered the DPP more favorably. The same procedure was repeated for the KMT-NP case and the DPP-NP case.

To capture the voters' attitudes on the four positional issues we transform the original scores, comparing the respondent's own position and his or her perceived positions of the parties. In the KMT-DPP case, for example, we first calculate two absolute values, one for the difference between the respondent's position and that of the KMT, and the other for the difference between the respondent's position and that of the DPP. The former is then subtracted from the latter to obtain a new score as shown in the following equation:

$$I_{ji} = |Z_{ji} - D_{ji}| - |Z_{ji} - K_{ji}| \quad (1)$$

where  $I_{ji}$  denotes the respondent  $i$ 's score on the  $j$ th issue, showing the relative distance between his own position and the perceived positions of the two parties;  $Z_{ji}$  is  $i$ 's own position; and  $D_{ji}$  and  $K_{ji}$  are his perceived positions of the DPP and the KMT respectively. Given equation (1), if  $I_{ji}$  is positive,  $i$  is assumed to favor the KMT on the  $j$ th issue; if  $I_{ji}$  is negative,  $i$  prefers the DPP to the KMT, and if it is 0,  $i$  is indifferent between the two parties on that issue.

On the two valence issues, we employ the same procedure to calculate the comparative evaluation score. We also construct two dummy variables to measure party identification. In the KMT-DPP case, one dummy variable depicts KMT and non-KMT supporters, and the other DPP and non-DPP supporters. We use this construction to determine whether KMT or DPP supporters would give the KMT or the DPP higher evaluation scores than non-KMT or non-DPP supporters.

Our regression model for the KMT-DPP case is formally specified as:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I_{1i} + \beta_2 I_{2i} + \beta_3 I_{3i} + \beta_4 I_{4i} + \beta_5 I_{5i} + \beta_6 I_{6i} + \beta_7 (\text{KMT}_i) + \beta_8 (\text{DPP}_i) + U_i \quad (2)$$

where  $Y_i$  is voter  $i$ 's comparative evaluation of two political parties;  $I_{1i}$  (economy issue),  $I_{2i}$  (national identity issue),  $I_{3i}$  (environmental issue), and  $I_{4i}$  (stability issue) stand for  $i$ 's judgment of the differences between his preferences and his perceived positions of the two parties on the issues.  $I_{5i}$  (local public works issue) and  $I_{6i}$  (anti-corruption issue) are comparative scores given by  $i$  to indicate the relative capabilities of the two parties in solving these valence issues as seen by  $i$ . (KMT) and (DPP) are dummy variables which distinguish respondents who are leaning toward the KMT, from those leaning toward the DPP. The results of the regression analysis are reported in Table 11.

TABLE 11. Issue effect on party evaluation: KMT versus DPP

Variable	Estimated coefficient	Standard error	Beta	<i>t</i> -statistics
Constant	0.66	0.13		4.90†
Economy	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.91
Identity	0.09	0.02	0.14	4.42†
Environment	0.04	0.03	0.05	1.46
Stability	0.03	0.02	0.04	1.33
Public work	0.36	0.04	0.37	10.02†
Corruption	0.25	0.03	0.27	8.18†
KMT	1.03	0.19	0.17	5.27†
DPP	-1.12	0.26	-0.14	-4.25†

$R^2 = .645$

$N = 411$

†Significant at .01

As can be seen from the table, among the six issue variables, only the national identity issue and the two valence issues significantly affect the respondents' evaluation scores, with the two valence issues exerting a much higher impact on the dependent variable than any of the other positional issues. This result may be attributable to the context of this survey, which was designed for the election of the county magistrates and city mayors, rather than the national elections. The coefficients for the two partisan dummy variables are also significant.

Tables 12 and 13 show the same analysis for the KMT-NP and the DPP-NP cases, respectively. In Table 12, the two political issues—national identity and democracy stability issues—along with the two valence issues, have significant impact on the dependent variable, as do the two partisan dummy variables. Among all variables, the local public works issue plays the most important role. In Table 13, the evaluation of the two opposition parties depends very much upon the economic growth-equality issue, the two valence issues, and the two partisan dummy variables. Among the issue variables, the most important one is, again, the local public works issue.

TABLE 12. Issue effect on party-evaluation: KMT versus NP

Variable	Estimated coefficient	Standard error	Beta	t-statistics
Constant	0.22	0.22		0.99
Economy	0.01	0.06	0.01	0.10
Identity	0.14	0.05	0.15	2.75†
Environment	-0.11	0.06	-0.11	-1.90
Stability	0.14	0.05	0.14	2.53*
Public work	0.42	0.06	0.41	7.32†
Corruption	0.16	0.05	0.20	3.43†
KMT	1.00	0.34	0.17	2.95†
NP	-1.63	0.45	-0.20	-3.61†

 $R^2 = .570$  $N = 165$ 

\*Significant at .05

†Significant at .01

TABLE 13. Issue effects on party evaluation: DPP versus NP

Variable	Estimated coefficient	Standard error	Beta	t-statistics
Constant	-0.15	0.22		-0.68
Economy	0.23	0.07	0.18	3.26†
Identity	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.54
Environment	-0.13	0.08	-0.09	-1.67
Stability	-0.06	0.07	-0.05	-0.86
Public work	0.37	0.06	0.34	5.77†
Corruption	0.23	0.07	0.21	3.42†
DPP	1.58	0.49	0.18	3.20†
NP	-2.79	0.44	-0.34	-6.41†

 $R^2 = 0.590$  $N = 157$ 

\*Significant at 0.05

†Significant at 0.01

Finally, we would like to show that these issues affect vote choices by demonstrating that the respondents' comparative evaluation of the parties and their vote changes are closely related. As Table 14 shows, among those respondents who said they were more satisfied with the KMT than with the DPP, 79.6 per cent said they voted for the KMT candidates in the election for the county magistrates and city mayors. For those who were more satisfied with the DPP, 75.4 per cent voted for the DPP candidates, while for those who regarded the performance of the two parties as equally satisfactory or equally unsatisfactory, the percentage voting for the candidates of either party was almost the same (45.2 per cent for the KMT and 46.2 per cent for the DPP).

In Table 15, we show a similar analysis for the KMT-NP case. Of those respondents who were more satisfied with the KMT, more were likely to vote for the KMT (66.5 per cent). However, respondents who were more satisfied with the NP tended to vote either for the KMT (35.7 per cent) or for the DPP (45.2 per cent).

TABLE 14. Candidate evaluation and vote choice: KMT versus DPP

Row % (No. of cases)	Vote for KMT	Vote for DPP	Vote for NP	Vote for ind.	Vote for KMT-ind*	Vote for DPP-ind*
More satisfied with DPP	13.4 18	75.4 98	6.2 8	4.6 6	0 0	0 0
Neutral	45.2 90	46.2 92	1.5 3	4.5 9	2.0 4	0.5 1
More satisfied with KMT	79.6 300	12.5 47	4.2 16	2.1 8	1.3 5	0.3 1

\*Referring to those candidates who were KMT or DPP members, but did not obtain the party's endorsement.

TABLE 15. Candidate evaluation and vote choice: KMT versus NP

Row % (No. of cases)	Vote for KMT	Vote for DPP	Vote for NP	Vote for ind.	Vote for KMT-ind*	Vote for DPP-ind*
More satisfied with NP	35.7 30	45.2 38	14.3 12	3.6 3	1.2 1	0 0
Neutral	49.5 49	44.4 44	3.0 3	1.0 1	2.0 2	0 0
More satisfied with KMT	66.5 189	25.1 72	2.8 8	3.5 10	1.4 4	0.4 1

\*Referring to those candidates who were KMT or DPP members, but did not obtain the party's endorsement.

TABLE 16. Candidate evaluation and vote choice: DPP versus NP

Row % (No. of cases)	Vote for KMT	Vote for DPP	Vote for NP	Vote for ind.	Vote for KMT-ind*	Vote for DPP-ind*
More satisfied with NP	71.9 97	14.8 20	11.1 15	0.7 1	1.5 2	0 0
Neutral	57.5 73	37.0 47	2.4 3	2.4 3	0.8 1	0 0
More satisfied with DPP	48.7 96	43.1 85	1.5 3	4.1 8	2.0 4	0.5 1

\*Referring to those candidates who were KMT or DPP members, but did not obtain the party's endorsement.

Only 14.3 per cent said they voted for the NP! The same is evident for the neutral voters. It seems that at least some of those who were more satisfied with the NP were strategic voters. These voters supported another party because either they did not want to waste their votes for the NP candidates, or because the NP did not run any candidate in their district, or, they voted for the lesser evil between the two major parties in the race. For those who chose to vote for the DPP candidates, it might also be the case that their first choice was the DPP, while the NP and the KMT were ranked second and last, respectively.

In Table 16, a similar phenomenon appears again. For those who were more satisfied with the NP than with the DPP, a great majority (71.9 per cent) voted for the

KMT. This likely includes many of those who preferred the KMT to the NP and the NP to the DPP. However, it is likely that at least some of them preferred the NP to the KMT and the KMT to the DPP. One possible reason to vote for the KMT candidates was to prevent the DPP candidates from winning. Even for the neutrals, a majority of them (57.5 per cent) voted for the KMT, and a substantial minority (37 per cent) voted for the DPP, with only a minuscule 2.4 per cent voting for the NP.

### **III. Conclusion**

This paper is an attempt to understand the role that issues played in Taiwan's electoral politics in the context of the 1993 election for the county magistrates and city mayors. We identify six issues on which the three political parties competed: economy; national identity; environment; stability; local public works and anti-corruption. On these issues, we find that the respondent's position and salience rankings are associated with demographic variables such as age; education; ethnicity and gender; party ID. To summarize, the younger generation is more in favor of economic equity, environment, and political reforms, while mainlanders are found to be more supportive of unification with China. Female voters are more in favor of stability, as they regard economy and stability issues to be more salient than other issues. Respondents with higher education are more pro-environment and they regard economy and anti-corruption issues as the most salient issue. Finally, the KMT supporters were found to regard economy and anti-corruption as less salient than other issues, whereas the DPP and the NP supporters have the exact opposite salience rankings.

In addition, our study reveals several interesting observations. First, the environment issue has not played an influential role in Taiwan's electoral politics. Most voters do not have a well articulated preference on this issue, nor are political parties' positions distinguishable on this either. Second, the stability issue is the survival kit of the KMT. Most voters prefer more stability to greater reform and they see the KMT as their safest bet on this issue. Third, on the national identity issue, the DPP is clearly perceived as the party for independence. If the DPP hopes to appeal to a wider base of voters, it will need to move closer to the median position on that issue. The question of whether the KMT or the NP is more pro-unification will need to be tested empirically in the future studies. We believe that the NP is fundamentally more pro-unification than the KMT, although this is not evident from the survey results. The reason our data failed to support this view is because the survey was conducted only a few months after the birth of the NP as knowledge of their position preference was not widespread. Finally, on the economy issue, the NP and the DPP are positioned very closely, and thus compete to gain support from the middle and lower classes. Our data reveal that the KMT is perceived to be more conservatively positioned.

We have employed a regression analysis to determine whether these issues play a role in the respondents' evaluation of the performance of the various parties. The study shows that the two valence issues are indeed important factors. With regard to the positional issues, however, only the national identity issue is considered important. We speculate that the main reason that the other positional issues are not significant is because the 1993 election is a local election. However, an alarming phenomena we observe is that national identity remained a factor affecting



voters' choices over political parties despite the fact that very few candidates campaigned on that issue. Another important piece of information disclosed by our survey is that approximately 45.9 per cent of the respondents rank national identity as the least important issue while only 1.9 per cent rank it as most important. This result seems to suggest that a large majority of the respondents wish to play down the importance of the national identity issue, although some politicians within each political party find it in their electoral interest to capitalize on this issue. National identity is an emotional and potentially explosive issue. If it is not well contained, it will become a permanent political cleavage in Taiwan's electoral politics.

### Notes

1. In the current Legislative Yuan (Parliament), the KMT holds about 59 per cent of the total seats, the DPP 33 per cent, the NP 5 per cent and the rest are independents.
2. In Taipei county, the New Party had the strongest support. Its candidate, Li Shen-feng, received 24 per cent of the popular votes in a three-way race.
3. The survey is based upon multistage cluster sampling with a sample size of 1,394 by means of face-to-face interviewing.
4. Full statistical results are available on request.

### References

- Davis, Otto A., Hinich, Melvin J. and Ordeshook, Peter C. (1970) An expository development of a mathematical model of the electoral politics, *American Political Science Review*, 64 426-448.
- Downs, Anthony (1957) *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Harper & Row, New York.
- Enelow, James M. and Hinich, Melvin J. (1984) *The Spatial Theory of Voting: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Hsieh, John F. S. and Niou, Emerson M. S. (1994) Issue voting in the Republic of China on Taiwan's 1992 legislative Yuan election, *International Political Science Review*.
- Kuo, Shirley W. Y., Ranis, Gustav and Fei, John C. H. (1981) *The Taiwan Success Story: Rapid Growth with Improved Distribution in the Republic of China, 1952-1979*. Westview, Boulder, CO.
- Niou, Emerson M. S. and Ordeshook, Peter C. (1992) A game-theoretic analysis of the Republic of China's emerging electoral system, *International Political Science Review*, 13(1) 59-79.
- Stokes, Donald (1963) Spatial Models of Party Competition, *American Political Science Review*, 57.