

RESEARCH NOTE

Referendum as a Form of *Zaoshi*: The Instrumental Domestic Political Functions of Taiwan's Referendum Ploy

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This paper seeks to explain the domestic political functions of Taiwan's 2004 "defensive referendum" by outlining the referendum's value as a strategic campaign ploy in Taiwan's high-level elections. The way the referendum was used draws on tried and successful campaigning methods in Taiwan: mobilizing mass rallies to create the impression of strength; demands by politicians that supporters visibly display loyalty/support; and the instrumental use of almost any means that is deemed beneficial to election success. The article argues that these campaigning techniques embodied in the referendum strategy can be understood as a form of "zaoshi." Such instrumental use of the referendum as a means of mobilizing sup-

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porters—rather than as an aide to policymaking—helps demonstrate that Taiwan, as a society with open political contest, still lacks adequate procedural principles and established conventions for political behavior.

KEYWORDS: referendum; *zaoshi*; election strategy; instrumentalism; procedural principles.

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This article is a preliminary effort at conceptually bridging two topics that have to date mostly been analyzed separately: election campaigning and referenda.¹ Scholars have often seen a particular election as a kind of referendum,² or referenda as intimately linked to party politics and affecting party election fortunes.³ Studies of the actual conjunction of referenda and other elections have been limited, however, given the scarcity of empirical cases. The most studied case is probably the 1993 New Zealand joint referendum and general election.⁴ Hardly any research makes the case that a referendum has been organized largely as a means of voter mobilization for another election (i.e., instrumentally), although Mark Walker has argued that political elites often manipulate the timing and wording of referenda in order to achieve their own political ends.⁵

This paper utilizes a political anthropology approach to provide an overview of the domestic political functions of the "defensive referendum"

¹One earlier study which saw referendum campaigning as very similar to electoral campaigning is Lawrence Leduc and Jon H. Pammett, "Referendum Voting—Attitudes and Behavior in the 1992 Constitutional Referendum," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 1 (1995): 3-33.

²Jimmy D. Kandeh, "Sierra Leone's Post-Conflict Elections of 2002," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 2 (2003): 189-216; and Yitzhak M. Brudy, "In Pursuit of the Russian Presidency: Why and How Yeltsin Won the 1996 Presidential Election," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30, no. 3 (1997): 255-75.

³Tor Midtbø and Kjell Hines, "The Referendum-Election Nexus: An Aggregate Analysis of Norwegian Voting Behaviour," *Electoral Studies* 17, no. 1 (1998): 77-94.

⁴E.g., Jack Vowles, "The Politics for Electoral Reform in New Zealand," *International Political Science Review* 16, no. 1 (1995): 95-115.

⁵Mark Clarence Walker, *The Strategic Use of Referendums: Power, Legitimacy, and Democracy* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2003).

(防禦性公投) in 2004, Taiwan's first ever referendum. The goal is to describe how the referendum was used in a highly instrumental way: as a means to mobilize supporters rather than as an inquiry into voter opinion on a policy issue. The paper suggests, moreover, that such instrumentalism is pervasive in Taiwan politics. The question to be answered by the analysis is: If coupling the referendum with the presidential election was done primarily for reasons related to election strategy, what were the specific functions that the referendum was supposed to achieve?

The article begins with a brief discussion of the rationale behind using election campaign logic to study the referendum. Section two introduces the *zaoshi* (造勢) concept while section three makes the argument for interpreting the referendum as a form of *zaoshi*. I then tentatively examine whether the presumed strategy of coupling the referendum with the elections can be deemed a success on its own terms. Finally, a concluding section raises a provocative but fundamental question as to whether this pervasive instrumentalism in Taiwan politics is detrimental to achieving a well-functioning representative democracy.

A brief methodological point is worth noting before moving to the body of the analysis. This article seeks to consolidate various ideas that the author has gleaned from field research conducted in Taiwan on several occasions over the course of six years. Unless otherwise noted, the statements about Taiwan politics found throughout the paper derive from author's interviews with various politicians, campaign organizers, government officials, scholars, media representatives, and others from different geographical areas on the island.

The Referendum and Election Campaign Logic

In conjunction with the 2004 presidential election, voters in Taiwan were asked two referendum questions: (1) whether their government should strengthen self-defense capabilities by acquiring more advanced weaponry should mainland China continue to threaten Taiwan, and (2) if their government should engage in negotiations with mainland China to

establish a "peace and stability framework."⁶ To many observers, the questions did not seem to be appropriate as referendum questions; even in their revised form, most people would hardly disagree with the statements.

In fact, the whole referendum was more a plebiscite than a regular referendum. A referendum implies putting a political question to a direct vote of the electorate, whereas a plebiscite refers to a request for approval of the general policies of the government or a (often radical) governmental decree.⁷ Many external observers in Beijing and the West regarded the referendum as a Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁)/Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) plot to achieve independence or at least to change the cross-Strait status quo.⁸ Observers in Taiwan, in contrast, mostly saw the referendum as a domestic affair, although they differed as to whether the motives were self-interest/idealistic (i.e., election manipulation) or benign (i.e., giving Taiwanese people more say in their government).

Although the referendum probably had several functions and aims, this paper focuses on the referendum's election strategic functions. Studies on Taiwan's elections have centered on campaign organization (e.g., factions and vote buying);⁹ analyses of macro-level election data;¹⁰ party issues and positions;¹¹ or such institutional issues as the effects of the

⁶For the exact wording of the questions, see Wikipedia Encyclopedia, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ROC_referendum,_2004 (accessed April 15, 2004).

⁷Wikipedia Encyclopedia, available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plebiscite> (accessed May 31, 2004).

⁸See, e.g., Michael Swaine, "Trouble in Taiwan," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 2 (March/April 2004): 39-49; "U.S. Official, in Beijing, Questions Taiwan's Referendum Plans," *The New York Times*, January 31, 2004, 6; and "Germany Urges Taiwan to Rethink on Referendum Issue," Reuters, March 14, 2004.

⁹Shelley Rigger, "Grassroots Electoral Organization and Political Reform in the ROC on Taiwan and Mexico," in *The Awkward Embrace: One-Party Domination and Democracy*, ed. Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins (Cape Town, South Africa: Tafelberg Publishers, 1999), 301-18; and Joseph Bosco, "Faction versus Ideology: Mobilization Strategies in Taiwan's Elections," *The China Quarterly*, no. 137 (1994): 28-62.

¹⁰Emerson Niou and P. Paolino, "The Rise of the Opposition Party in Taiwan: Explaining Chen Shui-bian's Victory in the 2000 Presidential Election," *Electoral Studies* 22 (2003): 721-40; and Lee Pei-shan and Hsu Yung-ming, "Southern Politics? Regional Trajectories of Party Development in Taiwan," *Issues & Studies* 38, no. 2 (June 2002): 61-84.

¹¹Dafydd Fell, "Party Platform Change in Taiwan's 1990s Elections," *Issues & Studies* 38, no. 2 (June 2002): 31-60; and John Fuh-sheng Hsieh and Emerson Niou, "Issue Voting in

election system on voting.¹² A few studies have focused on the role of the media and political communication in election campaigns,¹³ and Joseph Bosco has undertaken a preliminary comparison of Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) campaigning techniques.¹⁴ Much less research has been conducted, however, on the techniques and functions of mass campaigning in Taiwan's elections—despite such campaigning being a prominent feature, especially in presidential elections. This is all the more curious given that mass campaigns have been a longstanding theme in studies of PRC politics.¹⁵ This paper tries to fill this gap in the literature.

Answering our research question requires an analysis of Taiwan's political culture, particularly in terms of some salient campaigning activities in Taiwan's high-level elections. The way the 2004 referendum was used draws on tried and successful campaigning methods in Taiwan: mobilizing mass rallies to create the impression of strength; demands by politicians for displays of loyalty from their supporters; and the instrumental use of almost any means deemed beneficial to election success. I summarize these mass campaigning techniques in the concept of *zaoshi*.

The Meaning and Use of *Zaoshi*

The term "*zaoshi*" combines two characters: "*zao*" usually meaning "to make"¹⁶ and "*shi*" which carries connotations of power/strength, influ-

the Republic of China on Taiwan's 1992 Legislative Yuan Election," *International Political Science Review* 17, no. 1 (1996): 13-27.

¹²Wang Yeh-lih, "The Political Consequences of the Electoral System: Single Nontransferable Voting in Taiwan," *Issues & Studies* 32, no. 8 (August 1996): 96-104.

¹³E.g., Gary D. Rawnsley, "As Edifying as a Bout of Mud-Wrestling': The 2000 Presidential Election Campaign in Taiwan," in *Political Communications in Greater China*, ed. Gary Rawnsley and Ming-yeh T. Rawnsley (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003), 103-23.

¹⁴Bosco, "Faction versus Ideology."

¹⁵There is long Chinese tradition of protest demonstrations. See Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

¹⁶"*Zao*" also has the meaning "to concoct/fabricate," "to build," or "to educate/train."

ence, and momentum. While *zaoshi* as a concept does not appear to have been widely used in China historically speaking, the character "shi" is both a word rich in connotations and a central concept in Chinese military-strategic literature.¹⁷ In classical Chinese strategic thinking, "shi" denotes the force, momentum, or correct timing by which a battle or war is won.¹⁸ *Zaoshi* can thus be similarly understood as meaning "to create circumstances favorable to a desired outcome."¹⁹

This paper holds that the function of the March 20 consultative referendum in Taiwan is not quite the same as the conventional function of referenda in the West—asking the public's (binding or non-binding) opinion on an important political issue. In seeking to explain the referendum, the concept "*zaoshi*" and the activities it denotes in Taiwan politics are key.

In modern-day Taiwan, use of the concept "*zaoshi*" appears to have been rare before the late 1980s. It was sporadically used in the context of the KMT's mission to "recover the mainland" (光復大陸, *guangfu dalu*), often in the form of a mobilizing "call to arms."²⁰ The current use of the concept seems to conspicuously coincide with the birth of the first opposition party—the DPP—in 1986, the island's political liberalization that began in 1987, and the commencement of large-scale (non-local) elections. A search of articles in the database of *Lianhe bao* (聯合報,

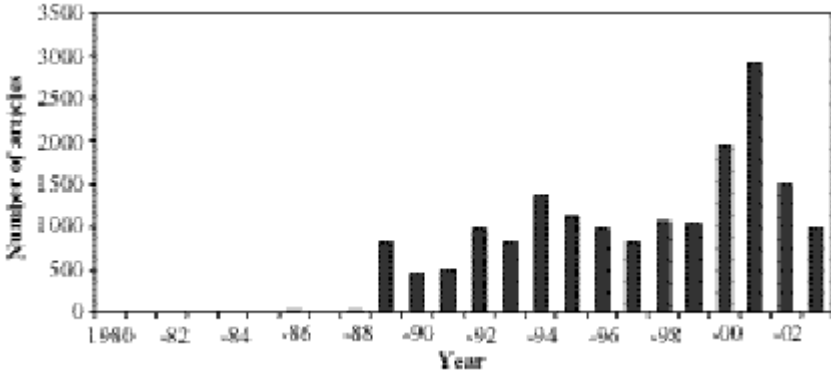
¹⁷The fifth chapter of *Sun Zi bingfa* (孫子兵法, The Art of War) revolves around the concept of *shi*. See *Sun Zi shi jiazhu* (Sun Zi with ten commentaries) (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1978).

¹⁸One prominent translation of *The Art of War* translates "shi" as "the strategic power." See Sun Tzu, *Art of War*, translated by Ralph D. Sawyer (Taipei: SMC Publishers, 1994), 187-88.

¹⁹Chang Shouzhu, "Sun Zi bingfa lunli sixiang tansuo" (An exploration into the ethical thinking of Sun Zi's *Art of War*), *Panzhijhua daxue xuebao* (Journal of Panzhihua University) 14, no. 4 (December 1997): 8; and Lu Ming, "Dui yunyong 'ruan shashang' cong zhengzhi shang zaoshi de jidian kanfa" (Some views on using 'weak inflicting casualties' political *zaoshi*), *Kongjun zhengzhi xueyuan xuebao* (Bulletin of the Air Force Political Institute) (Shanghai), 1998, no. 6:59.

²⁰E.g., "Chuangzao xin xingshi kaiqi xin jingjie. Yi yi qi lun dangqian guoji xingshi zhi bian yu women yingbian zhi dao," *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News), July 26, 1964, 2; and "Jiang Jingguo [Chiang Ching-kuo] buzhang zuo gao liwei cheng. Guojun zhuangda yu shi jujin. Bi neng zhangwo fuguo zhi jiyun," *ibid.*, November 30, 1965, 1.

Figure 1
Number of Articles Using the Concept "Zaoshi" in the *United Daily News*, 1980-2003



Source: *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News) (Taipei) database, accessed April 1-3, 2004.

United Daily News)—one of Taiwan's three main newspapers—confirms this (see fig. 1).

The first uses of the concept in conjunction with elections appear to have been during the campaign for mayor in Hsinchu City (新竹市長) in late 1985, where in particular the political speeches (政見會, *zhengjian hui*) of an independent candidate attracted large crowds.²¹ Use of the term then exploded in 1989, coinciding with the election held that year. By the 1991 National Assembly elections, the term "zaoshi wanhui" (造勢晚會) had been coined to refer to the mass campaign rallies usually organized out in the open air and featuring mobilizing political speeches that have since come to typify non-local elections in Taiwan. The high point of the use of the concept was reached in the year 2001 when the phrase appeared on average in eight *Lianhe bao* articles each day. Years with major elections have usually seen a jump in the use of the concept. Note that in the first three months of 2004, the term "zaoshi" had already been used in 1,247 ar-

²¹"Xuanqing guancha: Zhongshi wu ba shili xiaozhang chuxian duanni, Zhushi shuang xiong bilei fenming, ge xian shen tong," *Lianhe bao*, November 8, 1985, 3.

ticles.²² Today, participants in Taiwan elections usually describe the meaning of *zaoshi* in campaign activities as "showing force" or "bringing out the forces."

War as a Metaphor for Campaigning

Taiwanese people involved in election campaigns often refer to their campaign endeavors in warlike terms. For example, of someone who has no practical experience in election campaigns, the expression "*ta mei daguo zhang*" (他/她沒打過仗, he/she has not fought wars) may be used. The two main political camps are called the blue army or camp (藍軍, *lanjun*) and the green army (綠軍, *lijun*) respectively, while a campaign song is referred to as a war song (戰歌, *zhange*). Taiwanese election campaigns indeed often look a bit like wars: there is bombastic posturing (i.e., street parades and loud demonstrations), sometimes with uniform-like outfits; intelligence gathering (i.e., elaborate efforts to determine who controls which key vote brokers); military-like hierarchic organization of campaign staff; "arms races" of escalating vote-buying and other campaign activities; and mobilization for "virtual" battles/mass rallies, where troops/supporters line up holding banners that look like traditional Chinese military banners, often accompanied by shooting/fireworks and even (war) drums.²³

Candidate visibility is crucial in Taiwan's election campaigns, although the forms differ slightly depending on the election. In local elections, emphasis is placed on direct contact with voters. Campaign activities in Taiwan's high-level elections lean heavily on mass rallies and other—often ideologically-charged—mass activities.²⁴ It is hard to avoid the impression that there is an element of populism in Taiwan politics.²⁵

²²*Lianhe bao* database, accessed April 1-3, 2004.

²³By chance, the second character of presidential candidate Lien Chan's [Zhan, 連戰] name means "war." During the past two presidential elections, supporters carried flags prominently displaying this character.

²⁴Mikael Mattlin, "Nested Pyramid Structures: Political Parties in Taiwanese Elections," *The China Quarterly*, no. 180 (December 2004; forthcoming).

²⁵Wang Jenn-hwan and Sechin Y.S. Chien, "Maixiang xin guojia? Mincui weiquan zhuyi de

Mass rallies were originally linked to opposition movement demonstrations and later to DPP campaign activities. The KMT used an array of highly organized methods of vote mobilization such as setting up "responsibility zones,"²⁶ mobilizing local factions, and buying votes.²⁷ The opposition movement, which lacked the KMT's resources, used street protests.²⁸ Supporters were mobilized via street parades, elaborate "hand-shaking" (掃街, *saojie*) events,²⁹ and mass political rallies.³⁰ In the view of one top DPP politician, mass political rallies became an established part of campaigning especially after the 1994 mayoral elections and have been growing in size since then.³¹ The tactic proved so successful that now all parties (including the KMT) imitate these activities.

One must bear in mind that during the authoritarian era, the KMT had permeated most sectors of society (including what might be called "civil society")³² and up to 12 percent of the entire population were KMT party

xingcheng yu minzhu wenti" (March toward a new nation-state? The rise of populist authoritarianism in Taiwan and its implications for democracy), *Taiwan shehui yanjiu jikan* (Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies), no. 20 (1995): 17-49.

²⁶Liu I-chou, "The Electoral Effect of Social Control on Voters: The Case of Taipei" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1990).

²⁷Shelley Rigger, "Machine Politics in the New Taiwan: Institutional Reform and Electoral Strategy in the Republic of China on Taiwan" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1994), 153-226.

²⁸Bosco, "Faction versus Ideology," 28-62.

²⁹Mikael Mattlin, "Campaigning Without Issues: Networks, Face, and Service Politics" (Presented at the Nordic Association of China Studies biannual conference, Oslo, June 16-19, 2003), available at <http://www.helsinki.fi/nacs/>. This article was based on several interviews with campaign organizers and volunteers, Tainan City, November 2001 and June 2002.

³⁰Note that there is a difference between street parades (遊行, *youxing*), street demonstrations (抗議, *kangyi*), and mass political rallies (*zaoshi wanhui*). *Youxing* and *zaoshi* are ordinary campaign activities, while *kangyi* is usually used to denote gatherings in opposition to something, an example of which was the demonstrations that occurred outside of the Office of the President following the 2004 presidential elections.

³¹Author's interview with DPP Legislator Luo Wen-jia (羅文嘉) in Taipei, March 17, 2004.

³²Traditionally, women's associations, youth associations, irrigation committees, farmer's and fishermen's associations, business associations (工商會, *gongshanghui*), Lions/Rotary, and same-village associations (同鄉會, *tongxianghui*) were all linked to the KMT. The DPP enjoyed support mainly among "disadvantaged" groups such as labor unions, churches, and welfare groups. See also Chu Yun-han, "A Born-Again Dominant Party? The Transformation of the Kuomintang and Taiwan's Regime Transition," in Giliomee and Simkins, *The Awkward Embrace*, 84-86.

members.³³ The usefulness of such rallies thus lay in the fact that it was initially very daring to show support for the opposition, and such behavior could result in arrest and harassment as in the best-remembered case, the December 1979 Kaohsiung Incident (高雄事件). Most DPP supporters are so-called native Taiwanese (本省人, *benshengren*), who had learned after the February 28th Incident in 1947 to avoid politics. For a long time, native Taiwanese were more politically apathetic than mainlanders (外省人, *waishengren*). Uniting in a group was a way for the opposition to draw strength from one another and demonstrate unity outwards.

The Goals of Zaoshi

During elections, a *zaoshi* activity has three inter-linked purposes. For one, a successful *zaoshi* is a way of strengthening supporter resolve and encouraging passive voters to come out and vote. Secondly, *zaoshi* is intended to sway pragmatic intermediate voters—who have often played a decisive role in Taiwan's elections—to support the side that appears to be winning.³⁴ Finally, in the case of massive *zaoshi* events, the aim is not only to get people to rally behind the leader but also to silence criticism—which in the current state of Taiwan politics can reach severely constraining proportions. In terms of the war analogy, one could say that a massive and boisterous mobilization aims to frighten the opposing side into capitulating without a fight in the best tradition of the Chinese military strategist Sun Zi.

Apart from ordinary *zaoshi* activities such as political rallies during election campaigns, similar mobilization has frequently been used in Taiwanese politics in different guises. For example, Lee Teng-hui organized two large-scale conferences in the 1990s—the National Affairs Conference (NAC 國是會議, *guoshi huiyi*) in 1990 and the National Development

³³Bruce Dickson, "The Adaptability of Leninist Parties: A Comparison of the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1994), 72.

³⁴Taiwanese intermediate voters tend to be politically active. See Alexander C. Tan et al., "What If We Don't Party? Political Partisanship in Taiwan and Korea in the 1990s," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35, no. 1 (2000): 67-84.

Conference (NDC 國發會, *guofa hui*) in 1996—in order to "achieve national consensus" on key political matters. Neither conference resulted in much agreement,³⁵ but holding such events has been an effective way of rallying support behind the leader and undercutting opposition.³⁶ After such a comprehensive gathering at the behest of the President, critics would find it hard to oppose him. Chen Shui-bian used the same trick in 2001 when he convened a conference to discuss economic development and cross-Strait economic integration at the so-called Economic Development Advisory Conference (EDAC, 經濟發展顧問委員會). The EDAC adopted 322 "consensus decisions"—which in practice amounts to saying that there was no consensus.³⁷ The "decisions" were not really decisions at all; they read more like a wish list and a statement that all concerned agreed to disagree. The conference did, however, allow the President to show that he was in charge while giving the government a quieter political environment in which to work.

The Referendum as a Form of *Zaoshi*

Introducing referenda in Taiwan was originally promoted by only a few radical voices within the DPP, such as Chai Trong (蔡同榮) and Lin Yi-hsiung (林義雄).³⁸ The idea of a referendum as a defensive measure was floated by the Chen Shui-bian administration in August 2002 in the face of deadlocked cross-Strait relations.³⁹ The referendum became an

³⁵According to one participant, the NDC hardly even discussed what it was supposed to discuss, i.e., constitutional reforms. Author's interview with high-ranking government official (KMT) in Taipei, October 2001.

³⁶Ling and Shih have argued that the NDC and similar ad hoc committees appealing to unity can be understood as an attempt at gaining moral leadership (Confucian moral credibility). See L.H.M. Ling and Shih Chih-yu, "Confucianism with a Liberal Face: The Meaning of Democratic Politics in Postcolonial Taiwan," *The Review of Politics* 60, no. 1 (1998): 79.

³⁷For an overview of the conference, see "EDAC Brings Taiwan Back to Majority Rule?" *Taiwan Headlines*, August 28, 2001, available at http://th.gio.gov.tw/show.cfm?news_id=10493.

³⁸"Cabinet Kills Plant Referendum," *Taipei Times*, August 11, 2001, 3.

³⁹"Chen Raises Pitch of Anti-China Rhetoric," *Taipei Times*, August 4, 2002, 1; and "Media

election issue in the latter half of 2003, when the Chen administration began pushing for the creation of a Referendum Act (公投法). The opposition camp initially was in strong opposition to the move, but ended up having no option but to support a watered-down version of the law as the pan-Blue (泛藍) camp found it hard to oppose an issue with wide popular appeal, especially with an election approaching.⁴⁰

Beijing and Washington both were alarmed at the referendum issue, fearing that the referendum was introducing a precedent for a future referendum that would be used to sanction some form of *de jure* independence. Beijing was especially shocked when the pan-Blue opposition also endorsed a watered-down version of the referendum law.⁴¹ The passed law, which was drafted mainly by the opposition, failed to endorse many of the most controversial clauses in the original proposal offered by the cabinet. The law approved, however, a clause (Article 17) that gave the President the right to initiate a "defensive referendum" on national security issues when the country is under foreign threat.⁴² This clause was invoked by the Chen government to call for the March 20 referendum. The opposition was angered by this move, as they did not believe that there was enough of a threat to justify the calling of such a referendum.

Took Remarks out of Context," *ibid.*, August 7, 2002, 1. A top DPP legislator interviewed about the rationale behind the "defensive referendum" after it was first announced by Chen Shui-bian in the summer of 2002 placed the referendum in the context of Taiwan's deteriorating international position due to pressure from Beijing and explained it as a necessary toughening of the position toward Beijing. A high-ranking government official portrayed the referendum both as a challenge to the Taiwanese people to confront their problem with mainland China and as a measure to get international attention in order to deter Beijing. Author's interviews in Taipei, August 2002.

⁴⁰ Author's interview with the Legislative Yuan's head of conference procedures, April 1, 2004, and with a *Lianhe bao* journalist covering the Legislative Yuan, Taipei, March 11, 2004.

⁴¹ "Beijing Censures Passing of Referendum Law," *China Daily*, November 29, 2003, 1; "Pan-Blue Camp Developing Worrying Shades of Green," *ibid.*, January 8, 2004, 5; and "Experts: Pan-Blue Camp Makes Dangerous U-turn," *ibid.*, January 8, 2004.

⁴² See ROC Government Information Office, *Chengqing gongtoufa xiangguan yiyi* (Clarifying doubts related to the Referendum Act), http://www.gov.tw/referendum/dispute_explanation.html (accessed April 6, 2004); "Legislature Passes Referendum Law," *Taipei Times*, November 28, 2003, 1; and "Major Clauses of Taiwan's Referendum Bill," Reuters, December 11, 2003.

The referendum cannot be well understood from a narrowly-defined issue-centered point of view that only considers the content of the referendum questions. In many ways, the questions asked were secondary. Note that the referendum was announced before it was clear what the referendum would be about, while Chen himself and other government officials indicated beforehand that the results of the two referenda would not have much practical policy effect.⁴³ The results of the referendum also clearly show that the two questions were rather irrelevant. On the first question, "If the PRC refuses both to withdraw the missiles it has targeted at Taiwan and to openly renounce the use of force against us, would you agree that the government should acquire more advanced anti-missile weapons to strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities?," 91.80 percent of respondents answered "yes." On the second question, "Would you agree that our government should engage in negotiations with the PRC about the establishment of a 'peace and stability' framework for cross-Strait interactions in order to build consensus and for the welfare of the peoples on both sides?," 92.05 percent said "yes." Note that voter turnout was low—45.15 percent and 45.10 percent, respectively—as the pan-Blue side told its supporters to boycott the referendum.⁴⁴

If we change tack and do not see the content of the referendum questions as important, but rather consider the activity itself and people's participation in it as key, then holding the referendum begins to make more sense, in particular in conjunction with the presidential elections. The referendum is better understood as *an activity that carries a political statement*.⁴⁵ In effect, holding of the referendum was a massive *zaoshi* activity.

⁴³"Taiwan's Chen Says Ballot Won't Affect Missile Deal," Reuters, February 19, 2004.

⁴⁴For referendum outcome, see the International Foundation for Election Systems, http://www.ifes.org/eguide/resultsum/taiwan_ref04.htm (accessed May 19, 2004).

⁴⁵Abner Cohen has written vividly of the political statements that cultural rituals such as masquerades make. See Abner Cohen, *Masquerade Politics* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993).

Linking the Referendum and Presidential Election

The 2004 presidential election cannot be understood without reference to the background of the previous election.⁴⁶ In 2000, a rift within the KMT caused a vote split between the party-nominated candidate Lien Chan and KMT maverick Soong Chu-yu (宋楚瑜), who decided to run as an independent, causing DPP-nominated Chen Shui-bian to win the election with only 39.3 percent of the vote. In 2004, the two losers of the previous round joined hands to run on a joint ticket, with Lien as presidential and Soong as vice-presidential candidate in a grand "pan-Blue" alliance of three political parties: the KMT, the People First Party (PFP, 親民黨), and the New Party (NP, 新黨). This coalition teamed up against a "pan-Green" (泛綠) front formed by the DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU, 臺灣團結聯盟).

The incumbent Chen was trailing far behind in opinion polls for most of the run-up to the election, though the Chen-Lü ticket steadily narrowed the difference as the election approached.⁴⁷ The DPP ticket won by the thinnest of margins—50.1 percent to 49.9 percent—on election day. The opposition claimed that Chen's victory was achieved due to a mysterious assassination attempt on the President that occurred one day before the election. Initially the opposition refused to accept the election results; the losing pair, Lien Chan and Soong Chu-yu, staged their last stand in a long protest demonstration in front of the Presidential Office in Taipei. For both senior politicians, the 2004 presidential election was probably their last personal election battle.

The higher the number of people voting in favor of the referendum questions, the stronger the endorsement would have been for Chen and the more difficult would it have been for the pan-Blues to criticize him. Such

⁴⁶For a comprehensive account of Taiwan's 2000 presidential elections, see Mutiah Alagappa, ed., *Taiwan's Presidential Politics: Democratization and Cross-Strait Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

⁴⁷Opinion polls reported by *Apple Daily* showed a difference in support in Lien's favor between 12-22 percent June-September 2003. The gap began shrinking after September 2003, was only 2-3 percent in December 2003, then opened up considerably again in January 2004, only to shrink to a few percentage points in February-March 2004. See *Pingguo ribao* (*Apple Daily*) (Taipei), March 9, 2004, A6.

an endorsement is not a trivial matter in the current state of Taiwan politics. An overarching theme of Chen Shui-bian's first term was his difficulties in getting things done. On the domestic front, a host of government initiatives stalled in parliament as the pan-Blues—who held a slight majority of seats—refused to endorse them. Chen's problems in getting a grip on the government apparatus were acute in 2001-02 when Chen (against his earlier pledge not to) assumed party chairmanship, and instituted regular coordinating meetings between the Presidential Office, DPP legislators, and the party center.⁴⁸

Similarly, on the external front the Chen government was—and still remains—almost completely ignored by Beijing. Beijing has consistently argued that Chen Shui-bian is only the representative of a small extremist minority in Taiwan, while the vast majority does not accept his stance. If the Chen government could gain popular support for its more controversial initiatives, Beijing would perhaps be put in a position of having to initiate contact with Chen's administration. Holding a plebiscite-like referendum thus made sense also in terms of the island's external relations.

Election Battles and Resource Control

The war analogy presented in the previous chapter may seem a bit far-fetched, but many participants certainly take election battles very seriously in Taiwan. In the 2004 presidential elections there was a virtual "arms race" of mass rallies. In the run-up to the elections, the DPP and the TSU together organized a huge human chain to "protect Taiwan" (手護臺灣, in practice to support the Chen Shui-bian campaign) that was modeled on the Baltic countries human chain in 1989. An estimated 2 million people took part in the chain which ran 486 kilometers from the island's northernmost point to its southernmost cape.⁴⁹ Pulling off this hand-in-hand rally (which occurred on the sensitive day, February 28th) was a great coordination feat and a very potent election weapon given the

⁴⁸Several interviews with key DPP legislators and heads of party departments, Taipei, August 2002.

⁴⁹"'Great Wall of Peace' Opposes China," *The China Post*, February 29, 2004.

large number of people mobilized. The event made the pan-Blue rally of a few tens of thousands in Kaohsiung on the same day look measly in comparison.⁵⁰

Some local KMT campaign organizers in the south at the time were visibly nervous after the February 28th rally, with higher-level party officials running around doing face-to-face checks on the firmness of their grass-roots support. On the other hand, the DPP people appeared elated, reporting that the pan-Blues had started fighting among themselves.⁵¹ The February 28th event had been a hands-down battle victory for the Greens. However, the pan-Blue camp managed to pull its ranks together and countered two weeks later with their own massive mobilization rally on March 13th, also bringing an estimated 2 million people to the street.⁵² Despite a huge DPP rally in the southern city of Kaohsiung the same day,⁵³ the March 13th rally again shifted the election balance according to several observers.⁵⁴

The high level of personal emotional involvement in the campaign becomes understandable given that, in Taiwan, political incumbency has a great effect on the resources available to be channeled (legitimately or otherwise) to supporters. At the local level, *lizhang* (里長, borough warden) supporting the ruling party customarily take a cut of the money channeled down to their office for local projects. City councilors similarly benefit if the mayor is from their own party in that their initiatives are pushed faster through the administration; entire regions might benefit if the government is led by the same party as the city mayor or county magistrate.⁵⁵

⁵⁰A KMT campaign organizer in Tainan put the number of people participating in the Kaohsiung rally at 30,000. Interview in Tainan, February 29, 2004.

⁵¹Interviews with KMT and DPP presidential campaign personnel in Tainan City, February-March 2004.

⁵²"Islandwide 'Pan-Blue' Rallies Attract Millions," *The China Post*, March 14, 2004, 1.

⁵³"Pan-Greens Hold Huge Rally in Kaohsiung, Blast Soong," *Taipei Times*, March 14, 2004, 1.

⁵⁴Author's interviews with pan-Blue-leaning political scientist, KMT city councilor, and KMT local official in Tainan City, March 17-18, 2004.

⁵⁵Author's interviews in Tainan City with DPP city councilor, June-July 2002, and KMT city

The KMT's presidential election loss in 2000 ushered in a significant downsizing of the party's staff from about 3,000 to only 1,300, with a further round of downsizing in the offing.⁵⁶ In a social environment where many people lack pension coverage, the party pension proffered to KMT officials who have served eighteen years is a significant carrot. Many KMT officials fear that one or two more election losses could mean the end of the whole party, and consequently their own benefits. Another reason the stakes are so high is the huge financial cost of running election campaigns. Campaign costs for one candidate can run as high as NT\$200-300 million (US\$6-9 million) for county magistrate/city mayor elections, NT\$100 million for legislative elections, and NT\$20-30 million for city councilor elections.⁵⁷ Campaigns in Taiwan are so expensive due to two primary reasons: voter expectations of activity by the campaign participants (with big outlays needed for election regalia and lunch boxes given to campaign aides and supporters) and vote buying. A lost election may even mean financial ruin for candidates, who are often forced to take out bank loans to cover their expenditures.⁵⁸

The logic, especially in executive elections, is therefore zero-sum.⁵⁹ Staying politically neutral in such an environment is difficult. There is an inherent paradox in Taiwanese politics, however: amid the high level of political participation, support for political parties is actually generally

councilor, February 2004. See also Luor Ching-Jyuhn, "Buzhu yusuan da bing de fenpei: Shei yingle? Shei shule? Weishe nme?" (Dividing the subsidy budget cake: Who won? Who lost? Why?), in *Taiwan fenpei zhengzhi* (Taiwan distributive politics), ed. Luor Ching-Jyuhn (Taipei: Qianwei, 2001), 115-50.

⁵⁶Interview with KMT district party secretary, Tainan City, February 25, 2004. For a writing on the retreat of the KMT state, see Thomas B. Gold, "The Waning of the Kuomintang State on Taiwan," in *State Capacity in East Asia—Japan, Taiwan, China and Vietnam*, ed. Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Susan Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 84-113.

⁵⁷Author's interview with KMT campaign organizer, Tainan City, July 2002.

⁵⁸During the KMT rule, it was allegedly possible for KMT politicians to leave such loans unrepaid. With a DPP government, this possibility was foreclosed. Interview with KMT official and another party member, Tainan City, July 2002. Instead, legislators resort to various "consulting" projects to recoup their expenditures. Author's interview with two legislative assistants, Taipei, August 2002.

⁵⁹Cf. Tang Tsou, "Chinese Politics at the Top: Factionalism or Informal Politics? Balance-of-Power Politics or a Game to Win All?" *The China Journal*, no. 34 (July 1995): 95-156.

weak and there is a high propensity for people to switch their support from one party or person to another.⁶⁰ This pragmatism toward political parties is a legacy of Taiwan's authoritarian past. The KMT traditionally relied on vote brokers (樁腳, *zhuangjiao*), in particular *lizhang*, to mobilize its supporters.⁶¹ Such mobilization is, however, utterly dependent on resources.⁶²

Political Support as a Vow of Allegiance

After the DPP captured the presidency in 2000 and substantially increased its seats in the 2001 legislative elections, many *lizhang* began to distance themselves from the KMT, while strengthening their ties with the DPP. Many *lizhang* now pledge support for both sides, thus reducing their effectiveness as a tool of the KMT, while indirectly or directly helping the DPP. *Lizhang* are almost entirely dependent on allocations of funds from higher administrative levels.⁶³ In a city with a DPP mayor, open show of support for the KMT is thus risky. KMT-leaning borough wardens in one city with a DPP mayor often attempt to get around their obligation of helping the KMT party by switching boroughs when they are expected to appear as supporting the pan-Blue campaign. Instead of helping the party in their own borough, where they are likely to be known and reported to the DPP-led administration, they appear in a far-away borough where nobody knows them. Even so, the KMT had great trouble in 2004 finding *lizhang* willing to help the pan-Blue cause.⁶⁴

The loyalty of key vote brokers is particularly crucial. At the same time, however, such support is the least trustworthy—thereby making

⁶⁰Mattlin, "Nested Pyramid Structures." See also Tan et al., "What If We Don't Party?" 67-84.

⁶¹Rigger, "Machine Politics in the New Taiwan," 153-226.

⁶²The DPP government has tried to break the KMT's hold on resources used to supply clientelistic networks through the imposition of new legislation, the creation of new institutions, and conducting investigations. See Christian Göbel, "Combating 'Black-Gold' Under Chen Shui-bian" (Paper presented at the inaugural conference of the European Taiwan Studies Association, School of Oriental and African London, April 17-18, 2004), <http://www.soas.ac.uk/taiwanstudiesfiles/conf042004/papers/panel3gobelpaper.pdf>.

⁶³Rigger, "Grassroots Electoral Organization," 302-8.

⁶⁴In one area observed closely by the author, the KMT struggled to get even ten out of thirty-six *lizhang* to help the pan-Blue presidential campaign.

visible displays of support and loyalty a necessary part of the campaign. The Chinese word denoting support—*zhichi* (支持)—is salient in discussions with politically active people in Taiwan. Western observers visiting the island are often dismayed by people trying to drag them into showing support for one or the other. This occurs because campaigning candidates grab every opportunity to be seen with even such "notables" as "foreign supporters," an association which is good for one's social face (面子, *mianzi*). The mere act of observing an election rally will usually incite locals to say "thank you for your support."

As there can never be complete certainty about support, various "loyalty-proving" rituals figure prominently during the campaign. Candidates and parties will use several tactics in order to make key political supporters "lock in" their support so that it becomes difficult to change loyalty half-way through the campaign. Such tactics include photo-ops with the candidate, with the photos later placed prominently on display; making decorative placards, which express supporter backing of the candidate, to hang on the campaign office wall; and asking the person to appear onstage together with the candidate at such public events as campaign rallies. Getting people to come out and show support during a campaign is thus important as a symbolic tie. When support is shown, it tends to be very boisterous—seemingly needing to "overcompensate" for the fact that one's support in fact may not be that strong. Mass rallies are characterized by ear-numbingly loud noise from horns, music, and jeers—the louder, the better. Public displays of political support in Taiwanese elections are thus akin to a vow of allegiance.

With the above as background, one can more easily see how tying the referendum to the 2004 presidential election was a way of turning the referendum into a massive *zaoshi* activity—a public show of support for the beleaguered President and everything he represents. Doing so capitalized on a long trend toward localization (本土化, *bentuhua*) and self-rule by native Taiwanese. Previously the central government was almost monopolized by the so-called mainlanders. Combined with political liberalization, however, the dominant trend in Taiwan society in recent years has been epitomized in the expression "*dangjia zuozhu*" (當家做主) or "to be

the master in one's own house." The DPP gambled on this trend having already reached a critical mass, and hoped that people would feel an additional need to vote for Chen Shui-bian as an expression of their support for this localization. Not surprisingly, "love Taiwan" was one of the key themes of the Chen campaign.

Did the Presumed Strategy Succeed?

Disregarding the external dimension of the referendum, I suggest that there are at least three separate election-related domestic reasons for tying the referendum to the presidential election: (1) defining the election campaign with an issue which the competing side would find hard to battle (agenda-setting), (2) winning the tightly fought election by "piggybacking" on the referendum, and (3) in the event of a presidential election victory and a strong backing in the referendum, silencing any vociferous and obstructionist opposition that would otherwise occur after the election.

Setting the Agenda

In an environment where democracy and being allowed to voice one's opinion have become supreme values, it is daring to argue against people's right to express their opinion. The pan-Blues nonetheless attempted to do so by arguing that the referendum was illegal. Many intellectuals even considered *not voting* in the referendum as being more democratic of an exercise.⁶⁵ However, this argument turned the whole discussion into a debate over democracy and the referendum itself, which presumably benefited the Green side (which has traditionally held stronger credentials in this area). Topics that the pan-Blue camp attempted to bring into the debate—such as the alleged poor state of the economy, cross-Strait relations and direct links with mainland China (三通, *san tong*), corruption

⁶⁵"This Referendum is Simply Illegal," *Taipei Times*, March 2, 2004, 8; and interview with KMT-leaning political scientist, Tainan City, March 2004.

(黑金, *heijin*), and cutting service time for conscripts—utterly failed to define the campaign, as both expert and lay discussion paid much more interest to debating the pros and cons of organizing the referendum.

An indication of the dominance of the referendum issue in the public election debate is conveyed by the results of a search for articles in *Lianhe bao*—Taiwan's main pan-Blue-leaning newspaper—in the six months leading up to the election. The search was conducted by the author on April 1, 2004, utilizing the *United Daily News* database of articles appearing in *Lianhe bao* in the period September 20, 2003 to March 20, 2004. Articles where either the term "*zongtong xuanju*" (總統選舉) or "*zongtong daxuan*" (總統大選, presidential elections) appeared were searched for mention of words related to election topics. The following terms were searched: referendum (公投, *gongtou*), democracy (民主, *minzhu*), economy (經濟, *jingji*), ethnicity (族群, *zuqun*), cross-Strait relations (兩岸關係, *liang'an guanxi*), stock market (股市, *gushi*), unemployment (失業, *shiye*), "black-and-gold" (*heijin*, corruption), "three links" (*san tong*), and military service (兵役, *bingyi*).⁶⁶

In a total of 3,996 articles touching on the presidential elections, the referendum was mentioned in almost a third of the articles (1,271) and democracy was brought up in 597 articles. Ethnicity, which the pan-Blues frequently allege that the pan-Greens are using as a campaign tool, was mentioned in 228 articles. In comparison, the pan-Blues' favorite topic—the economy—was mentioned 575 times, while more specific issues such as cross-Strait relations (149), unemployment (119), corruption (110), and the "three links" (70) lagged far behind. The issue of cutting military service from twenty months to three months failed most miserably (only 11 articles mentioned military service at all), although several KMT politicians and officials were convinced that this was an important issue for young people in the presidential elections. The three "pan-Green" topics—referendum, democracy, and ethnicity—easily dominated over the seven

⁶⁶Note that as the articles were not all read, there is a margin for error as some articles may have talked about presidential elections in another country.

"pan-Blue" topics. While the results are at best indicative, they provide a general picture.⁶⁷

The pan-Greens also dominated the televised debates, which were watched by a sizeable part of the population. In distinction to the two presidential debates, the pan-Blue camp—sticking to their stance that the referendum was illegal—refused to participate in a series of ten televised debates on the referendum organized by the DPP-led government. Instead, the opposite view was argued by independents and political activists, several of whom had either formerly been prominent DPP supporters or could be expected to be supportive of the referendum based on their earlier political positions. However, this boycott strategy effectively allowed the pro-Chen camp to shape much of the televised debates—a nice bonus to a presidential election campaign for which the agenda had been set by the pan-Greens from start to finish.

Effect on the Presidential Vote

It is harder to gauge what effect the referendum focus had on the actual vote. Chen Shui-bian's votes in the 2004 presidential election increased by 1.5 million over the just under 5 million votes he captured in 2000, while the Lien/Soong votes captured by the joint ticket in 2004 fell more than 1.1 million from their combined votes when running separately in 2000. This 2004 showing was also the best result for the pan-Green camp in any election to date: neither Chen's personal vote in 2000 nor the pan-Green vote in previous elections had ever before exceeded 5 million ballots. There is a conspicuous match between Chen's personal vote in 2004 and the number of people who voted "yes" on the two referendum questions (see fig. 2).

⁶⁷Studies have shown that ethnic differences, national identity, and authoritarian vs. democratic values are the most important political cleavages in Taiwan. See, for example, Sheng Shing-yuan and Chen Yih-yan, "Zhengzhi fenqi yu zhengdang jingzheng: erdinglingyi nian lifa weiyuan xuanju de fenxi" (Political cleavage and party competition: an analysis of the 2001 legislative election), *Xuanju yanjiu* (Journal of Electoral Studies) 10, no. 1 (2003): 7-40.

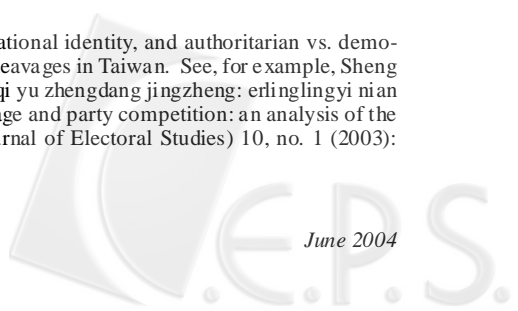
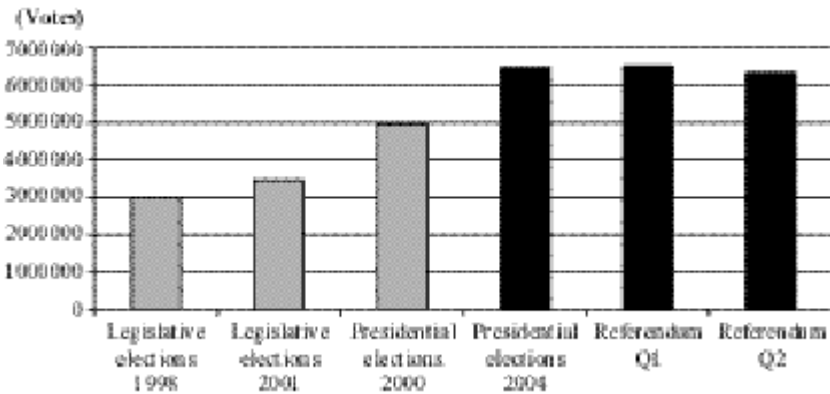


Figure 2
DPP Candidate(s) Total Votes in Recent Elections and "Yes" Votes on the Referendum Questions



Source: DPP party website, <http://www.dpp.org.tw> (accessed April 15, 2004).

Naturally, there are many other possible reasons for the extra 1.5 million votes garnered by Chen than the coupling of the referendum with the presidential elections.⁶⁸ Good policymaking was not, however, one of them, as the first four years of the Chen government are widely seen as having produced very little in the way of policy successes.⁶⁹ What the Green camp apparently tried to achieve by coupling the referendum with the presidential election was to associate positive values—democracy, expressing one's own will, and love of and identification with Taiwan—with the person of Chen Shui-bian, and turn support for these values into support for the candidate. The strategy was not a complete success as only half of the voters played along. It was countered by the Blue camp's attempts to associate Chen with all things evil—from Hitler through Osama bin

⁶⁸It is also possible that the DPP simply extended its support basis during the first Chen term, e.g., through resource allocation to local elites.

⁶⁹Even the strongly DPP-leaning *Taipei Times* felt compelled to ask in an editorial "What Achievements?" the Chen administration had to show for its first period in power. See *Taipei Times*, July 7, 2003, 8.

Laden to Saddam Hussein.⁷⁰

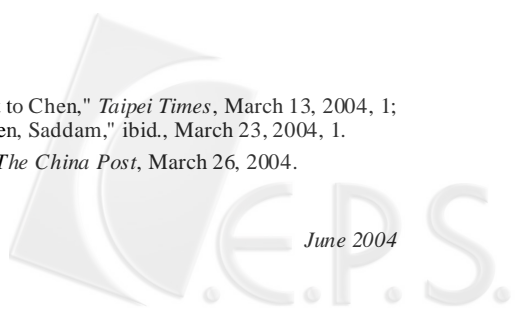
Success or Failure?

At this stage we return to the three possible election-related reasons for bringing the referendum issue into the presidential elections. On the first goal—agenda-setting, we can conclude that the Green camp clearly succeeded. For better or worse, the referendum dominated the election. By combining the referendum with the presidential election, Chen managed to throw the pan-Blues on the defensive right from the beginning. The pan-Greens almost completely defined the "battlefield" on which the election would be fought.

As for the second goal, although the shooting incident on March 19, 2004 may indeed have ultimately decided the presidential election given the closeness of the voting, the fact is that Chen's votes increased by 1.5 million and very closely correlated with the number of yes-votes cast for the two referendum questions. Even the voting set-up was conducive to producing a close match between Chen's personal votes and referendum votes, although, ironically, it was pan-Blue pressure that had resulted in such procedures. There were 13,700 polling stations altogether, making the underlying population units rather small. In every polling station local party representatives would be observing the election. Voters first picked up and cast the presidential ballot; only after was the referendum ballot picked up and cast.⁷¹ Thus, party observers could, in principle, note down who picked up the referendum ballot and who did not. Anyone betting on a Chen victory and wanting to maintain good ties to the DPP would feel some pressure to pick up the referendum ballot; those wanting to maintain good ties with the KMT/FPF would similarly feel pressured to not cast a referendum ballot. The effect is enhanced by social pressure from close relations, which is often substantial in Taiwan, to "vote in the right way."

⁷⁰"KMT Apologizes About Hitler Ad—But Not to Chen," *Taipei Times*, March 13, 2004, 1; and "Pan-Blue Poster Likens Chen to bin Laden, Saddam," *ibid.*, March 23, 2004, 1.

⁷¹"CEC Revises Poll Process to Avoid Chaos," *The China Post*, March 26, 2004.



True, there is not conclusive evidence on what the effect of the referendum was on Chen's votes. However, it would appear that the referendum issue at least galvanized Green/Chen supporters to come out and vote, possibly also swaying some intermediate voters to vote for the DPP as Chen created the impression toward the end of the campaign of having a good chance at winning. We can tentatively conclude that the strategy was a guarded success in this respect. This result cannot be conclusive as there is a significant element of the chicken-and-egg problem involved: did Chen supporters vote yes in the referendum because of their support for Chen, or did people who supported the referendum, for whatever reason, also vote for Chen?

However, on the third point we can observe that the referendum did not succeed in attracting a very strong backing for Chen that would have given him a stronger hand domestically. In that sense, the presumed election strategy can be deemed to have been a partial failure. Indeed, the very tightness of the presidential race caused another controversy over who had actually won. Instead of silencing the opposition, the opposition grew even louder. Although legally speaking Chen would not have been required to consent to a recount of votes, he eventually did, as not doing so risked alienating half of the voters and significant parts of the administration he leads. Nevertheless, this partial success may imply that referenda in Taiwan will be used in the future for similar instrumental domestic political reasons, rather than as aides to policymaking.

Conclusions

I have argued that the 2004 referendum in Taiwan cannot be well understood from an issue/policy-centered perspective; rather, it has to be recognized as a form of *zaoshi* activity, which carries a political statement. The "content" of the 2004 referendum thus lay in the activity, which was an exercise in a show of loyalty and support toward Chen Shui-bian and the kind of Taiwan he represents. In the election context, the goals were then conceivably threefold: to set the agenda for the election, to win the election

by "piggybacking" on the referendum, and to silence any vociferous and obstructionist opposition after the election.

The analysis has highlighted three important features of Taiwan's political culture which shape election campaigns as well as other political activities: mobilizing mass rallies to create the impression of strength; demands by politicians for displays of loyalty from their supporters; and the instrumental use of almost any means deemed beneficial to election success. The three elements are all present in the way the first referendum was used in Taiwan, which drew on a well-established tradition of mass mobilization, while raising it to a higher level than ever before in terms of the number of people participating.

I have argued that the referendum was used in an instrumental way. As seen above, even political participation—which otherwise is probably one of the strongest grounded "democratic principles" in Taiwan—can be used highly instrumentally. The pervasive instrumentalism in Taiwan politics and its consequences are something that I believe deserves more attention. All politics depends on certain "rules of the game," otherwise what we have is not politics but a fight.⁷² This requirement is sharpened in representative democracies where political contest and other political activities are usually highly regulated and there are many, often unwritten, "procedural principles" to which to adhere. Procedural principles as used here refer to established local conventions for how politics is supposed to be carried out—e.g., when and for what purposes it is deemed appropriate to organize a referendum, or when a political controversy is referred to judicial adjudication. The opposite to having procedural principles is ad hocism, or making new rules for every occasion. Pervasive instrumentalism points toward a lack of established procedural principles that are generally accepted and equally applied.

However, it is not a simple question to decide whether the referendum was used simply as an election trick. The cynical aim is in the eye of the

⁷²Frederick G. Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985 [1969]), 1-3.

non-sympathetic beholder. A supporter may have seen the same aim as righteous and just. There exist many people in Taiwan who believe that Chen was right to use the referendum in Taiwan in order both to get him re-elected (needed if certain policies are to continue) and to make a political statement. There also exist many who believe that it was absolutely wrong of him to use the referendum in such a way. Whichever standpoint one takes often depends on one's political position. In early 2004, the easiest way to tell someone's political "color" was by asking what they thought of the referendum. One is tempted to describe this as institutionalized double standards.

In saying that the referendum was used instrumentally by the DPP, the purpose is not to make a value judgment. The referendum could be used highly instrumentally because procedural principles do not (at least yet) have the same generally-held, universalizing, and almost sacred function in Taiwan as they do in established Western democracies; in the eyes of most people such principles are naturally secondary to practical political results beneficial to oneself.⁷³ One only needs to compare the speed with which Al Gore resigned himself to a Supreme Court ruling and gave up his victory in the 2000 American presidential elections on the one hand, with the difficulties Lien Chan and Soong Chu-yu have been having in accepting defeat in 2004 on the other.

Almost anything that appears useful will also be taken advantage of in the political struggle in Taiwan.⁷⁴ Collateral damage to principles is almost certain whenever there is open political contest. This raises two

⁷³In a famous writing, Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong (費孝通) described Chinese people as having a "differential mode of association" (差序格局, *chaxu geju*) where social networks emanate from each person, as opposed to Westemers' "organizational mode of association" (團體格局, *tuanti geju*) where social relationships are mediated by organizations. According to Fei, this is reflected in different kinds of morality: a general and universalizing morality in Western society versus a contextual and particularistic morality in Chinese society. See Fei Xiaotong, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992 [1947]), 60-79.

⁷⁴In an intriguing study, two Africanologists have similarly argued that African leaders systematically exploit political disorder for their instrumental goals. See Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works. Disorder as Political Instrument* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

provocative but fundamental questions. Is a well-functioning representative democracy eventually dependent on placing principle above outcome? Or conversely, is open political contest ill-suited to a political cultural environment that lacks this feature, and where, as a consequence of this political contest, there are almost no neutral arbiters left anymore?

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