

Prospectus: The Moderating Effects of the Two Party System in the Republic of China

**Background:**

The island nation of Taiwan, otherwise known as the Republic of China (ROC) exists in one of the most precarious situations faced by a modern state. Its powerful neighbor, the People's Republic of China claims that Taiwan is part of its territory and is currently nothing more than a rogue province. To assert this claim, the threat of violence is ever present, making this issue a specter constantly overshadowing nearly every issue in the Taiwanese political system. The very existence of the island as an independent, democratic state hinges on the outcomes of Taiwan's elections.

Ever since Taiwan's first democratic elections in 1991 the nation has been divided solidly into a two party system of government (cite jstor). The original nationalist party of China, the Kuomintang (KMT) is the island's right wing conservative party, while the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), as its name suggests, tends to favor more liberal progressive policy positions. While other smaller parties do exist they are usually divided into one of two coalitions; the Pan-Blue Coalition or the Pan-Green Coalition, led by the KMT and the DPP respectively. The KMT and the DPP are also the only two parties to have ever held the presidency. While both the parties take radically different positions on many issues, especially the issue of Taiwanese independence, they both tend to be pulled back to the middle of the political spectrum in order to garner more votes.

## **Methodology:**

In the course of my research I will examine a wide variety of sources ranging from news articles written by and for Taiwanese and Chinese nationals to books compiled by professional political scientists. Some of these will be original Chinese sources including the KMT and DPP's own websites, both of which include a plethora of information on the parties' respective positions on various issues as well as electoral successes and failures. Much of my research will come from scholarly articles such academic journals and will therefore likely be relatively unbiased. Many of my sources, however, will be news articles, as well as statements and publications by the KMT and DPP and will therefore be at least somewhat biased; however I hope to counteract this bias by utilizing relatively equal numbers of sources from both sides of the political spectrum.

I intend to use the information derived from these sources as well as additional sources on electoral results since the beginning of democracy in Taiwan to measure the success of the KMT and DPP according to how they have adjusted their policy positions. For instance, if a DPP candidate for a parliamentary seat in a particular year took a more radical stance on Taiwanese independence and his opponent took a more moderate stance and won, this would support my hypothesis regarding the moderating effect of the two party system.

In my thesis I will first provide a brief history of the development of democracy in Taiwan, followed by an examination of the structure of the political system currently in place. I will then list other examples, including that of the United States, of the moderating effects two party systems as well as the various political science theories behind this. Next, I

will look into the respective parties positions on key policy issues and how these have changed over time. Through cross examination of the moderation or radicalization of policy issues with electoral successes or failures, I will attempt to gather evidence either supporting or refuting my claim. By thoroughly examining the mechanizations of the Taiwanese political system, the changing policy positions of candidates for office, and the results of elections, utilizing a variety of academic and primary sources I hope to provide a solid base of support for my hypothesis of the moderating effect of the two party system in Taiwan.

### **Research Question and Hypothesis:**

My thesis research will center on the question: What impact has a two party system had on the politics of Taiwan? I hypothesize that the two party system in Taiwan will have a moderating effect on the policy positions of the parties involved. Based on my initial research findings there appears to be a strong pull towards the middle for Taiwan's two dominant political parties, especially near election times. For example, if a party leans too far towards independence from, or reunification with, China they tend to lose votes in the next election as a result. As parties adopt more moderate positions they are rewarded with more electoral votes and vice versa, thus creating a moderating system of punishment and rewards.

### **Significance:**

Taiwan's foreign and domestic policies are controlled by the internal political mechanizations of the government. The results of elections and the policies of the ROC have a large effect not only on the island, its economy, and status as a nation, but also in its relationship with China and the United States. The issue of Taiwan is one of the central

issues in U.S.-China relations and has been one of the main impediments to smooth cooperation between the two leading world powers.

The moderation of policy by the Taiwanese government as a result of the two party system therefore has a great effect both locally and internationally on the world stage. The moderating effect of the two-party system in Taiwan can also be seen as a model for the moderating effects of two-party systems in other democracies, such as that of the United States. By investigating this phenomenon it is possible to gain greater insight into one of the leading foreign policy issues for the two largest world powers, as well as examine a occurrence present in many of the world's democracies today.

### **Annotated Bibliography:**

Bush, Richard C. "Taiwan and East Asia Security." *Foreign Policy Research Institute*. N.p., 2011. Web. 13 Sept. 2013. <http://www.fpri.org/docs/taiwan.pdf> - Political analysis of Taiwan's two party system and effect on its security written by Richard C. Bush the Director for the Northeast Asian Policy Studies and Senior Fellow of Foreign Policy, and The Michael H. Amacost Chair at the Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C. His two-decade public service career spans Congress, the intelligence community and the U.S. State Department.

Hunkovic, Lee J. "The Chinese-Taiwanese Conflict: Possible Futures of a Confrontation between China, Taiwan and the United States of America." *Lamp-Method*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Sept. 2013. <http://www.lamp-method.org/ecommons/hunkovic.pdf> - Valuable as a

Military/Conflict analysis as opposed to a political or economic analysis – addresses the possible future conflicts and U.S./China/Taiwan dynamics.

Kan, Shirley A., and Wayne M. Morrison. "U.S.-Taiwan Relationship: Overview of Policy Issues." *Federation of American Scientists*. N.p., 11 Sept. 2013. Web. 15 Sept. 2013. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41952.pdf> - Congressional Research Service – Valued because it is a U.S. think tank of people employed for the purpose of analysis – in this case of U.S. Taiwan Relations.

Kan, Shirley A. "Democratic Reforms in Taiwan: Issues for Congress." *Federation of American Scientists*. N.p., 26 May 2010. Web. 13 Sept. 2013. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41263.pdf> - Congressional Research Service – a second report by the Federation of American Scientists – analysis of the Taiwanese two party system and its influences and ramifications.

Kumar, Ravindra. "Dialogue Process in China-Taiwan Tension." N.p., 7 Sept. 2007. Web. 15 Sept. 2013. [http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/no\\_topic/Kumar-Dr.-Ravindra/Dialogue-Process-in-China-Taiwan-Tension](http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/no_topic/Kumar-Dr.-Ravindra/Dialogue-Process-in-China-Taiwan-Tension) - Valuable article produced by the World Security Network, an organization dedicated to bringing to light conflicts in the interest of resolution - offers insight into the cultural differences between China and Taiwan and the tension caused by the differences in political policy.

Lin, Chia-cheng. "Viable Two-Party System is Possible." *Taipei Times*. N.p., 8 Feb. 2012. Web. 13 Sept. 2013.  
<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2012/02/08/2003524943>- Valuable source reflecting Taiwanese media presentation of the political climate and the relationships between Taiwan and China and Taiwan and the U.S.

Rigger, Shelley. *Taiwan's Democratization*. N.p.: East-West Center Washington, 2006. Print. Taiwan's Rising Rationalism: Generations, Politics, and "Taiwanese Nationalism" by Shelley Rigger- This book discusses the increasingly moderate views of the Taiwanese people and how this has led to increasingly moderate political policies.

Rios, Xulio. "The Development of the Relations Between Mainland China and Taiwan during Hujintao's Term of Office." *Politica-China*. N.p., 2012. Web. 13 Sept. 2013.  
[http://www.politica-china.org/imxd/noticias/doc/1344111140The\\_Development\\_of\\_the\\_Relations\\_between\\_Mainland\\_China\\_and\\_Taiwan.pdf](http://www.politica-china.org/imxd/noticias/doc/1344111140The_Development_of_the_Relations_between_Mainland_China_and_Taiwan.pdf) - Valuable document produced by a student in a fellowship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan) Analysis of the development of relations between Taiwan and China from 2002 to 2012.

Roy, Denny. *Taiwan: A Political History*. N.p.: Cornell University Press, 2002. Print. Taiwan: A Political History by Denny Roy- This book provides insight into the internal political mechanizations of Taiwan and how they shape both domestic and foreign policy.

Tien, Hung-mao, and Chyuan-jeng Shiau. "Taiwan's Democratization." *World Affairs* 155.2. Web. 13 Sept. 2013. <http://0-www.jstor.org.umiss.lib.olemiss.edu/stable/20672340> -This document provides analysis of Taiwan's transition to democracy and the early democratic period.

*U.S., China and Taiwan Security*. 2009. American Enterprise Institute. Web. 15 Sept. 2013.. <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/285234-2> - Foreign relations is a fluid evolving situation and these two videos, recorded in 2009 by c-span, produced by the American Enterprise Institute reflect on trade relations, economic security and the dynamics between the China, the U.S. and Taiwan.

Wang, Fei-Ling. "Taiwan: A Key to China's Rise and Transformation." *China Research Center* 6.2 (2007). Web. 13 Sept. 2013. <http://www.chinacenter.net/taiwan-a-key-to-chinas-rise-and-transformation/> - China Research Center – Valuable for the perspective of Chinese Government and Political figures on the foreign policy status between China and Taiwan with much referral to the two party system in Taiwan and its effect on the relationship between China and Taiwan.