

Coalition Politics: A New Phenomenon in Taiwan*

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Taiwan politics has entered a new and interesting phase since the 1995 Legislative Yuan election. The ruling Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party of China) commands only a tiny majority in the national legislature, and with its traditional lack of party discipline, opposition parties are exploring the possibility of forming a coalition to challenge the KMT's near-total domination of the executive branch. Since the traditional emphasis on the issue of unification vs. independence has gradually declined in its importance, "size principle" has become the most effective tool to understand and analyze possible coalition patterns among Taiwan's major political groups.

Keywords: democratization, coalition, KMT, DPP, NP, constitution

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Although Taiwan's first direct presidential election and mainland China's simultaneous military threat caught the attention of the world, Taiwan politics has had an undercurrent largely ignored by outside observers. The very fact that the ruling Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party of China) has only a small majority in the Legislative Yuan leaves room for the two opposition political parties—the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the New Party (NP)—to maneuver and restrain newly reelected President Lee Teng-hui.

As early as December 1995, just after the Legislative Yuan election, the leaders of the two opposition parties met and agreed

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to cooperate in the national legislature in order to defeat the long-term ruling party. Although the initial attempt failed to secure a majority in either the elections of Legislative Yuan speaker and deputy speaker or the confirmation of the premier (head of the Executive Yuan), there is little doubt that there will be more cooperation of this sort in the Legislative Yuan on various issues against the KMT.

Nevertheless, Taipei's new politics is not as simple as an opposition coalition against the ruling party, as the internal dynamics of the DPP may nudge it into an alliance with the KMT. Following the presidential election, the KMT has signaled the possibility of inviting opposition politicians to join the cabinet. Some DPP leaders responded by making a proposition to acquire some seats in the cabinet in exchange for their support of the KMT premier. This shift of direction was particularly clear when DPP chairman Shih Ming-teh resigned to take responsibility for the party's defeat in the presidential election. However, acting DPP chairman Chang Chun-hung has made it public that a coalition government is on the party's agenda.¹ Whatever results from triangular coalition politics in the Legislative Yuan, the KMT certainly will have its political power trimmed. If the DPP and the NP continue to cooperate with each other on the Legislative Yuan floor, the KMT will face the threat of being a de facto minority because it lacks party discipline; if the DPP joins the coalition cabinet, the KMT will have to share power with the DPP.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the results of the 1995 Legislative Yuan election and analyze the possibility of different types of coalitions among the three major political parties as well as independents, and their likely outcome. In addition, through analyzing various forms of political coalitions, one may be able to anticipate a future Legislative Yuan without a KMT majority. Taiwan politics has entered a new and very interesting phase, as the authoritarian nature of the polity and a predictable decisionmaking process have clearly given way to plurality, negotiation, and uncertainty.

The 1995 Legislative Elections and Their Results

The 1995 Legislative Yuan election was held on December 2. The result did not come as a surprise to many: out of a total of 164

¹*Zili wanbao* (Independence Evening Post), April 7, 1996, 3.

seats, the KMT won 85 seats, the DPP 54, and the NP 21, with the other 4 held by independents. The KMT held on to its majority status, but with only a small winning margin. In terms of popular vote, the KMT won 46.06 percent, the DPP 33.17, and the NP 12.95, with the rest going to independents and other minor parties.² If one looked only at the election results, the KMT would be expected to win in the legislative speaker/deputy speaker elections as well as in the confirmation of the premier, thus preserving its ruling status.

However, there is more to the issue than sheer numbers of seats held by different political parties. Legislative Yuan tradition has shown that the KMT lacks strong party discipline in enforcing decisions made by the party center. In addition, KMT legislators' attendance rate in the Yuan floor has been much lower than that of the other two parties. Except for the occasions when the KMT has considered a particular legislative bill a key vote and mobilizes, it has usually been a minority in the Legislative Yuan. Consequently, its current majority status does not guarantee its victory in every vote. This was the case in the second Legislative Yuan in which the KMT held a two-thirds majority. It is expected that the KMT will face a more serious threat in the third Legislative Yuan where its majority is slim.

The most prominent case which the KMT has lost to the opposition in the second Legislative Yuan was the Public Personnel Assets Disclosure Law (or Sunshine Law). Against the stern opposition of Premier Lien Chan, the Legislative Yuan passed the law, which requires high-level government officials to disclose their personal assets to the general public and place them in blind trust to a lawyer or an accountant if they exceed a certain amount. A handful of rebelling KMT legislators, most notably those from the New KMT Alliance who later formed the New Party, joined with the DPP to defeat the KMT.

The case indicates that the KMT has not been as invincible in the Legislative Yuan as its numerical superiority might have indicated. As a catch-all party, the KMT needs to accommodate different social

²*Zhongguo shibao* (China Times), December 3, 1995, 1. There have been some changes to the number of seats held by each political party after the Legislative Yuan convened in the first part of 1996. Two KMT legislators were expelled for siding with the opposition, two DPP members were suspended of their rights for different offenses, and the independents' alliance broke up because of violence committed by one of them against another. If one considers the fact that the speaker of the Legislative Yuan does not vote on the floor, the KMT's majority is next to nothing.

forces and classes which often have conflicting interests. For example, the business interests represented in the KMT obviously have a very different interpretation on industrial development from that of labor interests. Similarly, legislators with military support might carry an ideology similar to the New Party, while many of the Taiwanese KMT legislators might consider the DPP their allies when it comes to pragmatic diplomacy and national identity. There are also a few KMT members, most notably Ting Shou-chung and Chao Yung-ching, who consider themselves clean of business ties and want to maintain a positive image in the general public by frequently challenging party stands. In addition, many KMT legislators have their own personal interests which might run against party interests. Moreover, since many KMT legislators also have their own private enterprises, they would consider it more profitable to tend their own business than participating in prolonged and seemingly fruitless debates on the Legislative Yuan floor. Under such circumstances, there is a natural tendency for KMT members in the Legislative Yuan to be divided on different issue areas.

One of the latest incidents of KMT defeat took place on April 11, when the Executive Yuan's 1997 budget proposal was returned by the Legislative Yuan.³ The reason was simple: the KMT was not able to mobilize sufficient legislators to guard against opposition because some KMT legislators used the opportunity to disagree with vice president-elect Lien Chan's continued service as premier. Apparently, several KMT legislators who preferred other premier candidates deliberately stayed away from the Legislative Yuan in order to defeat Lien Chan. Although the Legislative Yuan decision was eventually reversed, it is quite clear to the public that these kinds of internal controversies and conflicts of interest within the KMT make it vulnerable in the legislature. In turn, this kind of vulnerability will force the KMT to seriously consider forming an alliance with other political forces.

A more humiliating defeat came on May 24, when the Legislative Yuan, with a resolution of 76 to 42 against the will of the Executive Yuan, scratched the entire budget for Taiwan's fourth nuclear power plant and halted all ongoing construction of the plant.⁴ Some KMT legislators from Taipei county, where the plant was under construc-

³*Zhongguo shibao*, April 12, 1996, 1.

⁴*Ibid.*, May 25, 1996, 1, 3.

tion, had to either vote with the opposition or abstain in order to avoid heavy criticism from their constituents. KMT Policy Committee chairman Rau Ying-chi even blamed the chairman of the Legislative Yuan Agenda Committee (a KMT legislator) of deliberately allowing the opposition motion to slip through by intentionally leaving the floor at the key moment because of a personal feud with some party officials.⁵ Even though the administration is likely to resort to an executive veto to reverse the legislative decision, it is anticipated that further humiliating incidents, such as the June 11 resolution to demand President Lee to resubmit the candidates for premier for legislative confirmation, will likely become the recurring nightmare for the KMT.

If one looks at the KMT's performance in Legislative Yuan elections across different time frames, one would most likely come to a gloomy conclusion. Since the 1983 Legislative Yuan election, the KMT has been losing its seats at an average rate of 7.8 percent, and its votes at 5.8 percent.⁶ With its current stand at 52 percent of the total seats and 46 percent of the popular vote, it is doubtful that the KMT can survive as the sole ruling party in projections for 1998 or after. Nevertheless, since the growth rate of the DPP has leveled off in recent elections and the NP seems to have limited growth potential, it is not likely that either the DPP or the NP will be strong enough to replace the KMT's dominant role in the near future, thus bringing political coalitions to the forefront.

Ideology and Coalition-Building

The most commonly used criterion to distinguish Taiwan's political parties has been the stand on the most fundamental issue of national identity, i.e., whether Taiwan should pursue independence from mainland China or reunify with the mainland. This issue has affected Taiwan politics for more than a decade, and is still creating hostility between segments of the population. It is fair to argue that there has been no other issue more salient in contemporary Taiwan politics than national identity.

⁵Ibid., 2, 4.

⁶Jaushieh Joseph Wu, "The 1995 Legislative Yuan Election in Taiwan," *Issues & Studies* 31, no. 12 (December 1995): 111; Teh-fu Huang, "Electoral Competition and the Evolution of the Kuomintang," *ibid.*, no. 5 (May 1995): 95-96.

According to this criterion, the DPP is clearly a political party advocating the independence of Taiwan, while the NP opts for unification with mainland China and the KMT is situated in the rather ambiguous middle ground. If we hold other issue considerations constant, the patterns of coalition, should there be any, could only be KMT-NP and KMT-DPP because of ideological proximity. A DPP-NP coalition is not likely to happen because the two political parties have drastically different ideological stands on the key issue of Taiwan's national identity.

However, meetings between the top leaders of the NP and the DPP have shown that the traditional wisdom of national identity as the overwhelming issue determining Taiwan's political configuration has limits in terms of analytical power. The reasons for this could lie either in the moderation of the political parties' ideological stands or considerations of other issues facing Taiwan. These factors make the political coalition game much more complicated than what would be predicted by a single criterion of ideology, and deserve further examination.

The debate on national identity came to a height in the 1994 Taipei mayoral election, the first open election for Taipei mayor in thirty years. Although DPP candidate and current mayor Chen Shui-bian tried to avoid the debate on the identity issue during his campaign, NP candidate Jaw Shau-kong used the opportunities of televised national debate to strongly address the issue and further charge that President Lee was planning for Taiwan independence. The public seemed to be split quite clearly along the issue, to the extent that it incited hostility between Taipei's two main ethnic groups—the Taiwanese and the mainlanders.

However, debate on the issue entered a new era when the election was over. Taipei mayor Chen Shui-bian made significant efforts to ease ideological and ethnic conflict by appointing people from various political parties and ethnic groups to head city government agencies. In addition, Jaw Shau-kong, recognizing his defeat in the mayoral election, publicly admitted on several occasions that the NP should preserve the status quo—maintaining Taiwan's *de facto* political and economic independence from mainland China—while not giving up the long-term goal of national unification. This view is shared by most of the other NP leaders.

The 1995 Legislative Yuan election and the 1996 presidential election coincided with mainland China's large-scale military exercises, which were aimed at intimidating the Taiwanese voters not to support Taiwan's separation from the "motherland." In order to

avoid being labeled as sympathizers with the communist regime in Beijing, the NP held several large rallies and launched sharp attacks against Beijing's scare tactics, and top NP leaders appeared on popular TV talk shows to announce that it would not consider unification with mainland China as long as Beijing retained its hostility toward the people of Taiwan.

Meanwhile, DPP leaders, realizing the potential danger of pursuing Taiwan's independence and antagonizing Beijing, announced after the first round of Chinese missile tests in July 1995 that the party would not declare the independence of Taiwan even if it won a majority in the Legislative Yuan or took over the Presidential Office. The DPP has made it very clear by playing down the identity issue that it has no intention to rock the boat.

Top DPP leaders also understand the limit of the party's growth imposed by the ideological issue. Social and political surveys in recent years have all indicated that the percentage of population supporting Taiwan independence has been limited to roughly 20 percent. If it does not moderate its stand on national identity and stress other issues, the DPP is unlikely to gain further voter support and replace the KMT as the ruling party. Prior to the 1995 Legislative Yuan election, the DPP had already toned down its ideological appeal, and during the election, the Central Standing Committee offered the new ideas of *dahejie* (grand reconciliation) and *dalianhe* (grand coalition), hoping that such a conciliatory tone would capture more supporters. In sharp contrast to its previous emphasis on the identity issue, the DPP has also shifted its focus to issues of national security and political reform.

These changes clearly show that the two opposition parties have reduced their ideological differences on the national identity issue and are prepared to tackle other issues which would conceivably allow them to gain support from the majority of voters who have taken the middle ground on the identity issue. This new development paves the way for cooperation between the DPP and the NP, which may someday end KMT domination of the administration at the national level. In order to understand the possible coalition patterns in Taiwan for the present and future, one must look beyond the simplistic ideological interpretation.

Rational Choice and Size Principle

For studies on coalition government, William Riker's *The Theory*

of Political Coalitions still stands as one of the most influential works today.⁷ In his view, each political party, with rational considerations, would certainly try to maximize its gains in the distribution of cabinet positions. In order for a political party (if it must form a coalition with other political parties) to gain maximum benefit, it needs to minimize the size of the coalition to the extent that it will only guarantee the smallest winning margin in the parliament. As the size of a coalition grows, the share of cabinet positions for each political party in the coalition is reduced at the same time.

Based on the current and projected Legislative Yuan as well as the "size principle," several patterns of coalition can be derived, with patterns closer to the "minimum winning coalition" having a better chance of success. These patterns include a KMT-independents alliance, a DPP-NP alliance, a KMT-NP alliance, a KMT-DPP alliance, and a grand coalition involving KMT-DPP-NP.

KMT-Independents Alliance

As mentioned above, there were only four independents at the beginning of the first session of the third Legislative Yuan. If one includes expelled KMT members Walis Pelin and Tsai Chung-han and temporarily suspended DPP member Chang Chin-cheng, there are only seven independents. A KMT-independents alliance may form a force strong enough to offset the discipline problem of the KMT Legislative Yuan caucus.

On May 2, 1995, Rau Ying-chi, chairman of the KMT Policy Committee, met with the independents in the Legislative Yuan and discussed the possibility of cooperation. Two of the independents, Liao Hsueh-kwang and Lin Hong-chung, told Rau frankly that they were interested in forming an alliance and were prepared to present potential and qualified candidates to the KMT in order to fill cabinet positions.⁸ Apparently both the KMT and the independents have seriously considered forming a coalition in the central government. Involving only the KMT and a handful of independents, this form of coalition may be the easiest of all to achieve. Since the KMT would be the dominant force, it would not have to give up so many

⁷William H. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

⁸*Ziyou shibao* (Liberty Times), May 3, 1996, 2.

important cabinet positions as to affect its overall ruling status. Moreover, as there are already two nonaffiliated independents in the KMT-dominated cabinet, it would require only minimum effort to rearrange a few positions for them. For the KMT rank and file, this form of coalition would also not provoke controversy; since the KMT is still a majority party in the Legislative Yuan, some of its members in the legislature would find the voluntary sharing of power with any other political party in the cabinet hard to accept.

Despite the fact that the KMT has lost ground in the previous elections, it is likely to survive as the largest political party because of the fabulous political and economic resources at its dispense. If the KMT loses its majority status in the 1998 election or afterward, and if a KMT-independents combination can form a majority in the Legislative Yuan, this alliance would also be the most likely form of coalition. Nevertheless, the opposition challenges the KMT will have to face in the Legislative Yuan will be stronger than ever, and it must satisfy the independents with more promises in order to consolidate their alliance. However, if a KMT-independents alliance is not large enough to form a majority in the Legislative Yuan, other forms of coalition will prevail.

DPP-NP Alliance

Although it has long been admitted, by politicians and scholars alike, that it would be difficult for the DPP and the NP to form a coalition against the KMT,⁹ the two opposition parties surprised the nation by calling for a “sunshine coalition” involving the two parties and a few “clean-imaged” KMT legislators only a few days after the Legislative Yuan election. This form of coalition, if it works, would fulfill the “size principle” and allow the DPP and NP to maximize their gains in cabinet positions.

The meeting between DPP chairman Shih Ming-teh, secretary-general Chiou I-jen, and Legislative Yuan caucus leader Chou Po-lun and the NP’s top leaders Jaw Shau-kong, Chen Kuei-miao, and Chou Chuan caught the spotlight of the news media. In the meeting, the

⁹Teh-fu Huang and Emerson Niou, “Party Systems and Democratic Consolidation: The Cases of Taiwan and South Korea” (Paper presented at the International Conference on Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Trends and Challenges,” Taipei, August 27-30, 1995), 39; Jih-ching Yang, “Forming the Cabinet after the Reelection of the Legislative Yuan,” *Wenti yu yanjiu* (Issues & Studies) 35, no. 1 (January 1996): 13.

the two sides agreed to the reduction, and even the elimination, of hostility between the two parties through self-imposed restrictions on national identity debates in order for their coalition to work.¹⁰ To prepare for the elections of the Legislative Yuan speaker and deputy speaker as well as the confirmation of the premier in February 1996, the two opposition parties worked closely together to solicit KMT legislators who dared to rebel against their own party. Eventually, a handful of KMT legislators willing to support the DPP-NP coalition were found and a joint DPP-KMT ticket for legislative speaker and deputy speaker forced a tie in the first round of elections.¹¹ Although the coalition was consequently defeated in second round elections, it had proved that it has a distinct possibility for success.

Since its formation in 1986, the DPP has fought very hard to replace the KMT as the ruling party in Taiwan. Had the coalition with the NP and a few KMT rebels worked, the DPP would have been able to achieve this goal without having to win the Legislative Yuan or presidential elections. Moreover, the DPP would be the most powerful force in this coalition, and therefore it would be in the dominant position for distributing administrative resources. In addition, if and after the DPP unseated the KMT as a ruling power, it would be able to deprive the KMT of opportunities to funnel its administrative resources to its own use, therefore guaranteeing the KMT's demise and the DPP's future electoral gain.

Moreover, both the DPP and the NP noticed the heightened hostility between Taiwanese and mainlanders over the national identity issue after the 1994 Taipei mayoral election. The parties' cooperation and cooling down of the national identity debate may be the easiest way to bring the two communities back together again. Once the national identity issue is sidelined for other legislative issues and the DPP and the NP can rid themselves of the negative stereotypical image resulting from their respective rigid ideological stands, both parties may anticipate significant improvement in their electoral performances.

Most surveys have indicated that the people in Taiwan who support unification with mainland China and independence amount to only about 20 percent of the total population each; the rest would

¹⁰*Zhongguo shibao*, December 15, 1995, 1-2.

¹¹*Ibid.*, February 2, 1996, 2-3.

like to see Taiwan maintain its status quo in its relations with mainland China. If the DPP and the NP are not able to break away from their own ideological stands on the national identity issue, the possibility for either to become the majority party would be slim indeed. Working together in a coalition government is perhaps the best means for both to achieve the goal of avoiding the polarizing issue.

For the NP, this form of coalition is perhaps the most beneficial in comparison with all others. The twenty-one members of the NP would comprise nearly 30 percent of the coalition, giving the party veto power and significant gains in cabinet positions. In addition, being able to topple the KMT from its control of the cabinet would trim President Lee's power, an objective high on the NP agenda. The DPP-NP dominated cabinet would certainly form a strong check against a powerful presidency.

However, the difficulty of the "sunshine coalition" not only lies in securing the steady support of KMT rebels, but also internal DPP opposition to cooperation with the NP. As news of NP-DPP talks has been broken to the public, strong protests against working with the NP have grown. Many of the DPP rank and file have found it hard to accept the idea of having to ally with the NP, which has frequently been portrayed as sympathizers with the communist regime in mainland China, against the KMT, which is regarded as another Taiwanese political party. To them, a more preferable choice for a coalition government involving the DPP would be the KMT. Many DPP supporters have even gone so far as to blame the meeting between the two opposition parties and their alleged alliance for the DPP's defeat in the presidential race.

Nevertheless, if the KMT loses its Legislative Yuan majority in the 1998 election and the debate on the identity issue substantially cools down, a DPP-NP alliance, with or without a few KMT rebels, will be the most competitive form of coalition. The most rational choice for the two opposition parties would be to unseat the KMT from the executive branch and distribute their spoils.

However, one word of caution must be noted for this form of coalition: since the DPP has never acquired ruling status, people still have doubts about its ability to form a cabinet. It might be reasonable to assume that the DPP would retain or invite some well-respected KMT or independent politicians to fill some of the decisionmaking positions. This may present an image of a grand coalition to the public, but the final decisions and political responsibility will rest in the hands of the DPP and the NP.

KMT-NP Alliance

If one puts the KMT and the NP together, one would find that the coalition has a nearly two-thirds majority in the national legislature. Although this form of coalition may not be as cost-beneficial as one involving the KMT and the independents, the KMT's numerical strength would still allow it to retain its dominance in the cabinet.

Moreover, since the NP split from the KMT in 1993, many people, particularly those from the DPP, still consider the two parties natural allies against the DPP. The experiences of Taipei City Council meetings, in which the KMT and the NP frequently team up against the DPP mayor, have reinforced the suspicion that the two parties are "the new KMT" and "the old KMT," and difficult to separate from each other.

Nevertheless, the NP seems to have been in no mood to cooperate with the KMT since the 1995 elections. The NP split from the KMT because it wanted to challenge the long-term ruling party from outside the party establishment, and going back into the establishment is not logical. In addition, the NP has the support of urban dwellers because of its bitter criticism against the KMT in general and President Lee Teng-hui in particular. Forming a coalition with the KMT would not appeal to the NP's supporters or help its future elections. Moreover, the NP will not have the kind of veto power in this coalition (unless the KMT loses its majority in the future elections) compared to a DPP-NP alliance, since the KMT itself is still a majority party in the legislature. Cooperating with the KMT would not let the NP play an important role in the administration; indeed, it would deprive it of the opportunities to check the Executive Yuan and receive recognition from the public as a strong force fighting against government corruption.

From the KMT's perspective, the incentive for forming an alliance with the NP is not high, either, as it is the party that suffered the most after the NP was formed; it has made the NP its prime target of criticism on many occasions. Moreover, the "Taiwanization" of the KMT, i.e., the gradual transfer of political power into the hands of the Taiwanese elite, has prompted the NP to characterize the KMT as another political party seeking Taiwan's independence from China. The harsh rounds of criticism have led the public to believe that on the national identity issue, the KMT and the DPP are perhaps closer to each other than the KMT and the NP. In short, the KMT and the NP are just not attracted to each other.

However, the experience of the Taipei City Council, in which the KMT and the NP often gang up on the DPP mayor, suggests that if the DPP gains control of government administration, the NP may want to play a strong opposition role instead of being a ruling coalition partner. Some top NP leaders have often spoken about the balance of power among the political parties, and they may want to play the role of key minority (*guanjianxing shaoshu*), balancing the two larger parties. By the same token, an important reason for the NP's consideration of a coalition with the DPP against the KMT at the beginning of the third Legislative Yuan was President Lee's imminent decisive win in the presidential race and the expectation that he would have more political power than ever. Nevertheless, if the DPP wins a future presidential election, the NP may, in a repetition of the Taipei City Council experience, choose to form an alliance with the KMT in order to check the DPP in the legislature. In addition, if Lee Teng-hui, the major target of the NP's vicious attacks, is out of the political scene by 2000 or after, the NP may have more incentives to cooperate with the KMT.

KMT-DPP Alliance

As mentioned above, many DPP leaders and followers find it easier to accept an alliance with the KMT than with the NP. Some *Meilidao* (Formosa) faction leaders such as party chairman Hsu Hsin-liang (elected June 16, 1996) and former acting chairman Chang Chun-hung have argued that the DPP must seriously consider forming a coalition with the KMT in order to groom itself to be a ruling party.¹² Chang has even emphasized that forming an alliance with the KMT is the DPP's best option, while an alliance with the NP should only be a secondary option if an alliance with the KMT fails.¹³ Hsu also argued in an interview by the *United Daily News* after he was elected party chairman that it was time for the KMT to cooperate with the DPP.¹⁴

It was widely speculated before the 1995 Legislative Yuan election that some of the top *Meilidao* leaders had contacted the KMT

¹²*Ziyou shibao*, April 24, 1996, 2. The talk by Hsu Hsin-liang about forming a coalition government was given after the DPP Central Standing Committee decided not to form a coalition government with the KMT.

¹³*Zili wanbao*, April 7, 1996, 3, an exclusive interview with DPP acting chairman Chang Chun-hung.

¹⁴*Lianhe bao* (United Daily News), June 17, 1996, 2.

center about the possibility of forming some sort of coalition government. News reports on contacts between the DPP and the KMT leaders on coalition matters have carried past the 1996 presidential election.¹⁵ Nevertheless, one may anticipate that a coalition government based on the current relative strength of the two parties' legislative caucuses would provoke serious protest from within the KMT rank and file. Many government officials have spent much time working their way up the administrative ladder, and are waiting for opportunities to go up higher. Many party officials or bureaucrats also supported Legislative Yuan and presidential election campaigns in order to gain higher government positions. However, a coalition government with the DPP as a full partner would certainly imply handing many decisionmaking positions to the DPP and therefore eliminate many opportunities for KMT officials to move up the ladder. As the KMT decisively won the presidential election and a majority in the Legislative Yuan, forming a coalition with the DPP based on their relative strength in the legislature would likely be opposed by KMT supporters and officials. It would also be inconceivable for the KMT to form a coalition government with the DPP and give up its domination in the government administration. During an interpellation session in the Legislative Yuan, several KMT legislators threatened Premier Lien Chan that if the government incorporates any opposition leaders into the cabinet, they would withdraw from the KMT in protest.¹⁶

As the DPP has pressed for party-to-party talk on coalition government, the KMT seems to be aware of the potential danger to its rule and wants to incorporate only a few individual opposition leaders into the cabinet, bypassing a formal party-to-party agreement. Even though the idea was ridiculed by the public, President Lee announced on April 14 through Wu Po-hsiung, the secretary-general of the Presidential Office, that he wishes the general public to recommend suitable people to fill decisionmaking positions, including cabinet appointments.¹⁷ This is believed to be a KMT tactic to gain the DPP's cooperation in the Legislative Yuan without having to give up many of its administrative resources. In a news report, the KMT center has considered giving up only two minor cabinet positions and/or

¹⁵*Zili wanbao*, April 14, 1996, 1.

¹⁶*Ziyou shibao*, April 24, 1996, 2.

¹⁷*Lianhe bao*, April 15, 1996, 1.

other advisory positions in the Presidential Office in forming an alliance with the DPP.¹⁸ In turn, the DPP is afraid that only minor gains in administrative positions through an alliance with the KMT would lead to the party's demise because it would not be able to challenge the KMT as a coalition partner. In order to prevent the worst scenario from occurring, the DPP Central Standing Committee passed a resolution prohibiting any individual member to accept a request from President Lee to take up a position in the cabinet before KMT-DPP negotiations reach any concrete agreement.¹⁹

Based on the strength of the KMT in the Legislative Yuan and its internal opposition, a coalition government composed of the KMT and the DPP is not likely to take place during the third Legislative Yuan. However, if the KMT is not able to retain its majority status in the fourth Legislative Yuan election in 1998, a KMT-DPP alliance will be more likely, as the DPP is unlikely to grow powerful enough to have its own candidate for premier confirmed by the Legislative Yuan and form its own cabinet. Moreover, many DPP leaders and the KMT center would prefer a coalition government without the NP participation. The KMT-DPP alliance is likely to be one of the most tempting forms of coalition, particularly if the national identity issue heats up again and neither the KMT nor the DPP wants to see Taiwan swamped by mainland China. But since a KMT-DPP alliance would deviate from the "size principle," the NP and some DPP leaders consider ending KMT rule more urgent than participating in the administration; the additional fact that the DPP is not likely to play a dominant role in an alliance involving the DPP and the KMT suggests that any KMT-DPP alliance may eventually give its way to a DPP-NP alliance.

Grand Coalition

A grand coalition has the widest distance from Riker's "size principle," as the share of political resources for each political party would be the smallest. From the rational choice perspective, a grand coalition is therefore the last choice among political contenders. In Taiwan, too, it can be anticipated that the idea of grand coalition—government positions distributed according to the relative strength

¹⁸*Zili wanbao*, April 11, 1996, 1.

¹⁹*Ziyou shibao*, April 11, 1996, 1.

of each and every political party—would be bitterly opposed by the largest party because it minimizes its gains in the administration.

It would truly be inconceivable for the KMT to agree to a grand coalition with the DPP and the NP during the third Legislative Yuan, because it would have to give up almost half of the administrative resources and share power with the other two parties while it is still the majority party in the legislature and well in control of the Presidential Office. However, this form of government may be tempting if no political party wins a majority in future Legislative Yuan elections and all parties are unable to come to terms with one another in forming smaller-sized coalitions. In addition, the two smaller parties may agree not to accept any invitation by the largest (but not majority) party to form a smaller coalition, because both would want to trim the largest party's power; a grand coalition would thus become their most effective tool. Moreover, the internal dynamics of the DPP may force it to consider a grand coalition more seriously than the other two parties because forming a coalition either with the KMT or the NP will engender opposition from within. Nevertheless, a grand coalition is not the most rational choice for political parties and is less likely to happen than coalitions of smaller sizes.

Constitutional Constraints

Although there are arguments favoring a coalition government in Taiwan, the constraints imposed by the current constitutional setup are too great to be ignored. As experience in Western democracies has shown, a coalition government may only take place in countries with parliamentary or mixed models of constitutional structure, in which the government is formed by a majority party or a majority coalition in the parliament. In the winner-takes-all presidential model of government, on the other hand, whoever or whichever party wins the presidential election will have sole power to decide on the distribution of administrative positions.

There is still a significant debate in Taiwan regarding the form of government the Constitution has set out to establish. On the one hand, to many people, the president of the Republic of China has always enjoyed a great deal of political power, and the president is expected to be even more powerful now that the position has been made into a directly elected office. In addition, the Constitution also specifies that the president has the power to nominate the premier and other key positions in the Judiciary Yuan, the Control Yuan,

and the Examination Yuan.²⁰ The president is also the chairman of the National Security Council as well as the commander-in-chief of the military. In an additional provision to the original Constitution, the president may "issue emergency orders and take all necessary measures to avert an imminent danger to the security of the State or of the people or to cope with any serious financial or economic crisis. . . ."²¹ Moreover, all bills passed by the Legislative Yuan must be signed by the president before they become laws.²² All these constitutional provisions indicate that Taiwan's government appears to be based on the presidential model.

But on the other hand, the Constitution of the Republic of China specifies that the presidential nominee for premier must be confirmed by the Legislative Yuan and appear on the legislative floor to be interpellated by legislators on major policies concerning the nation. The Constitution also provides that the premier is the chief executive of the government,²³ as opposed to the role of the president, who is head of the state. The Constitution further specifies that if the Executive Yuan cannot accept a resolution passed by the Legislative Yuan, and the Legislative Yuan, at the Executive Yuan's request for reconsideration, reconfirms its resolution by a two-thirds majority, the premier must accept the resolution or resign.²⁴ These provisions of the Constitution and the mechanism of checks and balances tilt the system heavily toward a parliamentary model.

Under such circumstances and without clear provisions concerning the division of labor between the president and the premier, serious conflicts are bound to happen among the president, the premier, and the legislature. Consequently, the debate whether Taiwan should have a coalition government when there is no clear majority party in the Legislative Yuan is much more complicated than that in Western parliamentary democracies. A serious constitutional crisis is likely to take place if the KMT, or likewise the president's party, loses its Legislative Yuan majority in future elections.²⁵ By looking

²⁰Article 55, Constitution of the Republic of China; Articles 13, 14, and 15 of the Additional Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of China.

²¹Article 7, Additional Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of China.

²²Article 72, Constitution of the Republic of China.

²³Article 53, Constitution of the Republic of China.

²⁴Article 57, Constitution of the Republic of China.

²⁵Jaushieh Joseph Wu, "The 1994 Elections in Taiwan: Continuity, Change, and the Prospect of Democracy," *Issues & Studies* 31, no. 3 (March 1995): 104-10.

at the record of Legislative Yuan elections since 1983, one cannot help wondering whether the KMT will be able to hang on to its majority status in the 1998 election and afterward.²⁶ A powerful president newly equipped with popular mandate and a growing, assertive Legislative Yuan are obviously on a collision course.

Making things more complicated, President Lee has requested Vice President Lien Chan to stay on as premier, disregarding the clear distinction of functions and responsibilities between the two positions and bypassing the legislative confirmation process. In response, opposition legislators have passed a motion demanding the president to rename a premier for legislative confirmation, an action equivalent to a vote of no confidence in a parliamentary system. In turn, the Executive Yuan has avoided embarrassment by presenting the case to the Council of Grand Justices, a forum dominated by the KMT, for clarification on the constitutionality of the legislative action. The deadlock between the executive branch and the legislative branch of the government has caused the most serious constitutional crisis since the 1990 power struggle between the mainstream and non-mainstream factions.

In order to solve the puzzle whether the Constitution of the Republic of China supports a presidential system and whether the president has full power over naming the cabinet, or if it actually allows a coalition government, another round of constitutional revision by the National Assembly is certainly required. However, based on Taiwan's previous experience with the National Assembly, few people, if any, are optimistic about the outcome of a new round of constitutional revision. Without serious negotiations among the three major political parties prior to National Assembly sessions and formulating a consensus, the 300-strong-member body is only likely to engage in prolonged and fruitless debates with and criticisms against one another. However, a meeting among the top leaders of the three major political parties concerning constitutional revision does not seem to be on the KMT's agenda.

Moreover, both the KMT and the DPP, which both helped push for direct presidential election, are inclined toward a presidential model of the government. Another round of constitutional revision is only likely to move closer toward this goal and farther away from a parliamentary

²⁶See Wu, "The 1995 Legislative Yuan Election in Taiwan," and Huang, "Electoral Competition and the Evolution of the Kuomintang."

model, therefore making a coalition government less attainable. In other words, political conflict or even constitutional crisis may go on for some time before a coalition government is realized in Taiwan.

Conclusion

The political coalition concept is relatively new in Taiwan and the country has never practiced any form of coalition government. It was not until the attempt by the DPP and the NP in early 1996 to form a "sunshine coalition" when people began to realize that a coalition government may become a reality in the foreseeable future.

Although the KMT still commands a majority in the Legislative Yuan, albeit by only a tiny margin, its traditional lack of party discipline has allowed opposition parties to explore possibilities to overrun the KMT's monopoly of the executive branch. Although attempt to form a "sunshine coalition" failed in February 1996 to either win the legislative speaker election or premier confirmation, willing rebels in the KMT have made it clear to the public that they are prepared to put the long-term ruling party in an awkward position in the Legislative Yuan. The situation could intensify when the legislature reviews highly politicized bills, as there will always be some KMT members willing to take the advantage of the party center by threatening to side with the opposition. In other words, while no coalition government may exist for the time being and the KMT may hang on to its status as the sole ruling party, its ruling power will be subject to continuous challenge by the more unified and better disciplined opposition parties.

Despite the strong traditional argument about the significance of the unification vs. independence issue in Taiwan politics, its saliency has apparently been reduced to the degree that the DPP and the NP, the parties on the two extremes of the debate, have been able to moderate themselves and even come to terms with each other on other substantive matters. If the saliency of the national identity issue is significantly reduced, the possibility for various forms of political coalition rises simultaneously.

As mentioned earlier, the "size principle" presented by William Riker is probably the best tool to understand the possible forms of coalition in Taiwan, either for the present or future. For the time being, since the KMT still holds a majority in the legislature and retained its premier position in the February confirmation process, it is not likely that it will voluntarily share political power with any of the two opposition parties. If there is to be any coalition at this juncture,

it would most likely be a KMT-independents ruling alliance against a DPP-NP opposition alliance. However, the KMT's challenges are likely to remain strong because of its discipline problem.

If and when the KMT loses its majority in the Legislative Yuan in future elections, the coalition will be more complicated and less predictable, and it may depend very much on the "size principle," which ensures the maximum gains of coalition partners in administrative positions. The KMT is likely to remain the largest political party even if it loses its legislative majority and will thus be the strongest contender in the coalition government. Since an alliance with independents would give it a majority in the legislature, it can be foreseen that this form of coalition is the most likely to be realized. Nevertheless, if the KMT and its independent allies are unable to form a majority in the legislature, cabinet positions are more likely to be decided by a DPP-NP coalition. However, since the DPP and the NP may not have sufficient capable administrators to fill all positions in the cabinet, the coalition government is likely to include some competent and "clean-imaged" KMT officials who can be trusted by the coalition. Consequently, a DPP-NP dominated coalition will have a flavor of grand coalition without the KMT serving as a formal partner in the coalition. Nevertheless, a DPP-NP alliance would be very uneasy indeed, as some DPP leaders and supporters, such as Taipei mayor Chen Sui-bian and notables from the Taiwan University Professors' Association, are still very suspicious of NP motives. The fact that the NP will have a veto power in the coalition will also make the DPP very nervous about an alliance.

A KMT-DPP alliance, although it deviates from the "size principle," is another coalition possibility. This is a form of coalition strongly favored by the *Meilidao* faction of the DPP as well as by the KMT center (in the event the KMT is forced to form a coalition government with a second political party). A KMT-NP coalition is almost out of the question because of their mutual antipathy toward each other. It is more likely to take place, though, if President Lee completes his term and the DPP takes over the Presidential Office.

At any rate, it can be predicted that in the third Legislative Yuan, which ends in 1998, the less-disciplined KMT will face strong challenges from the more organized opposition political parties. In the fourth Legislative Yuan, which is scheduled to begin in 1999 if not altered by any constitutional revision, the KMT is also likely to lose its near-total domination in the executive branch and an experiment in coalition government may come to pass.