

The Political Consequences of the Electoral System: Single Nontransferable Voting in Taiwan*

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In its modern history, Taiwan has adopted the multi-member district, single nontransferable voting (SNTV) system in elections for various public posts. Recent electoral reforms in Japan and South Korea have led to the abandoning of SNTV in those countries, leaving Taiwan as the only country with the system. The SNTV system has been different from the single-member district plurality and proportional representation (PR) systems in its design and impact on party politics. The adoption of SNTV in Taiwan has generated several features in the electoral system which are significantly different from those in Western democracies and worthy of further study. In this paper, the author first explores the historical background and evolution of SNTV in Taiwan and its impact on Taiwan's party politics, party nomination process, and election campaigns. The author then discusses the advantages and drawbacks of this system and makes some suggestions for future electoral reform in Taiwan.

Keywords: single nontransferable voting (SNTV); medium-sized district; Duverger's law; proportionality; hybrid systems; strategic voting

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As we approach the twenty-first century, democracy has become the prevalent political structure in most Western countries. Since World War II, other parts of the world have also been affected by

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several waves of democratization.¹ Since democracy generally refers to a representative democracy governed by representatives freely elected by the citizens,² political scientists have usually evaluated its effectiveness by judging whether elections are held in a fair, just, and regular manner.³

Scholars have found that not only is election a prerequisite for democracy, but the electoral system itself often greatly impacts on the development of party politics.⁴ At present, Western democracies have either adopted the proportional representation system (hereinafter referred to as the PR system) or the single-member district plurality or majority system.⁵ Naturally, most studies of electoral system have centered on those two systems.

Taiwan, on the other hand, has for a long time adopted the single nontransferable voting (hereinafter referred to as SNTV) system in public elections at all levels. In the past, only Japan and South Korea adopted the same system;⁶ both have since abandoned it, leaving Taiwan as the only country that has retained it. Unsurprisingly, very few Western political scientists are familiar with such a system. Few papers have been written about the SNTV system in Japan,⁷ and academic research on Taiwan's electoral system has been even

¹Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

²Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-one Countries* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), 1.

³Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 7.

⁴See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957); Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, trans. Barbara and Robert North (New York: Wiley, 1966); Douglas W. Rae, *The Political Consequence of Electoral Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart, eds., *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences* (New York: Agathon Press, 1986); Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁵Lijphart, *Democracies*, 150-54; Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1991), 503-11.

⁶Japan and South Korea respectively abandoned SNTV in 1994 and 1988 to switch to a hybrid single-member district plurality and PR system.

⁷Arend Lijphart, Rafael Lopez Pintor, and Yasunori Sone, "The Limited Vote and the Single Nontransferable Vote: Lessons from the Japanese and Spanish Examples," in Grofman and Lijphart, *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, 154-69; Steven R. Reed, "Structure and Behaviour: Extending Duverger's Law to the Japanese Case," *British Journal of Political Science* 20 (1990): 335-56; Gary W. Cox, "Strategic Voting Equilibria under the Single Nontransferable Vote," *American Political Science Review* 88 (1994): 608-21.

rarer.⁸ Views on how to classify SNTV have been divided: some regard it as "limited voting," under the category of a multi-member district plurality or majority system,⁹ while others see it as a semi-proportional system.¹⁰

Taiwan has undergone rapid political change since the latter half of the 1980s: in 1986, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was established; in 1987, martial law and the ban on forming parties were lifted; and in 1991, an overall reelection of parliamentary members was held. Elections have played an important role in this transition to democracy. Through them, interparty electoral competition has intensified and peaceful transfers of power have become possible. However, the impact of Taiwan's electoral system on its party politics calls for our attention. Because of structural differences, the SNTV system's impact is different from those of the plurality system or PR system; as a result, Taiwan's party politics has developed several features different from those of Western democracies. These differences are worth further exploration.

Joseph A. Schumpeter defined the democratic method as an "institutional arrangement . . . in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."¹¹ More often than not, a country's electoral system influences its party politics. In this paper, the author will first discuss the history and evolution of the SNTV system in Taiwan, followed by its influence on the development of Taiwan's party politics. Finally, the author will attempt to make viable suggestions, partaking of theory and reality, for Taiwan's electoral reform.

The Evolution of Taiwan's Electoral System

Since SNTV originated in Japan, we should first explore its

⁸Gary W. Cox and Emerson M. S. Niu, "Seat Bonuses under the Single Nontransferable Vote System: Evidence from Japan and Taiwan," *Comparative Politics* 26 (1994): 221-36.

⁹Mackie and Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 503; John Fuh-sheng Hsieh, *Zhengdang bili daibiao zhi* (The proportional representation system) (Taipei: Lilun yu zhengce zazhishe, 1992), 13-14.

¹⁰Lijphart, *Democracies*, 154; Taagepera and Shugart, *Seats and Votes*, 28; Yang Tai-shun, *Xuanju* (Election) (Taipei: Yongran, 1991), 16.

¹¹Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 269.

history in Japan in order to understand its applications and development in Taiwan.

Under the SNTV system, a voter has only one vote in a multi-member district. The vote is nontransferable; that is, no matter how many votes any one candidate receives, s/he cannot transfer the surplus votes to other candidates, as opposed to single transferable voting (STV)¹² in Ireland, Malta, and Australia (for senator elections).¹³

With the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889, Japan instituted a two-chamber system in which members of the House of Representatives were directly elected by the people. Japan's 1889 electoral law divided the nation into 215 single-member districts and 43 two-member districts.¹⁴ In the two-member districts, each voter had two votes, and the two candidates with the highest number of votes were elected. This is called block voting.¹⁵ In 1900, Japan first adopted SNTV and divided the country into 51 large-sized districts in accordance with the number of counties or cities. The system was in practice continuously thereafter, except in 1946, when a large-sized district limited voting system was adopted.¹⁶ In 1919, the country was divided into 295 single-member districts, 68 two-member districts, and 11 three-member districts.¹⁷ In 1925, Japan switched to a medium-sized electoral district system, with each district having between three and five seats.¹⁸ This system persisted until 1994.

The extension of the right to vote to all adult males in 1925 led Japan to switch to medium-sized district SNTV. This move was

¹²See Mackie and Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 508.

¹³The electoral system adopted in Australia's Representative election is "alternative vote," or known as "preferential vote." It is a single-member district majority system. *Ibid.*, 503.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁵This electoral system had proven to be susceptible to manipulation by factions. Therefore, it has not been adopted in any democratic countries. However, according to Article 4 of Taiwan's Civil Organizations' Election Laws, elections within organizations (including political party) should adopt block votes. Limited voting is an exception. See Tanaka Munetaka, *Riben gongzhi xuanju fa jieshuo* (Japan's public officers election law), trans. Liu Hao-shan (Taipei: Central Election Commission, 1993).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁷Mackie and Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 276.

¹⁸For example, after the 1986 electoral reform, with the exception of one single-member district, four two-member districts, and one six-member district, all 127 districts ranged from three to five members. See Tanaka, *Riben gongzhi xuanju fa jieshuo*, 16, 35-6; also Gerald L. Curtis, "Japan," in *Electioneering*, ed. David Butler and Austin Ranney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 223; Yang, *Xuanju*, 32.

designed by the two major conservative parties in the House of Representatives in order to withstand challenges from the labor-supported party.¹⁹ Therefore, the adoption of medium-sized district SNTV was meant to maintain the interests of majority parties in the House.

Taiwan was under Japan's colonial rule after it was ceded to Japan in 1895. In the 1920s, indigenous political movements emerged, including one to establish a Taiwanese congress and gain regional autonomy. At the movement's core were the Taiwan Culture Association, the Taiwan People's Party, and the Taiwan Autonomy Federation.²⁰ In the 1930s, Japan finally made concessions to placate nationalists and leftist radicals as well as pacify Taiwan's struggle for civil rights and autonomy.²¹ In April 1935, the Japanese colonial government amended Taiwan's regional system and enforced new laws on *zhou/ting* (the state), *shi* (cities), and *jiezhuang* (villages). Under the new laws, Taiwan was supposed to enjoy "regional autonomy," with *zhou/ting*, *shi*, and *jiezhuang* constituting legal bodies with limited autonomy. Councils were also established for expressing public opinion. Half of the council members were elected by voters; the others were appointed by the colonial government. At the *shi* and *jiezhuang* levels, half of the councilors were directly elected by voters,²² and at the *zhou* councils, half of the members were elected by *shi* and *jiezhuang* councilmen.²³ Under a large-sized district (more than five seats) SNTV system, elections for *shi* and *jiezhuang* councilmen were held on November 22, 1935—the first elections of autonomous bodies in Taiwan's history.²⁴ *Zhou* councilman elections were

¹⁹Curtis, "Japan," 223.

²⁰Cheng Mu-hsin, *Taiwan yihui zhengzhi sishi nian* (Taiwan's parliamentarism over the past forty years) (Taipei: Zili wanbao, 1988), 39-46.

²¹*Ibid.*, 46.

²²There was no universal suffrage in Taiwan at the time. According to related regulations, only financially independent males above the age of twenty-five who had lived in the district for more than six months had the right to vote and to be voted for. Moreover, he had to pay an annual tax of more than five yen. See Articles 10 and 11 of *Taiwan shizhi* (Organizational law for Taiwan cities) and Articles 10 and 12 of *Taiwan jiezhuang zhi* (Organizational law for Taiwan villages), quoted in *Xuanju zhi* (Election records), book 1, vol. 6 of *Taizhong xianzhi* (Taichung county annals) (Taichung: Taichung County Government, 1989).

²³Wu Mi-cha, "Local Elections during the Japanese Colonial Period," in *Xuanju zhi* 1:1-36.

²⁴See Article 15 in "The Order for Implementing Organizational Law in Taiwan's Cities" (State order no. 11, 1935), Article 15 in "The Order for Implementing Organizational Law for Taiwan's Villages" (State order no. 12, 1935), and related regulations concerning form no. 7 (election records) in "Rules for City and Village Council Elections in Taiwan." See *Xuanju zhi*, book 1.

subsequently held on November 20, 1936.²⁵

After these events, SNTV continued to be adopted in public office elections at all levels, with the exception of some indirect elections (such as the first County Council and Provincial Assembly elections in 1946 and the first Temporary Provincial Assembly elections in 1951).²⁶ However, reserved seats for vocational groups were later canceled, and in 1991 the PR (one-ballot and 5 percent threshold) system was adopted for national district and overseas seats during National Assembly elections.²⁷

The Impact of the SNTV System on Party Politics

Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan were the three countries that adopted SNTV. However, when Roh Tae Woo came to power in South Korea in 1987, he promulgated the Constitution for the Sixth Republic, which initiated political reform. South Korea consequently switched to a hybrid system of 75 percent single-member district seats and 25 percent PR seats (see table 1).²⁸ Japan embarked on political reform in 1988 because of government scandals during the Takeshita administration. A formal plan was proposed by the Kaifu administration, and after seven prime ministers within six years, political reform was finally approved by the Diet in November 1994.²⁹ The biggest change was to abandon SNTV, which had been in place for over a century, in favor of a hybrid system of 60 percent single-member district seats and 40 percent PR seats (see table 1). Taiwan is thus currently the only country which still utilizes SNTV.

²⁵ Wu, "Local Elections," 1; Cheng, *Taiwan yihui zhengzhi sishi nian*, 47.

²⁶ See "Regulations for Provincial Assembly Election" and "Regulations for County Council Election," both promulgated by the Nationalist government in 1944; and "Regulations for Temporary Provincial Assembly Election in Taiwan," promulgated by the Executive Yuan in 1951, in *Xuanju zhi*, books 1 & 2.

²⁷ See related regulations in Articles 1 and 3 of the Additional Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of China, and Article 65 of the Public Employees Election and Recall Law.

²⁸ Yu Ming-hsien, Lin Chiu-shan, and Chou Chen-chang, trans., *Hanguo xuanju fagui huibian* (Korea's electoral laws) (Taipei: Central Election Commission, June 1994).

²⁹ The reform plan was respectively adopted by the House and the Upper House on November 2 and November 21, 1994. It was promulgated on November 25 and effective from December 25 the same year. See *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News) (Taipei), November 3, 1994, 9; *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times) (Taipei), November 23, 1994, 17; and *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily News) (Taipei), November 23, 1994, 7.

Table 1
Countries Adopting Hybrid Systems in Recent Years

Country	Year of Adoption	Seat Allocation	Threshold	Ballot Structure
Germany	1990 ^a	656 seats: 50% single-member plurality (328) 50% PR seats (328)	5%/3 seats	two-ballot
South Korea	1988	299 seats: 75% single-member plurality (224) 25% PR seats (75)	5 seats	one-ballot ^b
Japan	1993	500 seats: 60% single-member plurality (300) 40% PR seats (200)	2%/5 seats	two-ballot
Italy	1993	630 seats (House) 75% single-member plurality (475) 25% PR seats (155)	4%	two-ballot
Hungary	1994	386 seats: 176 single-member runoff 152 PR 58 national district	—	—
Russia	1993	450 seats: 50% single-member plurality 50% PR seats	5%	two-ballot
ROC	1991 (National Assembly)	325 seats: 225 SNTV seats 20 overseas seats 80 PR national list	5%	one-ballot
	1992 (Legislature)	161 seats: 125 SNTV ^c 6 overseas seats 30 PR national list		

Notes:

^aWest Germany adopted a hybrid system of 60 percent single-member district seats and 40 percent PR seats after 1949. In 1953, the system was balanced to consist of 50 percent single-member district and 50 percent PR seats. After German unification, the electoral system remained the same.

^bIf the biggest party does not win 50 percent of local district seats, half of the PR seats can be allocated to it. The rest of the PR seats can be divided among other parties in accordance with the percentage of local seats they win.

^cIn Taiwan's 1995 legislative elections, the seats for local districts increased to 128 in order to account for the increase in total population. The total legislative seats increased to 164 seats.

Sources:

- (1) *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times), March 8, 1992, 9; October 21, 1993, 10; August 14, 1994, 10; November 23, 1994, 17.
- (2) *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News), January 17, 1994, 9; November 3, 1994, 9.
- (3) *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily News), November 23, 1994, 7.
- (4) Tung Pao-cheng and Chou Tsung-yu, trans., *Deguo xuanju fagui huibian* (Germany's electoral laws) (Taipei: Central Election Commission, January 1994).
- (5) Yu Ming-hsien, Lin Chiu-shan, and Chou Chen-chang, trans., *Hanguo xuanju fagui huibian* (Korea's electoral laws) (Taipei: Central Election Commission, June 1994).

At this point, an analysis of political scientist Maurice Duverger's famous "Duverger's law," which was formulated in the 1950s³⁰ and has been discussed widely since,³¹ should prove useful. According to Duverger's law, (1) the single-member district plurality system tends to favor the two-party system; (2) the proportional system favors the multiparty system; and (3) the two-ballot majority system leads to coalition government.³² Generally, it is easier for a small party to survive in a PR system than in a single-member district system.³³ In theory, the proportionality of SNTV in multi-member districts should lie between the single-member district system and the PR system—the larger the district size, the higher the proportionality.³⁴ Likewise, a small party should have a better opportunity to exist in the SNTV rather than in the single-member district system.³⁵

Theoretically, in a district with N seats and V number of total valid votes, if any party can receive at least $V/(N+1)+1$ votes, or the so-called "security votes," it can capture at least one seat.³⁶ If one or two candidates receive very high returns in an election, the actual votes the other candidates need in order to be elected will be much lower than the "minimum quota." For example, in the 1992 legislative elections, Taipei county had to fill sixteen seats. Therefore, gaining one-seventeenth (or 5.9 percent) of the total votes would guarantee election. However, Jaw Shau-kong of the Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party of China) captured a high number of votes, reducing the necessary quota to around 2.65 percent of the total vote. This

³⁰Duverger, *Political Parties*, 217; Duverger, "Duverger's Law: Forty Years Later," in Grofman and Lijphart, *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, 69-84.

³¹Rae, *The Political Consequence of Electoral Law*, 95; William H. Riker, "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982): 753-66; Giovanni Sartori, "The Influence of Electoral Systems: Faulty Laws or Faulty Method?" in Grofman and Lijphart, *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, 58-59; Hsieh, *Zhengdang bili daibiao zhi*, 17-19.

³²Duverger, *Political Parties*, 217; Duverger, "Duverger's Law," 70.

³³Mackie and Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 508-11.

³⁴Hsieh, *Zhengdang bili daibiao zhi*, 19.

³⁵Ibid.; Yang, *Xuanju*, 32-36.

³⁶ $V/(N+1)+1$ is the "droop quota" used in the PR system. See Mackie and Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 504. According to the rule of the quota, when there is only one candidate to be elected, if the candidate can receive half of the valid votes plus one vote, then his/her election will be guaranteed. When there are two to be elected, if the candidate can get one-third of the valid vote plus one vote, s/he can at least be the first runner-up, because no two other candidates will have more votes.

indicates that there is indeed room for small parties in the multi-member district system.

However, in a district with N seats, SNTV has often led to $N + 1$ contenders.³⁷ In other words, either because of strategic voting (voters not wasting votes on candidates with no chance of being elected) or small parties' coalition strategies (in order to gain sufficient votes to capture seats), the number of major contenders in an N -member district has often been $N + 1$. Consequently, when any party is able to win $V/(N + 1) + 1$ votes, it can win seats. Accordingly, if a faction is capable of winning $V/(N + 1) + 1$ votes, it has the potential and ability to break away from its parent party.³⁸

According to Rein Taagepera and Matthew Shugart, single-member and two-member district systems are conducive to a two-party system, while the case is more complicated in a three-member district system.³⁹ On the one hand, one large party may be over-represented; that is, it gains a number of seats proportionally higher than its total vote share. This is possible when the vote share of the third party is less than half of that of the largest party. On the other hand, a third party can gain ground if its vote share is higher than half of the largest party's share. In general, if a district has more seats, the relationship between vote share and number of seats is more equal and proportionality is higher. However, overrepresentation of a third party might occur in medium-sized districts. For example, Taiwan's electoral districts are mostly medium- or large-sized. Of the twenty-nine electoral districts in legislative elections, nineteen have more than three seats. In theory, there is not only room for a third party, but certain circumstances (for example, inadequate nominations or vote equalization strategies by the two major parties) could lead to its overrepresentation.

Major parties with strong grass-roots networks and vote equalization capabilities can use SNTV in multi-member districts to maintain their majority status.⁴⁰ To maximize its seats, the party must be able

³⁷Reed, "Structure and Behaviour," 335-56; Cox, "Strategic Voting Equilibria," 608-21.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 336.

³⁹Taagepera and Shugart, *Seats and Votes*, 114-16.

⁴⁰Yeh-lih Wang, "The Electoral System for Parliament Members and the Development of Party Politics," in *Zhengdang zhengzhi yu minzhu xianzheng xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (Collection of papers for the conference on Party Politics and Constitutional Democracy), vol. 3 (Taipei: Democracy Foundation, 1991), 307-9; Yang, *Xuanju*, 36-39.

to equalize votes on an accurate and fair basis. Tight party discipline and highly cooperative candidates are also necessary. In the past, the KMT met all these requirements, and as a result, the SNTV system encouraged it to distribute seats among its local factions and mobilize. It thus had no strong motivation to engage in electoral reform. On the other hand, opposition groups from the *dangwai* period to the fledgling DPP have been allowed enough support through SNTV to capture at least one seat in most districts. The DPP therefore opposed the adoption of a single-member district system when it was still nascent and fragile. If such a proposal was made at that time, the DPP probably would have feared the increase of vote-buying, although its real concern was its ability to compete with the KMT and gain seats. However, as the DPP has grown stronger, it now faces the same problem of distributing seats among factions much like the KMT. However, the multi-member district system is capable of accommodating each faction's interests and lowering the possibility of intraparty conflict caused by related nomination issues. Therefore, the two major parties have not been interested in electoral reform.

The Impact of SNTV on Political Parties' Nomination Process

The practice of SNTV in Taiwan has generated unique phenomena that cannot be found in either the single-member district or PR system of Western democracies. Among them are distinctive nomination strategies. In a single-member district system, it is natural that each party will nominate only one candidate for each district. There are no problems such as "inadequate vote equalization," and political parties can pursue "maximum" single-candidate nomination and vote support in order to gain the optimal numbers of seats.⁴¹ However, in a multi-member district system where there can be $N + 1$ contenders, the number of candidates a party nominates can affect its election results. In principle, a party can decide on the adequate number of candidates by evaluating the following factors: the party's vote share in previous homogenous elections;⁴² the estimated vote

⁴¹Yeh-lih Wang, "The Nomination Strategy in Multi-Member Districts," *Lianhe wanbao* (United Evening News) (Taipei), May 18, 1995, 2.

⁴²Take legislative elections, for example: "homogenous elections" refer to previous legislative elections or provincial assembly/city council elections. Voter turnout in county/city mayoral or gubernatorial/mayoral elections often cannot be compared to those in legislative elections.

share for this election; other parties' nomination strategies; the party's capability for vote equalization; the voter socioeconomic structure; the balance of power among factions; the impact of single-member district voting on PR seats; and the number of reserved seats for females. After taking all the above factors into consideration, a party can determine the appropriate quota and make the best use of available political resources. If a party nominates too many candidates in a district, it might lead to infighting within the party which would disperse voter support and decrease the number of seats. If a party nominates too few candidates, it would lead to election failure and further affect the PR seats. If there is a heavyweight candidate and his/her party does not distribute surplus votes to other candidates, s/he might absorb too many votes and squeeze other candidates out, leading to a decrease in the number of seats the party wins. Under the multi-member district system, the maximization of votes does not necessarily lead to the most seats; yet, to a political party, seats are obviously more important than total votes.⁴³

In addition to the direct impact on election results, nomination lists and vote equalization are other features of SNTV. During the nomination process, political parties often have to consider voter structure and features, the candidate's connections in the district, and the balance of power between factions. This prevents candidates from being too homogenous and disperses the votes to capture as many seats as possible. Every party hopes to absorb all possible resources and votes like a sponge; therefore, the parties have to exercise a degree of adjustment power over selecting different types of candidates so that the nomination list can attract voters from different walks of life. Candidates from the same party should be complementary, not contradictory. If a party nominates too many candidates with similar images and overlapping vote support in a district and does not take "market differentiation" into account, it will likely lose the election in that district. "To elect the wise and the able" might be possible in single-member districts, but this does not apply in multi-member districts.⁴⁴

⁴³See note 41 above.

⁴⁴Yeh-lih Wang, "The Impact of the Electoral System and Campaign Strategy on the Year-End Elections," *Zhongguo shibao*, December 7, 1991, 11.

The Drawbacks of SNTV

In Taiwan, the proportionality of the SNTV system lies between the single-member district system and the PR system, and under its influence, small parties have a better chance for survival. However, the question remains: Why have Western democracies not adopted such a system and why did Japan and South Korea discard it? The answer is that SNTV has far more drawbacks than advantages.

Taiwan's experiences have shown that the nomination process under SNTV has caused serious opposition between factions within almost every party. SNTV has also led to the emergence of new factions (which will be explored later). Therefore, as long as the electoral system remains unchanged, events such as the vigorous protests by local DPP chapters against the party center in 1995 will continue.

Under SNTV, intraparty competition can be stiffer than inter-party competition during elections.⁴⁵ Candidates not only have to face challenges from other parties, but have to look over their shoulders at fellow candidates who may try to steal their vote support or "uproot" their *tiao-a-ka* (vote broker). In fact, during election campaigns, it is not unusual to see candidates from the same party fight for the same voter support. Every candidate must make an effort to differentiate him/herself from others and closely watch his/her brokers and loyal supporters in order to avoid vote erosion. On the other hand, candidates also want to take away potential votes from fellow candidates to guarantee their election.⁴⁶ These kinds of election grudges and conflicts of interest have been one of the major causes of the emergence of local factions in Taiwan. As this author has noted, multi-member districts are favorable for the distribution of seats among factions. It is thus sensible for candidates to side with a faction in order to gain vote support. This in turn leads to changes in strength or reorganization of factions in accordance with the election results. Through complicated interpersonal networks and broker systems, factions have hence become an inevitable product of SNTV.

Under SNTV, party identification is less important unless there

⁴⁵Gary W. Cox and Frances Rosenbluth, "The Electoral Fortunes of Legislative Factions in Japan," *American Political Science Review* 87 (1993): 579.

⁴⁶See note 44 above.

is only one candidate in the district. When a party has several candidates competing in the same district, even if the voters identify with the party to some extent, they usually place more emphasis on the individual candidates. On the whole, Taiwanese voters do not have a high degree of party identification.⁴⁷ However, some suspect that the voting behavior of preferring individual candidates to the party has shown cracks in the past two years. For example, in the 1994 Taipei City Council election, the New Party's (NP's) fourteen nominees were able to win eleven seats thanks to voters' spontaneous vote equalization (as opposed to the KMT's planned vote equalization) in addition to support for NP leader Jaw Shau-kong. In the 1995 legislative elections, the NP used the slogan "we are too small to waste any one vote" to mobilize supporters for mandatory vote equalization in districts with more than two NP candidates. The four DPP candidates in the Taipei city southern district also appealed to their supporters with slogans such as "four superstars, 100 percent vote equalization," "four is company," and "four bumper harvests" to reinforce mobilization and vote equalization. Opposition parties' campaign strategies of mandatory vote equalization have been groundbreaking measures in that they are a challenge to the voters' longtime habit of "choosing the individual candidate rather than the party." It has attempted to overcome organizational weakness at the grass-roots level and maximize the number of seats gained in multi-member districts. Nevertheless, such a strategy is not without risk: it could lead to victory in elections, or the party might lose heavily.

The following are the four prerequisites for successful mandatory vote equalization: (1) a certain proportion of the supporters must strongly identify with the party, favor the party over individual candidates (such as the KMT's Huang Fu-hsing chapter in the past), and be willing to cooperate in mandatory vote equalization; (2) the party must have an accurate estimation of potential vote support and be able to fairly carry out vote equalization; (3) the candidates of the same party must be willing to cooperate; and (4) the party can nom-

⁴⁷Yeh-lih Wang, "Gubernatorial and Mayoral Elections and Taiwan's Political Development" (Paper presented at the conference on "Taiwan's Political Environment after the Gubernatorial and Mayoral Elections," jointly held by the National Chengchi University Department of Political Science and the Center for Asian Studies at Chu Hai College, Hong Kong, April 22, 1995). According to a recent survey, only 40 percent of the Taiwanese people held party identification. See *Zhongguo shibao*, May 22, 1995, 4.

inate candidates with similar ideology, image, or other requirements, as some voters might support the party only because they strongly identify with a certain candidate's cause (such as fundamental supporters for Taiwan independence).

In the 1995 legislative elections, the NP's vote equalization scheme in Taipei city's southern and northern districts and Taoyuan county, and the DPP's similar scheme in Taipei city's southern district largely met the above four requirements. The parties' success in those districts will probably influence party election and nomination strategies in the future. However, mandatory vote equalization should not be seen as the panacea, and each party should recognize that this strategy has its limitations.

According to polls conducted by *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times), before the 1995 legislative elections, 47 percent of the respondents said that they would vote for individual candidates regardless of their party or faction. Only 25 percent of the respondents said that they tended to identify with a specific party.⁴⁸ According to a poll by another local newspaper, *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News), immediately after the election, 57 percent of the voters said that their decisions were "candidate-orientated," broken down into "the candidate's qualifications" (36 percent), "relatives' recommendation" (5 percent), "personally knowing the candidate" (4 percent), "the candidate's connections in the district" (2 percent), or "the candidates' previous performance" (10 percent). Twenty percent of the respondents said they were "issue-oriented," including those who supported the "candidate's platform" (13 percent), "check-and-balances" (3 percent), or "safety of society." Only 13 percent of the respondents stated that they voted for the party.⁴⁹ Therefore, the effect of voters who support the party rather than individual candidates in mandatory vote equalization is limited.

In the 1995 legislative elections, the main reason for the DPP and NP's successful mandatory vote equalization strategies was that the nominees shared homogenous and favorable images, lessening the difficulties of choosing between the party and the candidates. In addition, both parties' nominees in those districts were adequate for mandatory vote equalization; the strategy would not have worked

⁴⁸*Zhongguo shibao*, November 4, 1995, 2.

⁴⁹*Lianhe wanbao*, December 3, 1995, 9.

in districts like Taipei county where the DPP had as many as ten nominees, or in Taichung city, where the DPP nominated three candidates although the potential votes were not enough to be equally divided among them. In addition, there are differences in voting behavior or even political culture among voters of different districts. This might explain why the NP's mandatory vote equalization scheme did not quite succeed in Taipei county.⁵⁰

Normally it is important for the candidates to distinguish themselves from their fellow nominees for more votes. In addition to stressing their factional affiliation, as mentioned before, many candidates have also tried to emphasize their distinctive qualities or their cause in order to consolidate loyal supporters and attract undecided voters. Since candidates can win in multi-member districts when they receive $V/(N+1)+1$ votes (or even fewer), they do not have to capture the majority votes in the district. Instead, they can get hold of a very small portion of loyal voters (for example, 5 percent). Therefore, going to extremes and vote-buying have become common practices under SNTV.⁵¹ According to the Median Voter Theorem, in single-member districts, candidates will try to stay middle-of-the-road in order to attract more votes.⁵² However, in multi-member districts, since the candidates wish to attract a "certain minority" instead of the majority, they can afford to be more extreme. Under these circumstances, even though 80 percent of the voters in a district might dislike a certain candidate, the candidate still stands a chance of being elected as the front runner and acting as the representative of "the majority of the electorate" in the district.

Under SNTV, in most districts voters and candidates care little about the party label. For many candidates, the interests of themselves and their affiliated faction have been more important than those of their party. Since the election of individual candidates hardly depends on party labels, and factional interests take precedence over the party's overall interests, loose party discipline and low efficiency

⁵⁰Yeh-lih Wang, "Voting Behavior in Legislative Elections," *Zhengce yuekan* (Policy Monthly), no. 11 (December 1, 1995): 3-5.

⁵¹Hsieh, *Zhengdang bili daibiao zhi*, 21.

⁵²Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, 115-17; James M. Enelow and Melvin J. Hinich, *The Spatial Theory of Voting: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 8-13; Emerson M. S. Niou and Yeh-lih Wang, "How to Win Nowadays Election?" *Zhongguo luntan* (China Forum) 29, no. 8 (1990): 44-49.

can be expected.⁵³ Since the party cannot help a candidate compete with fellow candidates, s/he has to watch out for him/herself. In medium- or large-sized districts, big corporations and gangsters as well as factions can easily exert influence on campaigns (either by financial support, force, or even becoming candidates themselves).⁵⁴

Finally, under SNTV it is difficult to exercise recall rights. Under the principle of "majority rule," "elect" and "recall" should be a pair of composite concepts. In single-member districts, a representative is elected and recalled by the majority voters in the constituency.⁵⁵ However, under SNTV, a candidate can be elected without the support of the majority voters, and can be recalled by another segment of voters who did not support him/her at the first place. It is arguable whether this is in line with the democratic spirit of "majority rule," "representative politics," or "political accountability."

Some Thoughts on Electoral Reform

The above discussion shows that the SNTV system currently practiced in Taiwan has far more drawbacks than advantages, which might explain why Taiwan is the only country currently adopting it. Some of Taiwan's law scholars have even regarded multi-member districts as unconstitutional.⁵⁶ If there is to be future development of democracy, the time has come for Taiwan to engage in electoral reform.

Scholars on social choice theory have proven that there is no perfect voting method or electoral system in the world.⁵⁷ The single-

⁵³In multi-member districts, it is rare that a candidate can be elected solely using party identification or party mobilization and vote equalization. For example, after the KMT's Huang Fu-hsing chapter, once called the "iron vote," rusted, even candidates from the KMT's military faction had to explore other ways to gain voter support. For DPP and NP candidates, party identification might exert more influence. However, unless there is only one nominee in the district, the problem of market differentiation still exists.

⁵⁴John Fuh-sheng Hsieh, "If the System Is Not Changed, There Will Be No Party Discipline," *Zhongguo shibao*, May 7, 1995, 11.

⁵⁵In fact, for various reasons, such as short office terms, few Western democracies have exercised recall rights. Whether the majority voters support a representative's words and deeds and ideas are usually determined by votes in the next election.

⁵⁶Yang Yu-ling, "Multi-member Districts are a Violation of the Constitution," *Faling yuekan* (Law Monthly) (Taipei) 46, no. 4 (1995): 3-5.

⁵⁷Kenneth Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Thomas Schwartz, *The Logic of Collective Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

member district and PR systems in Western democracies have their own advantages and limitations. Theory and reality should be combined in electoral reform, and a system that has more advantages than pitfalls and is also compatible with Taiwan's national and social conditions should be chosen. In the author's view, there is no need to make a definitive choice between the single-member district and PR systems. Germany's hybrid system, which combines the advantages of both systems and to some extent avoids their shortcomings, might be a good model to consider.⁵⁸ In fact, hybrid systems have become a major trend in democratic countries' electoral reform (see table 1). For example, Italy recently changed its forty-year-old PR system for House of Representatives elections, adopting a hybrid system of 75 percent single-member district seats and 25 percent PR seats in an attempt to correct various malpractices under the PR system such as multipartism, corruption, and pork-barreling nominations.

Germany has the best-known hybrid system in the world. After its first parliamentary election in 1949, West Germany adopted a system of 60 percent single-member district seats and 40 percent PR seats, with an electoral threshold of 5 percent, or one seat. Each voter had one ballot. After 1953, the method of allocating seats was changed to 50 percent single-member district seats and 50 percent PR seats, with a two-ballot structure. In 1956, the threshold was raised to 5 percent, or three seats. The second (party) vote determined the total number of seats for each party. After subtracting the seats a party gained in the single-member districts, the remaining seats would be allocated according to the PR system.⁵⁹ German unification in 1989 had no impact on this system, although the number of parliamentary seats increased from 496 to 656.

If Taiwan adopts only the PR system and abandons local districts, local politics would undergo a major structural change. It is difficult to say whether the people would support the idea. Moreover, if a single-member district system is adopted, there would be proportionality problems. Take legislative elections, for example: if legislature size remains the same (164 seats in 1995), single-member districts would render district magnitude too small and create loose

⁵⁸Yeh-lih Wang, "When It Comes to Electoral Districts, Small Is Better Than Large," *Zhorigguo shibao*, November 27, 1994, 11.

⁵⁹Mackie and Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 158-59. If a party wins more single-member district seats than PR seats, it can keep the surplus seats.

representation (even the Taiwan Provincial Assembly has only 79 members). Moreover, under the circumstances, representatives might overemphasize the interests of their respective districts and overlook the distribution of national resources as well as the country's overall interests. On the other hand, if districts are too large and the number of legislators too few, the legislation process will be slowed down. Under the current political environment, it is unknown whether the proposal of reducing legislature size will gain any support.

It might be better for Taiwan to model itself after Germany and divide legislators into two groups, one to be elected under the single-member district plurality system and the other to be elected under the national district PR list system with a two-ballot structure. To prevent multipartism, a threshold can be imposed to limit the number of parties in the parliament. However, any party that can win three seats in local districts or 5 percent of the national vote can get seats in the parliament in accordance with the second (party) vote. In this way, the votes "wasted" by small parties in local districts can in some degree be made up for by the second ballot and prevent disproportionality under the single-member district system.⁶⁰ In the national district list, each party can nominate minority social groups, scholars and professionals, and ethnic groups, all of whose local campaigns would encounter difficulties, so as to promote pluralism, the quality of representative democracy, and ethnic assimilation.

Under hybrid systems, two ballots seem more reasonable. West Germany adopted a two-ballot structure in 1953 due to the tendency of split-ticket voting.⁶¹ In Taiwan's election culture, "choosing the individual candidate rather than the party" and split-ticket voting are very popular.⁶² Therefore, only under the two-ballot structure can candidates on party lists have the legitimacy of direct popular support and not be regarded as secondary. In addition, since the voters elect PR candidates based on the party, candidates would not be under pressure to serve their district, and can concentrate on promoting party policy and maintaining party discipline without sacrificing the country's overall interests. Moreover, a two-ballot structure will enhance voters' party identification, which is favorable

⁶⁰see note 58 above.

⁶¹Mackie and Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 159.

⁶²See note 47 above.

for the future development of Taiwan's party politics.

On the local district level, candidates must strive for the majority's support in order to be elected in a single-member district. In this way, the principle of "plurality rule" will be implemented more easily, and the exercise of the right to recall will be more sensible. It would be much more difficult for candidates to be elected by going to extremes, and thus societal polarization would be slowed. In addition, grass-roots party organizations could concentrate on helping only one candidate in each district, thus resolving intraparty conflicts. For voters, there would be no difference between choosing the individual candidate or the party in single-member districts. As voter support for the party grows, party labels will become more salient, and Taiwan will come closer to fulfilling the spirit of party politics. Furthermore, as district size decreases, candidates' finances would be less relevant in election campaigns, and plutocracy would gradually subside. The influence of factions would also decrease as candidates seek the majority's support. Even if one faction is able to dominate short-term elections, unless voters perceive this outcome as beneficial for the district and are willing to extend their support, according to "Duverger's law," an opposition force will gradually emerge to counter it. Opposition between at least two factions (usually between two major parties) will come into being, ending long-term domination by one faction.

Finally, some may worry that after switching to the single-member district system, vote-buying will proliferate. If we take the 1995 legislative elections on the local district as an example, however, we find that if the whole country is divided into 82 single-member districts, the average number of voters in a district would be 173,000 (with a total population of 14.15 million).⁶³ And if the voter turnout rate is 70 percent, a candidate must have at least 60,000 votes to be elected—a much higher figure than what most of the elected candidates received in the 1995 election. The costs of vote-buying would be prohibitive in such a situation. In addition, in theory, it is harder to buy out more than half of the voters in a single-member district than to buy out a small proportion of voters in a

⁶³In the 1994 gubernatorial and mayoral elections, the voter turnout for Taiwan province was 76.15 percent, 78.53 percent for Taipei city, and 80.58 percent for Kaohsiung city; see *Lianhe bao*, December 4, 1994, 1. The overall voter turnout in the 1995 legislative election was 67.70 percent; *ibid.*, December 3, 1995, 2.

multi-member district. In a one-to-one contest in a single-member district, candidates will also keep a closer watch on each other. This also makes vote-buying more difficult. Therefore, the change to single-member districts would not enhance vote-buying.

Nevertheless, three problems associated with the current political reality remain to be overcome. First, if a single-member district is adopted, the two major parties will certainly encounter resistance or boycotts from existing factions. Some might worry that the impact of electoral reform on the local factions will be so great that they will disintegrate, and thus will resist reform. To compensate, a party can allocate its PR seats to senior members who have good records and can alleviate resistance during the transitional period.

Second, on the local district level, to change the multi-member districts into single-member districts will be a highly difficult political task. On the one hand, it might encounter strong opposition from those who feel that the redrawing of districts would deprive their interests. In addition, the gerrymandering phenomenon which favors a certain party or faction in the redrawing of districts would have to be avoided.⁶⁴ Therefore, redrawing must be conducted by impartial committees in order to preempt possible malpractices and undue political influence or manipulation by factions.

Third, if electoral reform involves the addition of national district seats or reserved seats for females in local districts after the change to single-member districts, the constitution would need to be amended. The present National Assembly may be the key to electoral reform, and the success of reform depends on whether it can forge a consensus on these issues and if at least 75 percent of its members can support them.

Many of the peculiar phenomena that have emerged in Taiwan's democratization process can be directly or indirectly attributed to the multi-member district SNTV system it has adopted. Certainly, the electoral system has not been the only cause of political irregularities; nevertheless, it has been one of the contributing factors. As other nations such as Japan and South Korea have already abandoned SNTV, it behooves Taiwan to focus on electoral reform and not allow its political environment to deteriorate.

⁶⁴Austin Ranney, *Governing: An Introduction to Political Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1993), 184-87; Bruce E. Cain, *The Reapportionment Puzzle* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984).