

COMMENTS

Only Ad Hoc Politics, Not Adhocracy, under the DPP

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Dr. Chen's personal account of the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP, 民主進步黨) decision-making process basically confirms what the media have reported and political observers have suspected over the past seven years of the DPP's rule in Taiwan. It is not a revelation. Still, this analysis from an insider is valuable in that it reinforces the general perception of the top-down decision-making style of the DPP government under the leadership of President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) and the replacement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) by the National Security Council (NSC) in foreign policymaking. This piece is not a direct response to Dr. Chen's work. Instead, my criticism of the DPP's ad hoc approach to decision-making complements his observations, and together we may help to explain the failure of governance under the DPP since 2000.

The DPP has been a party noted for adopting dove-tailed campaign strategies in order to maximize its electoral appeal in Taiwan. Even though the party had held power locally before 2000—for example, in Ilan (宜蘭縣), Kaohsiung (高雄縣), and Taipei (台北縣) counties, and Chen had been elected mayor of Taipei (台北市) in 1994—the DPP had no experience

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of exercising power nationally before its victory in the 2000 presidential election.

Most of the electorate held the view that it might take the DPP some time to adjust its role from opposition party to ruling party, given that its only prior experience of governing was at county and municipal levels, where the budget and the bureaucracy are much smaller and less complex. The deeper question appears to be whether bureaucrats who have passed civil service examinations administered by the previous ruling party, the Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨), who were recruited and trained by this long dominant party, and who generally share the KMT's conservative political outlook, can coexist with a party and its political appointees who are more used to attending political rallies and talking directly to voters than sitting in an office dealing with endless paperwork and making sure the government's policies are in line with various rules and regulations.

Given that it is mistrusted by a bureaucracy that is considered to be pro-KMT and has very few politicians willing to endure the boredom of bureaucratic routine, it comes as no surprise to keen observers of the Taiwan political scene that the DPP has opted for ad hoc decision-making, including for its foreign and security policy. The electoral campaign that brought the DPP to power was one of unproven programs and empty promises, during which DPP politicians attracted voters with eloquent speeches and populist appeals. This fuelled the perception that the electorate can be won over with primordial preference and pork-barrel politics, rather than sound public policies. Thus, poll-watching, political slogans, and populism have become the mainstays of DPP rule in Taiwan.

This explains why President Chen and his advisors do not have coherent positions on major foreign and security issues. Whatever stand they take on a particular issue is likely to be the one that yields the greatest political dividend at that time, no matter whether that stand is consistent or whether it can pass the test of time.

There are many examples of such inconsistency. In its White Paper on Foreign Policies of 2000, the DPP criticized the KMT for maintaining diplomatic ties through various assistance programs. Once it came to power, however, the DPP simply followed the same path and embraced

the "diplomatic myth" it had previously condemned. At least this was an inconsistency between its policy in opposition and what it did when it came to power. President Chen's famous "five no's" and his unilateral declaration that the National Unification Council (國家統一委員會) had "ceased" to function are typical examples of reversals of policies while the party has been in power. Another example was when President Chen announced in March 2005 that "we should not fool ourselves into believing that Taiwan independence is a viable option," during a video conference with the European Parliament. Since then, Chen has become more assertive, and has strongly advocated the independence cause.

DPP legislators and party leaders who can expect their aides and local organizations, or even the party machine, to do their bidding in line with such a populist approach to policymaking are easily thwarted by the rigidity and conservatism of the KMT-dominated bureaucracy. When DPP politicians plan to implement certain programs of a populist nature, the bureaucracy might be reluctant to go along with them because their feasibility is problematic. Such bureaucratic prudence, however, has often been condemned by the DPP as political sabotage by bureaucrats whose ideology is diametrically opposed to that of the ruling party. For a party that has won two consecutive presidential elections, failure to have total control over the bureaucracy because of a lack of political appointment opportunities must be frustrating. The DPP, however, has itself to blame because it has seldom attempted to develop policies from a long-term perspective.

In the foreign policy area, the National Security Council, filled with politically appointed advisors and assistants outside the bureaucratic system, is more suited to Chen's style of top-down, ad hoc policymaking. It is no wonder that the MOFA is relegated to policy implementation instead of policy formulation and policymaking.

Thus, Chen's call for "one country on each side of the Taiwan Strait" in 2002, the holding of a referendum on cross-Strait relations concomitant with the presidential election of 2004, the attempts to abolish the National Unification Council in 2006, and the change of name in the application for membership of the United Nations in 2007 were all moves that were ad hoc in nature and possessed populist appeal. Two of these moves were aimed

at consolidating Chen's political base and the other two were attempt to help Chen and the DPP at the ballot box.

Some thirty years ago, in his seminal work *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler introduced the idea of "adhocracy," a new arrangement in policy formulation and implementation.¹ The idea of adhocracy has been further elaborated by Robert H. Waterman, Jr., who claimed that ad hoc project teams and task forces are the most effective means of bringing about change.² We do not know whether President Chen and his advisors have ever heard of the term adhocracy, either before or even since they came to power. The DPP could well have developed a convincing argument for jettisoning the existing bureaucracy and adopting an adhocratic approach to governing. After all, in contrast to the bureaucracy, adhocracy is more flexible, responsive, adaptive, and creative in dealing with non-routine issues.

Possible examples of this shift are the ad hoc Inter-Party Task Force on Cross-Strait Relations (兩岸跨黨派小組) of 2000 and the National Economic Development Conference (全國經濟發展會議) of 2001, which allowed entrepreneurs, professionals, and academics as well as politicians and bureaucrats to take part in a pseudo-policymaking arrangement. However, the "three acknowledgments" and "four recommendations" (三個認知, 四項建議) put forward by the task force have never been implemented or respected by the ruling party, so the merits of adhocracy have not been put to the test.

Even though later in his first term, President Chen frequently mentioned that he was going to create an ad hoc "cross-party alliance for national stabilization" (跨黨派國家安定機制) as a platform for cooperation and dialogue on national security issues, it has never come to fruition. These ad hoc mechanisms, whether real or imaginary, have simply become instruments of superficial bipartisanship to deceive voters. With the abandonment of even this pretence after 2003, top-down decision-making

¹Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).

²Robert H. Waterman, Jr., *Adhocracy* (New York: Random House, 1984).

in foreign and security policy has become even more entrenched. With the president's insistence on holding a referendum to maximize his electoral appeal in 2004, adhococracy in Taiwan became nothing more than ad hoc politics exercised by the DPP.