

# Antipartyism and Public Opinion toward Presidential Unilateral Actions: The Case of Taiwan in 2017

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## Abstract

In this article, we examine how antipartyism influences the public's preferences for the tools of presidential power by focusing on the case of Taiwan, which is a president-parliamentary system. We distinguish two types of antipartyism: general antipartyism and reactive antipartyism. The former refers to the general perception of political parties, whereas the latter involves the functions of parties in modern democracy. According to the analysis results, we find that general antipartyism is positively associated with support for the president's power to unilaterally appoint judges. In contrast, reactive antipartyism leads to less support for executive privilege, unilateral judicial appointments, and the authority to direct agency implementation of policies passed by the legislature.

## Introduction

In the past two decades, there have been emerging discussions on the “presidentialization” or personalization of politics across a variety of regime types—semipresidentialism, presidentialism, and parliamentarism, and it has been shown that presidentialization of power results from the president's ability to successfully appeal to the voters through the modern mass media (Poguntke & Webb, 2007a). Recently, by the same token, a number of studies have explored public attitudes toward the use of presidential powers in the

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United States—a typical case of presidentialism—and found that, although public support for unilateral actions by the U.S. president is generally low, the public is more supportive of a president's unilateral actions under certain circumstances (Aberbach, Peterson, & Quirk, 2007; Reeves & Rogowski, 2015).

Understanding how and why the public supports the president's authority to act unilaterally is important because the strength of the presidency depends not only on executive powers granted by the Constitution but also on public opinion toward presidential powers. Citizens' approval of the president, on the one hand, is the foundation for presidential use of unilateral powers (Reeves & Rogowski, 2015). Public opinion, on the other hand, forms the potential check on presidential use of unilateral powers (e.g., Berinsky, 2009). The existing literature has shown that public support for unilateral presidential actions is affected by partisanship (Aberbach et al., 2007; Christenson & Kriner, 2017; Reeves & Rogowski, 2015), the ends of the policy-making process (Christenson & Kriner, 2017), and democratic values such as belief in the rule of law (Reeves & Rogowski, 2016).

Although many efforts have been made to address how the public views presidential powers, what is still missing is an investigation into whether and how public opinion toward presidential powers is influenced by views on other political institutions such as the legislature and political parties. In most modern democratic regimes, political parties serve as the primary vehicle for representation and policy-making. It has been shown, however, that popular discontent with parties is growing, and such antiparty sentiments may be translated into support for other types of political actions such as the personalistic system of rule (Webb & White, 2007, p. 352).

To fill this gap, in this article, we investigate factors that account for differences in individuals' attitudes toward unilateral powers by focusing on public sentiments toward political parties. We argue that, on the one hand, antipartyism rooted in historical development is likely to induce support for presidential powers when people have a generally negative impression of political parties *per se*. Antipartyism resulting from poor party performance, on the other hand, is likely to reduce citizens' support for presidential unilateral actions when the president is strongly connected to a political party, for example, as the party chairperson. Uncovering whether and how the public's sentiments toward parties affect its view on presidential powers will thus contribute to the studies of presidential powers, executive-legislative relations, political accountability, and party system change.

Most, if not all, of the existing studies on public opinion toward presidential powers focus on the United States. We extend the discussion to semipresidentialism and select the case of Taiwan where partisan conflict is severe, and public dissatisfaction with parties is growing. We investigate public opinion toward a range of presidential powers and how these attitudes are affected by the evaluations of the political parties by analyzing a nationally

representative sample of 1,222 voters in Taiwan. We find that general anti-partyism is positively associated with support for the president's power to unilaterally appoint judges. In contrast, reactive anti-partyism leads to less support for the use of executive privilege, unilateral judicial appointments, and the authority to direct agency implementation of policies.

## Public Support for Presidential Powers and Antipartyism

### Public Attitudes toward Presidential Unilateral Actions

Most, if not all, of the extant studies on public opinion toward presidential use of unilateral powers focus on the United States because it is a typical case of presidentialism and provides the foundation for us to discuss other presidential democracies and other regime types in the world. In the United States, generally speaking, the public has an ambivalent attitude toward presidential powers (Howell, 2013). According to the institutional arrangements of checks and balances, ordinary citizens want their presidents to be constrained on the expansion or abuse of executive power (e.g., Rudalevige, 2006), especially among those with strong beliefs in the rule of law (Reeves & Rogowski, 2016), or, at least, they are less supportive of the use of unilateral actions in contexts where national security matters are not involved (Mueller, 1973) or where the president and the majority of the public are in opposition to policies (Reeves, Rogowski, Seo, & Stone, 2017).

The masses, however, need responsive governments and usually hold presidents accountable for a wide range of social issues, including national economy (Hibbs, 2000), war casualties (Karol and Miguel, 2007), natural disasters (Gasper & Reeves, 2011; Healy & Malhotra, 2009), and even shark attacks (Achen & Bartels, 2016). Issues like the national economy or the handling of international conflicts are within the boundary of a president's authority, and thus the president is inevitably blamed for economic depression or military fatalities. Other issues such as natural disasters and shark attacks are events that a president has minimal ability to control and usually occur at the state or local level, but the president is still expected to react and respond to such events.

Besides the demand for responsive presidents, public support for presidential powers is also affected by partisanship and policy preferences. Partisan cues have been recognized as the major heuristic on which the public can rely to develop political values (e.g., Goren, 2005) and form opinions (e.g., Zaller, 1992). Thus, the president's co-partisans usually show greater support for presidential powers (Aberbach et al., 2007; Christenson & Kriner, 2017; Reeves & Rogowski, 2015). In addition, the public evaluates unilateral presidential actions based on policy concerns in the way that the public endorses unilateral actions that move policy closer to its policy preferences (Christenson & Kriner, 2017).

The public's excessive expectations for presidents are likely to enhance presidential powers as well. Take natural disaster response as an example. Local governments, in fact, should take much of the responsibility of being prepared for and responding to the occurrence of natural disasters. For disaster relief, however, people expect the president to play a major role in disaster assistance operations (Roberts, 2013). In order to reduce bureaucratic red tape and make immediate reaction possible, people expect the president to use the authority to direct agencies to assist, cooperate, and share resources. Due to potential electoral benefits, the president is more than willing to do so, and therefore, the scope of presidential powers is expanded (Reeves, 2011).

### **Antipartyism and the Use of Presidential Powers**

In democratic regimes, public dissatisfaction with government dysfunction may drive the public to seek political figures who will take responsibility to solve problems. If so, public support for a president's use of unilateral powers is likely induced by public discontent with the inability of the government to solve certain social problems. In the Philippines, for example, people are sick of criminals, drug problems, and corruption, and they thirst for a change in the social and political environment. As mayor of Davao City, Rodrigo Duterte built on his accomplishments in the war against criminals, drug addicts, and corrupt officials to facilitate his win of the presidency and enhance his presidential powers. In Turkey, the demand for political stability enhances the influence of the presidency and drives the replacement of parliamentarianism with presidentialism (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017).

Public support for a president's use of unilateral powers is also likely induced by negative sentiments toward other political institutions beyond the presidency. Deadlock in the legislative process, for example, is one sign of governmental inability that could incite the public's disaffection. Although one of the criticisms of presidential systems is the possibility of presidential unilateral actions and its detrimental effects on democratic consolidation (Bélanger, 2004; Linz, 1990), severe legislative gridlock could also lead to presidential unilateral actions (Linz & Valenzuela, 1994). After all, legislative gridlock might reduce public trust in the legislative branch (Ramirez, 2009) and increase public support for the exercise of presidential powers to overcome congressional inaction (Reeves & Rogowski, 2016).

Partisan conflict, in addition to institutional features within the Congress, is the main cause of gridlock (e.g., Binder, 1999; Cox & McCubbins, 1993) and indirectly influences the public's assessments of the legislature (Flynn & Harbridge, 2016). Partisan conflict among major parties, on the one hand, leads to disagreements on public policies and policy instability, especially after party alternation. Party differences such as party polarization and party

fragmentation, on the other hand, result in a stalemate in the lawmaking process when a (super)majority cannot be achieved.

Political parties *per se* are also likely to be the target of criticism by the public. Since the 1990s, it has been observed that public discontent with political parties and, probably worse, antipartyism are prevalent in developed democracies in general (Dalton & Weldon, 2005) and in the United States (Norris, 1999), Germany (Scarrow, 1996), Britain, Canada, Australia (Bélanger, 2004), Southern Europe (Torcal, Gunther, & Montero, 2002), Eastern Europe, and Latin America (Webb & White, 2007), in particular. Antipartyism poses a serious threat to the functioning of democratic regimes. When the public does not trust political parties, antipartyism may decrease public participation in politics through political parties, which, in turn, damages the legitimacy of governing parties.

To investigate the causes and consequences of antipartyism, scholars have made efforts to distinguish the dimensions of antipartyism. First, Torcal et al. (2002) categorize antipartyism into two types: cultural antipartyism and reactive antipartyism. The former is the denial of political parties rooted in historical traditions and political culture, whereas the latter refers to public dissatisfaction with political party performance. Second, Webb and White (2007, p. 352) make a distinction between “hard” and “soft” antipartyism. Hard antipartyism indicates the public perception that parties are not necessary to the political system; soft antipartyism expresses negative sentiments toward parties but still accepts the role of parties in democratic regimes. Third, Poguntke (1996) and Bélanger (2004) state that antipartyism includes specific antipartyism—the rejection of major parties—and generalized antipartyism—the rejection of political parties *per se*.

Based on the above discussion, in this article, we distinguish two types of antipartyism by their sources. How these sources shape public antipartyism is context-dependent, which leads to different views on the use of presidential powers. The first is termed general antipartyism, which refers to the public’s negative perception of political parties in general. General antipartyism may originate from historical traditions/experiences, core values of political culture, or cult of personality. One variant of general antipartyism forms a hostility not only toward parties but also toward democratic systems *per se*. In Post-Communist European and Latin American countries, for example, a number of people have relatively low trust in political parties due to their antipathy toward democracy (Burton, Gunther, & Higley, 1992; Maravall, 1997; Webb & White, 2007). In this regard, general antipartyism is intermingled with prevailing distrust in all dimensions of democratic systems. Therefore, we argue that people who distrust democracy, and thus, parties, may favor charismatic leaders and support unilateral presidential actions that are not constrained on the basis of a democratic structure.

The other variant of general antipartyism cultivates public preference for a personalistic system of rule while the public accepts the role of parties in democratic systems. In Latin American countries, for instance, some people are not hostile to democracy and parties. However, they would claim that the presidency is fundamental to the legitimacy of the system (Webb & White, 2007, pp. 353–354). Moreover, in East Asian countries, some people are imbued with paternalism and favor a strong leader who can take care of everything due to the influence of Confucian political culture (e.g., Chang, Chu, & Tsai, 2005). In this matter, although people consider parties as a necessary vehicle for representation, they believe that government leaders such as the president are qualified to make wise decisions and rule the country. According to this logic, we argue that general antipartyism is positively associated with support for unilateral actions of presidents through the democratic process.

The second is called reactive antipartyism, which involves the roles of political parties for the functioning of democracy. Specifically, reactive antipartyism results from the failure of parties to serve as agents in the policy-making process in which the public's preferences are indirectly transformed into policy decisions. Political parties and party elites lose their credibility because they are unable to fulfill their commitments to the electorate. Due to this poor performance, citizens are eager to see an improvement in the linkage between the masses and policymakers. In this matter, the public would choose to “exit” from parties and search for better alternatives (Hirschman, 1970). It has been shown that, in the electoral arena, voters find third parties (Bélanger, 2004) and independent presidential candidates (Owen & Dennis, 1996) attractive as they exit from major parties.

Regarding the association between reactive antipartyism and the evaluations of presidential powers, we argue that reactive antipartyism influences public opinion toward presidential powers in two ways, depending on whether the president is strongly connected to a party. Ideally, political parties serve as an instrument for solving the problem of decision-making in which they represent different social interests and compete for political power. Severe party competition, however, could generate a stalemate in the lawmaking process, especially when the parties' ideologies and motivations are extremely distinct from each other (Binder, 2004). To prevent the governing party/coalition from benefiting from policy implementation, for example, the opposition party/coalition makes it difficult to pass bills in the legislature. When this occurs, people are dissatisfied with not only the legislature but also the political parties, and the negative assessment on the parties' poor performance mobilizes citizens to demand improvement from the incumbents in power (Dalton, 1999; Norris, 1999). In the trend of the personalization of politics, for example, political leaders such as presidents and premiers have been

important and have personalized the policy platforms of their respective parties (McAllister, 2007; Poguntke & Webb, 2007b). In other words, to show their discontent with political parties, people turn their support to the presidency and expect that the use of unilateral presidential powers is a solution to government dysfunction.

When people think that the president is strongly connected to one party; however, they do not consider presidential powers as an exit from major parties or a solution to government dysfunction. Studies on the presidentialization of politics focus on the circumstance that the candidates or executives are individually influential and reduce the control of their parties (Sergio, 2007). The literature suggests that, for example, chief executives tend to govern beyond their parties rather than through them (Webb & Poguntke, 2007, p. 340). Presidents in presidential or semipresidential democracies, in contrast, may want to control the party to achieve their desired policy outcomes. This is possible when the person who holds the office of the presidency simultaneously takes the position of the party chairperson. Due to this dual identity, the people could hold the president responsible for the poor performance of that party in the policy-making process. If so, people could spread their negative attitudes toward parties to the presidency, which, in turn, decreases support of presidential powers.

### Case Selection, Data, and Measurements

In this section, we discuss the case of Taiwan—a newly consolidated democracy in East Asia—and provide testable hypotheses appropriate for presidential democracies in general and for this particular case. Taiwan has a semipresidential system (a presidency-centered system of government) and has recently been faced with severe partisan conflict and public antipartyism, making it an appropriate case for us to test the proposed theoretical arguments.

#### The Case of Taiwan

We selected the case of Taiwan for three reasons. First, Taiwan is a president-parliamentary system, which is a subtype of semipresidentialism closer to the pure type of presidential system in terms of the president's ability to form a government and the assembly's restricted ability to vote no confidence (Shugart, 2005). Such a presidency-centered system of government provides us an opportunity to examine whether the observed public attitudes toward presidential powers in the United States also exist in semipresidential systems. Second, partisan conflict in Taiwan is severe and results in people's antipathy toward politics. To deal with this issue in past presidential elections, several presidential candidates have called for cooperation across political parties after the election. We do not know yet, however, whether the public expects the



role of the presidency to solve political wrangling. Finally, since the general election of the president and vice president of the government of the Republic of China (ROC) was held for the first time in 1996, there have been four different presidents, and all of them have been their party chairperson for a certain time.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the case of Taiwan is an appropriate case to examine the linkage between public antipartyism and support for presidential powers.

After the Chinese civil war in 1949, the government of the ROC relocated to Taiwan, and the ROC was under an authoritarian system, ruled by the Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang, KMT). During the latter half of the twentieth century, Taiwan experienced rapid economic growth, also known as the Taiwan Economic Miracle. Being influenced by Confucianism and paternalism, some people attribute this miracle to two authoritarian leaders—Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo. At that time, Taiwanese people enjoyed the benefits of economic growth without party competition. Due to Confucian political culture and the experience of economic development, people may think that political parties hinder government leaders from doing their job. Furthermore, although they think that parties are not necessary to democracy, people do not deny the functioning of the democratic system.<sup>2</sup> In other words, people favor the personalistic system of presidential rule under the structure of the democratic process. According to this logic, our first hypothesis to be tested is:

*H1: Higher levels of general antipartyism are more likely to induce the support for unilateral actions of presidents.*

Since 1987, Taiwan has experienced democratization processes and a series of constitutional reforms such as lifting martial law and the ban on opposition parties from political competition, changes in the process of the presidential election and in presidential power, and electoral reform. Regarding electoral reform in Taiwan, members of the national legislature (the Legislative Yuan) were elected by the single nontransferable vote system from 1992 to 2004, and since 2008, they have been elected by the single-district, two-vote system, which is a variant of the mixed-member system, that is, a combination of single-member district plurality and closed-list proportional representation. The legislators now serve a term of 4 years and are eligible for re-election.

<sup>1</sup>Former President Lee Teng-hui (January 13, 1988 to May 20, 2000) was the chairperson of the Kuomintang (KMT) from July 27, 1988 to March 24, 2000; former President Chen Shui-bian (May 20, 2000 to May 20, 2008) was the chairperson of the DPP from July 21, 2002 to December 14, 2004 and October 17, 2007 to January 16, 2008; former President Ma Ying-jeou (May 20, 2008 to May 20, 2016) was the chairperson of the KMT from August 19, 2005 to February 13, 2007 and October 17, 2009 to December 12, 2014; current President Tsai Ing-wen was the chairperson of the DPP from May 21, 2008 to February 29, 2012 and has been the chairperson from May 28, 2014 to November 24, 2018.

<sup>2</sup>From the same survey data analyzed in this article, 64.4% of the respondents agree with the statement “democracy may have problems but still is the best system” whereas 24.71% of the respondents do not.



Although the electoral system for legislators has been changed, the party system in Taiwan has basically not changed and has been more or less a two-party system (see Fell, 2014). Despite being a former authoritarian party, the KMT has survived the democratic transition and has been one of the two major parties in the political system. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has been the major opposition party since the legislative election of 1992 and became the ruling party for the first time after winning the presidential election of 2000. After the Taiwan general election in 2016, the DPP won the presidential election and secured the majority in the legislature. The striking difference between the two major parties is their ideological positions on national identity, that is, ROC- or Taiwan-based identity, which influences their stand on cross-strait relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan. Generally speaking, the KMT tends to support economic and cultural cooperation between China and Taiwan to lower tensions with China. In contrast, the DPP cautions against close interactions with China due to the military threat from China.

This ideological distinction between the KMT and the DPP influences not only their China policy but also their conflicting positions in all respects, which leads to gridlock in the legislative process. To block policies proposed by the governing party, legislators from the opposition party often use the tactic of occupying the speaker's podium and, even worse, spark "legislator brawling" in the legislature (Batto and Beaulieu, Forthcoming). We observed, for example, that the opposition DPP in 2014 and the opposition KMT in 2017 paralyzed legislative proceedings. This long-standing, rancorous partisan competition results in general public disaffection with political parties and affects citizens' voting behavior. Voters, for example, might vote for one party and/or its candidates due to negative sentiments toward the other party (Tsai, 2017).

After the constitutional reforms in the 1990s, Taiwan came to be considered as a president-parliamentary system. The president and vice president of the ROC (Taiwan) are selected by a direct election, serve a term of 4 years, and can be re-elected once. The presidency in Taiwan is granted a variety of formal powers by the Constitution such as unilateral military powers, veto powers, and presidential appointments. Due to presidential influence through formal and/or informal powers, political elites usually expect presidents to overcome inter-party conflict. For example, President Ma Ying-jeou was asked to hold a National Affairs Conference several times during his second term of office. In addition, President Tsai Ing-wen, who succeeded Ma Ying-jeou as the president of Taiwan, has held two meetings of the National Affairs Conference for pension reform and national judicial reform.

To overcome intra-party conflict, both major parties favor their presidents as the chairperson and even modify the program to make it official. As the

president and vice president of the ROC were selected by a direct election for the first time in 1996, there have been four different presidents who served six terms, including current President Tsai Ing-wen who took her oath of office in 2016, and all of them have been their party chairperson for a certain time. The DPP and the KMT modified their party programs in 2002 and 2009, respectively, to state that whoever is elected as the president is certainly the party chairperson. Due to the strong connection between parties and the presidency, people may associate the president with poor party performance and extend their antiparty sentiments to the presidency. According to the above discussion, because the citizens are discontented with the severe conflict between the two major parties, they withdraw the support from the parties, which in turn makes the president have less legitimacy to use their powers. In other words, people with stronger reactive antipartyism are less likely to support the use of presidential powers. Thus, they are less likely to support the president's unilateral actions when they are discontented with parties' performance, which is our second hypothesis to be tested:

*H2: Higher levels of reactive antipartyism are less likely to induce the support for unilateral actions of presidents when the presidency is strongly related to his or her party.*

## Data Description and Measurements

We analyzed survey data in Taiwan collected by telephone interviews from July 14th to 20th in 2017, when the DPP controlled both the executive and legislative branches, with a nationally representative sample of 1,222 voters.<sup>3</sup> In addition to a series of questions about background demographics and political attitudes, the respondents were asked questions about presidential powers and political parties (see [Supplementary data](#)). With regard to presidential powers, we followed the work of Reeves and Rogowski (2015) and used their questions involving six dimensions of presidential powers with slight adjustments to the wording. For public sentiments toward political parties, we employed the same survey items as those used in Torcal et al. (2002).

We first evaluated popular approval ratings of the president and public support for the six tools of presidential power. As can be seen in Table 1, presidential approval is relatively low, with 27.00% of the respondents approving of President Tsai Ing-wen's performance about 1 year after her inauguration on May 20, 2016. Moreover, since President Tsai Ing-wen was the chairperson of the DPP from May 28, 2014 to November 24, 2018, we

<sup>3</sup>The survey data are from the project "Revisiting the Study of Party System Change: A Case Study of Taiwan" (MOST 105-2410-H-004-027-MY2) supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology, R.O.C., and the principal investigator was Dr. Ching-hsin Yu, Research Fellow of Election Study Center at National Chengchi University, Taiwan. The collection of the nationally representative survey data was conducted by Taiwan Real Survey Co., Ltd.

Table 1

*Public Support for Government and Presidential Powers in Taiwan, 2017*

Items	Support (%)	Missing (%)
Presidential approval	27.00	12.03
Unilateral military powers	31.91	12.68
Executive privilege	68.33	8.43
Veto powers	54.99	15.14
Unilateral judicial appointments	26.35	10.47
Direct agency implementation of bills	46.44	12.12
Unilateral enactment policy	22.18	10.15

*Note.* Data are weighted to reflect the characteristics of the national population.

assume that respondents received the information that President Tsai is tightly connected to the DPP.

In contrast, popular support for presidential powers varies across the six dimensions and is distinct from the evaluation of the president, which is consistent with the claims in the literature (e.g., Reeves & Rogowski, 2015). A majority of the voters support the president's use of executive privilege (68.33%) and believe the president should have veto powers (54.99%). In addition, 46.44% of the public supports the president's authority to direct the ways in which agencies implement policies passed by the legislature. Only about a third of the voters support the president's unilateral military powers (31.91%) and about a quarter of the public supports the president's ability to unilaterally appoint judges (26.35%) or make policy (22.18%) without the legislature's confirmation. The results in Table 1 also show the inconsistency between presidential powers supported by the public and the powers granted by the constitution. For example, unilateral policy enactment is granted to the presidency by the constitution whereas unilateral judicial appointing is not. But only 22.18% of the public supports the president to use the former, whereas 46.44% of the public supports the president to use the latter.

Table 2 shows the aggregate levels of the public's negative sentiments toward political parties in Taiwan. On the whole, a majority of the voters agree that the parties criticize one another but are alike (75.86%) and that parties only divide people (58.43%). About half of the public disagrees that parties are needed for democracy (45.05%) and for defending various social interests (44.11%). Only about a third (28.56%) of the public disagrees that parties contribute to citizens' political participation and a fifth (20.62%) of the public thinks that parties are useless. These results indicate that people generally think political parties are not completely useless but only conducive to the political participation of the citizens.

According to the analysis in Torcal et al. (2002, p. 266), the six items can be categorized into two groups. The first group includes "parties are alike"

Table 2  
*Antipartyism in Taiwan, 2017*

Items	Agree (%)	Missing (%)
Parties are alike	75.86	6.06
Parties divide people	58.43	8.02
Parties are useless	20.62	6.30
Items	Disagree (%)	Missing (%)
Parties are necessary for democracy	45.05	8.50
Parties defend interests	44.11	9.17
Parties facilitate political participation	28.56	8.51

*Note.* Data are weighted to reflect the characteristics of the national population.

and “parties divide people,” which are indicators of general perceptions of political parties. The other group consists of “parties are necessary for democracy,” “parties defend interests,” and “parties facilitate political participation,” which are indicators associated with the functions of parties in democracy. The item “parties are useless” is associated with both dimensions but is more strongly related to the first one. In their analysis, Torcal et al. (2002) exclude the final item from the construction of the scores of antipartyism.

We followed Torcal et al. (2002) in the way that we explored the associations between the two types of antipartyism and the six items. Unlike what Torcal et al. (2002) did for the scales of antipartyism, however, we employed the methods of item response theory (IRT) to examine the dimensionality and construct the scores of the two latent variables (Embretson and Reise, 2000). The two models employed in the analyses are illustrated, respectively, as follows. Suppose that, for each item,  $k = 1, \dots, K$ , respondent  $i = 1, \dots, N$  provides a response ( $z_{i,k}$ ), which is either an agreement ( $z_{i,k} = 1$ ) or a disagreement ( $z_{i,k} = 0$ ). For a unidimensional latent variable  $\theta_i$ , a two-parameter logistic (2PL) item response model is

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr(z_{i,k} = 1 | \theta_i, \alpha_k, \beta_k) &= \Lambda[\beta_k(\theta_i - \alpha_k)] \\ &= \frac{\exp[\beta_k(\theta_i - \alpha_k)]}{1 + \exp[\beta_k(\theta_i - \alpha_k)]} \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where  $\Lambda(\cdot)$  denotes the logistic cumulative distribution function (cdf),  $\alpha_k$  item-difficulty parameters,  $\beta_k$  item-discrimination parameters, and  $\theta_i$  levels of the latent trait (Lord & Novick, 1968). With regard to ordinal responses such as the Likert-type scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree), a graded response model (GRM) is employed:

$$\Pr(z_{i,k} = j | \theta_i, \alpha_k, \beta_k) = \Lambda[\beta_k(\theta_i - \alpha_{k,j})] - [\beta_k(\theta_i - \alpha_{k,j+1})], j = 1, 2, \dots, J, \quad (2)$$

where  $\alpha_{k,j}$  are extremity parameters, for which  $\alpha_{k,1} < \dots < \alpha_{k,j} < \dots < \alpha_{k,J-1}$ , and  $\alpha_{k,J} = \infty$  (Samejima, 1969).

We constructed the scores for general antipartyism and reactive antipartyism in the following procedure. First, to show that the six items are related to two latent variables, we compared the model fits between the unidimensional 2PL model represented in Equation (1) and a two-dimensional 2PL model, for which  $\beta_k(\theta_i - \alpha_k)$  is replaced by  $\sum_{d=1}^2 [\beta_{k,d}(\theta_{i,d} - \alpha_k)]$  in Equation (1), and found that the latter fits better to the data than the former does.<sup>4</sup> We find similar results exhibited in Torcal et al. (2002), that is, items “parties are alike” and “parties divide people” have higher factor loadings on the first factor, which corresponds to general antipartyism, whereas items “parties are necessary for democracy,” “parties defend interest,” and “parties facilitate political participation” have higher factor loadings on the second factor, which corresponds to reactive antipartyism. The item “parties are useless” is associated with both dimensions but is more strongly related to the first factor. Instead of excluding the item “parties are useless,” we included this item in the construction of the scores of general antipartyism because it is relatively highly associated with the first latent variable, and we did not want to discard any information.

Second, we employed the GRM shown in Equation (2) to estimate the scores of general antipartyism and reactive antipartyism, respectively, with associated items. Specifically, we included items “parties are alike,” “parties divide people,” and “parties are useless” in the GRM for the estimation of general antipartyism and items “parties are necessary for democracy,” “parties defend interest,” and “parties facilitate political participation” in the GRM for the estimation of reactive antipartyism.<sup>5</sup> Through the methods of IRT, we obtained scores for general antipartyism and reactive antipartyism in continuous scales, which are, in turn, used in the regression analysis in the following section.

### Empirical Analysis of Public Support for Presidential Powers

We were interested in examining how general antipartyism and reactive antipartyism are associated with popular support for presidential powers. To test our hypotheses stated above, we modeled public attitudes toward presidential

<sup>4</sup>The results of model comparisons and factor loadings are presented in [Supplementary Appendix SB](#).

<sup>5</sup>The item response category characteristics curves, along with the distributions of latent traits, are displayed in [Supplementary Appendix SC](#).

powers as a function of antipartyism. The outcome variables are public support for the six tools of presidential power, all of which are binary variables as displayed in Table 1. For our main explanatory variables, the two types of antipartyism—general antipartyism and reactive antipartyism—were estimated by the GRM discussed above. According to the discussion in the previous section, we expected that general antipartyism would be positively correlated with all six tools of presidential power and that reactive antipartyism would be negatively correlated with presidential powers.

We also included a number of control variables that are considered to be factors affecting public attitudes toward presidential powers.<sup>6</sup> The extant literature has shown that public support for presidential powers is influenced by several factors such as presidential approval (Reeves & Rogowski, 2015), democratic values (Reeves & Rogowski, 2016), and partisanship (Aberbach et al., 2007; Christenson & Kriner, 2017). We first include *presidential approval*, which was measured by a dichotomous variable, with approval coded as 1 and 0 otherwise. Second, regarding democratic values, we considered beliefs in checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches instead of beliefs in the rule of law. Third, two dummy variables, *Pan-Green* and *Neutral*, were used to measure public partisanship, with *Pan-Blue* as the reference. Fourth, dummy variables, *Junior High*, *Senior High*, *College*, and *University and above* reflected the educational levels of respondents, with elementary school or illiterates as the reference group. Fifth, respondents' age was divided into five groups with 10 years as a unit. Finally, *Female* was the gender of respondents with male as the reference.

We applied the logit model for each of our six outcome variables because these outcome variables are binary. The logit model is represented as:

$$\Pr(y_i = 1) = (X_i\beta), \quad (3)$$

where  $y_i = 1$  indicates that respondent  $i$  agrees with the statement about the described powers granted to or claimed by presidents,  $\Lambda(\cdot)$  denotes the logistic cumulative distribution function (cdf),  $X_i$  the explanatory variables, and  $\beta$  the coefficients.

The results of empirical analysis are presented in Table 3.<sup>7</sup> Several findings are summarized as follows. First, the evidence shows that general antipartyism is positively associated with views on presidential powers. Respondents who have higher general antiparty sentiments toward parties are more likely to support presidential powers except unilateral military actions. Although the effects of general antipartyism in these five models are

<sup>6</sup>The full list of the coefficient estimates are presented in [Supplementary Appendix SD](#).

<sup>7</sup>We also provide predicted probability and the uncertainty of support for each of the six tools of presidential powers in [Supplementary Appendix SE](#).

Table 3  
*Determinants of Public Support for Presidential Powers*

Explanatory variables	Military powers	Executive privilege	Veto powers	Appoint judges	Direct agency	Unilateral policy
General antipartyism	-0.10 (0.10)	0.08 (0.11)	0.05 (0.10)	0.30* (0.11)	0.18 (0.10)	0.20 (0.12)
Reactive antipartyism	0.24* (0.09)	-0.24* (0.10)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.31* (0.10)	-0.32* (0.09)	-0.11 (0.10)
Presidential approval	0.22 (0.19)	0.10 (0.21)	0.20 (0.19)	0.55* (0.19)	0.38* (0.19)	0.16 (0.21)
Checks and balances	-0.58* (0.17)	-0.54* (0.19)	-0.08 (0.17)	-0.38* (0.17)	-0.73* (0.16)	-0.94* (0.18)
Partisanship						
Pan-Green	0.28 (0.20)	0.04 (0.22)	0.24 (0.20)	0.57* (0.21)	0.56* (0.20)	-0.08 (0.22)
(Pan-Blue = 0)						
Neutral (Pan-Blue = 0)	0.24 (0.20)	0.03 (0.20)	-0.10 (0.19)	-0.15 (0.22)	0.08 (0.19)	-0.37 (0.22)
Intercept	-0.02 (0.45)	1.64* (0.48)	1.38* (0.45)	-0.71 (0.46)	0.78 (0.44)	0.01 (0.48)
No. of Obs.	832	868	835	864	847	870
Log-likelihood	-509.22	-468.43	-519.62	-472.07	-519.51	-445.10

Note. Data are weighted to characteristics of the national population; standard errors are in parentheses.

\*Significance at  $p < .05$ .

expected, only the effect on judicial appointments reaches the conventional level of significance ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Second, reactive antipartyism is negatively associated with views on presidential powers. Respondents who are more dissatisfied with the performance of political parties are less supportive of presidential unilateral actions except unilateral military actions. The effects on executive privilege, unilateral judicial appointments, and the authority to direct agency implementation of policies passed by the legislature are statistically significant at the conventional level. These results support our hypotheses in the way that people's antiparty sentiments influence them to support presidential actions and that they would not support presidential actions when the president is responsible for poor party performance.

Finally, we find a negative relationship between general antipartyism and support for the power of a president to take unilateral military actions but a positive relationship between reactive antipartyism and support for unilateral military powers. We suspect that this is related to the issue of cross-strait relations, but are uncertain what the mechanism is.

These findings, generally speaking, show the evidence partially supporting our hypotheses. First, although general antipartyism is positively associated



with public support for presidential unilateral actions, except unilateral military powers, only the effect on judicial appointments reaches the conventional level of significance. Second, reactive antipartyism is negatively associated with public support for presidential unilateral actions, except unilateral military powers. Among these expected associations, however, only three of the coefficient estimates reach the conventional level of significance, including executive privilege, the authority to direct agency implementation of policies, and unilateral judicial appointments. One possible explanation is that, although people are aware of the fact that a president has the authority to make decisions, they do not fully understand these powers in detail. Instead, they are probably more familiar with appointment power and administrative discretion than military powers and veto powers. We cannot, however, confirm this suspicion in this article. The reason is that the president in Taiwan cannot unilaterally appoint judges or decide how executive branch agencies will implement bills which do not involve national security. Therefore, we are not sure whether people do not support the use of appointment power/administrative discretion or the expansion of presidential powers that are not granted by the constitution. This leaves us an avenue for future research.

### Conclusion

We have observed presidentialization or personalization of power, that is, the expansion of executive power and autonomy for leaders, across a variety of regime types—presidentialism, parliamentarism, and semipresidentialism. Other than the formal constitutional structure, public opinion toward the president's authority inevitably has a significant impact on the use of unilateral powers because what the president does is mostly to appeal to the voters. The literature has shown that presidential approval, co-partisanship, the proximity of enacted policies to public preferences, and policies involving national security increase support for presidential unilateral actions. In contrast, voters with strong democratic values such as beliefs in the rule of law are less likely to support presidential use of unilateral action.

Following the literature on public opinion toward presidential powers, we investigate factors that account for differences in attitudes toward unilateral powers by focusing on public sentiments toward political parties. In this article, we argue that, on the one hand, general antipartyism is positively associated with support for presidential powers in the context of a personalistic system of presidential rule and paternalism. We also argue that, on the other hand, reactive antipartyism is negatively associated with support for presidential powers when the president is strongly connected to one party, e.g., as the party chairperson.

We tested our hypotheses against a nationally representative sample from Taiwan, which is a presidency-centered system of government with growing antipartyism. The evidence shows that, first of all, public support of or opposition to the president's unilateral judicial appointments and bureaucratic implementation are strongly associated with antipartyism. Specifically, except unilateral military powers, general antipartyism is positively associated with the use of presidential powers and reactive antipartyism is negatively associated with presidential unilateral actions. Second, the association is stronger between antipartyism and presidential judicial appointments and administrative discretion. Finally, there is generally low support for presidential powers such as unilateral military powers and unilateral enactment of policy without the confirmation of the legislature while there is generally high support for presidential powers such as the use of executive privilege and veto powers.

One of the implications is that, when the president is strongly connected to one political party, poor party performance is likely to weaken the strength of the president as chief executive. Moreover, general antipartyism is likely to induce the support for presidential appointment powers and administrative discretion. It is also likely to induce the support for the expansion of presidential powers. These open up an avenue for future research.

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### Supplementary Data

[Supplementary Data](#) are available at *IJPOR* online.

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