

Taiwan's Party Primaries in Comparative Perspective

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ABSTRACT

There has been a lack of research into candidate selection outside the developed world. In this paper we attempt to fill this gap, with a detailed examination of the factors leading to the introduction of party primaries, their operations and their future prospects, in a third wave democracy, Taiwan. Although Taiwan is a late democratizer, the high degree of party institutionalization makes it more appropriate to compare its nomination system with those of older political parties, we particularly contrast it with the leading German and British political parties. Our discussion also finds many similar trends with developments of intra-party democracy in European parties, particularly in terms of a decentralization of candidate selection and reduced mediation between party centre and members. In addition, despite technical changes in electoral campaigning, parties in Taiwan have not abandoned the mass membership model. In Taiwan, direct primary elections have been a controversial subject. By analyzing relevant data, we argue that the core problem of the party primary was its lack of fairness, because party cadres tried to monopolize the candidate selection and thus failed to remain neutral. We find signs that leaders in all parties are wary of allowing inner party democracy to go too far and losing

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Note on romanization: We have adopted the hanyu pinyin system for Chinese names and place names. The only exceptions are for the names of Taiwanese authors where their works were originally published in English and we have used the KMT rather than the GMD.

their control over nomination. When the party centre fears the wrong candidates will be selected, they are prepared to manipulate the rules in their favour or re-centralize the selection process.

Candidate selection is a central aspect of the political process. In a much-quoted statement Schattschneider (1942: 64) has pointed out that, 'he who can make the nominations is the owner of the party'. However, the significance of candidate selection goes far beyond the degree that party leaders can pull the wires. The candidates selected have considerable bearing on the quality of a democracy, the groups represented in parliaments, and the issues that will be on the political agenda.

Although party members and candidate selection has been a growing sub-field in the party politics literature since the late 1980s (Crotty and Jackson, 1985; Gallagher and Marsh, 1988; Jackson and Crotty, 1996; Mayer, 1996, 2000; Scarrow, 1996, 1997), this research has tended to focus on cases in the advanced Western democracies, in particular Western Europe. There has been a shortage of work looking at nomination from a cross-national perspective and of cases in the developing world. In this research we attempt to fill this gap with a detailed case study of how candidate selection operates in the Taiwan case and how the process differs and is like cases in the developed world.

In this article, we adopt a framework suggested by Scarrow (1996) to examine the changing roles of party members in terms of inclusiveness, centralization, and mediation. For example, the leading German parties, the SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands), the CDU (Christlich-Demokratische Union), and the British Labour Party are found to be increasingly inclusive, in that requirements for members and participation have been relaxed. They are less centralized, in terms of giving members a greater say in candidate selection and have a lower degree of mediation, so that the central political parties are more likely to communicate directly with members rather than via the intermediary of the local party branches. We adopt these concepts, particularly centralization, to examine the causes of the introduction of primaries, operations, controversies, and prospects for candidate primaries in Taiwan.

Why do we select Taiwan as the focus of this research? First, Taiwan is a developing country and a member of that growing club of Third Wave democracies. As mentioned earlier, nomination research has been in short supply for these newer democracies. Second, though Taiwan's democratic competitive multi-party elections are only ten years old, compared with other Asian or Third Wave cases party politics in Taiwan is relatively institutionalized (Blondel, 1999: 39). Ten years since the first meaningful multi-party election in 1991, the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) and KMT (Kuomintang/Chinese Nationalist Party) remain the dominant political forces in Taiwan. In addition both major parties have survived the departure of leading figures to form new parties, and also research has shown that Taiwan's parties differ ideologically on core electoral issues (Fell, 2001). It is only in a climate of party

stability that party identification can be expected to develop. The Taiwan case stands in stark contrast to the repeated splits and mergers seen in the Japanese and Korean cases over the 1990s and also to the degree that parties exist solely as the tools of the ambitions of leading political figures in many new democracies. Finally, in the debate over Asian values, Taiwan has placed itself firmly in the camp of liberal democracies; however, an examination of the operations of intra-party democracy offers the opportunity to determine whether the democratic rhetoric is genuine.

In the last decade, all three of Taiwan's major political parties have experimented with direct party primaries to select party candidates. However, the primaries have remained a contentious issue and the parties remain divided over the ideal selection method and degree that members can be trusted to select the winning optimum candidates. Following the introduction, we outline the causes of the adoption of party primaries, how the primaries have actually operated in practice, and the future prospects for candidate selection in Taiwan.

Motivations for candidate selection change

Research in Germany has found that the conditions most conducive to the developments of intra-party democracy are a changing and increasingly competitive electoral environment (Scarrow, 1997). In the German case, this was particularly due to the rise of new parties, such as the Green Party, and a decline in the levels of party support for the leading German parties. Since the KMT government fled to Taiwan in 1949, Taiwan had been a one party state; the formation of opposition parties was banned. However, in the late 1980s there was an earthquake in the political climate. Key components included: the illegal establishment of the DPP in 1986, the dismantling of martial law in 1987, and the unprecedented power struggles for leadership of the KMT following Chiang Ching-kuo's death in 1988 (Wu, 1997: 244). Electoral defeat is a key cause for parties to reform both their policy package but also to make organizational changes. It is noteworthy that the initial impetus for increasing the role of party members in both Britain and Germany came from Labour and the SPD after a series of humiliating electoral defeats. Unlike in Germany and Britain, where the initial impetus for member primaries originated from opposition parties, in Taiwan the proposals came from the ruling KMT that had been in power in Taiwan for over four decades. Although the KMT had never lost an election, it perceived that the opposition's strength had been on the rise and felt it was losing its competitive edge in the 1980s. In fact, the three-month-old and loosely organized DPP's ability to obtain a quarter of the total vote in the 1986 election was viewed as a defeat by the KMT.

Prior to 1989, the KMT nomination system had been far closer to the centralized European model, whereby the party center has the decisive say on party candidate nomination. However, in the light of the mounting electoral challenge, some KMT officials considered that the time was ripe for party reforms, including a change in the nomination system from a top-down to bottom-up process. The proposals did

not go unchallenged, as party leaders in the KMT feared a rise of intra-party conflict and a loss of central power, while in Germany voices of caution argued that since World War II delegate democracy had worked well (Scarrow, 1996: 158). Despite the objections from some members at the plenum meeting, the KMT proceeded with a closed primary system for the 1989 elections (Wu, 2001: 108). Four goals were given for the introduction of primary elections: (1) creation of party loyalty; (2) improvement of party image; (3) a strengthened ability to compete; and (4) enhancement of party unity (Kuan, 1992: 239–63). These public justifications for increasing the role of members in selecting candidates are mirrored in the British and German cases, as both the SPD and Labour Party hoped to use them to improve their party image and electoral fortunes. Labour reformers wished to remove the image of being run by militant leftists and being under the thumb of the Trade Unions, while the SPD claimed its motivations as making membership more attractive by increasing the opportunities for participation and proving that the party was not elitist (Scarrow, 1996: 164).

Party leaders' public rationalization for primaries must be treated with caution; there were also significant ulterior motives. Keen observers of the inner workings of the KMT considered the true intention of the new system was to weaken, if not to destroy the influence of local factions in the nomination process (Hadley and Wu, 1997). With the factions weakened, the KMT hoped to bring former factional members firmly into the party's camp and in particular to communicate directly with factional members without the faction leaders as intermediaries. Similarly, in Britain, Labour reformers hoped that, by expanding the selection role of ordinary members the influence of more radical activists would be reduced and therefore more centrist candidates would be selected. In Germany, the key factor was an elite power struggle for the leadership of the SPD in 1993, with the most enthusiastic supporters of primaries being opponents of Gerhard Schroder, who was favorite to win if the contest were decided by party delegates.

The initiation of a revised nomination system may come from demand by party members, local party branches, or party center decision makers. In Taiwan all the major parties, along with the German SPD and British Labour Party, fall into the third category. However, in contrast, though party primaries were initially discussed in the central CDU, the party center was far more cautious on reform, and the party began expanding intra-party democracy from the state party level, particularly in North Rhine-Westphalia (Scarrow, 1996: 164).

As is the case of the introduction of party primaries in Germany in 1993 by the SPD, the process can have a snowball effect on other parties. Once the momentum of primaries had begun, the parties discovered the policy was popular among members and well received by the media. Likewise, the KMT's decision to introduce primaries served as encouragement for other parties to follow suit, and soon after, in 1989, the DPP announced its intention to adopt a similar primary system. Although the primaries adopted by the KMT and DPP had some shortcomings when compared to

the USA, many in Taiwan praised the development as a major breakthrough in intra-party democratization.

The operation of primaries in Taiwan's major political parties

Compared to US primary turnout rates of 20–5 per cent (Hadley and Stanley, 1996; Ranney, 1972), the KMT's primary turnout rate in 1989 of 46 per cent was a resounding success (as shown in Table 2). However, many in the party perceived the workings of the primaries as falling far short of the ideals and there was considerable dispute in the party whether to continue holding member primaries. As a compromise, in the 1991 and 1992 elections the KMT introduced what is known as the *revised party primary* system. Though members still had a voice in the selection process, their votes only counted for 60 per cent of the decision in 1991 and 50 per cent in 1992. While the power of local cadres over the candidate selection rose to 40 per cent in 1991 and 50 per cent in 1992. Clearly, by reverting to a more centralized system the party center felt that in 1989 it had devolved too much power to the ordinary members. In addition, the 1992 nomination regulations allowed local party branches to take into account local circumstances to cancel primaries and make candidate recommendations directly to party headquarters to approve. As a result of this clause, in 1992 only eleven out of 29 electoral districts actually conducted primaries (Xin-xin-wen [*The Journalist*] 2 August 1998, 10). In the following years the KMT's continued to further centralize the nomination process. For the 1993 local executive race, the KMT changed its nominating practice to party member opinion consultation, whereby party branches could select from one of the following three methods: member opinions, primaries and cadre evaluation (in 1994 public opinion polls were also added to the selection options). For the remainder of the 1990s this more centralized opinion consultation method served as the basis of candidate selection for the KMT (Wu, 2001). Primaries remained an option, however, after 1992 the KMT did not again hold a single primary until 2001.

In the KMT the decision to scrap primaries was a divisive step and a significant factor in the move by a group of high profile KMT dissidents to split away to form the New Party (NP). As in the case of the formation of the Social Democratic Party in Britain in 1983, disputes over nomination methods often result in party splits. Following this there were clashes over nominations in the KMT at every election, with some aspiring members demanding that primaries be restored. This request fell on deaf ears and those not receiving nomination often disobeyed the party and stood for election or left the KMT (Wu, 2001: 113, 116). In fact, the KMT's failure to allow a fair closed primary for its 2000 presidential candidate was the major contributing factor in Song Chu-yu's independent candidacy and the split of the KMT vote in March 2000. This episode was remarkably similar to Labour leader Tony Blair's attempt to manipulate the selection method for the party's nominee for the London mayoral contest in 2000. However, Blair's ploy to block the leftist Ken Livingstone in favor of his handpicked candidate backfired and Livingstone won as an independent.

Unlike in Taiwan, successful independent candidates are an exceedingly rare breed in contemporary British politics.

In the subsequent post-mortem on Taiwan's March presidential election, nomination reforms have been a major item on the KMT's reform agenda. Indeed the KMT held its first ever member's primary for its party chair in March 2001 and will revive widespread primaries for some candidate selection for the December 2001 Legislative and Municipal Executive elections. The reformers hope that by creating a democratic, fair and open nomination system, party unity can be enhanced and fresh blood can be brought into the party. However, those opposing primaries feel that the malpractices of 1989 are ample proof of their drawbacks.

Criticisms against the KMT's primary system

Next we will outline the main objections that have been made by opponents of member primaries in the KMT.¹ First, primaries create a backlash among the local factions. Losing factions often refuse to support the party-nominated candidate in the election campaign, or even support candidates from other parties. Second, the difference in structure between primary voters and the general electorate means that some primary winners are not necessarily competitive in general elections. Third, the competition of primaries damages party unity and the antagonism between candidates strengthens disputes among fellow party members. Fourth, the involvement of money politics in primaries damages the reputation of elections. Many primary candidates have used inappropriate methods to gain votes, such as vote buying, violence and insulting other candidates. Fifth, since candidates undergo two campaigns for one election (nomination and election campaigns), they spend energy and money twice; especially money for bribes to secure the nomination and election. It has been criticized as 'skinning an ox twice' [a Taiwanese proverb]. Last but not the least, Taiwan has an electoral system with multi-member district (MMD) with single non-transferable votes (SNTV) system; this system, it is claimed is not suited for primaries. This is because the number of nominated candidates is flexible, making the actual number of candidates to nominate the source of inner party disputes.

In the next section we examine these criticisms, with particular reference to the KMT and see if the arguments are well founded. Although many of these objections are not applicable to our comparisons in Germany or Britain, the second complaint of a gap between the primary selectorate and the general electorate mirrors the

¹ There are numerous reasons given for opposing party primaries. Those cited in this paper were found in related books, periodicals, research papers, newspapers and magazine articles. In addition, between May and September 1997, and between July and September 1998, the first author conducted intensive interviews on the subject of party primaries with a wide range of informants that included three major political parties' national and local party cadres, local faction leaders and members, parliamentarians and their assistants, journalists, and scholars of Taiwan politics.

Labour Party perception in the 1980s that candidates chosen by militant leftist party activists were unacceptable to the median voter.

Criticisms of exacerbating inner party conflicts and local faction backlash

Over the last few decades of authoritarian rule, the majority of factional leaders emerging have been KMT members. The KMT allied itself with local factions to continue its electoral success and governing domination. Local factions, in partnership with the KMT, shared both political power and material benefits in exchange for their allegiance. The patron-client bond helped solidify the KMT power base at the expense of political democratization. The alliance helped preserve the economic privileges enjoyed by factions at the expense of public resources. Although factional allegiance served the interests of the KMT, the alliance bonds were far from permanent. The KMT adopted various strategies aimed at controlling the electoral importance of local factions. Local factions then used tactics to preserve their power given KMT nomination strategies to advance its interests. This relationship of cooperation and competition is most apparent during the process of candidate nomination. There have also been conflicts between the party centre and local branches in the British case, for example Labour has been embarrassed by extreme left wing local Labour run councils, such as Liverpool in the 1980s. However the party centres in Britain and Germany have had a more dominant role than in the Taiwan case. This is partly due to the fact that while the principle ties between the KMT and local factions are an economic exchange, while the West European parties, in particular, parties of the left are united by ideological policy objectives.

Looking back over the primaries, if they caused a factional backlash and intra-party conflict, then we would expect these problems to decrease after the suspension of primaries. However, these questions did not disappear following the adoption of the revised party member primaries and opinion consultation. In fact, factional antagonism and inner party conflict got worse. How is it possible to measure degrees of internal conflict? In the area of nomination, the worst result of inner conflict is when aspirants do not get party endorsements, then decide to violate party discipline and to run as mavericks. The next worse condition is where the party branch is unable to mediate between candidates and all aspirants are permitted to compete freely without any party endorsement; it is termed 'open nomination'. The frequencies of running as mavericks and open nominations are effective indicators to measure internal conflict. We take the last three county magistrate and city mayor elections as test cases. As shown in Table 1, though 1989 is described as the year with the worst factional backlash and internal party fighting, there were no KMT candidates running without nomination. There was only one case of open nomination in Hualian, between Wu Guo-dong (the primary winner) and Chen Qing-shui (the incumbent magistrate and second place in the primary). Apart from Hualian, there was a special case in Penghu. In this instance the incumbent magistrate Ou

Table 1. *KMT Members running for elections of county magistrates and city mayors, 1989–1997*

Year	Candidate nominating system	Number seats	KMT members			Total
			Nominees with recommendation	Open nominations	Running as mavericks	
1989	Closed party primary	21	20	2	0	22
1993	Opinion consultation	23	20	5	9	34
1997	Opinion consultation	23	21	4	10	35

Sources: The data are provided from *General Summary of the Election to County Magistrates and City Mayors* [in Chinese] (Taizhong, Taiwan: Taiwan Provincial Election Commission of the Department of Civil Affairs, 1989 and 1993), and are supplemented by newspaper reports.

Jian-zhuang came top in the primary with 60.15 per cent of the turnout rate. However, the KMT nominated Wang Qian-tong, who had come second in the primary.² Despite this, Ou did not run without permission.

By comparison with 1989, there was much more squabbling among party members and antagonism between candidates in 1993 and 1997. For example, in 1993 there were a total of nine KMT members running without endorsement and five openly nominated candidates and in 1997 there were a total of ten KMT members running without endorsement. In conclusion, since the KMT abandoned primaries for more centralized nomination methods, it has not reduced factional confrontations. Quite the contrary, factional and internal fighting is even more serious and an increasing number of KMT candidates are running without nomination.

Criticism of the gap between party members and general electorate

Those opposing primaries often cite the point that with low primary voter turnouts, there is a large gap between the composition of party members and the general public, therefore the winners of primaries are often not competitive in general elections. This is an argument also heard in the British Labour Party to explain its electoral failures in the 1980s, it was widely believed that militant leftist groups had taken control of many party branches and forced the party to adopt policies out of step with the median voter. One example is the 'iron votes' of the Huang Fu-xing party branch; which tends to support Mainlander candidates. However, the electorate will not necessarily support those winning primaries. We examine this question by looking at three aspects: primary voting rates, ethnic composition of party members and the general electorate, and the provincial origin of nominated candidates. Table 2 shows that the average voting rate for KMT

² According to the regulations for candidate nomination in the 1989 set of elections, the KMT adopts a bottom-top selection system, in which the results of member primaries are the main basis of nomination. Only where the voter turnout has failed to reach 50 per cent of the district's members (including occupational groups), then the primary result will be treated as a reference for nomination decisions.

primaries in 1989 was 46 per cent. As mentioned earlier, this is not low compared to US primary voting rates. In 1991 and 1992, the KMT adopted its revised primary system in which party members votes counted for 60 per cent and 50 per cent of the selection decision respectively. This system was clearly meant to be controlled by party cadres, while the central party headquarters kept its rights for final approval. The reduction of member influence over nomination resulted in a lack of interest among members in the process and a reduction of the primary voting rate (29.06 per cent in 1991 and 29.55 per cent in 1992).

Ethnic composition of voters: Benshengren (native Taiwanese, including Minnan, Hakka and Aboriginal groups, this refers to those coming to Taiwan prior to the Second World War and their descendants) make up 85.6 per cent of the population of Taiwan, compared to 14.4 per cent Waishengren (Mainlanders, this refers to those who arrived from Mainland China after the WWII and their descendants). The Waishengren population is most concentrated in Taipei City (28.5 per cent), followed by Gaoxiong City (16.2 per cent), while the rate for Taiwan Province is 11.9 per cent. In the KMT, Benshengren make up 67.57 per cent of members compared to 32.43 per cent for Waishengren (Huang, 1996: 115). There appears to be a difference in the ethnic composition of the KMT and the general electorate. However, due to the expansion of the transport network, reconstruction of the military villages, population mobility and intermarriage between ethnic groups, there is no longer a clear geographical division among Taiwan's ethnic groups. In other words, the gap in ethnic composition between the KMT and general public is not particularly wide and this can be observed from the provincial ratio of nominated candidates.

One of the commonly cited examples of a gap between party and public ethnic composition is the case of Taipei first electoral district in the 1989 Legislative Yuan election. All six of the primary winners were Waishengren. It is atypical, however. Looking at the broader picture, there were a total of 293 candidates to be selected for elections in 1989. For which 645 KMT candidates contested at party member primaries, only 118 of who were Waishengren and only 22 Waishengren were among the top ranked candidates (Kuan, 1992: 92). From Table 3, we can see that for the 79 Legislative Yuan seats, there were 103 KMT candidates. This included 55 recommended candidates and another 48 open nomination candidates. Among those recommended candidates, 41 were Benshengren and 14 Waishengren. Other than in Taipei and Gaoxiong cities, the ratio of Waishengren candidates was generally low. From the above, it can be concluded that primaries do not necessarily favor Waishengren candidates. Moreover, after the 1993 formation of the NP, many Waishengren voters deserted the KMT and the ethnic composition of the KMT members became closer to that of the general population. In addition it should be noted that the as late as 1991 KMT membership accounted for almost 25 per cent of the total electorate, this is a far higher proportion than that achieved by any parties in developed countries.

Table 2. Turnouts of Party members and cadres for KMT party primary elections, 1989–1992

Year	Type of election	Candidate nominating system	Number of eligible voters	Percentage of turnout of cadres	Percentage of turnout of membership
1989	Legislative Yuan ¹	Closed party primary	1,977,249	n.a.	45.10
	Taiwan Provincial Assembly ²	Same as above	1,581,921	n.a.	46.76
	Taibei Municipal Assembly	Same as above	237,551	n.a.	45.56
	Gaoxiong Municipal Assembly	Same as above	149,481	n.a.	36.94
	County magistrates/city mayors	Same as above	1,581,707	n.a.	46.42
1991	2nd session National Assembly	Revised closed primary	1,950,000	67.36	29.06
1992	2nd session Legislative Yuan	Revised closed primary	809,000	68.99	29.55

Notes: ¹ Includes the party members of Taiwan Province, Taibei Municipality, Gaoxiong Municipality, Fujian Province (Jinmen County and Lianjiang County), and Taiwan's aborigines, excluding the ones of occupational organizations (farmers and workers, fishermen, industrialists, businessmen, and educators).

² Includes the party members of Taiwan province and Taiwan's aborigines.

Sources: For 1989, the original data come from Kuan (1992: 276–311); the reported figures are calculated by the authors. The 1991 and 1992 data are collected from Robinson and Baum (1994: 84).

Table 3. *KMT candidates for the 1989 election to the legislative yuan*

District	Number seats	Number candidates	KMT candidates	KMT endorsed candidates			Permitted candidates ²
				Members	Taiwanese ¹	Mainlander	
Taipei county	11	29	15	6	4	2	9
Yilan county	2	4	2	1	1	0	1
Taoyuan county	5	8	5	3	2	1	2
Xinzhu county	1	3	2	0	0	0	2
Miaoli county	2	4	2	1	1	0	1
Taizhong county	4	12	6	3	3	0	3
Zhanghua county	4	13	4	2	2	0	2
Nantou county	2	7	4	1	1	0	3
Yunlin county	3	7	3	3	3	0	0
Jiayi county	2	6	2	2	2	0	0
Tainan county	4	10	5	3	3	0	2
Gaoxiong county	4	8	4	3	2	1	1
Pingtung county	3	6	3	2	1	1	1
Taidong county	1	6	2	1	1	0	1
Hualian county	1	4	2	1	1	0	1
Penghu county	1	2	2	1	1	0	1
Jilong city	1	2	1	1	1	0	0
Xinzhu city	1	6	1	1	1	0	0
Taizhong city	3	12	4	2	1	1	2
Jiayi city	1	3	2	0	0	0	2
Tainan city	2	9	3	2	2	0	1
Taipei municipality 1	6	20	10	5	2	3	5
Taipei municipality 2	6	17	8	5	3	2	3
Gaoxiong municipality 1	4	13	5	3	1	2	2
Gaoxiong municipality 2	4	11	3	2	1	1	1
Fukien province	1	4	3	1	1	0	2
Total	79	226	103	55	41	14	48

Notes: ¹ Includes Fujian province (Jinmen county and Lianjiang county).

² Candidates with KMT permission to run but without endorsement.

Source: *General Summary of the 1989 Supplemental Election to the Legislative Yuan* [in Chinese] (Taipei: Central Election Commission, 1989).

From the overall results of the KMT primaries, the above-mentioned case can be viewed as an exceptional case. Treating a deviant case to surmise the whole phenomenon results in ecological fallacy. Thus we are doubtful of the argument that the composition gap between party members and general electorate will produce unelectable candidates in general elections.

Criticism of requiring two campaigns and election corruption

Another reason for doubting the value of primaries is that they create the need for two campaigns for one election and thus involve a huge waste of resources. Since

vote buying is common practice in Taiwan's elections, it is necessary to spend money twice for primary and election bribes. Clearly, the expenses to be nominated in Taiwan are far higher than in either Germany or Britain. For example, campaigning for nomination in the British Labour Party comes down to making a speech and answering questions at a party member meeting. In contrast, in the run up to the 2001 DPP primary in Taiwan, campaigning began six months before the vote. Potential nominees have placed newspaper and TV ads, used loudspeaker vans and placed huge posters and colourful flags with their names throughout the constituency and allegedly spent vast sums bribing party members for support.

Due to a lack of data we are unable to prove whether primaries increase candidates' campaigning expenses. There are two reasons for this lack of evidence. First, primary candidates do not need to declare their campaign expenses to either local or central party headquarters. Second, even though the government sets limits and candidates submit declarations of campaigning expenses, it is well known that most candidates spend far more on campaigns than they declare. Thus this paper is unable to compare unreliable data on campaign expenses.

Apart from increased vote buying costs, we do not believe that two campaigns should necessarily increase campaigning expenses. This is because primaries will eliminate contestants from the general election and make it a clear battle between party-endorsed candidates. If this filtering process does not take place, candidates not only have to fight for votes from opposition party candidates but also from those of their own party running without nomination. This situation should create even more serious waste of personnel and financial expenses.

In addition, the argument that primary elections destroy the campaign spirit or damage Taiwan's electoral culture is doubtful. Elections are not a new phenomenon in Taiwan, they have been held continuously for decades. Election malpractices such as vote buying and violence have long been commonplace. These problems with Taiwan's electoral culture arose long before the KMT and DPP began holding primaries in 1989. Moreover, since the KMT's resolution to end primaries in 1993, the problems of vote buying and candidate links to the underworld have become more widespread than ever. In short, the idea that primaries exacerbate electoral corruption has little basis.

Criticism that primaries lead to electoral defeat

In practical terms, a political party utilizes a candidate selection system expected to win or continue electoral dominance (Bartels, 1988; Busch and Ceaser, 1996: 341–2). In fact it could be argued that the SPD and Labour's more moderate candidates produced by the decentralized nomination system has been a contributing factor to their revived image and electoral success in the late 1990s. The motivation for the KMT to hold primaries was no exception to this principle. Despite the fact that the KMT won a respectable majority, those opposing primaries blamed them for the loss of vote and seat shares in 1989. In other words,

primaries are not only unable to raise party competitiveness but also lead to electoral defeat.

By comparing the electoral results over a period of time it is apparent that the above assumption is problematic. From Table 4 we can see that in the 1989 Legislature election the KMT had about a 10 per cent drop in both seat and vote shares. However, this is less than the 13.7 per cent drop in seat share at the 1992 Legislative Yuan election. As shown in Table 5, the KMT's drop in seats at the 1989 Provincial Assembly election was 6.5 per cent. This drop is lower than the decline in seat share at either the 1977 or 1994 races (6.8 per cent and 9.3 per cent respectively). The situation for the county magistrate and city mayor elections can be seen from Table 6. The drop in seat share of 14.4 per cent in 1989 was moderate compared to falls of 20 per cent in 1977 or 30.4 per cent in 1997.

Until the 1980s, the KMT, with its Leninist structure, had been able to monopolize political resources and restrict the development space of opposition parties. In the past the KMT endorsed candidates faced little competition, thus there was a widespread concept that being nominated by the KMT was equivalent to being elected. Since the late 1970s the changing social environment has resulted in a relaxing of KMT authoritarianism. Rising education levels, industrialization, urbanization, media expansion, and diversification of political information have all facilitated the development of the opposition forces and the opposition's continued electoral growth (see Chao and Myers, 1998; Cheng, 1989; Tien, 1989; Winkler, 1984; Wu, 1997). In short, a reduction in vote share is a sign of the challenge of social change to authoritarian regimes. Viewed in this light, the KMT's electoral defeat in 1989 should be attributed to the development of democratization rather than the introduction of primaries.

Even if the nomination system is a major factor in electoral results, other factors should not be neglected, e.g., campaign funds, campaigning strategies, and mobilization tactics. With Taiwan's multi-member constituencies with SNTV system, one of the greatest dangers is over-nomination, as this results in candidates of the same party fighting over the same voters. As already shown in Table 3, in 1989 the KMT had 103 candidates (including those openly nominated) fighting for only 79 seats. This kind of over-nomination clearly led to internal party fighting. In addition, if primaries weaken a party's electoral competition why did this not have the same effect on the DPP? The DPP also introduced primaries in 1989 and suffered from factionalism and intra-party squabbling, however this did not prevent the DPP from increasing its electoral support. Moreover, if primaries led to the KMT's poor electoral performance in 1989, we would expect cancelling the primaries to result in improved results. However, in actual fact its election results continued to slide. Based on the above arguments we conclude that the weakening of party competitiveness cannot be blamed on primaries.

Table 4. *KMT Nominating system and election results of the legislative yuan, 1969–1998**

Year	Candidate nominating system	Number seats	KMT vote share (%)	Difference from the last election result	KMT seat share (%)	Difference from the last election result
1969	Party cell opinion response	11	76.0		72.7	
1972	Party member opinion response	36	70.2	–5.8	83.3	10.6
1975	Same as above	37	78.7	8.5	81.1	–2.2
1980	Party member opinion response and cadres' evaluation	70	72.1	–6.6	80.0	–1.1
1983	Same as above	71	70.7	–1.4	87.2	7.2
1986	Same as above	73	69.9	–0.8	80.8	–6.4
1989	Closed party primary	101	60.1	–9.8	71.3	–9.5
1992	Revised closed primary	125	52.7	–7.4	57.6	–13.7
1995	Opinion consultation	128	46.1	–6.6	52.3	–5.3
1998	Same as above	168	46.4	0.3	57.1	4.8

Notes: *Excludes the number of seats of the overseas Chinese communities for years before 1989, and the numbers of seats of the national and overseas Chinese representatives distributed to the political parties based on the proportion of votes won by these parties since 1992.

Sources: *The Summary of Election Statistics of the Republic of China* [in Chinese] (Taipei: Central Election Commission, 1988); *General Summary of the Election to the Legislative Yuan* [in Chinese] (Taipei: Central Election Commission, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1998).

Table 5. *KMT Nominating system and election results of Taiwan Provincial Assembly, 1951–1994**

Year	Candidate nominating system	Number seats	KMT vote share (%)	Difference from the last election result	KMT seat share (%)	Difference from the last election result
1951	Selective support	55	n.a.		72.7	
1954	Quasi-closed party primary	57	68.8		84.2	11.5
1957	Same as above	66	67.8	−1.0	80.3	−3.9
1960	Party member opinion response	73	65.4	−2.4	79.5	−0.8
1963–64	Same as above	74	68.0	2.6	82.4	2.9
1968	Same as above	71	75.5	7.5	84.5	2.1
1972	Same as above	73	68.9	−6.6	79.5	−5.0
1977	Same as above	77	64.1	−4.8	72.7	−6.8
1981	Party member opinion response and cadres' evaluation	77	70.3	6.2	76.6	3.9
1985	Same as above	77	69.8	−0.5	76.6	0.0
1989	Closed party primary	77	62.1	−7.7	70.1	−6.5
1994	Opinion consultation	79	51.0	−11.1	60.8	−9.3

Notes: * In 1951, member of the first session Taiwan Provincial Provisional Assembly (TPPA) was indirectly elected by the county and city councils. The election for the second session TPPA was the island-wide direct popular suffrage, and the third session TPPA was renamed as the first session Taiwan Provincial Assembly in 1959.

Sources: *The Summary of Election Statistics of the Republic of China* (see Table 4); *General Summary of the Election to the Taiwan Provincial Assembly* [in Chinese] (Taizhong, Taiwan: Taiwan Provincial Election Commission of the Department of Civil Affairs, various years); *The Taiwan Provincial Self-Government Annals* [in Chinese] (Taizhong, Taiwan: Taiwan Provincial Self-Government Annals Compilation Committee, 1965).

Table 6. *KMT Nominating system and election results of county magistrates and city mayors, 1950–1997*

Year	Candidate nominating system	Number seats	KMT vote share (%)	Difference from the last election result	KMT seat share (%)	Difference from the last election result
1950–51	Selective support	21	n.a.		85.9	
1954	Quasi-closed party primary	21	71.8		90.5	4.6
1957	Party member opinion response	21	65.0	–6.8	95.2	4.7
1960	Same as above	21	72.0	7.0	90.5	–4.7
1964	Same as above	21	73.1	1.1	81.0	–9.5
1968	Same as above	20	72.4	–0.7	85.0	4.0
1972	Same as above	20	78.6	6.2	100.0	15.0
1977	Same as above	20	70.4	–8.2	80.0	–20.0
1981	Party member opinion response and cadres' evaluation	19	59.4	–11.0	78.9	–1.1
1985	Same as above	21	62.6	3.2	81.0	2.1
1989	Closed party primary	21	52.7	–9.9	66.6	–14.4
1993	Opinion consultation	23	47.5	–5.2	65.2	–1.4
1997	Same as above	23	42.1	–5.4	34.8	–30.4

Sources: *The Summary of Election Statistics of the Republic of China* (see Table 4); *The Taiwan Provincial Self-Government Annals* (see Table 5); *General Summary of the Election to County Magistrates and City Mayors* (see Table 1, various years).

Criticism that primaries are not suited to the multi-member seat system

Those opposed to primaries also cite the claim that multi-member constituencies are unsuited to holding primaries. They believe that since America has single member electoral districts, the primary rules are straightforward; as only one candidate should be nominated in each district, the candidate getting a simple majority receives the party nomination. However, because Taiwan has multi-member constituencies, the number of nominated candidates is flexible and party branches need to have the power to decide the number of nominated candidates. Also it makes those just failing to achieve nomination in the primaries threaten to leave the party to force the party into nominating them.

We accept that Taiwan's multi-member district electoral system differs from the United States in having to nominate more than one candidate. However, this is not a valid argument against holding primaries. For example, despite the fact that Germany has a mixed SMD and PR electoral system, member primaries have been successfully introduced. In addition, electoral research proves that the greater the party's electoral experience, the greater its ability to gain votes, win seats and to control vote equalization (Cox and Niou, 1994; Hsieh, 1996; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989). This proves that a party should be able to estimate the vote share of a general election and thus fix the number of nominated candidates before holding primaries.

Primaries in the DPP

Candidate selection has also been a divisive issue in Taiwan's second largest party, the DPP. In the subsequent eleven years since the party first used primaries, the DPP has changed its primary policy eight times and has still not found a satisfactory system. The key problem for DPP primaries is the lack of party members; the ratio of members to the population is far below its electoral support. In June 1998 for the DPP party chairman election there were only 92,504 members (*Zhong-kuo shi-bao* [*China Times*] 8 June 1998: 2). In addition, the serious factional struggle was seen in the primaries with the proliferation of 'pocket' members. The degree to which these 'pocket' members and factions allocated votes and exchanged votes was widely criticized. There were calls in the party for the ending of primary elections. As with the KMT the DPP has fluctuated between decentralized and centralized nomination methods. In fact, in 1995 the DPP was the first party to experiment with open citizen primaries for its presidential candidate. However, four years later, the DPP preferred to avoid a divisive battle for the presidential nomination, in stead the choice of Chen Shui-bian was made behind closed doors by the elite factional leaders. The party was deeply divided over the ideal nomination system, and finally the party has opted for a formula in 1999, in which public opinion polls account for 70 per cent of the primary results, while party primaries account for the remaining 30 per cent.

As mentioned earlier, the DPP has a severe lack of registered party members. This allows those interested in standing for election to pay the fees of 'pocket' members and even to allocate, exchange or buy votes. These kinds of malpractices

were especially serious during the March 1998 primaries for Legislative Yuan and city councillors in Taipei and Gaoxiong. In April, a number of reform proposals were made to deal with these questions.³ First, some feel that the evaluation of new party members should be stricter, for example, avoiding allowing many members of one household from becoming members. Second, large numbers of independent citizens should be encouraged to join and thus dilute the effectiveness of 'pocket' members. This proposal is similar to the reforms proposed by the British Labour Party in the 1980s to expand the role of ordinary members in candidate selection to dilute the influence of more radical party activists (Scarrow, 1996: 167–71).

Third, some are of the opinion that political party primaries should come under the jurisdiction of the Election Law. The idea is that national law will be able to tackle the corruption involved in party primaries. Fourth, it is suggested that primaries are retained, but the present electoral system of SNTV with multi-member districts is replaced by a single-member district plurality system. This it is believed would root out the evils of Taiwan's elections. Last, some say that since Taiwan lacks the cultural and political conditions required for American style democracy, the dogma of 'primaries equal democracy' should be abandoned. They prefer the European model of compromising between factions or in which a small elite nomination group uses their professional knowledge to evaluate candidates.

The concept that a single-member district plurality system would solve Taiwan's electoral corruption needs further examination. Research has found that systems do have certain mechanical effects (Duverger, 1959; Grofman and Lijphart, 1986; Rae, 1971; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989). However, the system is not the sole variable influencing electoral competition and results. The hypothesis that changing the electoral system will rectify corruption must not only prove that the SNTV system causes the vote buying and other malpractices (see Hsieh, 1996), but also that the single member district plurality system (such as is used in elections to executive posts) can keep criminal influences out of elections. Both Japan and South Korea have abandoned the SNTV with MMD system in the hope of reducing corruption, making politics more issue and party orientated. However, system change in both cases has resulted in more continuity than change, as both countries elections remain candidate centred and money politics is still as vibrant as ever (Hideo, 1999). In reality, the crux of the problem is election culture. Without raising the level of social education and political culture, any changes to the electoral system would be in vain.

European style elite centralized nomination system is appealing to some DPP leaders. Party scholars have pointed out that different types of parties have large differences in their organizational structure and decision-making process (Crotty, 1968; Epstein, 1967; Gallagher, 1988; Wright, 1971). In West Europe, parties tend to be

³ The DPP proposals discussed in this paper are a summary of the proposals made by the DPP's five-person reform group in April 1998 and party member suggestions for primary reform. These proposals and the discussion of them were widely reported in the media during April 1998.

more centralized and the party's ideology serves as a unifying force to maintain party discipline. America, on the other hand, is a two party system, in which ideology plays a lesser role. Party operation emphasizes winning elections. The Democratic Party and Republican Party aim to attract the majority of voters in the centre and must adjust their policies in the light of social changes. This is reflected in the party organizations, which tend to stress the need for a decentralized nomination system and results require voter participation and reflect diversified social interests. Finally, it should be pointed out that many European parties are moving away from the old centralized model. For example, the leading German and British parties have also increased the role of members in candidate selection, by adopting more decentralized nomination systems.

The NP's primaries

Taiwan's third major party received much attention with the introduction of US style semi-open primaries (c.f. Bibby, 1992: 132, 134). Since the formation of the NP in 1993, there has been much criticism that the power to nominate candidates has been concentrated in the hand of the few leading cadres of the National Election Development Committee (NEDC). In April 1998, the NEDC passed the party nomination regulations for the Legislative Yuan and Gaoxiong and Taipei Municipal Council elections. It was decided that in constituencies where there was strong inner party competition for nomination, that citizen primaries would be held. Commencing in late July 1998, primaries were held by the NP at 80 sites. All citizens registered within a constituency had the right to vote and it was hoped that this would help revive the party's falling popularity. The NP's primaries were completed by the end of August, and a total of over 250,000 people had voted in these primaries (*Zhong-kuo shi-bao* [*China Times*] 14 April 1998: 2). However, the internal disputes within the NP did not end with the conclusion of the primaries. Throughout the primary process NP candidates attacked each other and there was a widespread view of the KMT getting involved to support certain candidates. The political parties literature has pointed out that there is the possibility of crossover voting. Crossover voting refers to a situation in which supporters of one party deliberately attempt to manipulate the result by voting in the other party's primary. The tendency is to vote for the weaker candidate, in the hope that if nominated this candidate will fail in a general election (Adamany, 1976; Ranney, 1972; Wekkin, 1988).

Even if some crossover voting did occur in the NP's primaries, we consider that the effects of the claimed KMT manipulation could have been not significant. It is widely accepted that Taiwan's politics are becoming increasingly mature, education levels are rising and mass communications are becoming further developed. It would be very easy for the mass media to discover if any given political party had really encouraged its members to try to influence another party's primary results. If crossover voting did actually occur, it would be exposed in the press and the instigator would be roundly condemned and the victimized party would become

even more united. This point can be shown that even if the NP was justified in accusing the KMT local branch of Taoyuan County of involvement in the primary, the NP was certain that the KMT central party headquarters had not given the orders (*Zhong-kuo shi-bao* [*China Times*] 8 August 1998, 4). Even so, some NP leading figures claimed that in the light of the damage caused by the primaries that they should not be continued in the future.

The real problem?

Since we have found the claimed arguments for opposing primaries in all three of Taiwan's parties unconvincing, what are the real problems? First, the elite in both in Taiwan's and European parties are fearful of devolving too much power to party members, and therefore if they perceive the primaries will produce the 'wrong' results, leaders are prepared to manipulate the nomination system or bend the rules to benefit their preferred candidate. This lack of fairness in the operation of primaries has resulted in candidates running independently in Taiwan and Britain and further damaged party discipline and electoral fortunes. Second, the success or failure of primaries is heavily influenced by its position in the state of inner party power struggles. In the British Labour Party, Neil Kinnock and party reformers succeeded in expanding member roles in nomination, however, essentially this was a component of party moderates' ploy to weaken the extreme left of the party and thus make the party electable. In Taiwan the use of primaries was closely tied to the struggle between Mainstream and Non-mainstream Factions of the KMT. The Mainstream Faction had little option but to cancel primaries in the early 1990s, as it needed the support of the anti primary local factions to win elections and defeat the Non-mainstream Faction.

Conclusion

As in the case of the German CDU, SPD and British Labour parties, Taiwan's political parties show trends of increasing inclusiveness, decentralization, and less mediation. However, the trends have not been one directional, particular in the degree of centralization, all three parties have followed a zigzag course. In addition, all Taiwan's political parties have attempted to reduce mediation; this has partly been an attempt to reduce the hold that local factions maintain on members' loyalties. Despite the increasingly TV centred election campaigns, Taiwan's parties still place considerable stress on the roles of party members. This can be seen by the intensive membership drives of the KMT, DPP, and the new People First Party (PFP) since the March 2000 election. This is due to legitimacy value that high membership figures can bring a party and the value that members can bring in terms of electoral support both during and between campaigns.

We are of the opinion that the main problem with the operation of primaries both among the Taiwanese parties and those in Western Europe is not actually deficiencies in the primary system, the crux of the problem is that the party centre

cadres are terrified of losing control over the nomination process and are thus unable to remain neutral in the process. There are examples in all three Taiwanese parties of bending the nomination rules or lack of partiality to ensure their preferred candidate is nominated. This can create a backlash and may lead to candidates running without endorsement, for example the independent candidacy of Ken Livingston's in the 2000 London mayoral elections and that of Song in Taiwan's March 2000 elections.

The fact that both the DPP and KMT have both used primaries in the run up to the 2001 Legislative and Municipal Executive elections are promising signs. However, both parties are clearly suspicious of the whole process; this is shown by their attempts to persuade candidates to withdraw from contests and thus to avoid holding primaries in municipal executive races. In addition, the KMT's first primary for party chairman revealed the KMT's lack of sincerity for intra-party democracy. There was only one candidate and he received 97 per cent of the vote. This election would not have been out of place in the PRC or the old Soviet Union. The signs are even less promising for the remaining two parties, the NP is expected to return to centralized nomination, while the party formed by Song Chu-yu looks likely to use the most centralized nomination method, whereby all decisions are in the hands of a single party leader. Clearly, there are leaders in all Taiwan's parties that are sympathetic with traditional Asian values, in preferring to keep conflict behind closed doors.

It appears that Taiwan's political parties contrast sharply both with their Asian neighbours and fellow Third Wave democracies. The parties have become relatively institutionalised, with stable mass memberships, distinctive ideology and a significant degree of intra-party democracy. However, the trends towards re-centralization in the KMT from 1990-1999 and the fact that the British Conservative Party has not followed the decentralizing route of Labour show that decentralization is not an inevitable trend. In fact, the success or failure of primaries is not essentially tied to the actual design of system but comes down the elite power struggle, specifically to the strength of the alliance within any party supporting or opposing decentralization.

We are of the opinion that Taiwan can learn a great deal from the US and recent European experience of holding primaries. We see the closed primaries as the most appropriate model for Taiwan and these should be run by government organizations. In this way, there can be no claims of biased practices or unjust results. However, it is uncertain whether Taiwan's political parties have the will to accept and pass legislation for such large-scale nomination system reforms. In Taiwan, as in West Europe, it is unlikely that inner party democracy will reach the extremes of inclusiveness found in the US, where the distinctions between members and supporters are blurred. However, we are cautiously optimistic for the future of primaries in Taiwan, as once the genie of member primaries is let out of the bottle it is very hard to put it back in.

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